

TOM MERRY'S MASTER-STROKE.

The

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VOL. 4.

Grand Long
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Tale

A Tale of the Terrible Three.

by
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



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A Long Complete Tale of the School Chums of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

The Head's Surprise.

"THE Head's a brick!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"A real, double-action, gilt-edged, non-skidding brick!" went on Tom Merry, of the Shell, enthusiastically.

And again Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form chimed in:

"Yaas, wathah!"

"First chop, and no mistake!" said Jack Blake. "I wouldn't change the Head for his weight in toffee!"

"Yaas, wathah—I mean, wathah not!"

"A whole holiday!" said Monty Lowther, rubbing his hands. "Think of it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"All of his own accord, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, change the record, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"There, what an obliging kid—he's changed it already!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"A whole day!" said Tom Merry. "Hurrah!"

"Yaas—"

"Hip, pip!"

"Good!"

"Jollay good!"

"Ripping!" said Manners.

"Spiffing!"

"And what are we going to do?" asked Tom Merry. "That's the important question now. How are we going to spend Whit Monday?"

"Yaas, wa——"

"Ring off, Gussy! We know that record by heart."

"Pway don't be funnay, Lowther."

"The Head's a brick!" said Tom Merry, once more.

"Hear, hear!"

"Three cheers for the Head!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, pip, hurray!"

And the shout rang loudly over the quadrangle at St. Jim's, and echoed among the old elms, which were bright and green on this fresh May morning.

The juniors of St. Jim's were in high spirits.

There had been something of the sort in the air, as it were, for some days, but it was not till that morning that they had known for certain that it was to be a whole holiday. But after prayers the announcement had been made, and the fellows had poured out into the quadrangle in the gayest spirits.

Exactly what the Head's motive was, the juniors did not know. Whether it was sheer kindness of heart, or whether he had any other motive, they neither knew nor cared.

They only knew and cared that they had a glorious May day all to themselves. And that was enough!

"And what are we going to do?" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's go and dig up a row with the New House chaps," suggested Jack Blake. "I feel so jolly that I must have a row with somebody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's bump Gussy!" suggested Monty Lowther.

D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass, and surveyed the humorous spirit of the Shell scornfully through it.

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Come on! Let's bump him!"

"I uttably wefuse to be bumped! I should wegard such a pwoceedin' as extwemely dewogatory to my dig."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause for wibald laughtah in that wemark, Mannahs."

"Never mind; I do!" grinned Manners. "Lend a hand, and let us bump Gussy! I feel so joyful that I must bump somebody, and why not Gussy?"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Collar him!"

"Bump him!"

"Weally—ow—wow!"

The Terrible Three, laughing heartily, rushed at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and collared him. D'Arcy struggled, but he was an infant in the sturdy grasp of Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther.

They whirled him round, and bumped him down in a sitting posture on the grass in the twinkling of an eye.

Of course, they did not hurt him. But they rumbled his clothes and his hair, and that was a more serious matter to the swell of St. Jim's than any actual bodily hurt would have been.

"Ow!" he roared. "You wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful boundahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wefuse me!"

"Ha, ha! Bump him!"

"Bump!"

"Bai Jove! Wefuse, deah boys! Wefuse!"

Jack Blake and Digby and Herries, D'Arcy's chums, had stood by, laughing as loudly as the Terrible Three.

The matter seemed to appear as funny to them as to the chums of the Shell.

But as loyal Fourth-Formers, they could not allow D'Arcy's yell for rescue to pass unheeded.

"Bump!"

"Wefuse!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Blake. "Collar those Shell-fish!"

"Yes, rather!" And Blake and Herries and Digby rushed to the rescue.

Tom Merry & Co. were rolled over by that quick rush, and they went sprawling in the grass, and D'Arcy staggered to his feet.

The swell of St. Jim's gasped for breath.

"Gweat Scott! I have been tweated with gwoss disrespect! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Tom Mewwy.

"You uttah wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries bumped Manners' head into the grass, and Digby gently wiped his boots on Monty Lowther's trousers. Blake sat on Tom Merry's chest and pinned him down. The hero of the Shell gasped for breath.

"Pax!" he exclaimed.

"I wefuse to make it pax!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin' first!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway let him get up, Blake, while I thwash him."

Blake jumped up.

"Nuff's as good as a feast!" he exclaimed. "Pax, you Shell bounders!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on, Gussy."

"Weally—"

"Come on, I say."

"I am goin' to thwash Tom Mewwy—"

"Cheese it!"

"And Lowthah, and Mannahs—"

"Mersey!" exclaimed the Terrible Three in chorus.

"You uttah wottahs—"

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Jack Blake, slipping his arm through D'Arcy's. "Take his other arm, Dig. This way."

"Right you are!" said Digby.

"I wefuse! Ow!"

"Full steam ahead!"

"Ha, ha! Right-ho!"

"I wefuse—oh! Wefuse me—ow! You are wumplin' my sleeves—yow! Pway don't play the giddy goat, deah boys! Yarrah!"

But the chums of the Fourth did not release the swell of the School House.

They rushed him into the House, and they rushed him up the stairs, and along the Fourth-Form passage.

Then right into Study No. 6 they rushed him, and bumped him down breathless in the armchair, and there they let him go.

And D'Arcy sat up and gasped.

"Bai Jove! You uttah wottahs!"

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Read the Tale of the

Grammar School in

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry Has an Idea.

TOM MERRY dusted himself down and laughed. He did not mind a little rough play, and certainly the Terrible Three had started it.

It was a glorious May morning, and a whole holiday, and the chums of St. Jim's were simply bursting with high spirits.

"Where are we going?" asked Manners.

"What about getting up a cricket-match?"

"Can do that any time!"

"Yes; we want something extra special to-day," Tom Merry assented thoughtfully. "Some sort of an extra special beano."

"That's it."

"Even a House row wouldn't satisfy me now," said Tom Merry, laughing. "What are we going to do?"

"Make an excursion for the whole giddy day."

"Good!"

"But where?" said Manners. "It's a bright day, and splendid for photography. Shall we take the camera out for a walk?"

"Oh, blow the camera!"

"Look here—"

"We want something a little more exhilarating to-day," said Tom Merry. "What about camping out up the river?"

"Hurray!"

"Hip-pip!"

"You remember the island in the river, in Sir Hilton Popper's estate?" said Tom Merry. "The fellows used to camp there a lot in the summer."

"But Popper doesn't allow it now."

"He's going to make an exception in our favour to-day," said Tom Merry coolly. "You know St. Jim's has a claim to that island, and there's a lawsuit pending. It's all very well for it to be put out of bounds for the sake of keeping the peace! Who wants to keep the peace?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Are we going to camp on the island in the river?"

"We are—we is."

"Then let's go and lay in a supply of grub, and get off before any of the other chaps get to know of it," said Tom Merry. "The island's too small for a big party, and we don't want a crowd to attract the attention of the keepers. We three can have a jolly time there. We'll take out a boat and some grub—"

"How jolly!"

"Come on, then!"

"Better take some rugs and coats," said Manners. "It'll be colder coming home."

"Right! You go and get them, while Lowther gets the grub at Mrs. Taggies's, and I go and get the boat out," said Tom Merry, in a business-like tone. "That's an equal division of labour."

"Good!"

And Manners darted off into the House, while Lowther scudded to the school shop, and Tom Merry went down to the boathouse by the silvery waters of the Ryll.

The Ryll rushed and sang among the reeds, shining in the sunlight in the most inviting way.

Tom Merry was not the only junior who had thought of having a boat out—there was a rush for the boats, in fact.

The stately seniors were taking out boats in their stately way, but among the juniors there was a considerable amount of scrambling.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House, were coming down to the river; and, to judge by the big bag that Fatty Wynn carried, the New House chums had also decided to make a day of it somewhere.

"Hallo, Tom Merry, going out?" said Figgins affably, as Tom Merry jumped into a boat that was moored to the wooden landing-stage.

"Yes, rather."

"You can steer for us, if you like," said Figgins generously.

"Thank you for nothing," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"By the way, we want that boat."

"Go hon!"

"Are you going to steer for us?"

"I think not," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Then jump out."

"Rats!"

"Now, look here, Tom Merry—"

"Rubbish."

Figgins & Co. exchanged a glance. They were not looking particularly for a House row that bright morning; but, of course, they meant to have the boat. Even if they had not wanted it, they would not have allowed a School House fellow to score over them. And they did want it.

"Jump in," said Figgins.

"Right-ho!"

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"Rescue!" gasped Blake, as Tom Merry rolled him over and sat on his chest. "Now, then, make it pax and get off the island," said Tom Merry grimly, "or I'll jolly well roll you into the water."

Tom Merry grinned.

He had unmoored the boat, in anticipation of some such move on the part of the New House juniors, and he pushed off quickly just as the trio jumped.

Three splashes sounded as one.

The boat had rocked away, and Figgins & Co. had plunged into the water.

There was a roar of laughter from the fellows in caps and blazers crowded on the bank.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Oo-oo-och!" gasped the plunging juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry.

Figgins & Co. struck out. But the bag that had been in Fatty Wynn's hand was gone to the bottom, and the provisions it contained lost for ever, or, rather, converted into food for fishes.

Fatty Wynn scrambled upon the planks of the landing-stage.

"It's gone!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's gone?" demanded Figgins, scrambling out after him.

"The grub!"

"Phew!"

Kerr was hanging on to the gunwale of the boat. Tom Merry leaned over, with a boat-hook in his hand.

"Where will you have it?" he asked pleasantly.

"You ass!" gasped Kerr.

"Name the spot," said Tom Merry, flourishing the boat-hook.

And Kerr decided that he wouldn't have it anywhere, evidently, for he let go the boat and plunged for the landing-stage.

"You young asses!" exclaimed Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, standing up in a four-oar manned by Sixth-Formers. "Go and get your clothes changed at once."

"The—the grub!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"The what?"

"The grub!"

"What's he talking about?" exclaimed Kildare.

"Ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "His grub has gone to the bottom."

Kildare grinned.

"Well, it's gone," he remarked. "You'll never get it back, Wynn."

"Dive for it, Fatty!" shouted a dozen voices.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn did not dive for it: that would not have been much use. But he would certainly have hung about the spot where it had disappeared, haunting, as it were, the shores of Styx, where his beloved had departed, had not Figgins and

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE ST. JIM'S PAGEANT."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Kerr seized him by the arms and dragged him away to the house to get his clothes changed.

They passed Monty Lowther and Manners on the way.

The two Shell fellows stopped to stare at them.

Lowther carried a bag much resembling that which Fatty Wynn had lost, and Manners was laden with coats and rugs. "My only hat!" ejaculated Lowther. "Been taking a bath with your clothes on."

Figgins grunted.

"Go for 'em!" muttered Fatty Wynn. "They're going picnicking—that's grub Lowther's got in that bag."

"Good. One good turn deserves another."

"Sock it into 'em!" shouted Kerr.

And the dripping trio rushed at Manners and Lowther.

The odds were against the Shell fellows, and they did not stop to fight. They ran for the river. They didn't want to come into too close contact with the dripping garments of Figgins & Co.

"Run for it!" grinned Lowther.

And the chums of the Shell ran.

"After them!" roared Figgins, in stentorian tones.

Figgins & Co. gave chase.

The Shell fellows went down towards the river in fine style, the New House trio tearing on their track.

From the crowd on the bank and the river rose an encouraging shout.

"Go it, Figgins."

"Buck up, School House."

"Collar them, New House."

"Hurray!"

"Buck up!"

"Long legs wins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther's long legs had indeed won the race. He reached the boat; but at the same moment Figgins & Co. overtook Manners.

"Got him!" yelled Kerr.

"No good!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "He hasn't got the grub."

"Rescue!" yelled Manners.

Monty Lowther swung round and charged back at the New House trio.

He swung the big bag round in his hand, and Figgins went spinning on one side with a wild yell, and Kerr on the other.

Fatty Wynn sprang straight at Lowther, but Manners tripped him up, and the fat Fourth-Former rolled on the grass with a breathless grunt.

"Quick—into the boat!" shouted Tom Merry, bringing the skiff nearer to the planks of the landing-stage.

"The—the grub!" gasped Lowther.

For in those two terrific biffs he had dealt at the New House chums, the bag had burst open, and a dozen or more jam-tarts had scattered out on the grass. Fatty Wynn was already clutching at them.

"Never mind the grub," said Tom Merry. "Get in. Chuck the bag."

Lowther nodded, and threw the bag to Tom Merry, who caught it. Then Manners and Lowther bounded into the boat. It swayed and rocked away from the landing-stage with the impetus of the heavy jump.

Figgins and Kerr scrambled to their feet. Fatty Wynn did not: he was eating jam-tarts.

The boat was receding, and Tom Merry kissed his hand at the exasperated chums of the New House.

"Ta-ta!" he called out.

"Good-bye, Bluebell," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, let's get back!" growled Figgins. "Come on, Fatty."

"Gr-r-r-roo."

"You'll catch cold if you stay there gorging in your wet things."

"M-m-m-m."

"Yank him along, Kerr."

And Fatty Wynn was yanked along, and he went, still eating jam-tarts. The Terrible Three, laughing loudly, put out the oars, and floated out into the shining stream.

"Now for the giddy island," said Tom Merry.

And they pulled up the river.

CHAPTER 3.

So Has Blake.

"WEALLY, Blake—"

"The question is—"

"Weally—"

"Hallo, Gussy! Did you speak?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, don't! Now, the question is—"

"Weally, deah boys—"

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"THE EMPIRE" LIBRARY.

"The question is, what we're going to do for this giddy Bank Holiday?" said Jack Blake, rubbing his hands. "We've agreed that the Head's a brick!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah! But, I say—"

"Now, how are we going to make the best of it? I'd jolly well like to spend it on Hampstead Heath," said Blake regretfully. "That's not possible, however. The next best thing is a whole day excursion somewhere about here."

"We might go for a long tramp," suggested Herries. "My bulldog Towser likes to go for a long walk, and it would do him good."

"Yes," agreed Blake, with heavy sarcasm. "I think I can see us devoting a whole holiday to taking Towser for a tramp—I don't think."

"What-ho!" said Digby emphatically. "If Towser wants to go for a tramp, Towser can go for a tramp, but we—"

"Yaas, wathah. I should uttably wufese to go for a tramp with Towser," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, getting out of the armchair. "That wotten beast of yours has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs, Hewwies!"

"Rats!"

"If you says wats to me, Hewwies—"

"More rats."

"I am sowwy to have to ask you to delay the discuss. for a short time, deah boys, while I give Hewwies a feahful thwashin'—"

"Order!" said Blake. "We can't spend a Bank Holiday in watching you play the hooligan, D'Arcy."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Shut up. Now, what are we going to do? My idea is something in the line of a picnic."

"Good egg!"

"Bai Jove! I wish there were time to let my Cousin Ethel know."

"But there isn't," said Blake. "It would be ripping, but it can't be helped. Of course, Cousin Ethel would make the picnic a ripping success."

"Yaas, wathah."

"But there isn't time to let her know, and that settles it; and I expect she would have some other engagement, anyway."

"Of course, she would put off any othah engagement to oblige me, deah boys."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You're an ass, Gussy."

"Nothing of the sort. I—"

"But I don't see why we shouldn't have a decent picnic even though Cousin Ethel can't come," said Blake. "We can take some grub, and camp on the island up the river."

"Bai Jove! That's a good ideah."

"Yes, and the best of it is that we shall have the island to ourselves, as it's really out of bounds, and none of the other fellows will think of it," said Blake, with much satisfaction.

"Good!"

"We may have twouble with Sir Hilton Poppah, deah boy."

"I've heard that he's gone to London," said Blake. "Anyway, he doesn't matter. If he pops on the island, we'll make him pop off again. Blow Popper! Is it the island?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Good egg! I'll go and get Towser," said Herries.

Three stony stares were fastened upon Herries.

"You'll what?" demanded three voices in unison.

"I'll go and get Towser," said Herries defiantly.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Look here—"

"Now then—"

"Towser's coming," said Herries positively. "Besides,

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don't be an ass. Suppose some of the other chaps should think of camping on the island to-day. Towser will be useful to keep them off."

"Well, there's something in that," admitted Blake.

"Of course there is."

"I object to Towser. That beastly animal has no respect whatever for a fellow's twousahs."

"Towser's jolly well coming," said Herries resentfully.

"It's simply rotten the prejudice you chaps have against Towser, because he's a little—a little playful."

"Yes, he is a little playful," said Digby. "He'll get shot for it some day; but if you're set on Towser, take Towser. Blow Towser!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"I'll go and get him," said Herries. "I'll join you fellows at the gates. You'd better lay in some grub for the picnic."

"Yaas, watah! How fortunate my governah sent me a fyah on Satahday, deah boys."

"Yes, wasn't it?" grinned Blake. "Come on!"

And the chums of the Fourth left the School House. Blake, Digby, and D'Arcy went to Dame Taggles's little shop, to lay in the supply of provisions required for the picnic, while Herries went round to the kennels for Towser.

Herries ought really to have been at the rendezvous at the gates first, but as a matter of fact it was the other three who arrived there, laden with bags, without Herries or Towser having put in an appearance.

Blake looked up and down.

"The ass isn't here," he exclaimed. "I suppose he's stopping to feed Towser, or curl his hair, or something, before he brings him."

"Gr-r-r!"

"Bai Jove! Here he is!"

Herries came in sight, with a very red and flustered face, dragging on the chain of the bulldog. Towser was trying his hardest to get away, and Herries had all his work cut out to drag him to the gates.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surveyed them through his glass with an air of great interest.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked. "If Herries is goin' to dwag him all the way like that, I watah wondah how long it will take to get him all the way?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all right," gasped Herries.

"Yes, it looks it," agreed Blake.

"Oh, don't be an ass! Towser's trying to get at young Wally's mongrel," gasped Herries. "Young Wally is taking the beast out—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Towser caught sight of him. Blessed if I know why they allow that young ass to keep such a rotten beast in the school."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Towser will be all right when we—"

"Hewwies, I wefuse to allow you to call my minah an ass," said D'Arcy, with considerable dignity. "I twust you will withwaw the expression."

"Ass!"

"Then I shall have no weource but to thwash you, Hewwies—"

"Gr-r-r-r!" said Towser, as D'Arcy made a warlike movement towards Herries.

The swell of St. Jim's hastily retreated.

"Keep that wotten beast quiet, Hewwies."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo, here's Wally!"

Wally D'Arcy, Arthur Augustus's hopeful younger brother, appeared in sight, with Pongo frisking about his heels. Jameson and Gibson, of the Third, Wally's Form-fellows, were with him, and the three were evidently going to make a day of it, like most of the fellows at St. Jim's that Whit Monday.

"Bow-wow-wow!"

Pongo gave voice as he caught sight of Herries's bulldog, and with wonderful courage considering his size, frisked up to Towser with a challenging yap.

Towser was not likely to stand that.

He made a spring that dragged the chain from the hand of Herries, and went for the mongrel with a low growl.

"Here, hold your beast!" yelled Wally.

But it was too late.

Towser was rushing upon Pongo; and Pongo, repentant too late, dodged away to avoid the jaws of the bulldog. He dodged round Arthur Augustus.

"Stop them!" shrieked Wally.

Arthur Augustus staggered as Towser bumped against his legs behind, in pursuit of Pongo, and sat down.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"You ass! Why didn't you stop them?"

"Weally, Wally—"

Pongo made a desperate rush for the open gate. After

him went Towser, with his chain clinking on the ground behind him.

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "There'll be a circus now!"

The juniors rushed out into the road.

Pongo and Towser were disappearing down the road in a cloud of dust, Pongo still ahead, but Towser a good second. Wally, with a glare at Herries, jammed his cap tighter on his head, and started in pursuit.

