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MISS PRISCILLA'S MISSION.

DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.



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NO. 2. VOL. 1.

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By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.
Screwed In.

FOUR strokes boomed out from the clock-tower at St. Jim's, and Tom Merry jumped up with a start, and threw aside the latest number of "The Magnet," in which he had been deeply engrossed.

"My hat! That's four!"

Monty Lowther, who was stretched in the only easy chair, with his feet on the fender, looked up with a yawn.

"Hallo! What's bothering you, Tom?"

"It's four o'clock——"

"I believe it generally is at this time of the day," said Lowther, in a reflective sort of way. "Nothing remarkable in that."

"Miss Priscilla Fawcett is coming down to-day."

"How nice! I hope she hasn't forgotten the cod-liver oil!" said Lowther, with solicitude.

Tom Merry laughed.

When his old governess paid him a visit at St. Jim's, it was generally with a view to looking after his health, and the remedies she brought him for imagined ailments were fearful and wonderful.

"And the Purple Pills for Pink-faced People," said Manners, looking up from the photographic prints he was finishing. "I'm afraid you've been neglecting them lately, Tom. You haven't touched the last box your old governess sent you."

"Haven't I!" said Tom Merry anxiously. "By Jove, she mustn't find it here! Where is it?"

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"On the mantelpiece."

Tom Merry crossed to the mantelpiece, and the next moment the box of pills dropped unopened into the heart of the fire.

"That's settled!" said Tom Merry, with a sigh of relief. "Miss Fawcett is the dearest old soul in the world, but I do wish she wouldn't fancy I was ill, and bring me those horrible things! I should be ill enough if I swallowed them. But I've got to cut off now, you kids. Miss Priscilla's train gets in at four-thirty, and four's just gone."

"Sorry I can't come!" said Manners. "If I leave these prints, some ass will come along and spoil them."

"I'll come," said Lowther, "if you'll wait till I get my boots on."

"Can't wait. So-long!"

And Tom Merry picked up his cap, and stuck it on the back of his curly head, and went to the door to open it.

It was Wednesday—a half-holiday at St. Jim's—and the three chums of the Shell had had some hard practice on the football-field earlier in the afternoon, and were "taking it easy" in their study for a time, feeling that they deserved a rest.

Tom Merry pulled at the study door, but it did not open.

"Hallo, what's wrong with this door?" he exclaimed.

Manners and Lowther glanced towards him in astonishment. Tom Merry was pulling at the handle, but the door refused to budge.

"Got jammed!" drawled Lowther.

"Rot!" said Tom Merry. "It couldn't get jammed as tight as that. It's fastened on the outside."

"My word! Then it's a little game of some of those youngsters."

Monty Lowther referred, by the disparaging title of youngsters, to the chums of the Fourth Form—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, who resided in Study No. 6, farther up the passage. The heroes of the Shell were, of course, a few months older than the Fourth Formers, and equally, of course, they never allowed the latter to forget it.

Tom Merry's brow wrinkled.

"I believe you're right!" he exclaimed. "Do you remember how we began to screw up the door of Study No. 6, last week, and Figgins & Co. dropped on us. Blake and his lot have worked off our own wheeze on us."

"Let me try," said Lowther.

He came towards the door. Tom Merry stepped back to give him room.

"I've tugged as hard as I can," he said; "you'll never manage it."

"Oh, perhaps I can, you know," said Lowther, taking hold of the handle of the door. "There is a knack in doing these things.

He gripped the handle hard, set his foot against the wall, and tugged with all his strength. He put on such a strain that something was bound to go. The screws outside held the door fast, and so it was the handle that went.

"I believe it's coming!" gasped Lowther. "I can feel it—— Oh, crumbs!"

It came. The handle flew right off, and Monty Lowther pitched backward, and crashed against Tom Merry. Tom Merry sprawled on the hearthrug, and Lowther sprawled across him.

"You—you utter ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry, sitting up, and rubbing the back of his head. "If there's a knack in doing those things, the sooner you get out of practice the better."

"The handle's come off!" gasped Lowther.

"Only just discovered that?" asked Tom Merry witheringly.

"Well, of course, I couldn't guess the handle would come off——"

Tom Merry jumped up, and picked his cap out of the grate. Then he went to the door, and kicked on the panels.

"I say, out there!"

There was a sound of a chuckle in the corridor. If there had been any doubt before, there was none now, that the perpetrators of that little joke were the chums of Study No. 6 in the School House at St. Jim's.

"I say!" shouted Tom Merry, kicking at the door.

"Hallo!" came the voice of Blake, of No. 6, through the oak. "Are you talking to me, Thomas?"

"Yes, I am, fathead! Have you fastened this door?"

"No, I haven't!"

"I can't get it open!"

"How singular! What can be the matter, Herries?"

"I think it must be the screws I put in," said the voice of Herries.

"What do you think, Digby?"

"I think it must be the screws Herries put in, Blake."

"What's your opinion, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, deah boy, I think it must be the scwews that Hewwies put in that pwevent Tom Merry fwom openin' his beastly door, you know!"

"You see how it is, Merry!" called Blake, through the door. "I haven't fastened your door. If you can't open it, I think that it must be due to the screws Herries has put in. I'm not certain, but I think it's very probable."

"Open the door, you rotters!"

"Can't be done, dear boy! It's taken us ten minutes to drive in those screws!"

"I want to come out——"

"That's unfortunate, because you can't, you see!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said the voice of D'Arcy, the elegant swell of the School House. "It is extwemely unfortunate, because you weally can't get out, you know, Tom Mewwy!"

Tom kicked frantically at the door. The minutes were passing, and the train bearing Miss Priscilla Fawcett was speeding towards Rylcombe Station. What would she think if she arrived in Rylcombe, and Tom Merry were not there to meet her? Tom would not have appeared neglectful of his kind old governess for anything in the world.

"Open the door, you rotters!"

"Can't be did! We're just going out for a walk!"

"Don't go away! I tell you——"

"Must, dear kid! You can get out of the window, you know, if you don't mind breaking your necks. Of course, that wouldn't matter very much, except for the expense of a funeral, and it could very likely be done cheap by taking three together——"

"Look here——"

"I can't see through an oak door, kid. Perhaps Gussy can, with his eyeglass. Can you see through the oak door with your window pane, Gussy?"

"Oh, pway don't wot, deah boy!"

"I tell you——" roared Tom Merry.

"That's all right!" interrupted Blake cheerfully. "If you don't like the window you can go up the chimney, and get out on the roof."

"I say, Blake, don't be a beast——"

"Good-bye!"

"Stop—stop a minute! It's important——"

"Hallo! What's the trouble now?" asked Blake, realising from Tom Merry's tone at last, that there was something serious in the matter.

"Listen to me——"

"I'm listening, with all my ears, to say nothing of D'Arcy's, Herries', and Dig's."

"Miss Fawcett is coming down to the school to-day——"

"How jolly for you! What you really want is a good, steady drink of cod-liver oil——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"She's coming by the four-thirty!" howled Tom Merry, through the keyhole, "and I've got to meet the train, and it's nearly a quarter past now."

There was a pause in the passage.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Blake, after a moment. "That alters the case. But it's honest Injun, eh? You're not gammoning?"

"Honest Injun!"

"Then—my hat! I'm afraid you're done in! There are six four-inch screws in here, and it will take a dog's age to get them out again!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry tore his hair. It looked as if Miss Priscilla's train would be in before he could even escape from the study, let alone go down to the village station.

"Unscrew as fast as you can, Herries!" directed Blake. "You dodge off, and see if you can borrow another screwdriver, Dig."

"Tom Mewwy has a scwew-dwivah in his study, Blake."

"He can't pass it through the keyhole, can he, fathead?"

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

"Buck up!" shouted Tom Merry.

"We're bucking up! It's a good joke spoiled, but politeness to a lady before everything," said Blake resignedly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Herries is working away like a Trojan, and Dig is scouting for a screw-driver. It's a lot of trouble wasted. You won't find me screwing up your door again in a hurry, Tom Merry."

"If I do," said Tom Merry, "there will be a mangled kid in the School House the next minute. What will Miss Fawcett think, if there's nobody to meet her at the station. Do be quick!"

"She will think Tom Mewwy is a wude boundah," said D'Arcy, after a pause for reflection. "But when she comes to know the twue circs. of the case, I am gweatly afwaid that she will think that we are wude boundahs——"

"Horrid!" said Blake.

"It is indeed howwid! I should not like to be considahed a wude boundah by any lady, especially by an old lady whom I

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As Tom Merry was not in sight, Miss Priscilla advanced upon the porter, and startled him into alertness by digging him in the ribs with her umbrella.

esteem so highly as I do Tom Mewwy's wespected governess. But I have an ideah——"

"Don't tell us about it now."

"Pway do not interwupt me! It is necessawy for Miss Pwiscillah to be met at the beastly station, you know, and Tom Mewwy is a beastly pwisonah in his study. I will buzz off and get to the station, and explain things to Miss Pwiscillah."

"Good egg!" said Blake approvingly. "But you couldn't get there in time."

"Oh, I'll wun like anythin'."

"That's right!" called out Tom Merry. "Get off as quick as you can, and tell her I'm coming. Buzz! Bunk!"

"Yaas, wathah! I'll only stop to get a silk hat."

"Bother your silk hat! Go as you are."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Go as you are!" roared Blake, seizing D'Arcy by the collar and swinging him round, and starting him along the passage with a push. "Go as you are!"

"If you think I can go to meet a lady without a hat——"

"Here's a cap."

"I could not wear your cap. It is too large by nearly a quartah of an inch. And besides, I do not wegard a cap as a pwopah headgeah for such an occasion. I am goin', Tom Mewwy, and it will take me only a few minutes to bwush my hair and get my toppah."

And D'Arcy scuttled off before Blake could kick him. At the same moment Digby returned with a couple of screw-drivers, and he and Blake set rapidly to work to aid Herries in getting the screws out.

But Herries, who was nothing if not thorough, had done his work well, and the removing of the screws was a tedious task. Tom Merry was looking like a caged animal inside the study.

"Patience, old kid!" said Lowther soothingly. "Can't be helped, you know, as you say yourself."

"But Miss Fawcett will arrive, and find nobody there."

"D'Arcy's gone."

"He'll never get there in time."

"Well, she'll guess you've been delayed, and wait."

"Fancy keeping her waiting! I say, I can't stick it. I'm going out of the window."

"Now, don't break your neck!"

"It's all right. I can get down the water-pipe."

"But, I say——" exclaimed Manners and Lowther together.

But Tom Merry did not stay to listen. He threw up the window, and jerked himself out on the sill. The water-pipe was a good two feet from the end of the sill; but Tom Merry, who had a nerve of iron, swung himself to it and caught it with a hard grip. Then he slithered down the pipe to the ground.

Manners and Lowther watched him with their hearts in their mouths, so to speak, and gasped with relief when he was safely on the ground.

"Thank goodness you're safe!" exclaimed Manners. "I ——"

But Tom Merry was not listening. His feet had no sooner touched the ground than he was off, crossing the quadrangle to the gates as if he were on the cinder-path.

CHAPTER 2.

Marmaduke is not Good.

TOM MERRY was at the top of the School House juniors in the running line. His fame was great on the football field, and he had beaten Figgins, the chief of the New House juniors, by a foot in an historic race; and he fairly flew down to the gates of St. Jim's.

Four juniors were standing in the gateway, talking. One of them, tall and long-limbed, was the great Figgins, and the other three were Kerr, Wynn, and Marmaduke Smythe, known in the New House as the Co. Figgins was speaking as Tom Merry came tearing up.

"The young ass came bolting past," he said. "I knocked

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his silk hat off. I knew that would make him stop, if anything would. And what do you think he said?"

"Give it up," said Marmaduke.

"He said he would thwash me if he wasn't in a huwwy to go and meet a lady," chuckled Figgins. "Before I could wipe up the ground with him he was off, with his silk hat in his hand. I watched him from the gate, and saw him jam it on the back of his head. He was running like one-o'clock."

"Meeting a lady, eh?" said Kerr. "Is Gussy in love again? You remember the time he met me in feminine attire in the Head's garden?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He didn't look in love," said Fatty Wynn reflectively. "He wouldn't go to meet his lady-love in such a flustered state. He——"

"Hallo! Where are you running to?" roared Figgins.

The four New House juniors were standing in the gateway, and Tom Merry came bolting right through them. There was no time to talk; and besides, it was rather a joke to scatter the New House fellows, the deadly rivals of the School House.

Tom Merry burst upon them like a thunderbolt. Fatty Wynn and Kerr, shouldered off by the sturdy School House junior, rolled on the ground, and Marmaduke received an elbow on his chest which sent him reeling against Figgins, jamming the great Figgins against the gate.

Before the New House quartette could recover from the surprise, Tom Merry was gone. Figgins gasped, and looked after him, and he was already disappearing down Rylcombe Lane.

"My hat!" exclaimed Figgins. "That's another maniac! Is Tom Merry going to meet a lady, too, I wonder?"

"I'll knock his confounded head off!" exclaimed Marmaduke, rubbing his chest where he had received Tom Merry's elbow.

"Eh?" exclaimed Figgins. "What's that?"

"I said I'd knock his head off."

"Yes, I heard you. Now, Marmaduke," said Figgins impressively, "it won't do."

"What won't do?"

"That won't. You came to St. Jim's a fearful bounder—that was some time ago—and we cured you. You've been home for a long time——"

"Look here, Figgins——"

"Shut up while I'm talking! You've been home, and, in the atmosphere of millions in your pater's palatial mansion in Petticoat Lane, you have——"

"My father's mansion is in Park Lane."

"My mistake! In the gold-tinted, diamond-studded, pearl-hung atmosphere of your paternal mansion in Park Lane, you have grown into some of your old habits, and have come back to St. Jim's a little bit of a bounder——"

"Look here——"

"We cured you once, and we'll cure you again," said Figgins generously. "We don't mind taking a bit of trouble in a good cause—do we, kids?"

"Certainly not," said Kerr, the Scottish partner in the Co. "I'm willing to knock down Marmaduke every time he does anything caddish."

"So am I!" said Fatty Wynn heartily. "Marmaduke shall never have reason to say that I've neglected an old chum."

Marmaduke was beginning to glare. Although a good fellow at bottom, he had his faults, and imperiousness and an impatience of contradiction were among them.

"I'm not going——" he began.

"Certainly not!" said Figgins. "You're staying, and we're going to cure you. You spoke spitefully just now because Tom Merry jammed you on the chest."

"Well, he hurt me."

"My dear chap, if Tom Merry counted up all the biffs he had received from us he would have a list as long as your pater's bank account," said Figgins. "You must not make a fuss over a trifle like that. It's all meant in fun, and must be taken thusly. You have shown a tendency to be spiteful——"

"I'll knock his beastly head——"

"Ahem! I see it is time for the first lesson," said Figgins. "Lend a hand here, kids, and let us aim at the improvement of our young friend!"

"Good!" said the Co.

And Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn laid hold of Marmaduke with heavy hands and serious faces. The heir of millions, who did not quite know whether they were joking or not, growled.

"Hands off, you silly—— Ow!"

Quietly, solemnly, as if acting reluctantly from a painful sense of duty, Figgins & Co. knocked Marmaduke's head against the gate.

"All right now?" asked Figgins, a good deal like a physician asking a patient about the state of his health.

"You asses!"

"Once more!" said Figgins; and Marmaduke's head was knocked again.

Marmaduke gave a growl, and rubbed the place.

"What are you up to, you fatheads?"

"Giving you instruction. Whenever you show traces of being a bounder or a rotter, we instruct you like that," explained Figgins.

Before Marmaduke could reply, Lowther and Manners came running down to the gate.

"Hallo! Here's some more of them!" exclaimed Kerr. "Where are you going, kids?"

"Has Tom Merry gone out?" asked Manners breathlessly.

"Yes, about five minutes ago."

"Right-ho!

And Manners and Lowther ran out into the road. Figgins stared at the Co. in amazement.

"I suppose there's something on," he said. "First D'Arcy, then Tom Merry, then those two School House wasters. I think we had better look into this."

"Rats!" said Marmaduke sulkily. "I'm going in."

Figgins linked his arm in that of the heir of millions.

"Marmy, you're looking a little teeny weeny bit sulky."

"Oh, rats!"

"You must come with us, my son. Sulkiness is an abomination."

"Don't be a fathead!"

"You know the rule," said Figgins severely. "He that calleth his leader a fathead shall be biffed on the boko!"

"Keep your big paws off, Figgins!"

"Hallo! Have those kids gone out?" exclaimed Jack Blake, coming up to the gateway, followed by Herries and Digby.

Figgins turned round to look at them.

"You going out, too!" he exclaimed. "What's in the wind? Are you all going out to meet ladies this afternoon? There's Gussy in love again——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "He's not in love this time. It's Miss Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess, that he's gone to meet."

"Oh!" said Figgins.

"You see, we had screwed Merry up in his study, and then we found the lady was coming down, so Gussy started off as a deputy," explained Blake. "It's occurred to me that those kids of the Shell may fall in with the Grammarians."

"That's very likely. They're always round Rylcombe on a half-holiday."

"So I was thinking we would follow," said Blake. "You kids can come along if you like. Of course, I know you New House fellows won't be much good if it comes to fighting, but you may be able to frighten them with your faces."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Herries; "especially Marmaduke. He looks very pretty just now. What has ruffled our friend from Petticoat Lane?"

"I have," said Figgins serenely. "Marmaduke wants me to cure him——"

"No, I don't!" snapped Marmaduke.

"Yes, you do, my son. You don't know it, but you do. And I'm going to do it. I'm going to stand by you like a chum."

"Well, are you coming?" said Blake. "I think there'll very likely be a row, and we may as well have a hand in the game. And you know the compact. Outside the gates of St. Jim's we're shoulder to shoulder against the enemy."

"Certainly. We're ready. Come on, kids!"

"I'm not coming!" said Marmaduke.

"Your mistake," said Figgins blandly. "Take his other arm, Fatty."

"I tell you I don't want to come."

"And I tell you I don't care a rap whether you want to come or not!" rapped out Figgins. "I'm your leader, and



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all you've got to do is to obey orders, and look pleasant. That's easy enough, in all conscience."

"But I say——"

"It's not necessary for you to say anything at all——"

"Look here, Figgins, I'm not going——"

"Bring him along!" said Figgins.

And Marmaduke, vainly protesting, was run out of the gateway. Then he had either to run or be dragged, and he chose the former. And the School House chums, laughing heartily, followed.

CHAPTER 3.

The Capture of Miss Priscilla.

MISS PRISCILLA FAWCETT stepped out of the train at Rylcombe Station. Tom Merry's old governess was looking very well, and the wonderful cut of her gown was only equalled by the antique shape of her bonnet. At Laurel Villa, in the village of Huckleberry Heath, Miss Fawcett led a very quiet life, and did not notice the years that slipped by. One result of that was that she persisted in regarding her ward, Tom Merry, as still a little boy, whose little aches and pains had to be carefully looked after. Another result was that her attire was always about fifteen or twenty years behind date. But her kind old face made you forget all about any little peculiarities she might have when you looked at her.

She looked up and down the platform, evidently expecting to see someone there. As there was no one in sight excepting the porter she advanced upon him, and startled him into alertness by digging him in the ribs with her umbrella.

"My good man——"

"Ow!" gasped the good-man, turning round.

"My good man, is my ward here?"

"Hey?" said the Rylcombe porter.

Miss Priscilla, in the innocence of her heart, always seemed to take it for granted that everybody knew all about Tom Merry, but the Rylcombe porter evidently needed some further enlightenment.

"My ward, Tom Merry! Is he waiting here for me?"

"Oh, Tom Merry!" said the porter, who had heard of Tom. "That young limb——"

"What did you say?"

"That young limb!" said the porter, rubbing his side where he had been poked by the umbrella. "That young rascal!"

"There must be two Tom Merrys, then," said Miss Fawcett, with a puzzled look. "The lad I am inquiring for is a delicate little fellow with very gentle manners——"

"Then it hain't the Tom Merry I've seen, who turned my trolley over the other day," growled the porter. "But, howsumever, I hain't seen any Tom Merry."

"But he was to be here to meet my train."

"Well, he ain't here, is he?"

"Oh, dear!" said Miss Priscilla. "Some terrible accident has happened. I feel sure of it. Have you heard of a fearful accident in the streets of Rylcombe to-day, my good man?"

The porter grunted.

"There's only one street in Rylcombe, ma'am, and there ain't been any accident."

"Are you sure that there has been no runaway motor-car, or an accident to an electric tram——"

Even the stolid porter could not help grinning at the idea of an electric tram in the sleepy little village.

"It is no laughing matter," said Miss Fawcett severely. "My dearest child may be lying in his gore at this very moment——"

"Perhaps he's waiting outside the station, ma'am," suggested the porter practically.

"Ah, indeed, that is possible!"

And Miss Fawcett hurried off the platform and looked round the station entrance, and then into the street.

The ancient hack which served Rylcombe Station was there, and the driver was in the nearest public-house, keeping himself warm.

Two lads in Grammar School caps were lounging round a penny-in-the-slot machine outside the station, and they glanced idly at Miss Fawcett. Seeing no sign of Tom Merry, the old lady approached the Grammarians.

"Excuse me, young sirs!" she said, in her old-fashioned way. "I dare say you are acquainted with my ward, Tom Merry——"

The Grammarians looked at one another.

