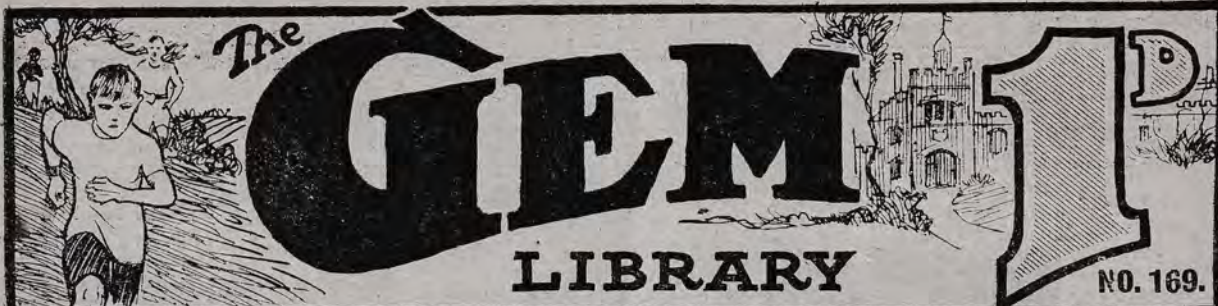


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The Schoolmaster's Rescue



A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale
of TOM MERRY & CO.
at St. Jim's.

... BY ...

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Cheek!

"LIKE his cheek!"
"Yaas, wathah!"
"Cheek's not the word! I call it nerve—beastly nerve!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rotten!"

"Disgusting!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with his "Yaas, wathah!" came in like a sort of operatic chorus. Whatever the other fellows said, that remark seemed to express D'Arcy's feelings better than any other.

The juniors seemed rather excited.

They were talking the matter over in Tom Merry's study, in the Shell passage in the School House, and several of them were talking at the same time. There was nothing unusual about that, but it did not add to the clearness of the discussion.

As a rule, when Tom Merry, of the Shell, discussed matters with Jack Blake & Co., of the Fourth, trouble would arise, and trouble arose whenever either party discussed matters with Figgins & Co., of the New House. But the time seemed to have arrived when the lion should lie down with the lamb, for Tom Merry, of the Shell, and Blake and his chums of the Fourth, and Figgins & Co., of the New House, were all on the best of terms with one another as they talked with heated voices. They were excited, but it was not a Form or a House row. Their indignation was evidently turned against somebody outside St. Jim's.

"Like his cheek!" said Blake, for the fifth or sixth time.
"Blessed if I see how a chap can have such a nerve!" Reilly, of the Fourth, remarked. "It's too cool entirely!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rotten!" said Herries.

"Somebody ought to do something," said Manners, of the Shell, rather vaguely.

"Hear, hear!" chimed in Monty Lowther.

"Good egg!" said Blake. "You take his photograph,

Manners, and send him a copy. That would make him sit up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a laugh, and the amateur photographer of the Shell glared at Blake.

"You utter ass—" he began.

"Peace, my children!" said Tom Merry. "Don't let your angry passions rise. We're discussing the conduct of Mr. Browning-Jones."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The gentleman with the double-barrelled name—"

"Down with him!" said Kerr.

"Hear, hear!"

"We want him—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Not at all. We don't want him here," said Tom Merry. "We don't want him at all, for that matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah—I mean, no, wathah!"

"We want him to see that his conduct is regarded with— with despicion by the juniors of St. Jim's," said Tom Merry.

"Well, that's a good word, anyway," Figgins remarked.

"We want to show him that we regard him, in fact, as an awful outsider."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Wynn.

"The question is, how are we going to do it?" said Tom Merry.

"That's the question."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors ceased to speak all at once, and looked thoughtful. That was indeed the question, and the answer to it was not forthcoming.

The cause of the indignation of the St. Jim's juniors was curious enough.

Mr. Browning-Jones, a gentleman of whom no one seemed ever to have heard before, had opened a private school close to St. Jim's.

Now, a man might open a private school and yet be all

Next Thursday:

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE" AND "THE BROTHERHOOD OF IRON."

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that was decent, and Tom Merry & Co. were perfectly willing to admit the fact.

But what business had Mr. Browning-Jones to open his private school—"his blessed private school," as Blake said—close to St. Jim's?

England was a big country, and Sussex a fairly large county, and surely Mr. Browning-Jones might have found somewhere else to open his private school, and not right under the fellows' study windows at St. Jim's.

That was how Monty Lowther put it.

Lowther was exaggerating a little. The new private school was a good half-mile away, and the fellows could not see it from the highest roof at St. Jim's.

But that made no difference.

It was undoubtedly like the cheek, the unexampled nerve, of Mr. Browning-Jones to do anything of the sort.

It had been bad enough when Rylcombe Grammar School opened near St. Jim's, and the Grammarians became their near neighbours.

The Saints had got used to that, however. But now a second establishment was opening its doors in the neighbourhood, not exactly under the junior study windows, as Lowther averred, but quite close at hand.

It was undoubtedly rotten!

Mr. Browning-Jones ought to have known better: and if he did not know better, surely it was up to the St. Jim's juniors to teach him better.

That was the unanimous view held by the meeting in Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage.

But how were they to do it?

That was a question which none of the excited juniors found it easy to answer. It was all very well to condemn the unheard-of action of Mr. Browning-Jones, but it really seemed as if the powers of the indignant juniors stopped at that point.

"Somethin' ought to be done," said D'Arcy wisely.

And all the fellows nodded. But that was as far as they could get.

"We shall have to think it out," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a knock at the study door, and Kangaroo—otherwise Harry Noble, of the Shell—looked into the room.

He stared at the closely-packed gathering in surprise. Tom Merry's study was really not designed to accommodate so many.

"Hallo!" said the Cornstalk. "Is this a giddy mothers' meeting?"

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"What are you sitting around like a lot of owls for?" demanded Kangaroo.

"I uttally refuse to be compared to an owl, Kangawoo!"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Buzz off!"

"Don't interrupt!"

The Cornstalk junior laughed.

"But what's the trouble?" he asked. "I've heard your voices from the end of the passage. Has the Head been cheeking you?"

"You uttah ass!"

"Any of the Form-masters been disrespectful?"

"Weally—"

"It's Browning-Jones," said Tom Merry.

Kangaroo stared.

"Browning-Jones!" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Who's that?"

"Chap who's opened a new private school up the river," said Manners, in a deeply aggrieved tone. "Stuck himself and his blessed private school just under our windows, with a crowd of bounders in mortar-boards."

"Well?"

"Well," exclaimed Tom Merry, "it's like his cheek!"

"Why?"

"Why—why?" Tom Merry was at a loss for a reason for a moment. "Why, you ass, because it is, you fathead!"

"Oh, good!" said Kangaroo. "Isn't this a free country?"

"Yes, ass."

"Can't a man open a school where he likes, so long as he buys the ground or pays his rent?"

"I—I suppose so."

"Well, then—"

"Oh, you're a chump!"

"Yaas, wathah! An uttah ass!"

"We're talking it over," said Figgins, with a glare at the Cornstalk junior. "We're trying to hit on a plan of campaign."

"Oh, I see!"

"We're going to make the bounder sit up, somehow, and take his blessed school somewhere else, where it won't worry us."

"Oh, I see! Do you want a suggestion?"

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"THE BOYS' HERALD." Id.

They looked suspiciously at the Cornstalk. There was a glimmer in Kangaroo's eyes, as if he regarded the whole matter in a humorous light; which, of course, was not to be endured for a moment.

"Well, yes," said Tom Merry, "if it's a sensible one."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, it's a jolly good one!" said Kangaroo. "I'll make it, if you like, and I think it will save all your trouble now, if you take my advice."

"Well, we'll hear it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Go ahead!"

"You really want me to make the suggestion?" asked Kangaroo.

"Yes, ass."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, it's this: mind your own business!" said the Cornstalk.

"What?" roared the juniors.

"Mind your own business!"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You worm!"

"Bump the bounder!"

The excited juniors swooped down upon the Cornstalk, and before he could dodge out of the study he was grasped by many hands.

He was whirled over and bumped.

"Ow!" he roared. "Leggo! Yow!"

"Bai Jove! Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yarrah!"

"Now kick him out, deah boys!"

"Yow!"

Out of the study Kangaroo went whirling, with five or six boots behind helping him on his way. Then the study door was slammed.

Kangaroo did not open it again.

CHAPTER 2.

Fatty Wynn's Idea.

TOM MERRY looked round the study rather heatedly.

"Well," he said, "anybody got an idea?"

Fatty Wynn, of the New House, nodded. A bright expression had come over the fat Fourth-Former's face.

It was clear that Fatty Wynn had an idea. Every eye was fixed upon the Falstaff of the New House at once.

"Well?" said half a dozen voices.

"I've got an idea," said Fatty Wynn.

"Go ahead, Fatty!" said Figgins, encouragingly.

"Pile on!"

"Fire away!"

"We don't seem to be able to think of a wheeze, here," said Fatty Wynn, "but it's a dead cert. that this Browning-Jones chap has got to be put in his place!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, then, suppose we adjourn to the tuckshop—"

"Eh?"

"And have a feed—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And talk it over there," continued Fatty Wynn. "I've always noticed that a fellow's brain works more actively when he's eating."

"You ass!"

"Well, you see—"

"You uttah ass!"

"Well, I think it's a jolly good idea!" said Fatty Wynn. "You never know what splendid scheme we might hit upon, if we thought it over over a good, square meal!"

"Oh, ring off!" said Monty Lowther. "If nobody's got anything to suggest, I'm going down to the river. It's no good wasting a half-holiday indoors, listening to Fatty Wynn talking about grub."

"Not a bit of it!"

"But if we had a feed—"

"Scat!"

"It will be tea-time soon, and—"

"Bai Jove! I've got an idea!"

"Oh, go ahead!" said Blake. "Gussy's got an idea! Whose is it, Gussy?"

"My own, you uttah ass!"

"Well, let's have it! Buck up!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Go ahead!" roared Tom Merry.

"Pray do not woe at a fellow in that wude way, Tom Mewwy. You throw me into quite a fluttah. I was thinkin' that I would w'ite a scathin' article in the 'Weekly,' and send a copy to the howwid boundah, Joning-Bwown—I mean Browning-Jones."

"Ass!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"If we can't get any better wheezes than this, I'm off!" said Monty Lowther, crossing over to the door.

"Yaas, wathah, I think you are off, Lowthah—off your silly wockah!"

Monty Lowther walked out of the study.

It was the signal for the meeting to break up. Tom Merry & Co. had expressed, in the most emphatic manner, their indignation at the reprehensible conduct of Mr. Browning-Jones, M.A. But how to bring Mr. B.-J. down off his perch, as Blake expressed it, was as yet unknown to them.

They had to wait for a scheme to transpire.

Meanwhile, it was glorious weather, and the river and the fields were better than a stuffy study.

The juniors left the School House, and Figgins & Co. went off to get a skiff out—a handsome skiff that belonged to Kerr. Most of the St. Jim's fellows were out by the river in blazers, or else at practice on the cricket-pitch. It was Wednesday afternoon—a half-holiday at St. Jim's.

Even Skimpole, of the Shell, had felt the call of the wild, to the extent of coming out of the School House with a big book under his arm.

Skimpole was a genius, and an enthusiast on subjects like Socialism, and Determinism, and Evolution, and other matters of the same sort, of which he did not understand the meaning, or which had no meaning for him to understand.

Skimpole could hold forth for hours on these subjects, and would cheerfully have done so, but for the difficulty of finding anybody to listen.

That was a difficulty the genius of the Shell had not yet been able to overcome, with all his mighty brain-power.

Skimpole came trotting over towards Tom Merry & Co. as they stood in a group chatting outside the School House, discussing the best way of making the most of that glorious afternoon.

The Shell genius had a huge book under his arm, which bore upon the cover the famous name of Professor Bahny-crumpet, the great social reformer.

Skimpole blinked at the juniors through his big spectacles in the most benevolent way.

"I am glad to see you, my dear fellows," he began.

"All the gladness is on your side, then," said Manners.

"Ahem—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ahem! I have an idea—"

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Have you been thinking about it, too, Skimmey?"

Skimmey blinked at him.

"Indeed, I have, Merry!"

"And you've got an idea?"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Let's hear it."

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Oh, let's hear it," said Blake. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—you know the rest. Go ahead, Skimmey!"

"Oh, vewy well; let's heah the ideah!"

"My idea is to call a meeting of all the juniors of both houses—"

"Yaas?"

"And address them in the quadrangle—"

"Well?"

"And thoroughly explain to them the ideas propounded in this wonderful book by the great Professor Bahny-crumpet."

"Eh?"

"Thus I hope that you and other ignorant and foolish youths at this school may be made to realise the wonderful truths of Socialism—"

"What!"

"And thus enlightenment—"

"You ass!" roared Blake. "You said you had an idea!"

"That is my idea, Blake."

"Isn't it about Browning-Jones—"

"What!"

"I thought you meant an idea on the subject of Brown-Jones, you chump!"

"Eh? Who is Browning-Jones?"

The juniors glared at Skimpole. They felt that they had been induced to listen to the crank of the Shell under false pretences, as it were.

"You uttah ass!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"You silly fathead!" yelled Blake. "Buzz off!"

"But I wish to explain—"

"Get out!"

"Under Socialism—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"All ignorant and uncultivated minds like your own—Yarrah!"

Skimpole ceased suddenly.

Jack Blake had seized him, and whirled him round, and he was sitting down in the quadrangle before he knew he was moving. He gasped for breath, and blinked dazedly at the juniors through his big spectacles.

Blake rolled him over in the grass, and bumped him there, and dropped his huge volume upon him, and left him in a state of great confusion and astonishment.

"Dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "I—I regard that as almost rude of Blake."

And Tom Merry & Co., laughing, strolled down to the river.

CHAPTER 3.

Not Wanted.

GORE, of the Shell, was standing by the river, with a scowl upon his face. Gore, of the Shell, had a face that seemed to be specially designed by Nature to fit a heavy scowl, and there was frequently one upon it. The scene was very cheerful up and down the river—excepting for Gore. Gore looked far from cheerful.

The broad, sunny river was dotted with craft and bright blazers. Fellows were scattered up and down the bank. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, of the Shell, had brought out a basket, which evidently contained eatables, and it was clear that a picnic somewhere was in preparation. Merry voices and laughter sounded along the sunny river. But Gore was scowling as Tom Merry & Co. came down for a boat.

Gore was a peculiar youth in some respects. He had been the most unpleasant fellow in the Shell, much given to bullying and ragging the youngsters, and making himself generally disagreeable—as he was able to do, being the biggest fellow in the Shell Form. Of late, Gore had shown a disposition to turn over a new leaf, but his backslidings were innumerable. But Gore seemed to consider that, if he chose to be in a good temper one day, fellows were called upon to forget that he had been rude or insulting the day before.

The other fellows did not see it.

Gore, so long as he kept up his old ways, had friends in fellows like Mellish or Crooke; but he was not satisfied with them now, and, in fact, was on bad terms with them. That was all to Gore's credit, for Mellish and Crooke were the greatest cads in the School House.

And while Gore was turning over his new leaf in earnest, he had friends among Tom Merry & Co.

But when the old Gore came out too strong, he quarrelled with his new friends, and he did not find them so willing to make it up as Mellish would have been.

Not that the chums of the School House bore malice.

It was not that. But a fellow could not be insulted one day, chummed with the next, and insulted again on the third day.

They were willing to be either friends or foes, but not friends on the terms that would have satisfied a fellow like Mellish.

So long as Gore, who usually had plenty of money, was willing to treat the cad of the Fourth, he could always make friends with Mellish, even if he had been licking him.

He found matters different with the better fellows.

He could not call Monty Lowther a fool, or Manners a liar, or Blake a rotter, and then get on the same terms as usual with them.

On this special afternoon, Gore was feeling specially virtuous. Perhaps it was the fine weather. Perhaps it was the fact that he had licked Mellish, and thus turned his back, for about the tenth time, on his bad associates.

He had come down to the river with an amiable smile upon his face, conveniently forgetful of the fact that only that morning he had had a row with half a dozen fellows he now wanted to be friendly with.

But they had not forgotten it.

He cheerfully offered to accompany Kangaroo and Clifton Dane on their picnic, and in reply to that offer Kangaroo looked him up and down.

"Rats!" said Kangaroo, by way of answer.

Gore reddened.

"If you're thinking about what I said this morning—" he began.

"You called me a fool, I think," said Kangaroo.

"Well, I did, but—"

"And as you whispered it in class, and Linton was there, I couldn't punch your head for it."

"But—"

"But I'm quite prepared to punch it now," said the Cornstalk.

"I—"

"Or I'm willing to let the matter drop, unless you care to repeat your little politeness here and now," said Kangaroo.

"Look here, I'm willing to be friends!"

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"Then you'd better learn decent manners," said the Cornstalk drily.

And he walked away with his chum.

Gore stood scowling.

He felt himself to be very hardly used. Figgins and Kerr were stepping into a skiff, and Gore turned towards them.

"Like me to steer?" he said.

"No," said Figgins shortly.

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Rats!"

Gore gritted his teeth. He had been very offensive to Figgins the previous evening, and Figgins had evidently not quite got over it.

Tom Merry & Co. came down to the river. They ran a boat into the water, and Gore watched them with envious eyes.

"Take care, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You vewy neahly splashed my twousahs then, Lowthah."

"Sorry!" said Lowthah.

"Oh, it's all wight!"

"It isn't."

"Eh?"

"You see, I'm sorry I didn't splash them."

"You uttah ass!"

"Wait a few minutes for me," said Herries.

"What is there to wait for?" asked Tom Merry. "We've got the oars here."

"I'm going to fetch Towser."

"Towser!"

"Yes; my bulldog likes a run on the river as well as anybody," said Herries. "I shan't be a few minutes."

"Weally, Hewwies!"

"Hold on, Herries!"

"I object to the pwesence of Towsah in the boat!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy excitedly. "The beast has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."

"Look here—"

"Wats!"

"Jump in, Herries!"

"But Towser—"

"Blow Towser!"

"I'm going—"

"So are we!" chuckled Blake. "And we shall be gone long before you get back with Towser. You'd better give him a miss, Herries!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Herries grunted.

"I say, Tom Merry!" exclaimed Gore.

Tom Merry looked at the bully of the Shell with a steady expression in his eyes. Tom Merry had always backed Gore up when he seemed in earnest about leading a better life. But Gore's relapses tried Tom Merry's temper very severely.

Only that morning Tom Merry had found Gore ragging Wally, D'Arcy's younger brother, and he had interfered, with the result that Gore had an aching jaw for hours afterwards. Wally was certainly a mischievous young rascal, but Gore had been twisting his arms, and that was a piece of cruel bullying that nothing could excuse. Tom Merry could not forget it, or Wally's white, strained face, in a hurry. He felt that he would not be able to endure Gore for some time to come.

"Well?" he rapped out.

Gore coloured.

"Can I come with you?" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"No, you can't," he said abruptly. "We don't want a bully and a cad in this boat."

Gore gave him a furious look, and then swung away, with his hands in his pockets, scowling. The boat pushed out into the river.

CHAPTER 4.

A Pull on the River.

"RACE you!" shouted Figgins.

Tom Merry laughed.

Figgins and Kerr, in their skiff, were coming along briskly. But the offer to race a six-oar was absurd—so the School House fellows thought. In Tom Merry's boat the captain of the Shell was rowing, with Lowther and Blake, Reilly and Herries, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Manners was steering, and he had his camera on his knees. Manners generally had his camera with him when he was out on a half-holiday. He was a keen and enthusiastic amateur photographer.

"Well, of all the asses!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, resting upon his oar a moment, to bestow a glare upon Figgins.

"How long will you race us—two seconds?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove! I weward you as an ass, Figgins."

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"Race you," replied Figgins. "Get a move on. You School House chaps can't row for toffee."

"You New House waster!"

"Rats!"

"Oh, go it, my sons!" said Tom Merry. "We'll leave them miles behind in a few seconds, and give them a lesson not to be cheeky."

"Rats!"

"Pull away!"

The School House oarsmen bent to it.

The boat shot along under the steady rowing. But the two New House juniors were in a racing-skiff, and they were rowing splendidly. Kerr, especially, had a turn for rowing that was really wonderful. The skiff kept pace with the larger boat.

"My hat!" Jack Blake exclaimed. "They can row!"

"Yaas, wathah! Undah the cires. I weally considah that we must admit that Figgins and Kerr can wow."

"Rats!" said Herries. "Pull away!"

"Go it!"

"Put your beef into it, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You're slacking!"

"I am not slackin', you uttah ass. I am sowwy, deah boys, but I shall have to stop the wace for a few minutes while I give Lowthah a feeshful thwashin'."

"Pull away!" roared Tom Merry. "Keep your place!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Pull, you ass, pull!"

"Under the cires—"

"Pull!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pulled.