"My hat!" panted Herries.

"Well, they're gone now, and you'll never catch 'em," said Blake, consolingly. "Come on!"

"But what about Towser?"

"Rats," said Digby warmly. "I suppose you don't want us to spend the whole day in chasing a blessed bulldog?"

"I don't see how we can have a picnic without Towser."

"Well, we'll try," said Blake sarcastically. "Perhaps if we try very hard, we may have a passably good time, even without Towser."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

Herries gave a last glance down the dusty road. Pongo and Towser had disappeared, and Wally was just disappearing round a bend in the lane.

Herries grunted, and followed his comrades down to the river. It certainly wasn't much use trying to catch Towser now, till Towser chose to be caught.

Herries was looking rather serious; but it was not difficult to see in three other faces in the party that the majority of them were by no means displeased by the occurrence. Indeed, Blake murmured to Digby that Wally deserved a vote of thanks for coming along with his mongrel in the nick of time like that, and Digby grinned and said, "Hear, hear!"

They obtained a boat, and dragged it out and jumped into it. Blake grinned with satisfaction as he sat down to steer.

"The best of it is," he remarked, "that we shall have the island to ourselves for the giddy picnic. That's the best of it."

And the others agreed that it was.

CHAPTER 4.

And Figgins!

"THERE jolly well won't be a boat left," said Kerr, as he towelled his head in the Fourth Form dormitory in the New House.

Figgins, who was squeezing the water out of the jacket he had just discarded, paused for a moment.

"By George, you're right!" he remarked. "All the fellows seem to be bent on boating to-day—I never saw so many blazers along the Ryll."

"Well, we sha'n't get a boat."

"That doesn't matter so much," remarked Fatty Wynn dolorously. "I'm thinking of the grub. It's at the bottom of the river. Whatever happens, boat or no boat, we shall never get that back."

"Oh, blow the grub!"

"Well, you ass," said Fatty Wynn, "there was a ripping feed in that bag! Do you remember there were fifteen sausages, done to a turn—"

"Blow the sausages!"

"And three pounds of ham—"

"Blow the ham!"

"And a whole tongue—"

"Blow the tongue!"

"And a pot of strawberry jam—"

"Blessed if he won't make me feel hungry if he keeps on!" exclaimed Figgins, flinging a boot at Fatty Wynn. "Shut up!"

"Look here— Oh!"

The boot cut short Fatty Wynn's remarks, as it bumped on his chest.

"Oh!" he roared.

"Shut up, then!"

"You duffer!"

"We can get some more grub," said Figgins, "but—"

"Now you're talking," said Fatty Wynn, recovering his good-humour at once. "Let's raise all the tin we can, and get down to the tuckshop before Mrs. Taggles has sold out. There's a big rush on the tuckshop this morning. I don't believe there will be any sausages left in any case."

"Rats! The bother is, whether we shall get a boat—"

"Never mind the boat if we get the grub."

"Ass! Do you want to swim to Popper's Island, then?"

"We can picnic somewhere else."

"Stuff! We don't want to be raided by a gang of School House rotters or the Grammar cads," said Figgins, "Rylcombe Grammar School has a holiday to-day, you know, and Gordon Gay and his lot are sure to be out."

"Bai Jove!" he remarked. "If Hewwies is goin' to dwag mind a row with the Grammarians, but it would be simply awful to have the grub raided."

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"Besides, we made up our minds to go to the island, and we're not going to change our plans," said Figgins. "It's a good distance, and it isn't every day we get a chance of going there. It's jolly adventurous camping out on an island, like giddy Crusoes. Besides, too, we shall have the place all to ourselves. I don't suppose it has occurred to anybody else at St. Jim's to camp on the island."

"Yes, that's so."

"Let's see what tin we can raise, and get out," said Figgins. "We're wasting a lot of time, through you duffers falling into the water."

"Why, you fell in yourself!"

"Well, let's get out," said Figgins, without arguing the point.

The New House chums were soon dressed, and a cricket-bag was found to carry the new supply of provisions in. Fortunately, Figgins & Co. were still able to raise a certain amount of cash. Figgins said generously that he would sell his diamond pin if necessary; but luckily it was not found necessary.

The three chums and the cricket-bag went down to the school shop, and they found Dame Taggles very red and tired, but in high good-humour.

The good dame had been doing a roaring trade that morning, and the little tuckshop was very nearly sold out.

Fatty Wynn cast a mournful glance at the empty sausage-dish, and the fragment of ham that remained.

"I told you we should be too late, Figgy," he remarked. "Plenty of tarts left, Master Wynn," said Mrs. Taggles, "and I can make you some beef sandwiches, and—"

"Good!" said Figgins. "Any old thing will do—"

"Will it?" said Fatty Wynn wrathfully. "It jolly well won't! Look here, you chaps had better go and look for a boat, and leave me to get the grub. I'll bring it down to the boathouse."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins.

And Fatty Wynn was left to examine what was left of Dame Taggles's stock, and to expend the sum of seven shillings and sixpence to the best possible advantage.

Figgins and Kerr willingly left him to the task, and walked down to the landing-stage before the boathouse.

The place was not so crowded now.

The river was alive with boats and skiffs and punts, and the boathouse, when Figgins looked into it, was quite empty, save for a light racing-skiff belonging to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, which was quite useless for their purpose.

Figgins grunted.

"No blessed boat here!" he remarked.

"I thought so."

"I've a jolly good mind to give up the picnic, and track out those Shell bouders, and give them a scrapping," said Figgins wrathfully.

"Do you know where they are gone?"

"Haven't the faintest idea."

"Then we'd better stick to the picnic," grinned Kerr.

"But how are we going to get to the island without a boat?"

Kerr knitted his brows in reflection. It certainly was not an easy question to answer.

"We can tramp up the river as far as the island," he remarked. "There's a towing-path part of the way, too. When we get there—"

"Swim?"

"Well, we could swim, and float our clothes over on a log or something," said Kerr. "It would be awfully like Robinson Crusoe!"

Figgins nodded.

"Or we could make a raft of the fence there," he said. "There's a wooden fence at one part, you know, where the bank's crumbled away."

"Good idea."

"Hallo, here's Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn was labouring down to the boathouse with the bag crammed. There was evidently quantity if not quality in the supply the fat Fourth-Former had laid in.

Fatty Wynn dropped the bag on the planks, and gasped for breath.

"By George, it's heavy!" he remarked.

"What have you got there?"

"Well, I've done the best I could," said Fatty Wynn. "No good running any risk of getting hungry and having nothing to eat, you know; so I've got a lot of bread and cheese—three loaves, and two pounds of cheese—"

"Phew!"

"That will lay a solid foundation, and then we can fill up with the tarts and buns and things," explained Fatty Wynn. "There's nothing like laying a good foundation, as I've discovered from experience. I haven't got any ginger-pop, so we can drink water. After all, ginger-pop is a luxury, and grub is a stern necessity."

"No ginger-pop?"

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"It's not really necessary, you know."

"Br-r-r! Who's going to eat three loaves?" demanded Figgins.

"Well, I could at a pinch, if you fellows didn't want any," said Fatty Wynn. "But wait till you've been in the open air a few hours, and you'll be glad enough of the bread and cheese."

Figgins snorted.

"Well, come on. We've got to walk; there's no boat."

Fatty Wynn looked dismayed.

"How are we to get the bag along?" he asked.

"Well, you might lay it on the ground, and whistle to it, and perhaps it would follow you," suggested Figgins sarcastically. "If that wouldn't answer, the only possible thing is to carry it, so far as I can see."

"It's jolly heavy!"

"Leave it there, then."

"Leave the grub!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn. "Are you dotty, Figgins?"

"Well, carry it, then."

"I've been doing all the shopping," said Fatty Wynn argumentatively. "Don't you think that you and Kerr ought to carry the bag in turns?"

"So we will," said Figgins, with a grin. "And you shall take your turn, too. There's jolly well not going to be any slacking in this party."

"Well, you see—"

"Oh, come on!"

Figgins lifted the bag to take first turn in carrying it. He strode away, and the other two followed him on the path up the river.

It was a blazing May morning, and the woods were very cool and shady from the sun, but when the juniors had an open path to traverse, Fatty Wynn began to blow. As it happened, it was his turn to carry the bag then, and he laboured along under it with many a grunt.

But suddenly a brilliant idea flashed into his brain. He set the bag down, and turned to Figgins and Kerr, mopping his brow with his handkerchief.

"I say, Figgy—"

"Well?" demanded Figgins.

"It was your idea to camp on the island."

"Yes, it was."

"But you thought we could get a boat, and we can't. Suppose we camp here, and have the grub now?" suggested Fatty Wynn. "I'm getting hungry."

"Br-r-r!"

"You see, I always get hungry in this May weather," said Fatty Wynn. "There's something in the air at this time of the year, I suppose. We could get under the trees yonder, and eat the grub—"

"Pick up that bag!"

"But—"

"Pick up that bag!" roared Figgins.

"Look here—"

"By Jove, I'll—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Fatty Wynn picked up the bag, and grunted on. Figgins grinned, and reached over, and jerked the heavy bag out of his hands. Fatty stared at him.

"What the—"

"It's all right, Fatty. I was only maintaining discipline!" grinned Figgins. "We're not going to camp here, but I'll carry the bag."

Fatty Wynn mopped his streaming brow.

"Good; but—"

"Oh, come on; it's nothing to me."

"Yes, but—"

"I tell you I hardly notice the weight."

"But—"

"Oh, come on; never mind, I tell you."

"But—but I don't mind; but—but why not have a snack now—that's what I was going to say!" stammered Fatty Wynn.

Kerr burst into a chuckle. Figgins grinned.

"If you come near this bag, I'll jolly well biff you with it," he said. "Look out!"

And Fatty Wynn sighed, and tramped on.

CHAPTER 5.

The Island in the River.

TOM MERRY stood up in the boat, and looked ahead. Manners and Lowther rested on their oars.

It was a glorious scene, and what scenery can be more glorious than English river scenery in the merry month of May?

The wide, deep river ran on with a steady murmur, and bubbled and sang through the rushes, and down the centre of the stream lay a golden bar of sunlight. But nearer the rich earthy banks the overhanging trees made a tremulous shade.

In the clear water the thick foliage was mirrored with flecks of golden light filtering in and dancing on the water.

Overhead was the blue sky—deep, deep blue—around the shining river, the green shady trees, the song of birds.

Tom Merry drew a deep sigh.

"How glorious!"

"What ho!" said Manners. "I've been thinking that all holidays ought to be whole holidays. You miss so much by only getting out in the afternoon."

"Yes, rather! And we ought to have one every day," said Lowther meditatively.

"And two on Sundays," said Tom Merry, laughing.

His laugh rang merrily through the silent woods.

"There's the island," he went on. "Looks ripping, doesn't it?"

"Can't see through the back of my head!" growled Lowther. "I'll take your word for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The island did look ripping, and no mistake.

It rose, a mass of green, from the rushing water, and round it the trees were reflected as in a looking-glass.

From a distance, it appeared a mere mass of foliage and undergrowth, but on approaching nearer, openings in the trees could be seen.

The juniors had been there before, though not often, owing to the dispute over the island between Sir Hilton Popper and the governing body of St. Jim's.

It was a doubtful point, perhaps, in law; but the juniors had no doubts whatever on the subject. The island belonged to St. Jim's, and always had. They wanted to camp there, and could there be a better reason for believing that the island was wholly and solely the property of the school?

"Doesn't it look gorgeous?" said Manners, craning his neck round. "A giddy picture—as pretty as a picture-postcard, by Jove!"

"Jolly good!" said Lowther. "But that oar you're bumping into my back isn't nice."

"Oh, sorry!" said Manners, looking round.

"I should think you are. Why—"

"Now, then, no ragging," said Tom Merry warningly. "This is going to be a peaceful day, and I won't have any quarrelling, if I have to lick both of you to keep the peace."

"Rats!"

"And many of 'em!"

"Peace, my children! We've got to land now."

The boat glided up to the island.

The Terrible Three had congratulated themselves that nobody else at St. Jim's had thought of camping on the island, and at all events there was nobody else there as yet.

The beautiful spot was quite silent and deserted.

Several birds rose from the bushes as the boat ran in to the shore, and flew away, but there was no other sign of life.

Tom Merry guided the boat in through a tangle of bushes that grew in the water, under the shade of a huge tree with drooping branches, Lowther and Manners standing up and using the oars to fend off.

Bump!

The boat ran its nose upon soft mud, and Manners made fast the boat to an old tree stump.

The Terrible Three jumped ashore.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I say, this is lovely! What a jolly good idea it was to come and camp here!"

"Spiffing!"

"We can explore the giddy island, and get a bathe here presently, too," said Tom Merry. "I thought of bringing towels. But, of course, the first thing in camping is to have a camp-fire."

"Blessed if I can see what we want with a fire on a giddy blazing morning like this," said Monty Lowther.

"Ass! We can't cook dinner in the sun, can we?"

"But it's not dinner-time yet."

"It will be by the time you're done arguing, I think," said Tom Merry. "Look here, if we leave getting the fire till dinner-time, we shall be jolly late with dinner. We've got to select the spot, and get the firewood, and make the fire burn. That's not always so jolly easy. I've camped out before."

"Oh, all right!" said Lowther resignedly.

"Buck up and gather some fuel—"

"But, I say, it's just possible that the Grammarian chaps might come along to-day," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully.

"There's a holiday at the Grammar School, you know. Wouldn't it be best for one of us to sit here on the bank and watch for enemies, while the other two gather the firewood?"

"Well, that's not a bad idea. I'll sit here, and—"

"Eh?"

"I'll sit here and watch, while you two—"

"Oh, come off!" said Lowther. "Of course, I should sit here and watch, while you and Manners get in the firewood."

"Yes," said Manners. "I don't think."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Oh, cheese it!" he said. "Let's go and get firewood first. If we can help it, we won't chop down any trees. It's a pity to spoil the scenery, and we haven't an axe, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And there will be lots of boughs and things."

The Terrible Three plunged into the trees at once in search of firewood. The spot where they had landed was the openest on the island, and most suitable for building a camp-fire. There was a burnt patch on the grass, in fact, which showed that a fire had been built there before.

In the wood there was plenty of fuel to be gathered.

In a very short time the chums of the Shell had collected as much as they could carry, and then they rejoined one another, and came back through the wood towards the camp, with great boughs slung over their shoulders, and sticks and brushwood jammed under their arms.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther suddenly.

"What's the row?"

"Was that an oar on the river?"

"Shouldn't wonder! Lots of fellows plying up the river to-day, though most of them don't come in this direction," said Tom Merry.

"Rather a joke if the Grammarians came by and collared the boat."

"Phew!"

"I suggested keeping watch, you know," said Lowther pleasantly.

"Oh, rats!"

The Terrible Three quickened their pace a little.

Lowther had said that it would be a joke, but as a matter of fact it would prove a serious thing for the Saints if their old rivals, the Grammarians, should come upon them by surprise and get possession of the boat.

For Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School, would certainly be on the warpath, if they came upon any St. Jim's juniors, and they would undoubtedly regard it as a ripping joke to capture the boat and leave the Saints stranded.

"Buck up!" said Tom Merry briefly.

There was a sound of a splash from the landing-place, and a grating sound, as if one boat had jammed against another.

There was no further doubt on the subject.

Fresh visitors had arrived at the island.

Friends or foes!

The Terrible Three, dropping part of their burden to run more quickly, dashed back to the landing-place.

As they burst from the trees a familiar voice fell upon their ears.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, here they are!"

CHAPTER 6.

D'Arcy Makes a Suggestion.

JACK BLAKE & CO. had arrived.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy stood on the greensward, and behind them their boat could be seen, moored alongside that belonging to the Terrible Three.

If the Terrible Three had been on the spot, the landing of the Fourth-Formers would certainly not have taken place undisputed, but they were ashore now.

The chums of the Shell came panting up.

They dropped the fuel into the grass, and stood staring at the Fourth-Formers, prepared for hostilities.

Tom Merry was relieved to find that the invaders were not the Grammarians, at all events; but the island was invaded all the same.

"Well?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Well?" said Blake.

"Well, deah boy?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, putting up his monocle and staring at the chums of the Shell.

"What have you come here for?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I was just going to ask you, what are you Shell-fish doing here?" said Jack Blake. "What do you fellows mean by planting yourselves on a respectable island?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We came here to picnic—"

"How curious; so did we."

"Well, as you see the island occupied, you can go further on," said Tom Merry. "There's lots of room on either bank."

And he waved his hand generously towards the distant banks of the Ryll.

Blake chuckled.

"I was just going to suggest that you should move out, and leave the island to us," he remarked.

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I fail to see anythin' asinine in The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 117."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE ST. JIM'S PAGEANT."

Blake's remark. I admit that he is an ass as a wule, but

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"Pway don't intewwupt me, Blake. I admit that he is an ass, as a wule——"

"Dry up!" roared Blake.

"I decline to dwy up. I admit that Blake is an ass, as a wule, but on this occasion I wegard his suggestion as vewy sensible. You Shell boundahs will have to cleah out."

"No fear!"

"I shall insist upon your doin' so."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I uttably fail to see any cause for diswespectful mewwiment. I insist upon you fellows gettin' into your boat and wovin' away at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy's right," said Digby. "He's usually a silly chump, but——"

"Weally, Dig——"

"But this time he's hit the nail right on the head. Are you fellows going to step into your boat, or be chucked in?"

"That's it," said Herries. "Perhaps you chaps wish we had brought Towser now. He'd have cleared these Shell rotters off pretty fast."

"Upon the whole, Hewwies, we are bettah without Towsah. Although Tom Mewwy is howwibly impertinent, I don't think a fellow ought to go so far as to wish wuinin' his twousahs, as would be the case if——"

"Are you Shell-fish going?" asked Blake.

The Terrible Three grinned at one another.

"Are we going, kids?" murmured Tom Merry.

"Yes," said Lowther, "I don't think."

"The question is, are you Fourth Form kids going?" said Manners. "We can't be bothered by children when we're camping out."

"Exactly," assented Tom Merry.

The Fourth-Formers turned red.

"Bai Jove! I can see no wescource, deah boys, but to give these wottahs a feahful thwashin'."

"What-ho!" said Blake.

"Collar the cads!"

The Terrible Three lined up at once. They were quite prepared to fight for the possession of the island, and, as a matter of fact, were not at all averse to a row. The Fourth-Formers were four to three, certainly, but then the upper Form fellows were a little older and a little bigger, though not much.

Blake pointed to the boat.

"There's your giddy boat," he remarked.

"Yes; I've seen it before," said Monty Lowther blandly.

"Will you jump in?"

"Not much."

"Better go quietly."

"My hat! Sounds like a giddy policeman, doesn't he?"

"Are you going?" roared Blake.

"Is that a conundrum?"

The Fourth-Formers wasted no more time in words. Blake rushed to the attack, and Digby and Herries followed fast.

Arthur Augustus delayed a little to put his eyeglass away in safety.

"Sock it into them!" roared Blake.

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"Collar them!"

"Boo!"

In a second the Terrible Three and the Fourth-Formers were struggling desperately.

Blake and Tom Merry rolled on the ground, and rolled over and over, as if they were performing some circus trick.

Digby collared Lowther, and was collared in his turn, and they staggered about wildly pommeling, most of the blows falling upon vacancy.

Herries seized Manners, and whirled him round and had him down in a moment, and sat on his chest to keep him there.

"Help, Gussy!" roared Blake, finding that Tom Merry was getting the upper hand.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Lend a hand, you ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass."

"Got you!" gasped Tom Merry.

They rolled over for the last time, and Blake went on his back in the grass, and Tom Merry sat astride of his chest.

"Rescue!" gasped Blake.