There were few boys at Rylcombe Grammar School who did not know Tom Merry very well. In the rivalry between the two schools, Tom Merry was the enemy they had most to dread. Monk, Lane, and Carboy, the leaders of the Grammar School juniors, knew Tom Merry—rather, as they would have said. So did Hake and Lucas, the two Grammar School seniors, whom Miss Fawcett was now addressing.

Hake winked at his companion. Hake was the bully of the Grammar School, and Lucas was a fellow of the same stamp. Their rubs with Tom Merry had been frequent, and they had generally got the worst of them.

"Tom Merry!" said Hake. "He's your ward, is he?"

"Yes. You know the dear boy?"

"Know the dear boy? Yes, I should say so!" grinned Hake.

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Lucas.

"I thought you must!" beamed Miss Fawcett. "You belong to St. James's Collegiate School, do you not?"

"St. James's Collegiate School?" said Hake slowly. "St. Jim's? Oh, yes, of course! We belong to St. James's Collegiate School, don't we, Lucas?"

"Oh, rather!" said Lucas.

"Tom Merry is our best chum," said Hake blandly. "You'd hardly imagine how fond we are of him, madam."

"Oh, yes, I can!" said the gratified Miss Priscilla. "Everyone is fond of Tom. You see, he is such a dear, kind boy. When he had the measles, a long time ago now, you can hardly think how anxious we all were——"

"You must have been," said Hake, trying to keep a straight face. "Did you feel much anxiety when he had the scarlatina, ma'am?"

"Oh, yes, indeed we did!"

"And when he had the smallpox——"

"My darling Tommy never had the smallpox——"

"He didn't? Well, when he had the bubonic plague, then?"

"The—the what?"

"You've come down to see Tommy, of course, ma'am?" asked Hake.

"Yes; and the darling boy was to meet me at the station, but he is not here, so I was going to ask you if you had seen him."

"Oh, rather!" said Lucas.

"Certainly!" said Hake. "He was called away on most important business just before your train came in. You know how fond people get of him—how they can't bear him out of their sight——"

"Oh, yes, indeed!"

"Well, that's how it happened. Dr. Holmes's brother, the Bishop of Shepherd's Bush, came down to the school to-day," said Hake, with a perfectly serious face. "He insisted upon taking Tom back with him in his carriage——"

"In his carriage?" ejaculated Miss Fawcett. "But I understood that Shepherd's Bush was a suburb of London, and surely the bishop could not come all that way in his carriage."

"Oh, he never travels without it!" said Hake calmly. "It was put on a goods' van in the train, you see. Well, he insisted upon Tom's going back with him to his palace at Shepherd's Bush to teach him to play diabolo——"

"Dear me, how very singular!" said Miss Fawcett, who was astonished, but had not the slightest idea of suspecting Tom Merry's chum of telling untruths.

"Yes, wasn't it?" said Hake. "But that's the end of the matter. Tom didn't like to refuse, so he asked us to come down and meet you——"

"My only hat!" murmured Lucas.

"He said we should know you at once," said Hake; "he described a young lady in a fashionable bonnet, and so we hadn't a doubt the moment we saw you. Will you step into the hack, ma'am? We're to take you to the school."

"Certainly!" said Miss Fawcett. "It was very thoughtful of Tommy to send you in his place. But that is like my darling Tommy. He is so thoughtful for others."

"Yes, isn't he?" said Hake. "That's why we all love him so, because he's so thoughtful for others. Lucas, old chap, will you go and yank the driver out of the pub, and tell him he's wanted."

"Certainly!" said Lucas.

"My luggage——" said Miss Fawcett.

"I'll see that put on the hack," said Hake. "Pray, don't trouble! Have you tipped the porter yet?"

"No, I have not done so——"

"Then if you give me half a crown for him, I'll see to it."

Miss Fawcett, who was a careful old soul, thought half a crown a large tip, but she did not like to argue such a point with Tom Merry's friend. She explored in her purse and fished out half a crown, which she handed to Hake. The Grammar School cad walked into the station.

"Here, you porter fellow!" he exclaimed. "Get the old lady's things on the hack, sharp; and she's given me this tanner to give you!"

And he tossed sixpence to the porter.

The trunk and bonnet-box belonging to Miss Fawcett were

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placed upon the hack, and then Lucas returned with the driver.

"Are you kind lads coming to the school with me?" asked Miss Fawcett beamingly.

"Certainly!" said Hake, handing Miss Priscilla politely into the vehicle.

He stepped towards the driver, who had mounted upon the box.

"Rylcombe Grammar School," he said, in a low voice.

"Yes, sir!"

The driver gathered up his reins. Lucas stared at his friend in amazement

"What are you driving at, Hake?" he asked.

"'Sh, you ass, she'll hear you!"

"But you told the driver to——"

"It's a little wheeze," said Hake, with an ill-natured grin. "This is a capture for us. We'll guy the old girl for all she's worth. It will be a shrieking joke if we can get her to the Grammar School, making her believe all the time she's going to St. Jim's."

Lucas chuckled.

"Good wheeze! But——"

"Oh, come on, or she'll get suspicious!"

The two Grammarian seniors entered the hack. The vehicle rolled out of the station-yard and along Rylcombe High Street.

"Hallo, Hake!" sang out a cheery voice, as the hack passed the tuck-shop. "You're doing things in style this afternoon."

Hake scowled as he looked out of the window. Three cheerful-looking Grammar School juniors were outside the tuck-shop, and they kissed their hands to him. Monk, Lane, and Carboy were on the worst of terms with the Grammar School bully. Monk came down to the vehicle and coolly looked in.

"Taking a drive in your elegant carriage, Hake?" he asked. "I see you've got a lady there—my only pyjama hat! It's Tom Merry's governess!"

Monk stared into the hack in amazement.

What Tom Merry's governess could be doing in the vehicle with the Grammar seniors was past his guessing.

"Miss Fawcett!" he exclaimed. "I beg your pardon, but——"

"Get away!" roared Hake.

"Rats! What's the little game?"

"I'll wring your neck——"

"Nice language before a lady! Hakey, Hakey, how can you! After all the care I've taken with your education, too!" said Frank Monk severely.

The Grammar School senior turned red with rage.

"Drive on faster!" he shouted, fearful every moment lest Frank Monk should enlighten Miss Priscilla as to the true state of affairs. The hack increased its pace. Monk, Lane, and Carboy easily kept pace with it, however. The idea was in Monk's head that Hake was playing a trick on Miss Fawcett, and, although he was at war with the juniors of St. Jim's, Monk was not the fellow to allow anything of that kind if he could prevent it.

"I'm sorry you should be annoyed like this, Miss Fawcett," said Hake, turning to the perturbed old lady. "Those youngsters are Grammar School boys, and they hate Tom Merry like poison."

"Dear me! How shocking!"

"You see, it's a rival school, and they'll do anything they can to set down Tom Merry and his party," explained Hake. "That is why they are following the hack. But I'll soon get rid of them."

"Pray, do not use violence!"

"Not at all. When I first came to school," said Hake solemnly, "my grandmother placed her hand in mine, and, with tears in her eyes, entreated me never to use violence. I promised her solemnly I would not. Whenever I am tempted to use violence, I always think of my grandmother and refrain. I have a lock of her silver hair, which I keep in a locket, to remind me of my promise never, never, never to use violence!"

"How sweet!" murmured Miss Priscilla, deeply touched. "What a dear, good, kind boy, and what an invaluable friend for my darling Tommy!"

"I shall alight," said Hake, "and speak sweetly and kindly to these misguided lads, and point out to them that if they do not mend their ways their kind teachers will not love them. You will help me, Lucas?"

"Certainly!" said Lucas.

The two seniors alighted from the hack without stopping it. Monk, Lane, and Carboy ran right into them. The next moment the three juniors were flying in three different directions, hurled there by swinging right-handers from the two bullies.

As they reeled and fell in the dusty road, Hake and Lucas ran after the hack, and jumped into it again. It had all passed before Miss Fawcett had had time to look out, and the old lady had no idea of what had really happened.

"Have they gone away?" she asked.

"Yes, madam!" said Hake. "It did not take long to persuade them, you see. A word or two was sufficient to show them the error of their ways."

"We are leaving the road," said Miss Fawcett, as the hack turned out of the road into the lane leading up to the Grammar School.

"It's a short cut," explained Hake.

The next moment he gritted his teeth. Miss Fawcett was looking out of the window at the road they were leaving, and all at once she uttered an exclamation.

"My darling Tommy!"

At the corner of the road stood Tom Merry, flushed and breathless with running, gazing in astonishment at the hack.

"Drive faster!" shouted Hake.

CHAPTER 4.

Taking the Stranger In.

"WEALLY, that is wathah surpwisin'!"

Tom Merry turned his head as he heard the words.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was coming towards him, looking flushed and heated, and with his silk-hat tilted at a rakish angle over his left ear.

"Hallo, Gussy!"

"Glad to see you, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's languidly. "I have been wunnin' like anythin', and I feel quite exhausted."

"You didn't get to the station in time?"

"No, deah boy; I was in the High Stweet when the station hack passed me, and I wecognised Miss Pwiscillah sittin' in it."

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation.

"Then I was not mistaken!"

D'Arcy looked at him inquiringly.

"The hack just came along here," said Tom Merry, in explanation. "I thought I saw Miss Fawcett's face as it the ancient vehicle dashed up to the gates of the Grammar School, instead of to St. Jim's, I thought that I must be mistaken."

"It is a twick, Tom Mewwy."

"A what?"

"A twick. I saw two Gwammah School cads sittin' in the hack with Miss Pwiscillah."

Tom Merry started.

"Not Monk and Carboy?"

"Oh, no; two seniors—two beastly persons who have tweated me with extweme wudeness on sevewal occasions—named Hake and Lucas!"

"Then it is a joke on Miss Fawcett," exclaimed Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "They're taking her to the Grammar School, instead of to St. Jim's, to guy her."

"Weally that would be an extwemely caddish action, but Hake is quite capable of it. He knocked my toppah off on one occasion and twod on it—twod on it delibewately. A fellow who would do that would do anythin'."

"I'm going after the hack."

"Yaas, wathah, and so am I! I cannot allow a lady to be tweated with diswespect, especially a lady whom I esteem so highly as I do Miss Pwiscillah Fawcett."

Tom Merry was already running at full speed down the lane, and D'Arcy followed, holding his silk-hat on with his hand.

But the hack was already at the Grammar School.

After catching sight of Tom Merry, Hake had urged on the driver, and the old horse had done his level best, and the ancient vehicle dashed up to the gates of the Grammar School with quite a flourish.

Hake jumped out, with a grin upon his face.

There was immediately a crowd of Grammar School boys round the hack, and a grin went round at the sight of Miss Priscilla.

The old lady looked out of the window in surprise.

"But this is not St. James's Collegiate School!" she exclaimed, looking up at the mass of modern brickwork which comprised Rylcombe Grammar School.

"Oh, yes!" said Hake unblushingly, and with a wink to the fellows crowding round. "This is St. Jim's, Miss Fawcett!"

"But—but——"

"We have lately had extensive alterations," explained Hake. "The School House and the New House have been pulled down, and this handsome modern building, with all the latest improvements, erected in its place. Do you like it better?"

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In spite of his curious little ways, D'Arcy showed at that moment he was made of the stuff that heroes are made of.

"I—I really don't know!" murmured Miss Priscilla.

"I shall have great pleasure in showing you over the school," went on Hake, handing Miss Priscilla out. "Come on, Lucas! Now then, Morton, what are you doing with that hatbox? That belongs to Miss Fawcett. Miss Fawcett is Tom Merry's grandmother, and must be treated with great respect."

Miss Fawcett coloured.

"Not his grandmother," she corrected mildly; "his old governess, and once his nurse!"

"His nurse, I mean," corrected Hake. "Miss Fawcett was not Tom Merry's grandmother, she was his nurse, and I can tell you that she had an anxious time when he had the bubonic plague!"

"The measles——"

"Ah, yes; the measles, I mean! He never had the scarlatina, fortunately. As Tom Merry is gone on a visit to the Bishop of Shepherd's Bush, we are going to do the honours in his absence. Bring Miss Fawcett's luggage in!"

"But the driver——".

"Never mind him. He would refuse to accept payment from Tom Merry's aunt—I mean, nurse—as he adores Tom Merry as much as we all do," said Hake. "Pray come in, Miss Fawcett!"

"How sweet of him!" murmured Miss Fawcett.

She entered the gates with Hake. The Grammarians were giggling hysterically. Some of the better sort did not like the idea. But there was something really comical in the simple way in which Miss Priscilla swallowed Hake's astounding inventions.

"Dear me!" murmured the old lady, as she gazed up at the Grammar School. "Imagine those two historic old houses being pulled down to make way for that—that handsome edifice! Dear me! I am shocked—I mean, surprised! But there will be one circumstance to be thankful for in the matter."

"Indeed!" said Hake. "What is that, Miss Fawcett?"

"There has long existed, I hear, a rivalry between the two houses at St. Jim's," said Miss Fawcett. "I have thought a great deal about it, and have come down to the school specially to compose that rivalry, and induce the lads to live upon better terms with each other."

"Ha, ha!—I mean, how good of you, Miss Fawcett!"

"It is my duty, young sir! Of course, I do not disapprove of rivalry in the playing-fields. That one boy should try to obtain more runs than another in a football match is very right and proper!"

"Is it?" murmured Hake. "And I suppose, ma'am, you wouldn't disapprove of one fellow trying to get more goals than another in a cricket match?"

"Certainly not," beamed Miss Fawcett, "though I do not like the terrible scrummages I have heard about in these dreadful Rugby cricket matches! I do not know much about these matters."

"My dear madam, your knowledge of them is quite surprising!"

"Oh, no; not at all! But I hear a great deal of the boys' talk, you know, and I am not unobservant," explained Miss Priscilla. "Of the two games, I think football is the gentler, because in cricket there is the bat, which must often cause considerable hurt in the scrummages. But, as I was saying, I do not disapprove of that kind of rivalry, but fighting is a terrible thing, and I have actually seen a boy named Figgins with a great swelling on his nose——"

"Have you, really?"

"Yes; and then a nice, well-mannered lad named D'Arcy had his hat knocked down over his ears on one occasion, and——"

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"Shocking!"

"Yes; and my desire was to make peace between the two houses at St. James's Collegiate School, but, since they are both turned into one now, that will not, I suppose, be required." said Miss Fawcett, looking up at the Grammar School again.

Hake nearly choked.

"But there is still something for me to do," went on Miss Fawcett. "I hear that there is a great rivalry between St. James's Collegiate School and a Grammar School in the neighbourhood."

"Not really!" said Hake.

"Yes; I shall certainly make peace between these two schools, and induce the boys to shake the right hand of fellowship," said Miss Fawcett. "I cannot bear to think of them living in enmity, and causing damage to one another's features. It is too painful to my feelings."

"It's painful to their features, too, sometimes, ma'am!" said Hake.

Miss Fawcett looked at him quickly, but his face was quite grave.

"Yes, I suppose so," she said. "I shall not leave St. James's until I have made peace between the schools—— Dear me, what was that?"

Miss Priscilla's hand went up to her bonnet, as it was struck from behind. She looked round, and saw a dozen solemn faces. It was certain that someone there had pushed her bonnet awry, but for the life of her she could not guess which one it was.

"My dear boys," said Miss Fawcett mildly, "I hope no one here would be intentionally rude to an old lady."

"Certainly not!" said Hake, winking round. "We would rather be rude to our own respected grandparents, really!"

"My bonnet-box!" screamed Miss Fawcett.

The bonnet-box was lying on the ground, and a Grammarian was just in the act of taking a flying kick at it.

Miss Priscilla rushed to the spot, but a crowd closed up between, and she could not get through.

Biff! went the kick, and the bonnet-box flew through the air.

"Bravo, Gale! Goal!" shouted a dozen voices.

Gale grinned. But the next moment there was a pattering of rapid feet in the gateway of the Grammar School, and a boy, red and breathless with running, came tearing up. He came right on, heedless of the exclaiming Grammarians, and hit out without stopping, and Gale rolled along the ground from the forceful blow.

There was a yell from the Grammar crowd.

"Tom Merry!"

"St. Jim's cad!"

"Go for him!"

Hake stared at Tom Merry. He knew that the hero of St. Jim's was following the hack, but he had not expected him to venture so boldly into the very midst of his enemies.

He did not know Tom Merry. Tom came right on, and shoved Hake violently aside; so violently that the Grammar School senior, big fellow as he was, reeled and fell on one knee.

"Tom!" exclaimed Miss Priscilla.

Tom reached her side the next moment. With his left arm thrown half round Miss Priscilla, and his right fist clenched and raised, Tom Merry faced the crowd, his eyes flashing fire.

CHAPTER 5.

The Rescue of Miss Priscilla.

"KNOCK him down!"

"Give him beans!"

"Sock it to him!"

The Grammarians crowded round Tom Merry with threatening looks. The better element of the Grammar crowd had drawn back to take no hand in the "guying" of Miss Fawcett, and the dozen or so of fellows crowding round were of Hake's kind, and ready for anything. It looked as if Tom Merry would be rushed on the spot, and he braced himself to meet it.

But there came a diversion the next moment. A figure came bolting in at the gates, with two gloves gripped in one hand, and holding on a silk-hat with the other. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He ran to the side of Tom Merry immediately, his eye gleaming behind his monocle.

"I am here, Tom Mewwy!" he exclaimed. "You may wely upon me." He raised his hat to Miss Fawcett. "My dear and esteemed madam, I am extwemely sowwy I did not meet you at the station——"

"Knock them over!" yelled Hake.

And he led a rush at the two juniors of St. Jim's. D'Arcy's topper was sent flying, and his eyeglass strung out wildly at the end of its cord. But the swell of St. Jim's showed at that moment that, in spite of his curious little ways, he was made of the stuff that heroes are made of.

Gallantly he stood up beside Tom Merry, hitting out with all his strength. Hake received an upper-cut which made every tooth in his head ache as he caught it on the chin, and he went over backwards like a sack of coal. Lucas, at the same moment, dropped from a right-hander from Tom Merry. A couple more went over, knocked out by the chums of St. Jim's, and then Tom Merry and D'Arcy were on the ground. And the Grammarians, with angry shouts, scrambled all over them.

Up to this moment Miss Fawcett had seemed too amazed and bewildered to act in any way at all. She remained dazed and wondering. But as she saw Tom Merry go down under the rush of the Grammarians, she woke to life. Up went her umbrella, and down it came upon the Grammarians who were scrambling over the Saints.

"Oh—ow!" roared Hake, as he received the umbrella across the shoulders.

"Oh, my word!" panted Lucas, catching it on the head.

Biff, biff, biff! went the umbrella. But it was snatched away, and an eddy of the crowd bore Miss Fawcett away from her ward, and then it would have gone hard with Tom Merry and D'Arcy had not three lads rushed into the fray to their aid.

They were Monk, Lane, and Carboy, who had just arrived, and, seeing how matters were, they rushed to Tom Merry's aid without stopping to think, hitting out right and left. This new reinforcement drove back the angry Grammarians.

"Rescue!" shouted Frank Monk.

Monk had plenty of friends, especially in the Lower School. His call was answered from all quarters, and Hake, senior as he was, thought it best to draw back.

"You cheeky young hound!" he hissed.

"Oh, shut up!" said Monk. "You're a cad, and if I were Head of this school I'd kick you out!"

Hake turned crimson with rage.

"You whelp! You are free with your tongue, because your father is headmaster, but——"

"Liar!" said Frank cheerfully. "You know that doesn't make any difference. I call you a cad because you are a cad—a rotten cad!"

"What is all this disturbance?"

A tall, thin gentleman with side-whiskers came upon the scene. He was evidently a master in the school, and Miss Priscilla turned to him wildly.

"Save my darling boy!"

"My dear madam——"

"Save my Tommy!"

"Madam——"

"They are injuring him—my darling Tommy!"

"Who is this person?" exclaimed Mr. Quin. "What does all this mean?"

"It's nothing, sir," said Monk. "Only——"

Tom Merry and D'Arcy were scrambling to their feet. They both looked dusty and dishevelled and breathless. Mr. Quin looked at them in angry amazement.

"Hake, you are a senior, explain this to me at once!"

"It's those young scoundrels' fault, sir," said Hake, pointing to Tom Merry and D'Arcy. "They belong to St. Jim's, and they've come here to make a row."

"Ah, I think that is the boy Merry——"

"I am Tom Merry!" exclaimed Tom indignantly. "But I did not come here to make a row. I came here because ——"

"Hold your tongue, sirrah! Go on, Hake!"

"It appears that that old lady came here by mistake," went on the veracious Hake. "She thought she was going to St. Jim's, and she came here."

"Impossible!"

"Well, ask her, sir."

"Is not this St. Jim's?" exclaimed Miss Fawcett, in bewilderment.

Mr. Quin's brows contracted.

"Have you visited St. Jim's before, madam?"

"Certainly!"

"Then, how could you mistake this modern brick building for that old college?"

"But—but I was told that—that——"

"You see, it was a mistake, sir," said Hake blandly. "Of course, it's pretty plain that the old lady has been drinking——"

The cad of the Grammar School got no further. Tom Merry could not reach him where he stood, but he had picked up his cap, and now he flung it with all his force in Hake's face. The bully staggered back.

"Merry, how dare you!" exclaimed Mr. Quin.

"I would do the same to anyone who insulted my governess!" exclaimed Tom Merry passionately.

"Merry, you had better go! I regard this visit here as

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an outrage, and I shall complain to your headmaster about it."

"If you please, sir——" began Frank Monk.