The two boats were dashing along, but the New House skiff naturally fell behind. Figgins and Kerr laboured at the oars. There was a sudden yell on the river.

"Look out, you juniors."

It was the voice of Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's. Four Sixth-Formers were pulling down the river, and Tom Merry's boat had nearly run them down. In the hurry of the race the juniors had not seen the other boat. Kildare glanced at the youngsters as the boats passed within a foot of one another, the oars being dragged in to avoid collision.

"You asses!" he roared. "Can't you be careful?"

"Certainly!" said Monty Lowther, raising his cap.

"You nearly ran us down!"

"Glad we didn't, Kildare. It would have quite spoiled my afternoon's pleasure if you had been drowned," said Monty Lowther politely.

The St. Jim's captain glared at him, but the boats were gliding apart, and Kildare was now too far off to do anything but glare. The juniors chuckled.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "Figgy's got ahead!"

"Pull away!"

"Put your beef into it."

The School House fellows bent to their oars.

They strained after the racing skiff, and overtook it inch by inch. By this time the two boats were out of sight of St. Jim's, and in a wide reach of the river between deep, dark woods. Over the trees on the further bank rose a slate roof into view—a new roof, which had not been there long. It was the roof of the new private school kept by Mr. Browning-Jones.

The juniors did not look at it now, however.

They had attention only for the exciting race.

"Go it, Kerr!" gasped Figgins.

"Right-ho!"

"Pile in, you fellows!" roared Tom Merry.

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

A young man on the bank of the river, in white flannels, with a cheery, sunburnt face, paused in his walk, and looked at the two boats. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, who were sitting on the sloping bank, just opening their lunch-basket, stopped in that interesting occupation, and watched, too.

"Bravo, School House!" roared Kangaroo. "Go it!"

The young man in the blazer and white trousers glanced along the bank to the two picnickers, and then looked at the boat again.

He clapped a pair of sinewy hands.

"Go it!" he shouted. "Bravo!"

The School House boat shot ahead. With six oars against two, the New House fellows were not likely to keep the race up long. Figgins suddenly rested on his oars.

"I'm done!" he gasped.

Kerr grinned, and ceased rowing.

"Same here, Figgy!"

"Bui Jove, they're done, deah boys!"

"So am I, jolly nearly!" gasped Blake.

The boats glided on more slowly.

"It's all right!" called out Figgins. "We were only pulling your leg, you know. We knew we couldn't row two against six."

"Ha, ha, ha!"



Tom Merry and Mannerns dragged at the rope with all their strength. "Ow!" gasped Skimpole, as he was dragged from the mud and slime. "Yow! I am very wet." (See page 8.)

"Weally, Figgins!"

"There's a couple of bounders guzzling lemonade on the bank there," said Digby. "I'm as dry as a lime-kiln, or one of Skimpole's books."

"Yaas, watbah!"

"Same here!"

"Share and share alike!" grinned Herries. "Come on!"

"Right you are!"

The two boats turned into the bank where the picnickers sat. Kangaroo waved his hand to the juniors.

"Come on!" he called out. "There's heaps here, and al are welcome!"

"That is weally vewy courteous of you, Kangawoo."

"Go hon!"

"Undah the cires.—"

"Under the cires, shut up, and jump out," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

The boats bumped into the grassy bank, and the juniors tumbled out.

"A very good race, my lads."

The St. Jim's juniors looked round in surprise.

It was the young man in the blazer who spoke.

They looked him up and down. He was a handsome, athletic fellow, and did not seem to be much over thirty.

There was a kind, boyish expression upon his sunburnt face that was very taking.

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry. "Was it you that shouted?"

"Yes," said the young man, smiling. "I thought it was a good race. But I should advise you youngsters not to pump yourselves out like that," he added, turning to Figgins and Kerr. "You won't do yourselves any good by straining in that way."

Kerr nodded.

"I told Figgy so when we started," he replied.

"So you did," said Figgins. "I dare say you were right; and you're right, sir. I suppose you row?" he added, looking at the stranger.

The young man smiled.

"I rowed for my college," he said.

The juniors looked interested.

"Oxford man?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes. Balliol."

"Perhaps you'll join us in a feed, sir?" said Kangaroo politely.

"Thank you! You're very good; I will."

And the Balliol man sat down on the grassy bank with the juniors, without any ceremony. Kangaroo lighted the spirit-stove, and made the tea. It was a joyous party that joined in the little picnic.

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**NEXT
THURSDAY:**

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE."

**A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 5.

Mr. Browning-Jones.

TOM MERRY & Co. were decidedly pleased with their new acquaintance.

He evidently knew all about rowing and swimming and cricket—subjects dear to the hearts of the St. Jim's juniors.

He talked on those subjects, and told college stories of them, in a way that delighted the juniors.

His name he did not mention; nor did the juniors think for a moment of asking for it. He was evidently a pleasant fellow, with tastes very like their own, and that was enough for them.

"I'm awfully glad to meet you, you know," D'Arcy remarked, as he helped the stranger to sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs, and cake and biscuits, in his hospitality rather over-doing it. "My bwothah's a Balliol man, you know."

"Really? Perhaps I know him."

"Yaas, pewwaps; he's Lord Conway."

The young man nodded.

"I met him," he said.

"A friend of his, pewwaps?"

"Well, no—the merest acquaintance, I'm sorry to say. Then you are a son of Lord Eastwood, if you are Lord Conway's brother."

"Yaas, wathah! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, you know."

"The one-and-only Gussy," Jack Blake explained.

"Weally, Blake—"

"The only and inimitable Augustus—"

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah. Bai Jove! I've got an idea."

"Never mind the idea; pass the eggs."

"It's wathah wipin'—"

"Pass the ham!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Mannahs. Look here, I weally think our friend might be able to give us some advice."

"Oh!"

The young man in the blazer smiled.

"Advice!" he repeated. "If it's anything about rowing or cricket, I dare say you can depend upon me."

"Yaas, but it isn't; it's a more delicate mattah, but I have a feelin' that you may be able to suggest a good plan," said D'Arcy. "A chap who knows as much about cricket as you do, is bound to have some ideahs."

"Thank you!"

"What on earth are you getting at, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"The new wottah, you know."

"Oh, I see!"

"A new boy at your school?" asked the young man, with rather a puzzled look.

D'Arcy smiled.

"No, sir; it isn't a new boy—it's a new schoolmaster."

"A new schoolmaster!" repeated the Balliol man perplexedly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You see, there's an awful bounder come to this neighbourhood," Jack Blake explained.

"Indeed!"

"Yes; he's opened a rotten school here."

"That's bad."

"A beastly private school, you know, almost under our windows," said Monty Lowther. "We all think it's like his cheek."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Balliol man smiled.

"A beastly private school?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Beastly in what way?"

"Well, I don't know about being beastly," said Tom Merry. "We haven't seen the place, as a matter of fact, only the roof of it over the trees."

"Or the pupils?"

"Well, there aren't more than a dozen pupils," said Lowther disdainfully. "We have two hundred or more at St. Jim's."

"And it's a rotten new place," said Manners.

"Rotten?"

"Well, new, anyway. St. Jim's has been standing for centuries and centuries."

"Yaas, wathah! Quite old and wespectable."

The Balliol man laughed.

"And you don't like this bounder opening his rotten private school in your neighbourhood?" he asked.

"Wathah not!"

"It's like his cheek, to come between the wind and your nobility, as Shakespeare expresses it," the Balliol man continued.

Tom Merry looked at him quickly, suspecting mockery. But the young man's face was perfectly grave.

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"Well, it's a blessed cheek, isn't it?" said Tom.

"It may not have occurred to the bounder that it is."

"Then it ought to be pointed out to him," said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What we want to do, is to show our disgust in some gentlemanlike mannah," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, we don't want to descend to his level."

"I suppose not."

"Hear, hear!"

"By the way, what is the bounder's name?" asked the Balliol man.

"Oh, a widiculous double-bawwelled name, you know—Jonning-Brown—"

"Browning-Jones," said Kerr.

"Yaas, that's it."

"Browning-Jones," said the Balliol man. "Oh!"

"I dare say you have heard the name, sir?"

"Yes, I have heard it."

"He's an awful boundah!"

"You know him well?"

"Well, no; I have nevah seen him, as a mattah of fact."

"Have any of you seen him?"

"Well, no."

"But you have no doubt about his being a bounder?"

"Wathah not."

"None at all."

"We judge by his conduct, you see."

"By his awful cheek."

"Oh, I see!" said the Balliol man, as the St. Jim's juniors raised these explanations in upon him. "I see."

"I was thinkin'," went on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "that you might be able to give us some advice upon the mattah."

The young man nodded thoughtfully.

"What sort of advice?" he asked.

"How to get wid of him, or at all events to impress upon him a sense of our uttah disgust at his wotten conduct."

"Oh!"

"More tea, sir?" asked Kangaroo.

The Balliol man rose to his feet, with a genial smile.

"Thank you, no!" he said. "I am afraid I must bid you good-bye now. I have to get back to school."

"To—to school?"

"Certainly!"

The juniors stared at him.

"You don't go to school now, sir!" gasped Figgins.

"I do."

"To—to school! Bai Jove!"

"You see, I am a schoolmaster," the young man explained genially.

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And I'm very sorry I can't help you in the matter of putting that obnoxious Mr. Browning-Jones in his place," continued the Balliol man urbanely. "You see, it would be very difficult, because—"

"Because—" murmured Tom Merry, guessing now what was coming.

"Because I happen to be Mr. Browning-Jones."

And the young man, raising his cap politely to the juniors, walked away down the river bank, and disappeared behind the trees in the direction of the new school.

He left the St. Jim's juniors thunderstruck.

CHAPTER 6.

The Bounder!

"BAI Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the first of the juniors to find his voice.

"Bai Jove! Weally, you know!"

"Great Scott!" said Kangaroo.

"My hat!"

"Phew!"

"Browning-Jones!"

"B.-J. himself!"

"My only Aunt Matilda!"

The juniors rose to their feet, staring in the direction in which Mr. Browning-Jones, of the New School, had gone.

They were amazed—and dismayed.

The thought that was in every mind was voiced by D'Arcy.

"What a set of wude boundahs he will think us!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Fancy talkin' like that to the man himself—"

"Telling him he was a bounder!"

"And had acted rottenly—"

"My hat!"

Blake gave an angry snort.

"It was rotten his taking us in like that!" he exclaimed,

wrathfully. "He ought to have told us at first that he was B.-J."

"Yaas, wathah, when you come to think of it."

"It just shows he's a bounder."

"Yes, rank outsider."

"No class."

"Quite impossible!"

"I shouldn't wonder if he isn't a Balliol man at all."

"Might have been indulging in terminological in-

exactitudes."

"Horrid beast!"

"Rotter!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors all looked very angry.

They were feeling very sore at being led on in that way by the Balliol man, only to be informed, when they had hopelessly committed themselves, that the man they were talking to was Mr. Browning-Jones himself.

True, Mr. Browning-Jones could not have known in advance that they were going to talk about him, and he had really been quite powerless in the matter.

But the juniors were too annoyed to think about that now. It was agreed on all hands that the man was an utter bounder—a greater and more utter bounder than they had even imagined at first.

"Somethin' ought to be done," said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry laughed ruefully.

"Something has," he said. "It seems to me that we've been done."

"Yes, rather!"

"I wegard him as a feahful beast."

"A rotten, rank outsider," said Lowther.

"Simply unspeakable."

"And we can't tell him so," said Tom Merry. "He's gone. About the best thing we can do is to go, too."

And the juniors embarked, Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, and the empty lunch-basket being taken into Tom Merry's boat.

They pulled back to St. Jim's.

The pull on the sunny river quite restored their good-humour, and their faces were soon bright again, though they had a sore feeling whenever they thought of Mr. Browning-Jones, and the way they had given themselves away to him.

Gore was seated on the grassy bank, watching the river, as Tom Merry & Co. pulled towards St. Jim's.

The Bully of the Shell was sitting in a disconsolate attitude, his elbow on his knee, and his chin on his hand, in deep and far from pleasant reflection.

His straw hat lay in the grass at his feet.

Gore turned his eyes upon Tom Merry's boat, as it drew up towards the bank, and a glitter came into them.

The chums of St. Jim's looked bright and cheerful, and their happy faces made Gore feel more miserable and neglected than ever.

The boat ran into the bank, and Tom Merry jumped out. He caught sight of George Gore, and a shadow crossed his face. The dejected look upon Gore's face went directly to Tom's heart.

After all, the fellow was a bully and a cad; but one was called upon to forgive a fellow's faults, and not to bear malice. Tom Merry walked over towards Gore.

The Bully of the Shell looked up savagely.

The dejection in his face had given place to anger at the sight of Tom Merry coming towards him.

"Well, what do you want?" he snapped.

"I want to speak to you," said Tom Merry mildly.

"You can save your breath."

"I want to say—"

Gore snapped his teeth.

"Oh, let me alone!" he said.

"Very well," said Tom Merry quietly, "I'll let you alone. Only I wanted to say that I'm sorry I answered you as I did awhile back."

"Oh, you're sorry, are you?" sneered Gore.

"Yes."

"What do you want?"

"Nothing."

"You want a loan, I suppose?"

Tom Merry flushed red.

"No," he said, "I don't want a loan."

"Then what are you trying to spoof me for?"

"I am not trying to spoof you," said Tom Merry, controlling his temper with difficulty, "I'm telling you the truth; but I can see that I made a mistake in speaking to you at all. I've nothing more to say."

Gore shrugged his shoulders.

The hero of the Shell turned on his heel, and walked back to his friends, and did not once glance in the direction of Gore again.

The Bully of the Shell rose, and strolled away with his hands in his pockets, scowling ominously.

He was angry with Tom Merry, and at the same time angry with himself for refusing Tom Merry's overtures of friendship.

His sullen temper had got the better of him again, and the words he had spoken could not be recalled. Tom Merry was not likely to give him a second chance.

"My dear Gore—"

It was Skimpole's voice.

Gore scowled at the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's. Skimpole was Gore's study mate in the Shell passage, and Gore had quite enough of him within doors.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" he growled.

"Really, Gore, I cannot but regard that speech as almost rude," said Skimpole, blinking at Gore benevolently through his big spectacles; "but I do not blame you for it, Gore. When you have studied the subject of heredity as much as I have, you will be aware that we are all the slaves of hereditary instincts, and that you can no more help being a rude and ill-mannered rotter, than I can help being the cleverest fellow at St. Jim's. It is all a matter of heredity, Gore. It is quite possible that some day some other trait of heredity may appear in you, derived from some more decent ancestor, and you may become quite decent in your manners—oh!"

Skimpole sat down suddenly.

The cause of his collapse was Gore's fist biffing hard upon his nose. The fall to a sitting posture interrupted the flow of Skimpole's eloquence.

"Ow!" he gasped.

Gore glared at him.

"You silly chump!"

"Really, Gore—"

"Do you want any more?"

"Ow! No!"

"Then you had better check somebody else," growled Gore.

Skimpole blinked at him.

"My dear Gore, I was not cheeking you. I was simply pointing out the undoubted and indisputable fact that your rough and coarse manners were the outcome of heredity, and I was going to add that I should not be so unjust as to blame you for them. It would be like blaming a pig for being a pig, to blame you for being what you are, my dear Gore. You cannot help it, and, indeed, I may say—Yaroo!"

Skimpole said "Yaroo!" as Gore thrust his foot forward, catching the amateur scientist on the chest, and rolling him over in the grass.

Skimpole rolled down the steep bank, clutching wildly at his spectacles, and lodged finally in a group of willows near the water's edge.

Gore grinned, and strode on, leaving Skimpole to extricate himself from the willows, which he did in a very dazed and confused state of mind.

CHAPTER 7.

Upset!

"THIS is all right!"

Fatty Wynn made the remark.

He was sitting in a boat moored under the steep green bank, with trees overhanging it. It was a very pleasant, secluded spot, and the green grassy slopes, and the thick old trees, and the shining river beyond, made a pleasant picture. But Fatty Wynn was not looking upon it with the eye of an artist. He was sitting in the boat and contemplating a lunch-basket he had just opened.

It was the lunch-basket that was "all right."

Fatty Wynn took out the cold chicken, and the sandwiches, and the cake, and his fat, round face grew more and more cheerful.

"This is simply ripping!" he murmured. "It's nearly an hour since I had anything to eat, and then I only had a few ham patties, and some sausages and potatoes, and a pound-cake, and some biscuits, and nuts. I've got a jolly good appetite for a little feed."

And he started.

It was just then that Skimpole rolled down the bank and lodged in the willows. As the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's crawled out of the willows, he caught sight of the fat Fourth-Former sitting in the boat.

Skimpole sat on the bank and blinked at him, and Fatty Wynn sat in the boat and stared back.

"Ow!" said Skimpole.

"Oh!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Groo!"

"Ah!"

"Yow!"

"H'm!"

"You seem to be enjoying yourself, Wynn," Skimpole remarked. "I am also somewhat hungry, owing to the fresh air of the afternoon, and to the circumstances that I ate very sparingly at dinner-time, and have not had anything since."

Fatty Wynn grunted.

He had pulled out to that secluded spot in the boat to enjoy a little feed all by himself, and his supplies were not more than he could have comfortably managed himself. But hospitality constrained him.

"Come into the boat," he said.

"Certainly, my dear Wynn."

"Do you like sandwiches?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"I'd offer you some chicken, only I've started it," said Fatty Wynn.

"I do not mind that in the least."

"Well, I—I do," said the fat junior. "You can have the sandwiches. Do you like ginger-pop, or would you prefer some water? The water just here is nice and clean and pure, and it is really better for you."

"I think I should prefer ginger-beer, Wynn. I fear that there may be impurities in the water of the river."

"Well, there are two bottles—you can have one. Go ahead!"

"Certainly, my dear Wynn."

And Skimpole began to make hay of the sandwiches.

Fatty Wynn finished his chicken, and helped Skimpole with the sandwiches. Then they shared the cake.

Fatty Wynn looked very fat and contented, and showed decided signs of sleepiness.

"This is all right," he murmured.

"Indeed it is, my dear Wynn! Now that I have refreshed myself, I should be very pleased to explain to you—"

"Groo!"

"Some of the most important principles of Determinism. You see, it is an excellent opportunity while we have the place to ourselves, far from the distractions of the madding crowd—"

Snore!

"My dear Wynn—"

Snore!

"Dear me! He is falling asleep!" said Skimpole.

Snore!

Skimpole leaned over Fatty Wynn and shook him. The boat tilted up dangerously. Fatty Wynn was leaning back at his end of it, and the fat Fourth-Former's weight was considerable.

"Wynn! My dear Wynn!"

Fatty Wynn opened his eyes.

"Groo-ohh!" he said.

"Pray remain awake, my dear Wynn. It is extraordinary that people should show this strange desire to go to sleep as soon as I begin to speak upon the extremely interesting subject of Determinism. I fail to understand it."

Yaw-w-w!

"My dear Wynn—"

Snore!

Skimpole shook Fatty Wynn up again.

"If you persist in sleeping, Wynn, it is useless for me to explain the principles of the wonderful science of Determinism—"

"Shurrup!"

"Eh?"

"Cheese it!"

"My dear Wynn—"

Fatty Wynn started up.

"Look here, shut up!" he roared. "You can pull the boat back to the school if you want something to do."

"But—"

"Shurrup!"

"My dear Wynn—"

Snore!

Skimpole blinked at Fatty Wynn through his big spectacles. It was evident that the fat Fourth-Former was in no mental state to receive instruction upon the wonderful science of Determinism.

Skimpole decided to pull the boat back to the St. Jim's landing-stage as requested. He put out the oars.

Skimpole wasn't a good oarsman, and the boat was tilting up continually under the weight of the fat Fourth-Former at the end. His return to the school landing-stage was therefore not an easy task.

But Skimpole did his best.

He caught crabs innumerable as he pulled back towards the school, and there came occasional grunts from Fatty Wynn as he was splashed.

There was a shout from the bank as Skimpole came in sight of the boathouse.

"Hallo, Skimmy!"

Skimpole blinked up, and saw Tom Merry and Manners.

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They were laughing, though for what reason Skimpole could not guess.

"Hallo, my dear fellows!" he replied.

"Did you ever get a prize for rowing, Skimmy?"

"Never, Merry."

"You surprise me."

"Really—"

"Stay like that for a moment, Skimmy," said Manners, unslinging his camera.

"What for, Manners?"

"I want to take you."

"T-t-take me?"

"Snapshot you."

"Oh, I see! You are quite welcome, Manners. I suppose you are taking photographs of athletes, and wish to add me to the number?" said Skimpole, standing up and resting upon one oar, to make a good pose for the amateur photographer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Merry—"

Snap!

"I've got him!" said Manners. "I ought to get a guinea for that from the editor of 'Comic Cuts.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Manners—"

Snap!

