

Next Thursday: **"THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY."** By Martin Clifford.

Every

Thursday.



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BOUND BY HONOUR!

A Splendid New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Bully Gore.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



CHAPTER 1.

Gore Breaks Out.

CRASH! Bump!

Tom Merry jumped up, and a shower of blots scattered from his pen upon the paper before him. Tom Merry gave an angry snort. He was nearly at the end of a German imposition, when the sudden crash in the next study startled him, and certainly it would be of no use to take that imposition to Herr Schneider now.

Bump!

"The silly asses!" muttered Tom Merry wrathfully. That's Gore and Skimpole having another row!" He stepped to the study wall, and wrapped on it with his knuckles.

"Shut up in there!" he roared.

Bump!

"Will you be quiet?"

Crash!

Tom Merry breathed hard through his nose, and went to his door. He opened it, and as he looked out into the Shell passage, the door of the next study opened, and George Gore came out with a very flushed face.

He slammed the door behind him, with a slam that rang the whole length of the Shell passage, and was heard nearly all over the School House.

"You noisy ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Gore stared at him.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded.

"You've made me spoil an impot!" said Tom Merry wrathfully. "Fifty lines for old Schneider, and now I've got to do most of it over again!"

"Well, go and do it, then," said Gore, "and be hanged to you!"

Tom Merry looked at him. Gore had never been polite; in fact, he was generally the reverse. When he was good-tempered his manners left much for a Chesterfield to desire. And he was not frequently good-tempered. Gore had always been a bully, and although he had certainly turned over a new leaf of late, the old nature would keep cropping up.

When he was in one of his tantrums, as the other fellows called them, Gore was the old Gore again, and decidedly unpleasant. And it was perfectly clear that he was in a more than usually violent tantrum this time. At such times he did not measure his words.

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"THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY," AND "DEEP SEA GOLD,"

No. 187 (New Series.)

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"I shall make as much row as I like in my own study!" Gore went on deliberately. "I have been bumping Skimpole. He worries me! I've buzzed him into the corner, and buzzed all his silly books at his head! And you can go and eat coke!"

Tom Merry pushed back his cuffs.

"I suppose you are looking for a particularly thick car!" he remarked. "Come on, and select which car!"

"Oh, rats!"

Gore swung on down the passage. Although in a savage and quarrelsome mood, he did not want to enter into a fistie encounter with the champion athlete of the School House.

Tom Merry looked after him. He was greatly inclined to follow Gore down the passage, and give him reasons to be sorry for his rudeness; but he had the impot. to do, and Tom was a peaceable fellow.

He turned back into his study, and was soon deep in German characters again, working against time to get the imposition through before tea, which made the German writing look more German than ever.

Gore tramped down the passage with his hands in his pockets, and a sullen frown upon his face. There was no doubt that he was in a decidedly bad temper, and that it would be unfortunate for any small fags who crossed his path just then.

As he turned into the Fourth Form passage to reach the stairs, Mellish and Levison came up to go into their study. Mellish and Levison belonged to the Fourth, but they had been great chums of the bully of the Shell at one time, though of late there had been very much coolness between them.

They stared at Gore as they caught sight of his frowning face.

"His lordship looks wrathful," Levison remarked sarcastically. "Better give him a wide berth! I'm trembling!"

Mellish sniggered.

"So am I," he remarked. "Hear me tremble?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gore gave them an angry look. The remarks were intended for his ears, and he heard them. He came striding up to the two Fourth-Formers, his hands clenched. It was really not a safe moment for the two cads of the Fourth to worry Gore. But of late he had been so peaceable, in comparison to his former self, that they did not know the risk they ran. At the present moment Gore was simply yearning for a reasonable pretext to hammer somebody.

Levison looked at him with a sneering grin.

"Had bad news, I suppose?" he remarked. "Letter from home—eh?"

Gore started.

"How do you know I've had a letter from home?" he demanded.

Levison grinned.

"Because I saw it in the rack before you took it," he replied.

"And how do you know it was from home?" asked Gore, in a very unpleasant tone.

"I know your father's fist."

"You seem to take a lot of interest in other chaps' correspondence!" said Gore.

"I keep myself posted, you know," said Levison airily.

"I always notice details of that sort. I noticed the postmark, too—the place where you live! And as I've seen your pater, and know what a terror he is, I expect that's what's the matter with you now. He's been ragging you by post!"

"You ought to be a Sherlock Holmes!" said Gore.

"Yes; I rather fancy myself in that line!" said Levison complacently. "And—"

"But the Sherlock Holmes bizney isn't exactly popular in a school!" Gore suggested. "Fellows don't like having their private business nosed out by an inquisitive cad! They don't like Peeping Toms at work on their correspondence. I don't, anyway! And I'm jolly well going to give you a looking for not minding your own business!"

"Here, hands off! Ow!"

"Yow!" howled Mellish.

Smack, smack!

Gore's right caught Levison on his nose, and his left landed on Mellish's chin. The two Fourth-Formers staggered back, and Gore drove them into their study under a shower of blows.

"Take that—and that—and that!"

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Here, back up, Mellish!" shouted Levison desperately. And he put up his hands to Gore, and resisted as well as he could.

Gore laughed. That was just what he wanted. Mellish had dodged round the table, and was looking wildly at the window, as if minded to jump out. Gore "went for"

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Levison unmercifully. He hit out right and left, and the cad of the Fourth was driven round the study, vainly striving to defend himself. He had no chance against the burly Shell fellow.

"Oh!" he roared. "Help! Yaroooh! Help! Oh!"

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah Leah?"

An elegant junior looked in at the door of the study. At the same moment George Gore's heavy fist caught Levison on the point of the chin, and he went to the floor with a crash that made the study shake.

CHAPTER 2.

Much Chucked.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY jammed an eyeglass into his right eye, and stared into the study. D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form, was not given to interfering in other fellows' quarrels, as a rule. He could fight when required, but he did not like fighting. He considered it "wuff!" as he expressed it, and there was always danger of making his clothes dusty. But as George Gore turned a flushed and angry face towards him, after knocking Levison down, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pushed back his spotless white cuffs in anticipation.