"Now, then, make it pax, Blake——"

"Rats!"

"And get off the island——"

"More rats!"

"Or I'll jolly well roll you into the water," said Tom Merry grimly.

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Read the Tale of the Grammar School in

"Rescue!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Gussy, you rotter——"

"I wefuse to be called a wottah!"

"Why don't you help me?" yelled Blake, as much puzzled as enraged, for D'Arcy was usually as brave as a lion, and quite reckless in a fistical encounter.

But just now there was a thoughtful shade upon the face of the swell of St. Jim's. He had put his eyeglass away for security, but he now took it out again, and jammed it into his eye, and surveyed the struggling combatants with a reflective air.

"I've got an idea, deah boys——"

"Rescue!"

"Yaas, I'll wescue you if necessary, but——"

"Help!" gasped Blake, as Tom Merry began to work his way through the grass towards the water's edge, which was close at hand.

"Yaas, wathah! But I've got an ideah. You see, I'm dwessed in white flannels, which would be wuined if I stuggled on the gwass in that wotten way."

"You howling ass!"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a howlin' ass!"

"Help!"

"Yaas, that's all wight, wait a minute. I was goin' to make a suggestion. Suppose we make it pax with these wottahs, and all camp here on the island togethah? There's woom enough on the island for all seven of us, you know, and we should make quite a jollay partay."

"Ass!"

"If Tom Mewwy will not agwee, I will collah him immediately, and we will throw the wottahs into the wivah!"

Tom Merry grinned.

The Shell fellows had rather the best of the combat, so far, but if D'Arcy joined in, the odds would be against them, and the chances certainly were that they, and not the Fourth-Formers, would be rolled into the water.

"I'm willing!" said Tom Merry. "After all, what is there to row about? The island's big enough for fifty campers."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake grunted.

"Gussy, you howling ass——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Why couldn't you make your blessed suggestion before, you image?" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove, you know, I didn't think of it till I saw you wollin' on the gwass, and thought how howwid it was for your clothes, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha! Is it pax?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," growled Blake.

And the combatants separated, and rose to their feet, very breathless and very dishevelled. The only fellow there who looked at all tidy was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and upon him the glares of Blake and Herries and Digby turned wrathfully.

CHAPTER 7.

Arthur Augustus Catches It.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was feeling very satisfied with himself.

His brilliant suggestion had stopped the combat, and he had been saved from the painful necessity of rumpling and soiling his clothes.

He turned his eyeglass upon Blake, Herries, and Digby with a compassionate air, and smiled sweetly at them.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, you do look awf'ly untidday!" he remarked.

Blake snorted.

"Oh, we do, do we?"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake, Digby, and Herries exchanged glances, and drew nearer to the swell of St. Jim's, who was chuckling in great amusement.

The three heroes of the Fourth certainly did look extremely dishevelled.

Blake's jacket was torn, Digby's trousers were very muddy, and Herries's collar was hanging by one end.

Their faces were red and flustered, their hair untidy, and they were gasping for breath. They formed a decided contrast to the handsome, well-groomed swell of St. Jim's, who looked as if he had just stepped bodily out of a shop-window.

No wonder Arthur Augustus was amused, and no wonder his amusement excited wrath in the breasts of the three fellows who had done all the scrapping. It would have been more judicious of D'Arcy to conceal his merriment.

"You look like thwee twamps, you know!" said Arthur Augustus, smiling. "You had bettah wash yourselves in



The heroes of the Fourth formed a contrast to the handsome, well-groomed swell of St. Jim's. "You look like twamps, you know!" said Arthur Augustus. "You had better go and wash yourselves in the wivah!"

the wivah! Fortunately, I bwought a clothes-bwush along, as I guessed it would be needed for my twousahs aftah a day wuffin' it. I will lend you the bwush, and you can bwush one anothah down! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Weally, Blake, I wegard it as wotten to chawackewise my laughtah as cacklin'!"

"What were you laughing at, then?"

"You fellows! You look so wagged and wuff!" said Arthur Augustus. "You wemind me of those fellows in the nursewy stowy, you know—'Wound the wugged wocks the wagged wascals wan!'"

"Awfully funny, isn't it?" said Blake, glowering.

"Yaas; I wegard it as wathah funnay!" assented D'Arcy.

"And you're nice and tidy, ain't you?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Because you left us to do all the scrapping?" said Herries wrathfully.

"It wasn't necessawwy for me to do any, you know, as I thought of that bwiliant suggestion in time," said D'Arcy. "Of course, if it had been necessawwy, I should have given Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah a feahful thwashin'! But—ha, ha, ha!—you must weally excuse me—you chaps do look so awf'ly wagged, you know!"

"Yes; we'll excuse you—I don't think!" growled Blake.

"Collar him!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Bump him!"

"Hold on—I—I mean, let go! Weally—— Hands off! Don't be a wottah! Blake, if you do not immediately wesease me—ow!—I shall wefuse—oh!—to wegard you as a fwend!"

"Bump him!"

"Weally—— Ow! Oh! Yaroooh!"

"Jolly untidy, ain't we?" grinned Digby. "Awfully wagged—eh? We'll see if we can make you look awfully wagged, too, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Roll him over!"

"Bump him!"

"Wipe your feet on him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott! Weally, deah boys! You howwid wascals! I will give you all a feahful thwashin'! Ow! Yow! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three stood by and roared with laughter. They were not at all sorry to see the punishment of Arthur Augustus.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were in deadly earnest.

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By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE ST. JIM'S PAGEANT."

By the time they had finished rolling the swell of St. Jim's in the grass, he was more untidy than the three of them added together.

They released him at last, and the swell of the Fourth sat up in the grass, gasping for breath, and looking dazed and dishevelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "He looks untidy!"

"Awfully wagged! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's funny! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy staggered to his feet.

He jammed his monocle tighter into his eye, and glanced down in utter dismay at the dusty and rumpled state of his previously spotless flannels.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have a gweat mind to give you all a feahful thwashin'!"

"Begin, then!" said Blake.

"On second thoughts, pewwaps I had bettah bwush down my clothes instead! I considah you a set of wotten and waseally hooligans, and I wufuse to continue to wegard you as fiends!"

"Well, I'm blessed if I care to own such a ragged, untidy chap as a friend, anyway!" said Blake.

"You cheeky wottah—"

"I don't see how we can be seen speaking to such a rough-looking character!" said Digby, with a shake of the head.

"Weally, Dig—"

"I wouldn't let my dog Towser chum up with him!" said Herries solemnly. "Not that Towser would! He's rather particular!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Hewwies!"

Blake waved his hand admonishingly.

"Don't address us again, D'Arcy, until you're a little cleaner! We don't know you—we utterly refuse to recognise you as an acquaintance in that state!"

D'Arcy did not reply.

His feelings were too deep for words.

He took a brush out of a bag in the boat, and began to brush himself down, expending a great deal of labour on the unavailing effort to restore his beautiful flannels to their pristine spotlessness.

The other juniors chuckled gleefully. Complete harmony was restored now between the chums of Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three.

"It will be dinner-time before we know where we are," Tom Merry remarked, when he had finished dusting himself down. "We've wasted a lot of time over these Fourth Form kids—"

"Who are you calling kids?"

"Sorry! I meant cads!" said Tom Merry gracefully.

"We've wasted a lot of time, and the sooner we get a camp-fire going the better!"

"Right you are!"

"We've got a jolly lot of fuel here!" said Manners.

"Better leave building the fire to me!" said Blake thoughtfully. "I've done a lot of camping-out up in Yorkshire, you know, and I think I'd better handle it!"

"You're welcome!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Right-ho! Tramp down the grass here—"

"Eh?"

"And bring me the fuel—"

"What?"

"Get the matches out of the boat—"

"Ahem!"

"Separate the twigs from the big chunks of wood, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Blake, in surprise.

"Your idea of building a fire!" grinned Tom Merry. "It seems to be standing up with your hands in your pockets, and giving orders to other fellows."

"Well, of course, you chaps will have to help with the manual labour, if I do the brainwork!" said Blake indignantly.

"I'd jolly well like to know what you're going to do brainwork with?" said Monty Lowther, with an air of great interest.

"Look here, if Lowther's going to be funny, pax is off!" said Blake, with a snort. "I'm not going to camp-out on this island and listen to Lowther's rotten jokes!"

"Hear, hear!" said Digby. "My idea is, that on a whole holiday Lowther ought to agree not to be funny!"

"Yes, rather!" cried Herries. "I never could understand why Tom Merry takes him out without a muzzle!"

Lowther glowered.

"You Fourth Form asses—"

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"Peace!" said Tom Merry. "It's all right! Lowther can't help it—"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Let's get on with the giddy camp-fire!" said Tom Merry pacifically. "There's the bacon to cook yet."

"Well, bring the wood here, and—"

"Rats!"

"How am I to light a fire without wood?" demanded Blake.

"Use your head!" said Lowther.

And at that ancient and time-worn chestnut, the Fourth-Formers rushed at Monty Lowther, and levelled him with the earth.

CHAPTER 8.

No Matches.

MONTY LOWTHER roared as he rolled on the grass, with the three excited Fourth-Formers rolling over him. Tom Merry and Manners did not rush to the rescue. They stood and looked on, and roared, too—with laughter.

"Bai Jove, that's wight!" said D'Arcy, looking up a moment from brushing his white trousers. "Woll on him! Bump the wottah!"

"Rescue!" gurgled Lowther.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry severely. "You know perfectly well that a great statesman said a long time ago that there was a limit to human patience. When you trot out a chestnut like that you reach the limit!"

"And pass it!" said Manners.

"Ow!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Help!"

"There," said Blake, getting up, with a gasp. "I think you won't make any more rotten old puns for a bit."

"Yow! You fathead!"

"You go into the water the next time," said Digby warningly.

"Groo!"

"Now bring me the wood, and I'll build the fire," said Blake.

Lowther sat up and panted. He bestowed a glare upon his chums, who were yelling with laughter.

"You rotters!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "Is this what you call sticking to a clam?"

"Well, Blake and Herries and Digby were sticking to you, you know."

"Fathead!"

And Lowther dusted himself down indignantly. Herries and Digby brought up armfuls of the wood, while Jack Blake was tramping down a spot for the fire.

"Get some stones from the bank," said Blake. "They help make a fire much better than just lighting it on the ground."

"But there aren't any stones bigger than marbles in the bank," said Herries. "It's a blessed earthy bank."

Blake grunted.

"Break that big branch up into logs, then."

"Who's building this giddy fire?" asked Digby innocently.

"Oh, don't jaw, old chap, wire in!"

"But—"

"Nuff said!"

And Blake set to work. He piled up the thickest chunks of wood to make a kind of grate, and arranged dry leaves and twigs and chips inside. Then he looked up over his shoulder.

"Matches!"

"Haven't any."

"You don't mean to say that you forgot to bring matches!" exclaimed Blake.

"Well, I thought you had some."

"I thought I saw Dig put 'em in his pocket," said Herries.

"Pair of blessed duffers!" grunted Blake.

"Well, you haven't any either; you forgot—"

"Oh, don't argue! How you chaps jaw! Gussy, have you got any matches?"

"There is a box in my jacket pocket, deah boy."

"Good! Hand it over."

"Sowwy; I changed my jacket before I left St. Jim's, you know, and I haven't any in these clothes."

Blake glared at him speechlessly for some moments.

"You utter ass!" he exclaimed at last. "Do you think I wanted to know whether you had any matches in the pockets of your clothes at St. Jim's?"

"You weally did not say what you wanted to know, Blake. You asked me if I had any matches, and I weplied—"

"Like a giddy fathead."

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"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, ring off! I suppose you've got some matches, Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry coloured.

"Blessed if I have!" he exclaimed. "I—I never thought of matches, you know. It—it quite slipped my memory. Of course, you've got some, Manners?"

Manners shook his head.

"Sorry; I never carry matches."

"Well, of all the giddy duffers!" exclaimed Blake, in disgust. "I suppose you have some, Lowther?"

"Go and eat coke!" said Monty Lowther, who was still considerably ruffled by the bumping he had received.

"Look here, have you got any matches?" roared Blake, who was beginning to get exasperated.

"Come, Monty, old chap," said Tom Merry persuasively; "don't be a rotter, you know."

"I had some loose vestas," said Lowther, relenting.

"Good!" said Blake. "If we just get the fire alight, we'll take care it doesn't go out again. Hand 'em over!"

"Of course, I may have lost them."

"Well, look."

Monty Lowther went through his pockets with irritating slowness. The Fourth-Formers, standing round the unlighted fire, glared at him impatiently.

The joker of the Shell took his time.

Perhaps he was not sorry to get his own back a little on the Fourth-Formers in this way. Blake broke out at last.

"Well, have you got any?"

"Can't find 'em," said Lowther blandly. "They must have jerked out of my pockets when you were rolling me in the grass."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Oh, don't cackle!" grunted Blake. "Let's look in the grass."

The three juniors went down on their hands and knees in the spot where they had bumped Lowther, and searched through the grass. Monty Lowther stood with his hands in his pockets, and regarded them with a bland smile, without offering to help. Several minutes passed in fruitless search, and then Blake turned up a very red and flustered face towards Tom Merry and Manners.

"Ain't you going to help," he demanded, "or are you going to stand there all the morning like a pair of blessed graven images?"

"Sorry; I thought you were lighting that fire," said Tom Merry. "If you can't do without help from the Shell, I'll wire in, with pleasure. Come on, Manners!"

And they joined in the hunt for the spilt matches.

"Come and help, Gussy!" shouted Blake.

"Sowwy, deah boys; I'm bwushin' my clothes."

"I'll jolly well come and comb your hair if you don't lend a hand."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Don't be a rotten slacker, Gussy!" said Herries.

"Oh, vewy well!"

And D'Arcy joined the match-hunters. On the spot where Lowther had been bumped, and all round it, the six juniors hunted on their hands and knees, digging among the tough roots of the grass in search of lost vestas.

But they found them not.

Lowther emitted a gentle chuckle, which brought several wrathful glares upon him. He was leaning against a tree in an attitude of easy grace.

"You cackling ass!" said Blake politely. "Why don't you come and help look for those blessed matches?"

"No fear!" said Lowther promptly. "You did the bumping, and now you can do the hunting for the matches."

"Bai Jove, I'm gettin' wathah dustay!"

"Do you think we're not dusty, ass?" said Blake crossly.

"I decline to be called an ass."

"I can't find any blessed matches, and I'm not going to look any more," exclaimed Digby, rising to his feet at last. "Very likely the fathead has made a mistake, and never had any matches in his pocket at all."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Lowther suddenly.

They looked at him.

"Well!" said Blake.

"I'm sorry; I remember now. I lent the matches to Skimpole," said Lowther. "Sorry I haven't any."

They stared at him, and they glared. For some moments they were incapable of speech. Blake found his voice at last.

"You—you—you've given us this job for nothing!" he gasped.

"Sorry! You see—"

"Collar the rotter!" shrieked Digby wildly.

Monty Lowther dodged round the tree and dashed away at full speed into the wood. The dusty and exasperated juniors meant business, as he could see from their looks.

Lowther's long legs stood him in good stead just then.

"After him!" panted Blake.

"Collar the rotter!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"By Jove, we'll duck him!"

"We'll scalp him!"

Lowther chuckled as he ran. He had no doubt of being able to dodge the pursuers in the wood, and the joke upon the Fourth-Formers was worth the trouble. But Lowther reckoned without his host.

As he ran into a little glade he suddenly stumbled over a recumbent form in the ferns at the foot of a tree, and rolled on the earth before he knew what was happening. He sat up dazedly.

A youth had been sitting in the ferns there, half sitting and half lying in the shade, with a big book open, which he was devouring with eyes that blinked through a huge pair of spectacles.

It was Skimpole, of the Shell.

Skimpole dropped the book, and uttered an ejaculation as Lowther rolled over him, and jumped up, blinking at the Shell fellow in amazement.

"Dear me, Lowther—"

"Ow! You ass! Oh!"

Lowther uttered that last ejaculation as the juniors overtook him and grasped him.

They all stared in amazement at Skimpole. They had not had the faintest idea that the genius of the Shell was on the island.

"How on earth did you get here?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Skimpole blinked at him.

"Dear me! What a crowd there are of you!" he exclaimed. "This is most annoying."

"What is annoying?"

"To be disturbed like this. I came here to be quiet and undisturbed, in order to read through and fully grasp the important truths of Professor Loosetop's great book on Determinism," explained Skimpole. "Dear me! What are you doing to Lowther?"

"Pax! Ow! Pax!" yelled Lowther.

"Bumping him," said Blake, with a grin.

"Hold on!" yelled Lowther. "Skimmy's got some matches; I lent them to him. It's all right! Stop it, you asses!"

"Bai Jove, that's a good idea!"

"Good egg!" said Blake. "Skimmy, old man, we've got a camp-fire, and can't light it, as these duffers have forgotten to bring any matches. Can you help us?"

"Certainly!" said Skimpole, looking pleased. "Where is the fire?"

"This way!"

And Blake dragged the genius of the Shell off towards the camp.

CHAPTER 9.

Skimpole to the Rescue!

SKIMPOLE tucked his big book under his arm, and went willingly. Skimpole, the amateur Socialist, the fervid Determinist, and the enterprising youth of science, was always ready to oblige. True, when he tried to be of service to anybody, things generally went wrong, and the last state of the person he tried to help was worse than the first. But that wasn't Skimpole's fault.

"I am very pleased to be of service to you fellows," he remarked. "Of course, it is annoying to have my studies interrupted in this way—"

"Rats!" said Blake cheerfully.

"Really, Blake, that is almost rude. However, I pardon you, as rudeness is the outcome of the combined influence of heredity and environment, and—"

"Not on a whole holiday," interrupted Tom Merry.

Skimpole blinked at him through his spectacles in great astonishment.

"Really, Tom Merry, you are under a remarkable delusion if you imagine that the influence of heredity and environment ceases to work on holidays."

"Ha, ha! I mean, we don't want to be bored with that rot on a whole holiday," explained Tom Merry.

"You are quite mistaken. Determinism is not rot, though I admit that it is hard for the unpractised eye to see any difference between them at first sight. But I will explain—"

"That you jolly well won't!" said Manners.

"Really, Manners—"

"Oh, shut up, and come and light the fire!"

And Skimpole was hurried off to the camp so fast that he was too breathless to say another word. Monty Lowther followed the juniors, a little breathless, too, though the timely meeting with Skimpole, and the news that matches were to be had, had saved him from the severe punishment the juniors had intended for him.

"Here you are!" said Blake, dragging the gasping

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Skimpole out of the bushes. "You shall join in the feed, if you like, Skimmy, after this. I never imagined it would be possible for anybody ever to be glad to see you, but—"

"But the unexpected has happened," said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Just so," agreed Blake. "It's like corn in Egypt. Where are the matches, Skimmy?"

"Dear me!"

"Light the fire, kid!"

"I—I am quite out of breath."

"That's all right! Light the fire."

"Oh, dear!"

"Give me the matches, then," said Blake.

"The—the matches!"

"Yes, ass, the matches! M-A-T-C-H-E-S—matches!" roared Blake. "Hand them over, and I'll get the fire going."

"I am sorry, Blake—"

"Oh, blow your sorrow! Hand over the matches!"

"I haven't any!"

"What!"

Skimpole blinked at the excited juniors.

"I am sorry I haven't any matches, Blake," he said.

"You—you ass—"

"That duffer Lowther said—"

"I said I lent him some," said Monty Lowther. "I didn't say he hadn't used them. I suppose he has."

"Certainly," said Skimpole.

"You frabjous chump!" said Blake, in measured tones.

"Then what do you mean by saying that you could light the fire?"

The genius of the Shell smiled pityingly.

"My dear Blake, I can light a fire without matches."