"Got him again!" said Manners.

"Under the circumstances, Manners, I shall decline to pose for you any more," said Skimpole, sitting down to his rowing.

"I—"

"I'll take you like that, too."

Snap!

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

Skimpole blinked indignantly, and turned the boat in towards the bank. Manners snapped him again as he rowed in, and caught a beautiful effect of crab-catching. The boat came bumping against the grassy bank.

"Wake up, my dear Wynn."

Snore!

"Wynn—Wynn!"

Snore-ore!

"Dear me!" said Skimpole. "He seems to be fast asleep. I suppose I shall have to shake him."

The genius of the Shell moved along the boat and bent over Fatty Wynn, and started shaking him. Tom Merry gave a yell of warning.

"Look out!"

But it was too late.

Skimpole's weight, added to Fatty Wynn's at the same end of the boat, made it tilt up dangerously, and Skimpole shot over the gunwale headlong into the water.

Splash!

"My hat!"

"The ass!"

The boat tilted up in the mud. Skimpole rose to the surface, covered with slime and dripping with water, and struggling frantically as he clutched at the bank.

"Ow! Help!"

CHAPTER 8.

Wet.

"GET a rope," said Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!"

Manners dashed off.

Skimpole was grasping at the steep bank, but it was too steep to climb. He hung on to the rushes and gasped for help.

"Hold on, Skimmy!" said Tom Merry encouragingly.

"We'll have a rope here in a jiffy—"

"Ow! I am very wet!"

"Well, you can't tumble into a river without getting wet. You should think of these things first."

"Ow!"

"Here comes Manners."

"Yow!"

"Here's the rope," gasped Manners, as he dashed up.

"We'll have you out in two shakes of a lamb's tail, Skimmy!"

"Groo!"

The rope was lowered down the grassy bank, and Skimpole grasped the end of it.

Tom Merry and Manners seized it firmly and pulled.

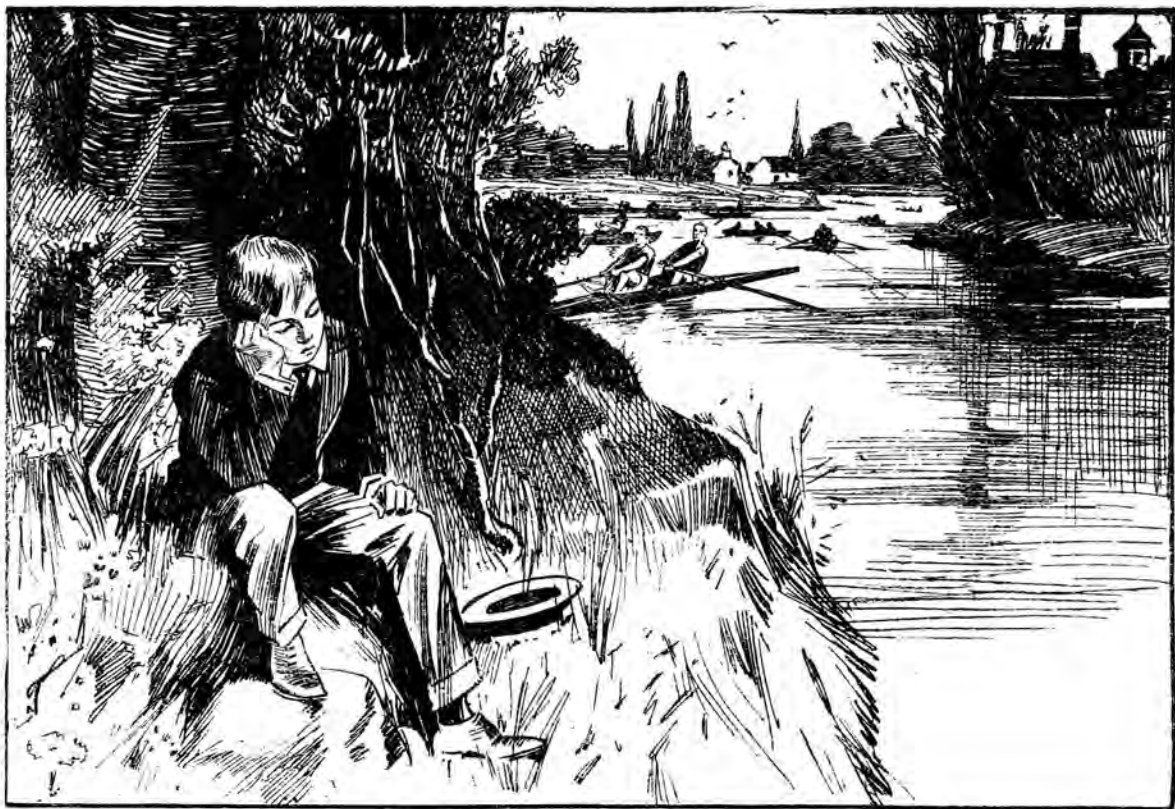
"Put your beef into it," said Tom Merry.

They dragged with all their strength.

Skimpole came slowly, being extracted from the mud and slime like a cork from a bottle.

"Ow!" he gasped, as he landed. "Yow! I am very muddy."

"Never mind," said Manners consolingly, as he dragged Skimpole out upon the grass. "You're not drowned, any—"



The bully of the Shell was sitting in a disconsolate attitude, his elbow on his knee, and his chin on his hand, in deep and far from pleasant reflection. (See page 7.)

way, and that's lucky for you, though it's rather a misfortune for everybody else."

"Really, Manners——"

"Wynn!" shouted Tom Merry.

Fatty Wynn had not awakened. The boat was tilting dangerously, but the fat Fourth-Former was still asleep in it. The boat rocked and oscillated close to the rushes, in danger of overturning every moment.

"Wynn!" roared the Shell fellows.

Fatty Wynn started up.

The movement was fatal. It gave the finishing touch to the boat, and the end plunged under the water.

"Yaroop!" roared Fatty Wynn.

He went out into the river head first.

The chums of the Shell roared. They could not help it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn disappeared in the river, and the boat rocked and bumped along the rushes. Wynn's fat face came up in a second. He was puffing and blowing and gasping.

"Help!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo! Help!"

"There's the rope," called out Tom Merry. "We'll pull you out, Wynn."

"Ow! Yow!"

Fatty Wynn grasped the end of the rope, and was pulled up the bank as Skimpole had been.

He was landed like a fish, floundering and gasping.

"My dear Wynn, I am sorry you were upset," said Skimpole. "You have shared my unfortunate mishap——"

"You silly ass!" roared Fatty Wynn.

Skimpole blinked at him.

"Really, Wynn——"

"What did you get out of the boat for and leave me to tilt up?"

"I fell out."

"What did you fall out for?"

"Really, Wynn——"

"Look at my clothes!" roared Fatty Wynn. "Look at my chivvy! And the lunch-basket at the bottom of the river—and there was still a sandwich in it!"

"Really——"

"You chump!"

"My dear Wynn——"

"You fathead! You——"

Fatty Wynn clenched his fists and rushed at Skimpole. Tom Merry and Manners grasped him just in time to stop him.

"Hold on, Fatty!"

"Chuck it!"

"Lemme gerrat him!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Cheese it——"

"Lemme——"

Skimpole blinked at Fatty Wynn in the greatest astonishment. He did not seem to have any idea what the trouble was about.

"My dear Wynn," he expostulated, "your annoyance is entirely without cause. It was not my fault that the boat upset. You see——"

"Lemme get at him——"

"Under the circumstances, I——"

Tom Merry took Skimpole by the shoulders and swung him round, so that he faced the school. Skimpole blinked.

"Under the circumstances, you'd better cut off," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Really, Merry——"

"Buzz off!"

"But——"

"Scoot!"

Tom Merry gave Skimpole a start with his boot, and the genius of the Shell ambled off towards St. Jim's, still in a state of the greatest astonishment.

Manners was holding Fatty Wynn back. The fat Fourth-Former grunted and gasped, and gouged the mud out of his eyes and mouth.

"Lemme go!" he grunted. "I want to go and get a change. The silly ass! I might have known what would happen if I let a Shell duffer into the boat."

Tom Merry laughed.

Fatty Wynn started off towards St. Jim's, leaving a trail of wet and mud behind him as he squelched on with boots full of water.

Figgins and Kerr met him at the gates.

"Hallo! We've been looking for you," said Figgins.

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Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE."

"What on earth's the matter with you, Fatty? You haven't been taking a swim with your clothes on, have you?"

"Looks like it," said Kerr.

Fatty Wynn snorted.

"I've been upset."

"Well, you look a little upset."

"Groot!"

Fatty Wynn stalked on, leaving Figgins and Kerr grinning. He left everybody grinning whom he passed on his way to the New House.

As the wet and muddy junior tramped up the New House stairs towards the Fourth Form dormitory, the voice of Sefton, of the Sixth, rang along the passage.

"Fag!"

Sefton, the bully of the Sixth, had a way of calling out for a fag on all occasions, partly because he was too lazy to do anything for himself, and partly from an ill-natured love of calling fags away from their occupations, and upsetting any arrangements they might have made. Sefton called out as he heard footsteps pass, and Fatty Wynn heard him, but he tramped right on. He was in no state to enter a senior's study just then, dripping wet and mud and river slime.

"Fag!"

Sefton shouted again.

Fatty Wynn took no notice.

The bully of the Sixth came to the door of his study, with an angry face.

"Fag! Wynn, is that you?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you come when I called?"

"I'm wet."

"I don't care whether you're wet or dry. Come to my study at once!"

"But—"

"Don't answer me back!"

Sefton went back into his study. Fatty Wynn's eyes gleamed, and he obeyed. He felt that the senior would be sorry for it. Sefton was very dandified in his study, and he had a nice carpet and curtains, and everything in neat order. Fatty Wynn tramped in, making huge muddy marks over the carpet, and he purposely brushed against the white muslin curtains, smothering them with mud.

Sefton glared at him.

"You—you—" he gasped. "How—how dare you go about the house in this state?"

"I've fallen into the river."

"To—come into my study like that—"

"I told you I was wet."

"Get out!" roared the Sixth-Former. "You've mucked up my curtains; you're ruining my carpet! Get out!"

"Well, you called me," said Fatty Wynn.

"Get out!" yelled Sefton.

Fatty Wynn got out. The bully of the Sixth was left glaring at the muddy footprints on his carpet with feelings too deep for words. Fatty Wynn chuckled as he went up to the dormitory.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally Does It.

"PEWWAPS—" "Give a chap some room!" said Blake, as he drew a chair up to the table in Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage.

"Pewwaps—"

"No perhaps about it," said Blake. "I want to do my prep."

"Pewwaps—"

"Oh, Gussy is understudying a parrot!" said Herries.

"Can't you give a chap a corner of the table?"

"Pewwaps—"

"For goodness' sake," said Blake crossly, "put on a new record, or else ring off!"

"You uthah ass—"

"We want to do our prep."

"Pewwaps—"

"He's starting again," said Herries. "It's sickening!" D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed his two chums wrathfully.

The study table was covered with books, and papers, and pens, and pencils, and scribbled sheets and slips.

Arthur Augustus had evidently been very busy in a literary way when his two chums came into the study.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Well, he's changed the record, at all events," said Blake.

"Pewwaps—"

"Off again!"

"Pewwaps you fellows wouldn't mind leavin' me to myself THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 169.

Come to London
To See the Coronation.

for a bit," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Pewwaps you wouldn't mind doin' your pwp. in the Form-woom."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Bosh!"

"Undah the circs—"

"What are you up to, you image?"

"I wefuse to be called an image."

"But what are you doing?" roared Blake. "What are you filling the blessed study up with blessed paper for?"

"I am w'itin'."

"Writing to Digby?"

"Oh, wats! I suppose I shouldn't need all this papah to wite to Digby," said Arthur Augustus. "Besides, I have written to Digby since he went away, and there is no need to write again to-day."

"Then what—"

"I am doing my contwibution to 'Tom Mewwy's Weekly.'"

"Oh, that's of no consequence," said Blake airily. "It could be missed out, you know. Give a chap some room."

"It is a most important contwibution. I am goin' to write a scathin' article about that awful boundah, Brownin'-Jones, and send him a copy of the 'Weekly' when it is published," D'Arcy explained. "I wathah weekon it will make him sit up. What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause watevah for wibald laughtah. I wegard it as a wippin' ideah. It is the only way to put the wottah in his place."

"Do you think he will read it?"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall mark the article in the copy of the papah I send him."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Well, suppose you go and write the article in the Form-room, and leave us the study for our prep?" Blake suggested.

"Wats!"

"How much have you done?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I am only just beginnin'—"

Blake put his books under his arm.

"Are you going to read it to us when you've done?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then I'll buzz off, for one, with pleasure."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on, Herries! You're going to have the scathing article read to you if you stay here," said Blake warningly.

"Then I'll jolly well come to the Form-room," said Herries.

"You feahful asses—"

But Blake and Herries were gone. D'Arcy heard them chuckle as they went down the passage. He sniffed, and dipped his pen in the ink.

He had dipped his pen in the ink many times already, but none of the ink had been transferred to the paper, so far, excepting in the form of blots.

It was one thing to sit down to write a scathing article on the subject of Mr. Browning-Jones, and quite another to get the article written. Arthur Augustus was not the first ambitious author who had sat down to write with a nice block of clean, blank foolscap before him, and risen again leaving the foolscap still blank.

"Bai Jove," murmured the swell of St. Jim's, "it's wotten! I suppose it's these wotten intewwptions, but a chap's bwain won't work just when he wants it to. There is a lot of material for a scathin' article, and I can't think of anythin' to write. It's wotten!"

He dipped the pen in the ink again.

Then he gnawed the handle of it.

Then he laid the pen down, and rose and walked up and down the study with his hands deep in his trousers-pockets, and a wrinkle of deep thought upon his brow.

What was to be done?

"The question is," murmured D'Arcy aloud, "whethah it shall be in whyme or in pwose. Pewwaps a limewick would meet the occasion."

He reflected upon it.

"There was a feahful boundah named Browning-Jones, Who had the cheek to open a school undah our beastly study windows—"

He shook his head.

Neither the metre nor the rhyme pleased him.

"Try again!" said a voice at the door.

D'Arcy looked round quickly.

It was Wally, his minor, the scamp of the Third Form. Wally had a smear of ink on his fingers and a smear of jam on his face. Wally was generally either inky or jammy—sometimes both.

"Weally Wally—" began Arthur Augustus.

See this week's number of
"THE BOYS' HERALD," Id.

A FREE OFFER!

Wally grinned.

"Composing a sermon?" he asked.

"You young ass! I am composin' a limewick."

"I thought limericks had to rhyme?"

"I have not finished this one yet."

"Let me help you," said Wally cheerfully.

D'Arcy looked at him doubtfully.

"You would be much better occupied in washin' your hands," he said, "or in gettin' a clean collah, you howw! young wagamuffin!"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gussy!" said Wally pathetically.

"Weally, Wally—"

"I'm stony," Wally explained, "broke to the wide, and I've promised to stand Jameson and Curly some grub at Mrs. Taggles. Can you lend me half-a-crown?"

"I should pwefer to lend you some soap, Wally. You have been eatin' jam for your tea, I pweesume?"

"How do you know?" asked Wally.

"There is a smear of jam on your face."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Wally. "That's from last week."

D'Arcy stood speechless.

"Lend me half-a-crown, Gussy," said Wally persuasively.

"The governor sends you more pocket-money than he does me. I'm broke to the giddy world, my son. Fork out!"

"What a howwidly vulgah expession!"

"I'll tell you what, Gussy. You lend me half-a-crown, and I'll write the limerick for you," said D'Arcy minor.

"I am afraid you could not do it, Wally."

"Honour bright!"

D'Arcy fished the half-crown out of his pocket, and tossed it to his hopeful minor, who caught it.

"Thank! Lend me your pen!"

D'Arcy handed over the pen. Wally wrinkled his brows, and rubbed his chin thoughtfully with a grubby finger, thereby far from improving the appearance of his chin. Then his pen began to travel on the paper.

Arthur Augustus watched him with considerable interest. He knew that his minor was quick-witted, and it was possible, after all, that Wally would get him out of the difficulty. The swell of St. Jim's overlooked the fact that he had not even acquainted his minor with the intended subject of the limerick, and Wally had not asked for it. But Wally's pen was driving away lightly.

"There you are!" said Wally. "It's done!"

"But weally—"

"You're welcome to it, Gussy, old son. Thanks for the coin!"

And D'Arcy minor vanished from the study.

Arthur Augustus picked up the paper from the table and read it. Then his eyeglass dropped to the end of its cord in his surprise and indignation.

For what he read ran as follows:

"There was a young duffer named Gussy,

Whose ways were remarkably fussy.

In all Colney Hatch

There isn't a match

Of the Fourth Form tame lunatic, Gussy."

"Bai Jove!"

Breathing wrath, the swell of the Fourth dashed to the door of the study. But Wally had disappeared; and the elegant Fourth-Former returned to the study, with a very pink colour in his cheeks.

"The feahful young wascal!" he murmured.

And he threw Wally's effusion into the fire, and settled down once more to his poetical labours.

CHAPTER 10.

Copy.

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther were busy in their study. It was near time for the publication of the number now due of "Tom Merry's Weekly," and the chums were making up the copy ready for the press.

Tom Merry gave a sigh of relief as he laid down the pen after finishing his editorial notes.

"That's done!" he remarked.

"So's my serial," said Monty Lowther. "I've knocked off an instalment for this number—just knocked it off, you know, in time. A chap gets into the habit of doing these things. Some fellows find it hard to write. I don't."

"Your stuff is harder to read than to write," Manners suggested.

Monty Lowther glared at him.

"If you think that's funny, Manners—"

"Glad you've got it done!" interrupted Tom Merry hastily. "We shall have to get to press to-day, or the number will have to be missed again this week. I've done

an article on the Grammarians, about the licking we gave them last week, and I think it will make Frank Monk & Co. sit up when they read it."

"Good! About my serial, I don't mind reading out a few paragraphs—"

"Then there's the photography article," said Manners.

"I've finished that."

"I don't mind reading out—"

"We can get the thing off by the post this evening, and

"Chapter thirteen," said Monty Lowther. "The attack on the laager."

Manners held up his hand.

As a matter of fact, Monty Lowther, who was of a humorous turn of mind, was frequently chipping Manners on the subject of his photography articles in the "Weekly," and Manners thought he saw an opportunity of getting his own back in connection with Lowther's serial. Lowther's serial was lurid, not to say bloodthirsty.

"I object!" said Manners.

Lowther gave him another glare.

"What do you object to?" he demanded.

"The subject—the attack on the laager," said Manners.

"I think that a school paper ought to be strictly temperance in principles, and there ought not to be anything about beer in it."

"You silly ass—"

"I may be an ass, but I stand by my principles," said Manners loftily. "I'm a strict teetotaler myself—"

"You frabjous ass!" roared Lowther. "It's l-a-a-g-e-r; not l-a-g-e-r. It means a Boer entrenchment—not beer!"

"Oh, I see! Are you sure that's quite clear to the readers?"

"Listen, you ass, and—"

"H'm! Is that strictly necessary?"

Lowther, like many humorists, did not wholly appreciate humour at his own expense. He glared at Manners, and began to read out the chapter:

"With a fierce yell, the Boers dashed to the defence of the laager. The cracking of rifles mingled with the popping of revolvers—"

Manners held up his hand again.

"Questions allowed?" he asked.

"What do you want to ask questions about, fathead?"

"What's the difference between the cracking of rifles and the popping of revolvers? Why shouldn't the revolvers crack, and the rifles pop?"

"Ass!"

"Abuse isn't argument," said Manners loftily.

"Chump!"

"Oh, shove it in, and we'll read it in print!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Let's get the copy posted off, or some ass will be coming in with more contributions—"

There was a knock at the door, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the Shell study, with a sheet of paper in his hand.

"I twust you haven't finished the papah yet, deah boys?" he said.

"Just finished."

"I have a limewick to put in."

"Sorry—no room!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"All copy must be in the office early, or there is no room for it," said Tom Merry decisively.

"You can leave out some of the editowial notes to make woom for this."

"No fear!"

"Or some of Mannah's dwy wot about camewas and things."

"Ass!" said Manners.

"Or some of Lowthah's wotten sewial—"

"Chump!"

"You see, it simply must go in!" explained D'Arcy.

"It's a limewick, and—"

"Limericks are out of date."

"This is a tewwific one, awf'ly sarcastic, slatin' Brownin'—"

"Oh!"

"I'll wead it out."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Tom Merry resignedly.

D'Arcy read it out.

It had cost him great mental labour, and there was a ring in the elegant Fourth-Former's voice, expressive of pride in his achievement as he read it out:

"There was a feahful boundah named Jones,

Whose remarks on all occasions deserve to be tweated with gwoans.

I considah it cheek

On his part to open a new school last week

In the neighbourhood of our own."