"I did not give you leave to speak, Monk!"

"But Merry is not to blame——"

"Silence!"

"Yes, but——"

"Take fifty lines, Monk! Merry, go at once, and remember that I shall complain to Dr. Holmes. Miss Fawcett, I cannot understand the mistake you have made——"

"I was told——"

"But the vehicle which brought you is waiting there. Permit me to show you to it."

"I will do that, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry disdainfully. And he drew his bewildered governess's hand within his arm.

"Very well, and kindly go at once."

Frank Monk hurried after Tom Merry as he moved to the gate with Miss Priscilla, D'Arcy walking on the other side of the old lady.

"I say, Merry, I'm awfully sorry this has happened," whispered Monk. "You know that we wouldn't have had a hand in it, don't you?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I know that, old fellow. It was Hake and his set. You did your best, and we should have come off pretty badly if you hadn't chipped in."

"I can't say how sorry I am, Miss Fawcett," said Monk.

But the old lady was too bewildered to hear him. Tom Merry placed her in the hack, and the bonnet-box was restored to the roof. Tom and D'Arcy entered, and the grinning driver set his horse in motion. Monk, Lane, and Carboy stood hat in hand as the hack drove off.

"Well, really," said Miss Priscilla at last, "this has been a most surprising adventure! Then that person was not your friend, Tom?"

"Who wasn't my friend?" asked Tom Merry.

"The rude boy called Hake."

"Hake? Oh, he's a beast!"

"My dear child, that is a coarse expression!"

"Can't help it," said Tom. "He's a beast! Isn't he, Adolphus?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"A horrid beast!" went on Tom. "He made you think the hack was going to St. Jim's, I suppose, didn't he?"

"Ye-es; he informed me that the two houses at St. Jim's had been pulled down, and that modern structure built in their place."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But how do you come to be here, Tom?" asked Miss Priscilla. "I did not expect to see you to-day, when I heard that you had gone on a visit to the Bishop of Shepherd's Bush."

"The—the—the what?" ejaculated Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Dear me! That must have been another of that wicked lad's fabrications!" said Miss Priscilla, looking very shocked. "I must find an opportunity of speaking to this boy seriously, and pointing out to him——"

"It won't be much good," said Tom Merry, with a grin. "You'll find Hake a hardened sinner, dear."

"All the more reason why I should try to show him the wickedness of his course," said Miss Fawcett. "A lad who begins life as a story-teller, may end it as anything—in prison, or on the scaffold. I shall certainly find an opportunity of speaking to him."

"I don't see how you will," said Tom Merry dubiously. "We're not exactly on visiting terms with the Grammar School, you know."

"It will be necessary for me to visit the Grammar School to carry out my mission," said Miss Fawcett.

Tom Merry looked at her in surprise.

"I—I don't quite understand," he said. "Your—your mission——"

"Yes," said Miss Priscilla beamingly; "I have been thinking over this dreadful rivalry which reigns between the two houses at St. Jim's, and also between St. Jim's and the Grammar School. This occurrence to-day is an outcome of it. I am going to find a way of stopping it."

"Weally, Miss Fawcett——" began D'Arcy.

"I am going to make peace between your two houses first," announced Miss Priscilla. "I shall not be satisfied until you and Figgins have shaken hands——"

"But, my dear good soul," said Tom Merry, in dismay, "we're jolly good friends already! I like old Figgy, and he'd stand by me any day. Figgy's all right. Our little wars are only in fun, really."

"You say that to make me easy in my mind, Tommy, but I know that sometimes you strike one another upon the nose or in the eye——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And I cannot rest in peace while this dreadful state of things continues."

"My dear——"

"And after I have made peace between the School House and the New House," said Miss Priscilla, "I shall make peace between the college and the Grammar School."

"But—but really——"

"Now, don't try to discourage me, Tom," said Miss Fawcett. "I have had enough discouragement already from my brother Frank. He did not think it a good plan; and, in fact, he laughed when I suggested it. Men learn such dreadful manners in India. I have thought over it for a long time, and have come to the conclusion that it is my duty."

"But, oh, really—but——"

"Weally, Miss Pwiscillah——"

"I am not one to blench from the path of duty," Miss Fawcett said firmly. "It is useless to attempt to dissuade me. My mission is to make peace, and peace I will make by appealing to the higher nature and the better feelings of the boys."

"Oh, my only hat!" groaned Tom Merry.

"Tommy, I am expecting you to aid me; and your friends, too—Lowther and Manners. They are nice boys, and I remember Lowther brought the tears into my eyes by his description of how he had gone on his knees and begged Figgins to make peace with the School House, and offered him his new football-bat to induce him to do so."

"I'll—I'll punch his beastly head!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I am afwaid Lowthah was wottin'——"

"Hallo—hallo! Here they are!"

The hack was turning into the road again, and at the corner Lowther and Manners came in sight. They took off their caps to Miss Fawcett, and stared at Tom's lugubrious face.

"All right?" asked Lowther. "We'll get on top, and come back with you. Glad to see you looking so well, Miss Fawcett. You've cheered Tom up already."

Half-way to St. Jim's, Blake, Figgins, and the rest were encountered. Blake stared at the hack and at Lowther, who was seated beside the driver.

"Hasn't there been a row?" he exclaimed. "What rot! And we were hurrying like fun to get into it."

"There!" exclaimed Miss Priscilla. "What a terrible desire for fighting and brutal encounters that speech shows, Tommy, darling! Do you not think it is my duty to make peace, and show these misguided boys the better way—the higher path?"

But Tom Merry only groaned, and he hardly spoke again till the hack rolled into the gates of St. Jim's. There, Miss Fawcett's luggage was taken off, and Mrs. Mimms, the dame of the School House, looked at it and at Miss Fawcett inquiringly. She had not heard that Miss Fawcett was coming to stay.

"I shall probably be staying a few days," said Miss Priscilla beamingly. "Now, Tommy, dear, I must go and see the Head at once."

And the old lady was shown into the presence of Dr. Holmes. Tom Merry thrust his hands deep into his pockets and walked away.

CHAPTER 6.

The Peacemaker.

DR. HOLMES rose to his feet.

"My dear Miss Fawcett, I am very glad to see you!"

He shook hands cordially with the old lady. Miss Fawcett had caused the Head of St. Jim's considerable worry at times. Her anxiety for the health of her ward, Tom Merry, led her to pay somewhat frequent visits to the school, and once or twice she had caused frowns to shadow the plump face of Mrs. Mimms, the house-dame, by criticising the fare provided for her darling boy.

Then her determination to regard Tom as a delicate lad, and to administer all sorts of fearful and wonderful remedies to him, was certain to cause bother.

But Miss Fawcett was a liberal subscriber to many charities connected with the college, and she had made a handsome donation to the chapel restoration fund, and was besides so thoroughly kind and good-hearted that it was impossible for anybody not to like her.

Dr. Holmes both liked and respected her, and so he bore patiently with many little foibles which sometimes caused inconvenience.

"Pray, sit down," went on the Head of St. Jim's, handing Miss Fawcett a chair. "Have you had a comfortable journey down."

"I have had a strange adventure, Dr. Holmes," said Miss Fawcett.

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"Indeed!" said the Head.

"Yes, indeed!"

And Miss Fawcett detailed the hoax played off upon her by Hake, and the occurrence at the Grammar School. Dr. Holmes's brow darkened as he listened.

"Inexcusable!" he exclaimed. "I cannot pardon a trick of that kind. I know that in the rivalry between the two schools many incidents occur to which a wise master must close his eyes; but a matter like this is absolutely inexcusable. I shall certainly complain to Dr. Monk."

"No, no; pray do nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Miss Fawcett.

"But, my dear madam——"

"Pray, Dr. Holmes! Any complaint in such a matter would have a tendency to embitter the relations between the schools."

"Yes, that is very true."

"My object is to eradicate that bitterness, not to add to it, my dear doctor."

The Head looked rather curious.

"Your object;" he repeated. "As you say, a complaint may cause bitter feeling, and I naturally would rather not have to make one. If you can excuse the rudeness of the boys who treated you so badly——"

"Certainly; I forgive them freely."

"You are very kind, Miss Fawcett. Then, nothing shall be said about the matter."

"Thank you, sir! Whatever is said must be in the way of kind counsel and moral instruction, in my opinion."

"I—I do not think I quite follow, madam."

"I have a mission, doctor, in coming to St. James's Collegiate School. I trust that I shall not inconvenience you by staying some days."

"Oh, no, certainly not, Miss Fawcett," said the Head politely, but with an inward sinking of the heart as he realised what Miss Fawcett's presence in the school for a few days might mean.

"Thank you, doctor! And my companion——"

"Ah, you are not alone, then?"

"I am alone now, but to-morrow Miss Cleveland will be here—with your permission, of course. I think you have met Ethel Cleveland, Master D'Arcy's cousin. She has her father's permission to come to the school to see a game of cricket that is to be played on Saturday——"

"Football, my dear madam—football!"

"Well, football. It is my intention to take charge of her."

"That is very kind of you."

"She is a dear girl," said Miss Fawcett, "and I hope to gain much support from her in my mission."

"Your—your mission?"

"Yes. I have come here, sir, to make peace between the School House and the New House," announced Miss Priscilla.

"Oh, really!" murmured the doctor.

"And then to put a peaceable end to the painful rivalry existing between the two schools, Dr. Holmes."

"Oh—oh—oh, really!"

"Of course, in such an object I shall have your hearty support?"

"Oh—er—of course!" stammered the Head, who hardly knew what to say. He would not have hurt Miss Fawcett's feelings for worlds, but really——

"And that of the masters here," continued Miss Fawcett.

"I—er—yes, of course."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Dr. Holmes. I—I was somewhat afraid that you might regard my mission somewhat in the light of an interference."

"Oh, my dear madam!"

"It is very kind of you to assure me on that point, doctor. I could not undertake my mission without your full approval, of course."

"No, no, I suppose not."

"I shall feel that I have not lived in vain," said Miss Fawcett, with enthusiasm, "if I can know that I have established peace where discord reigned."

"Er—yes, of course. But—but how do you propose to set about this—this very laudable object?"

"By making an appeal to the boys," said Miss Fawcett—"an appeal to their higher nature. How pleasant it would be if, instead of striking one another forcibly upon the nose, they were to walk about the quadrangle hand in hand, with gentle smiles upon their faces?"

"Aha, aha!—I mean—ha, ha!—that is to say, the picture you draw is quite touching, Miss Fawcett!" gasped the doctor.

"Yes," said the kind old lady. "Think, when my dearest Tom meets Figgins or Blake, how nice it would be to take him by the hand, or kiss him upon the forehead, instead of exchanging loud and defiant words with him, and perhaps proceeding to violent assault upon his person."

The picture thus conjured up of Tom Merry kissing Figgins upon the forehead in the quadrangle at St. Jim's was almost too much for the doctor.

He coughed so violently to prevent himself laughing that he nearly choked, and the water came into his eyes.

"But you are busy," said Miss Fawcett, with her usual kind consideration. "I am taking up your time. I will go to my room now, and——"

"The same room, Miss Fawcett," said the Head, recovering himself; "and I am sure Mrs. Mimms will do everything to make you comfortable."

"Oh, I am sure of it. Thank you so much, Dr. Holmes!"

"Oh, not at all!"

"Yes, yes, yes! It is so pleasant to be welcomed with so hearty a greeting, and to have one's little efforts in the cause of peace and goodwill so keenly appreciated."

"Yes—er—yes—quite so."

And Miss Fawcett left the doctor's study. A few minutes later Mr. Railton, the housemaster of the School House, entered.

He glanced at the doctor's worried face in surprise.

"I hope nothing is wrong, sir."

"No, no, nothing," said the Head, rather dubiously. "But—but you are aware that Miss Fawcett, Tom Merry's guardian, has arrived?"

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Yes, I have just had the pleasure of meeting her in the passage."

"Well, she has come here to make peace between the two houses."

The housemaster elevated his eyebrows.

"And when that is accomplished——"

"When!" said Mr. Railton, with a smile.

"Yes, when that is accomplished she is going to make peace between St. Jim's and the Rylcombe Grammar School."

"Miss Fawcett has set herself a long task, I am afraid."

"And she is going to stay at the school until it is accomplished."

"Dear me! This is very—very——very—ahem!"

"I would not wound her for worlds," said Dr. Holmes. "Yet—yet I think that there will be trouble, and probably some ridiculous contretemps, if she attempts to carry out this absurd project."

"I think that is very probable, sir."

"But—but what am I to do?" said the distressed Head of St. Jim's.

"I should be inclined to point out, gently but firmly, that Miss Fawcett's mission is superfluous and quite unnecessary," remarked Mr. Railton.

"But that would wound her; and—and besides, I was so taken by surprise that—that, in fact, I have agreed to everything."

"Dear me! That is bad."

"And promised her my support."

"That is worse!"

"And yours."

"Bless my soul, Dr. Holmes!"

"I only hope," said the worried Head, "that she will grow tired of her mission, and give up the task as hopeless. It is useless to explain to her that the rivalry between our two houses makes rather for good than for bad, and that there is no real feeling of enmity at the bottom of it. It is futile to explain that to a lady who regards a blow on the nose to a boy as a kind of unheard-of barbarity. I really hope that Miss Fawcett will give up the idea."

But the doctor's hope was ill-founded.

CHAPTER 7.

First Results of the Peace-making.

TOM MERRY'S face was very glum as, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, he walked away after parting with Miss Fawcett. Monty Lowther and Manners stared at him, and then ran after him.

"I say, kid, what's the matter?" exclaimed Lowther. "You didn't get hurt in that scrap with the Grammarians, did you?"

"Yes, a bit," said Tom, "but that's nothing."

"Then what are you looking like a funeral for?" demanded Lowther. "How dare you go about with a face that would frighten the cowl off a chimney?"

Tom Merry laughed

"My dear chap, there are going to be ructions," he said.

"All the better," said Manners. "Don't we live and thrive on ructions? Don't we live, move, and have our giddy being in ructions?"

"Miss Fawcett has come to St. Jim's——"

"Quite a superfluous bit of information, as we have seen her with our own beautiful blue eyes——"

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"Oh, don't start rotting, I'm worried! She has come to St. Jim's with the intention of peace-making——"

"Of whatting?"

"Making peace between the two houses——"

"My only hat!"

"And then between St. Jim's and the Grammar School."

"Tommy, my boy, it won't do. You must point out to Miss Fawcett, in the most gentle way in the world, that her proper province is cod-liver oil and chest-protectors. Further than that she must not go——"

"Now, look here, Lowther——"

"I'm looking, and speaking, too, by the way, so don't interrupt. If anybody starts making peace with me there will be ructions—real, double-back-action, non-skidding, first-class ructions——"

"Same here," said Manners. "I'm not going to be made peace with against my own giddy inclination, I can tell you!"

"We must talk it over——"

"No good talking it over. The good old soul has got on the wrong track, and must be gently but firmly led back to it——"

"And explained to——"

"Oh, shut up a minute. I tell you——"

"Don't tell us anything. My dear fellow——"

"Look here, fathead——"

"Who are you calling a fathead——"

"I'm calling you a fathead! You'd make the Sphinx tired, and talk the hind legs off a brazen image. Can't you——"

"You'd better mind——"

"I don't care——"

"I tell you——"

"Rats——"

"Bai Jove, there's the Tewwible Thwee quawwellin', deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, coming along the passage. "Stop a minute, chaps! I have nevah seen those thwee boundahs quawwellin' yet, and I think it will be cuwious."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Keep it up, kiddies! Gussy thinks it will be curious!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

But D'Arcy's words were enough to recall the chums of the Shell to themselves. All three had been growing rather excited, but the interruption had come in time to save them from their first quarrel.

Tom Merry turned very red.

"I say, kids, I am sorry I spoke so hastily!" he exclaimed. "Of course, you know that I didn't mean——"

"Certainly!" said Lowther, grinning. "I was a bit too previous myself, and as for Manners, why he was a——"

"Never mind what I was," said Manners. "No need for us three to row. If people are going to make peace with us, that's no reason why we should quarrel."

"They have left off quawwellin', just as I have awwived!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I wegard that as wathah inconsidewate. It would have been cuwious and wathah funnay to watch them."

"I'll make you look funnay, as you call it, if you don't keep your head shut," said Manners.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye and looked superciliously at Manners.

"I wefuse to keep my head shut!" he replied. "I distinctly wefuse to do anythin' of the kind. I wegard you as an ass, Mannahs!"

"I'll jolly soon show you——"

"Here, keep the peace!" exclaimed Blake, pushing him back. "You can show us anything you like, without any demonstration of that kind."

"If you're looking for a black eye, Blake——"

"I'm looking for all the black eyes any kid in the Shell can give me!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But I say, what's the row?" asked Herries. "What were you three wasters ragging one another about, anyway? Anything gone wrong?"

"Not exactly," said Tom Merry. "As a matter of fact, Miss Fawcett, my old governess, has come down to St. Jim's with the idea of establishing peace all round, between us, and with the Grammar School."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Hear me smile!"

"My word!" exclaimed Digby. "And Miss Fawcett's mission of peace looks like making war in the camp, causing more rows, in fact, than there were before."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And you were having a little quiet argument about it," said Blake sympathetically. "Well, go on, don't mind us!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway go on, deah boys. I wegard it as extwemely ill-natured of you to leave off quawwelling diwectly I come by, when it would have been vewy intewestin' and cuwious to me to watch you."

"Gussy, old man, you're too funny to live!" said Manners. "Some day you will be found dead in the quadrangle—died of being too funny——"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as funnay! I wefuse——"

"I say, kids——" began Tom Merry seriously.

"Excuse me, Tom Mewwy, I was speakin'——"

"You generally are, Gussy. I say, you fellows, this is an awkward business and I should like you all to consider it seriously. Miss Fawcett is a dear old soul——"

"Yaas, wathah! Didn't she entertain us a tweat the last time we had a wun down to Hucklebewwy Heath, wathah!"

"That's so," said Blake. "We all esteem Miss Fawcett; but when she starts in business as a peace-maker, I really think——"

"I wouldn't have her wounded for worlds——"

"Certainly not. If she wants rows to cease in the School House while she's here, why that's arranged easily enough."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, you fellows will only have to acknowledge that the Fourth Form is top form, and Study No. 6 top study, and——"

"Catch us!" said Monty Lowther.

"No fear!" said Manners emphatically.

"Well, if you're going to be obstinate, I don't see what you can expect," said Blake. "I propose a simple and suitable way out of the difficulty, and you get your backs up about it at once——"

"Talk about cheek——"

"Well, you know, we are top form and top study——"

"Cheeky young bounders!" said Manners.

"Hallo! What's that?"

"Yaas wathah! What did you say, Mannahs?"

"I said cheeky young bounders, and I mean cheeky young bounders!" said Manners defiantly. "I'll repeat it if you like. Cheeky young bounders!"

"Do you apply that oppwobwious expwession to me, Mannahs?" asked D'Arcy, with elaborate politeness.

"Yes, I apply it to all of you——"

"Then I shall have no wesource but to thwash you——"

"Ha ha! You couldn't thrash the tail of a mouse!"

"I will show you! Blake, hold my jacket! Digby, take care of my eye-glass. Hewwies pway take my cap. Now, Mannahs——"

"Oh, stop it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I tell you——"

"I wefuse to stop it! Mannahs has insulted me! I am goin' to give Mannahs a feahful thwashin', or pewish in the attempt!"

"You utter ass——"

"If you apply the expwession of an ass to me, Tom Mewwy, I shall thwash you aftah I have thwashed Mannahs——"

"Get back!"

"I wefuse to get back! It is a question of dig. with me, and it is imposs. for me to let Mannahs off unless he tendahs an apology!"

"No fear!" said Manners.

"Then I shall thwash you——"

"Ass! You'll have a master or a prefect down on you if you start fighting here!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I cannot wegard any twivial mattah like that, when it is a question of upholdin' my dig. Mannahs, come on!"

"Will you stop——"

"Certainly not. Come on!"

"You utter ass——"

"Come on!"

Tom Merry shoved D'Arcy back as he rushed at Manners. D'Arcy promptly tapped him on the nose, and Tom Merry hit back. All the juniors were growing excited now, and Manners was rushing at D'Arcy, but Digby jumped in the way. A moment more, and the two parties were mixed in a wild and general scrimmage, nobody knew exactly how or why. Four Fourth-Formers and three of the Shell scrambled in the wild melee, with a gasping and trampling and scuffling loud enough to alarm the whole house.

And that was what Miss Priscilla saw as she came along the passage from Dr. Holmes's study.

CHAPTER 8.

Miss Priscilla Makes Peace.

MISS PRISCILLA uttered a scream.

"My dear boys! My darling children! How can you fight in that dreadful way!"

The combatants instantly separated. The rivals of the School House were always ready for a scrap, but fighting in the presence of a member of the gentle sex was extremely bad form.

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Looking somewhat sheepish, and very dusty and rumpled, the juniors separated. An athletic form came striding along the passage.

"What's this row about?"

It was Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's. He saw Miss Fawcett the next moment, and the frown left his brow.

"I'm sorry you should have been annoyed by this rowing, Miss Fawcett," he said respectfully. "The youngsters get out of hand sometimes. They don't mean any harm, but there is a rivalry between two studies in the School House——"

"Dear me!" said Miss Priscilla. "More rivalry! I see that I shall have to commence my mission in this house."

"Eh—er—I beg your pardon!" said Kildare, looking puzzled; and, indeed, wondering what the good old lady was talking about.