"Eh? How?"

"By the same means that Archimedes used to set somebody's fleet on fire," said Skimpole. "That was a most interesting experiment—"

"Blow Archimedes! Can you light that fire?" howled Blake.

"Certainly."

"How?"

"With a burning-glass," said the scientific junior. "By means of a burning-glass, I can concentrate the sun's rays—"

"Have you a burning-glass?"

"Well, no. Haven't you?"

"Do you think I go on a picnic with my pockets full of blessed burning-glasses?" shrieked Blake, exasperated.

"H'm! Perhaps there may be another method," said Skimpole. "Pray be calm. To a really scientific mind nothing is impossible. If a scientist believed in anything being impossible, how could he possibly credit the modern scientific theories on any subject? I have no doubt that I can obtain fire in some way, by bringing the powers of my brain to bear on the subject. By a mixture of sulphur and saltpetre—"

"A what?" said Tom Merry.

"A mixture of sulphur and saltpetre, I can obtain—"

"Have you any sulphur?"

"Or saltpetre?" howled Blake.

"Well, no, but—"

"Anybody got any sulphur or saltpetre in his pocket?" asked Tom Merry, laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole wrinkled up his big, bumpy forehead in a thoughtful way. His mighty brain was evidently hard at work.

"Perhaps I can make a burning-glass which will answer the purpose," he said, at last. "A broken bottle—"

"There's a tumbler in the hamper in our boat," said Digby.

"Excellent!"

Blake snorted.

"I wonder what time he will get the fire alight with a blessed tumbler?" he remarked. "We shall have to have our dinner cold. I'm hungry."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Blessed if I know how we're to eat raw bacon cold," said Herries; and there was a general shudder.

"It is all right," said Skimpole, blinking at them. "I shall undoubtedly ignite the fire in the course of a few minutes with the aid of the tumbler."

"Rats!"

"Really, Blake, I could wish that you would be more respectful to the marvels of science—"

"Poof!"

"Please give me the tumbler, Digby."

"Here you are!"

"Thank you. Now watch me. I am just going to begin." And Skimpole began.

The bottom of the tumbler certainly acted as a reflector, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 117.

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and threw a patch of golden light from the sun upon the pile of fuel.

Skimpole put his hand there, but there was no perceptible heat. He blinked round at the unbelieving juniors.

"Of course, it will not ignite all at once," he remarked.

"It jolly well won't ignite all at all," said Blake. "We haven't any tinder, and the sun isn't strong enough, anyway."

"Really, Blake—"

"And if it were, a giddy ass like you couldn't do it," said Blake. "Now, how on earth are you going to get a fire?"

"With the aid of science—"

"Blow science."

"Really, Blake—"

"How on earth—"

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter with you, Gussy— Have you thought of a dodge?"

"No, deah boy. I was not thinkin' of the fish," said D'Arcy, pointing across the shining stream towards the northern bank. "Look!"

The juniors looked, and uttered simultaneous exclamations of surprise.

CHAPTER 10.

No Luck for Figgins & Co.

FIGGINS & CO., had reached the bank of the Ryll opposite the island.

Fatty Wynn, as he came down the grassy bank of the river, threw himself down in the shade of a tree, and gasped.

The morning was decidedly warm, and growing warmer, and the fat junior had had enough of walking. Figgins set the bag down, and looked towards the island.

Little did he dream that seven pairs of eyes were fastened upon him from the island in the river. He could not see Tom Merry & Co. there, for they were hidden by a fringe of bushes. But Figgins & Co. were plainly visible to the fellows on the island.

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "I think all St. Jim's has made up its mind to camp on this island to-day."

"Looks like it," grinned Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But Figgins can't be coming over here," said Manners. "They've got no boat. They've been tramping through the woods."

"Look at Figgins."

A look at Figgins was enough to proclaim his intentions. He was stripping off his clothes in the shade of the trees. Kerr was following his example. Fatty Wynn was gasping in the grass, and did not move.

"They're going to swim to the island," said Tom Merry.

The chums of the Shell chuckled.

"They were too late to get a boat," grinned Lowther.

"Serve them jolly well right for trying to collar ours."

"Yes, rather!"

"I like Figgy for one thing—he does stick to a thing," grinned Blake. "If he can't row to the island, he'll swim to it. But when he gets here—"

"He'll find that New House bounders are barred."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Suppose we yell to them and warn them off," suggested Digby.

Blake made a hurried gesture of warning.

"No, no! Figgy may have some matches about him, and we want them. He can't have been as enough to come out camping without matches, like the rest of you."

"Yaas, bai Jove! That's vewy thoughtful of you, Blake."

"Go hon!"

"Don't make a row—"

"Who's making a row, Tom Merry?"

"Well, don't," said the hero of the Shell pacifically. "If we scare them off, we sha'n't get the matches; and Figgins is certain to have some. He carries a matchbox on his watchchain—a silver one."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the chums of the School House, keeping under cover of the bushes, watched the New House trio with great interest, prepared to give them a warm reception as soon as they reached the island. In the keen interest of a House row, they forgot even that they were hungry.

Figgins and Kerr were soon ready to take to the water, but Fatty Wynn was still resting in the long grass. Figgins stirred him with his foot, and the fat Fourth-Former grunted.

"Get up, Fatty!"

"Groo!"

"Buck up!" said Figgins. "We're ready!"

"I'm fagged."

"A swim will liven you up," said Kerr encouragingly.

"I'm hungry."

"Well, we're going to feed on the island."

"I think we ought to have some grub first," said Fatty Wynn, sitting up. "It will make less to carry over, and then—"

"Rats!" said Figgins. "We're going to picnic on that blessed island, if we have to fly there. I'm not going to be done."

"But I'm hungry."

"It's bad to get into the water after eating, you duffer."

"Well, we could have a feed now, and then a rest, and then—"

"Up with you," said Figgins, without waiting for the rest of the programme Fatty Wynn was mapping out.

And he seized the fat Fourth-Former by the collar and jerked him to his feet. Fatty Wynn came up to a perpendicular attitude with a grunt.

"I think it's rot—" he began.

"Are you going to strip, or shall we strip you, Fatty?"

"Oh, I'll strip!"

And Fatty Wynn undressed.

Figgins had gathered a number of boughs and sticks as he came through the wood, and he plunged into the water, and fastened these together in a flimsy raft with string. The raft would not have borne the weight of one of the juniors for a moment, but it was quite capable of bearing the weight of the clothes and the bag of provisions.

"Shove the things this way, Kerr," said Figgins.

And Kerr handed out the cargo, and Figgins arranged it on the raft, and tied it there. The idea was to swim to the island and push the little raft before them; not at all a difficult task for good swimmers like Figgins & Co.

"Are you ready, Fatty?"

"Yes," grunted Fatty Wynn.

"Then come on!"

Fatty Wynn put one toe in the water, and drew it back again.

"It's cold!" he said.

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Figgins, who was swimming, and pushing the raft out from the rushes. "Don't be afraid of the water. Push him in, Kerr!"

"Certainly!"

"Here—oh—groo—oo!"

Splash!

Fatty Wynn disappeared into the water with a mighty splash. Figgins gave a yell. A good deal of the splash came over the raft, and upon the things it bore. Figgins had not foreseen that.

"My hat!" exclaimed Kerr, in dismay.

"You ass!"

"Well, you told me—"

"Oo-oo-ooch!" gasped Fatty Wynn, coming up. "You chump! Yow! Groo! Oooh!"

Figgins reached out with one leg and shoved him under the water again. When Fatty came up he was puffing and blowing more than ever.

"You ass!" he snorted. "What did you do that for?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Figgins crossly. "Come on, Kerr!"

Kerr slipped into the water, and helped Figgins float the raft out. The astonished Fatty kept at a safe distance from both of them.

The raft floated across the placid river towards the island, the New House juniors swimming on either side of it and propelling it. They had started a little way above the island, to allow for the current.

From the island Tom Merry & Co. watched them with gleaming eyes.

"My only hat!" Monty Lowther remarked. "That is a good dodge of Figgys—especially as we're here to collar his giddy raft as soon as he's ashore."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet!" said Tom Merry. "Wait till they've shoved the raft close to the shore, and then collar it, and chuck the New House bounders back into the water."

"Good egg!"

And the School House fellows watched eagerly.

Closer came the trio, blissfully unconscious of the reception that awaited them.

Closer and closer—till Figgins pushed the little raft through the rushes that grew on the edge of the island, and it came fast in the mud of the bank.

Then Figgins and Kerr scrambled through the reeds ashore, and gasped.

"Got here, anyway!" said Figgins.

"Yes, rather. Good!"

"The best of it is, that we shall have the island to ourselves—Oh!"

Figgins said "Oh!" as half a dozen forms suddenly rushed out of the bushes and seized him and his comrade.

Before they had time to resist—before they even knew that they were attacked—Figgins and Kerr were tossed back into the water.

Splash!

"Oh!"

"Groo!"

"Collar the stuff!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

In the twinkling of an eye, almost, the School House chums collared the raft and its burden, and dragged it ashore and plumped it down.

Then they stood on the margin of the stream, and looked at Figgins & Co. Figgins and Kerr came up puffing and blowing, and stared in blank amazement at the School House fellows. From Tom Merry & Co. came a yell of laughter that rang along the river.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 11.

Licked Hollow.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The School House juniors simply roared.

The faces of Figgins & Co. were an interesting study. Treading water, the New House trio stared and glared at the juniors on the island.

"M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Figgins.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Kerr.

"The—The School House cads!" panted Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I wathah weckon you're done this time, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his monocle upon the dismayed and astounded New House juniors.

"What-ho!" grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who's cock-house at St. Jim's?" yelled Tom Merry.

"School House!" shouted the rest.

"Where's the New House?"

"Nowhere!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Hear us smile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Je smile, vous smilez, nous smilez!" said Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha! How many duckings are you going to take to-day, Figgys?"

"Well, you rotters!" said Figgins, finding his voice at last. "Fancy meeting you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You beastly bounders!" said Kerr. "Give us back our clothes!"

"Can't be did!" said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "We want to make a camp-fire, and—"

"Here, I say, you jolly well can't make a fire of our clothes!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, in alarm.

"Ha, ha! I didn't mean that! We're going through your pockets for matches!"

"Here's Figgys's matchbox," said Blake, jerking it out of the pocket of Figgins's waistcoat. "This is luck!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Like corn in Egypt in a lean year, and no mistake!" grinned Manners. "You've come just in the nick of time, Figgys!"

"And the grub will come in useful, too!" remarked Herries.

"Here, you lot that grub alone!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's our grub!"

"My dear chap, you've carried the grub here, and we're going to eat it," said Lowther. "That's an equal division of labour, and quite fair!"

"Yah! You—"

"My hat! Here's tins of salmon, and loaves, and cheese, and—"

"Come on!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn excitedly. "We're not going to lose the grub. You would come and picnic on this beastly island, Figgins!"

"Not much chance of picnicking there now!" grinned Kerr.

"Doesn't look like it!" grunted Figgins.

There certainly wasn't much hope of success in attacking overwhelming odds. But Fatty Wynn was too excited about the feed to think or care for that.

"Come on!" he exclaimed.

"Hang it all, Fatty—"

"Come on, I say!"

And Fatty Wynn swam desperately to the shore. Figgins and Kerr could not but follow him. The three plunged through the rushes.

"Here they come!" grinned Blake. "What giddy heroes!"

"A forlorn hope!" said Monty Lowther. "Talk about the storming of Badajoz!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The School House juniors lined up on the shore, and stood ready to receive the attack. Figgins & Co. scrambled up, and each of them was seized by two pairs of hands as he landed, and tossed back helplessly into the water.

Splash, splash, splash!

Figgins & Co. floundered in the river again, gasping.

"Any more coming on?" grinned Tom Merry.

"Yah! School House rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better give in, and make it pax," said Blake. "If you like to admit that the School House is cock-house at St. Jim's, we'll make it pax, and you can come ashore!"

"Rats!"

"That's the music," said Tom Merry. "Now, is School House cock-house?"

"No!" roared Figgins & Co.

"Then you can jolly well stay in the water till it is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn gasped, and exchanged glances of exasperation. They had lost their feed, and they had lost their clothes, and there wasn't the remotest chance of effecting a landing on the island while the School House chums were on guard.

"Going to give in?" asked Blake sweetly.

"No!" roared Figgins.

"Give them some turfs to help 'em make up their minds," suggested Lowther.

"Ha, ha! Good egg!"

The juniors detached chunks of turf, and began to pelt the three swimmers, knocking up splashes all round them.

Figgins & Co. promptly swam back to a safer distance.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "We're done this time. But we're jolly well not going to give in. Never!"

"Never!" said Kerr.

"I'm jolly hungry, though!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Eh?"

"I'm jolly hungry. I think——"

"If you're thinking of selling your giddy birthright for a pot of message—I mean a mess of pottage——" began Figgins excitedly.

"We'll jolly well drown him!" said Kerr.

Fatty Wynn backed away in alarm.

"Here, hold on, you duffers! I wasn't thinking of giving in. Only we shall have to get some grub somewhere!"

"Blessed if I know what we're to do without our clothes!"

A voice hailed them from the bank.

"Hallo, you New House wasters!"

"Hallo, you School House worms!"

"Are you giving in?"

"Never!"

"You'll be ill if you stay in the water. You know that New House juniors and cold water never get on."

"Go and eat coke!"

"Better give in, Figgy, and come and feed!"

"Never!"

"Well, you can have your clothes, then," said Tom Merry cheerfully, pushing the raft out of the rushes. "We don't deprive you of your clothes. Mind, if you like to give in——"

"We don't!"

"We won't!"

"You've only got to say, 'Please make it pax, and we'll be good——'"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll make you say that presently," said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, we'll give you one last chance," said Figgins, coming nearer to the island. The School House fellows stared at him.

"Well, I like that!" gasped Tom Merry. "You'll give us—one last chance!"

"Yes. You can get off that island, and leave our grub untouched, or——"

"Or you'll slay us?" asked Blake, in mock alarm.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or we'll come back with a New House crowd and wipe you up!" said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind, we mean bizney!"

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry, laughing, "you can bring all the New House if you like, including the seniors, with your House-master thrown in, and we shouldn't mind a bit!"

"Not a little bit."

"Wathah not!"

"Oh, all right!" said Figgins. "We'll snatch you bald-headed, and make you squirm. Mind, it's your last chance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The loud laughter of the School House fellows showed that they were not much alarmed by Figgins's dire threats.

The raft bearing the clothes floated down on the current. The provisions were retained, as the spoils of war.

"Mind, you can come and feed if you want to!" called out Tom Merry, as the New House juniors seized the raft and propelled it away.

"So we will, and there won't be any left for you soon!" said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn cast a longing glance back at the island. But though the flesh might be weak, the spirit was loyal. Fatty Wynn swam off with Figgins and Kerr, and the triumphant yells of the School House fellows died away in the distance.

CHAPTER 12.

Blake Cooks the Bacon.

"THIS is where we smile, and no mistake!" grinned Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get the fire lighted, then," said Tom Merry. "Skimpy doesn't seem to have made much progress with the burning-glass."

Blake grinned, and approached the still unlighted camp-fire. Skimpole was kneeling in the grass, still patiently holding the tumbler to serve as a burning-glass. The fire had not yet caught, or shown any sign of doing so.

"How are you getting on, Skimpy?" asked Blake.

"Pretty well, Blake."

"Not alight yet?"

"Not quite. But, of course, one cannot expect too much, even of science," said Skimpole. "Of course, it's bound to catch in the long run."

"This term, do you think?" asked Lowther.

"Or the year 1990?" asked Blake.

"Really, Blake——"

"Bai Jove! Skimpy is a patient ass, isn't he? I am weally sowwy that science doesn't work out as he wishes, but we can't wait for our lunch till Skimpy has lighted the fiah by scientific methods. I'm gettin' wathah hungry."

"And I'm simply famished," said Herries.

Blake made a sign to Digby, showing a lighted match in his half-closed hand. Digby grinned and interposed himself so that Skimpole could not see the side of the heap of fuel where Blake was kneeling.

Unseen by the amateur scientist of the Shell, Blake poked the burning match into the midst of the dry wood, and the twigs and crumpled paper under the fuel caught at once.

Blake withdrew his hand quickly.

Skimpole was quite unconscious of the fact that a lighted match had been put to the fuel, and for some minutes, in fact, he remained unconscious that the fire was alight, as he was very short-sighted.

Blake stood up, with his hands in his pockets, watching him.

The short-sighted genius of the Shell became aware at last that there was a thin spiral of smoke rising from the heap of fuel, and he uttered an exclamation of great satisfaction.

"Look—look, Blake!"

"Look at what?" asked Blake.

"The fire! It has caught!"

"By Jove!"

"Great Scott!"

"Wonderful!"

"Amazin'!"

The juniors crowded round Skimpole with exclamations of wonder, so over-done that they would have undecieved anybody but Skimpole at once.

But the genius of the School House was quite satisfied Science had achieved another triumph, and it was only natural that the scoffers should be surprised and greatly impressed.

The amateur scientist blinked up at the juniors.

"You see, it was bound to catch!" he exclaimed. "It has been rather a long time, I admit, but the concentration of the sun's rays was bound to do it."

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"You had better turn the bacon now, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Good" said Blake, swinging the pan so that the bacon flew into the air splashing spots of grease over D'Arcy's beautiful white flannels.

"Ha, ha, ha—I mean, marvellous!"

"Yes, it is marvellous; but what is it to the other marvels of science?" said Skimpole, blinking with enthusiasm. "The science that measures the heavens, and calculates the distance of a star within a couple of million miles—a truly astounding degree of accuracy. Scoffers may say that it doesn't matter whether the star is one hundred million miles away, or whether it is one hundred million one thousand and fifty-two miles and a quarter. But the scientist regards them with scorn. I assure you, my dear friends, that little achievement of mine is nothing to the discoveries, for instance, of Darwin."

"Go on!" said Blake sarcastically. "You're too modest, Skimmy."

"Not at all. Wonderful as my mental grasp is—and it would indeed be false modesty in me to deny that it is wonderful—I confess I am as nothing to the great man who proved that we have nothing to be proud of in our origin, any more than the toads and the snails have. I—"

"You're too modest, Skimmy. We won't listen to you slating yourself in this way—in fact, we won't listen to you at all."

"Hear, hear!"

"My dear fellows—"

"Cheese it! Where's the frying-pan?"

"I was going to explain to you—"

"Don't trouble. Hand over that frying-pan."

"Really—"

Skimpole was gently pushed over, and he sat down in the grass. Blake squashed a place in the fire for the frying-pan, and it was jammed there, and the butter rubbed round it and the bacon put in.

Blake rather prided himself on the way he could cook bacon—he fancied himself the equal of even Fatty Wynn in that respect.

The others were not anxious to cook, and they agreed with singular unanimity that Jack Blake was exactly the proper person to handle the frying-pan.

D'Arcy, however, had his ideas on the subject. He didn't want to cook, or to touch so greasy an article as a frying-pan, but he was willing to help with advice.

"Pway don't do the bacon too much on one side, Blake, dear boy," he remarked.

Blake looked round at him with a glance that might have made a gargoyle blush.

"What's that, dummy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What do you know about cooking bacon?"

"I think it ought not to be done too much on one side. I appeal to the other fellows."

"Quite so," said the other fellows.

"You had better turn it now, dear boy."

"You ass!"

"I refuse to be called an ass."

"You think it ought to be turned, eh?" said Blake.

D'Arcy fixed his eyeglass upon the bacon, which was getting on very well. He nodded.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!" said Blake, with unexpected docility. "I'll turn it!"

He turned it—by the simple process of swinging the pan so that the bacon flew into the air, turned over there, and came down with a smack into the pan again.