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Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE."

Tom Merry fell back in his chair, looking faint. Manners gasped for breath, as if he had received a great shock. Monty Lowther fell off his chair with a loud bang to the floor, and lay groaning.

The collapse of the Terrible Three was sudden and complete.

D'Arcy looked at them in surprise. He adjusted his eyeglass and looked at them again.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"Oh!" groaned Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Go away!" said Manners faintly.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Mercy!" implored Tom Merry.

"You uttah ass!"

The swell of St. Jim's began to look wrathful. He was very proud of that limerick. He thought there were really few limericks like that in existence—and, indeed, he was quite right on that point.

"I wegard that as a splendid limewick, and a feabfully hard hit at Bwownin'-Jones!" he exclaimed.

"Well, if he read it—"

"He would be bound to wead it if we sent him a copy of the 'Weekly,' with the pawgawaph marked."

"Well, it would give him a shock," said Lowther, in a faint voice, "It's given me a terrible shock."

"You feafful ass—"

"Ow!"

"Where did you learn to shove in such ripping metre, Gussy?" asked Manners. "You are quite sure the lines will scan, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah!" Pewwaps they are a twiffe wocky in places, owin' to bein' written in wathah a huvwyy—"

"Perhaps!" moaned Lowther.

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Lowthah!"

"Perhaps! Oh, my grandfather's pink sun-bonnet! Will they scan! Oh! The metre! How many feet do you shove in a line as a rule, Gussy?"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"And all the feet club-footed, to judge by the sound of the lines," Tom Merry remarked.

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye and surveyed the Terrible Three with a scornful stare.

"I wegard you as a set of silly asses!" he said. "Gweat poetic minds are nevah undahstood by the common herd—and that's exactly what's the mattah. This is a wippin' limewick, and it will make that Bwown-Jones boundah sit up like anythin'."

"It will if he tries to scan it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I insist upon that limewick bein' put into the papah. You can leave out some of Lowthah's or Mannah's wot, or some of your own wubbish, to make woom for it, Tom Mewwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I could suggest a slight improvement," Manners remarked thoughtfully. "How would it sound like this:

"There was once a fearful and unspeakable sort of bounder named Browning-Jones,

Whose observations on every variety of subject deserved to be hooted down in the loudest and most insistent of tones,

He had the unexampled impudence

To open a private school in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's,

For which he deserves to be booted until he has a separate ache in every individual one of his bones."

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

D'Arcy sniffed.

"You uttah asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Havin' been tweated with such wibaldwy, I shall wufuse to allow you to use my splendid limewick in that wag of a papah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy retired from the study, closing the door with unnecessary force, leaving the chums of the Shell shrieking.

CHAPTER 11.

Not Nice.

"HALLO!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"What is it?"

"B-J."

"Phew!"

A crowd of fellows were strolling along the towing-path on the grassy banks of the Sark. It was the day after the half-holiday, and the juniors were out after morning school. Tom Merry and Blake and Figgins and Lowther and D'Arcy and five or six other fellows were there. They were having a walk round with Marmaduke Smythe before Figgy's old friend left St. Jim's to return to his people abroad, as he had to do in a day or two.

The athletic form of the young schoolmaster had come into view round the elm-trees farther along the towing-path.

Mr. Browning-Jones did not see the juniors at once. He was reading a book as he walked, apparently under the impression that he had the towing-path all to himself.

The juniors paused.

Mr. Browning-Jones was coming directly towards them, and would see them in a few seconds. What was to be done?

Now that they had met the Bounder face to face, now was the time to testify the great scorn and loathing they felt for him.

But how?

As Monty Lowther remarked, they could not put their extended hands to their noses, and shout "Yah!" That would hardly be a dignified course to take.

But something had to be done.

"Weally, you know—" D'Arcy began.

"Suppose we don't speak or look at him," Lowther suggested.

"Good idea!" agreed Marmaduke Smythe.

"Or we could push him into the river," Herries suggested.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"We don't want to be too drastic," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I should wegard that as altogether too dwastic. "My ideah—"

"He'll see us in a minute!" said Jack Blake.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake."

"Go hon."

"My ideah—"

"He's looking up from his book."

"My ideah is that we should all look at him scornfully, and pass him by with our noses vevy high in the air," said D'Arcy. "It will impress upon him a sense of the feafful contempt we feel for his conduct."

"Good!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Lowther, grinning.

"We'll fall in line, with Gussy in the lead, and loathe him as we pass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't laugh; it will spoil the effect."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Browning-Jones had now looked up from his book, and a smile came over his face at the sight of Tom Merry & Co. Perhaps he remembered his little talk with them on the previous day, and the kind opinions they had so freely expressed with regard to him, before they were aware of his identity.

He came straight on, lowering the book he had in his hand, the smile making his sunburnt face look very handsome and pleasant.

The juniors fell into line.

D'Arcy took the lead, and he jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and curled up his aristocratic nose into an expression indicative of the most profound scorn.

Thus he marched down upon the astonished schoolmaster.

Mr. Browning-Jones stood petrified.

The other fellows followed D'Arcy's lead, all of them marching past the young schoolmaster with their noses in the air, and averted looks of great scorn.

Mr. Browning-Jones watched them blankly till they were past. Then he turned round to look after them. And then the humour of the thing appeared suddenly to strike him, for he burst into a loud and ringing laugh. It was not in the least a forced laugh; it was a hearty laugh of genuine merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

He walked on his way.

The juniors slackened down, and looked at one another a little sheepishly.

"Bai Jove! The wottah doesn't seem to be impressed at all!" D'Arcy ejaculated.

"Not a bit!"

"Awful cad!"

"Bounder!"

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 169.

"THE BULLY'S REMORSE" is the title of the Splendid, Complete, School Tale of "MAGNET" LIBRARY, Now on Sale. Harry Wharton & Co., appearing in this week's One Penny.

"Outsider!"
"Beast!"

"Oh, what can you expect of him?" said Monty Lowther, with a sniff. "The fellow's a rank, rotten sweep, and that's all there is of it."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Hear, hear!"

The juniors all agreed upon that point. At the same time they could not help feeling that the obnoxious Mr. Browning-Jones had had the best of that little encounter somehow; and they were feeling distinctly exasperated by it.

CHAPTER 12.

Wally Approves of B.-J.

"W!"

Mr. Browning-Jones paused.

He was well along the towing-path now, and in sight of St. Jim's boathouse, looking out in its fresh paint from the trees opposite the school.

The sharp cry that had caught his ear came from a clump of thickets on his right, and the young schoolmaster paused.

"Ow! Oh! Don't!"

Mr. Browning-Jones's brow darkened.

It was a cry of pain and expostulation, in a youthful voice; and the young schoolmaster did not need to be told that somebody was being hurt under the shadow of those thickets. He had not the slightest doubt that bullying of some kind was going on.

The young man paused.

In his own little school, anything of that sort he would have put down with a strong hand. But here, he knew that the boys concerned must belong to St. Jim's; and he felt a natural hesitation about interfering with another's man's pupils.

But a repetition of the cry banished his hesitation.

"Oh, Gore! Don't!"

Mr. Browning-Jones plunged into the thickets.

He came suddenly upon the two. Gore of the Shell, with his face full of angry spite, was holding Wally D'Arcy by the arm.

Wally was as tough as a nut, and he generally knew how to take care of himself, and the fact that Gore was limping seemed to indicate that the fag had been kicking his shins. But the powerful Shell fellow was, of course, able to do as he liked with the fag, when he fairly got hold of him, and he was cruelly twisting Wally's arm to punish him—as he had been doing the previous day when Tom Merry stopped him. It was a favourite trick of Gore's when he was ill-tempered, and many of the fags knew it to their cost.

"Oh, Gore! You cad! Don't! Yah! Stop it, you beast!"

Wally struggled savagely.

But he could not get away from Gore, and he could not bring his boots into play again, and his face was going white with the pain he was enduring.

"Oh!"

"You young cad!" snarled Gore. "You'll find it safer, in the long run, not to cheek me, I think!"

"Ow! Cad! Coward! Oh!"

"I'll—Oh!"

It was Gore's turn to exclaim "Oh!" as a strong hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he was swung away from his victim.

He involuntarily relaxed his grasp upon Wally, who rolled in the grass, gasping with pain.

Gore turned savagely upon the individual who had grasped him, expecting to see a St. Jim's fellow, and he started in surprise at the sight of Mr. Browning-Jones.

"Leggo!" he exclaimed angrily.

Mr. Browning-Jones did not reply.

Grasping Gore firmly by the shoulders, he shook him—shook him very much as a terrier might shake a rat—till Gore's teeth seemed to be rattling together in his head like castanets.

Wally scrambled to his feet. At the sight of Gore undergoing that severe shaking, he forgot the pain in his arm, and burst into a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" gasped Gore.

"Go it!" yelled Wally. "Pile in!"

"Ow! Ah! Oh! Leggo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Browning-Jones shook and shook, and finally dropped Gore upon the ground. The Bully of the Shell rolled in the grass, panting.

The young schoolmaster looked down sternly into his white and furious face.

"You coward!" he exclaimed. "How dare you treat a boy like that—how dare you twist his arm? You might have injured him!"

"Oh!" groaned Gore.

"If you belonged to my school, I would cane you most severely!" said Mr. Browning-Jones, with a frown.

Wally gave a jump.

"Your school!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, certainly!"

"You—you ain't a schoolmaster?" ejaculated the scamp of the Third, in astonishment.

Mr. Browning-Jones smiled.

"Indeed I am!" he replied.

"My only Aunt Jane!"

Gore staggered up, holding on to a tree for support. He was boiling with rage; but he realised that he had better not give it vent just now. Mr. Browning's hands had seemed like iron as they grasped him, and Gore knew that the man could break him like a stick if he chose.

Wally was staring at the young schoolmaster in great and wondering interest.

"I say, sir," he exclaimed, "you ain't B.-J., by any chance?"

Mr. Browning-Jones looked puzzled.

"B.-J.?" he repeated.

"Yes; Browning-Jones."

The Balliol man laughed.

"Yes," he said, "I am B.-J."

"Great Scott!"

"You seem to be surprised, my young friend."

"The boulder!" ejaculated Wally.

"The what?"

"All the fellows are calling you a—a—all sorts of names," said Wally hastily. "I've been thinking you were an awful boulder myself. But—but it was all rot. I can see now you're awfully decent."

"Thank you!" said Mr. Browning-Jones drily.

Wally looked very earnest.

"I'm much obliged to you for making that cad stop bullying me," he said. "He was hurting me something awful. It was very good of you, sir."

"Not at all."

"I'll tell the fellows how decent you are," went on Wally.

"They're prejudiced on the point, you see, sir. By the way, would you mind giving that cad Gore another shaking, sir? It was a treat to watch you."

Gore hastily departed through the trees.

The Balliol man laughed.

"But why are the St. Jim's boys prejudiced against me?" he asked.

"Because of your cheek, sir—ahem!—because you've opened a private school so near to St. Jim's, sir."

"But why shouldn't I?"

Wally rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Blessed if I know," he said. "The fellows seem to regard it as a cheek, that's all. You see, we were annoyed when Dr. Monk opened the Grammar School a short time ago. I suppose we got into the way of thinking that the whole blessed neighbourhood belonged to us." Wally grinned. "We've been having rows with the Grammarians ever since, and now there's another blessed school. But I don't see why you shouldn't if you wanted to, now I come to think of it."

Mr. Browning-Jones smiled.

"Perhaps your friends will also see that I have a right to do as I like with my own property, when they come to think of it," he suggested.

Wally chuckled.

"I'll put it to them, sir," he said.

"Very good."

"Thank you very much for what you've done, sir."

"Oh, not at all!"

And Mr. Browning-Jones nodded genially, and walked his way. Wally rubbed his twisted arm, and grunted.

"He's a jolly good sort," he murmured. "I wish he'd given Gore another shaking, but he's an awfully good sort, anyway."

Wally did not mean to fall into Gore's way again just then. He strolled about the river till Tom Merry & Co. came back from their walk, and he met them on the towing-path.

"I've got something to say to you chaps," he said.

"Weally, Wally—"

"I've met B.-J."

"So have we," said Tom Merry.

"I twist you twated him with wpopah contempt, Wally."

Wally snorted.

"I didn't do anything of the sort!" he exclaimed. "He's a jolly good sort—awfully decent, first-class, and a sportsman all through. There!"

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

"What has he been doing?"

"He stopped Gore bullying me and twisting my arm," said Wally. "He gave Gore a shaking. It was a treat to watch him."

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A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE."

"Like his cheek interfering with St. Jim's fellows," said Blake, with a sniff.

"Eh?"

"He had no right to touch Gore."

"Rats! Gore was bullying——"

"Well, I dare say you deserved what you were getting," Manners observed.

"Yaas, wathash. You genewally do, you know, Wally."

"More often than not," Figgins remarked.

"Oh, rather!"

Wally stared at the juniors in great wrath and indignation. He had not expected them to take this line; but, as a matter of fact, they were still feeling rather annoyed from their own encounter with Mr. Browning-Jones, and perhaps they didn't like the idea, too, of having a lecture from a fag of the Third Form.

"Well, of all the duffers!" exclaimed Wally.

"Weally, Wally!"

"Of all the chumps!"

"You diswepctful young wascal!"

"Of all the frabjous fatheads——"

"Cheese it!"

"Of all the—— Ow!"

Wally was suddenly interrupted. Three or four of the juniors grasped him, and he was sat down with considerable force on the ground. Tom Merry & Co. walked on, and left him there, looking and feeling extremely heated.

CHAPTER 13.

A Rush for the Boats.

PREJUDICE is a peculiar thing. It frequently begins without much reason—quite by chance or accident, in many cases; but the longer it lasts the stronger it grows, and personal dislikes will grow up, without anyone being able to assign an adequate cause for them. So it was in the case of Mr. Browning-Jones and the St. Jim's juniors. Their resentment of his supposed "cheek" in opening a private school near St. Jim's was only half-serious in the first place, but it grew more and more so, till all the fellows came to take it quite seriously, and to regard Mr. Browning-Jones as an impossible outsider, whose doings were all to be looked upon with the gravest suspicion.

True, the seniors at St. Jim's did not trouble their heads about the matter. If Kildare and Darrel and Monteith, and the other great ones of the Sixth, heard anything about the prejudice of the juniors, they laughed. Mr. Browning-Jones and his private school were nothing to them.

But with the juniors the prejudice grew and grew, so that in the course of two or three days they came to look upon Mr. Browning-Jones as they might have looked upon Sweeney Todd or Charles Peace, if either of those gentlemen had settled in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Browning-Jones was a rank outsider. B.-J. was quite unspeakable. That was the opinion of the Fourth and the Shell; both houses were agreed upon it. And from that decision there was, of course, no appeal.

Gore, naturally, though he did not agree with Tom Merry & Co. in many things, agreed with them in this.

Wally, on the other hand, was loud in Mr. Browning-Jones's praises. But Wally was considerably bumped in consequence.

The fellows voted B.-J. impossible, and there was an end of it, or should have been an end of it.

As to making the man feel their indignation, they were beginning to realise that this was difficult, if not impossible.

As D'Arcy remarked, he knew that they didn't like him in the neighbourhood, and yet he stayed.

If a man had cheek enough for that, he had cheek enough for anything, and it was quite impossible to deal with such a bounder.

The juniors still turned plans over in their minds for doing so, however; but they could not think of anything that would be likely to penetrate the complacency of Mr. Browning-Jones.

Meanwhile, the Balliol man was going on his way, and had probably forgotten the existence of the juniors of St. Jim's.

His school was a very small one, and there were not more than a dozen fellows there, of various ages, whom he appeared to be coaching for exams.

They did not come into contact with the St. Jim's fellows, perhaps through some discretion exercised by Mr. Browning-Jones himself, who naturally did not want to begin his residence in the neighbourhood by a declaration of war.

And it is to be feared that the St. Jim's juniors were only too ripe for rows.

Of Mr. Browning-Jones they saw a good deal—at all events, those of them who were addicted to outdoor sports saw a good deal of him.

The young schoolmaster was a good walker, and a good oarsman, and he was frequently seen pulling a skiff up the river, sometimes alone, and sometimes with a lad or two.

His bronzed face on such occasions glowed with health and good-humour; prejudice is strong, and the St. Jim's fellows were determined to see no good in him or in his manners and customs.

When Saturday afternoon came, bringing with it brilliant sunshine, and a soft breeze to stir the rushes by the gleaming river, the St. Jim's fellows turned out in crowds for the fields and the boats.

There was a senior cricket match on, but the juniors mostly preferred the river, and there was a huge demand for boats—a larger demand than could possibly be met. Fellows who were not lucky enough to possess their own private skiffs had to take their turn.

Gore of the Shell was not one of the earliest down to the boathouse, but he was loudest in his demand for a craft. He had Mellish of the Fourth with him, and they had planned a pull up the river to a certain riverside inn of dubious reputation, where ginger-beer and something stronger than ginger-beer could be obtained. Gore, during the past few days, seemed to be falling back into all his old evil ways, and Mellish of the Fourth was only too glad to aid him.

"Look here, I want a boat!" Gore exclaimed angrily.

Monty Lowther looked round at him with a sweet smile. Lowther and Manners and Kangaroo were carrying a skiff out.

"You want a boat, Gore?" asked Lowther.

"Yes."

"You're too late, my son."

"Look here. I'm going to have a boat."

"Where will you get it?"

Gore snorted with wrath. He would like to have taken that one from Lowther by force, but he knew he could not do it. The Three Shell fellows went out with their boat, and Gore looked round for an easier victim.

Wally D'Arcy and Jameson and Gibson of the Third were taking a skiff out. The burly Shell fellow bore down upon them.

"I want that boat," he said.

Wally stared at him.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he exclaimed. "You which?"

"I want that boat," said Gore, in his most bullying tone.

Wally's eyes gleamed.

"You may want it," he said, "but you won't get it."

"No fear!" said Jameson.

Gore grasped Wally by the shoulder.

"Let go that skiff!" he exclaimed.

"Rats!"

"Let go!"

"I won't!" roared Wally. "You sha'n't have it, you rotten bully! We're taking it out! You sha'n't have it!"

"GEM" FREE HAMPER WINNERS.

The Six boys marked with a X on the photographs published on the back page of No. 163 of the GEM Library, having sent in their applications, have duly received the six GEM Free Hampers. The names and addresses of the lucky winners, who attend the Technical and Secondary School, Warrington, and the Francis Avenue School, Southsea, are as follows:

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MASTER JOSEPH SHUTT, 142, Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington.

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MASTER HAROLD J. BENNETT, 15, St. David's Road, Southsea.

MASTER B. GEORGE, 13, Ruskin Road, Southsea.

MASTER J. R. DAVIES, 131, Victoria Road, N., Southsea.



"We don't want a bully and a cad in this boat," said Tom Merry, sternly. Gore gave him a furious look, and swung away with his hands in his pockets, scowling. (See page 4.)

"Let go it, you young sweep!"

A good many fellows looked over towards them, but Gore was not an easy fellow to remonstrate with. No one interfered.

The boat went with a crash to the floor, and the three fags gathered round it desperately. It was their only chance of having a boat out, and they felt that they would let Gore knock them to pieces before they would surrender it.

"Kick them out, Mellish!" said Gore.

Mellish grinned.

"What ho!" he replied.

The three fags stood their ground. But they would certainly have been very roughly handled if Tom Merry had not looked into the boxhouse at that moment. Tom Merry had heard Gore's upraised voice, and he guessed pretty accurately what was going forward.

He strode towards them.

"What's the trouble?" he asked quietly.

"The rotter wants our boat!" roared Wally. "The utter cad wants to take our boat away. We came down specially early to get it, and he wants to take it away."

"And I'm jolly well going to have it!" exclaimed Gore savagely.

Tom Merry looked at him with flashing eyes.

"You won't touch that boat," he said.

"The fags don't matter," said Gore sullenly. "I suppose a Shell fellow isn't going to stand down for a set of fags, is he?"

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"There's such a thing as fair play," he said.

"I'm going to have that boat."

"You won't touch it!"

"Look here—"

"If you lay your hand on that boat," said Tom Merry, his voice trembling with anger, "I'll knock you across the room, Gore."

Gore, with a savage click of the teeth, laid his hand upon the boat. Tom Merry kept his word. His right came out like a flash of lightning, and Gore went reeling and tumbling, till he collided with a bench, and rolled on the floor.

Tom Merry stood with his hands clenched.

"Now, come on, you bully!" he exclaimed.

Gore did not need asking twice. As a rule, he avoided any encounter of this sort with Tom Merry. But he was in too great a rage now to think of anything of the sort. He only wanted to get at his enemy.

He leaped to his feet, and sprang at Tom Merry like a tiger, his fists lashing furiously out.