"What is the mattah Leah, deah boys?"

Gore snapped his teeth.

"Mind your own bizney!" he replied.

"Weally, Goah—"

"Get out!"

D'Arcy came a step further into the study.

"I wufuse to get out!" he said. "I utahly decline to do anythin' of the sort! I wegard you as a wude beast, Goah!"

"Fathead!"

"I decline to be called a fathead! I asked what the mattah was Leah. If you have been up to your old twicks, Goah—"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"He has!" groaned Mellish, caressing a damaged chin. "The beast started on us for nothing, and without any warning! Ow!"

Levison sat up. He passed his hand over an eye that was rapidly becoming discoloured, and then over his aching jaw.

"Oh!" he groaned. "The beastly bully!"

"Has the wottah been bullyin' you, Levison?"

"Ow! Yes."

D'Arcy looked thoughtful.

"Well, you are an awful wottah yourself, Levison," he remarked, "and Mellish is an awful wottah, too! I daro say you deserved it. I am quite willin' to listen to your explanation, Goah!"

Gore laughed angrily.

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

"I decline to do anythin' of the sort! I should be inclined to thwash you in any case, but I do not wish to make my clothes dustay. Undah the cires, I shall be satisfied if you will wotire fwom the studay!"

"Rats!"

"You heard what I said, Goah?"

"Oh, yes, I heard!"

"And what is your reply?"

"Rats!"

D'Arcy pushed his white cuffs back out of danger. Then he carefully bestowed his monocle in his waistcoat-pocket. Gore watched these preparations with a sneering grin. He was very much bigger than D'Arcy, and he was spoiling for a fight. Levison picked himself up, gasping.

"That's right, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "Go for him, and I'll help you!"

"Pway do nothin' of the sort, Levison! That would not be cwicket. And pway do not call me Gussy; I am Gussy only to my intimate fwends! Goah, will you have the extreme kindness to wotire fwom this studay, where you are not wanted by the ownahs?"

"No!" said Gore.

"I wequest you politely to wotire!"

"Rats!"

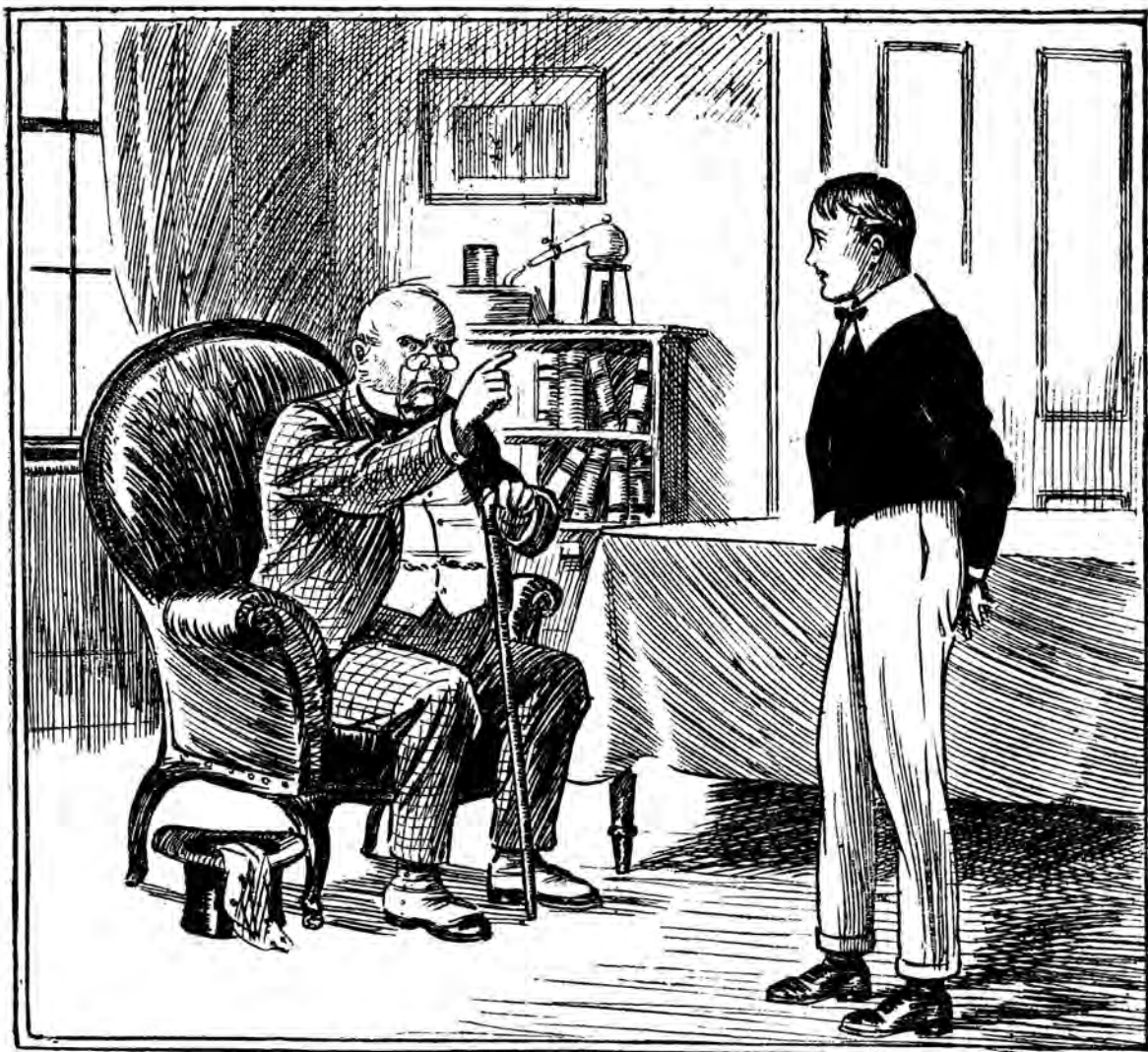
"If you do not wotire in peace, I shall have no wesome but to give you a feahful thwashing!" said D'Arcy warningly.