"I have come to St. Jim's on a mission of peace and goodwill," said Miss Fawcett. "My object is to reconcile the two houses and put an end to this absurd feud reigning between them, and then to reconcile St. Jim's to the Grammar School."

"Oh!" said Kildare.

"I must begin here," said Miss Fawcett. "I believe you are a consul, or something—I forget exactly what, but some old Roman title——"

Kildare grinned.

"A prefect," he said.

"Ah, yes! I knew it was something like a consul, or something. You are a prefect. But will you, as a favour, leave this matter in my hands? Instead of punishing the dear lads, I should like to reconcile them with one another."

"By all means!" said Kildare, with a grin, pretending not to see the dismay in the faces of the juniors. "I leave the matter entirely in your hands, Miss Fawcett. You have my authority, as head prefect of the School House, to deal with it."

"Thank you very much!"

And Kildare walked away, thinking to himself that the noisy juniors were "in" for a punishment more severe than a licking all round, as was, indeed, the case.

The youngsters were looking absolutely dismayed.

Miss Fawcett, with the best intentions in the world, was about to make them look utterly ridiculous, they knew; and already they noted fellows looking towards them curiously from up and down the passage, and from some of the doors.

"Now, my dear children——" said Miss Fawcett.

"I say, you know," said Lowther, "we're not children!"

Miss Priscilla did not even hear him.

"I want you to make friends, my dear little ones," she said.

There was a cackle from Mellish and Gore, who were standing at the corner of the passage, looking towards the crimson-faced group.

"Dear little ones!" said Gore.

"Charming infants!" chuckled Mellish.

But Miss Priscilla was too intent upon the matter in hand to hear or heed the mockers. The visitor from Huckleberry Heath was in deadly earnest.

"Have you never thought," pursued Miss Fawcett, "how cruel and inconsiderate it is to strike one another with the clenched hand?"

"I say——" began Tom Merry, as red as a beetroot.

"Don't interrupt me, darling!"

"But really, I say, you know——"

"Let me finish, my dear, and then you shall speak as much as you like," said Miss Fawcett gently. "It is not like you to be rude, Thomas."

Tom Merry groaned, and relapsed into silence.

"All of you," pursued Miss Fawcett, beaming round upon the juniors, "bear the signs of rough treatment in your faces."

"Nature hasn't been kind to them, I know," remarked Mellish. And there was a giggle up the passage.

"How much better it would be, my children, if you loved one another, instead of quarrelling."

"We weren't really quarrelling, you know," said Blake. "We punched each other's nappers just—just—just to pass the time, you know."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My dear boys, you must not attempt to blind me to the really dreadful state of affairs which exists here," said Miss Priscilla, with mild reproval. "There is a rivalry between you——"

"Not exactly," said Blake. "It's only that these Shell bounders don't pay a proper respect to the Fourth Form."

"It's only," said Lowther, "that these kids in the Fourth don't respect their elders."

"You must permit me to wemark, Lowthah——"

"Now, don't you start making remarks, Adolphus."

"My name is not Adolphus."

"Well, Aubrey Fitzpercy, then."

"I wefuse to have these widiculous expwessions applied to me——"

"Pray, do not quarrel again!" said the alarmed Miss Fawcett.

"Certainly not!" said D'Arcy. "But, with your kind permish, I will explain to this wotten boundah——"

"Whom are you calling a bounder?"

"I wegard you as a boundah, Lowthah——"

"Pray cease!" exclaimed Miss Fawcett, in great distress. "Pray—pray cease!"

"Certainly!" said D'Arcy, who was nothing if not a Chesterfield. "Any wequest fwom a lady is an ordah. I will not tell Lowthah that I wegard him as a silly ass——"

"Now, look here, you eye-glassed donkey——"

"I wefuse to take any notice of you, Lowthah, in the pwesence of a lady, othahwise, I should wegard it as my duty to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Dear D'Arcy, do not quarrel!"

"Certainly not, Miss Pwiscillah! I am at your esteemed ordahs."

"Pray make friends!"

"But we're all jolly good friends!" said Digby.

"My dear children, I shall not relinquish my task till you are all reconciled!" said Miss Fawcett. "Pray shake hands all round, and promise me never—never to quarrel again!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom Merry.

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" grunted Monty Lowther.

"What did you say, Lowther?"

"Oh, nothing, Miss Fawcett."

"Now, you will do as I ask——"

"Pray shake hands all round!" called out Gore, from the corner of the passage. "It will be worth seeing."

Tom Merry looked daggers along the passage. There were a score of juniors round Gore and Mellish, all giggling away like a lot of hyenas; but Miss Priscilla did not seem to observe their presence.

"I say, do as she wishes," whispered Tom. "She won't be happy till we do. Oh, my hat! We shall be the laughing-stocks of the School House!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now, my dearest children! Tommy, darling, set the example," said Miss Priscilla encouragingly. "Take Blake's hand."

Tom Merry held out his hand in a shamefaced way to Blake. He was willing enough to shake hands, as far as that went; but the whole scene was so ridiculous that he felt the situation keenly. He knew, too, that it would be long before he heard the last of it from Gore and his set.

Blake, as crimson as Tom Merry, took his hand, and then the rest of the juniors, seeing that there was no help for it, each gave and took a hand, so that they were standing in a circle, shaking hands all round.

"This is where you sing 'Auld Lang Syne,'" said Mellish.

There was a roar of laughter, followed by a roar of the well-known chorus:

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot——"

Tom Merry felt tears of vexation come into his eyes.

He dropped Blake's hand as if it had suddenly become redhot, and the rest of the juniors followed his example.

But Miss Priscilla, fortunately, was satisfied.

"How sweet to see you make it up like this!" she exclaimed. "I hope that peace is now firmly established in the School House. To-morrow I must see if I cannot make it up between you and Figgins."

"My word!" said Digby; and he marched off with Blake and Herries, thinking that he had had quite enough of it.

"Don't you feel better, now, my dearest children, now that you have become quite friendly, and at peace with one another?" asked Miss Fawcett.

"Oh, yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy; and he followed his chums.

"Lots!" said Manners; and he incontinently beat a retreat with Lowther. Tom Merry would gladly have followed, but he was the only one left, and he did not wish Miss Fawcett to feel hurt.

"My dearest Tommy, you are looking troubled," said Miss Priscilla, peering at him in the light that was growing dusky in the passage.

"Am I?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, my dear. Is anything troubling you?"

"Why, what could trouble me?" said Tom Merry evasively.

"Perhaps you feel a pain somewhere?"

"No, no; nothing of the kind!"

"An ache in your——"

"No, no, no!"

"Your face is looking very red, and your eyes have an

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excited look. I am afraid you are not so strong as you think," said Miss Priscilla anxiously. "Have you been taking the pills as often this term as you did last?"

"Exactly the same," said Tom Merry, with a slight grin. Last term he had deposited the pills in the fire, and this term the fate of Dr. Bones's Specials had been equally fiery.

"You need one of Dr. Bones's Purple Powders, I think," said Miss Priscilla. "I will make up one, and let you have it before you go to bed."

"Thank you!" said Tom Merry. "Hallo, there's Manners calling me. Will you excuse me, dear, and I'll run away——"

"Certainly, Tommy! You must not neglect your friends on my account, especially that nice lad who shook hands so cheerfully just now. But one moment. Do you feel a need for more cod-liver oil just yet?"

"Oh, not at all!"

"Have you used up all the Soothing Syrup for Sad Sufferers?"

"No, there's quite a lot of it left."

"About your dear little chest——"

"My chest's all right. There's Manners yelling again——"

"I have brought a new flannel chest-protector."

"Oh, thank you! Can I go now?"

"Yes, yes—certainly! I hope you are taking care not to get your feet wet, this damp weather. There is nothing so bad for the general health as getting one's feet wet."

"I'm awfully careful!"

"And—ah, Manners is calling again, and he seems to be growing impatient. You had better go. I have many questions to ask you, but I will leave you now."

And Tom Merry cut off to join his chums in the study.

CHAPTER 9.

D'Arcy's Peace-offering.

THREE dismayed youths stood in stony silence, and stared at one another in the study—Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther. The Terrible Three were not often taken by surprise, and very seldom floored; but floored they were now. Miss Priscilla was a little too much even for youths of their long and varied experience.

"What's to be done?" asked Monty Lowther, at last.

Tom Merry made a hopeless gesture.

"Blessed if I know!"

"The dear old soul has made peace between us and Study No. 6."

"I'll knock their heads off!"

"They feel just as much inclined to knock ours off, I think. Gore and Mellish and their lot were killing themselves in the passage."

"Wish they'd do it outright."

"It will be the joke of the school."

"I know it will."

"What's to be done?"

"I don't know!" groaned Tom. "I say, Miss Fawcett told me in the hack that Cousin Ethel is coming down tomorrow. She's coming down really to see the footer match on Saturday; but Miss Fawcett depends upon her to back her up in this campaign."

"D'Arcy's cousin! She's a ripping girl, but—but what asses we shall look!"

"Rather! I say, isn't there any way of getting Miss Priscilla to go home like a good girl, and not try to make peace any more?"

"Yaas, wathah; that's what we want to know, you know!"

It was D'Arcy's voice, and the swell of St. Jim's came in, followed by the rest of the chums of Study No. 6.

They were looking just as serious as the Terrible Three, and evidently felt the burden of Miss Priscilla's mission weighing upon their minds.

"I say, Tom Merry, this won't do, you know!" said Blake, wagging his forefinger at the hero of the Shell in a way Tom Merry found rather exasperating.

"Right-ho!" said Herries emphatically. "That's what we all think! It simply won't do—not at any price!"

"My word," said Digby, "I should say not!"

"Yaas, wathah! You know, we are bein' made to look widiculous asses, you know," said Arthur Augustus plaintively.

"Well, that's nothing new to you, at least," said Lowther.

"I object to that wemark, Lowthah. I——"

"You see," said Tom Merry, "it can't be helped. We've got to stand it. I'm only thinking of what will happen when Miss Fawcett visits the Grammar School on a peace-making mission. It will be rotten!"

"Yaas, wathah! They will guy her, you know, and we shall have to thwash them for their confoundedly beastly cheek, you know, and that will lead to——"

"To something very different from peace," said Blake.

"We are bein' made to look widiculous," said D'Arcy, with a glance at Lowther. "I feel it vewy much. And, you know, my cousin Ethel is comin' down here to-morrow. She is a wippin' girl, you know, but she does smile so at a fellow. I weally don't know what there is about me to make a girl smile, but she always does. And if Miss Pwiscillah is makin' us look like a lot of silly asses, you know——"

"By Jove, it's rotten!" said Tom Merry. "But, I say, there's one thing we can do—we'll be careful not to have any more rows while Miss Fawcett is here, and so she won't have any more peace-making to do on our account."

"That's a good idea," said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah! I shall expect Lowthah, howevah, to tweat me with pwopah wespect, if there are to be no more wows," said D'Arcy.

"Rats to you, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to—— I mean, I will not have wats said to me! I call upon you to withdwaw that wemark, Lowthah!"

"More rats!"

"Then I shall have to administah——"

"Here, quiet!" exclaimed Blake. "Is this how you're starting the new rule? Both of you shut up, or we'll knock your heads together!"

"I wefuse to have my heads knocked togethah—— I mean——"

"Never mind what you mean, Gussy. It's a good suggestion of yours, Tom Merry, and we'll take care to keep the peace until Miss Fawcett is gone, at least. If anybody starts a row we'll jump on him and give it him in the neck."

"Yaas, wathah; but weally Lowthah——"

"Suppose we ask Figgins & Co. to make it pax, on the same grounds?" suggested Manners. "We've often made pax with them for days at a time, you know, so we could manage it if they were willing. That would stop Miss Fawcett from making peace between us, and guying us before the whole school."

Tom Merry nodded

"Good egg! We'll talk to Figgins & Co. on the subject to-morrow."

"Yaas, wathah! I think we shall be able to make it pax with Figgins & Co., as I am goin' to make Figgins a wathah genewous offah."

"What are you going to offer him, fathead?"

"I object to that expwession!"

"What are you going to offer him, then?"

"You have noticed that Marmaduke Smythe has shown sevewal twaits of bein' a boundah since he came back to St. Jim's——"

"Yes; he's several sorts of a pig sometimes. What about it? It's no business of ours, I suppose."

"I offahed Figgins once to take him in hand and bwing him up bettah——"

"Ha, ha! And Figgins dotted you on the nose, I remember. Serve you right, too!" said Monty Lowther.

"Pway do not wefer to that extweme wudeness on the part of Figgins, Lowthah, or I shall weally find it difficult to make fwiends with him. I am goin' to wenew my offah to look aftah Marmaduke——"

"You ass, you'll get their backs up at once——"

"No. You see, Figgins has had some expewience of him now, so he will be willin' for him to weceive some instwuction. I weally think it's a gentleman's duty to take a boundah in hand and teach him bettah, and the twouble is nothin' to me."

"My dear ass," said Tom Merry, "you'll only——"

"I distinctly wefuse to be called an ass, and I shall not argue with you on the subject, Tom Mewwy. I flattah myself that my judgment is all wight. You wequire a fellow of tact and gweat bwain powah in these mattahs, so it is no good leavin' them to fellows of your descwip." And the swell of the School House marched out of the study.

"If he goes over to the New House Figgins & Co. will wipe up the floor with him," Tom Merry remarked.

"The young ass!" said Blake wrathfully. "I suppose we'd better go and see that he comes to no harm. But, really, he wants killing badly at times."

And the chums of Study No. 6 left the room. The Terrible Three were left alone, but they did not remain long.

"I say, this looks like being a House row," said Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. will never stand being checked in their own quarters. We must stand by our side against the New House, so I think we'd better toddle along after Blake."

And the chums of the Shell went downstairs. In the hall they passed Miss Fawcett, who had her bonnet on.

"I am just going over to the New House, Tommy," she said, with a beaming smile. "I am going to speak to Mr. Ratcliff, the housemaster, on the subject of my mission here."

Tom Merry groaned.

"You may see me across the quadrangle, if you like, Tommy darling."

And Tommy darling did so.

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CHAPTER 10.

More Results of the Peace-making.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY entered the New House, and coolly mounted the stairs to the passage upon which the Fourth Form studies opened, and walked along till he came to the famous apartment shared by Figgins & Co.

The door was half open, and the light streamed out into the passage, and the sound of voices showed that Figgins & Co. were at home.

"I tell you, Marmaduke, that it won't do!"

It was the voice of the great Figgins, and its excited tone showed that the chief of the New House juniors was getting animated upon the subject under discussion.

The voice of Marmaduke Smythe, decidedly unamiable in its tones, was heard in reply:

"What won't do, Figgins?"

"You're a bounder, Marmaduke! I'm sorry, very sorry indeed, but I'm forced to come to the conclusion that you are a bounder!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Careful, kid! When I am told to shut up, I generally knock somebody down."

There was a grunt.

"We have braced curselves to the task of curing you," went on Figgins, with some indignation in his tone, "and are you grateful—are you taking it at all decently?"

"Not a bit of it," said Kerr.

"Rather the reverse," chimed in Fatty Wynn.

"Exactly. Quite the reverse. Generously, and entirely for your own good, Fatty dotted you on the crumpet. What did you do? Heaved a lexicon at him with malice aforethought, and biffed him on the side of the head, and raised a bump."

"He should keep his silly paws off!"

"If you call my hands silly paws," began the Welsh partner in the Co., wrathfully, "you will get another dot, Marmy, and jolly soon!"

"You see how it is, Marmaduke. You mustn't lose your temper. You mustn't be a bounder if you are to remain a member of the Co. It would be a sad wrench to us to part with you, but if you are to stay—— Hallo, what's that funny thing in the doorway?"

The funny thing in the doorway was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He gave Figgins a glance of indignant disdain.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Oh, get off, old fellow! You mustn't come into the New House, you know. We're not what you'd call particular, but we bar freaks. Travel!"

"I object to bein' alluded to as a fweak——"

"Are you going to travel along?"

"I have come here to speak to you, Figgins, and to make you what I wegard as a genewous offah," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"But we're busy."

"Yaas; but I'm goin' to speak on the same subject. When I heard that Marmaduke was coming back to St. Jim's, you may wemembah that I offahed to take him in hand, and twy to make him a little less of a beastly boundah."

"Ha, ha! Yes. That was kind of him, wasn't it, Marmaduke?"

The heir of the house of Smythe grunted.

"You wefused my offah," went on D'Arcy—"I may say that you wefused it wudely. I made up my mind not to wepeat that offah——"

"Now, that was cruel of you, Aubrey!"

"But circs. have changed. I make that offah again as a sort of peace-offerin', you see. We want to make it pax between the School House and the New House."

"Tired of getting licked?" asked Kerr.

"Certainly not! Miss Pwiscillah Fawcett has come to the school——"

"We've seen her!"

"And what do you think she has come for, deah boys?"

"To bring Tom Merry a new supply of cod-liver oil, I expect."

"Vewy likely; but somethin' else, too. She has come to make peace between the two Houses, and between St. Jim's and the Gwammah School."

Figgins whistled, and the Co. stared. Marmaduke, who had worn a somewhat sulky expression, looked interested.

"You don't mean to say——" began Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah, you may wely upon it."

"But, I say, there will be ructions."

"There have been wuctions alweady. It nearly led to a quawwel between the Tewwible Thwee on the subject."

"Scott! Why they never quarrel!"

"They nearly did this time, and I think they would have quite done so, only I came by, and I thought it would be intewestin' and cuwious to watch them, and then they left off quawwellin', which I wegarded as extwemely inconsidewate."

"Ha, ha, ha! And has Miss Fawcett started peace-making?"

"Yaas, wathah! She made peace between Study No. 6 and the Tewwible Thwee, and made us shake hands in a wing——"

"Eh?" ejaculated Figgins.

"She made us stand in a wing and shake hands——"

"What wing? Whose wing? What are you jabbering about?"

"I say she made us stand in a wing——"

"Ha, ha!" roared Kerr. "He means in a ring!"

"Oh, I see! She made you stand in a ring and shake hands!" grinned Figgins. "Je comprends. What a set of giddy asses you must have looked!"

"Yaas, wathah! And Gore and Mellish and the west were laughin' in the most wude and vulgah mannah in the cowwidah."

"No wonder! If I had been there," said Figgins, "I really think I should have smole, perhaps in a rude and vulgar manner. Well, I'm glad you're at peace in the School House now. But what——"

"I'm comin' to that. Miss Pwiscillah is goin' to make peace between us, so we want you to make it pax till she is gone fwom the school, and then we shall not be made to look a set of widiculous asses, you know."

"Good idea! We can't show Miss Fawcett any sort of disrespect, after the kind way she's treated us on more than one occasion."

"Rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "Do you remember the turkey at Laurel Villa at Christmas?"

"Yes; he got you by the ear."

"I don't mean that—I mean at dinner! I'd make peace with anybody who'd provide such ripping feeds as Miss Fawcett does."

"Yaas, wathah! And now to come to the point. I pwopose that we leave off waggin' one another till our esteemed and wespected old fwiend has left the coll., and in the meantime I am quite willin' to wenew my offah, and take Marmaduke in hand."

"That is what I call really kind of you, Gussy."

"Well, weally, Figgins, my intention is to be kind."

"We'll leave it to Marmaduke himself to answer the generous offer," said Figgins, with a wink at the Co. "Marmy, old man, this is where you speak! Express to Arthur Augustus Aubrey Fitzgerald de Vere your deep sense of obligation."

"Certainly!" said Marmaduke, grinning.

And he rose and walked up to Arthur Augustus, who met him with the beaming smile of confiding friendship. But Marmaduke did not beam back. He seized the swell of the School House by the shoulders, and twisted him over and sat on his chest.

Arthur Augustus gasped and wriggled.

"Weally, Marmaduke——"

"You image of a tailor's dummy!" said Marmaduke.

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Tom Merry simply hurled himself at the large iron gates of the grammar school.

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a tailor's dummy!"

"I'm going to teach you not to come into the New House with your cheek, you bounder! Give me the liquid blacking, Kerr!"

"With pleasure!" said Kerr.

D'Arcy wriggled in horrid anticipation.

"Marmaduke, I wegard this weception of my genewous offah as wottenly wude and ungwateful!"

"Buck up with that blacking!"

"But if you do not care to accept the offah, I am willin' to withdraw it, and wetire from this study. I wequest you as a gentleman not to use that blackin' upon me."

"Hand it over, Kerr!"

"Here you are!" grinned Kerr. "I've taken the cork out!"

"Marmaduke, you howwid wuffian!" gasped D'Arcy, as a thin stream of liquid blacking descended upon his nose. "You—you will stain my collah! You—— Ow! Help!"

"Rescue, School House!" shouted Blake, dashing in at the door of the study, followed by Digby and Herries.

"Yaas, wathah! Wescue!"

Marmaduke was hurled off D'Arcy in a twinkling. The bottle of liquid blacking was upset over his own waistcoat. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn rushed forward, and the chums of Study No. 6 met them gallantly. In a second the study was the scene of one of the finest fights ever seen at St. Jim's.

D'Arcy staggered to his feet, and at once went for Marmaduke. Smythe, whose humour had not been improved by the blacking, met him willingly, and they clasped each other and reeled about the study in a deadly embrace. The table went flying, with books and papers and inkpots, and D'Arcy and Marmaduke fell into the midst of the heap. Figgins and Blake, wrestling wildly, fell over them.

"Rescue, New House!" roared Figgins. "School House boundders! Rescue!"