The hero of the Shell met him with equal energy. Tom Merry's fists came out like lightning, and Gore staggered back, and back. Hardly one of his own blows taking effect, while Tom Merry's knuckles crashed again and again upon his face.

"Go it, Tommy!" roared Wally, clapping his hands. "Give him ginger!"

"Hurrah!"

"Pile in! There goes Gore! Hurrah!"

George Gore crashed to the floor again. This time he did not rise. He lay blinking stupidly at Tom Merry, and gasping for breath as he lay. He was evidently "done."

"Are you finished?" asked Tom Merry quietly.

"Oh! Yes! Oh! Hang you!"

Tom Merry turned away without another word to Gore.

"I'll give you a hand out with that boat, Wally," he said.

"Thanks, old son."

Gore staggered to his feet. Mellish followed him out of the boathouse. Mellish was in an anxious frame of mind.

There was no boat for the proposed excursion, nor was Gore in a humour for an excursion, apparently. Mellish began to think that he would lose his afternoon's treat.

"We can get a boat in the village, Gore," he suggested.

Gore grunted.

"Hang the boats!"

"Or shall we have a walk up the river past the mill?" asked Mellish. "We could get a boat from the miller, for that matter; he lets out boats."

"No."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"I'm going to bathe my face," said Gore sullenly. "Let me alone."

Mellish bit his lip.

"Do you mean to say you don't want me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes!" snarled Gore. "Leave a fellow in peace, for goodness' sake!"

Mellish stood with a very spiteful expression upon his face, while Gore thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and tramped away up the river by himself.

CHAPTER 14.

In Deadly Peril.

TOM MERRY jumped into the boat with Manners and Lowther and Kangaroo, and they pulled out from the plank landing-stage.

Tom Merry's face was still very grim.

He had not wanted trouble with Gore, but the Bully of the Shell had made it unavoidable, and Tom Merry was not sorry for having licked him as he certainly deserved.

But the excitement over, he felt a little depressed; it was not a pleasant beginning to a half-holiday.

"You're steering awry, Tom," said Monty Lowther.

"Am I? Sorry."

"You don't want to run us into another boat, do you? There's Gussy; he looks as if he's going to give you a lecture on steering."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood up in the Fourth-Form boat as the Shell fellows passed him on the river. The swell of St. Jim's was quite pink.

"Do you call that steewin', Tom Mewwy?" he called out.

"Eh?"

"Do you call that steerin', you ass? You vewy nearly wan us down."

"Oh, rats!"

"You uttah ass! Oh!"

Monty Lowther dropped his oar heavily upon the water, and a splash came swooping up, and drenched the elegant white trousers of the elegant Arthur Augustus.

D'Arcy gave a yell.

"Oh! Ow! You ass!"

"Sorry! Ha, ha, ha! Sorry!"

"You uttah ass! My t'wousahs are wuined! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Shell boat glided on.

The chums of the Shell were soon out of earshot of the Fourth-Form boats, and the polite remarks of D'Arcy and Blake and Herries were lost upon them.

Ahead of the Shell boat was the old mill, the scene of the gallant rescue performed by Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the junior who had risked his life to save the miller's little girl from being drawn under the mill-wheel.

The juniors naturally spoke of it as they passed within sight of the mill, where the white-smocked miller could be seen on the shore.

"That was the place," Lowther remarked.

"And a rotten place to have a swim in," said Manners.

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"I suppose a good many fellows would have wanted to do just the same as Lumley-Lumley did, only—"

"Only all fellows wouldn't have the nerve."

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's so," he said. "Lumley has heaps of grit, and I thought better of him ever since that happened. I knew he had something decent in him then, and it's turned out so. I don't know that there's a more decent chap than Lumley-Lumley at St. Jim's now."

"Excepting our nimble selves," said Monty Lowther.

"Look there, there's Gore on the bank, and he's waving to us."

Tom Merry frowned.

"What does Gore want?" he muttered.

"Another licking, perhaps."

"I don't want any more trouble with him."

Lowther grinned.

"The question is, does he want any more with you?" he replied. "Look here, I suppose he wants to speak to you; we can stop here."

"Oh, all right!"

"Manners and I will go into the mill and get some grub, to take up to the island, and we can have a feed there," said Lowther. "We sha'n't be five minutes, and you can have Gore all to yourself, and you can either lick him, or weep on his manly bosom, just as you prefer."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Lowther chuckled, and pulled the boat round towards the bank. The bows bumped upon the green bank, and the juniors clambered ashore, and Manners tied the painter.

Gore was some little distance up the bank, away from the mill. He was standing with a sullen expression upon his face, but as the Terrible Three landed, he came towards them. Manners and Lowther walked away towards the mill, leaving Tom Merry to meet the Bully of the Shell. If Gore meant trouble, Tom Merry was quite able to take care of himself.

Gore came swinging up, with a most unpleasant expression on his face.

Tom Merry looked at him steadily.

"You were waving to us," he said.

Gore gritted his teeth.

"Yes, I was."

"What do you want?"

"A word with you," said Gore savagely. "You licked me in the boathouse."

"I didn't want to touch you," said Tom Merry quietly, "but you couldn't expect me to stand by and do nothing while you were bullying the fags."

"You can't mind your own business?" sneered Gore.

"That is my business."

"Well," said Gore, between his teeth, "put up your hands."

He pushed his cuffs back.

"I thought you had had enough," said Tom Merry.

"I'm going to lick you, or else you shall smash me," said Gore, grinding his teeth. "I'm going to make you squirm this time, hang you!"

"I'm ready if you're looking for trouble," said Tom Merry. Gore said no more.

He came on with a rush like a bull.

There had been a time, when Tom Merry was under the care of his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, before roughing it at a public school had hardened him, when Gore could have got the better of him in a tussle. Gore remembered that. And he intended to do his best this time.

And the furious rush he made was so heavy and determined that it drove Tom Merry backwards.

Both boys had forgotten that they were standing close to the verge of a steep, sloping bank, at the base of which deep water rushed and swirled.

Tom Merry remembered it when, staggering back, he found his foot go into space, and felt himself shooting downwards.

Then it was too late!

But it was too late for Gore also. The Bully of the Shell, borne onwards by the impetus of his own furious rush, plunged headlong over the bank after Tom Merry.

Splash-ash! The two splashes sounded like one, as the juniors plunged into the deep waters of the Sark.

The waters here were swift and deep. Close to the bank was six feet of water, and a few feet out it deepened to nine or ten.

Tom Merry rose to the surface, striking out vigorously. He struck for the bank, and reached it; but it was too steep to climb. He hung on to a root, and shouted for Manners and Lowther.

A cry answered him, but it did not come from his chums. It came from Gore! Tom Merry had forgotten Gore for the moment. Now he turned his head, and saw a white face gleaming above the rushing waters.

"Help!"

Gore's voice was drowned by swamping water as he gasped out the word.

Tom Merry turned white.

Gore was a dozen feet away from him, being swept away by the rushing current, with which he vainly strove to battle.

Gore was not a good swimmer, and he was not in good condition, and he had no chance whatever of holding his own against the tearing current.

"Help!"

The word died in a spluttering moan.

The water closed over the head of George Gore, and he was swept resistlessly away—towards the creaking, grinding mill-wheel.

CHAPTER 15.

The Schoolmaster to the Rescue!

TOM MERRY felt his head swim for a moment. But he did not hesitate.

Back into his mind came the memory of Lumley-Lumley—of how the Outsider of St. Jim's, as he was called, had braved the awful danger of the mill-wheel.

What Lumley-Lumley had done, he could do!

He let go his hold upon the bank, and struck out quickly for Gore. With frantic speed he swam for the Shell bully, and as Gore came to the surface, Tom Merry grasped him. He brought Gore's head above water, and kept it there, holding Gore with one hand, and battling with the current with the other.

Gore turned a wild, scared look upon him.

"Save me!" he gasped.

"I'll save you."

"Oh! I—I'm sorry, Merry! Save me."

"Hold to me."

Gore clung to the hero of the Shell.

The river was deafening Tom Merry's ears, and the grind of the mill-wheel seemed like the sound of thunder.

He fought for his life—and for Gore's life!

But the burly Shell fellow was heavy and cumbersome, and he seemed to be incapable of making an effort to help himself!

He weighed Tom Merry down, and the current sucked them away, and the swift current was growing swifter, now, as they drew closer to the grinding wheel!

Where were Manners and Lowther?

In the mill, doubtless, purchasing the cakes and milk from the miller's kind wife, and quite ignorant of the danger their chum was in! The high bank hid everything on the river from their sight, even if they had looked out, and they had not heard the cries, they were too far off.

A terrible despair came into Tom Merry's heart.

He could have saved himself by abandoning Gore, but that he would not do. But it was growing clearer that both were going to their doom.

Was there no help?

"Help!"

Tom Merry shouted, but his voice sounded hoarse and cracked, and the sound that came from his lips seemed little more than a whisper.

"Help!"

But the faint cry was heard.

A handsome, athletic young man was swinging along the towing-path, and he heard the dull, heavy cry, and looked up.

Tom Merry did not see him; he did not recognise Mr. Browning-Jones, the "bouncer." But he heard the shout that came in response to his cry.

"I am coming!"

The strong, clear, brave voice sent a thrill through him.

Help was at hand!

"Help!"

"I'm coming!"

Splash!

The schoolmaster had torn off his upper garment in a second, and plunged into the river without the slightest hesitation.

There was a shout from the mill. Manners had seen Mr. Browning-Jones make the leap, and he came dashing down to the shore with Lowther.

They stood petrified, looking on.

Mr. Browning-Jones was swimming with steady, powerful strokes towards Tom Merry and Gore. He came on like a knife cleaving the water, and intercepted the two as they were sweeping down to the mill-wheel.

"Give him to me."

And Tom Merry, whose senses were reeling, gladly yielded Gore into the stronger hands of the Balliol man.

"Can you swim alone?"

"I—I think so."

"Then follow me."

Holding Gore's head above the water, the young school-

master struck out for the bank, where Lowther and Manners and the miller were waving their hands, ready to help as soon as the swimmer came within reach.

But Mr. Browning-Jones turned his head a moment later to look at Tom Merry, and he saw the lad sweeping away. Tom Merry's strength was spent.

"Hold to me!" he called out.

Tom Merry hesitated. The young schoolmaster was sufficiently burdened already. But Mr. Browning-Jones gave him no choice.

He caught Tom Merry and drew the junior to him, and Tom Merry caught his shoulder, and held on while the Balliol man struck out for the bank again.

Slowly, steadily the burdened schoolmaster won his way to the shore. Lowther and Manners waited eagerly, with white, anxious faces.

Tom Merry kept his hold upon the young schoolmaster.

If he had lost it, he knew that he would have been swept away to death under the grinding mill-wheel.

But he did not lose it.

And terrible as the strain was upon Mr. Browning-Jones, of reaching the bank with his double burden, he bore it bravely. Slowly but surely he won his way.

The current swept them along, but they drew nearer and nearer the bank, till Monty Lowther, plunging into the water, careless of his clothes, careless of the danger, grasped Tom Merry, and relieved the schoolmaster of half his burden.

The young man grasped at a root with his free hand, and held on, supporting Gore with the other arm.

Gore was quite insensible by this time, and his white, drawn face looked like the face of one dead.

Manners scrambled down the bank, and drew Gore away from the arm of the schoolmaster, and dragged him up to the safety of the bank.

Then Mr. Browning-Jones drew himself from the water.

He clambered up the bank, and stood gasping, and shaking the water from himself in great drops.

"Take them into the mill, quick!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said the miller.

Mr. Browning-Jones, spent as he was, helped to carry Tom Merry into the mill, Manners and the miller following with Gore.

They were laid upon beds, and the Balliol man helped to restore them.

"They are not in danger," he said, "but they must have a doctor as quickly as possible. I will go to the village—"

"Better let me go, sir," said Lowther; "I'll run—"

"I can run faster."

And the young schoolmaster departed instantly.

Tom Merry sat up on the bed, weak and panting.

"Oh, that was a narrow shave!"

"What-ho!" said Lowther, half-crying. "Thank goodness you're safely through it."

Tom Merry shivered.

"I should be at the bottom of the river but for Mr. Browning-Jones," he said.

"No doubt about that, old man."

"He saved your life," said Manners, "and Gore's, too."

There was a gulping in Tom Merry's throat.

"After the way we've treated him!" he said.

"We—we've been idiots."

"Idiots and cads."

"Ahem!"

Gore opened his eyes.

"Help!" he gasped faintly.

"You're all right, young sir," said the miller. "You're safe now, thanks to Mr. Browning-Jones, sir."

"Oh!" panted Gore. "I—I thought I was still in the river. Did—did you get me out of the water, Tom Merry?"

"I tried," said Tom Merry, "but it was B.-J. that did it."

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE."

"Browning-Jones?"
 "Yes."
 "Oh, I shouldn't have expected it of him."
 "Neither should I, which shows that we were fools."
 Gore breathed painfully.
 "I—I'm sorry I—I acted as I did," he said faintly. "I was a fool, and—and I'm sorry, Tom Merry—I'm sorry."
 "It's all right, Gore; forget all about it."
 Monty Lowther went to the door to watch for the doctor. He came in a short time, but the new schoolmaster did not return with him. Mr. Browning-Jones had gone on to his own place.
 The juniors wanted very much to see him again. But he did not come. They wanted to tell him many things, but they did not see him before they returned to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 16.

Rather a Chance!

"**B**AI Jove! The limewick's not in the papah!"
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking over the new number of "Tom Merry's Weekly," when the Terrible Three came into the school gateway. Tom Merry was looking little the worse for his adventure, though Gore was still very pale. Their clothes looked a great deal the worse, having been dried before the miller's fire, and having shrunk a great deal in the process.

"What's that, Gussy?" exclaimed Manners.
 D'Arcy turned his eyeglass accusingly upon the chums of the Shell.

"My limewick, slatin' the B.-J. boundah, has been left out of the papah," he exclaimed indignantly.

Tom Merry laughed.
 "But you told us you refused to let us use it, under the circumstances," he said.

"Wats! That was only a figah of speech, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We have been suffewin' undah the feahful impertinence of Mr. Bwownin'-Jones for days now, and have done nothin' to avenge our dig," exclaimed the swell of the Fourth.
 "I don't know what you fellows think, but I wegard it as wotten."

"Cheese it, Gussy!"

"Eh?"

"You're not to say anything against B.-J."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"He's a splendid chap."

"Wats!"

"He's a giddy hero."

"Wot!"

"He's saved my life."

"Eh?"

"And Gore's."

"Bai Jove!"

"You remember where Lumley-Lumley went into the mill-stream for the miller's little girl?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, Mr. Browning-Jones jumped in, in the same place, to pull out Gore and me," said Tom Merry. "We shouldn't have come back to St. Jim's otherwise."

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake, coming up in time to hear.

"Honest Injun! You're not pulling Gussy's leg, Tom Merry?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Honest Injun!" said Tom Merry impressively.

"Bai Jove!"

"He's a giddy hero—A1, double-width, gilt-edged, non-skidding, and first-chop," said Monty Lowther emphatically.

"My hat! I never expected that!"

"We've been playing the giddy goat," said Tom Merry dismally. "We've been down on one of the bravest and finest chaps in the world. I feel beastly about it."

"Well, it is wathah wotten. If you chaps had taken my advice—"

"What!" roared the Terrible Three.

"I advised you not to be too hasty."

"You—you ass! You didn't."

"Weally, deah boys—"

"You were more down on B.-J. than we were," shrieked Monty Lowther indignantly. "You wanted to slate him in the 'Weekly.'"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You wanted to write rotten limericks about him."

"Undah the circe—"

"You were the biggest ass in the whole set, as usual," said Manners.

"I warned you not to be hasty—"

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"It wasn't in connection with Mr. Bwownin'-Jones, I admit, that I spoke, but the pinciple is the same."

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"You utter ass!"
 "I wefuse to be called an ass. I wefuse—"
 "We shall have to do somethin' to make it up to B.-J.," said Blake. "It's simply rotten that this should happen."
 "Rotten! Would you have preferred B.-J. to leave us to go to the bottom of the river?" roared Tom Merry.
 "Well, no," said Blake reflectively. "I suppose he did right in fishing you out, though it wasn't much of a catch."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ass!"
 "It places us in a beastly awkward posish," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You fellows have fairly put your foot in it this time, I must say."
 "What about your own hoof, you ass?"
 "I wefuse to have my foot alluded to as a hoof. I—"
 "We shall have to ask Mr. Browning-Jones's pardon, somehow," said Manners. "We can't do less, under the circumstances. I wonder if he'll look over D'Arcy's asinine conduct?"

"Mine! Why, you awful boundah—"
 "We can point out to him what a fearful ass D'Arcy is," said Lowther.

"Weally, you fwabjous ass—"

"We shall have to tell the Head about it," said Tom Merry resignedly. "So come on, and let's get it over. I expect we shall get impots for falling in the river, as if it wasn't bad enough to be nearly drowned."

"I warned you not to be hasty, and—"

"Oh, rats!"

And the Terrible Three went on to the School House, and presented themselves before the Head.

Dr. Holmes listened to their account of what had happened in grave silence. When Tom Merry had finished, he fixed a penetrating glance upon the hero of the Shell, and Gore, who stood beside him.

"The conduct of Mr. Browning-Jones was noble," he said.

"I shall call upon him, and personally thank him for what he has done. But you have not explained, Merry, how you and Gore came to be in the river."

"We—we fell in, sir."

"How?"

Tom Merry coloured.

"We were fighting," he said at last.

"I suspected as much," said the Head. "No, I am not going to punish you. I think your terrible experience is punishment enough. But I hope you will let this be a warning to you, my lads, and try to be better friends."

"Oh, thank you, sir! I—I—"

"You may go; but do not forget what I have said to you," said the Head, kindly.

"Certainly not, sir."

Tom Merry and Gore quitted the Head's study. Outside, in the passage, they looked at one another rather dubiously. Finally, Tom Merry held out his hand.

Gore took it in silence.

"We've had a close shave," said Tom Merry, in a low voice. "Let's try to be friends, Gore. I'm willing if you are."

"I'm willing," said Gore.

And he spoke as if he meant it.

CHAPTER 17.

Sorry!

"**I** SUGGEST a bwass band."

"Eh?"

"A bwass band."

"What!"

"I twust my enunciation is not indistinct, Blake. I said a bwass band."

"My hat!"

"We must all go over in a body," said Figgins, "and tell Mr. Browning-Jones we're sorry we checked him—that's certain!"

"Oh, rather!" said Fatty Wynn.

"And the sooner the better," said Marmaduke Smythe.

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah! And in ordah to make the cewemony more imposin', I suggest a bwass band," said Arthur Augustus, firmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"We'll go over at once, as soon as Tom Merry comes out," said Kangaroo. "No good letting a thing like this rest. B.-J. must be thinking us a set of beasts."

"Yaas, wathah! And I suggest—"

"Here's Tom Merry!" exclaimed Manners.

Tom Merry came out of the School House with a bright face. The juniors gathered round him at once.

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"Let's hear Tom Mewwy's opinion of my ideah," said Arthus Augustus, with considerable dignity.

"What is it?" asked Tom Merry.

"We're all going over to the New School to apologise to B.-J. for having cheeked him," said Kerr.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Good egg!" he exclaimed heartily.

"Yaas, wathah! And in ordah—"

"We'll go in a body," said Jack Blake. "The more there are of us, the more imposing it will be. We want Mr. Browning-Jones to understand that we're sorry for—~~for~~—well, in plain English, for having been such cheeky asses."

"Yaas, wathah! And—"

"Let's get off at once," suggested Marmaduke Smythe.

"We've all cheeked him, and we all ought to apologise, and ask him to overlook it."

"I wegard that as vewy wight and pwopah. And in ordah—"

"Come on!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"No good wasting time," said Clifton Dane. "Let's start."

"I insist upon bein' heard! I wegard it as essential to make the cewemony as imposin' as possible, in ordah to pwopahly impress Mr. Bwownin'-Jones with a sense of our wegwet at havin' twated him badly. For this purpose, I suggest marchin' ovah in pwopah ordah, with a bwass band."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Hands up for the brass band," said Tom Merry, laughing.

D'Arcy raised his right hand, and on reflection, raised his left hand, too. But no other hand went up.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Hands up against the brass band."

A crowd of hands ascended.

"You're outvoted, Gussy—"

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Brass bands are barred!" said Tom Merry. "Come on!"

"But the vote of a person of a superiah ordah of intelligence ought to outweigh a mere majowity," said D'Arcy.

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I insist—"

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Take his other arm, Herries!"

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was rushed off before he could proceed any further. The juniors marched out of the quadrangle, and took the path to the new private school.

"Pway welease me!" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I will walk in an ordahly mannah, and if you are asses enough to wefuse to adopt my wippin' ideah, I will not insist upon it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors marched down the towing-path and turned into the lane where the new private school was situated. It was a half-holiday there, as at St. Jim's, and the gates were wide open, and several fellows in mortar-boards could be seen in the playground.