Smack!

The bacon was turned. And there was a wild yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ow!"

His beautiful white flannels were spotted over with splashes of grease from the frying-pan.

Blake gave a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Is it time to turn the bacon again, Gussy?"

The swell of St. Jim's retreated hastily.

"You uttah ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful wottah—"

"Why, you told me to turn the bacon."

"You—you watah! You did that on purpose!" shrieked D'Arcy, gazing down in horror at the grease-spotted clothes.

"Yes; you told me to."

"Ow! You ass! My clothes are ruined!"

"Oh, you can scrape it off!" said Blake. "Only don't go away, Gussy—I want you to give me some more advice about cooking the bacon."

But Arthur Augustus didn't. He walked away, and began to rub and scrape at his clothes for the second time that morning. Blake received no more advice on the subject of cooking the bacon.

Jack chuckled, and proceeded with his task. After D'Arcy's reception, no one offered him any more advice.

The bacon was cooked to a turn, and the eggs poached in a style that even Fatty Wynn might have been proud of.

Meanwhile, most of the others were busy. Some of them were laying the cloth on the grass, and getting out plates and knives and forks, some filled the jugs with water from the stream, or out the bread, or opened the bags of tarts.

By the time the cooking was done, all was ready.

Blake dished up the bacon and eggs, and the steaming dish was planted in the centre of the white table-cloth on the grass.

Blake surveyed it with an eye of pride.

"Jolly good, though I say it!" he remarked. "I think that lot is as well-cooked as anything Fatty Wynn ever turns out!"

"So it is," said Tom Merry, helping himself. "Done to a turn."

"Are you quite satisfied, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Would you like me to turn the bacon again?"

"Pway don't be an ass, dear boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This way, Skimmay. Dinner's ready."

"Very good, Blake," said Skimpole, closing his book, after carefully marking the page. "I am beginning to get a little hungry. Even the great thoughts of Professor Loosetop do not wholly neutralise the wants of the body."

"Go hunt Wire in, Skimmay, and give science a rest."

Skimpole blinked at him reprovingly.

"Really, Blake, you should remember that you owe this feed to science, as the fire could not have been lighted without scientific methods."

"Yes, I'd forgotten that, Skimmay," he remarked.

"Blessed if I hadn't forgotten all about the giddy burning-glass! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Skimpole wondered why the whole party yelled with laughter.

CHAPTER 13.

Skimpole Improves the Shining Hour.

THE bacon and eggs were done to a turn, and the juniors, who were all hungry by this time, enjoyed the feed on the island.

Owing to the unexpected supplies received from Figgins & Co., there was a greater plenty than they had anticipated, and even Fatty Wynn would not have been able to clear the board if he had been there to help.

Which was all the better, as there was another meal to come before the campers left the island, the idea being to have tea there at sunset and row back to St. Jim's in the dusk.

"I wish Figgins had made it pax and joined us," said Tom Merry, as he started on his fourth helping.

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Jack Blake nodded.

"Yes, rather! There's plenty here for all."

"By the way, dear boys, Figgins said he was comin' back with reinforcements," said Arthur Augustus. "We ought to keep watch."

"He won't find it easy to get the clan together," grinned Blake. "The New House kids are up and down the river, and in the village, and everywhere, and Figgins will have all his work cut out to call them in."

"Yaas, that's so."

"If they come we'll give 'em a warm reception," said Manners. "We want a jolly good House row to finish up the day."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I must say this has been a jolly good feed," said Herries, leaning back against a tree and slowly munching one more tart. "There's only one thing needed to make the picnic a complete success."

"And what's that?"

"Well, I should like Towser to be here."

"Bai Jove!"

"Otherwise, I'm quite satisfied," said Herries drowsily. "I think we'd better take a rest now. That was a jolly good feed."

"Some sort of gentle entertainment is the proper caper now," said Tom Merry. "I'm half sorry we haven't got Gordon Gay of the Grammar School with us. He could give us some impersonations, or a song and dance."

"As far as that goes, I should be vewy pleased to give you a song," said Arthur Augustus modestly.

"Let's have a rest," said Manners hurriedly. "Then we can have a stroll round and take photographs."

"Oh, blow photographs."

"I am quite willin' to give you a song," repeated D'Arcy, with emphasis. "As you are aware, I have a wippin' tenah voice."

"Yes, I've heard it rip," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Nearly rips the roof off, doesn't it," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You can't sing without an accompaniment, Gussy," said Digby. "Now, as that suggestion cannot be adopted—"

"You are quite w'ong, Dig. I can sing vewy well without an accompaniment," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Even if I finish in a different key, I don't suppose you fellows will notice it."

"If you like," said Skimpole, blinking up from his huge volume, "I will read you out some of Professor Loosetop's wonderful disquisitions on the subject of Determinism."

"Order!"

"The subject is intensely interesting—"

"I'd rather have Gussy's tenor solo."

"Yes, rather."

"I will sing you, 'Let Me Like a Soldier Fall,'" said Arthur Augustus, getting up. "Pway excuse me if I use a tunin' fork to get my note."

"We'll excuse you altogether, if you like."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"The subject of Determinism is one that embraces—"

"Shut up, Skimmay."

"Go ahead, Gussy; we'll risk it."

"That is hardly a complimentary way of puttin' it, Blake. However, I will go ahead."

And D'Arcy, who was never without his tuning-fork since he had taken up music, fished it out, and knocked it on his knee to make it sound.

"It ought to be knocked on wood," said Lowther. "Use your head."

"Lowther's beginning again."

"Bump him!"

But after that hearty meal, no one felt inclined to get up and bump Lowther, and the humorist of the Shell only grinned.

D'Arcy knocked the fork on a tree, and it buzzed out the "A"—the fork being tuned to A. By singing a third from A, D'Arcy obtained C, his starting-note, and immediately burst into song.

"Yaas, let me like a soldier fall—"

Monty Lowther absently pushed out his foot, and tripped the tenor over, and D'Arcy fell—not like a soldier, perhaps—but he fell.

He bumped down on his back in the grass, and the tenor solo died away in a sputter.

"Ow!" gasped D'Arcy.

He sat up, and groped for his eyeglass.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"He like a soldier fell!" chanted Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy jammed the glass into his eye, and glared at Lowther.

"I wegard you as a beast, Lowthah!"

"Go hon!"

"I shall now wufuse to sing my tenah solo."

"Hear, hear!"

"I will not sing a note."

"Hurrah!"

Skimpole blinked up from his book again.

"As D'Arcy is not going to bother us—"

"Eh!"

"I had better improve the shining hour by expounding the principles of Determinism. Then you will have the consciousness of not having wasted a day by camping out on this island. Determinism—"

"Sing, Gussy, for goodness' sake."

"Sing on, sweet bird."

"I wufuse!"

"Determinism is the greatest discovery of modern times. Man being what he is, and surrounded by his surroundings, is evidently exactly as he exists, and his environment environs him. This being proved—"

"Order!"

"This being proved, it is clear that so far as he is influenced by his hereditary qualities, he is the victim of heredity—"

"Shut up!"

"And so far as he is the creature of his surroundings, he is the victim of his environment—"

"Ring off!"

"I cannot ring off, Blake, as I am determined to improve the shining hour by improving your minds," said Skimpole firmly. "Having thus demonstrated that everything is the result of the combination of heredity and environment, since there is nothing else in existence, I proceed—"

"That you jolly well don't!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Shut up!"

"A sincere reformer never shuts up. Don't you see, Lowther, that having proved that man is the creature of heredity and environment, we demonstrate that he is not to blame for any of his acts. There is no right and no wrong; and, therefore, if you think right and wrong can exist, you are wrong—I mean—er—not wrong, as there is no wrong, but you are not right. Having demonstrated this, I proceed—"

"Dry up."

"I proceed to say—oh!"

Skimpole did not mean to proceed to say "Oh!" but he said it because Monty Lowther had reached over and jammed a tart into his open mouth.

Skimpole choked and gasped.

"I'll shove the next one down your neck," said Lowther warningly.

And Skimpole spluttered and gave it up.

CHAPTER 14.

For St. Jim's.

"H, dear!"

"What's the matter with you, Fatty?"

"I'm hungry!"

"Bosh!"

"I'm famished."

"Poof!"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Rats!"

And Figgins, having finished his towelling, donned his clothes.

The New House chums had landed at a considerable distance from the island, and towelled themselves down in no cheery mood.

They were all hungry, though Figgins and Kerr were not in the same state of famine as their unfortunate chum.

They had been done hollow by the School House fellows, and that was not pleasant; they were hungry, and that was decidedly unpleasant; and they didn't see how they were to get the upper hand of Tom Merry & Co., which was the worst of all.

Figgins had declared that he would gather the New House fellows, and return and sweep the enemy off the island, but when he came to think it out, he had to admit that it was not so easy to do as to say.

For, on the whole holiday, and in such glorious weather, the New House juniors were certain to be scattered far and wide, and it would be a long and a doubtful task gathering them for a raid on the School House.

Wherefore the brow of Figgins was clouded, and he listened without sympathy to the plaints of his hungry chum.

"It's rotten," Kerr remarked.

Figgins nodded.

"Yes, rather!"

"Yes, isn't it?" said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "I've never been so hungry before. And on a whole holiday, too."

And the fat Fourth-Former almost wept.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Figgins. "I'm not thinking about your unearthly appetite. I'm thinking about being done by the School House."

"Yes, but—"

"We've got to make them sing small somehow."

"Yes, but I'm hungry—"

"The question is, how are we to do it?"

"Famished, you know—"

"Better get back to St. Jim's," said Kerr. "We may find some of the fellows there, perhaps, getting up a cricket-match or something."

"I suppose it's the only thing to be done?"

"I don't think I could walk back to St. Jim's without something to eat," said Fatty Wynn faintly.

"Stay here, then," said Figgins gruffly.

Figgins and Kerr started, and Fatty, with a sigh, followed them. The chums of the New House took a short cut through the wood, and came out on the bank again a short distance from the school, having cut across the wood enclosed by the bend of the river.

Figgins uttered an ejaculation as they came out into the towing-path.

"My hat! Look there!"

A large boat was pulling gently up the river, and it needed only one glance to tell Figgins & Co. who its crew were.

There were eight fellows in the boat. One of them, a handsome lad, with very keen eyes, was standing in the bows, and Figgins knew Gordon Gay at once. Gordon Gay was the junior captain of Rylcombe Grammar School—the old rival of St. Jim's.

A youth with a large head and long hair was steering, and blinking as he steered, and was recognisable as Tadpole, the amateur artist of the Grammar School Fourth Form.

Six fellows were at the oars, and they were Jack and Harry Wootton, Jim Preston and Frank Monk, Lane and Carboy: all of the Fourth Form at the Grammar School.

That the Grammarians had a whole holiday that day, Figgins knew; but he was rather surprised to see so many of them in a party going up the river. The boat was near in-shore, and the Grammarians were talking as they pulled gently, and Figgins & Co. keeping in the bushes along the towing-path, listened.

A suspicion had crossed Figgins's mind the moment he saw the Grammarians, and the first words he heard confirmed it.

"You don't know how many there are of them, Gay."

"And don't care," said Gordon Gay cheerfully.

"But," began Tadpole, "it stands to reason—"

"Shut up, Tadpole! I don't suppose there are more than we are, and if there are, I don't care a rap."

"Hear, hear!" said the oarsmen.

"We shall take them by surprise, anyway," said Gordon Gay.

"Wootton ought to have counted them," said Frank Monk. Jack Wootton sniffed.

"How could I count them? I only had a glimpse of them on the island. Some of them were in the trees. I saw only two—Jack Blake and Tom Merry, but I know there were more there. How many more I don't know."

"And it doesn't matter," said Gordon Gay. "They were camping on this end of the island, you said, Jacky, towards St. Jim's?"

"Yes," said the Cornstalk.

"Well, we'll creep along the bank past the island, and come round to the other end," said Gordon Gay. "There we can lay without the St. Jim's chaps being any the wiser. Then we can get across the island, and go for them. If they're keeping watch, they'll be keeping it towards the river. We shall simply pulverise them."

"What-ho!" grinned the Grammarians.

"All the same—"

But the boat was out of hearing now.

Figgins & Co. exchanged glances.

"They're going for the School House kids on the island," said Figgins.

"Looks like it."

"Serve 'em right!" said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins nodded.

"Yes, it may serve 'em right, but we can't let St. Jim's chaps be done in by the Grammar cads, all the same."

"But what—"

"Oh, rats!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "You don't propose going back to warn them, I suppose?"

"That's just what I do propose."

"I'm hungry."

"I believe I've heard you say so before," agreed Figgins. "Don't be a rotter, you know. We can't let St. Jim's chaps be licked by the Grammarians."

"Of course not," said Kerr.

Fatty Wynn groaned.

"I—I suppose you're right, Figgins; but—but I'm simply famished!"

Figgins chuckled.

"We won't drag you back with us, Fatty. Kerr and I'll go back to tell Tom Merry, and you can go to the village shop."

"Cut off!" said Kerr.

Fatty Wynn shook his head bravely.

"No, I'll stick to you," he said. "I can stand it."

"Better go and feed."

"I won't, I tell you."

"Oh, all right," said Figgins, "just as you like. Look here, we can cut back the way we came, and get to the island long before the Grammar cads. They have to follow the bend of the river, and they were taking it easy, too."

"Come on, then."

And the three New House juniors retraced their steps.

Hardly as they had fared at the hands of the School House chums, Figgins & Co. had no thought but of sticking to their schoolfellows, when it was a question of tackling the Grammarians. On such an occasion both Houses at St. Jim's were as one.

Fatty Wynn suppressed many a groan as the three juniors tramped through the sunny, scented woods in the blazing noon.

He was loyal to the backbone, and he nobly dismissed from his mind the vision of the village tuckshop and ginger-pop and tarts galore.

Figgins set the pace, with his long legs that seemed never to tire, and Kerr kept pace with him with his springy stride; but Fatty Wynn every now and then had to break into a trot.

The gleaming river came in sight again through the openings in the thick foliage.

"There's the Ryll!" said Kerr.

And Fatty Wynn gave a gasp of relief.

The three juniors came out on the bank opposite the island. Figgins cast an anxious glance down the stream towards the bend.

There was no sign of the Grammarian six-oar yet.

"Plenty of time yet," said Figgins.

"I—I say, you're not going to swim out, Figg?" said Fatty Wynn. "I really don't think I should be equal to it without something to eat first."

Figgins laughed.

"I'll hail them," he said. "That yell we've picked up from Kangaroo will make them look this way."

And Figgins hailed the island with a bush yell.

"Coo-ey!"

From the island, in a few seconds, came back an answering call.

"Coo-oo-ey!"

CHAPTER 15.

A Surprise for the Grammarians.

"COO-OO-EY!"

Tom Merry leaped to his feet, and gave the answer. He stared out from the island towards the green, wooded shore of the river.

"Coo-ey!"

"That must be Kangaroo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He told me he was going with Danc and Glyn, in Glyn's car, for a run down to the coast for the whole day. I thought he was gone."

"Changed his mind, I suppose," remarked Blake. "That sounds like his yell."

"Coo-ey!"

"Bai Jove, it's Figgins!"

"Yes, look!"

"My only hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"It's a New House jape!" growled Digby.

"The rotters!"

"I don't know," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Figgins is waving his hands as if he was awfully excited about something."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He may have some news."

Tom Merry waved his straw hat in reply to Figgins.

"Hallo!" he called out. "What's the trouble?"

"Danger."

"What?"

"Grammarians."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry glanced up and down, and round about the wooded banks of the river. There was no sign of the enemy; but he knew that Figgins would not deceive him.

"Where are they?" called out Blake.

"Coming up the river."

"How many?"

"Eight."

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"Oh!"

"They know you're there, and are coming to wipe you up," said Figgins, his voice sounding faintly, but distinctly, across the wide expanse of shining water. "I thought I'd come and warn you. No larks!"

"Honour bright!" said Kerr.

"That's all right," said Tom Merry. "Look here, will you kids come out, if we send a boat for you? All together against the Grammar School?"

"Make it pax—eh?" said Figgins.

"Yes."

"Good—but mind, we don't give in. School House ain't cock-house."

"We'll settle that another time," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Just at present we'll settle the Grammar School."

"Right you are!"

"Better back up with the boat," said Kerr. "The Grammar cads may come round the bend any minute now."

"I say," called out Fatty Wynn, "can you send me some grub in the boat. You see—"

"Shut up, Fatty!"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Ha, ha! We'll send some of your own grub, Fatty."

Blake and Herries and Digby jumped into a boat, and pulled out towards the bank. Tom Merry tossed a half-loaf and a lump of cheese in after them.

The boat reached the bank in a few minutes.

"Jump in," said Blake affably.

The New House juniors looked rather grim as they stepped into the boat. But they had made it pax, and they could not break that, and the grins of the School House fellows had to pass unpunished.

"There's your fodder, Fatty," said Blake consolingly.

Fatty Wynn was already eating bread and cheese.

Never had any dainty morsel come so sweetly to Fatty Wynn as the bread and cheese did at that moment.

Blake and Herries pulled back to the island.

"Well, here we are again," said Tom Merry, slapping Figgins on the shoulder as he landed. "Now, where did you see the Grammar rotters?"

Figgins explained.

Tom Merry chuckled as he listened.

"So they're going to take us by surprise, are they?" he grinned. "Good! They're going to creep along close to the bank, so that we shan't see them pass, eh? I don't think!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll watch for 'em, and when they pass the island we'll get to the other end, and be ready for them," said Blake.

"Wire in, Fatty! Tackle the cold bacon. It's all right. I cooked it."

"You cooked it?" said Fatty Wynn.

"Yes," said Blake proudly.

"Well, never mind; I'm hungry enough to eat anything," said Wynn.

Blake gave him a frozen stare, and the other fellows chuckled.

Fatty Wynn had avenged himself by that remark. He wired into the bacon, however, as if he really found the cooking all right. All there was of it disappeared rapidly before the fat Fourth-Former's vigorous onslaught. Then he began on cakes and muffins and tarts, and effected a wonderful clearance.

"My word," said Fatty Wynn, grinning round. "It's worth while getting hungry, when you can have a really good feed afterwards."

"Look out!" said Tom Merry.

"What is it?"

"Quiet! The Grammarians!"

The juniors of St. Jim's looked out from the cover of the bushes.

The boat, manned by Gordon Gay and the Grammarians, had come in sight, sweeping in fine style round the bend of the river.

The boat was keeping well to the bank, under the shade of the overhanging trees, and as the river was very wide at this point, it might easily have passed unnoticed by the picnickers on the island.

But now they were on the look-out for it.

The boat crept along, the oars making hardly any sound, and disappeared up the river past the island.

Tom Merry laughed softly.

"Come on, kids!" he exclaimed. "They're going to land on the other end of the island—I don't think! They're going to take us by surprise."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fatty can stay here to look after the boats and the grub," said Tom Merry. "I don't suppose we could drag him away from the feed, anyway. The rest of you, come on. You can stay here, Skimpole."

Skimpole blinked up at him. He had been studying



"Look out!" said Tom Merry. The boat manned by Gordon Gay and the Grammarians had come in sight, sweeping in fine style round the bend of the river.

Determinism deeply, and did not even know that there were any Grammarians in the neighbourhood.

"Did you speak, Tom Merry?"

"I said you could remain here!" bawled Tom Merry.

"Yes, certainly!" said Skimpole, looking a little puzzled. "It is my intention to stay here! Is there any reason why I should not stay here?"

Tom Merry sighed.

"Bury yourself in bosh, Skimmy, and don't talk—there's a good chap!" he said. "You will make me old before my time! Come on, you chaps!"