"More rats!"

"Vewy well; I shall thwow you out!"

"Come on!" grinned Gore.

Arthur Augustus came on. He went for George Gore with a rush, and grasped him round the neck. He gave a wild yell as Gore's fist clumped upon his nose, and then Gore roared as he received D'Arcy's knuckles in the eye. Then they closed in a deadly wrestle, and waltzed round the study. They did not intend it for a waltz, but it looked very like



"To bully or even to raise the voice to, one smaller than yourself, and at your mercy, is wrong and cowardly!" thundered Mr. Gore. George Gore suppressed a grin. It was just what his father was doing at that very moment. (See page 5.)

one; and Levison and Mellish had to dodge to avoid being biffed over.

"Bai Jove! Out you go!"

"Rats!" gasped Gore.

With a whirl D'Arcy brought the Shell fellow to the door. With another whirl Gore brought the swell of St. Jim's back into the study. They crashed into the bookcase in the corner, and there was a smash of breaking glass, and a yell from Levison.

"Look out!"

Crash!

The two combatants rolled over a chair, and rolled on the floor. There was a shout from the passage, and two or three juniors looked in. The noise had been heard afar.

Blake, Herries, and Digby—Arthur's study-mates in No. 6—stared into Levison's study in blank astonishment.

"My hat! It's Gussy breaking up the happy home!" exclaimed Blake. "Don't kill him, Gussy! You know how terrible you are when you start!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the row about?" asked Digby, grinning.

"I'm chuckin' this wottah out!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"He looks more like chucking you about!" grinned Herries. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

Bump!

Arthur Augustus rolled over on his back, and Gore sat

astride of his chest. The bully of the Shell proceeded to bump the back of D'Arcy's head on the floor. Blake ran into the study.

"None of that, you cad!" he exclaimed.

"Let me alone!" roared Gore.

"No fear!"

The chums of the Fourth grasped Gore, dragged him off the swell of St. Jim's, and flung him out bodily into the passage. Gore rolled on the linoleum with a grunt. He was upon his feet in a moment, panting breathlessly, his eyes gleaming with rage. But he did not venture to rush into the study again. The chums of the Fourth were rather too many for him.

D'Arcy staggered up.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped, looking down at his clothes in dismay. "I am in a howvid state! I am smothered with dust, and my collah is torn! Bai Jove! I'm almost in wags!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I see no cause whatever for wibald laughter. Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where is that wottah, Goah? Goah, I shall let you off for the pvesent, as I am in such a feahful state, but pvesently I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh, rats!" said Gore, from the passage.

And he tramped away.

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"Bai Jove! I've a jollay good mind to go aftah him now

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and give him a feahful thwashin'! Aftah all, I cannot get much dustiah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Better have the gloves on in the gym," said Blake. "I should recommend a wash now. I can't have you in my study in that dirty state."

"Weally, deah boy—"

Arthur Augustus looked at himself in the glass. He did not stay to finish his remarks; he realised that a wash was necessary. To be untidy or dirty was torture itself to the elegant swell of St. Jim's.

He hurried away from Levison's study, and by cruel luck met Mr. Railton, the House-master, in the passage. The House-master signed to him to stop.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir!"

"I am shocked and surprised at you," said Mr. Railton. "You know that a boy is not allowed to go about the house with his clothes dusty and untidy, and his face dirty. I am very much surprised, indeed, at you, D'Arcy. Go and get yourself tidy at once!"

"Yaas, sir! I—"

"And take fifty lines for slovenliness."

Mr. Railton walked on majestically. D'Arcy almost staggered on his way to the bath-rooms. That he, the swell of St. Jim's, the elegant Beau Brummel of the School House, the glass of fashion in the lower Forms, should receive fifty lines for slovenliness, was simply unheard-of, fearful, terrible. He had often lectured his younger brother, Wally, on the subject of slovenliness, but Wally had never had lines for it. If Wally should come to hear of this—

D'Arcy shuddered at the thought.

He bolted into a bath-room, and comforted himself with steaming water and lathering soap and nice white towels.

CHAPTER 3.

Caught in the Act.

GEORGE GORE put his collar straight, and retied his tie, as he walked down the passage. He dusted his face with his handkerchief, and pulled his jacket straight. He was not very much the worse for his encounter with the swell of St. Jim's—the brunt of the battle had fallen upon D'Arcy. Gore was feeling victorious, which was the worst feeling he could have in his present mood, for it made him more quarrelsome than ever. Gore had a letter in his pocket from his father, and that letter had made him savagely angry, and he was anxious to find someone to wreak his anger upon. It was not very reasonable, but Gore never was very reasonable.

He walked out into the old quad, the sullen frown still upon his face. Tom Merry's chums, Monty Lowther and Manners, were chatting outside the School House. They looked at Gore—they could hardly help noticing his sullen face. Gore looked back at them, with a sullen stare.

"Anything wrong?" asked Lowther.

"Yes," snapped Gore. "But I don't see that it's any business of yours."

Monty Lowther reddened.

"Well, of all the pigs, I think you take the cake," he remarked. "I've a jolly good mind to give you a thick ear."

"Come on, then!" said Gore.

"Looking for trouble?" asked Manners.

"Just as you like."

Monty Lowther took a step towards him. But just outside the School House was hardly the place for a row. They were under the view of half a dozen masters' and prefects' study windows.

"Come into the gym, will you?" said Lowther.

"No, I won't."

"Then shut up!"

"Oh, rats!" said Gore. "Go and eat coke."

And he swung away.

"Something wrong with his lordship," Lowther observed. "I shall have something to say to him when I see him again somewhere a little less public."

Gore was laying up some accounts to be settled afterwards. He did not seem to care.