Regardless of their curious glances, Tom Merry & Co. marched in.

"There's B.-J.!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Browning-Jones, dressed now in flannels, could be seen imparting cricket instruction to several inquiring youths. He was handling a bat, displaying a "late cut" that brought an exclamation of admiration from Tom Merry. Tom Merry knew something about cricket, and he could see that Mr. Browning-Jones did, also.

The young schoolmaster stood bat in hand, and regarded the crowd of St. Jim's fellows with amazement as they marched up to the cricket-pitch.

The juniors lined up, and swept off their hats and caps at the same moment, at a sign from Tom Merry.

"Spokesman!" murmured Manners.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped forward.

"We have come, sir—"

"Shut up, Gussy! Leave it to Tom Merry!"

"Wats! I considah—"

"Order!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Ring off!"

"I wefuse to wing off! I— Oh! Leggo! Blake, you uttah wuffian!"

"Cheese it, then!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Mr. Browning-Jones smiled. Tom Merry stepped forward, cap in hand, and with a very red colour in his cheeks.

"If you please, sir—" he began.

"Well?" said Mr. Browning-Jones.

The private school boys were gathering round, in surprise,

to listen. The St. Jim's fellows felt very hot and uncomfortable. But they had a duty to do, and they did it.

"We're sorry, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather, sir!" chorused the juniors.

"Indeed!" said the young schoolmaster.

"You pulled me out of the river to-day, sir—" said Tom Merry.

"And we're all awfully sowwy," said D'Arcy.

"You ass!" murmured Lowther, while some of the juniors chuckled, D'Arcy's remark having, indeed, come at a rather unfortunate moment after what Tom Merry had said.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Mr. Browning-Jones smiled.

"Well?" he said.

"You saved my life, sir—and Gore's, too," said Tom Merry simply. "We've treated you rottenly, sir. We've cheeked you, and—and we deserve to be licked all round."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah! And under the cires, sir—"

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"Weally—"

"Under the circumstances, sir," said Tom Merry, "we've come over to tell you we're sorry, and that we hope you will forgive us, sir."

"Yaas, wathah! And—"

"Hear, hear! We're all sorry, sir."

"And Gore and I are awfully grateful to you, sir, for what you did," said Tom Merry, "and very sorry we cheeked you, or treated you with any sort of disrespect, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "That is weally not so vewy badly expwessed, Tom Mewwy."

Mr. Browning-Jones smiled very genially.

"Thank you for coming over," he said. "It was quite unnecessary for you to thank me for what I did. I was only too glad to be on the spot in time to fish you out. But I am very glad to hear that you are sorry for having hastily misjudged a man you did not know, and for having found fault with him for a very inadequate reason—or rather, for no reason at all. I am very glad to make friends with you all."

And Mr. Browning-Jones held out his hand to Tom Merry.

"You are very kind, sir."

"Oh, no! But now you are over here," went on the young schoolmaster, with a smile, "will you stay to tea with me? It happens to be my tea-time, and I have no doubt that my housekeeper will be able to provide for you in a way you will not despise. I shall be very pleased if you will stay."

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as vewy handsome!"

"Thank you so much, sir. We'll stay with pleasure."

Figgins raised his hand.

"Three cheers for Mr. Browning-Jones!" he exclaimed.

And the cheers rang out with all the force the juniors of St. Jim's could put into them—and that was a great deal.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Then they went into tea, and a jolly tea it was. Mr. Browning-Jones was a kind and cheery host, and when the juniors left they felt that they had seldom been so entertained. And, needless to say, there was no word uttered at St. Jim's against "B.-J." after the day of the schoolmaster's rescue.

THE END.

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A Thrilling Tale of Modern Adventure.



By ROBERT W. COMRADE.

INTRODUCTION.

Frank Kingston, a young Englishman, is engaged on a secret campaign against a criminal society called the Brotherhood of Iron, his aim being to break up the society by ruining the members of the Inner Council. He has the assistance of Miss O'Brien, an accomplished young lady, Professor Graham Polgrave, a clever scientist and inventor, Carson Gray, a detective, Fraser, his man, and a lad named Tim.

Kingston has brought eight prominent members to book, and is proceeding to ruin the ninth—a certain Dr. Julius Zeetman, who is in charge of the Grange Private Lunatic Asylum. He learns that many of its inmates are not lunatics, but perfectly sane people. Under the pretence of being a lunatic, Kingston, and Miss O'Brien as his nurse, obtain rooms in the asylum under the names of Mr. Meredith Hall and Miss Thurston. Kingston manages to get eight of the sane people out of the asylum. Zeetman is astounded at his loss, and leaves the Grange to visit Lord Mount-Fannell, the Chief of the Brotherhood. Meanwhile, all is confusion at the asylum. Five of the keepers are lying apparently dead, Kingston having administered one of Polgrave's drugs to them. The nurses hurriedly leave the asylum, and Kingston despatches the rest of the sane inmates to London. Zeetman returns, but on entering his library, he is surprised to find Kingston there. "I now mean to tell you what I think of you—what I am going to do with you," says Kingston.

(Now go on with the story.)

Zeetman's Sentence.

"Bah!" cried Zeetman. "Who do you think you are that you can talk to me like this? I take no notice of this bluff—this bragging! It may interest you to know that I have a revolver in my pocket, and at the least sign of treachery from you, I shall not hesitate to shoot! We are quite alone!"

Frank Kingston did not answer for a moment, but simply sat there, gazing full into Zeetman's eyes. And somehow his own light blue ones seemed to lose their disguised tint, and burn in that grim, terrible manner which Don Sebastian on the Iron Island could tell of so graphically.

"That revolver, Zeetman, will not be touched," said Kingston quietly. "You have your hand on it at the present moment. You will oblige me if you place your hands on this table. Do you hear me? Ah, that is better!"

Kingston's voice had not raised itself one atom, but some-

how the Inner Councillor found himself compelled, against his will, to do as he was told. Try as he would, he could not resist the order, and he stood there, his hands on the table, glaring at his companion with furious and half-frightened eyes.

"We can talk now, Dr. Zeetman," murmured Kingston. "I do not intend to tell you who I am, or what I am, but you shall know this—before I have done every member of the Inner Council shall be wiped out—wiped out as a number of them have already been!"

"You—you mean to kill me?" breathed Zeetman, in a whisper.

"No; I do not mean to kill you!"

Zeetman uttered a sigh of relief, but it changed the next moment as his mysterious companion continued.

"Killing would be too good for such a man as you. For years past you have kept sane people in this vile establishment of yours—have treated them worse than dogs, and have made their lives a misery, while you yourself lived in the most excessive luxury!"

"Well?"

"You are a cur, Zeetman, as vile a scoundrel as ever trod the earth!" said Kingston relentlessly. "In addition, you are responsible for the deaths of more than one person, and if the law did its utmost, you would be hanged for the murderer you are!"

"And what do you mean to do?" asked Zeetman hoarsely.

"What can you do? Good heavens, I—"

"Silence! Place your hands on the table again! What I mean to do to you will cause you considerable agony of mind. You have made it your work to incarcerate sane people as insane, and, in time, some of them have become so in reality. Now you, Zeetman, are sane. Is that so?"

"The question is unnecessary!" snarled the doctor.

"Doubtless. I am now about to treat you as you have treated your patients, with this difference—while you took months and perhaps years to effect a change, before another ten minutes have passed you will be a lunatic!"

"What do you mean?" gasped the other. "You are talking wildly! You cannot mean what you say! Such a thing is absolutely impossible!"

"We will now proceed to prove whether it is or not!" exclaimed Kingston, rising to his feet. "I have a preparation, Zeetman, which will cause you to lose your senses, your will power, and your mind, in less than five minutes. It cannot fail!"

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"But you cannot get me to take it!" cried the Inner Councillor. "I can baffle you—baffle you at the last turn! Rather than submit to such a thing, I would blow your brains out!"

He stepped back a couple of paces, and pulled the revolver from his pocket. For a moment he stood there, glaring triumphantly, thinking he had the upper hand.

"Zeetman!"

The word cut through the air like a knife, and Dr. Zeetman started. He looked at his companion, and gradually, unconsciously, he began to lower the revolver. The sensation he felt was absolutely uncanny, yet there was nothing remarkable in it. Kingston's will power was of the most amazing strength, and he literally forced the doctor to do as he wished. It was not hypnotism but sheer force of will.

"Give that revolver to me!"

Kingston took it without the least trouble, and laid it on the table. As he did so the spell seemed to drop, and Zeetman staggered across the room, snarling and cursing. He looked like a wild animal at bay.

"It is quite useless your trying to resist," murmured Kingston, producing from his pocket the little phial Professor Poigrave had given him. "Inside this bottle there is the stuff I told you about. The end is very near, Zeetman!"

The latter grasped the back of a chair to support himself, his eyes protruding from his head. He seemed weak and helpless in the presence of this singular individual. His gaze wandered round the room, then suddenly lit on a decanter of brandy on the sideboard.

"Ah, some brandy!" he muttered. "Anything to pull myself together!"

He snatched up a glass which stood beside the decanter, and filled it to the brim. Then he gulped the raw spirit down as though it had been water. It seemed to put new life into him, for he drew himself upright, as if preparing to fight to the finish.

"You think you can do as you like with me," he hissed between his teeth. "You think you can treat me as though I were a child—as though you can force me to obey your every order. But I won't! You hear me? I won't!"

His words died away as he looked at Kingston's face. On the latter an amused smile had appeared—a smile which caused Zeetman to break off in the middle of his sentence.

"What is it?" he almost screamed. "What are you looking like that for? I won't touch a drop of that stuff in the bottle! I won't touch a drop!"

His voice rose higher and higher, and he appeared as if he were going mad already. Kingston calmly placed the phial back into his waistcoat-pocket, and stood with his hands behind his back, cool and self-possessed. It caused him no pang to see this man's terror, for he deserved all he was condemned to receive and more.

"You say you will not touch a drop?" asked Kingston grimly.

"Not a drop! I will wreck the whole room before you can reach me!"

To suit the action to the word, he grasped a chair and half raised it above his head.

"You are too late, Zeetman!"

"Too late! What do you mean?"

"I mean that you have already taken the drug!"

Zeetman dropped the chair as though it had been red-hot.

"Already taken it!" he screamed. "Good heavens, what do you imply? How have I taken it? You are lying!"

"On the contrary, Zeetman, I am telling the perfect truth," replied Kingston evenly. "The glass of brandy you have just drunk was thoroughly impregnated from this phial. You did not notice some liquid in the glass before you filled it up. In your excitement you have administered the poison with your own hand!"

Lord Mount-Fannell on the Track.

"Well, that completes the case!"

Frank Kingston told himself these words as he stood in the long corridor. It was bare but for himself, and he stood there still looking somewhat grim.

It was a quarter of an hour since Dr. Julius Zeetman had taken the drug, and now he was locked up in one of his own cells. When Kingston had left him a moment before he had been quiet, submissive, and perfectly willing to do as he was told.

"It was an unpleasant task, but it was the best way," thought Kingston, as he turned his footsteps in the direction of his own rooms. "Yes; for the world at large, and perhaps best for himself."

He found Dolores in the sitting-room, waiting for him to

return. She looked up quickly, and noted that his face did not wear any look of triumph. On the contrary, it was rather serious, and he seated himself without a word.

"Have you finished?" she inquired, after a moment.

"Yes, Dolores. And although everything has played into my hands from start to finish, I do not feel quite satisfied. Dr. Zeetman can do no further harm, and it is the work I have just attended to which takes away some of the pleasures of being triumphant."

She looked at him keenly.

"How do you mean?" she asked.

"It's difficult to explain; but—well, I do not suppose an outsider, knowing only some of the facts, would look upon me with very favourable eyes for having deprived Zeetman of his reason."

"But, Mr. Kingston, it was the best thing you could have done; even I can see that."

"Of course, you know all the facts, and so would be of that opinion. I admit it seems rather brutal to turn a perfectly sane man into a lunatic; but, all things considered, I could not have performed a better action."

He was silent for a moment, then continued.

"It is my object to deal with every Inner Councillor, according to his own particular circumstances, to punish each man as each man deserves. Zeetman would assuredly have been hung had I not done this."

"But he might have escaped," put in Dolores.

"I agree that there is a possibility of that, and if that had been the case, he is far better in his present helpless condition. Think what he might have done—think of other lives he may have ruined. Yes; there was nothing whatever hard in my punishment. It was just, and well deserved."

"I do not want to appear callous, Mr. Kingston," said Dolores seriously, "but in my opinion the sentence was all too lenient. I know the man's character, and the very thought of him fills me with loathing. You did not want to kill him, and, being a quiet and harmless lunatic, he will enjoy life more in future than he has done in the past. He will have no worries, and will be unable to commit further crimes."

"There is one thing I mean to do," said Kingston suddenly, rising to his feet, "and that is to send a telegram to the Chief telling him of Zeetman's punishment. I can send it from the station, and Mount-Fannell will then realise that Zeetman's fangs have been drawn."

He crossed the room and looked back as he laid his hand on the door-handle.

"I am going to my room to remove this disguise!" he exclaimed. "From this moment Mr. Meredith Hall disappears, and another person comes in his place. Only temporarily, however, for as soon as we reach London I shall become my own self."

"And I?" inquired Dolores.

"I want you to do the same—to disguise yourself in a slightly different manner. When we board the train at the local station here, we must be perfect strangers to the porters, etc. I think there is no necessity to lay information to the police, for one of the nurses will have already done so. Perhaps though, after all, it would be advisable to give them a telephone message from a call-office in London. I have found that means of communication handy."

"What will you tell them?"

"Practically nothing. They will find Zeetman, and will be considerably puzzled at his condition—to mention nothing of the apparently lifeless keepers. The police can make what they like of it, but I do not think it will be much."

Ten minutes elapsed, and by that time both of them were ready for departure. Kingston now had the appearance of a prosperous tradesman, while Dolores had made one or two slight alterations which gave her a totally different appearance.

"Everything is ready with the exception of one little matter," exclaimed the former. "That is, to procure from the doctor's safe all papers connected with the Brotherhood. There are sure to be some there, and it would never do for the police to find them."

"What do you mean to do with them?" asked Dolores shrewdly. "The Brotherhood will be sure to know of their presence, and will naturally be under the impression that the police have taken possession of them."

"To obviate that, I shall simply place what papers I find in an envelope, and post them on to Lord Mount-Fannell. It will bring home to him very forcibly the fact that he has a serious enemy to contend against; it will show him that the police are not to be brought into the matter, but that the secret enemy means to do everything privately and from the background."

They left the rooms which they had occupied during their stay at the asylum, and hurried to the other part of the building, now looking deserted and desolate. They had left not a single clue behind them, and were convinced that their disappearance would never be fathomed.

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE."

It did not take Kingston long to open the safe, for he had procured the keys from Zeetman's pocket in readiness. His words proved to be right, for there were several papers of vital importance, which would have assuredly meant serious consequences for the Brotherhood.

"Now for the trap!" said Kingston briskly, as he stuffed the papers into his coat-pocket. "It is fortunate that there is a pony in the stables ready for our use. We can ride the greater part of the way to the station, then turn our vehicle into an adjacent field. By the time it is discovered we shall probably be in London."

The pony proved to be a quiet one, and presently they were jogging along the dreary heath at a smart pace. Their work at the Grange was completed—completed with the most astonishing success. As arranged, the trap was abandoned when they had reached a part of the country near the station. The bare heath here had given way to well-wooded country, and there was practically no fear of the pony and trap being discovered before the lapse of an hour or so. Indeed, even if it were, there would be no connection between it and the elderly couple who entered the little station a few minutes later.

The London train was not due for another ten minutes, and the booking-office was practically deserted, the only occupants being a dull-looking countryman and a small individual with grey whiskers and almost white hair. Kingston took scarcely any notice of them as he walked with Dolores to the small aperture in the booking-office to obtain the tickets.

"I think it would be advisable to send that wire to Mount-Fannell from London," he exclaimed in a low voice. "It would mean practically no loss of time."

Kingston procured the tickets, then he and his companion crossed over to the up-platform. In the booking-office the little man with grey whiskers stood thinking with shining eyes. After a moment he moved up and down restlessly.

"Who on earth can they be?" he asked himself repeatedly. "The man, whoever he is, is aware of my name, and obviously means to send me a wire. This looks decidedly extraordinary, for nobody in this locality knows me except Zeetman—and he almost secretly."

Lord Mount-Fannell was considerably puzzled. When Kingston had entered the booking-office he had seen nothing but the Chief's back, and so, of course, had no opportunity of recognising him. But the latter had heard two words, and those two words were sufficient to cause him a vast amount of uneasiness. They were "Mount-Fannell," and "wire."

"I cannot understand it," thought the Chief. "Why has Zeetman not come? He should have been here a long time since. Something has gone wrong. Something has happened to prevent him returning. Can the police—No, for nobody here knows a word about the matter yet, and had the police come the porters would have been talking of nothing else."

He walked out on to the platform and took a good look at the pair on the opposite platform.

"They are strangers to me," he muttered perplexedly. "Yet it is suspicious—very suspicious. Why should this man want to send me a telegram? It almost appears as though they had come from the asylum; that is the only place where my name is known. Yet who is there at the Grange—By Jove!"

Lord Mount-Fannell came to a halt, and the cigarette he had been smoking dropped to the ground. He had just remembered that Dr. Zeetman had told him, on one of his visits, that there was an elderly couple staying at the establishment; that one of them was out of his mind, and the other acting as nurse.

"Can it be possible that these are the two?" murmured his lordship. "This is the nearest station, and they are apparently strangers. If that is a fact, what are they doing here, and how do they know my name? And who released them from the asylum—Good gracious!"

Another thought had suddenly entered the Chief's head, and this time it was a very startling one.

"Can this man be—can he be the secret assailant who has always proved so elusive?" Mount-Fannell asked himself breathlessly. "By George, it seems impossible! Yet the thing must be looked squarely in the face. It is practically certain that this is the couple whom Zeetman told me of. How is it they are travelling to London so unconcernedly, while the doctor himself has not yet returned? They only arrived at the asylum recently—within a day or two, in fact. By Jove, yes; the first escape happened on the same night as the couple arrived!"

The point was a significant one, and not to be overlooked. The Chief was practically decided now, but he was clever enough to show no outward signs of agitation.

"Everything points to this theory being the correct one," he went on, "though who the woman is I cannot imagine.

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Presumably they are both in disguise. The man, of course, would be aware of my name, and it would be like his audacity to wire to me. Yes, I think I've struck the right scent!"

A distant whistle brought him back to his surroundings, and he glanced up the line. Owing to a curve he could not see the train, but the noise of its approach was plainly audible. Mount-Fannell hesitated a moment, then made up his mind swiftly.

"I will follow this couple," he told himself. "There is no telling what it may lead to, and as Zeetman has not turned up, I am quite justified in going. He should have been here nearly half an hour ago, and it causes me certain misgivings as to his safety. If this man here is that individual I suspect him to be—and I am practically certain of that—it looks very much as if Zeetman has got himself into hot water. I should like to see what has become of him, but the other matter is by far the most important!"

A few moments later the London train drew up at the little station, and Kingston and Dolores entered a first-class compartment. When they had seated themselves Mount-Fannell walked past the window with the most perfect confidence. He was positive his disguise could not be fathomed, and he wished to obtain a good look at his quarry.

At that moment Kingston was glancing through a paper, so the Chief obtained a searching look at his disguised face. Then the train started, and Mount-Fannell scrambled into another compartment close by. The journey to London was not a long one, and the Chief kept a sharp eye open at every stop. His quarry, however, made no sign of leaving the train, and Mount-Fannell almost smiled as he saw them step on to the platform at Waterloo.

"They have not the slightest suspicion that I am on their track," he muttered to himself. "Good! This affair looks like panning out well. I must, at all costs, find out their destination. Once that is accomplished, it will be an easy matter to place half a dozen or so spies on the watch. That done, should they prove to be what I suspect, it will be quite an easy matter to settle them."

Kingston appeared to be in no hurry as he escorted Dolores to the subway which led to the underground railway. There were comparatively few people about at that time of the day, and as the pair walked along the subway they found themselves quite alone.

"Just walk on a minute, Dolores," exclaimed Kingston suddenly. "My bootlace is a bit loose—and there is another reason!"

Dolores did not hesitate, for she could tell by his tone that the bootlace was not the reason of his stopping. Although she had not the remotest idea of what he was driving at, she walked on without a word, and Kingston bent down.

Behind him he heard footsteps, but did not look round. It was Lord Mount-Fannell, and the Chief muttered a curse under his breath. He could not possibly stop there, so was forced to walk past his quarry as unconcerned as he could manage.

Then a startling thing occurred. Barely had the Chief got a yard past the kneeling figure of Kingston, when the latter sprang upright. In one movement he had grasped the Chief's shoulder and had twirled him round until they were face to face.