The junior studies in the New House fairly hummed with

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voices. An attack from the rival House in such an open manner was an insult to every denizen of the New House. Juniors came racing up the passage to lend a hand in expelling the intruders. Pratt and French and Jimson came tearing into the study, and then the odds were against the School House four.

But the Terrible Three were on the spot now.

They rushed into the fray without stopping to ask questions.

Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther were three of the best fighting men in the Shell Form, and they made a diversion in favour of the School House lads, but reinforcements for Figgins were coming up every moment.

The study was crammed with struggling forms, and the interior was simply wrecked. It would have gone hard with the School House seven if all the enemy had been able to get at them. But there was no room for the New House juniors to come in; the study was crammed, and they could only stand in the passage and yell, which they did with great energy.

CHAPTER 11.

Figgins & Co. Catch It Hot!

MEANWHILE, Miss Priscilla Fawcett had called upon Mr. Ratcliff, the housemaster of the New House. Even the thin, sour-featured Mr. Ratcliff could not help being polite to the kind-faced, beaming old soul; but he had had a hint of her mission, and he was prepared for Miss Fawcett's attacks.

"Pray sit down, my dear madam!" said Mr. Ratcliff, handing Miss Fawcett to a chair. "This is a—er—a great pleasure! Can I have the honour of doing anything for you?"

"I believe the doctor has already spoken to you about my mission here, Mr. Ratcliff," said Miss Priscilla.

"Er—yes; I have had some hint."

"It is my desire to make peace between the boys of the two houses," said Miss Fawcett. "Dr. Holmes has promised me his support and that of his masters."

"A—a very laudable object, madam."

"I can count upon your support, then?"

"Oh, yes, certainly, if it is of any use to you," said Mr. Ratcliff. "If I were Head of St. Jim's, madam, this rivalry, leading to continual disturbance, would have been crushed out long ago. May I ask how you propose to set to work?"

"I have already accomplished something," said Miss Priscilla. "There was a rivalry in the School House, between the boys of the Shell Form and the Fourth, and I have been fortunate enough to stop it."

Mr. Ratcliff smiled sourly.

"And you do not think it will break out again, madam?"

"I hope not."

"And, as regards the New House?"

"I should like to see the boys who are called Figgins & Co., and make an appeal to them. I have the Head's permission. I am acquainted with these lads, and I know their characters—very honest and manly, but a little thoughtless and impulsive. An appeal to their higher feelings——"

"Ahem! There is no objection whatever to your seeing the boys, and I will show you to their study, if you wish."

"Thank you very much!"

"I am quite at one with you in this desire to put down the continual disputing between the two Houses," continued Mr. Ratcliff. "And if you can bring any instances to my notice of boys of my House breaking the peace, I shall take it as a favour."

"Indeed, I shall be glad——"

"By inflicting exemplary punishment upon them, I hope to effect our joint object, my dear Miss Fawcett."

"Punishment!" ejaculated Miss Fawcett. "Oh, no; I was not thinking of punishment, Mr. Ratcliff! I don't like the idea of——"

"I have managed this house for many years, madam, and I know how to maintain authority and keep order," said Mr. Ratcliff, with a sour smile. "I assure you that there is no other method."

"But, really——"

"And now if you would care to go to Figgins's study."

Miss Fawcett bowed silently and rose. The idea of her well-meant efforts leading to the punishment of any of the juniors concerned was very painful to her, as Mr. Ratcliff had meant that his words should be.

In a rather troubled frame of mind, and feeling vaguely that Mr. Ratcliff was not taking her mission seriously, Miss Fawcett accompanied the housemaster up the broad staircase. As they mounted, the sound of a din in the upper corridor fell upon their ears.

Mr. Ratcliff's brows contracted.

"There is some riot going on in the Fourth Form studies!" he exclaimed. "Excuse me, madam, I must see to this!"

And the housemaster's long, thin legs made good speed along the passage.

Outside Figgins's study a crowd of excited juniors, belonging to the Fourth Form and the Shell, were shouting and yelling, too excited to notice the approach of the angry housemaster. Within the study a terrific combat seemed to be going on.

"What is all this?"

Mr. Ratcliff's cold voice seemed to cut the din like a knife.

The shouting died away at once, and the crowd of abashed juniors parted for the housemaster to pass through to the study.

Mr. Ratcliff stood in the doorway and looked in.

A dozen or more juniors were crammed in the study, wrestling and punching and yelling in wild excitement. The furniture was a wreck.

"Stop!"

But in the excitement of combat even the housemaster's voice was not heard. Mr. Ratcliff snapped his teeth, and, darting into the study, seized the nearest boy, who happened to be Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, by the collar.

"Stop this, I say!" he cried savagely, shaking D'Arcy till his teeth seemed to rattle. "Will you stop this disturbance instantly?"

"Oh, wats!" exclaimed D'Arcy, not seeing whom his assailant was, and he hit out.

The blow caught Mr. Ratcliff upon the waistcoat, and he staggered against the wall.

"You—you—you infamous young ruffian!" he gasped.

D'Arcy realised what he had done, and turned quite pale.

"Bai Jove," he gasped, "it's old Watty!"

It was quite probable that Mr. Ratcliff's temper was not improved by hearing himself alluded to as "Old Watty!" He was crimson with rage.

"D'Arcy, how dare you? Young rascals! Cease, I say!"

The "row" stopped. The juniors stood looking at each other and at the master, in various stages of dishevelment.

"My word!" said Digby.

"Bai Jove, I have inadvertently stwuck Mr. Watcliff! My dear sir, pway allow me to tendah my most sincere apologies!"

"You young rascal!"

"It was quite by accident, sir! I did not know that you were coming in, and I stwuck out under the impwession that I was hittin' one of these wottahs."

"You—you——"

"I beg to apologise most sincerely, and to expwess my extweme wegwet, and I weally hope that I have not damaged your esteemed waistcoat!"

"Dear me," exclaimed the voice of Miss Priscilla at the door, "what a scene—what a dreadful scene! Tommy darling, have you been quarrelling?"

"Certainly not," said Tom Merry; "only having a row!"

"Having a row! What an expression! Ah, this is an outcome of the dreadful rivalry between your Houses!"

"It's an outcome of your blessed peace-making!" murmured Monty Lowther, sotto voce.

"My dearest children——"

"Pray allow me, madam!" said Mr. Ratcliff, in his hardest tones.

"But, my dear sir——"

"But, my dear madam——"

"Please allow me——"

"Pray allow me——"

"I wish to speak a few words——"

"I am afraid I cannot allow my authority in this House to be interfered with, Miss Fawcett!" said the master harshly. "I shall cane severely every New House boy concerned in this riot, and shall report the School House boys to their housemaster."

"May I beg of you——"

"I am afraid I have no time to attend to you now, madam! Pratt!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Go to my study and fetch the cane you will see upon the table!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

Pratt went. Miss Priscilla looked dismayed. What was to be done? The juniors were not looking over-pleased, either. The old lady ventured one more appeal to the housemaster.

"If you would allow me to speak a few words in season to these misguided youths, Mr. Ratcliff, I am sure that I could establish peace between them."

"You are at liberty to do so, madam"

"Then you will not punish them?"

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"I shall certainly punish them severely!"

"May I make one appeal to you?"

"Certainly not upon that topic!"

"Cad!" came a mutter from behind the housemaster.

He turned round with a face full of fury.

"Who said that?"

There was no reply.

"Who said that?" roared the housemaster.

"Blessed if I know, sir!" said Monty Lowther.

"You must not speak to me like that."

"No, sir; certainly not, sir. How shall I speak to you, sir."

"You will speak to me respectfully."

"Certainly, sir. I will always try to show how much respect I feel for you, sir," said Lowther blandly.

Mr. Ratcliff gritted his teeth. There was a double meaning in Lowther's remark, but he could not very well take notice of it.

"Who—who used that opprobrious expression just now?" he demanded, searching the faces of the juniors with a savage glance. "Was it you, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Mr. Watcliff——"

"Was it you, sir?" roared Mr. Ratcliff.

"I cannot wegard it as wight to ask a fellah to accuse himself," said D'Arcy, looking round. "It is not accordin' to law, nor accordin' to justice."

"Did you use that expression, D'Arcy?"

"Notwithstanding the wespect I feel for you, sir, I am compelled to wefuse to answer a question which I wegard as——"

"That will do, D'Arcy. I shall not fail to report this to your housemaster. You shall be taught not to apply expressions of that kind to your master. Pratt, you have been a long time. Hand me the cane. Now hold out your hand."

"If you please, sir——"

"Hold out your hand!"

"This is no place for me," said Miss Fawcett, with dignity; and she turned quietly and withdrew from the study, the boys, who appreciated her well-meant efforts to avert the inevitable punishment, making way for her with great respect.

CHAPTER 12.

The Two Housemasters.

PRATT received four on each hand, and was told to go. He went gladly. French and Jimson had the same number, and departed, hugging their hands under their arms and making curious contortions as they went down the passage. Then came the turn of Figgins & Co.

The Co. had watched the caning so far with great dismay.

"My hat!" muttered Figgins. "The beast is in good form! I believe he has been doing Indian club exercises to get his muscles up for this sort of thing."

Kerr rubbed his hands with unpleasant anticipation.

"Wynn," said Mr. Ratcliff, in a grating voice, "stand forward!"

The Welsh partner in the Co. came unwillingly forward.

"You need not go," said Mr. Ratcliff, with a glance at the School House boys, who were moving towards the door; "I shall accompany you back to your House."

Tom Merry & Co. halted. They could not very well disobey, greatly as they felt inclined to do so. They knew that Mr. Ratcliff spitefully wished them to witness the punishment of Figgins & Co. before their own turn came.

"Hold out your hand, Wynn!"

The plump hand of Fatty Wynn was reluctantly held out. He received six on each hand, and retired squirming into a corner. Then came Kerr's turn, and then Marmaduke's. They had six each, well laid on. Figgins was last, but he did not receive the least.

"I consider you," said Mr. Ratcliff, bending his brows upon him, "as the chief and leader in all these disturbances, and I shall punish you most severely."

"Thank you, sir," said Figgins.

The housemaster scowled. Figgy's coolness was annoying. He laid on the strokes with all the vigour he could put into them, and Figgins had to keep his teeth shut hard to avoid crying out. But he did not cry out, and the hard-tempered housemaster was disappointed, as far as that went.

"And now," said Mr. Ratcliff, "we will go to the School House."

"With pleasure, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"Silence, D'Arcy."

"Certainly, sir. I do not desire to speak if you——"

"Hold your tongue!"

"Yaas, wathah! But weally, Mr. Watcliff——"

Tom Merry caught D'Arcy's arm and hurried him out of the study. The School House juniors descended the stairs, and followed the tall, thin figure of Mr. Ratcliff across the quadrangle.

Straight to Mr. Railton's study they were marched. The housemaster of the School House started up in surprise as Mr. Ratcliff entered with his train.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, noting the dishevelled appearance of the juniors. "Is anything the matter, Mr. Ratcliff?"

"Yes," said Mr. Ratcliff; "something is very much the matter, I am sorry to say."

Mr. Railton compressed his lips. There was no love lost between the two housemasters, and their methods differed widely. Mr. Ratcliff was constantly seeking some excuse for interfering with the School House, and that, of course, was keenly resented by the School House master.

"Well, what is it?" asked Mr. Railton abruptly.

"There is a difference in our methods, Mr. Railton," said the New House master. "We agree, I think, on hardly any point of discipline."

"This is hardly the place to discuss that, sir," said Mr. Railton, with a glance at the silent juniors.

"The question has raised itself," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I try to keep my House in order, and leave yours to the state of riot you seem to prefer."

"Mr. Ratcliff!"

"I am speaking plainly," said the New House master, flinching a little from the clear, steady eyes of Mr. Railton.

"You are indeed. May I ask you to be brief as well?"

"But," continued Mr. Ratcliff, "when I see the order of my House disturbed by an invasion of a gang of unruly juniors from your House, it is time, I think, for me to represent to you that something ought to be done."

"Do you mean that my juniors have been making a disturbance in your House, Mr. Ratcliff?"

"Yes, I do; they have been fighting like wild beasts in Figgins's study."

"Oh, weally, Mr. Watcliff——"

"Silence, D'Arcy!"

"But weally, Mr. Wailton——"

"Silence, I say! Go on, Mr. Ratcliff."

"That your juniors were the aggressors is proved by the fact that the disturbance took place in the New House," resumed Mr. Ratcliff. "I have severely punished Figgins and his companions, and these juniors have witnessed the punishment."

"I have no doubt about it," said Mr. Railton drily.

"And now, sir, I demand——"

"That is not a pleasant word to use."

"I am not here on a pleasant errand. I demand the punishment of these juniors, as severely as my boys have been punished, for this unexampled act of hooliganism; and especially of D'Arcy, who added the most amazing insolence to his ill conduct by applying a most insulting expression to me—by calling me a cad, sir," concluded Mr. Ratcliff, biting his thin lips with rage.

The School House master looked very grave.

"Did you apply that word to Mr. Ratcliff, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Mr. Wailton——"

"Answer me at once. Do you know that this is a serious—a very serious matter?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I wegard it as extwemely sewious: and if you will let me explain my point of view—it will not take a quartah of an hour——"

"I am afraid I cannot listen to you, D'Arcy."

"But weally, sir——"

"Answer my question directly; did you or did you not apply to Mr. Ratcliff the word he accuses you of having used?"

"No, sir, certainly not," said Arthur Augustus.

"It is false!" exclaimed the New House master hastily. "I say——" But Mr. Railton, with a gesture there was no disobeying, stopped him.

"I cannot permit you to say that in my study, Mr. Ratcliff. Whatever D'Arcy's faults may be, I know him to be scrupulously truthful, and I will not have him accused of falsehood in my presence."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Silence, Merry!"

"The boy as good as admitted it in the New House when I taxed him with it," cried Mr. Ratcliff, pale with rage.

"Pway allow me to explain, sir. I did not intend to admit anythin' of the kind, as it was not I who used the word."

"You said, boy, that it was not right to ask a fellow to accuse himself when I asked you if you had used that expression."

"Yaas, I wemembah perfectly; but that was only a wemark, sir, which anybody might have made," said D'Arcy innocently. "I did not mean that I did not want to accuse myself. I meant that weally you were actin' in a wathah silly way."

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"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. And then he suddenly stopped and tried to look unconscious, as Mr. Railton's eye turned upon him.

The School House master himself could scarce repress a smile at D'Arcy's way of explaining things to the incensed Mr. Ratcliff. But he summoned up a severe expression.

"D'Arcy, you must not speak like that!"

"No, sir. But Mr. Watcliff asked me; and as one gentleman to anothah, I could not wefuse him an explanation when he wequested it."

"That will do, D'Arcy. I think you will admit, Mr. Ratcliff, that D'Arcy is guiltless of using that expression you objected to."

"I am far from satisfied upon that point; but if D'Arcy did not utter the word himself, he must know who did, and I call upon him for the name of the person."

D'Arcy's face set obstinately.

"I cannot wegard that as a gentlemanly position to take up," he said. "It is imposs. for a fellow of honour to betway anybody, and——"

"Quite so!" interrupted Mr. Railton. "I really think you are requiring too much of D'Arcy, sir. The matter had better be passed over, as it is really impossible to discover who used that expression—possibly a New House boy."

"Quite poss., Mr. Wailton."

"But as for this raid into the New House, if you ask for the juniors to be punished, I have no alternative but to accede to your request."

"I demand——"

"It is sufficient to ask," said Mr. Railton mildly. "Before I punish you, my boys, have you any explanation to offer?"

"None, sir," said Tom Merry, "only that we never meant any harm, and that Figgins & Co. never meant any harm, either. We've had a row, but there's no ill-feeling left behind, and we're none the worse for a thump or two."

"Yaas, wathah. I considah——"

"There is something in what you say, Merry; but you must remember that you have disturbed the order of the New House, and that Mr. Ratcliff objects to anything of that kind very strongly."

"May I have the gweat honah of pointin' out to Mr. Watcliff that weally——"

"And so I have no alternative but to punish you, Merry. I shall cane you all in turn, and commence with you."

"Certainly, sir; I know you are just."

Tom Merry accented the word "you" rather emphatically, so that his sentence implied that there was somebody else who was not just, and Mr. Ratcliff knew very well whom that unjust somebody was. Mr. Railton frowned a little, but took no other notice of the remark. He selected a cane, and the juniors advanced in turn to take their "gruel."

Mr. Railton was a kind master, and believed very little in the efficacy of corporal punishment, but on this occasion, with the jealous eye of Horace Ratcliff upon him, he laid on the strokes pretty well. Each of the juniors in turn received three on each hand, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy coming last. The swell of the School House looked a little apprehensive.

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy!"

"Pway excuse me a moment, sir! I should take it as a gweat favah, sir, if you would wefwain fwom canin' me, as I do not feel vewy stwong just now."

"Come, D'Arcy!"

"I have a gweat objection to pain, sir, and I have heard that it is much easiah to twain youth by example, and I will pwomise to take example by the caning you have given Tom Mewwy, if you will wefwain fwom——"

"Come, come, hold out your hand!"

"Vewy well, sir; of course, I cannot wefuse if you insist," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity.

And he held out his hand; but Mr. Railton, who was smiling now, laid on the strokes a little more lightly than usual. The juniors filed out of the study.

"Well, Mr. Ratcliff, I hope I have satisfied you."

"Hardly, sir. I should have expected a punishment much more severe, considering the outrageous conduct——"

"The punishment was severe enough in my opinion, but if you feel aggrieved at all, I am willing to take the matter before the Head and abide by his decision."

"As Dr. Holmes is much more your friend than mine——"

"He is just, at all events. But I feel that it is useless to prolong this discussion. And, as a matter of fact, I am somewhat busy."

Mr. Ratcliff compressed his lips. Without another word he turned and left the housemaster's study, and Mr. Railton, with a slight smile, settled down to his writing-table again.

CHAPTER 13.

Miss Fawcett is Pleased.

SEVEN disconsolate juniors came along the upper corridor in the School House, to Tom Merry's study. They were twisting their hands, or squeezing them, or sucking the palms of them, or hugging them under their arms. It was evident that they had not been having a good time.

"Come in!" said Tom Merry. "Let's have some coffee and roasted chestnuts, and warm our tootsies at the fire, and we shall feel better."

"Good idea," said Blake dismally.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a bright fire in the study. Manners soon had the chestnuts toasting, and Monty Lowther jammed the kettle on the glowing coals, and started cleaning out the coffee-pot, while Tom Merry hunted for cups and saucers.

The chums of Study No. 6 sat down before the fire, very glum at first, but gradually their countenances assumed a more cheerful expression. There was nothing "soft" about the St. Jim's juniors, and they could take a licking without feeling either very sulky or very damaged. D'Arcy, who had suffered least, was naturally the first to recover his spirits.

"I say, deah boys, you're lookin' wathah a gwumpy lot of owls, you know," he remarked, glancing round.

"Oh, shut up!" said Herries.

"I wefuse to shut up, Hewwies! We haven't had it so bad as Figgins & Co. What an uttah boundah that old Watty is! I should weally like to administah a feahful thwashin' to him, you know."

"I say, this is the outcome of Miss Fawcett's peace-making," said Blake. "If the dear old soul makes much more peace, she'll set everybody in the school by the ears."

"My word!" said Digby, rubbing his hands. "If this is the beginning, where will it end? We shall have to make it pax with Figgins & Co. till she is gone——"

"I say, I'm sorry, kids," said Tom Merry. "It's good of you to take it so patiently, and I know it's rotten——"

There was a tap at the door.

"Oh, come in, fathead!" said Lowther irritably.

The door opened, and Miss Fawcett appeared. Lowther turned crimson.

"I—I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed. "I—I did not know it was you, Miss Fawcett. I—I thought it might be Gore, or one of those rotters!"

"I quite understand, Lowther," said Miss Fawcett. "May I come in?"

The juniors were all on their feet at once. In spite of the trying experiences they had gone through, they were unfailing in politeness to a lady, especially an old lady, and there was quite a harvest of chairs for Miss Priscilla's acceptance. She sat down with a sweet smile.

"I am afraid you have been punished, my dear boys," she said.

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Tom Merry. "You'll have a cup of coffee, won't you, dear?"

"Yes, certainly, my dearest Tommy! Are you sure you are not in pain?"

"Quite sure," said Tom Merry hastily. "How are the chestnuts getting on, Manners?"

"All right!" said Manners, with a grin.

"You'll have some woasted chestnuts, Miss Fawcett, won't you?" said D'Arcy.

"Certainly, my dear child."

Arthur Augustus winced.

"I am very sorry you have been punished," went on Miss Fawcett. "But the moment is really very appropriate for making an appeal to you. Would it not be better for you to make friends with Figgins and his comrades, as you have made friends with one another? Is anything the matter, Blake?"

"N-no, only something in my neck, Miss Fawcett."

"You coughed very much; you must take something for it," said Miss Priscilla anxiously. "You really looked as if you were about to choke, for a moment."

"I felt like it," murmured Blake.

"I will get you some of Dr. Bones's Terracotta Tabloids for Children's Chests," said Miss Priscilla kindly. "I will send you a large packet immediately upon my return to Huckleberry Heath."

"Thank you so much!" murmured Blake.

"They are to be taken four before every meal, and six just before going to bed, and whenever you feel inclined during the day you may take one or two."

"I will remember."

"And now, as I was saying," resumed Miss Priscilla, "does not your adventure this evening, and its unfortunate consequences, show to you that it would be better to make friends with Figgins & Co.?"