He strolled away towards the gates. Under the old elms near the porter's lodge, two fags of the Third Form were indulging in the pleasures of an argument. They were Wally D'Arcy—D'Arcy minor, the younger brother of the noble Arthur Augustus—and Jameson, his chum. Chumminess in the Third Form at St. Jim's appeared to consist chiefly in having rows; and on those lines, Wally and Jameson were great chums.

"Oh, cheese it!" Jameson was saying. "You can call it a late cut if you like, but my idea is that you were trying to knock the wicket over."

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"Silly ass!" said Wally, with equal politeness. "If the weather wasn't so blessed warm, I'd jam your silly napper against that tree."

"Just you try it," said Jameson.

"I jolly well will!"

"Rats!"

"Look here—"

"Hold that row, you young sweeps!" said Gore's disagreeable voice.

The two fags turned towards him. In an instant their own quarrel was suspended, at a sign of interference from a fellow in a higher Form. They glared at the Shell fellow most aggressively.

"Hallo!" said Wally. "What do you want? Where did you get that face? Did you dig it up, or win it in a raffle?"

"Dug it up, I should say, and knocked it with the spade," said Jameson, "that's the only way of accounting for the features."

Gore snorted. In his present humour, he was not likely to take the elegant badinage of the Third Form quietly. He advanced upon the two fags, expecting them to run; but they did not run. They stood their ground, and put up their hands.

"You beastly bully!" said Wally.

"Rotten cad!" said Jameson.

Smack! Biff!

Jameson reeled away from a heavy back-hander, which knocked his guard aside, and caught him on the ear. Wally wriggled in the grip of the bully of the Shell.

"You cad!" he panted.

Gore gritted his teeth.

"Take that, you cheeky young bounder!"

Smack! smack!

"Ow!" roared Wally. "Rescue, Jimmy!"

Jameson rushed to the rescue at once. As Gore was as big as the two of them put together, two to one was quite fair play. But the two of them were no match for the burly Shell fellow, who was big enough and old enough to be in the Fifth, if he had not been kept back for laziness. Gore, with a savage grin, seized the two fags by the collar, and holding them almost at arm's length, he knocked their heads together.

Crack! crack!

"Ow!" gasped Wally.

"Yaroch!" panted Jameson.

Crack!

"Ow! Yow! Yah!"

Gore grinned evilly.

The two fags were quite powerless in his strong grasp, and Gore was enjoying himself. This was better than bumping Skimpole, or fighting with D'Arcy.

He brought the two heads together again, in spite of the frantic struggles of the fags, with a loud and sounding crack.

"Yah! Oh!"

"Yowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cad!" yelled Wally. "You rotter! You wouldn't dare to do this if Tom Merry or Figgins were by! Ow!"

"Rescue," yelled Jameson.

Crack!

The fags' heads were singing and aching, and they struggled ferociously, but in vain. Gore was too strong for them, and Gore was not merciful.

A stout, hard-faced gentleman, who had just walked in at the gates of St. Jim's, and was about to follow the drive up to the School House, paused as he heard the sharp cries under the trees, and looked in that direction.

The stout gentlemen had a very hard face, and it seemed to grow harder and sterner as he saw what Gore was doing.

He left the path, and crossed the grass towards the elm trees. Upon the soft grass, his heavy footsteps made no

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sound; and both the bully and his victims were too excited to notice the approach of a stranger.

Gore was warming to his work. Bullying, which he had almost dropped for a time, seemed to come back to him with added zest after long abstinence. And it was quite safe to bully fags who were too small to protect themselves. Gore was quite the old Gore now, bullying, overbearing, and unmerciful.

"Ow!" groaned Wally. "Won't I pay you out for this! Ow! Leggo!"

"Leggo!" groaned Jameson. "Ow! Chuck it!"

Crack!

Crack!

"Yaroo!"

The stout gentleman had arrived upon the scene. He fixed a deadly glare upon George Gore, and puffed breathlessly after his hasty exertions.

"George!" he thundered.

Gore jumped.

"George!"

The bully of the Shell released the two fags. Wally and Jameson staggered away from him, holding their heads and gasping. Gore fixed a terrified look upon the stern-faced, stout gentleman.

"Father!" he gasped.

CHAPTER 4.

Father and Son!

"FATHER!" Gore stammered out the word.

"Father!"

That word, which should have been the tenderest but one to any boy, was evidently without any tender associations for George Gore. Any associations it had were of fear and dislike; of high-handed harshness on the one side, and suppressed rebelliousness on the other.

"Father!"

Wally gave a soft whistle.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he murmured. "Gore's in for it now—I've seen his pater before, and I don't envy him! Let's cut."

Jameson nodded. They "cut."

Mr. Gore did not glance at them. His eyes were fixed upon his son with a freezing stare. Gore, after gasping out that one word, remained dumb.

"You expected me!" said Mr. Gore at last.

"Ye-es, father!"

"Did you get up this little scene for my especial benefit?"

"N-no."

"No!" said Mr. Gore, with ferocious sarcasm. "No! I am surprised! I should have thought that you had arranged it for me so that I could have no further possible doubt that all I have heard about my son is true—that he is a bully, a brute, and a young scoundrel."

"Oh!"

"I have come here," said Mr. Gore, "because I have received unfavourable reports of you from Dr. Holmes."

Gore looked sullen.

"The Head has always been against me," he muttered.

"Don't try to browbeat me!" thundered Mr. Gore. "I will not be argued with. I refuse to be bullied, sir, especially by my own son. Do you understand?"

"But I wasn't—"

"Silence, sir!"

Gore was silent.

"The Head states plainly in his letter that he has seen signs of improvement in you, and that your Form-master was favourably impressed," said Mr. Gore, "but that you have apparently abandoned the new line of conduct you have followed since the time you narrowly escaped being expelled from the school. The lesson has been lost upon you, sir, after all. Cases of bullying have been brought to his notice, and you have been reported by the prefects as addicted to smoking."

"Only one cigarette—"

"One cigarette, to a boy of your age, is as bad as a hundred," thundered Mr. Gore. "A criminal might as well state that he had committed only one murder. It is the principle of the thing, sir."