And Tom Merry & Co. went plunging away through the trees across the little island. Figgins and Kerr taking sandwiches in their hands, and Fatty Wynn not even looking up from his feed. Skimpole blinked after them in a perplexed way, and then buried himself in his big volume again.

It did not take the chums of St. Jim's long to reach the other end of the little island.

There, taking cover in the thickets, with a strip of grass before them sloping down to the water, they looked for the Grammarians.

The six-oar was already in sight.

It was floating down the centre of the stream with the current, and had the Saints been at the camp at the lower end of the island, they could certainly have seen nothing of

it. Now not a movement of the Grammarians escaped them.

"Quiet!" murmured Tom Merry. "They'll be ashore in a minute!"

Blake chuckled softly.

"Then they'll get a surprise!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Wait till they're ashore," grinned Tom Merry, "then rush out and collar them, and sit on them! Each of you pick his man before they land, so that there will be no mistake. I'll take Gordon Gay!"

"Good! I'll have Wootton I!"

"I'll take Wootton II!"

"Bai Jove! I'll collah Fwank Monk!"

"I'll have Lane!"

And so the St. Jim's juniors selected their victims in advance.

The boat floated down to the island.

"Here we are!" came Gordon Gay's voice.

The boat's nose ran into soft mud.

Gordon Gay made it fast, and jumped ashore. The rest of the Grammarians quickly followed. Gordon Gay stretched his limbs.

"Now for the Saints!" he remarked. "They haven't the faintest idea we're here, and—Oh!"

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NEXT
THURSDAY;

"THE ST. JIM'S PAGEANT."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Gordon Gay broke off as Tom Merry's voice rang out:

"At 'em!"

"Hurrah!"

In a crowd the St. Jim's juniors rushed from the trees and hurled themselves upon the Grammar juniors.

And in the twinkling of an eye Gordon Gay & Co. were sprawling on the greensward, with the St. Jim's juniors sitting on them.

"Got them!" yelled Blake. "This is where we smile!"

And the heroes of St. Jim's smiled a smile that was audible across the river.

CHAPTER 16.

Sent Back.

GORDON GAY blinked up at Tom Merry.

He was taken utterly by surprise.

The Grammarians had had no chance. They were pinned down before they knew that they were attacked.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood in an elegant attitude and surveyed the scene through his eyeglass.

As the juniors were eight to eight without him, the swell of St. Jim's had decided not to rumple his clothes unnecessarily, but he was ready to chip in if wanted.

But his aid was not required.

The Grammarians were helpless.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "I wegard this as wippin'! It will be a lesson to the Gwammah wottahs not to buck against St. Jim's, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" gasped Gordon Gay.

"Quite a surprise, isn't it?" said Tom Merry blandly.

"Not exactly the kind of surprise you intended—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But a surprise, all the same!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You didn't know how many there were, and you didn't care!" grinned Figgins.

Gordon Gay stared at him.

He remembered his own words, and it seemed to him like magic that Figgins should know what he had said.

"You—you knew we were coming?" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"How?"

"Oh, we can do some scouting, you know!" said Figgins negligently. "We wouldn't mind putting your Grammar chaps through a course of training as Boy Scouts, if you like."

"Rats!"

"Cheeky ass!"

"Blessed if I know how you knew we were coming," said Gordon Gay, his face breaking into a smile. "But you've got us. The surprise party has worked out the wrong way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes," growled Frank Monk, "and the sooner you make it pax, and get off my chest, the better I shall like it!"

"No hurry!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "You came here of your own accord, you know; trespassing on St. Jim's property—"

"Rats! The island belongs to Sir Hilton Popper!"

"Boah! It belongs to St. Jim's!"

"Stuff! It belongs to—"

"It belongs—"

"Weally, deah boys, it doesn't matter whom it belongs to—it belongs to us now, and we have a wight to wegard these Gwammah wottahs as twespasahs!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I suggest makin' an example of them!"

"Suppose we make them go down on their knees," suggested Monty Lowther, "and make them beg pardon for having been cheeky—"

"You can't!" roared Gordon Gay.

"Or send them adrift in their boat, with jam in their hair!" suggested Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll jolly well lick you some other time!" said Gordon Gay.

"Pewwaps! But at pwesent—"

"At present we owe it to ourselves to make an example of them!" said Tom Merry, with a nod. "Gussy, as you're doing nothing but ornamenting the landscape—and making a bad job at that—come and tie them up!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Have you got a rope?"

"I'm sowwy, Tom Mewwy, but I am not in the habit of sawwyin' a wope about with me!"

"Your braces will do—"

"Eh?"

"Take off your braces, and—"

"I uttably wefuse to take off my bwaces!"

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"Well, your necktie, then!"

"I decline to take off my necktie! I wegard the suggestion as wotten and exceedingly diswospectful!"

"Then what are we to tie them with?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"There's a rope in our boat," said Digby. "Gussy can fetch it!"

"I shall be vewy pleased to do so, deah boy!"

"Run, then!"

D'Arcy turned back.

"I am afwaid I should find it too exhaustin' to wun in this hot weathah, deah boy! I will walk as fast as poss."

"Buzz off, you ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Will you buck up?" roared Blake, in exasperation.

"Certainly, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus strolled away through the trees.

He was a good five minutes gone for the rope, and during that time the Grammarians told the St. Jim's juniors in very plain, if not polite English, what they thought of them.

But, as Tom Merry & Co. had the upper hand, and meant to keep it, they replied only with chuckles.

D'Arcy came back with the rope at last, and it was cut into lengths, and the swell of St. Jim's began to tie up Gordon Gay first.

The Wallaby struggled hard, but Tom Merry gently compressed his ear between finger and thumb till he consented to leave off struggling.

"Tie his hands tightly, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is that knot tight?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I twust I know how to tie a knot!"

"Blessed if I can trust you, though!" said Tom Merry.

"Is that knot all right, Gay?"

"Oh, I think it's ripping!" said Gordon Gay.

Tom Merry looked at him suspiciously, and jerked at the knot. The rope came open in his hand. Arthur Augustus looked at it in great surprise.

"Bai Jove! It's come undone!"

"You ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You sit on Gay while I tie him up!" growled Tom Merry.

"Oh, vewy well!"

Arthur Augustus reposed his elegant form upon Gordon Gay's chest. Tom Merry soon had the Grammarian leader tied hand and foot in a businesslike way.

The rest of the Grammarians were served in the same way, with the exception of Tadpole. Tadpole, as the least dangerous, was left free.

"Now shove them into the boat!" said Tom Merry.

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "Are you sending us away in this state?"

"Yes," grinned Tom Merry.

"But—but—"

"Tadpole will steer you away, and he can cut you loose presently!" said Tom Merry. "It's all right—the river's as smooth as glass, and even a Grammarian steersman couldn't run into any danger!"

"You duffer—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stick them into the boat!"

"Right-ho!"

The bound Grammarians were dumped down into the boat one after the other. Tadpole stood and blinked on, till he was dumped into the stern and told to take the rudders.

Meanwhile, Monty Lowther had cut across to the camp, and returned with a bag of tarts.

He calmly crowned the Grammarians with them, one each; and the looks that the prisoners gave him during that jammy coronation spoke volumes.

Lowther surveyed his handiwork with considerable pride.

"Looks ripping, doesn't it?" he said.

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"You're fond of jam tarts, aren't you, Gay?"

"Ow! Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think they may go now!" said Tom Merry. "The next time you come to surprise us, kids, I hope it will be just as howling a success as this!"

And the Saints roared.

They shoved the boat off, and pushed it away into the

ANSWERS

current, and Tadpole stood up with an oar to keep it off the bank. The other oars had been taken out of the boat, to make it impossible for the Grammarians to return to the charge when Tadpole released them.

With feelings too deep for words, the Grammarians floated out into the stream, and the boat drifted down on the current.

And from the island a yell of merriment followed them.

"Hear us smile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 17.

Something Like a Wheeze.

"G ONE!"

"Licked!"

"Hollow!"

Gordon Gay. "My only hat! Of all the giddy surprise parties—"

"This takes the cake!" said Jack Wootton.

"It does! It do! Ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," growled Lane. "The Saints will never leave off chuckling over this."

"No wonder—it's funny."

"I don't see the fun," said Carboy, with a snort. "What will the fellows say? And why doesn't that mooning ass, Tadpole, set us loose?"

"Because he's a blithering ass."

"And an addled dummy."

"And a frabjous cuckoo."

"And a dotty duffer."

"Dear me!" said Tadpole. "Are you fellows talking to me?"

"Yes, dummy."

"I will set you free as soon as possible," said Tadpole.

"At present I am steering."

"Cut these ropes, chump!"

"Set us loose, idiot!"

Tadpole was looking away towards the bank of the river with a far-away look in his eyes. Gordon Gay tried to follow his glance.

"What is it?" he asked. "What are you looking at?"

"I was observing a beautiful effect," said the amateur artist of the Grammar School. "Look at those beech trees—"

"Blow the trees!"

"With the sun on the leaves—"

"Blow the sun!"

"And the river in the foreground—"

"Blow the river!"

"And the church tower of Rylcombe in the middle distance—"

"Blow the middle distance!" howled Gordon Gay. "Are you going to be artistic now, you ass, or are you going to untie these cords?"

"You see—"

"My hat! We'll bump you presently!"

"I am about to sever your bonds, my dear fellows," said Tadpole, who never spoke in plain English if he could help it. "By means of my penknife I will soon restore you to your personal liberty."

"Back up, then, and don't jaw!"

Tadpole sawed through the cords with his knife, and the Grammarian juniors were released at last. The island was fading into the banks behind them; the boat had drifted a good distance down the river by this time.

Gordon Gay mopped his head with water, and rubbed it with the handkerchief, to get the jam out of his hair.

"Well, this is a nice go—I don't think!" he exclaimed. "No getting back to the island for another round, with only one oar."

"Of course not. Let's sneak home and be grinned at," said Frank Monk crossly. "That's about all we're fit for."

"Not much."

"We're done—done brown—"

"Perhaps we can turn the tables, though," said Gordon Gay coolly.

"Rats! We can't! If we go back, they're on the watch now, and we couldn't land with them ready for us. They could keep a score of chaps from landing if they were on the watch."

"I'm not thinking of a raid."

"What is it, then? Have you got an idea?"

"Yes."

The Grammarians sat up attentively.

When Gordon Gay said that he had an idea, they knew that there was something good coming; and the most annoyed of them stopped his grumbling at once.

"Well, what is it?" asked Harry Wootton.

"Get it off your chest, Gay!"

"Heave it out!"

"What's the wheeze?"

"We've been done—"

"We know that," snorted Carboy.

"Don't interrupt. We can turn the tables on the doers," grinned Gordon Gay. "I'm not thinking of a raid. We've tried that, and you fellows have made a muck of it."

"Well, I like that! Why, you—"

"But there's another dodge," said Gordon Gay, a little hurriedly. "I suppose you haven't forgotten that we're the members of the best junior dramatic society ever known in any public school."

"What on earth's that got to do with it?" demanded three or four of the Grammarians at once.

Gordon Gay chuckled.

"Thereby hangs a tale. You know that that island belongs to Sir Hilton Popper."

"There's a giddy lawsuit about it."

"Yes; but Popper claims the right to keep the boys off the island—us, as well as the kids from St. Jim's."

"If you're giving us a lecture on ancient history, Gordon Gay—"

"I'm not. I was going to ask, have you chaps seen Popper?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Never mind that; answer my question."

"Yes," said Frank Monk.

"What's he like?"

"A little fat man, with a red face and white whiskers, and a moustache like a toothbrush," said Frank Monk.

Gordon Gay nodded.

"Exactly. I've seen him, too, and he's a rather striking-looking chap."

"But what about Popper? What—"

"Suppose he came on the island and ordered the St. Jim's kids off? What price that?"

Frank Monk started.

"You can't be thinking of informing Popper—of giving them away to him—"

"Of course I'm not," exclaimed Gordon Gay sharply.

"Don't be an ass."

"Well, then—"

"Besides, Sir Hilton Popper is in London. I remember seeing it in the local papers."

"Then what the dickens—"

"I was thinking of Hilton Popper the Second," said Gordon Gay.

Monk looked dazed.

"Hilton Popper the Second!" he ejaculated.

"Yes—his double."

"Has he a double?"

"No; but he will have in half an hour."

"Oh, you're dreaming!" said Monk. "You'd better go and lie down."

But the two Woottons, who had already caught on to Gordon Gay's idea, grinned.

"Jolly good," said Jack.

"Ripping!" said Harry.

"You're jolly dense this afternoon, Monkey," said Gordon Gay. "Have you forgotten how we dressed up as girls to play a hockey match with East Hyde? Have you forgotten how I took on the role of Dr. Holmes at St. Jim's, and what a blessed row it led to? My dear kid, do you think I couldn't make up as Sir Hilton Popper? Why, he's got a chivvy that seems built for imitation on the stage."

"My hat!"

"I'm going on the island as Sir Hilton Popper, and one of you chaps can rig up as a keeper, and row me on," said Gordon Gay.

The Grammarians stared for a few moments.

Then, as the possibilities of the joke dawned upon them, they burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay chuckled.

"I rather think that will turn the tables on the giddy Saints," he remarked. "Of course, we'll let them into the jape later, so that they'll know how they've been done—after I've ordered them off the island, and they've gone as meekly as a lot of little lambs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what do you think of the wheeze?"

"Ripping!"

"Spiffing!"

"Top-notch!"

And the Grammarian juniors, with their good-humour completely restored at the prospect of scoring over St. Jim's after all, lost no time in returning to the Grammar School, where Gordon Gay was soon busy with his make-up.

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CHAPTER 18.

A Surprise.

FATTY WYNN stretched himself in the grass, and leaned his head on a cushion, and sighed with contentment.

He had finished.

As a rule, Fatty Wynn did not finish while there was anything left to eat. The provisions generally gave out before he did.

But the abundance was too much for the Falstaff of the New House.

He simply could not have negotiated another tart, and there were still tarts galore. Fatty Wynn sank into the deep rich grass in a state of complete happiness.

He listened with a languid grin to Figgins's account of the capture and the ragging of the Grammarians.

Like the dying gladiator, his eyes were with his heart, and that was far away. He was inwardly contemplating the enormous feed he had just had.

"Wasn't it ripping?" demanded Figgins.

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty.

"They were done brown."

"Done to a turn," said Fatty Wynn.

"Well, I'm glad you take some interest in the matter," said Figgins, with a snort. "You jolly well weren't on the spot."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"You didn't seem to care much whether we did the Grammar cads, or whether they did us."

"Grammar cads! Who's talking about Grammar cads? I was talking about the apple turnovers," said Fatty Wynn.

"The what?"

"The apple turnovers. You said they were done brown—"

"You ass! I was speaking of the Grammarians," said Figgins, in disgust.

"Oh, I was thinking of the apple turnovers. They were done to a turn, you know. So were the tarts. I've found fault with Mrs. Taggles's tarts before now, but I've nothing to say against this lot. They were prime."

"Look here—"

"And then the bacon. It was ripping, though it was cooked by a School House chap."

"You blessed glutton!"

"Oh, come, Figg; I know I've got a good appetite, but I don't think anybody could call me greedy. I like a lot, that's all."

"You do," said Kerr.

"I'm not a chap who pretends to have a fairy appetite," said Fatty Wynn. "Give me good grub, and I can go for it like a man. That's what I say."

"Or like a blessed rhinoceros," said Kerr.

"Sure you're finished?" said Figgins sarcastically.

"There's some grub left, you know."

Fatty Wynn nodded.

"Yes, I think I'm done. No good overdoing a thing, you know. It's bad for the digestion to eat too much."

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, yes, I've found that out by experience," said Fatty seriously. "I've eaten too much on one or two occasions, thoughtlessly, you know. That's why I never do it now."

Whereat Figgins and Kerr relapsed into silence. There was no rejoinder to be made. Fatty Wynn closed his eyes.

"Don't you fellows make a noise," he said drowsily.

"I think I could get a little nap now. I always thought it was a good idea to have a nap when you go on a picnic. Wake me up in time for tea, will you?"

"My only hat!" murmured Figgins. "Here, Fatty—"

Snore!

"Fatty, old man!"

Snore!

"My hat, he's asleep!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Do you know, Fatty Wynn reminds me awfully of a bo-constrictah, you know."

"Does he?" said Figgins, looking warlike.

"Yaas, wathah! You know, the bo-constrictah is a kind of reptile that gorges itself full, and then goes to sleep."

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Gussy?"

"Certainly not, Figgay! I wegard the question as wiculous."

"Then not so much of your bo-constrictors," said Figgins darkly. Figgins might chip Fatty as much as he liked about his unearthly appetite, but outsiders were barred from making jokes on the subject.

"If you fellows like," said Skimpole, "I will read you out a chapter on the subject of Determinism treated as a solution of the problems of modern life."

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"We don't like," said Tom Merry. "If you read out a word, we'll chuck the book into the river; and if you say Determinism again, we'll chuck you in after it."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Skimmay as an ass! Fewwaps you chaps would like me to sing a tenah solo, if Lowthah will kindly consent not to be grossly wude and diswepctful."

"I hope Lowther will be as rude as possible if Gussy begins tenor soloing," said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"I'm going round with my camera," said Manners, getting up from the grass. "No good slacking all the afternoon just because it's a holiday."

"Dear me! You can take my picture if you like," said Skimpole. "It will be very valuable to you some day, when I am famous."

"Sorry; if I break the camera now I sha'n't be able to take any more," said Manners politely. "Otherwise, I'd be glad to take your chivvy, Skimmy."

"Really, Manners—"

"You can take Fatty Wynn's, to be published in a series under the title of 'Strange Facts in Natural History,'" suggested Lowther.

Figgins glared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you ass—"

"You might take Miss Cleveland's photograph," Skimpole suggested—"Miss Cleveland and Miss Phyllis Monk and Miss Vera Stanhope in a group, with me standing in the foreground. I think that would make a very pretty picture."

They stared at him.

"Three-quarters of it would make a pretty picture," said Tom Merry. "But the girls are not here, ass, or likely to be here, chump, so—"

"Really, Merry, they may be here any-time after four," said Skimpole.

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Perhaps I forgot to mention that I was rowed to this island—"

"Yes, by Jove, how did you get here?" exclaimed Blake.

"I was going to ask you, but the cooking put it out of my head. You haven't a boat here."

"I was rowed here."

"By whom?"

"By three young ladies," explained Skimpole, blinking at them. "I desired to come to the island for the purpose of pursuing my studies in the important subject of Determinism, and I was debating how to get across the stream. Of course, in the long run I should have found some scientific method of transferring myself and my book across the water with dry feet."

"How many feet has the book?" asked Monty Lowther, with interest. "Is it a biped or a quadruped?"

"Really, Lowther—"

"Go on, Skimmy!"

"When a boat came in sight," said Skimpole. "It seemed that Miss Cleveland is staying with Miss Stanhope and her friend at Westwood Lodge for the week-end, you see, and they were out on the river for a row."

"Bai Jove! I wemembah now—"

"Dry up, Gussy!"

"I wemembah—"

"Cheese it!"

"I wemembah my Cousin Ethel told me she was goin' to Westwood for a week-end," said Arthur Augustus. "I should have wemembahed it, but I was bwushin' my toppah at the time, and I suppose that dwove it out of my mind."

"You ass!" said Tom Merry. "We might have got them to come on the picnic."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't see how we could have let them know in time," said Blake. "But if we had known they were on the river—"

"They kindly rowed me over to the island," said Skimpole, blinking. "Miss Stanhope said that they would be down the river again this afternoon, and would row me back, if I wanted to stay on the island all the time till then. I explained—"

"Never mind that. So they're coming again?"

"Yes, as I said."

"How good!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I wegard this as a stoke of luck. We shall be able to entahtain the deah gals to a picnic."