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D'Arcy was placed upon his feet, gasping like a fish out of water.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I am glad to hear you say so, D'Arcy."

"Weally, Miss Pwiscillah, we shall have much pleasure in cawwyin' out your wishes, and we'll make it pax with Figgins & Co. to-mowwow mornin'."

"That is very good news to me, my dear lads. Are you all of one mind?"

"Oh, yes, certainly, Miss Fawcett!"

"Very well. I should like to see you all embrace Figgins & Co. in the quadrangle, with the eyes of all the school upon you, as an example—— What is the matter, Lowther?"

"Nothing, madam."

"Your face was curiously twisted—have you a pain?"

"No, no, nothing!"

"It was probably a spasm. Are you subject to spasms?"

"N-no," mumbled Lowther, whose facial contortion had been caused by an heroic attempt to keep back an almost irresistible giggle; "not at all, I assure you."

"A person may be subject to them without knowing it," said Miss Fawcett, with a wise shake of the head. "Have you ever tried Dr. Bones's Pale Pellets for Spasmodic Subjects, my dear lad?"

"N-no," Lowther mumbled, turning red.

"Then I will send you a box when I send to Blake. They will do you good. Dissolved in a glass of lukewarm water, they are to be taken in doses eight times a day, the patient at the same time taking care to keep his feet warm and his chest well protected. Do you wear flannel next to your skin?"

Lowther mumbled something, and Tom Merry came to the rescue, drawing Miss Fawcett's attention away to himself.

"What time is Miss Cleveland coming down?" he asked.

"By the morning train," said Miss Priscilla. "I will not forget those pellets, Lowther. Now, you have promised me to make it up with Figgins & Co.?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then I am satisfied. I shall go over to the Grammar School to-morrow, and take Ethel with me. I am sure her influence will be useful in accomplishing my mission. Good-night now, my dear boys! Have you sufficient clothing on your beds in this cold weather?"

"Quite, thank you!"

"I would speak to Mrs. Mimms about it. I have already pointed out to her some little improvements in the diet of the house, that I think would be advisable. She does not seem to see it exactly as I do, but I shall convince her. Good-night, dears!"

And Miss Fawcett kissed each of the juniors in turn, and retired from the study.

Tom Merry looked dolefully at the rest.

"We're in for it," he said. "The only thing is to make peace with Figgins & Co. early in the morning, before she has a chance of making us look a set of silly asses!"

"We can't prevent her going over to the Grammar School," Blake remarked.

"I suppose not."

"And she's goin' to take my cousin Ethel with her!" D'Arcy remarked. "I say, the whole thing will be widiculous, you know!"

"We shall have to go along in a body to see that they come to no harm," said Tom Merry determinedly. "The peace-making will probably lead to a row, as usual; but we can't help that. Monk and his set would treat Miss Fawcett well, but Hake——"

"Yaas, Hake would be bound to act like a wottah! He knocked my toppah off once and twod on it, and a fellow who would do that would do——"

"Exactly!" said Blake. "We must go over, and take Figgins & Co. along so that there will be enough of us, and see that the Grammarians keep off the grass, as it were. No good telling Miss Fawcett, though; she'd not let us come."

"We shall have to fit it, then, for her to go some time when we're able to get away," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "You see, masters are inconsiderate, and they won't let us stay away from lessons even for the most important reasons."

"No, that's wathah wotten of them——"

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"I know," said Blake. "We'll ask Cousin Ethel. She's going with Miss Fawcett, and she'll fix it."

"Yaas, wathah! Ethel is a wippin' girl, you know, and I will ask her," said D'Arcy.

"She's more likely to see the point if I explain to her," said Tom Merry. "Don't you think so, Blake?"

"No, I don't," said Blake. "I'm the fellow to explain to Cousin Ethel; we understand each other very well."

"That's your beastly conceit!" said Lowther. "Cousin Ethel would be much more likely to see just how the matter stands if I——"

"Oh, come; no rotting!" said Digby warmly. "You know that I——"

"I wegard you all as asses!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Ethel is my cousin, and I claim the wight to explain things to her. I wefuse to discuss the mattah furthah."

And the swell of the School House walked out of the study. And the coffee and the chestnuts being finished, the meeting broke up.

CHAPTER 14.

Cousin Ethel.

MISS PRISCILLA had already made her mark at St. Jim's. And on the following morning her peace-making mission was the joke of the school. The seniors grinned over it in their studies, the juniors joked over it in the class-rooms. All were curious to know how the expedition to the Grammar School would turn out.

During the morning a stranger was seen to enter the gates of St. Jim's, whom some recognised as Mr. Quin, a master from the Grammar School. His expression showed that he had come to make a complaint. He was shown into the Head's study, and what passed there was not known to the boys of St. Jim's; but Mr. Quin's expression was decidedly discontented when he was shown out.

It was probable that the Head had pooh-poohed his grievance, and as the matter was not mentioned to the boys, it was clear that Dr. Holmes did not think it worth troubling his head about.

Figgins & Co. received the overtures of the School House chums in a very cordial spirit. As Figgins nobly said, the row of the previous evening had been gorgeous enough to satisfy anybody, and would last them some time.

Besides, the caning the New House juniors had received had been very severe, and they were not anxious for a second dose for some time to come.

But the chief reason for Figgins & Co.'s acquiescence was the desire to avoid a ridiculous scene, with Miss Fawcett as the chief actor.

To be appealed to as good little boys was rather humiliating to fellows of fifteen, or thereabouts, who looked upon even the masters at the school with a good-humoured toleration, and upon the prefects with positive patronage.

It was impossible to request Miss Priscilla to reserve her kind offices for use solely at Huckleberry Heath, so the only alternative was to make it "pax," and pax was accordingly made, the truce to last until Miss Fawcett left St. Jim's.

Miss Fawcett was a little disappointed at missing the touching scene she had pictured of Tom Merry embracing Figgins in the quadrangle before all St. Jim's, but her kind heart was delighted to know that peace was established at last.

Having established cordial relations at St. Jim's, Miss Fawcett, like Alexander, sighed for fresh worlds to conquer, and turned her attention towards the Grammar School.

Ethel Cleveland, D'Arcy's charming cousin, came down to the school in time for lunch with the Head, and so was there when the boys were at liberty after morning school. The juniors were glad enough to renew the old acquaintance. They had not seen Ethel since Christmas, but she had not forgotten them.

Tom Merry was the first to meet her. The cap came off his curly head as he sighted the graceful figure of the girl in the quadrangle, and he came dashing across to meet her. Ethel greeted him with a bright smile, and gave him her hand.

"It's jolly to see you again," said Tom Merry, in his cheery way. "You are going to stay as long as my governess, I believe?"

Ethel nodded.

"Yes, I am going to see the football match on Saturday before I return," she said demurely. "Miss Fawcett has promised that I shall see you take nearly all the runs."

"Ha, ha, ha! What Miss Fawcett doesn't know about football would fill a book."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, joining them. "I say, Ethel, you look weally wippin', you know! Here comes Figgins. Do you wemembah Figgins?"

"Of course I do," said Ethel, shaking hands with the chief of the New House juniors; "and Kerr, and Wynn, and Marmaduke, too. How do you do? But I must not stay long, as I am going in the trap with Miss Fawcett."

"To the Grammar School?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

"Yes."

"I say, Ethel," said D'Arcy, "it won't do, you know. We want Miss Fawcett to go at a time when we can follow on to see that——"

"To see all safe, you know," said Tom Merry. "We're anxious——"

"About you, really," said Figgins. "There are a rough lot at the Grammar School, though some of them are ripping fellows."

"That's so," chimed in Blake. "We've got to come along, and so we want you to persuade Miss Fawcett——"

"To go at a time when we can be on hand."

"After afternoon school will be best."

"You see——"

"Yaas, wathah, you see——"

Ethel laughed.

"My dear friends, the trap is already ordered, and Miss Fawcett is going," she said. "I am to join her in ten minutes, to go with her. I really don't think you will be needed. You are more likely to break the peace than to keep it."

"Oh, weally, Ethel——"

"But——" said Tom Merry.

"It's only half an hour to school," said Lowther, looking up at the big clock in the tower. "We might manage it."

"We must wisk it," said Arthur Augustus. "If Miss Fawcett takes Cousin Ethel to the Gwammah School now, they will awwive when the gwound is full of Gwammah cads, and they are certain to chivvy our esteemed old fwiend."

"But really——" said Ethel.

"You know why Miss Fawcett is going, don't you?" asked Tom Merry.

The girl smiled.

"Yes, on a mission of peace."

"You know, it's all rot, but we can't tell Miss Fawcett so."

"Scarcely. The object is very—very laudable."

"Yes, but the idea's all piffle," said Manners. "I beg your pardon. I should have said, all rot—I mean, nonsense."

"I must go now," said Ethel, looking at her watch. "I really think it would be better for you not to come to the Grammar School."

And she ran into the house. The crowd of juniors looked at one another dubiously.

"There's something in what she says," Tom Merry remarked. "If we go, it may make a row, when otherwise the thing might go off quietly."

"But weflect, Tom Mewwy, how they tweated Miss Pwiscillah yesterday."

"Yes, that's true enough."

"They will pwobably be extwemely wude. I weally think that we ought to go in force, and stand by the ladies, in case we are needed. It's only the polite thing, deah boy."

"D'Arcy's right, for once," said Digby. "I say——"

"I object to that wemark, Digby. I'm not the kind of fellow to blow my own twumpet, but weally I must say that I am usually wight in a mattah of this kind."

"If we're going," broke in Figgins, "the sooner we start the better. We stand more chance of getting away without being seen; and it occurred to me, too, that the trap will travel faster than we do, and we want to be there by the time Miss Priscilla is."

"True. Let's get a move on."

"Wait for me a minute, deah boys!"

"Can't. Come along!"

"I must wun into the house and fetch my hat."

"You've got your cap."

"Yaas, but on an important occasion like this a toppah would be au fait, I think," said D'Arcy, shaking his head.

"Look here, you ass——" began Blake.

"I wefuse to be——"

"Look here, I'm getting fed up with your hats. I've had enough of them—too much, in fact. You'll come as you are."

"I wefuse to come as I am. I shall be only ten minutes——"

"Come along, kids, and leave him behind, then."

"I wefuse to be left behind."

ANSWERS

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The juniors started towards the gate, and D'Arcy hesitated for a moment, and then jammed his cap down on his head, and followed. Out in the road the juniors broke into a trot, and they got over the ground in good style.

They were nearly at the gates of the Grammar School, when there was a patter of hoofs on the road behind them, and they dodged into the trees to let the doctor's trap pass. In the trap sat Miss Priscilla and Ethel. A couple of minutes later the vehicle dashed up to the Grammar School.

CHAPTER 15.

Arthur Augustus Undergoes the Frog's-march.

"HALLO! What's this?"

It was Hake who uttered the exclamation, as the trap drove in at the open gates of the Grammar School.

It wanted yet twenty minutes to afternoon school, and the ground was crowded with the Grammarians, and there was a rush at once at the sight of Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

The gravel drive leading up to the big brick buildings was thronged with grinning boys, to such an extent that the vehicle had to stop. Miss Fawcett looked benignly at the crowd. Ethel was looking a little frightened.

"My dear boys," said Miss Fawcett, "pray allow the vehicle to proceed."

"Get out of the way!" shouted Frank Monk, coming up at a run.

He took off his cap to Miss Fawcett and Ethel.

"Mind your own business, young Monk!"

"Get out of the way, I tell you!"

"Get back yourself!"

"If you don't clear off the drive this instant," said Frank, "I'll go straight and fetch the Head."

"Sneak!"

"Sneak or not, that's what I'll do, so take warning."

Hake and his set crowded back from the drive. The trap proceeded, Ethel giving Frank Monk a grateful glance.

"I should like to address a few words to those young lads," murmured Miss Priscilla. "I think the coachman had better stop——"

"Another time, dear Miss Fawcett!" whispered Ethel hurriedly.

"But a word in season——"

"They are so excited now."

"My dear child, they do not mean any harm. It is only boyish fun, and I am sure that an appeal to them——"

"Would it not be better to make your call upon Dr. Monk first, dear Miss Fawcett?"

"Well, yes, perhaps you are right, Ethel."

And Miss Fawcett alighted at the door of the School House, and was shown in with Ethel to Dr. Monk's study.

Meanwhile, the shouting in the Grammar School ground had been heard far along the lane, and it reached the ears of the juniors of St. Jim's, who were hurrying along in the track of the trap.

"My word!" gasped Digby. "They've started, you see."

Tom Merry compressed his lips. He put on a spurt, but D'Arcy, as it happened, was ahead in the race, having gained a start after the halt that had been made to let the trap pass. The swell of St. Jim's dashed up to the gates of the Grammar School, and dashed in. A yell greeted him.

"Gussy!"

"Collar him!"

There was a rush of Grammarians at the bold intruder.

"Here's more of them coming!" exclaimed Hake excitedly. "Shut the gates, and keep them out, and then we'll give Augustus the frog's-march."

There was a roar of approval. Hake, Lane, and Carboy jammed the gate shut just as the juniors of St. Jim's came racing up. Monk would have stood up to defend Miss Fawcett from insult, but against the St Jim's juniors he was at one with Hake. He fumbled with the bolt as the enemy hurled themselves against the bars.

Half a dozen Grammarians threw themselves upon D'Arcy, who was, unfortunately, alone of his party within the gates. The swell of St. Jim's was collared in a moment. He hit out with all his strength, and two or three Grammarians rolled on the ground, but they were too many for him.

He was pinioned and held fast, a helpless prisoner; while the crowd of Grammar lads held the gate shut against the Saints.

Tom Merry was first to reach the gate, and he simply hurled himself at it. Manners and Lowther were only a minute behind. They shoved and pushed madly, and Figgins & Co. were soon lending a hand, backed up by Herries, Digby, and Blake.

Ten stalwart juniors made a good weight, pushing with all their strength, and the gate swung back a few inches before Monk could secure it.

"Push here!" yelled Carboy.

"Shove," shouted Frank Monk, "all together!"

And a score of Grammarians rushed to back him up.

"Stick it out!" gasped Figgins.

The St. Jim's juniors put forth all their strength; but the enemy were too many. The gate clanged shut, and Monk fastened it.

Then the Grammarians let go, jeering and hooting at the Saints between the iron bars of the gate.

"The frog's-march!" exclaimed Hake.

"Right-ho!" said Frank Monk. "Mind you're not going to hurt him!"

"I'm going to do as I like."

"Not a bit of it. Line up here, kids. This is our business——"

IT IS ON THE OTHER SIDE!

"Stand back, Frank Monk!"

"I won't!"

"That's wight, Fwank Monk!" yelled D'Arcy, wriggling in the grasp of Lucas and two or three other Grammarians. "I object stwongly to bein' hurt——"

"Will you get out of the way, Monk?"

"No!"

"That's wight, wefuse—distinctly wefuse!"

"Ha, ha! Get back, Hake! This matter is in our hands! Now, Gussy, you're going to have the frog's-march!"

"I object to havin' the fwog's-march——"

"Well, you're not expected to enjoy it, you know. If you like to go down on your knees," suggested Carboy, "and confess that the Grammar School is top school, and that St. Jim's is no class and nowhere, why, then we might let you off."

"Good!" exclaimed Monk heartily. "They're the conditions, D'Arcy."

"I wefuse!"

"Don't do it!" yelled Blake, through the bars of the gate. "If you say anything of the kind, Gussy, we'll boil you in oil!"

"And wring your neck afterwards!" said Digby.

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Now, then, own up!" exclaimed Frank Monk, pushing Hake back and taking the lead in the affair. "Down on your knees, Gussy!"

"I uttahly wefuse!"

"Obey orders! Own up that we are top school——"

"Mind you don't!" yelled Tom Merry, shaking frantically at the bars of the gate till it creaked on the iron hinges.

"We'll boil you if you do!"

"Stick it out, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! You ought to know me well enough,

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dear boys, to know that nothin' would induce me to forget my dig., and that the dig. of the coll. I belong to——"

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Good old Adolphus!"

"I'll jolly soon make him do it!" exclaimed Hake, pushing his way forward. "Give me hold of his wrist!"

"That's the style!" cried Lucas. "A twist of the wrist, and he'll own up to anything you like!"

"You are quite mistaken, you wotten boundah——"

"Give me hold of his wrist——"

"Rats!" said Frank Monk contemptuously. "You may be a senior, Hake, and a monitor, but I tell you plainly that if you begin any of your bullying tricks here, we'll wipe up the ground with you, and that's flat!"

"I'm going to give him a twist——"

"You're going to do nothing of the sort."

"Stand out of my way——"

"Line up, fellows!"

Frank Monk had almost unbounded sway over the Grammar School juniors. Hake was generally disliked, too; for there were few youngsters present who had not experienced his bullying at times. The bully saw that he would have a big fight on his hands if he pushed his point. He could have tackled any two of the juniors easily, but a dozen would, as Frank Monk put it, have wiped up the ground with him. He growled and retreated.

A jeering yell from the juniors followed him. The Saints outside were shaking the bars of the gate frantically, but without being able to move it.

"Now, then, D'Arcy, are you going to own up——"

"Wathah not."

"Then we shall give you the frog's-march."

"Pway do not be so wude and wuff——"

"Ha, ha! Collar him!"

"I wefuse to be collahed—ow!"

Frank Monk turned very red.

"Stop it, chaps!" he exclaimed. "I say, you know, it's only fun! But there you are!"

D'Arcy was placed upon his feet gasping like a fish out of water. His collar was hanging by one end, his cap was gone, his hair resembled a mass of oakum, his clothes were rumpled and dusty. The dimples deepened at the corners of the girl's mouth as she tried not to smile.

"Thank you very much!" she said sweetly.

CHAPTER 16.

Miss Priscilla Explains.

COUSIN ETHEL was perfectly composed as she faced the mob of Grammarians. They felt back before her glance as they would never have fallen back from the heaviest charge of Tom Merry & Co.

Frank Monk was crimson, and Carboy and Lane did not raise their eyes. But they stood their ground, while the rest of the Grammar juniors slowly melted away.

"Weally, I feel vewy dirty and distwessed!" said Arthur Augustus. "I believe you are laughin' at me, Ethel——"

"Dear Cousin Arthur!"

"It is weally no laughin' mattah, Ethel! I have been used vewy wuffly, and my clothes will nevah wecovah fwom it, I believe."

"It is too bad——"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall considah it my duty to administah a fearful thwashin' to these bowwid wuffians at the first opportunity——"

"Oh, draw it mild, Gussy!" said Frank.

"I wefuse to dwaw it mild. I wegard your tweatment of me as distinctly wuff and diswespectful!"

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Caught up in a dozen pairs of hands, D'Arcy was dragged off, and experienced the pleasures of the frog's-march in the sight of his exasperated friends.

"Ow! Welease me! You are wufflin' my jacket! You are soilin' my collah! I insist upon bein' immediately weleased! Ow!"

Round and round the grinning Grammarians went with the swell of St. Jim's in their merciless clutch. They did not really hurt him, but never was there seen such a rumpled, dusty, and dishevelled figure as D'Arcy was when they set him on his feet again close to the gate.

Even the exasperated Saints looking through the bars could not help grinning at the spectacle he presented.

D'Arcy looked round him in bewilderment, as if rather uncertain whether he was right end upwards.

"Weally!" he gasped. "I object to this——"

"Ha, ha, ha! He objects!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard you as a lot of feahful wuffians. You haven't the least wespect for a fellow's clothes——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Are you going to own up that we are top school, and that St. Jim's is nowhere!" demanded Frank Monk.

"Certainly not."

"Bravo, D'Arcy!" shouted Tom Merry. "Stick it out!"

"Yaas, wathah, Tom Mewwy! I weally wish you were here stickin' it out instead of me, but weally I wefuse to say anythin' dewogatowy to the honah of the coll——"

"Round he goes again!"

Round went D'Arcy again in the frog's-march, but this time there came an interruption. Miss Priscilla ran out in high excitement.

"Pray—my dear boys—how can you—— Oh, dear!"

A graceful figure followed the old lady.

"Will you please release my cousin?" said a soft, sweet voice.

"I say, we didn't know he was your cousin, you know," said Frank Monk, looking repentantly at Ethel.

The girl smiled.

"That would have made a difference, of course!"

"Well—er—yes—you see——"

"Exactly. Dear Cousin Arthur, if you are to drive home with Miss Fawcett and myself I think you had better get a little—a little of that dust off——"

"Yaas, wathah! I feel too feahfully exhausted to walk home, and weally I am not fit to appeah in the pwesence of a lady——"

"True enough," said Monk. "Come along, and I'll take you to my quarters."

D'Arcy looked at him rather doubtfully.

"Honah bwight!" he asked. "No twicks, you know."

Frank Monk laughed.

"No, no tricks; honour bright, kid. Come along."

"Vewy well, I shall have pleasuah in acceptin' your kind offah, and I will wejoin you latah, Ethel."

The Grammar School juniors raised their caps to Ethel and marched D'Arcy off. The girl turned to Miss Fawcett with a smile upon her fair face.