"But—"

"Don't argue with me! I refuse to be argued with by an insolent boy. I have come here to take you away from the school."

Gore staggered.

"Take me away!" he gasped.

"Yes."

"Oh, father!"

"Ah! You do not want to leave the school, hey?"

"Oh, no, no, no!"

"I imagined not," said Mr. Gore satirically; "I imagined

not, sir. You are too lazy to work; you remain in the Shell at an age when most boys are passing out of the Fifth into the Sixth. I dare say you find life here very easy and lazy—better than working in your father's office, and helping to contribute to your own maintenance."

"Oh, father!"

"Don't answer me back! I forbid you to do so."

"I—I—"

"If you attempt to browbeat me, George, I shall administer personal chastisement," said Mr. Gore, shaking his cane at his son. "I hope you will not drive me to that."

Gore held his tongue. His father was seldom reasonable, but he seemed to be even a little less reasonable than usual that afternoon. The two, father and son, were very much alike, as a matter of fact, although each greatly disliked his own qualities as seen in the other.

It was useless to argue with Mr. Gore, and the gentlest reply was taken by him as an argument. The only method was to bow one's head to the storm, and wait for it to pass over.

"You have had a lesson and a second chance once," said Mr. Gore. "You have not profited by them. If you do not wish to leave the school, you have only yourself to thank for being forced to do so."

Gore bit his lip hard.

"Ah, you have nothing to say for yourself, I see," said Mr. Gore. "Of course, I quite expected that."

That was another of Mr. Gore's sweet, reasonable ways. If anyone replied to him, it was insolence and arguing; if anyone did not reply, it was because he had nothing to say for himself. Mr. Gore had his victim either way.

"You have disgraced yourself, sir," went on the parent victoriously. "If there is any fault I abhor, any fault I am determined not to permit in a son of mine, it is overbearing conduct and bullying. Don't scowl at me, sir!"

"I—I wasn't scowling, father."

"Hold your tongue! Bullying is your great fault, George, and it is a fault I am determined to cure you of. You understand me? Don't stare me in the face in that insolent manner!"

Gore dropped his eyes.

"I am going to take you away from this school with me," said Mr. Gore. "After all, it is time that you learned to help support yourself. No wonder you dare not look your father in the face, under the circumstances."

The unfortunate Gore raised his eyes again.

There was no doubt that Gore was a bully, and that his character was made up chiefly of defects; but certainly heredity had something to do with it, and Gore had been very unfortunate in his father. Mr. Gore was hardly the man to bring up a son to be kind and gentle in his ways.

"I am now going in to see the headmaster," said Mr. Gore. "You may go to your study. I shall see you again before I go."

"Yes, father."

"Don't say 'Yes, father,' in that mocking way."

"I—I didn't mean to be mocking."

"If you dare to contradict me, George, I shall chastise you," said Mr. Gore. "Go to your room at once."

"Very well, father."

George Gore turned away, and walked towards the School House. Mr. Gore snorted as he looked after him, and blew his nose loudly. Mr. Gore was evidently in a very bad temper indeed that afternoon.

Gore went to his study.

Skimpole, of the Shell, was there. Skimpole had the doubtful pleasure of sharing that study with Gore. There was a big bruise on Skimpole's cheek, which made his glasses set a little awry, and kept him incessantly blinking. He blinked at Gore.

The bully of the Shell scowled back at him.

"Get out!" he said.

"Really, Gore," said Skimpole, who was the mildest-tempered fellow in the Shell, as he needed to be, to get on in any way with George Gore—"really—"

"Get out!"

"But I have some work to do, Gore, and you can hardly expect, in reason, that I should get out of my own study, when it is inconvenient for me to do so," urged the meek Skimpole.

Gore picked up an inkpot.

"Get out, or I'll buzz this at you!" he exclaimed. "My pater's coming in here to see me and I don't want you here. Get out!"

"If you had explained that at first, Gore, I should have acceded willingly to your request that I should retire," said Skimpole, in his long-winded way. "Under the circumstances, Gore—"

"Get out, you ass!"

"Really—"

Swish!

The ink flew out of the inkpot in a stream, and it caught

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Skimpole in one ear. The unfortunate junior gave a wild yell, and clapped his hand to his ear.

"Yarook!"

"Now will you buzz off and stop jawing?" roared Gore.

"Really—Ow!"

Gore rushed at him and seized him by the shoulders, and whirled him out of the study doorway. Skimpole collapsed in the passage. His spectacles fell off, and he groped for them wildly. Gore took his books from the table, and hurled them after him, pelting Skimpole as he groped blindly for his spectacles. The last of the books hurled forth, Gore slammed the study door.

"Dear me!" gasped Skimpole.

And in a state of great confusion of mind the short-sighted junior gathered up his books, and trotted away down the passage. Gore threw himself into a chair in the study in deep and gloomy thought.

He had feared a "row" when he received his father's letter that day. His father seldom wrote to him excepting for the purpose of calling him to account in some way. He had expected a severe lecture, which he would have endured with sullen fortitude, and perhaps a licking, which he would have had to put up with. But to be taken away from the school—that was too bad!

What a fool he had been! Gore spent most of his time at St. Jim's in making himself disagreeable; but he liked the school, and he shivered at the idea of being taken away and placed in his father's office, under the terrible eye of his parent. He had had a narrow escape of that once before—he had been expelled from St. Jim's—and he had run away from home, and the Head had taken pity on him and allowed him to return to the school. Gore had been very careful for some time after that, but gradually he had slipped back into the old ways. It seemed to be in his nature, and he could not help it. At all events, he did not help it. More and more he had slipped back into his old manners and customs, and Tom Merry & Co., who had taken him up and tried to be friends with him, had dropped him in disgust. There seemed to be no curing Gore. But now—now that it was too late—he realised what a fool he had been!

If only he could have had another chance!