"Yes; there's lots of grub left, in spite of Fatty," grinned Kerr. "We'll muzzle him if he wants to start again before tea-time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Jolly good!" said Tom Merry, with much satisfaction. "A picnic isn't the real thing without any girls. But fancy Skimpy not mentioning it before!"

"The ass!"
 "The dummy!"
 "The champion burler!"
 "Really, you know, I was too deeply occupied with more important matters," said Skimpole, blinking at them.
 "You see, the subject of Determinism——"
 "Oh, ring off!"
 "Determinism is——"
 "I wegard Skimmay as a fwabjous ass!"
 "And I think he ought to be bumped."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Hear, hear!"
 "Really, you know—— Oh! Ow!"

Skimpole gasped as he was rolled in the grass. The juniors, laughing heartily, gave him another roll, when suddenly a sharp staccato voice cut into the laughter, as a fat man, with a ruddy face and bristling moustache, strode upon the scene.

"Hah! What is all this? Trespassers, by James! Hah!"

The juniors stared at the new-comer.

They gave one glance at the fat, short figure in tweed clothes, tan gaiters, and bowler hat, at the red, white-whiskered face and toothbrush moustache, and thick brows and rubicund nose, and exclaimed, in one voice:

"Popper!"

CHAPTER 19.

Ordered Off!

"SIR HILTON POPPER!" gasped Tom Merry.

The little baronet glared at the juniors fiercely. Sir Hilton Popper was known all along the countryside as a fierce little man, and he was a terror to his tenants and his keepers.

He always carried a stick under his arm, and with that stick he had been known many a time to rap the shoulders of village lads who did not treat him with the amount of respect that he considered his due.

He had never tried that with St. Jim's fellows, or he would probably have met with a surprise.

Sir Hilton Popper's ideas were quite feudal; in fact, he seemed to regard all English history since the time of the Plantagenets as a series of practical jokes.

In Popper Hall were the portraits of a long line of Poppers extending back into the dark ages, to the time of Sir Guy de Popper, who came over with William the Conqueror.

And Sir Hilton was a reproduction of one of those gallant old knights, who, clad from top to toe in impenetrable armour, gallantly led their unarmoured men to battle, and gallantly chopped down unarmoured foes, and gallantly returned home with what was left of their followers.

Sir Hilton Popper was well known, and recognisable at a glance; and he had a face and figure which, as Gordon Gay had said, lent itself to stage caricature.

And the juniors did not dream for an instant that the fiery vision which burst upon their gaze was anything but the real and genuine Popper.

The St. Jim's juniors ceased laughing, and stared at the little baronet, in return for the fierce glare he was bestowing upon them.

"Trespassers, begad!" said Sir Hilton.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Trespassers! Haven't I told you a thousand times to keep trespassers off this island, George?" roared Sir Hilton Popper, turning to the keeper who was with him.

The keeper was a short, thick-set fellow with a big beard and whiskers, and the juniors did not remember to have seen him before.

He touched his cap respectfully, evidently very much in terror of his peppery little master.

"Yes, sir. Yes, Sir Hilton."

"Then why have you not kept this island clear of trespassers, George?"

"You see, sir——"

"Hah! I see that there are a crew of young rascals here," roared the little baronet. "Camping on my island, begad! Lighting a fire on my grass, begad! Burning up my wood to cook their filthy meals, begad!"

Tom Merry turned red.

"If you please——" he began.

"But I don't please," roared Sir Hilton. "Begad, I won't have tramps on my property! No, sir!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hold your tongue, sir!"

"I wufese to hold my tongue," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "I uttably wufese to take any notice of you, Sir Hilton Poppah. I wegard you as bein' no gentleman."

The baronet seemed to gasp for breath.

"What! What! Hah! Insolence! Hah!"

"Weally, sir——"

"Impertinent puppy! Hah!"

"I decline to be chawactewised as an impertinent puppy. But for your age, sir, I should give you a feahful thwashin'."

"What! What!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said the swell of St. Jim's, jamming his monocle into his eye more tightly, and regarding the fiery little landowner with a stare of disdain. "I wegard you as bein' a boundah, sir—a boundah of the most pwo-nounced type."

"Begad! Hah!"

"I look upon you with the gweatest contempt."

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Go it, Adolphus!"

"Give him beans!"

"Yaas, wathah! I assure the unmitigated boundah that he cannot fwighten us with his wotten manna's!" said Arthur Augustus. "I twust there is no fellow here pwesent who does not wegard him with contempt."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, certainly," said Skimpole. "Your position is quite untenable, Sir Hilton Popper. I will explain to you the first principles of Socialism——"

"Hah! What!"

"Go it, Skimmy!"

"In the first place, this island cannot be your island," said Skimpole. "All the land in a country belongs to all the people who live in that country, and a man who claims to 'own' land can only be regarded as a lunatic, either harmless or harmful, as the case may be. I must remark that you appear to me to belong to the harmful variety of lunatic."

"Hear, hear!"

"George!" roared Sir Hilton Popper.

"Yes, sir!"

"Turn these tramps off my land."

"Yes, sir!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My dear sir, I have explained that it is not your land—— never was your land, cannot and never can be your land. Imagine two men on an island——"

"Chuck it, Skimmy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I can always stand Socialism till you get to the two men on an island. I can't stand them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Merry, it is an old illustration——"

"Yes, jolly old; time it was buried."

"George!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Turn those villains off my land!"

"Yes, sir!"

Tom Merry fixed his eyes upon the little baronet.

"You have no right to order us off this island," he said. "It belongs to our school——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And as there's a lawsuit pending, we have as much right on it as you have, till the courts have decided the ownership."

"The ownership rests with the nation," said Skimpole. "Private ownership of land is immoral and impossible. As part of the nation, we have a right here. We——"

"Ring off, Skimmy!"

"Cheese it, old chap!"

"George!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Kick these tramps into the river!"

"Bai Jove! I uttably wufese to be kicked into the wivah!"

"Begad! I'll report this to Dr. Holmes! I'll call on him to-morrow! Begad, I'll ride over this evening! Begad, I'll go over to the college at once! Begad!"

"Better go," said Blake, in a low voice. "The island's out of bounds, and if old Pepperbox reports us, there'll be a row."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I suppose so."

"It's rotten, I know. But——"

"But it's out of bounds," said Figgins. "Let's get out."

He shook Fatty Wynn to awaken him. The little baronet strode up and down, fuming. The keeper stood like a stone statue.

Fatty Wynn came out of a glorious dream, in which he had visioned himself dwelling in a fairy land where there were mountains of pork-pies and rivers of gravy.

"Hallo!" he said, sitting up, and rubbing his eyes. "Is it tea-time?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"Then what on earth have you woke me up for?" demanded Fatty indignantly. "Hallo! Who's that?"

"The great Popper."

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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE ST. JIM'S PAGEANT."



"My word!"

Fatty Wynn scrambled up, still blinking.

Sir Hilton Popper pointed to the river with his stick.

"Get out!" he roared.

"Certainly," said Tom Merry. "Not because you order us, though, but because—"

"Because you're a blessed sneak, sir," said Monty Lowther, with cool impertinence. "You'd go sneaking to our head-master—"

"Shut up, Monty!"

"Better give it him straight, kid."

"Get out!" roared Sir Hilton Popper.

"Come on, my sons," said Manners. "Would you mind standing like that for a minute, sir, while I take your photo?"

"Hah! Impertinence, puppy! Hah!"

"Never mind, Manners. You can photograph the turkey cock at the Quarry Farm; it will make much the same sort of picture."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Turn those tramps out, George!"

"Yes, sir!"

How the single keeper was to turn out eleven juniors if they did not choose to go was not clear. But the knowledge that the island was out of bounds hampered Tom Merry & Co. The Head had kindly given them a whole holiday, and they had a natural objection to seeing his kindness repaid with a report that they had broken bounds, and fallen out with a neighbouring landowner.

"Come on, kids!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, all right! If this island wasn't out of bounds, we'd bump the beast, and duck him in the river!" said Jack Blake regretfully.

"Yes, rather! But as it is—"

"All right; into the boat with you. Come on, Gussy!"

"D'Arcy! Come on!"

"Pway excuse me, Tom Mewwy, but I decline to come."

"Eh?"

"Sir Hilton Poppah has ordahed me to leave the island in a vewy wude way," said the swell of St. Jim's. "It would not be consistent with my personal dig. to do so."

"You ass—"

"I decline to be called an ass. I—"

"I must say D'Arcy is right," said Skimpole. "As a sincere Socialist, I must refuse to be ordered off land that is as much mine as anybody else's."

"Get into the boat."

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

CHAPTER 20.

Bowled Out!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY jammed his monocle into his eye, surveyed the fuming baronet with great scorn, and then shook his head at Tom Merry. He was determined not to go. When it was a question of his personal dignity, the swell of St. Jim's was immovable, and blind to consequences.

Tom Merry & Co. looked dismayed.

What was to be done? They knew of old how deaf Arthur Augustus was to persuasion when he had made up his mind.

"Look here—" began Tom Merry.

Sir Hilton Popper struck his gaiters with his stick, with a sounding crack.

"Get off my land!" he roared.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the kind."

"You—you trespassing tramp—"

"I decline to be called a tramp."

"Come on, Gussy!"

"Sowwy, Tom Mewwy, but I cannot. It is a question of personal dig. with me now. I cannot wefire from the scene without Sir Hilton Poppah makin' me an apology."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What!" gasped the baronet. "Hah! What! Begad!"

"I am waitin', sir," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"Hah! Impertinent puppy!"

"Gussy, old man, you must come! The island's out of bounds, and we can't bother the Head with any trouble through his giving us a whole holiday."

"I am extremely sowwy, Blake—"

"It would be bad form, Gussy."

"Yaas, I feah so; but there seems to be no othah wefource, as I cannot wefire from this island without Sir Hilton withdwavin' the wude expressions he has used."

"George!" roared Sir Hilton Popper.

"Yes, sir!"

"Turn that tramp off!"

"Yes, sir!"

The other juniors were in the boats. The keeper advanced

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towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to push him in after them. The swell of St. Jim's surveyed him calmly through his eyeglass.

"Pway keep off, deah boy," he said.

"Get into the boat. You heard what Sir Hilton said."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I shall be sorry to use violence—"

"You will be sowwy if you twy it, deah boy."

"Come on, Gussy!"

"I decline to come, deah boy."

"Get out!" roared Sir Hilton. "Get out! Begad!"

"I decline to get out."

"Throw him out, keeper!"

"Yes, sir!"

"I warn you that if you touch me I shall stwike you," said D'Arcy.

"Get into the boat."

"I decline to do so."

The keeper put his hands on D'Arcy's shoulders, and whirled him towards the boat. The swell of St. Jim's struck out, and his fist caught the keeper on the chin.

"Oh!" roared George.

He staggered backwards, and sat down on the turf.

The swell of St. Jim's looked at him through his monocle.

"Sowwy, deah boy," he said. "I—Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus broke off and stared at the fallen man in astonishment.

The blow seemed to have disarranged his beard strangely.

It was projecting from one side of his face now.

"Gweat Scott! How extremewly peculiah!"

The keeper adjusted his beard and sprang up excitedly. He rushed at Arthur Augustus, and they struggled.

"Hang it!" exclaimed Tom Merry, jumping out of the boat. "I'm not going to stand this. Come on, kids."

"Rather!"

The juniors crowded out of the boat again.

Reported to the Head or not reported, they were not going to fail to stand by a chum in the hour of need.

"Throw him out!" shouted Sir Hilton Popper.

"Yes, sir!" gasped the keeper.

He whirled D'Arcy towards the boat.

But the hands of the other juniors fell upon him, and he was whirled away from the swell of St. Jim's, and sent reeling over the turf.

"Begad! How dare you lay hands on my man!" vociferated Sir Hilton Popper.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Boy!"

"Bosh!"

"Get out!"

"Rubbish!"

"I'll report you to your head-master! I'll have you flogged! I'll have you expelled, begad! Hah!"

"Oh, all right, go ahead!" said Tom Merry coolly. "As you're going to bother us at the school anyway, we won't go!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I—I won't report you if you go at once," said Sir Hilton, calming down a little. "This is your last chance."

"I wefuse to go, for one!"

"Young rascals! Tramps! Villains—"

"Weally, Sir Hilton Poppah—"

"Get off my land!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully once more. "We're not going!"

"I—I—I— Begad!"

"Yaas, wathah! I suggest that we should bump the keepah, deah boys, for his feahful cheek in layin' hands on a St. Jim's juniah—and if Sir Hilton Poppah gives any more trouble, we'll bump him, too!"

"Begad!"

"Huray!"

And the juniors collared the keeper and bumped him.

"The wottah is wearin' a false beard—"

"My hat!" yelled Figgins. "Look there!"

In the somewhat rough grasp of the juniors the keeper's beard had come off. With it came a wig off his head, and a pair of whiskers.

Then in spite of the brick-red complexion the juniors knew the face.

It was that of Frank Monk!

They released the keeper in amazement, and simply staggered. Frank Monk gasped with breathless laughter.

"Monk!"

"Frank Monk!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Spoofed!"

"It's a jape!"

"And Sir Hilton Poppah—"

"Collar him!" roared Tom Merry. "Collar him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Begad! Hands off! I—"

But the hands were on him—and Sir Hilton Popper's white whiskers and beard, and ferocious moustache, were rudely grabbed—and came off in the grasp. Then the skilfully made-up complexion could no longer disguise the identity of Gordon Gay, the schoolboy actor.

There was a yell from the juniors.

"Gordon Gay!"

"I thought so!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Gordon Gay! Bai Jove!"

And the two disguised Grammarians were held fast, helpless prisoners, in the hands of the juniors of St. Jim's. The jape had not worked after all.

CHAPTER 21.

The Girls Look In.

"HUCK it!" gasped Gordon Gay.

"Got them!"

"Leggo!" stuttered Frank Monk.

"You bouders!"

"You awful impostors!"

"Bai Jove! The Gwammah cads, you know!"

"Of all the cheek!"

"Blessed spoofers!"

"Gerroff my chest, you ass!"

"Let them get up," said Tom Merry. "There's enough of us to handle them if they try any more tricks!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gordon Gay and Frank Monk staggered up.

They looked very peculiar now, with fragments of their disguises hanging about them, and the make-up on their faces worked into furrows by streams of perspiration.

The St. Jim's juniors surrounded them.

"Well, you look a pair of giddy beauties," chuckled Tom Merry. "But I will say that you did it well, you blessed spoofers."

"Yaas, wathah! They took me in, you know!" said D'Arcy. "I hadn't the faintest ideah that I was not addressin' the weal Sir Hilton Poppah, you know. Undah the cirocs, Gordon Gay, I withdaway my wemark that you were no gentleman."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass!" gasped Frank Monk. "I wish you'd withdraw the thump you gave me on the chin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am sowwy, Monkey! But, bai Jove, I wegard it as an awful cheek of these Gwammah wottahs to play a twick like this on us. We'll take them back to the Gwammah School, just as they are, and give them a show-up!"

"Ha, ha! Good egg!"

"Bai Jove, and we'll pawade them wound the quad. at St. Jim's first!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze!"

Gordon Gay and Frank Monk exchanged a desperate look. With a sudden spring they made for the river.

It was their only chance of escape, and both were good swimmers, even with their clothes on. But the St. Jim's juniors were too quick for them.

A dozen hands grasped them and dragged them back.

Gay and Monk went to the grass, with four or five juniors sprawling over them, and there was a terrific tussle.

"Ow!"

"Yah!"

"Leggo!"

"Collar 'em!"

"Bump them!"

"Yah!"

"Oh!"

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed a silvery voice in tones of surprise. "Whatever is the matter here!"

The juniors let go Gordon Gay and Frank Monk as if they had become suddenly red-hot.

Dusty and dishevelled, and covered with confusion, they turned to face the owner of the silvery voice.

Cousin Ethel looked at them in amazement.

A boat had run into the reeds, and three girls had stepped lightly ashore, and they were regarding the scene with wide-open eyes.

"Cousin Ethel!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"My cousin Phil!" murmured Frank Monk.

"Miss Vera!" gasped Gordon Gay.

The three girls looked at the crowd of dusty and confused juniors with prim and demure smiles.

"Goodness gracious!" said Miss Phyllis Monk.

"Dear me!" said Cousin Ethel.

"My word!" said Miss Vera.

Tom Merry turned a face of crimson towards the girls.

The hero of the Shell could have kicked himself.

A gleam of fun was in Ethel Cleveland's eyes.

"So sorry we interrupted you," she said.

"Oh, Miss Cleveland!"

"Weally, Ethel, deah gal—"

"I suppose that is a new game?"

"Of course," said Miss Phyllis, "it must make those who play it very dusty, though. What do you call the game?"

"I suppose it has a name," smiled Miss Vera.

Tom Merry laughed ruefully.

"Yes, we call it bumping the spoofers!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors all laughed, and the tension was relieved. The girls laughed, too; they could not help it.

Gordon Gay chuckled breathlessly.

"It's all right," he said. "You mustn't imagine for a moment that we were fighting, you know."

"Of course not," said Cousin Ethel gravely.

"Monkey and I came here rigged up as Sir Hilton Popper and a keeper, and—and—"

"And we bowled them out," grinned Tom Merry.

"Not till we had taken you in, though."

"Admitted! But—"

"And then," said Gordon Gay—"then—"

"Yes, then—" said Tom Merry.

"Then, you see, deah gals," said Arthur Augustus lamely.

"We see perfectly," said Cousin Ethel. "Don't we, Vera?"

"Perfectly," said Miss Vera.

"Quite so," assented Miss Phyllis.

"Oh, I suppose you see it all," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"We were bumping them for spoofing us—no harm meant at all. As for this bump on my nose, it was—was accidental."

"So was this mark on my chin," said Monk.

"And that beautiful blue round Dig's eye," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But now you're here," went on Tom Merry, "we've been expecting you, and—"

"Expecting us!"

"Yes. Skimpole told us you'd be coming, and we've got a ripping tea," said Tom Merry. "You'll stay and finish the picnic with us?"

The three girls smiled.

"Well, we were going back to Westwood Lodge for tea, after our row," said Cousin Ethel. "But we'd rather have tea here."

"Certainly," said Miss Phyllis and Miss Vera.

"Then you'll stay?"

"Yes, with pleasure."

"Jolly good!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good," said Fatty Wynn. "You'll like the feed. There are some apple turnovers left, and they are done to a turn. The tarts are ripping. The tea—"

"I'll make the tea," said Cousin Ethel.

"Then it will be ripping—better than the tarts or the apple-turnovers," said Fatty Wynn, with unwonted gallantry.

The juniors dusted themselves down, and put their collars and ties to rights, and washed off as much as they could of the dust of the conflict in the stream. Then they prepared tea.

Cousin Ethel made the tea, and the general verdict was that it was ripping. And the more solid portion of the meal deserved all the encomiums of Fatty Wynn.

The presence of the girls, of course, put an end to all thoughts of hostilities.

Grammarians and Saints fraternised with perfect good feeling, and as Monty Lowther remarked, it was like the giddy lion lying down with the lamb.

And the end of that picnic was more successful than the beginning had been, bearing out Tom Merry's statement that a picnic never could be considered quite a success unless some of the gentle sex were present.

"Well," said Fatty Wynn at last, "I've had feeds before, many a time—"

"You have," said the rest cordially.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Many a time," went on Fatty Wynn, "but never one quite so ripping as this. And I vote that we drink the health of the ladies in ginger-pop, with thanks for—gracing the festive board with their presence."

"Good old Fatty!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the toast was drunk in ginger-pop, with great enthusiasm. And when the setting sun warned the merry party that it was time to think of home, it was generally agreed that they had never spent a pleasanter day before.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "The St. Jim's Pageant," by Martin Clifford, next Thursday.)