"I am delighted to meet you, Lord Mount-Fannell," exclaimed Kingston blandly. "I must request you, however, to transfer your attention elsewhere."

The Chief gazed at his companion for a moment in amazement, for he had had no idea that Kingston had even noticed him, much less fathomed his disguise. Suddenly, with a snarl of fury, sounding quite out of place from Lord Mount-Fannell's genial lips, he endeavoured to free himself.

"My dear Chief, pray don't excite yourself," said Frank Kingston coolly, still in the same disguised tones. "There is no telling who may come along this subway, so I am afraid I must bid you good-day!"

Before the Chief could utter a word, and in one lightning-like movement, Kingston tied a handkerchief round Mount-Fannell's mouth. The movement was so rapid that he could not even resist. The next second his feet were bound in a like manner. Kingston had used the Chief's own handkerchief and muffler for the purpose.

"You are safe for a minute at least, and that is all the time I require. By Jove, there is somebody coming. I must bid you good-afternoon, Chief!"

Kingston turned and hurried off after Dolores. The whole incident had not occupied more than twenty-five seconds, and by the time his lordship had recovered his feet pursuit would be hopeless. Several people were approaching now, and a cry arose as they saw the grey-haired little man frantically untying his bonds.

Kingston was perfectly cool, and walked in a sceming leisurely fashion to the end of the subway. There he found Dolores waiting, expecting him to travel by the tube.

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"We will take a taxi," he exclaimed calmly, "so if you will come up these steps we shall very soon find ourselves in the street!"

And, unconcerned as possible, fully knowing what was occurring in the subway, he escorted Dolores up the steps as though nothing had happened.

From the end of the subway, at the foot of the stairs, it was impossible to see the Chief, owing to a turn in the tunnel. But barely had Kingston reached the top of the stairs when Mount-Fannell came rushing to the tube entrance. A train had that moment pulled up, and without hesitating a second he leapt aboard.

He was, of course, under the natural impression that Kingston had boarded the train himself, and although he was wild with anger at having been treated so off-handedly, he nevertheless congratulated himself at having stuck to the trail.

At the next station he kept a sharp eye open for his quarry, and transferred into another carriage. But no sign of them could he see. In this way he entered every carriage on the train, and then realised with a shock that he was off the track.

Furious and exasperated he left the train at Oxford Circus

But Kingston had been aware of his presence—and almost from the very first. As the Chief had passed his carriage window at the little station near the asylum, he had fathomed the disguise in a second. He had said no word, and Dolores had been in perfect ignorance that the Chief of the Brotherhood was so near to them.

Now, however, he told her all, and after a moment's look of alarm, she realised that they were safe—that pursuit was now impossible.

"And he has gone by the tube," she exclaimed with a smile. "After all, it was the most natural thing he would do. But what a daring thing to bind him in the passage as you did! There might have been somebody along at any moment!"

"It only took me a few seconds, Dolores, but they were quite long enough to put him off the track. He fondly imagined that I was unaware of his presence, but his disguise was a very poor one, and I saw through it immediately. It only now remains for us to become our own selves, and we shall be just as secure as ever."

"You mean, I presume, to visit Carson Gray?" inquired Dolores. "We can there remove our disguises and then proceed to the Cyril."



"Stand off!" yelled Zeetman. "I won't touch a drop of the stuff, I say!" "You are too late, Zeetman," said the disguised Kingston, grimly. "You have already taken the drug." (See p. 21.)

Station, with the knowledge that he had been duped like the veriest novice—that the unknown enemy had treated him with the same careless and unconcerned audacity which had characterised his every action.

"And I have let him go," snarled the Chief under his breath. "Good heavens, what a fool! He treated me as though I were a child, and I was totally deceived. While he ascended the stairs to the street, I rushed blindfold into the train! I might have guessed the ruse had I not been so ram-headed."

He walked along the crowded thoroughfare thinking deeply, his brow clouded and overcast. Suddenly he resolved what was to be done.

"A meeting must be called immediately, and this matter discussed. It will not be pleasant talking about the way in which I have been duped, but it must be done—done at once! Here I had the man within my grasp and allowed him to get the better of me, as though I were nothing but a brainless youth!"

The Meeting of the Inner Council.

Lord Mount-Fannell had certainly good cause to be angry with himself. He had been tricked in the easiest possible manner. Yet he was not to be blamed. He had been under the full impression that Kingston knew nothing of his presence, and so was at a disadvantage.

"Precisely!"

"Do you not think it would be advisable for one of us to stay away from the hotel for a few days?" she said thoughtfully. "Returning both on the same day, it might be just a little bit suspicious. The Chief's spies will be on the look-out everywhere, and although of you being the man would seem impossible, they could hardly miss the fact that we both returned a few hours after Mount-Fannell's adventure?"

"By Jove, Dolores, you are quite right! I must admit that the fact quite escaped me. Your suggestion is an excellent one, and while you return this afternoon I will put up for a few nights at Great Portland Street. It is hardly possible that we should be suspected at such a big hotel as the Cyril, but it is always best to take precautions."

It was not long before the taxi landed them at the detective's rooms in Great Portland Street. Carson Gray was delighted to see them, and was very curious with regard to the case which had just been completed.

"Before I speak to you about that matter, my dear Gray," drawled Frank Kingston, in his usual languid tones, "I want to remove this disguise. Miss O'Brien is of the same way of thinking, so if you will excuse us a moment we will become our own selves."

"You have free use of my disguising-room," declared Gray, without hesitation. "Personally, I much prefer to speak to you as yourself; and as for Miss O'Brien, it is quite unnecessary to state that she is ever so much more charming."

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE."

as her natural self than any powder and paint will make her."

Dolores smiled and left the room, to be followed a moment later by Kingston. By the aid of the hypodermic syringe it was an easy matter to remove their disguises; the disguises which Professor Polgrave's drugs made so perfect.

"Ah, that is better!" cried Carson Gray, as they returned. Kingston had unconsciously dropped his affected stiff manner now that he was again in his own personality. Dolores, too, had become once more the beautiful girl who was known to London society as Kathleen O'Brien.

"If you will excuse me, Mr. Gray," she smiled, "I should like to depart at once. It would not do for us both to leave at the same time, and Mr. Kingston has much to tell you."

"I am sorry you must go, Miss O'Brien," replied Gray; "but I quite see your reason for taking your leave separately."

Dolores took her departure a moment later, and without waste of time Kingston told Gray everything that had occurred, finishing by relating the encounter with the Chief.

"There is bound to be a Council meeting, at which something will be decided. But they've lost me now, Gray. I'm just as secure as ever."

"I can quite believe you, Kingston," replied the detective, with a smile. "Jove, but each one of your undertakings appears to be more difficult and more complicated than its predecessor! It is little short of marvellous how you have succeeded in this Zeetman affair."

"I had willing helpers, Gray, and that meant a lot," replied Kingston calmly. "And, speaking of helpers, I have to thank you for that little incident about the ten men in the motor-car. How did you prevent them reaching the asylum?"

Carson Gray laughed.

"Oh," he answered, "that was quite a simple matter! I got your wire too late to do anything personally, but I immediately went out to a call-office, and, using the name of an important superintendent at Scotland Yard, 'phoned to a police-station which the car would have to pass, informing the inspector in charge that they were to be placed under arrest. As I knew the inspector personally, and therefore could use his name, he was deceived beautifully."

"And the ten men were arrested?"

"Exactly," smiled the detective. "By morning, however, the worthy inspector made inquiries, and found the thing to be a hoax. By that time it was too late, of course, for the men to journey to the asylum, and they were released with many apologies, and returned to London."

"I was confident I could rely on you, Gray," returned Kingston quietly; "and I have another favour to ask of you."

"It shall be granted if it is in my power to do so."

"I want you to put me up here for a few days. It would look a trifle suspicious for both Miss O'Brien and myself to return to the Cyril at the same hour. The Brotherhood will be on guard now more than ever, and I wish to give them not the slightest ground upon which to work. My identity as Frank Kingston must be preserved at all costs."

"I shall be delighted to put you up," declared Gray. "But, tell me, what is the next case to be? Who is the next Inner Councillor to receive your attention? You see, Kingston, I am getting accustomed to your ways, and know that you will waste no time in setting about a fresh episode."

Kingston smiled.

"I can scarcely say at the moment what I mean to do, but my plans are already beginning to form themselves. You must understand that some of my plans have been matured for weeks past. There is to be a meeting of the Council to-day, for certain, and something may come to pass there which will shed a different light upon matters."

"But how will you get to know what occurs?"

"The only way in which I can ascertain that will be by Crawford. If any plans are made, some common-members will have to take part in carrying them out, and Crawford will therefore get to know, by a round-about route, what has been decided."

"That is one way, certainly," agreed Carson Gray. "I'll warrant Mount-Fannell is tearing his hair at the present moment. By this time he has got your wire, and is aware of Zeetman's fate."

And although the Chief was not exactly tearing his hair, he was nevertheless in a state of excitement and agitation such as he had seldom been in before.

When he arrived at his house in Grosvenor Square, disappointed and angry, he found a telegram awaiting him. He had not the least idea what it contained, but he guessed that it was from the man he had lately been tracking.

He closed the door of his library with a bang, then ripped the buff-coloured envelope open. The wire was short and to the point, and ran as follows:

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"THE BULLY'S REMORSE" is the title of the Splendid, Complete, School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., appearing in this week's

"Z is quite insane. Thought you might be interested.—MEREDITH HALL."

The telegram slipped from the Chief's fingers.

"Zeetman insane," he murmured. "Great powers! What can it mean? Who is this Meredith Hall? Ah, I remember! The doctor told me that was the name of the new patient. As I suspected, he is in reality the Brotherhood's most dangerous enemy. This is serious—terribly serious!"

He lit a cigar, and puffed at it erratically.

"A meeting must take place to-night," he decided finally. "The matter must be discussed from every point of view, and this man tracked. Who he is is a mystery, but when I get a thousand men on the watch—a thousand men spying all over the country—some result is bound to follow."

After a few minutes the Chief sent for Mr. Milverton, his right-hand man. The barrister was unable to come at once, but at about four o'clock he entered the library. Mount-Fannell was still pacing up and down agitatedly.

"Why, Chief," exclaimed the K.C., "what is the trouble?"

"Trouble? You cannot guess, Milverton. Everything is going wrong—everything! You know what has been happening down at the Grange Asylum, for I told you last night."

"Well?"

"Six more patients have escaped, and Dr. Zeetman himself has been converted into a lunatic. I do not know, but I am practically certain that by now the whole establishment has been broken up."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Milverton. "All this wants some believing. Zeetman a lunatic! It is out of the question, Chief!"

Lord Mount-Fannell snapped his fingers.

"It is the truth," he returned impatiently. "Listen to me, and I will tell you everything. Much has happened since I saw you last."

And the Chief told his companion everything that had happened that morning. He concealed nothing, but related even that part which was against himself. Milverton quite saw, however, that the Chief was in no way to blame for what had occurred. It was quite evident that this elusive "Mr. Meredith Hall" was an extremely clever individual. This was obvious from the fact that he had already diminished the number of the Council by eight or nine.

"The whole thing must be discussed and threshed out with all the councillors present," declared the Chief. "Fortunately most of them are in London, and can attend the meeting. We had better fix the time for eight o'clock sharp."

"But I have an appointment—"

"Dunce take the appointment!" snapped Mount-Fannell.

"Everything must be put aside. No matter what your fellow-councillors have on hand, they must leave it to attend the gathering to-night. I tell you, Milverton, the matter is of the utmost importance, and while you notify several members—say, eight of them—I will let the others know that they must meet in the Council Chamber at eight o'clock sharp."

This programme was carried out, and although several councillors had other engagements on hand, they had perforce to leave them and obey the Chief's wishes. They knew that something urgent was to be discussed, or the meeting would never have been so hurriedly called.

At eight o'clock everybody was present; everybody, that is, with the exception of those who were in other parts of the kingdom. They numbered twelve in all, and the Council Chamber looked somewhat bare with so many vacant chairs.

There was no time wasted, and Lord Mount-Fannell rose to his feet on the stroke of eight. Those around him looked at his face a little curiously, for in contrast to its usual genial appearance it was now haggard and pale.

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed, in a harsh voice, "I must apologise to you for bringing you together under such short notice, but it was absolutely imperative. Something has happened which must be discussed without a moment's delay. It concerns Dr. Julius Zeetman, who, up till this moment, has been one of our most honoured members."

"There is nothing wrong, I hope?" asked one of the Council; Mount-Fannell had, of course, told nobody so far, with the exception of Milverton, what had been occurring at the Grange Asylum.

"On the contrary," he replied grimly, "everything is wrong. You will be surprised to learn, gentlemen, that you will never see Dr. Zeetman in this room again."

"He is not dead!" cried the naval officer.

Lord Mount-Fannell smiled grimly.

"No," he replied, "he is not dead, but something almost as bad as death has overtaken him. Dr. Zeetman is, and will remain, I do not doubt, a hopeless lunatic for the rest of his life!"

The Council Come to a Decision.

A murmur passed round the assembled Inner Councillors, and they glanced at one another somewhat apprehensively. They well knew Zeetman's villainous trade, but had never guessed that he would himself become a madman.

"You are not aware of the fact, gentlemen," continued Lord Mount-Fannell, "but the most startling happenings have been occurring lately at the Grange Asylum. In a word, the whole establishment is now broken up!"

"But I do not understand," protested one of the councillors. "What has happened to Zeetman? How could he possibly have become a lunatic?"

"I will tell you everything. It is rather a long story," replied the Chief, "but it is necessary that you should know the facts."

He thereupon went into everything. He told them of the first escape from the Grange, and of the mystery which surrounded it; he told them of the second escape, and then of Zeetman's visit that morning with the news that a further six had disappeared.

"The doctor was in a terrible state," said his lordship, "as you can well imagine, for it was a stunning shock to discover the five dead keepers. There was nothing for Zeetman to do but get clear of the country, for with those men dead and the prisoners gone, what could he say for himself? Under these circumstances, I accompanied him to the station nearest the asylum, intending to wait there while he procured some vital papers. He did not return."

"Did not return?" echoed the army officer.

"No. But while I was there I encountered somebody else who interested me far more. I put two and two together, and realised that before me was the secret enemy who has been causing such disastrous havoc among our ranks during the past few months."

And the Chief thereupon recounted how he had tracked Frank Kingston and Dolores to Waterloo—how he had guessed who they were, and what they had done. He did not spare himself over the incident in the subway, but the councillors realised that he was not to blame for what had occurred.

"He escaped me," snarled the Chief, his eyes blazing; "but I shall have him again before long. You can well imagine the state of fury I was in when I realised that the one man we want more than another had slipped through my fingers with the most ridiculous ease. I tell you, gentlemen, I could scarcely contain my anger."

"It certainly was most exasperating," said the councillor known as Lyle. "But even yet I cannot understand how you come to the conclusion that Zeetman is insane."

"I told you a moment ago of the words I had overheard in the booking-office at the little station. Hardly had I arrived home, impotent and furious, when one of the servants brought me a telegram."

"A telegram?"

"I said so. Here it is—I will read it to you."

The Chief did so, and his companions glanced at one another as the significance of the words impressed themselves upon them.

"You evidently take this man's word for granted," exclaimed the naval officer, gently tapping a cigarette on the table preparatory to lighting it. "Meredith Hall" is, of course, a mere fake name."

"Of course. By this time both he and his companion have removed their disguises, which will make our task doubly hard. But as for taking his word for granted, I may as well say that I do—most emphatically do! He has proved himself to be no ordinary individual, and there would be no object whatever in his mis-stating the case. I am absolutely convinced that Zeetman is mad—that he has been made mad by some Eastern drug or other."

"There are such drugs, of course," put in Milverton; "and I think there is no doubt as to the genuineness of the news contained in the telegram. It is easy to conclude, moreover, by a little deduction, that the remainder of the prisoners have now been released. If this man Hall converted Zeetman into a lunatic before leaving, it is practically certain that he freed the other patients—"

The door opened suddenly, and a tall man stood looking in. It was another Inner Councillor, who had arrived somewhat late. He held a letter in his hand, and was obviously a foreigner.

"Ah, my dear count," exclaimed the Chief, "I am glad you have come, for there is an important matter to discuss with you to-night. But what have you in your hand?"

"A letter," replied the other, with but a very slight foreign accent. "The postman delivered it almost as I entered. As I was coming down to you, I thought I might as well bring it with me."

The Chief took it carelessly.

"Thanks!" he exclaimed, tearing the flap of the letter open. The next second an exclamation burst from his lips, and he looked round at the others in fresh surprise.

"No bad news, I hope?" inquired the new-comer as he took a seat.

"No," replied Mount-Fannell. "Rather good, if anything. But I am puzzled, gentlemen. The contents of this envelope are nothing more nor less than Dr. Zeetman's private papers. This morning they reposed in his safe at the Grange Asylum. By Jove, the fellow has had the audacity to send them to me! It proves conclusively that he does not wish the police to interfere in our affairs—that he is fighting against us alone is proof positive."

The new arrival started forward.

"What is all this about?" he exclaimed. "What has Zeetman to do with it?"

"You came just too late to hear, Count von Breczen," replied Lord Mount-Fannell. "However, I will briefly outline what has occurred."

He did so, and the count listened attentively, with growing agitation. The reason for this was not quite obvious, but that he had a reason was very certain. The Chief became somewhat demonstrative in his narrative, and thumped the table more than once to emphasise his points.

"This enemy must be hounded down," he concluded, in ringing tones. "Every effort must be made to track him, and find out his real identity. It was a very near thing this morning, but now he is just as far from our clutches as ever. You hear, gentlemen—every effort must be made, and I rely upon you all to keep your eyes open to their widest extent, and find out who this man is. I am practically convinced that he moves in good society. There is a possibility that some of us have met him ourselves. This fact is a foregone conclusion, however—'Meredith Hall' is a man who stops at nothing—a man something after the type of a keen detective. Nobody else could have performed the feats he has performed. So look out for him, and at the least suspicious sign spies will be set to watch him."

From this speech the Inner Councillors got the impression that their enemy was a keen, hard, quick-witted individual, and this made Kingston's identity all the more secure, for not one of them would even look a second time at Frank Kingston, the fop.

"But all this is unnecessary," cried Count von Breczen, starting to his feet. "What is to become of our plans now? With Dr. Zeetman's asylum disestablished, our carefully-laid scheme will come to naught."

"I have been thinking of that myself," declared the Chief, "and it has been worrying me not a little. Other arrangements must be made, and without a moment's delay. The Crown Prince arrives to-morrow, does he not, count?"

"To-morrow, at noon," said the foreign Inner Councillor, somewhat agitatedly. "What is to be done? What can be done? Heaven above, there is no time! What plans can be made at such short notice?"

"Pray do not excite yourself, count. The time is limited, I admit, but we can come to some settlement before we leave this room. Whatever happens, the Balatarian Government must not be disappointed."

"To what are you referring?" inquired the naval officer.

"Of course, you do not know of the episode, Captain Formby," said Lord Mount-Fannell, turning to him. "As a matter of fact, there are several persons in the room at present who know nothing of the Brotherhood's latest undertaking. Of course, there are a thousand and one cases every day, but they are carried out by the common-members. I am referring now, however, to a case of vital importance—a case which must be handled with extreme delicacy."

"You make me curious," said Captain Formby, to give the naval officer his proper name. "What is this vitally important matter?"

"Perhaps you will be good enough to explain in brief what has occurred," said the chief, turning to the foreign councillor, who was tapping his foot impatiently on the luxurious carpet which covered the floor.

"With pleasure," agreed the count, looking round at his fellow-members with a rather worried expression on his not un-handsome face. He was a tall man, and carried himself with a military bearing. His hair was black and thick, while his face was covered with a large, flowing moustache and bushy eyebrows. Owing to the dark colour of his hair, his chin bore a steely-blue appearance. The Count von Breczen seemed to be a formidable type of man should it come to a struggle.

"The main facts are these," he commenced, with no beating about the bush. "I am the Balatarian Ambassador for Great Britain, and have, as you know, very considerable influence. I am in constant communication, and in the most intimate confidence, with the Balatarian Ministers at Monte Questo, the capital of the kingdom. I dare say most of you have heard of his Majesty's critical condition?"

"Yes," agreed Lyle. "The King of Balataria is, I understand, practically on his deathbed."

"He has been in his present condition for many months

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now, and the end cannot be long in coming. Now, the head of the Ministry in my country is General Stolzenburg, and he has a group of men round him who are his sturdy supporters."

"But—"

"One moment, please! The general is, practically speaking, the ruler of Balataria, and he has numerous misgivings now that the old king is drawing near to his end. At present the Government have everything in their own hands."

"Then why does General Stolzenburg have these misgivings?" inquired Captain Formby.