But if he had it, he would probably lose it as he had lost the other. It seemed that he was fated to make a fool of himself. And how unfortunate that his father should have caught him in the very act of bullying the fags! That act had been so utterly uncalculated for and unjustifiable. The fags had not done anything to him; his interference with them had been purely arbitrary—the act of a sheer bully. And his father had come along at that precise moment. It served him right, as he realised with a groan. Why couldn't he have had more sense?

And he was to go! To leave the school, the familiar faces, the green playing-fields, the shining river, for a stuffy office and a pen and a desk and a high stool, with the hum of traffic always in his ears, and his father's voice within hearing.

And it was his own fault!

Gore realised that quite clearly; but it was no comfort to him. That afternoon he had made more than one boy miserable in the school; but as he sat there in his study, with his gloomy and bitter thoughts, he was certainly the most miserable fellow at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 5. The Head's Opinion.

"BOY!"

Tom Merry looked round. He did not know whether the monosyllable was fired at him or not, but he thought it was, and he looked round. Mr. Gore had just entered the School House. Tom Merry had finished his imposition at last, and had come down with it in his hand, to take it to the German master's study. As he was the only fellow in the hall besides the stout gentleman, Tom Merry concluded that he was the person addressed.

"Yes, sir?" he said.

"Show me to the Head."

Tom Merry coloured. He had no objection whatever to showing anybody to the Head's study; he was the most obliging of boys. But he had a very strong objection to being ordered about by anybody who was not entitled to give him orders. He had seen Mr. Gore once before, on the occasion of that gentleman's visit to St. Jim's, and he had not liked him. People very seldom did like Mr. Gore.

"If you touch the bell, the page will come and show you the way, sir," he said.

"Boy!"

"And perhaps Dr. Holmes would prefer to have his visitor announced," added Tom Merry calmly.

Mr. Gore snorted.

"Don't be insolent, boy!" he exclaimed. "You are, I

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suppose, one of those young insolent rascals who has led my son into his bad ways."

Tom Merry turned crimson.

"Your son didn't want much leading," he retorted, "and I have precious little to do with him, I can tell you."

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Gore.

Tom Merry turned away. He did not wish to be impertinent to a man old enough to be his father; but Mr. Gore was certainly very provoking.

Mr. Gore rang the bell angrily, and Toby, the page, appeared. He showed the irate old gentleman to the Head's study.

Dr. Holmes rose to receive his visitor, suppressing a sigh. He had had one interview with Mr. Gore, which he never forgot. Mr. Gore had come and gone like a whirlwind, leaving the quiet, scholarly old gentleman in a state of mental confusion that he did not recover from for quite a long time.

"Ah, Mr. Gore!" said Dr. Holmes. "Pray be seated, sir. I expected you, as I had your letter this morning."

Mr. Gore placed his cane and his silk hat upon one chair, and himself upon another. He planted his feet firmly upon the carpet, and held his knees very squarely, and kept his back very upright. Mr. Gore, whether he stood or sat, always seemed to be assuming, somehow, the position of an Ajax defying the lightning. As the poet has expressed it, he "stood four-square to every wind that blew," and he always seemed to be anticipating an attack from some quarter, and to be quite ready for it.

"I wrote you in reply to your letter, sir," he began.

"Which was written in reply to one from you, Mr. Gore."

"Exactly."

"I am, of course, very pleased to see the parents of any of my boys," said the Head; and if he had stopped to reflect, the Head would have realised that that was a statement which George Washington would have hesitated to make.

"But the purpose of this visit—"

"You have complained of my son—"

"Allow me! You wrote to me, asking me to tell you exactly how your son had progressed since the time he was allowed to return to St. Jim's, and to tell you frankly whether the improvement in his character had been permanent," said the Head. "In reply to that letter, I could only state the precise facts to you. George Gore showed decided improvement for a considerable time, but he has of late shown a falling back into the old ways. I hear so from his Form-master, and from the prefects. But I hope—"

Mr. Gore waved his hand.

"In a case like this, there is no room for hope," he said. "If such a lesson as my son received did not cure him, there is no cure to be found in this school, and the best thing he can do is to leave it."

Dr. Holmes started a little.

"You intend to take your boy away?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"This is rather sudden, is it not?"

"There is no need to dawdle, sir, when one's mind is made up," replied Mr. Gore. "I am a business man, sir. I am not in the habit of wasting time. In business, sir, minutes are precious. This afternoon I found that I could make time to take the journey. I leave London for Edinburgh at seven o'clock, and I found I had time to come down here before leaving for Edinburgh. It would have been absurd to put it off, in order to reflect upon a matter already decided."

"I suppose so," murmured the Head.

"I am therefore prepared to take my son away at once," said Mr. Gore, rising.

The Head seemed to hesitate.

"Pray pardon me," he said. "I suppose it is really no business of mine, but I take an interest in your son, as in all my pupils. May I inquire what you intend for him?"

"I shall take him into my office, sir," said Mr. Gore. "He will begin at the bottom of the ladder, and work his way up, as his father has done."

"He may not have the abilities of his father," the Head suggested.

Mr. Gore smiled grimly.

"In that case he can remain at the bottom of the ladder—the proper place for those who cannot or will not work," he said. "He had every chance of making a career for himself, and he has thrown every chance away. The responsibility is his."

"He is but a lad—"

"At his age I was working nine hours a day, and had a full sense of responsibility," said Mr. Gore. "I did not throw my chances away, or I should not be what I am now, sir."

The Head looked for a moment as if he did not really think it was very desirable to be what Mr. Gore was now.

"George has chosen to throw his chances away, and he must take the consequences," said Mr. Gore. "I need not waste your time any further, sir. My own time, too, is of value. I must catch the half-past five at Rylcombe Station."

"One word more, sir. If the boy were given another chance—"

Mr. Gore shook his head.

"Quite useless, sir," he said.

"You are resolved to take your son away, then, with you now?"

"Yes; if he cannot pack up in time to catch the train, his belongings can be sent after him, I presume?"

"Certainly. But—"

"As for the fees, which have been paid in advance for the term, I do not, of course, expect any part of them to be returned," said Mr. Gore. "I am a business man."