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE ST. JIM'S PAGEANT."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The First Chapters of a Splendid Serial Story.



By Lieutenant Lefevre.

READ THIS FIRST!

Oswald Yorke, a youth of eighteen, whom peculiar circumstances have forced to become a highwayman, one night holds up the carriage of Admiral Sir Sampson Eastlake. He is overpowered, however; but the good old admiral offers him a chance of serving the King in the Navy instead of handing him over to justice. Oswald, therefore, joins the frigate Catapult as a midshipman, under the name of John Smith.

Owing to the incompetence of her drunken commander, Captain Burgoyne, the Catapult does not distinguish herself against the French ships. The crew become discontented, and at length Oswald overhears a plot to mutiny, and murder the officers. The latter, with a few men they can trust, assemble on the quarter-deck, which they quietly proceed to fortify. They have not long to wait, and soon a terrific conflict takes place, and the mutineers are beaten, however, after great loss of life.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Terrible Storm.

Now Fid stood with tears rolling down his weather-beaten face, surveying the awful scene, and recognising each upturned, dead face.

"Jim Watts, who left his sweetheart in Portsmouth," he muttered. "Gorrings, whose old mother'll be waiting to see her boy agen. Franks, who fought like a man at Copenhagen, and died last night like a traitor—traitor! Hang him! There lies the greatest traitor of 'em all!" he muttered, turning to look at the captain, who lay on the deck like a log. "Hang him!" he muttered again. "It's such as he as makes rebels; such as he as—"

He paused. The captain had stirred. He flung his arms out, and uttered a long, gurgling sigh, then slowly opened his bloodshot eyes, and gazed straight upwards into old Fid's face.

"What's this— What's the matter? What—" he grunted. Then he suddenly seemed to become aware that he was the object on which all eyes were turned, and with an effort he dragged himself up into a sitting posture, and glared around him.

"What's this? What's happened? What—"

His eyes fell suddenly on the body of Jacobs, the deck hand, who lay not half a dozen feet away, his head crushed in by a blow from a clubbed musket.

The captain's gaze became riveted on the dead body; his face twitched, and his lips moved, but uttered no sound. Then, suddenly, with a hoarse cry, he leaped to his feet, and stood gazing about him with a look of horror and terror on his face.

"What is this? What has happened?" he whispered hoarsely.

Mr. Pringle turned, and looked him full in the face.

"Mutiny!" he said briefly.

"Mutiny! The—the crew—"

"Rose against you last night. Fortunately we had warning."

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of their intentions. We saved you and Lieutenant Brabazon. We carried you up here out of your cabin, and then—"

Mr. Pringle pointed to the dead on the deck in silence; there was no need for words.

With his arms hanging limply down beside him, Captain Burgoyne stood like a man turned to stone.

"Mutiny! They mutinied, the dogs!" he muttered, under his breath. "You held this deck against them?" he added, turning again to Pringle. "You seem to have done well. Where are the others?"

"Barricaded in the fore-castle."

"They'll hang for this, every one of them! Hang—hang them, they'll hang!" muttered Captain Burgoyne. Then, seeing the still recumbent form of his lieutenant, he kicked it savagely.

"Get up, you drunken dog!" he said, forgetting how short a time ago he was in the same position.

Mr. Pringle turned away with disgust and loathing on his face.

"By Heaven, I wish I had left him to them! I wish they had had their own way with him! He deserved it! It is his doing, all this. He forced the poor fellows to it, hang him!"

The horror that had attended his awakening was soon overcome, and Captain Burgoyne soon became himself again. Uttering the most horrible oaths and blasphemies, he went about peering into the dead faces of the men that strewed the deck of the Catapult, more than once stopping to revile the body of some man against whom he had had some particular ill-feeling.

Mr. Pringle's disgust infected the others. The men who had fought all night on the quarter-deck almost regretted that they had raised a hand to save a life so worthless.

"How many of those dogs are there in the fore-castle, Mr. Pringle?" cried the captain.

"I don't know. We could tell by counting the bodies of those on the deck. I should think a dozen, perhaps," replied Mr. Pringle.

"A dozen! And you let 'em stay there and defy you—a dozen? By thunder, we will soon have them out of it! Here, you, Benton, Crufts, Sims—all of you bring those carronades to bear on the fore-castle! We'll open a way for ourselves! Move, you scoundrels! Don't you hear me?"

The three men the captain had called upon by name shifted uneasily, but made no effort to obey him.

"Asking your honour's pardon," said Benton civilly, touching his forehead, "but—"

"I'll pardon you with a rope-end! By thunder, is this going to be a second mutiny?"

"There's been enough blood spilled and to spare," said old Fid stoutly. "We've done our duty, sir, to you as our superior officer, but we ain't going to spill no more British blood if we can help it."

Burgoyne's face went black with fury.

"You—you—" he gasped; then hesitated. There was

something in the expression of Fid's face that made all his coward fears arise.

Without a word he swung round on his heels, and went below, and the men on the quarter-deck drew a sigh of relief. "I'll cut off my hand sooner'n lift it agen one of them poor fellows in the fore-castle!" said Fid.

Benton and Sims nodded.

"Ay, no more butcher's work for us!" they said.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Armstrong had taken Mr. Pringle on one side.

"We are in a very serious predicament," he said, in a low voice. "There are a handful of Marines below deck, a handful of us above deck, and at any moment an enemy's ship may come in sight. If I live to see port again—British port—I will bear witness in this matter. If the Catapult is lost, the blame lies at the door of her captain."

"Ay, that it does, and if we live we'll see justice done!" said Mr. Pringle.

"If we live," repeated the lieutenant thoughtfully. "Captain Burgoyne must know full well that a searching inquiry will be made into this matter if we see port. He will also know that you and I and the others, too, will speak the truth."

"It'll mean disgrace everlasting for him, if not worse. Mutiny, and the captain dead drunk!" said Pringle.

"Depend on it, he will endeavour to stop our mouths if it lies in his power. We must be on our guard," replied the lieutenant.

"Ay, we must be on our guard. We've got more'n one enemy," said Pringle gloomily. "And that's the first enemy we must guard against," he added hurriedly, pointing up to the sky.

Lieutenant Armstrong looked up.

"I see nothing. It looks fair and calm to me," he said.

"Ay, but appearances are deceitful. Before another hour is gone we shall be seeing the dirtiest bit of weather we've encountered since we set sail—mark my words if we don't."

"The very Fates are against us," said the lieutenant.

"Old Davy himself," assented the master. "How are we going to work the ship in the face of a storm such as this that is coming down on us, with only a handful of men? Lieutenant, you must call up your Marines. Even Marines may come in useful here. A poor dozen of us, and some only boys, and all weary after last night's work! It's a pretty look-out, with such a storm as this coming down on us. If those fellows in the fore-castle would come out and lend a helping hand, we might pull through," he added hopefully.

"They are scarcely likely to do that. They know that they have only a rope to expect," said the lieutenant.

"Ay, but when it comes to saving the ship there might be mercy shown. I'll go and see the captain."

Mr. Pringle went below, and found the captain moodily pacing up and down his cabin.

"Well, what is it?" Captain Burgoyne said brusquely.

Mr. Pringle briefly explained the position of affairs.

"There is a hurricane coming down on us, nothing less," he said. "The men who were on deck with me all through the night are spent and tired out; we want help."

"What do you come to me for help for?" cried the captain, in a fury. "Do you think I keep men stored away in my lockers to bring them out in emergency?"

"There's the men in the fore-castle."

"They shall hang, every one of them, as sure as there is a sea beneath us!"

"Would it not be better to let them live, and save your ship?"

"By heavens, if you plead for them I shall think you are a mutineer yourself!" shouted the captain. "I tell you they shall hang for last night's work. Whether they hang here on board this ship, or when we touch port, it doesn't matter to me; but hang they will, as sure as my name is Burgoyne!"

"And supposing we never reach port? Supposing I tell you now, sir, straight, as man to man, that without the help of those men it will be almost impossible to work the ship in the face of the coming storm?"

"Then I tell you that I'll make you all work!" cried the captain between his clenched teeth. "There are a dozen men and a score of Marines. If that is not enough to work this frigate, what is?"

"Marines are not sailors."

"They will be sailors to-day, or I will know the reason why! Send Lieutenant Armstrong to me."

Pringle would have made one more appeal for the captives in the fore-castle, but, with a furious gesture, Captain Burgoyne pointed to the door.

"You hear me?" he shouted. "Obey!"

"You will order your men on deck, and place them under Mr. Pringle's orders," the captain said, when the lieutenant came in.

"Mr. Pringle thinks that the men will be of little use in this emergency," said the lieutenant.

"I don't ask for Mr. Pringle's opinion or yours, either! I order, and I expect obedience!"

Lieutenant Armstrong bowed, and left the cabin.

He ordered his men on deck, and they obeyed him, but sullenly, and with apparent ill-will. Their feelings were all in favour of the mutineers, and, as Mr. Pringle had foreseen, their presence on deck would more likely than not prove a hindrance rather than a help.

Meanwhile, a grey haze had overspread the sky, and the sun, shining through the mist, appeared like a blood-red shield hung in the heavens. Some strange and unseen force seemed to be at work, for the sea had become agitated, and was beating heavily against the frigate's sides; yet, so far, not a breath of wind stirred, and the air was heavy and heated, like a blast from a furnace.

"We shall have to work, all of us, you boys with the rest," said Mr. Pringle, turning to Maxwell. "We must get topsails set, or we shall lie like a log in the trough. Benton, Webster, Crafts, aloft and set topsails, my lads, as quickly as you know how! Smith, you and Maxwell set to work on the hatches. They must be battened down, or we shall be shipping more water than we can carry."

Oswald and Maxwell hurried away to obey this order, and were speedily followed by Rumbold and Babbington. For half an hour in the growing darkness the four of them worked away like niggers, making the hatches secure, while up aloft the men set the necessary sails, but slowly, too slowly for Mr. Pringle's impatience.

The great responsibility rested heavily on his shoulders.

"That man ought to be on deck," he growled to the lieutenant. "By Heaven, if we ever get into port there'll be a long bill against him!"

From the quarter-deck it was now quite impossible to see the men at work aloft, for a thick grey vapour hung like a dense cloud of steam over the deck, and through it even near objects looked like misty, indistinct phantoms.

"Hark!" whispered Mr. Pringle suddenly. "Do you hear anything?"

Lieutenant Armstrong listened for a moment, straining his ears.

"No—yes, a queer, humming sound, a—"

"Come down! Benton, Crafts, come down for your lives!" shouted Mr. Pringle. "Benton, you hear? Come down!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came Benton's voice from aloft.

"For your lives!" shouted Mr. Pringle. Then he dashed over to the wheel, and gripped the spokes with all his strength. "Lash yourself to something if you have time, if not, hold on for your life!" he shouted to the lieutenant. "We shall be smothered in a moment. Benton, are you down? Where are the others—Fid, Maxwell, Smith, Rumbold? Look out! By heavens, it's come at last!"

His last words were drowned in the deafening roar that suddenly uprose. Louder and louder it grew, swelling until those who heard thought their very ear-drums would burst with the tension.

Then a swirling white sheet of water came flying over the sea. It caught the frigate, spinning her round and round as though she were a child's top. Those who had remained standing on her deck were flung down and dashed against the bulwarks. Another moment, and a huge wave swept her from stern to stem, carrying with it dead and living, as the wave on the foreshore carries with it the little pebbles of the beach.

For an instant Mr. Pringle clung to the wheel with the strength of a maniac; but his strength against the power of the tempest was nothing. The wheel was forced out of his grasp, and spun round. He himself was flung down heavily, and the next moment was being carried swiftly over the deck by the mighty volume of water.

He grasped at something, and held on for his life. For a moment his progress to doom was stopped; then the thing in his hand gave way, and he was whirled towards the now smashed and broken bulwarks. Again he grasped something, and held on for his very life, suffocating and half drowned.

At the moment that Mr. Pringle gave warning that the storm was on them, Oswald and Maxwell had barely finished their work of battening down the hatches.

"Lash yourselves to something if you have time!" they heard Mr. Pringle shout, and, a coil of rope lying providentially near, Maxwell seized on it, and, binding it round and round his own waist, passed it twice around the main-mast.

"Lash yourself on!" he shouted to Oswald, and Oswald, seizing the free end, bound it round himself and secured it.

He had barely done so when the flying spume which preceded the great wave nearly blinded them. The next instant the huge volume of water was swirling round them. The grey mist-had lifted, whirled away by the tempest, and they could see the bodies of men being swept past them.

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One made a frantic effort to clutch Oswald as he swept by. They caught a glimpse of his white, despairing face, and saw it was Rumbold. The next moment he was gone, never again to be seen by mortal eyes.

As though furious at their efforts to cheat it of its prey, the swirling waters caught them and buffeted them, bruising them as it flung them hither and thither, now against the mast, now against each other. It seemed to them an eternity while they fought and struggled for breath; then the great sheet of water slipped away, pouring in a great cascade through the ruined and smashed bulwarks, and lightened of its enormous weight, the frigate rose, buoyant and light, on the crest of another wave.

To hear one another's voices was impossible, for the air was filled with the roar and the rushing sound of wind and driving water; the salt spray stung their faces, and well-nigh blinded them. They could see nothing, only the grey of the flying spume.

Then suddenly, with a crack like the report of a cannon, the mast to which they were lashed snapped and fell. It had broken off about ten feet above the deck, and fell crashing down with its weight of rigging, and torn and ragged sails, forcing its way through that part of the bulwarks that had been left standing, and falling into the sea, there to become a thing of danger to the vessel to which it had belonged.

Held fast to the frigate's side by the rigging, the waves lifted it, and hurled it against the ship's sides, its sharp, jagged splinters crashing against the woodwork.

During the brief respite that followed they could hear the wrecked mast being driven against the ship, which trembled and shivered at every furious blow. Dazed, half suffocated, Mr. Pringle staggered to his feet and stumbled across the deck.

He knew the awful danger that existed from being stove in by the mast, and if it cost him his life he meant to try and overcome it. But there was more work to do than one man was capable of. In a few words, shouted at the top of his voice, he told Lieutenant Armstrong of the danger, and the two men, knives in hand, fell upon the rigging, and commenced to hack and hew at it.

The tempest had lulled now sufficiently for Oswald and Maxwell to see what was going on. It was but the lull that preceded another outburst, as they knew well, and they knew that unless the mast was cut loose at once no power on earth could save the frigate.

Casting themselves loose from their lashings, they pulled out their knives, and set to work on the rigging.

Fid, who had been washed forward by the wave, but who had managed to save himself by clinging to the foremast, came up, and the five of them worked in silence—worked as not one of the five had ever worked before in his life.

But, work as they might, there was more to do than they could get through in the brief time allowed them.

Already indications of a fresh outburst on the part of the storm was apparent.

Mr. Pringle looked at the half-finished work despairingly.

"No use—no use!" he said. Then, raising his voice to a shout, "Quick—to safety!"

Oswald and Maxwell had no time to regain their former position, but, passing some of the ropes of the wreckage around them, they trusted to Providence that they would be secure. The three men did the same, and then once again the wild tempest swept down upon them.

This time it lasted longer—it died harder. It seemed as though great hands wrenched at the creaking timbers of the fated ship—wrenched and tore at them as though to drag it asunder. But more fearful to the ears of the helpless men and boys than the roar of the tempest was the frightful, dull, grinding sound of the wrecked mast against the Catapult's side.

Thud! thud! It seemed as though the sea was using it as a battering-ram to force an entry. Its crashing blows were delivered with marvel-

lous regularity, and at each blow the vessel trembled from stem to stern.

And now a light grew in the sky. The wind subsided from a roar to a howl. It was a wonderful sight that met their gaze. Through a break in the dense black clouds the sky glowed with an orange-coloured light. They could see the huge rolling waves, grey at their summits, black in their depths, come racing along towards them, capped with snowy crests of foam, and as each wave met the frigate she staggered at the furious blow, and a sheet of flying foam flew across the deck, leaving those upon it blinded and breathless.

For upwards of an hour they crouched there, with the ropes knotted around them. The light in the sky had grown, and the black clouds were rolling away; but the sea still ran very high, though the fury of the storm was passed. Oswald and Maxwell had fallen into a state of semi-stupor when they were aroused by Mr. Pringle's voice.

"The frigate rolls heavily," said the master. "I fear she has sprung a leak."

The words were very simple, and the tone of his voice was quiet, but those who heard him well knew the terrible meaning that underlay them.

Mr. Pringle had cast himself loose from his lashing, and the other four followed his example.

"She's carrying more weight than she did an hour ago," Fid said thoughtfully.

"Go and take soundings," said Mr. Pringle.

Old Fid hurried away, and at the same moment Maxwell uttered an exclamation.

The fore-castle had been entirely carried away, and those who had sought shelter in it had nothing now to fear from earthly justice.

Presently Fid came hurrying back with a scared look on his face, and Mr. Pringle hurried to meet him.

"It is as I feared," said Mr. Pringle, coming back to the lieutenant and the boys. "We have sprung a leak, and the water is coming in fast. The mast must have stove a hole in us."

"What can we do?" asked Lieutenant Armstrong eagerly. "Nothing to save the ship. We have not the men to work the pumps, and even if we had I am afraid it would be hopeless. We must get ready to leave her. And yet—" He paused, and glanced at the mountainous waves, and turned to Fid and said something quickly.

Mr. Pringle paused for a moment, and then turned to the others.

"It is only right you should know," he said quietly. "The frigate is doomed; she can't float for many minutes—an hour, perhaps, but I doubt it so long. With this sea running it will be almost an impossibility to launch a boat, therefore, there is nothing to look forward to but death!"

There was not a tremor in his voice as he spoke, not a shade of fear on his face.

The others took courage from him.

"At least we can make a fight for life," said Lieutenant. "We must launch a boat; it is our only chance," he added excitedly. "We will try."

At this moment Captain Burgoyne came up. He had been liberated from below deck by Fid.

"The water is a foot deep in my cabin," he said, in a trembling voice. Then, suddenly he grasped Mr. Pringle by the arm. "What does it mean?" he asked hoarsely. "We—we are going down—"

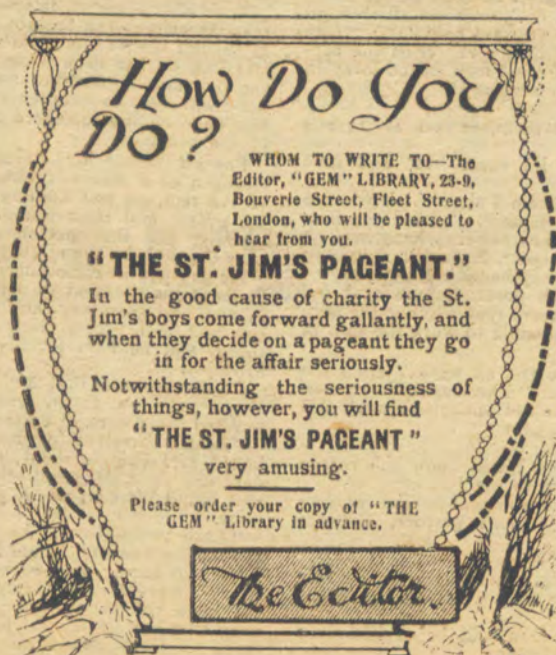
"In less than an hour," said Mr. Pringle.

For a moment the captain seemed numbed and stupefied by the news; then he burst out into a passion of invective against Fate.

"No boat could live in this sea!" he cried hoarsely. "My heavens, Pringle, we are doomed!—we must die!"

His face was grey and livid, and the words burst from his throat like a scream of terror.

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