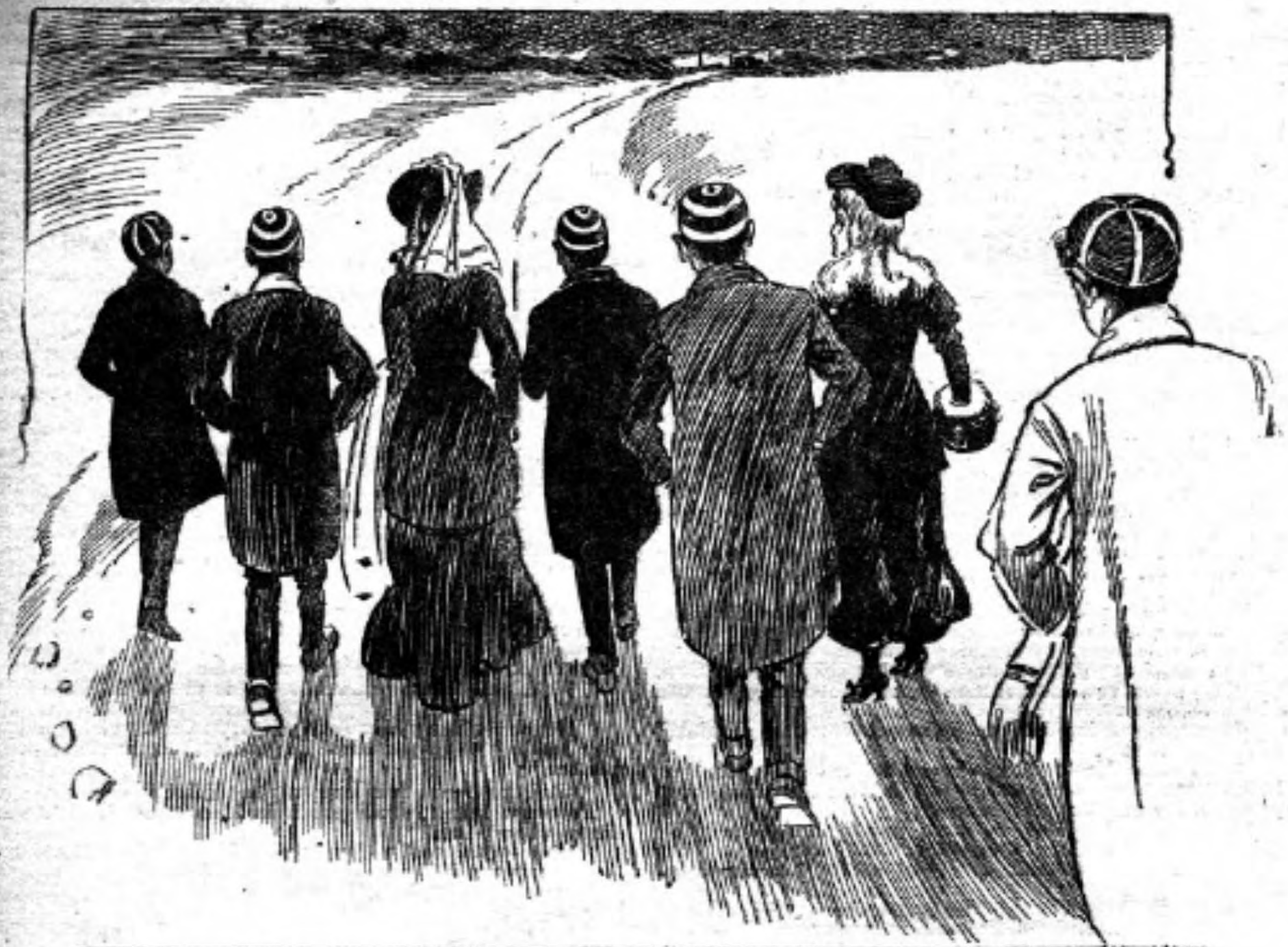
"They are nice boys, you see, after all," she remarked. "I told you they were not really hurting Augustus."

"Yes, indeed!" gasped Miss Priscilla. "You were right, but—but I was greatly alarmed. Dear me! What will Dr. Monk think of us leaving his study just as he was coming into it! Come with me, my dear!"

Dr. Monk was standing by his study window when the old lady re-entered with Ethel. He wore a puzzled look. He could hear an unusual noise in the distance, but his window did not command a view of the gates.

"Pray excuse me for leaving you so suddenly, sir," said Miss Fawcett, "I was alarmed by what I saw from the window."

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Tom Merry and Co. and a few of the Grammar School boys escorted Miss Priscilla and Cousin Ethel to the railway station.

"Pray sit down, madam. I do not think I—er—yes, I think I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance at St. Jim's when I called to see Dr. Holmes."

"Quite so, Dr. Monk. This is Miss Cleveland, who, I hope, will be able to assist me in my mission here——"

Dr. Monk looked puzzled, and Ethel coloured.

"Your—er—mission, Miss Fawcett?"

"Yes. You may be aware that for a long time a rivalry has existed between the two Houses at St. James's Collegiate School——"

Dr. Monk smiled.

"Yes, I am certainly aware of that, Miss Fawcett, but really, I do not see how——"

"I have fortunately been able to compose that rivalry, and really put an end to it," said Miss Fawcett. "I came down to St. Jim's for that special purpose, and I am glad to say that I have succeeded."

"Ahem—ah—I am pleased to hear it, but——"

"And now, sir, I wish to establish the same concord between the Grammar School and St. James's Collegiate School as I have succeeded in establishing between the rival Houses of St. Jim's."

A light dawned upon the Head of Rylcombe Grammar School. He stroked his grey beard in a rather troubled way.

"Indeed, Miss Fawcett! And your visit here——"

"Is in pursuance of my object. I have received every support from the masters of St. Jim's, with perhaps one exception, and I trust that I shall receive the same here."

"Oh—er—yes—but——"

"Think, sir, how extremely gratifying it will be if the boys of the two schools meet with gentle and kind words instead of mutual defiance. I have just seen a nice little boy from St. Jim's given what they call the toad's-march——"

"Frog's-march—dear Miss Fawcett," said Ethel gently.

"Well, the frog's-march, then, Ethel. I have just seen that curious and altogether objectionable form of punishment inflicted upon a nice-mannered boy, and it was very dreadful for me to see."

"I will inquire——"

"Not at all, pray. I should be very much pained if I thought that my efforts in the cause of peace should cause any lad here to be punished," said Miss Priscilla.

The doctor stroked his beard.

"But—but how do you propose to set about this—this laudable object, my dear Miss Fawcett?" he inquired.

"I should like you to call a meeting of the whole school," said Miss Priscilla modestly. "I could address them——"

"Ahem! I am afraid——"

"Hear me out! I trust you will not throw cold water upon a plan which will lead to the establishment of perfectly peaceful relations between the two schools."

"Far from it, my dear madam. But—but such a step as you contemplate would, I am sure, be regarded as—as somewhat ridiculous, by the boys."

"I should appeal to their higher feelings."

"Unfortunately——"

"What I request is——"

"My dear madam, I—I—I will consult with Dr. Holmes on the subject," said Dr. Monk, struck by a bright idea. "That will be—be best, I think. We will consult together on the point. And now I am afraid I—I must beg you to excuse me, as afternoon classes are about to commence."

Miss Priscilla rose to her feet.

"Thank you very much, Dr. Monk," she said. "I am sure that, upon reflection, you will see what an excellent plan it is."

"Yes, yes; I am quite sure—permit me to show you to your trap. I am quite sure that—yes—exactly—— Remarkably cold weather, is it not?"

Dr. Monk did not breathe freely until Miss Fawcett was in the trap. Ethel's face was quite expressionless as she sat beside Miss Priscilla. She felt keenly the absurd side of the situation, but she was too loyal by nature to let Miss Fawcett dream for a moment of what was in her mind.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking a great deal more clean and respectable, came quickly up, and climbed into the trap beside Ethel. The girl looked him over with a demure smile.

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"I feel watnah better now, Ethel. Those young wuffians weally used me most diswespectfully, you know. But Fwank Monk is not such a bad sort. He has lent me a clean collah. Lane has lent me a necktie. It is not so tasteful as I am accustomed to wear, but it was a decent thing to do, you know."

"Oh, very! I see your friends are still here!"

The girl smiled as the gates were opened, and Tom Merry & Co. drew back to make room for the trap to pass. Miss Priscilla looked at them in amazement as they stood, cap in hand.

"My dear boys, surely you ought to be at your lessons at St. James's Collegiate School at this hour!" she exclaimed.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, yes; but you see——"

"Surely you have not played truant, like naughty little boys!"

Tom Merry & Co. turned uncomfortably red. The glimmer of fun in Ethel's blue eyes troubled them as much as Miss Fawcett's mode of address.

"We came along to see you safe," Monty Lowther ventured. "We thought you might get into hot water at the Grammar School."

"My dearest child, how could I possibly get into hot water?" exclaimed Miss Priscilla, in astonishment. "You surely do not mean that you thought the Grammar School boys could be so rude as to throw hot water upon me?"

"No—no!" stammered Lowther. "I mean, we thought you might catch a Tartar there, and bump up against trouble."

"Bump up against trouble!" murmured Miss Priscilla. "What an exceedingly curious expression! Can you tell me, Ethel, what is meant by bumping up against trouble?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" giggled Blake involuntarily. And then, all of a sudden, recollecting himself, he became as grave as a judge.

"It means getting into an awkward situation, I think," said Ethel calmly.

"Oh, I understand! It was very kind and noble, my dear lads, of you to come to our aid in this way, and risk getting punished for missing your lessons."

"Yaas, wathah! But we were bound to do the polite thing, you know, Miss Pwiscillah," said D'Arcy. "My fwiends here are wathah a feahful set of boundahs, but they——"

"Ring off, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther. "We thought we ought to come, Miss Fawcett. If you think we did right——"

"It was very kind of you."

"Then you might speak to Dr. Holmes on the subject, and get him to let us off for cutting the first lesson this afternoon."

"Bai Jove, that is wathah a good idea, though it is yours, Lowthah!"

"I shall certainly do so!" said Miss Fawcett.

And the trap passed on, the relieved juniors waving their caps after it. Miss Fawcett was as good as her word, and the delinquency of Tom Merry & Co. was overlooked on their return to St. Jim's. They were careful to turn up in time for the second lesson, and their absence was not commented upon, owing to Miss Fawcett's kind offices. Peace with the Grammar School had hardly been established by Miss Fawcett's visit there, and the juniors wondered what the next step was to be. But an idea was working in the brain of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 17.

Pax!

"I SAY, Ethel, you know——"

The girl turned towards her cousin with a smile. Afternoon lessons were over, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was coming from the class-rooms with a book under his arm, and he met Ethel among the elms.

"I hope you don't feel worse for your rough experience at the Grammar School, Arthur?" said Ethel.

"Yaas, wathah; I must say I do, weally, Ethel. I came home in a state of complete exhaustion, and since then I have been compelled to listen to the feahful bore we have for a German mastah. I am feelin' quite fagged, you know. But while I was doin' the German this afternoon, I thought of a bwilliant ideah."

"Did you really? An idea for improving your German?"

"Oh, no!" said D'Arcy. "Something more important than that, you know. A bwilliant ideah for puttin' an end to this beastly peace campaign!"

The girl held up her finger warningly.

"You must not say anything wanting in respect to Miss Fawcett!"

"I should be the vewy last fellow in the world to do so, Ethel. I wespect Miss Fawcett vewy highly; but, you know, she has given us a feahful amount of twouble, and all the wows we have had lately have been caused by her makin' peace between us."

"Well, what is the idea, Arthur?"

"Why, she is determined to make peace between us and the Gwammah School, which is, as a mattah of fact, quite imposs——"

"Then Miss Fawcett will have to remain at St. Jim's for ever, for she is determined not to go till she has accomplished her mission," said Ethel, with a demure smile.

"Yaas, wathah! And that's the howwid part of it. She is a vewy nice old lady, but she is vewy much nicah at Hucklebewwy Heath than at the coll. You see, she makes a fellow feel such an awful ass, you know."

"Yes, I know."

"So I've been thinkin', and I've thought out a plan for makin' it pax between St. Jim's and the Gwammah School for one afternoon, and then we may be able to persuade Miss Fawcett to catch the evenin' twain, and leave before we start wowin' again."

"Ha, ha! And the plan?"

"We are meetin' Wynwood in a gweat football match on Saturday, you know. We might invite a select party of the Gwammarians ovah here to see the match, and stand them a picnic, and Miss Fawcett will see then what jolly good fwiends we can be. And, of course, Miss Fawcett will foot the beastly bill, you know."

"Well, that is a good idea, Arthur, in some respects," said Ethel, laughing.

"It's a weally bwilliant ideah in all wespects, I think," said Arthur Augustus. "I want you to pwopose it to Miss Fawcett."

"I think you had better do that, Arthur."

"Well, you know, you could put it to her in the wight way."

"Not so well as you could, I think," said the girl, shaking her head. "Only you could do justice to an idea like that, Arthur."

"Well, pewwaps you are wight, Ethel," said D'Arcy. "Pewwaps I had bettah put it to Miss Fawcett. Do you know where she is?"

"Yes; on the seat under the elms by the School House."

"Thank you! I will go to her at once."

D'Arcy soon found Miss Fawcett under the elms, and the old lady greeted him with a sweet smile.

"I have an ideah, Miss Fawcett," D'Arcy explained at once, "for bwingin' about the peace with the Gwammah School."

"My dear little boy, what a kind heart you must have!"

D'Arcy winced.

"I think we ought to invite them to a picnic on Saturday aftahnoon to show that there's no ill-feelin'," went on the swell of St. Jim's. "We could have a wippin' feed aftah the football match. Would you be willin' to stand a picnic, Miss Fawcett, for the sake of establishin' peace?"

"Should I be required to stand?" said Miss Fawcett doubtfully. "Surely camp-stools, or something of that sort could be provided?"

"Ha, ha! I mean, will you be the foundah of the feast, you know?"

"Oh, I understand! Yes; I should be very happy!"

"Vewy good! I will see Tom Mewwy about it, then; and we will awwange the details. It is weally a good idea."

D'Arcy found Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther in the gym. The Terrible Three listened to his explanation with interest.

"Good wheeze," said Manners. "But who's going to foot the bill?"

"Miss Pwiscillah has offahed to do so."

"That's very kind and thoughtful of her."

"Yaas, wathah! And it was wathah thoughtful of me, too, as I suggested it to her."

"You young ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You suggested to her to stand a feed to a hundred fellows! Why, it will cost no end of tin!"

"Well, you can't make peace, or anythin' like that, without bein' put to some expense," said D'Arcy. "My idea is that it will cost five pounds, at least; but by judicious awwangement we might make it cost more——"

"What on earth do you want it to cost more for?"

"Why, you see, that's part of the plan!"

"I don't catch on."

"No; I suppose a bwain like yours wequires a lot of explanation. You see, aftah makin' peace on Satahday aftahnoon, Miss Fawcett will, in all pwob., catch the twain back to Hucklebewwy Heath; but she might stay ovah the week-end to make suah that the good work is quite done. If she does——"

"Well, what then?" asked Tom Merry suspiciously.

"If she does," said D'Arcy, with a satisfied smile, "that's

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where my plan comes out stwong. The School House can stand the New House a feed to make pax, and Miss Fawcett can pay the bill."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther, while Tom Merry glared at the swell of the School House in great indignation.

"If the deah, good soul does not then weturn to Hucklebewwy Heath, you thwee fellows can stand a feed to our study, for the sake of pwomotin' peace, and Miss Fawcett can stand the wacket," went on D'Arcy. "I think by that time she is bound to be weally satisfied that all is goin' well. But if not——"

"Well, if not?" chuckled Manners.

"Why, then we can stand a big feed, and invite all the Upper Forms to it, for the sake of pwomotin' genewal good feelin' thwoughout the coll.," said Arthur Augustus. "That would cost Miss Pwiscillah about twenty pounds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even Tom Merry could not help laughing at the ingenious project of the swell of the School House. But he shook his head.

"Well, I'm not going to allow anything of the kind!" he declared. "You can have this picnic on Saturday, if you like, and if it isn't efficacious, you'll have to try some other plan."

"Now, weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"I've made up my mind on that point, D'Arcy."

"Weally, don't be an obstinate pig, you know!"

"Rats! It's settled!"

And the Terrible Three walked off. D'Arcy polished his eyeglass in a thoughtful sort of way.

"I weally hope the picnic on Saturday will settle the mattah, then!" he murmured. "I weally do not see what is Tom Mewwy's objection to a weally excellent plan; but I know it's no use twyin' to make him altah his beastly mind. If Miss Pwiscillah makes peace much longer here, I believe it will turn my hair gwey."

And D'Arcy sought out the chums of Study No. 6, to impart to them the news. Blake, Digby, and Herries jumped at the idea. So did Figgins & Co., when they heard of it. The football match on Saturday was a junior game, and most of our friends were in the eleven, to meet Wynwood Juniors on the St. Jim's ground. There were likely to be a good many of their friends present to see the match, and it was an excellent opportunity for a picnic.

The weather was too cold, doubtless, for a feed in the open air, but Figgins at once suggested the gym., which could be comfortably warmed, and permission to use it for the feed was asked and obtained.

"It's a good idea," Figgins declared, "and as originator of the scheme, D'Arcy had better go over to the Grammar School, and invite the kids there."

Arthur Augustus shook his head in a very decided way.

"I'd wathah not, Figgins, thank you!"

"But the idea is yours."

"Yaas, but I do not care to visit the Gwammah School again just now. I have too vivid a wecollection of the fwog's march. I might meet Hake or Lucas befoah I met Monk, and the wesult might be sewious. Hake once knocked off my silk hat, and twod on it delibewately, and a fellow who would twead on a silk toppah is capable of——"

"Anything," said Figgins. "We'd better write, then."

"You mean, I'd better write," said D'Arcy. "The idea is mine, I believe."

"Ha, ha! You'd better write, then, Gussy."

And Arthur Augustus wrote a polite note of invitation to Frank Monk, at the Rylcombe Grammar School. He explained the circumstances of Miss Fawcett's peace mission, and asked Monk, as one gentleman to another, to do his best.

There was a great deal of chuckling at the Grammar School over D'Arcy's letter; but Monk and his friends were quite willing to accept the invitation.

"We had a good feed at St. Jim's last week," said Frank Monk. "This looks like being a bigger thing still. We'll go—rather!"

"He wants us to take at least thirty fellows to prove to that dear old lady that we're on good terms generally!" grinned Lane. "We'll pick out the chaps who know how to be quiet, you know. There mustn't be anything like a row."

"Rather not! We'll make peace with St. Jim's, and enjoy the feed," said Carboy. "They are a cheeky lot of youngsters; but I rather like them, in a way, you know, and I'd do more than this for them, especially with a feed thrown in."

And it was easy for Frank Monk to pick out a score and a half of guests for the feed who could be trusted to keep the peace, and be generally discreet.

Frank Monk's polite note in reply to D'Arcy's, accepting the invitation, was read over in Tom Merry's study, and then taken to Miss Priscilla.

The old lady was delighted.

"I knew that my appeal would not be made in vain!" she exclaimed. "My darling Tommy, did it not please you very much to receive this note?"

"Yes, that it did!" said Tom Merry.

"I thought so! How pleasant to be at peace with your neighbours, and to grasp them cordially by the hand, instead of striking them violently upon the nose or in the eye. I am more pleased than I can say at this splendid result of my humble endeavours in the cause of peace. It is all the more gratifying, as I am anxious to be home, and now I shall be able to catch the Saturday evening train——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry gave D'Arcy a warning glance.

"I am anxious about my parrot," said Miss Fawcett. "Hannah will take every care of my cat, but the parrot always misses me so much. Then, to tell the truth, Mrs. Mimms has not taken the suggestions I made as to an improvement in the cooking here in a very genial spirit. I am very pleased by this news."

"I am extwemely gwatified by the success of my bwilliant ideah," said D'Arcy. "It flashed into my bwain, you know, when I was doin' German. All wight, I'm comin', Tom Mewwy! I hope you will let us see you off to your twain on Sattahday, Miss Fawcett. We shall be delighted to see you off! Yaas, I'm comin', Tom Mewwy!"

Saturday was looked forward to by all the juniors of St. Jim's. All were to be welcome to the feed, and as Miss Fawcett was standing the expense, Fatty Wynn was given a free hand in getting in the supplies; and Fatty Wynn nobly fulfilled his task.

The orders he sent to Mother Murphy's tuck-shop in Rylcombe, and the purchases he made of Dame Taggles in the school shop, caused those two old ladies to open their eyes with astonishment. The feed was likely to be a record one at St. Jim's.

Miss Priscilla and Ethel both had a hand in the arrangements. The success of her peace mission delighted Miss Priscilla beyond words. There was peace everywhere, and the lion was to lie down with the lamb, as it were, after the football match on Saturday afternoon.

Whether the peace thus established was likely to be lasting, Miss Fawcett fortunately did not stop to ask herself.

Perh[illegible] Ethel had her doubts, but she did not communicate then [illegible]iss Priscilla.

Sat[illegible]y came at last—a bright and sunny day, and after morning [illegible]hool, a hasty dinner was snatched, and then the boys of St. Jim's began to gather round the football-field.

Then the Grammarians began to arrive.

Pax was firmly established, and Frank Monk and his friends were greeted with cheers and handshakes.

Miss Priscilla beamed upon Frank as she shook his hand.

"I am so glad to see you!" she said. "It is a pleasure to me to know that my efforts have been crowned with success. Is it not pleasant, Ethel, to see Master Monk paying a friendly visit to Tom, never again to fall out or dispute at all."

"Very," said Ethel.