The Head coloured.

"I was not thinking of the fees," he said. "If you are determined to take your boy away, there is nothing more to be said. I think it would be advisable to give him another chance, that is all."

"H'm! I will talk to him, and—and see," said Mr. Gore. "I have a great respect for your judgment, sir. A man who can successfully run a school of this size, without a previous business training, is a man whose mental calibre I can respect. I will, then, speak to George once more, and see if I can find any possible reason for giving him one more chance. Good-afternoon, sir."

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Gore!"

The doctor shook hands with his visitor, who quitted the study. His heavy footsteps sounded along the passage. Dr. Holmes sank into his chair, feeling quite limp. Mr. Gore often had that effect upon people he visited.

CHAPTER 6.

Not At All.

"WHICH is my son's study?" Mr. Gore propounded that query as he met Jack Blake, of the Fourth, in the Fourth Form passage. Mr. Gore had been to his son's study before, and consequently he tried to make his way there alone, on this occasion; but he had forgotten the passage, and forgotten the number since his last visit.

Mr. Gore looked severely at Blake as he asked him. He always looked severely at boys when he spoke to them. He appeared to have an idea that it was rather impertinent of boys to exist at all, and that the more they were sat upon, the better it was for them and for everybody else.

Blake was about the last junior in the School House to be sat upon with impunity. He looked at Mr. Gore, and remembered him. Mr. Gore's was a personality not easily forgotten. But his hectoring manner did not please Blake at all. Mr. Gore assumed that everybody knew whom he was, and that he had a son, which was really a great assumption on his part, for there really were people who took no interest in his affairs at all.

"Excuse me, sir," said Blake, with dangerous politeness, "did you do me the honour of addressing me, sir?"

"I asked you which is my son's study."

"That depends, sir."

"What?"

"It depends upon who your son is, sir," Blake explained, with a very innocent smile. "If your son is Digby, of the Fourth, sir, he's in my study, No. 6, in this passage. If it's Herries, the same applies. But if it's Lumley-Lumley—"

"My name is Gore!"

"Oh, Gore! There's a fellow of that name in the Shell, sir."

"That is right."

"Not at all, sir."

"What?"

"It's left."

"Eh?"

"It's left," said Blake.

Mr. Gore turned nearly purple.

"Boy! What do you mean?" he rasped out.

"It's left from here," explained Blake, pointing along the passage. "You turn to the left at the end, sir, and that's the Shell passage. You can't turn to the right, sir; you'd biff into the wall."

Mr. Gore breathed hard. Whether Blake misunderstood him or not, he did not know; the junior looked as innocent as a baby. But Mr. Gore was of a suspicious nature—a very suspicious nature.

"Will you show me to the study?" he asked.

"Which study, sir?"

"My son's study."

"George's, sir?"

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NEXT WEEK: "THE GIPSY SCHOOLEBOY,"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Yes; my son's name is George."

"Oh, dear! George will be so glad to see you, sir," said Blake, and he added under his breath: "I don't think!"

"What did you say, boy?"

"Lovely weather, isn't it, sir?"

"I have no time to discuss the weather with a silly boy," said Mr. Gore. "Show me my way, and then be gone."

"My hat!"

Blake led the way down the passage. Mr. Gore's manners and customs did not please Jack Blake a little bit. He was leading him to the Shell studies, but he did not mean to lead him to the right one. If Mr. Gore wanted a service rendered, he should have taken the trouble to be polite about it.

Blake went down to the end of the Shell passage, and started up the box-room stairs. Mr. Gore paused.

"I do not remember going up these stairs on the occasion of my last visit to my son's study!" he exclaimed.

"No, sir! Memory often fails as we get on in years, sir," Blake suggested.

Mr. Gore snorted.

"Lead on, and hold your tongue," he said.

Blake grinned, and led on. Mr. Gore followed him angrily up the stairs. He seemed to take that additional staircase as a personal injury.

Blake opened the door of the box-room, and stood aside politely for Mr. Gore to enter. The stout gentleman passed in, without a word of thanks. Thanks Mr. Gore regarded as an unnecessary and superfluous waste of breath.

Blake closed the door quickly, and made a clicking sound with the handle, as if he were locking it. Then he scooted downstairs at top speed.

Mr. Gore looked round the room he found himself in.

It was a dusty old room, lighted by a single small window, and half-filled with empty boxes and trunks and lumber of various kinds.

That it was not a junior study was apparent at a glance. Mr. Gore simply snorted with wrath. That a junior should dare to show him into the box-room was amazing, and most exasperating.

The irate gentleman grasped his cane hard. He would have been very glad to have Jack Blake, of the Fourth, within hitting distance just then.

He remembered the click at the door, and snorted again. He had not the slightest doubt that the junior had locked him in. He strode to the door, and rapped upon it loudly with his cane.

Rap, rap, rap!"

"Open this door, you young scoundrel!"

Rap, rap, rap!"

Blake's footsteps died away in the distance. Mr. Gore was purple with wrath. He thrashed the door with the cane as if it had been Jack Blake instead of the door. The blows rang and echoed through the School House passages, till the cane split in two, and Mr. Gore had a narrow escape from the flying fragment. He dodged it, and whacked the door with redoubled fury with the piece that was left in his hand.

Crash, crash, crash!"

A voice yelled up the box-room stairs:

"Stop that row, you roisy idiot, or I'll come up to you!"

It was the gentle voice of Knox, of the Sixth, the prefect. Mr. Gore whacked the door with louder and more tremendous whacks, at the prospect of being heard and released.

There was a sound of tramping footsteps on the stairs. Knox came up in a towering rage, not in the least doubting that it was some humorous junior who was making the uproar, and that he refused to desist from pure "cheek."

The handle was turned from outside, and the door flung open so suddenly that Mr. Gore was very nearly knocked backwards by it.

"Now, you young fool!" roared Knox. "Oh! My hat!"

He stared blankly at Mr. Gore.

"Great Scott! Who are you?"

"My name is Gore, sir!" roared the stout gentleman.