"Because when the king dies his son will naturally come into power as reigning monarch. Our kingdom is not conducted precisely like your own, and the monarch out there has supreme power. Now, the Crown Prince's views are altogether at variance with those of his father's Government, and immediately he gets to the throne he will clear every one of them out, and start work in a very different manner."

"Did his Majesty never take notice of his son's views, then?"

"Never! The old king is something of a fool, and trusts implicitly in his Ministers. Stolzenburg has great ideas for the future, but the only prospect before him is one of ruin, for as soon as the old king dies he will be thrown from his present position, and will become absolutely helpless."

"Then the Crown Prince is rather a superfluous person?"

"Decidedly so. He's in the way both of Government and of people, but he has a strong will of his own, and nothing will alter his purpose once it is set. The people hate him—or the majority of them do—and would dearly love to see General Stolzenburg himself become the reigning monarch."

"But that is impossible!" declared the naval man.

"Not impossible, captain," exclaimed the count, with a dark sneer. "The general is not a man to be frustrated easily. As a matter of fact, he means to rule. It will be a delicate matter, but the Crown Prince Xavier must be got rid of."

"Murdered?"

A low murmur passed round the large table, and many were the glances cast across it.

"No, not murdered, gentlemen," said Count von Breezen significantly, "but simply got rid of. You understand?"

"I am afraid," replied Lyle slowly, "that I do not!"

"Then I will explain."

The count calmly knocked the ash from his cigar, and looked from one to the other of his fellow-councillors.

The Plot Against the Crown Prince Xavier of Balataria.

"You will understand," commenced Count von Breezen, "that the matter is no ordinary one. General Stolzenburg has been awaiting his opportunity for many weeks, and at last it has come. It is manifestly impossible to interfere with the Crown Prince in his own country without raising the gravest suspicion against the Ministers, who are known to hate him. The police, of course, are on the side of the Government, but it would never do to display this disloyalty to the Crown."

"Go on," said the Chief interestedly.

Von Breezen crossed his legs comfortably. It was seldom indeed that he held the attention of the whole Council, but on this occasion every one of them was vastly interested in his narrative.

"A little over a week ago," he continued, "I received a secret dispatch from Monte Questo—from General Stolzenburg himself—and it contained the news that Prince Xavier was paying a visit to this country."

"But you said his father was on his deathbed," interrupted Captain Formby. "Surely the prince would not leave under those conditions?"

"I am afraid I did not make my meaning quite clear. The old king, although unable to move about without assistance, shows surprising tenacity to life. He is well over eighty years of age, and his mind is becoming decidedly weak."

"Pardon me," interjected Mount-Fannell, "but I cannot quite see why he does not abdicate in favour of his son. Then the general would be indeed frustrated."

"The king will not think of such a thing," replied the Balatarian ambassador. "He declares that as long as he has breath in his body he will be King of Balataria. It is this very fact which has caused the general's hopes to run high. He is at present, to all intents and purposes, the ruler, the king having implicit faith in him, and seconding without hesitation all his proposals. Stolzenburg knows that as soon as Prince Xavier steps into his father's shoes all that will be altered. Now, to weary you no further, I will tell you what has to be done. My orders are to kidnap him—kidnap him, and hold him from the sight of all the world for a period of three years. It was my intention to hand him over to Dr.

Zeetman; but that, of course, is now all knocked on the head."

"But why for three years?" inquired Rupert Lyle—he was a prominent financier, and an extremely busy man. "Why do you not kill him outright when you are about it?"

"There is a good reason, you may be sure. In three years from now the Crown Prince will be entitled to a vast amount of money from a great foreign Power; but if he dies before that time arrives the debt—for it is a debt—will become null and void, and Balataria will lose the money. I cannot enter into all the technicalities at the moment, for that would be a waste of time."

"Under these circumstances, would not this foreign Power you speak of conspire to kill the prince, and so free themselves of their debt?"

"No!" declared the count decidedly. "The Power is exceedingly rich, as well as being honourable. There is no fear from that quarter. You will understand by now what I am driving at. With Prince Xavier out of the way for three years—not dead, you will understand, but simply missing, for there will be no proof of his decease—General Stolzenburg will have everything in his own hands. He will be appointed Regent to act in the prince's place until he turns up, or until proof is brought of his death. As Regent the general will be supreme ruler, and will be able to introduce his own ideas and those of his own Ministers. I tell you, gentlemen, it will be a great day for Balataria when the prince is kidnapped."

There was a moment's silence, for everybody did not quite agree with the count's views. That, however, was not the point. The Brotherhood's object was in no way connected with politics.

"Now, you will readily understand my anxiety," concluded the Inner Councillor. "With this disastrous happening to Dr. Zeetman, all my plans have been frustrated. The Crown Prince can no longer be incarcerated in the asylum, and we must seek some other means to keep him quiet. At the end of three years he will be released, and allowed to return to his country."

"So that the money may be paid him?"

"Exactly! By that time the whole populace will be in love with Stolzenburg's methods, and will have nothing else. Besides, once the money is paid, an accident could well happen to Prince Xavier."

"It is extremely awkward," murmured the Chief thoughtfully—"extremely awkward. What is to be done is a question. The prince will be here to-morrow, and must be kidnapped without delay. The question is where to conceal him—By George!"

Lord Mount-Fannell half rose in his chair as a sudden thought entered his head. He looked round for a moment in silence, then thumped the table.

"I have got it!" he cried. "By Jove, it is the very place—ten times as secure as Dr. Zeetman's asylum even!"

Count von Breezen looked up sharply.

"What do you mean, Chief?" he inquired. "What is this idea?"

"I will tell you, gentlemen," replied No. 1, looking round at the company in general. "The place where Prince Xavier will be absolutely secure—where he will be within the reach of no outsiders, is—"

"Well?"

"The Iron Island!" cried Mount-Fannell. "I defy anyone to make a better suggestion!"

For a moment there was another silence, the members of the Council looking at one another in wonderment. It was curious that nobody had thought of the Iron Island before.

"The Iron Island?" echoed the count quickly. "That is too far away."

"Not at all! The Brotherhood's new yacht, the Unicorn, is absolutely ready to sail. She has been built to take the place of the Night Hawk, which was sunk so mysteriously in the Pacific, and I may say she is a very much faster ship than the Hawk. My dear count, a better course could not be decided upon!"

"She is ready to sail, you say?"

"Even to the point of coaling-up."

"Then I think you are right!" exclaimed the Balatarian ambassador. "Once Xavier is aboard, his whereabouts can be kept an absolute secret, for the Unicorn is, of course, merely a pleasure yacht."

"Ostensibly so," agreed Mount-Fannell. "As a matter of fact, she is a very formidable foe, carrying, as she does, guns both fore and aft. At present, however, she has no crew, but that is a trivial matter. You are a seaman, Formby. What men would you recommend to take charge—By Jove, you shall captain her yourself!"

The naval officer stared.

"You are on six months' leave at present," continued the

Chief; "and as you are the only capable man amongst us I am afraid you must go whether you want to or not."

"I shall be only too delighted!" declared Captain Formby. "I know what a really first-class boat the Unicorn is, and it will give me keen pleasure to have her under my care."

"Good! Then the matter is as good as settled!" exclaimed the Chief, in his cool, matter-of-fact manner. "What men do you recommend to form the crew? I think you know pretty well which of the London common-members have been seamen."

"Well, it is rather difficult to say," said Formby thoughtfully. "There are several good men I know, though—such as Radnor, Smith, Renolds, Crawford, Blake, and numerous others. Oh, yes, Chief, I can very soon find a suitable crew!"

"The main question now is to decide how to get the prince aboard without suspicion," said Count von Brecken. "It is an extremely delicate matter, for the slightest slip would mean ignominious failure—and death for me! To kidnap the forthcoming king is no light task; and were I discovered in the act Stolzenburg would be forced to sign my death-warrant, even against his own wishes."

"I should like to make a suggestion, if I may," put in a quiet, athletic-looking member of the Council, bearing all the marks of good breeding.

"Let us have it, then, Sir Reginald," said the Chief. "There is none too much time; but all suggestions are welcome."

Sir Reginald Newman lit a fresh cigarette before replying. He was a comparatively young man, and had only joined the Brotherhood a few years previous. At the time he had been down on his luck, but was useful to Mount-Fannell in many ways. A year back, however, he had inherited an unexpected fortune, which was welcome both to himself and the Inner Council. Being a sporting man, he took more interest in motoring, etc., than in the affairs of the Brotherhood. Nevertheless, he was forced to remain a member, and he always declared it was a genial recreation to attend the Council meetings.

"My idea," he explained, "is a really first-class one, and of material use at last!"

"Before you say that, let us hear what you have to suggest!" exclaimed the Chief a trifle sharply. He had good reason to be out of humour that night.

The next moment the Council was utterly startled—startled by the suggestion which Sir Reginald Newman laid before them. For a moment there was nothing but an excited buzz of conversation; then Mount-Fannell restored order. The baronet's idea was laughed at for some time; then he convinced them thoroughly that it was not only feasible, but absolutely novel and safe.

The result was that the meeting broke up in decidedly better spirits than when they had gathered earlier in the evening. Much had been discussed; but, although the importance of tracking "Meredith Hall" was self-evident, the most urgent matter just then was the kidnapping of the Crown Prince Xavier.

Owing directly to Dr. Zeetman's disaster, the whole of the Balatarian ambassador's plans had been wrecked. But now a fresh structure had been erected, as it were, and, in the Chief's opinion, the new scheme was worth ten of the old. He was to find, however, that every one of the Inner Councillors—

But this is anticipating.

Early the following morning, as Fraser was walking leisurely down the Strand, on his way to a motor warehouse to procure some tools, he suddenly felt a hand laid on his shoulder. He glanced round with no sign of fear, for, having become an honest man, he was not afraid of all the police in England combined.

When he saw who his companion was, however, he stopped abruptly.

"Why, Crawford," he exclaimed, looking at the other's excited and breathless face, "what's up? You've been running, man! What's in the wind?"

"The biggest thing we've ever struck, Fraser!" gasped the common-member of the Brotherhood of Iron. "Where's the guv'nor? He must know at once!"

"It's really important, then?" asked Fraser eagerly.

"Important!" reiterated Crawford, in a hoarse whisper. "Why, Fraser, you can't guess! It's absolutely vital, an' Mr. Kin—the guv'nor'll be as pleased as punch. You mark my words—as pleased as blessed punch!"

Startling News.

"What is it, then?" asked Fraser curiously. "What's the new game?"

"That's more than I can say, mate," replied Crawford, as the two turned and commenced walking up the Strand together. "I don't know any of the facts; but it's something jolly big, you can take my word for that!"

"Then you'd best come right along with me to the guv'nor," declared Fraser.

"Where is he, then? Not at the Cyril, 'cos we're goin' the other way."

"No," replied Fraser; "he's at Mr. Carson Gray's house. Come on, we'll get on this 'bus."

The two leapt on the footboard of a passing motor-omnibus, and were soon being driven rapidly towards Oxford Circus. The time was barely nine o'clock, and Fraser was somewhat excited at the news. He had imagined that now that the Zeetman affair was over, things would be a little slack; but, to all appearances, Kingston was to be kept as busy as usual.

He did not ask Crawford what the news was, deeming it unwise to talk in so public a place. And he would hear soon enough when he arrived at Great Portland Street. Crawford had never been there, and the man was looking somewhat excited.

He had only once seen Kingston, but he was absolutely loyal. Being Fraser's fast friend, the latter had converted him from being a scoundrel to a valuable ally of Frank Kingston. He was, of course, still a common-member, which rendered his position so very useful.

The journey to Oxford Circus was not a long one, and the two men hopped from the 'bus and turned sharply down Great Portland Street.

Carson Gray's apartments were not very far down; and before long they were admitted by Mrs. Webster, the landlady.

"Is Mr. Carson Gray in?" inquired Fraser.

"He is, my man," returned the landlady, looking the visitors up and down rather closely. "What may you want at this time of the morning? Mr. Gray's only just finished his breakfast."

"Simply tell him that Fraser's called."

"I don't know that I ought," said Mrs. Webster doubtfully. "He's got a visitor—Mr. Kingston, a great friend of 'is—"

"That's all right, mum!" exclaimed Fraser impatiently. "I'm Mr. Kingston's valet. There ain't no time to be wasted, so please go and tell Mr. Gray that I'm here."

"Oh, very well, then!"

Mrs. Webster departed upstairs, still somewhat doubtful. She was very particular as to who she admitted to Carson Gray's rooms, knowing how very valuable the detective's time was, and how he hated seeing people who were more trouble than they were worth.

This time, however, the landlady had been mistaken; and Fraser and Crawford were instantly invited to walk upstairs.

They found Carson Gray and Kingston seated before the fire, the former smoking a cigar. Although the time was spring, the date had not yet quite arrived when fires could be dispensed with. In addition, the day was unusually chilly.

"Well, Fraser," exclaimed the great detective, "you are paying an early call! And who is your friend, may I ask?" Before replying Fraser closed the door securely.

"It's Crawford, sir," he said, pushing the latter forward. "He's got something important to say, Mr. Kingston—something urgent!"

"It's right, sir," agreed Crawford, in a hoarse whisper, and looking at Kingston somewhat in awe. "I thought I'd better come straight an' let you know, 'cos I met Fraser in the street, an' that was rather too public—"

"Quite right, Crawford!" exclaimed Frank Kingston quietly. "That was sensible of you. Excuse me a moment, Gray. Well, what is your news?" he added, turning once again to Crawford.

The latter glanced round the room to make sure that they were alone.

"There was a meeting last night, sir, an' although all the members couldn't attend, a good many of them was there. O' course, sir, I don't know what was said, but I've got an idea that it was mainly to do with Dr. Zeetman, the old hound!"

"Never mind about that, Crawford," smiled Kingston. "What was the result of the meeting. I guessed there would be one, and have been rather curious to learn what came of it."

"I can't tell you much, sir, but this morning I got orders through my district superintendent that I was to join the Unicorn to-night, sir—the Unicorn's the Brotherhood's new yacht, you know."

"Yes, Fraser told me something about that a short while ago," said Kingston. "And is that all you have to say? Do you not know where the ship is bound for?"

"Yes, sir," replied Crawford, "an' that's why I hurried here so quick. The thing was all decided last night, and the Unicorn sails to-morrow, I think!"

"Her destination?" asked Kingston, bending forward in his chair.

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NEXT THURSDAY!

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE."

"Her destination, sir," said Crawford, unconsciously lowering his voice, "is to be the Iron Island."

Carson Gray's cigar dropped to the floor.

"The Iron Island!" he cried. "By Jove, Kingston, this looks serious!"

Frank Kingston had not moved a hair, and now turned a cool glance on Carson Gray.

"Yes," he agreed. "Something will have to be done about it. The Iron Island, you say, Crawford? Do you know the object of this sudden journey?"

"No, sir, I only wish I did," replied the man. "All I can tell you, sir, is that somebody is to be kidnapped and marooned on the Iron Island—something like you was yourself, sir."

"Dear me," murmured Kingston. "This is quite interesting. Tell me, Crawford, who has command of the ship? Of course, you do not know who is to be kidnapped?"

"I ain't got the least idea, sir, but Cap'n Formby is to command the Unicorn."

"Really? That is rather a novel position for an officer in his Majesty's Navy. I presume you know what other men are picked for the crew, and who is accompanying the boat to the Pacific?"

"Hardly, sir," protested Crawford. "I was only told this morning. But, besides Cap'n Formby there's another councillor goin' with us, only I don't think he'll join till we get to Spain."

"Who is he?"

"The foreign chap, sir—Count von Brezen," replied Crawford. "I'm sure I don't know what he's got to do with it, but the super's rather pally with me, sir, an' told me a few things as he wouldn't say to the other common-members. I've got an idea, sir, I shall be promoted before long to a super, myself."

"Excellent, Crawford. That will be a distinct advance," replied Kingston, pleased at the news. "But what is this about the count? It is certainly surprising to hear that he is mixed up in the affair."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Carson Gray, relighting his cigar. "That fellow is the Balatarian Ambassador, isn't he? You have already told me of his connection with the Brotherhood, Kingston, and it makes me rather curious. I wonder what his game can be?"

Frank Kingston did not reply immediately, but sat in his chair, apparently bored to death. As a matter of fact, he was thinking deeply, wondering who this person could be whom the Brotherhood were conveying to the Iron Island. It was quite certain to be a distinguished personage, and Kingston searched his memory to discover who.

Suddenly he leapt to his feet, and laughed aloud.

"By Jingo, Gray," he exclaimed calmly, "why didn't I think of it before?"

"Think of what?"

"Why, the identity of this man who is now receiving the Brotherhood's attention. He's the Crown Prince Zavier of Balataria!"

"The Crown Prince of Balataria!"

Carson Gray echoed the words in tones of astonishment, while Fraser and Crawford glanced at one another somewhat in awe. The Brotherhood were indeed going in for something big if it came to kidnapping Royalty!

"But how on earth do you know, Kingston?" asked the detective. "How can you be sure of this? Ah, but I begin to see what you mean! The Crown Prince arrives in London to-day. I remember, now I come to think of it, seeing a paragraph in the newspaper to that effect."

"Precisely! It is a very simple matter to put two and two together, my dear Gray. It is a well-known fact that there is trouble brewing in Balataria—that the Prime Minister there is desirous of

having everything in his own hands. When it is remembered that Count von Brezen is going on the Unicorn to the Iron Island the deduction is fairly obvious."

"But surely," protested Gray, "the Balatarian Government would not sanction the Brotherhood of Iron interfering in this matter?"

"No, I suppose not. I do not imagine for a moment that they are aware of the Brotherhood's existence. The Prime Minister is well-known to be a man of few scruples, and it is only natural that he should place the matter in von Brezen's hands, who, in turn, has applied to the Brotherhood for help. The Crown Prince's visit at this juncture makes the kidnapping an easy matter."

"Yes, my dear fellow, I think there can be no doubt about the matter," declared Gray. "Everything points to the prince being the man. The Iron Island, moreover, would be an ideal place for his exilement. What do you mean to do?"

Kingston rose to his feet, and stood with his back to the fire.

"What do I mean to do?" he repeated quietly. "At present, Gray, that is a difficult question to answer. It is obvious, however, that the Unicorn must never reach the Iron Island. Should it do so, my identity will be exposed, and that must never come to pass. No, I must get to work immediately, and see what I can do. There is not much time."

"There ain't that, sir!" exclaimed Crawford, starting forward. "I don't know nothin' about this here prince, sir, but the Unicorn starts for the Pacific to-morrow night."

Carson Gray whistled.

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "That doesn't leave you much time, Kingston. Is your own ship ready for departure?"

"I make a point of always keeping the Coronet in readiness to sail at a moment's notice," replied Kingston. "I have already got a glimmering of an idea of what to do, but one thing is certain. The Coronet must be put to sea, and be ready for anything that might crop up. If necessary, I shall follow the Unicorn to within a hundred miles of the Iron Island!"

"And the Dart, sir?" questioned Fraser eagerly. "How about her?"

"Oh, Fraser, the submarine? Of course, she will have to go, for there is no telling how useful she might be. But there is no necessity to discuss these things now. You and Crawford had better go at once. You, Fraser, can go to the docks, and prepare Captain Morrison for what is coming.

He will doubtless be delighted at the news. I am pleased with the manner in which you have supplied me with this information, Crawford," he added, turning to the man. "It shows, quite plainly, that you are as loyal as Fraser himself."

Crawford's eyes gleamed.

"Rather, sir!" he exclaimed. "All I think about is gettin' in every blow I can against the Brotherhood. I wouldn't stick it, only I knows that I'm useful to you, sir. Nobody can't call me a member."

"Certainly not, Crawford. You are merely my agent—a sort of detective who is devoting all his time to the interests of justice!"

The words pleased Crawford immensely, and he decided then and there, as he took his departure, with flushed face, that he would remain true to Frank Kingston as long as he breathed. The two men were now left by themselves, and for a moment neither spoke. Finally, Gray looked at Kingston's calm face expectantly.

"Well," he said, "what do you intend doing? It's rather a puzzler—eh?"

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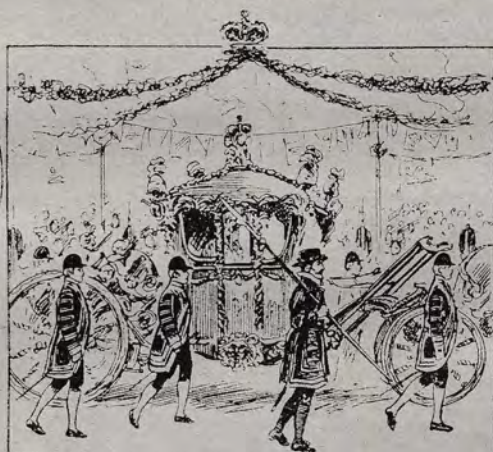
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