"Jolly nice!" said Frank Monk. "Tom Merry and I will always be jolly good friends, I hope, whatever happens."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, as Tom Merry slapped Frank on the back. "A wow or two will not interfere with fwiendship, you know——"

But just then Lowther trod on D'Arcy's toe, and stopped him.

The Wynwood eleven arrived a little later, and then came the football match; and a fine match it was. All St. Jim's crowded round the ground to see it, and the Grammarians crowded there with them, and cheered heartily at every bit of good play.

And when Tom Merry, in the last five minutes of the game, broke through the Wynwood defence, and beat the backs hands down, and kicked the winning goal, in spite of all the efforts of the Wynwood goalie, the cheering was deafening, and Frank Monk's voice was as loud as any in the hurrahing.

And Ethel clapped her hands, and so did Miss Priscilla, though she could not quite see what the enthusiasm was about, and at the finish of the game she asked Carboy which side had taken most runs, whereat Carboy grinned enigmatically.

And after the match, when the players had changed, came the feast in the gym., presided over by Miss Fawcett, ably seconded by Ethel.

Kildare and Monteith, and some more of the seniors, had consented to join the feasters, and the party was a large one, including most of the Shell and the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, the Wynwood eleven and their friends, and nearly two score of the young Grammarians. To relate all the incidents of that feast, and all that was said and done, would double the length of our story. Suffice it to say that all

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were extremely jolly, and that Fatty Wynn distinguished himself, as he usually managed to do upon such occasions.

Miss Priscilla's speech was rapturously applauded. The dear old lady congratulated St. Jim's on the peace that was now established where warfare once had reigned, and congratulated herself upon having been the means of bringing it out. The juniors winked and cheered with equal energy.

And when the feast was over, and the time came for Miss Priscilla to catch her train, the old lady and Ethel were escorted to the station by Tom Merry & Co. and Frank Monk and his comrades, and they departed amid a hurricane of cheers.

And thus peace was established, and the mission of Miss Priscilla had been a great success. But how long was it likely to last?

"Do you think there will ever be any more rows, Tom Merry?" asked Monk, after they had seen Miss Priscilla off at the station.

"I shouldn't wonder!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as vewy pwob——"

And Figgins & Co. chimed in with "What-ho!"

THE END.

(Another double-length tale dealing with Tom Merry & Co., next Thursday. Please fill in the order form in this issue and hand it to your newsagent.)

☞ The ONLY NEW AND ORIGINAL SCHOOL TALE by this famous author.



TEMPEST HEADLAND!

A SPLENDID NEW SCHOOL TALE.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

READ THIS FIRST!

Tempest Headland is a large school standing in an exposed position of Britain's coast.

A fearful storm is raging outside, when Cyril Conway tells Herr Ludvig, who is taking the class for German, that he can see from the window a ship being driven ashore. Dr. Buchanan, the headmaster, Herr Ludvig, and the boys immediately make their way to the cliff, but on reaching there they find that the ship has sunk. However, the Head is instrumental in saving a little black boy. He is taken to the school, and notes to the amount of £1,000, with a request that it may be used for his up-bringing, is found on him. A medical man examines the nigger, and he finds the boy has had such a shock to his system as to affect all memory of the past. Billy Barnes and Cyril Conway decide to name their new schoolmate Snowy White Adonis Venus. He is taken as a fag by Graft, a bully.

Mopps, the porter, persuades a number of the boys to go in for a raffle; the prize to be a loaded hamper. Cyril and Venus have two chances, and arrange a little plot between themselves to forestall Mopps, as they were well aware that Mopps will arrange matters to assure his winning the prize. The two chums are laughing over the scheme in their study, when Herr Ludvig asks them whether they are up to any mischief. "Mischief, sir?" exclaimed Cyril.

(Now go on with the story.)

Mopps Receives Some Good News.

"Mischief vas te vord I said, und it vas te vord I mean; so you need not look as tough you did not know vat such vord signifies. Be off mit you, you couple of monkeys!"

The chums bolted, and reached the lodge just as Mopps came in. He looked almost amiable, because the doctor had confirmed Cyril's words.

"It must have been cook as reminded him it was my birthday," observed Mopps. "I mentioned it to her, 'cos I thought as something a little nice would be sort of appropriate on such a horspicious occasion. I hope as I've won fust prize in that raffle."

"I hope you have done nothing of the sort, Mopps," said Cyril. "You know you told me that the ticket you sold was a lucky number, and I know you told all the other fellows you sold tickets to the same thing. I suppose you got your ticket for nothing, for selling all the rest? I know you wouldn't take all that trouble for nothing!"

"You don't know my nature! There's the post—least, I expect so. Here, get out of my way, you varmints!"

About half a dozen letters had been dropped into the box. Mopps brought them in. There were three postcards amongst them, and he laboriously spelt out their meaning. They were not addressed to him, but he liked to know all that was going on.

"Here's one for the master," he growled. "I believe I know the 'andwriting. I wonder what it's about, now?"

"Why don't you open it and see?" suggested Cyril.

"Here's one for the missus," growled Mopps, ignoring Cyril's brilliant suggestion. "Why, what's this on the back of it? Looks like a duck!"

"I rather fancy it is a crest."

"Well, I never! That's a gent's handwriting. Now, I wonder who's a-writing to her? It ain't the parson, 'cos no one can read his writing!"

"I should advise you to open that one also, Mopps," said Cyril. "It is only natural that you should want to know the contents of your mistress's letters. You show your authority, and open the thing; and if she doesn't like it, tell her she ought not to have letters addressed to her in a gentleman's handwriting. Threaten to report her to the doctor."

"Oh, you varmint! You ought to have been drowned years and—— Why, here's one for me—in a lady's hand, too! Well, I can't help it. It's downright sickening, and I never give them a bit of encouragement. I wonder, now, who has——"

"Open it, Mopps!" exclaimed Cyril. "That is the surest way to find out from whom a letter comes."

Mopps hesitated a moment, then ripped the envelope open, and, pointing with his first finger, he slowly spelt out the words. He was not a good reader.

"Hooray!" he roared. "Fust prize! Haw, haw, haw! A large 'amper, with good cheer. Bust! I knew as I was going to get fust prize. I had a—a what-do-you-call-it that I should."

"Try presentiment, Mopps," suggested Cyril.

"A hamper—a big hamper. Very well, how is he to send it? It will cost five shillings, will it? Not if I have to carry it all the road. Well, now, let me see. Look here, my lads, as I've always said to the masters, you are to be relied on. You say you are going up to the inn to-morrow morning in a boat——"

"Of course. The very thing, Mopps!" exclaimed Cyril. "We can bring that hamper back for you. Did you return my knife, Venus?"

Cyril felt in his pocket and looked absent-minded as he asked the question.

"I ain't quite sure 'bout dat," observed Venus, feeling in his own pockets.

"Well, we shall want that to-morrow. Yes, Mopps, we will bring your hamper back. It will save us buying——

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What I mean is, it won't be any trouble to us to bring that hamper back."

"See here, I'll come with you in the boat, and look after the hamper myself. There's wine in that hamper, to say nothing of plum-puddings and a couple of geese. Haw, haw, haw! Then, there's a five-pound note. I shall sell the geese to the doctor. They will do for the kitchen, and —well, I'll look after 'em."

"But it wouldn't be fair to sell the geese to the doctor and then eat them."

"Yes it would. He's supposed to find me in food, and it don't make no difference to him whether he buys the geese from me or from another shop."

"I did not know you were a shop, Mopps. You look more like a barrel! But where do we come in, if you are going to keep your eye on that hamper? You know, you are jolly heavy to row. There are two or three hundred-weight of blubber on you, to say nothing of your boots! That size must weigh a lot."

"I don't want none of your insults, now; and, what's more, I won't stand 'em! Howsoever, as you want me to come with you—why——"

"But there is no necessity for you to come, Mopps," observed Cyril. "We thought of having a little picnic; and, you see, we could easily bring your hamper back, you know. It would be rather fun to light a camp-fire, and cook the gee——. I mean, cook any fish we caught, or anything like that. No, don't you bother to come. We will look after your hamper, and I pledge you my word to bring that hamper here."

"Bust you! I know all about that. You might bring the hamper; then you would tell me that there worn't nothing inside it, and that's about what I'd find. I don't want none of your monkey tricks. What time are you going to start?"

"Eh? Oh, we will see to that hamper! Job will give it to us all right."

"Bust him! He'd better not. Mind, if you was to rob me I'd report you."

"But you would get into a row for having gone in for the raffle, and having sold tickets in the college, when you know that the doctor sets his face against such things. No, no, Mopps! You will get your hamper all right. All you have to do is to wait patiently till it comes. I can't give you the exact time of our start, but it will be somewhere before twelve. We are going to make a long day of it. Good-night!"

"Here, you come back! Bust it! I'll report you! Oh, the brutes! Wouldn't I like to wring their little necks? Now, they are going to rob a poor man. I know they are. Job is that soft he would give up the hamper to anyone as asked for it. Still, I'll be level with them. They are going to start early—that's what they are going to do—but I'll be up afore 'em; and I'll go in their boat, even if I have to do it by force."

"We've got him!" exclaimed Cyril. "He thinks we don't want him to come, so he is bound to come. We are going to have some fun to-morrow, Venus, you lovely goddess; but the greatest fun of all will be when we come home. Exit!"

"Suttinly! Sort ob chop him on de noddle wid an axe!"

"No, you silly black coon! That would not be funny, especially for him. Exit means scoot."

"Oh, I tought it had someting to do wid a chopper!"

The first boys in bed that night were Cyril and Venus, and this was such a remarkable thing that Herr Ludvig wrenched their bedclothes off to make sure that they were undressed, but he found it all right. For some moments he gazed at the docile youths, gravely shaking his head; then went away, muttering matters in German that even Cyril did not fully comprehend, although he was the professor's best pupil. Cyril's mother invariably spoke to him either in German or French; and though he always answered her in English, it gave him a very good knowledge of those two languages. He could speak either of them if he liked, but he never liked, and would never do so unless compelled.

Venus went to sleep, and in the ordinary course of affairs he would have continued to sleep until the bell, which he hated with a bitter hatred, forced him to get up—at least, a master or monitor generally forced him after the bell had gone; but on this particular occasion Venus was awoke by being violently shaken.

"Time to get up!" cried Cyril, who was half-dressed.

"I ain't been to sleep yet, Cyril!" growled Venus. "You will injure de poor nigger's health, and make him hab pneumatics!"

"Get up!"

"I can't get up, Cyril. I ain't at all well. I hab got a fearful pain all ober me, and I feel as sick as a hard-worked pump!"

"Look here, Venus," exclaimed Cyril, "I am not going to argue the point with you. Get up! You need not hurry. I have a water-jug just here."

"Golly! Stop it! You would kill me ob ice-water on de lungs: I ain't strong enough to stand anyting like dat. I hope you will shove a bunch ob violets on my grave, and tell your moder dat I forgave you."

Venus was out of bed like a shot, because he knew from past experience that he would have had the contents of the water-jug over him had he not leapt out.

"Ain't dis a mighty silly time to get up!" he growled.

"I won't argue the point with you," murmured Cyril.

"But dat's just what I want you to do, 'cos I'm mighty certain dat if I lie in bed arguing de matter, and you stand out in de cold, I could convince you in two-free minutes dat I'm right and you are wrong."

"Are you going to get dressed, or are you not?"

"'Spect I'm going to get dressed. I don't like it at all, but I like it better dan habing icy water chucked ober me. Wish I had been born a polar bear, or some ob dose insecks dat don't feel de cold. My teef are chattering."

"Well, they are keeping you company; only I don't think your teeth could possibly chatter such rot as you do."

"You know perfectly well, Cyril, dat dis ain't de time to get up. Boys ain't allowed to get up at dis time. I tell you dat I ain't been to sleep yet."

"Rats! You were snoring when I woke you. Now, make haste. It is past one o'clock."

"Golly! Dat's a nice time to get up, I must say!"

"We want to make a nice long day of it."

"Seems to me we'm making a day and a night ob dis day!" growled Venus. "I know you will make me ill before you'm done wid your silly tricks."

"You come along with me, and I'll show you."

"Den, you will want a light, 'cos you couldn't possibly show me anyting in dis darkness."

"Stop your grumbling, and get on your warmest clothes!"

"Dey'm all freezing cold, and I dunno how you could expect dem to be anyting else dis time ob de midnight. I'd much rader make a long day ob it de oder end."

Venus got dressed while he grumbled. If Cyril had made up his mind to get up at that unearthly hour, there was an end of the matter. It would be no good arguing with him.

"That's right!" exclaimed Cyril, as soon as Venus was dressed. "You look nice and warm now."

"Golly! Den, it's more dan I feel. You will hab a frozen piece ob black ice to cart about wid you!"

"Well, don't make such a noise, and come this way. Now, listen to me!"

"Wish I could sit by a fire while I was doing it."

"Rats! You are not cold. It is only imagination. Mopps will be in terror lest we start without him. Very well. I'm going to wake him up—by mistake, of course. But previous to that, I am going to take away his clothes; and as I shall have to do that without waking him—why, you must not make a row."

"Nunno! Yah, yah——"

"Hellup! Stop that awful guffaw, you silly owl!"

"Golly! I forgot dat little smile made a sort ob noise. Go lightly now, dough de man sleeps like some old hippopotamus, so he ain't at all likely to wake."

Mopps was lying on his back when Cyril entered his room, and he was snoring against time. Cyril took all his clothes, and then he told Venus to go and howl outside the window like a dog.

"I dunno dat I can howl like a dog."

"Well, howl like a cat, then."

"I wouldn't mind de yowling if I could do it indoors. Suppose I start like dis."

The awful row Venus made must have awoke any sleeper. It woke all the masters in the building, but they had no intention of getting up to see what was the matter. Each one considered it the duty of the others to do that, so no one came down. Mopps sprang out of bed and procured a light; then the two chums commenced to talk in stage whispers.

"I dare say Mopps will give us the key of the gates," observed Cyril.

"Not a doubt 'bout dat, if we ask de man nicely. Hellup, Mopps! We'm going to fetch your hamper, and we want de key ob de gates."

"Then, you ain't having it, bust you! How dare you come making this row at this 'ere time of night?"

"Don't be so lazy, Mopps!" exclaimed Cyril. "We are going to make a start now, so if you don't give us the keys we shall have to scale the wall."

"I'm coming with you, but it ain't time to start yet. I don't believe it's four o'clock."

"I must say you are a pretty judge of the time; but if you are really coming, you will have to hurry up, for we are not going to wait all day for you."



(*Continued*).

TEMPEST HEADLAND

The Only New and Original School Tale.
By S. CLARKE HOOK.

"Well, jest you wait a few minutes!" growled Mopps. "Bust it! Now, where have them clothes got——"

"Hurry up, there!" cried Cyril. "We can't wait all day!"

"I'm looking for my clothes."

"Well, look for them where you put them last night, stupid! Do you expect to find them up the chimney?"

"Why, I left 'em on this 'ere cheer."

"Well, cheer up, and find them!"

"Oh, you silly varmint, ain't that what I'm trying to do? You are enough to sicken anyone with your stupidity. Where—— Why, I know I left 'em here."

"Well, hurry up! You are wasting the best part of the day!" exclaimed Cyril. Then he went into the headmaster's study and rang the bell, and there he left Mopps's clothes.

Now, this was a very awkward position for the unfortunate Mopps. That bell wanted answering, judging by the violent way in which it was being rung, and yet he could scarcely go in his nightshirt. He got into a state of fury, and at last—as the bell commenced to ring more violently than ever—he wrapped a blanket round himself.

"Get behind the curtains!" Cyril whispered, as he heard Mopps coming. "He is sure to bring a light, and then he will see his clothes."

This was quite correct, and Mopps stood gazing at those clothes, with a blank expression on his countenance.

"Now, how did they come there?" he muttered. "Bust me! It's those varmints! Oh, they ought to be boiled alive in melted oil! I'll report them—as sure as I'm a living man I will! They want to get off before me, that's what they want to do; but I'll be level with them."

"He's going to be level with us, Venus," murmured Cyril. "Wait till he's half into his trousers, and then make a bolt for it."

Mopps was fearfully cold, and he commenced to hurriedly dress in that room.

The worthy pair waited until he had got one leg in his trousers, and was just struggling with the second one, when they darted from behind the curtains and made for the door.

"Come back, you utter varmints!" roared Mopps.

"We can't wait for you, dear boy!" cried Cyril. "See you later, down by the riverside. Good-bye! This way, Venus. We are getting some of our own back. We are going to hide in his clothes' cupboard. It's the last place where he will think of looking for us. The man wants correcting. Just listen to his language. I wish he would wake the doctor.

Mopps did not do this; but in a very short space of time he rushed into his lodge, seized the keys of the gate, and bolted towards the river.

It was quite against all rules, and had he known the time it is doubtful if he would have dared to do it; but as there was a moon, he imagined that it was just getting light. He left the keys in the gate, and Cyril went out and locked it. Then they lighted up Mopps's fire, drew the sofa in front of it, and while Venus slept on the sofa, Cyril went to sleep in the armchair.

The latter was a lad with an active brain, and he did not sleep for very long. He got up, made up the fire, and went into the kitchen to see what he could find. In the pantry he discovered some eggs and bacon, and these, with a loaf of bread and a frying-pan, he brought up. Then he awoke Venus.

"We are going to have breakfast, my chunk of chocolate," observed Cyril. "Mopps's kettle will soon be boiling. I don't know which you like, tea or coffee, but you are bound to find them here. Make what you like to drink, then take down the candle, and find some milk. Make haste! Mopps will be back at any minute. We have slept too long."

"Seems to me I ain't slept long enough. Howeber, if you say I hab slept too long, must be obersleep dat's making me feel so tired."

Venus had no difficulty in finding milk, and by the time he returned there was a very appetising smell of frizzling bacon. Then, by the time the eggs and bacon were cooked, the water was boiling, and the two chums sat down to an excellent breakfast.

"Suppose dat man goes widout us, and gets his hamper?" suggested Venus.

"He can't. In the first place, he would not be able to get a boat, and in the second, if he did, he would not be able to row it. No; his only chance is to walk there, and he will never attempt that."

"Funny ting he didn't notice de time!"

"Well, you see, I put his clock at five before I woke him, and if he happened to look at it, which is doubtful, he would have thought it was all right. Wire in! Don't you like it"

"I ain't got time to answer a silly question like dat!" observed Venus, with his mouth full of eggs and bacon.

"All right! Fire ahead! Hark! There is the bell! You can bet that is Mopps come back from the river. I expect he has found out the time. Well, we will put his clock right for him. It's no good having a clock hours too fast. Wait a bit. Give me some more coffee. Plenty of sugar in it. Why, here the man comes! He must have scaled the gates. I would have liked to see him doing that. Don't laugh at him. Leave him to me."

Mopps entered the room, and his face was a study.

"Oh, good-morning, Mopps!" exclaimed Cyril, looking extremely innocent. "Nice frosty morning for our trip, don't you think? We thought we would have a snack of breakfast while we were waiting for you."

"They ain't boys!" groaned Mopps. "Bust 'em, they are little vipers, strike me silly if they ain't!"

"Now, look here, Mopps," exclaimed Cyril, helping himself to the last rasher—Venus had been looking after his own wants—"we are not going to stand that sort of thing! Here we are helping you all we can to get your hamper, and you come and blame us. There's no pleasing you!"

"Bust you! You won't please me by sending me down to the river in the middle of the night, and hiding my clothes! You've stole that food!"

"Not at all, Mopps. The doctor expects us to have our breakfast before we start, and we've had it."

"What about my tea?"

"It's the doctor's tea, though I feel confident that we have been receiving stolen property there. I know you get a fine supply of tea from the monitors. But hurry up, Mopps! We are just about to start."

"You worm, I've started already! You have sent me down to the river in the middle of the night; but I will be even with you, and so I tell you."

"I tink if dat man is going to bully us all de road, we had better not take him."

"I ain't a-going to bully you!" growled Mopps, feeling that he was in their hands. "All the same, I like boys to be strictly honest, and I can't see as it's honest to take my tea. Now, jest sit by the fire while I get a bit of breakfast."

"Rats! We don't want to miss the tide."

"And I don't want to miss my breakfast!"

(Another long instalment of this splendid school tale next Thursday. Kindly fill in the order form and hand it to your newsagent.)



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THE EDITOR.

P.S.—P.C.'s, please.

P.P.S.—The picture for next Thursday's GEM is on the last page of the cover. P.T.O.

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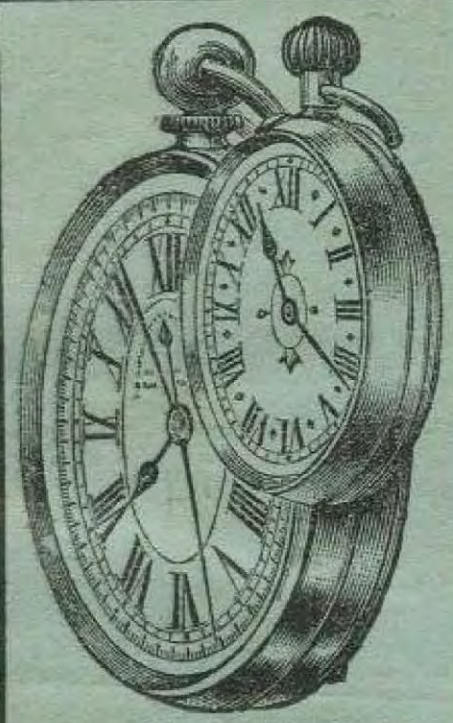


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