"Oh! Gore's pater, I suppose?" said Knox. "Well, I must say I'm surprised at tricks of this sort in a man of your age, sir."

"What?" choked Mr. Gore.

"I'm surprised!" said Knox. "It's simply extraordinary to me that a middle-aged man should go into a box-room and start whacking round with a cane. What were you doing it for?"

Mr. Gore spluttered.

"I was trying to attract attention," he gasped.

"You could have done that by standing on your head in the quad, without the trouble of coming all this way up stairs," said Knox.

"You—you idiot!" panted Mr. Gore. "I was trying to

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and "DEEP SEA GOLD." ORDER EARLY!

By REGINALD WRAY.

attract attention in order to be released from this room. I have been looked up in this room by an insolent junior."

"Looked up?"

"Yes."

"What rot!" said Knox. "The door wasn't locked."

Mr. Gore gave a yell.

"The door not locked?"

"Certainly not!"

"What—what?"

"There isn't even a key in the lock," grinned Knox. "What on earth could have made you imagine it was locked I don't know!"

Mr. Gore stared at the lock. There certainly wasn't any sign of a key there. He gasped for breath.

"I—I heard a sound, and—and concluded—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothing to laugh at!" thundered Mr. Gore. "I decline to allow this absurd and insolent ebullition of idiotic merriment, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox apparently could not control his idiotic merriment. He staggered out of the room, roaring with laughter. Mr. Gore, breathing fury, followed him. He was quite purple as he descended into the Shell passage again.

CHAPTER 7.

The Bully's Promise.

GEORGE GORE was standing in his study doorway—he had been disturbed by the noise in the box-room above. Mr. Gore caught sight of him, and stopped, needing no further guide to his son's study. Gore looked at his father's purple face in dismay. When his father looked like that Gore looked for trouble.

"Is—is anything the matter, father?" Gore faltered.

"Yes," snorted Mr. Gore—"yes! I have been treated with insolence and derision by a rascally young scoundrel, while my undutiful and idiotic son was sitting in his study, without thinking of how his father was to find his way here."

"You—you told me to wait for you in my study, father," faltered Gore.

"Don't argue with me!"

"I—I thought you knew the way, sir—"

"If you are insolent I shall chastise you, George!"

Gore relapsed into silence.

Mr. Gore planted himself firmly in the armchair, and planted his feet firmly on the rug, and planted his elbows firmly on the arms of the chair. He fixed his eyes firmly upon his son, who looked far from firm.

"George!" rapped out Mr. Gore.

"Yes, father."

"Don't stand with your hands in your pockets."

"No, father."

"I came down here to take you away from the school. Dr. Holmes thinks, however, that it would be judicious to give you another chance."

Gore brightened up perceptibly. The joys of a home-coming, with his irascible father as his constant companion in the future, did not appeal to him.

"Yes, father."

"Don't keep your hands moving about like that. Haven't you learned what to do with your hands at your age?"

The unfortunate junior put his hands behind him. It was evidently not right to have them either in his pockets or out of his pockets.

"The question is," resumed Mr. Gore, "whether you would have sense enough to make the most of a chance if I gave you one?"

"Oh, yes, father."

"You did not do so in the previous instance."

"No, father."

"But you think you can promise more judicious conduct in the future?"

"Yes, father."

"Bah!" exclaimed Mr. Gore, in exasperation. "Are you an utter idiot? Cannot you say anything at all excepting 'Yes, father,' and 'No, father'?"

"Yes, father—I—I mean, no, father," stammered Gore.

Mr. Gore snorted contemptuously.

"I don't know what I have done to have an utter fool for a son!" he said. "However, to resume. Your great fault, George, is that you have a hasty and uncontrolled temper, that you are overbearing and bullying, and that you are lacking in good manners and self-control."

Gore was silent. He could not help thinking that if he had those qualities they had probably descended to him on the father's side, but it was almost as much as his life was worth to say so.

"I found you quarrelling and fighting when I arrived here," said Mr. Gore. "You are always quarrelling and fighting."

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fighting—generally, I believe, with smaller boys than yourself. Is that not the case?"

"I—I—"

"To bully, or even to raise the voice, to one smaller than yourself, and at your mercy, is wrong and cowardly!" thundered Mr. Gore.

Gore suppressed a grin just in time. It was what his father was doing at that very moment, but Gore senior was not blessed with a sense of humour.

"If you can definitely promise a change in this respect I am willing to give you a chance," said Mr. Gore. "What can you promise?"

"I will be more careful, father."

"More careful not to be found out, do you mean?"

"Oh! No—no—"

"Listen to me," said Mr. Gore. "I am going away to Edinburgh, and I shall return in four days. I am willing to give you those four days to make a new start. If you have not changed your ways by then, sir, you leave the school. You understand?"

"Ye-es, father."

"You will promise me," resumed Mr. Gore, with terrific seriousness—"you will promise me, on your word of honour, not to enter into a fight of any kind while I am away at Edinburgh. You will promise most sacredly. If you break your word I have done with you."

"But—but—" stammered Gore.

"Well, what?"

"I—I could promise not to begin a fight, but—but suppose a chap goes for me, all of his own accord—"

"It would probably be on account of your having bullied him at some time, I dare say," said Mr. Gore drily. "In that case, you would be compelled to take the punishment quietly, and you should be thankful for an opportunity of learning the great lesson of self-control."

"But—but the fellows will think I'm a coward if I let a chap hit me," gasped Gore. "You—you don't understand, sir."

"What?"

"I—I—I said—"

"I don't understand, eh?" thundered Mr. Gore. "No, I dare say I do not understand! I dare say that my intelligence is extremely limited in comparison with that of my son! I have no doubt it is the case! I thank you for the compliment!"

"I—I didn't mean—"

"Very well!" said Mr. Gore, rising squarely. "I have given you your chance, and you have declined it. I have no more to say." He looked at his watch. "There will not be time for you to pack your box now, but Dr. Holmes will have it sent after you. Get your cap and come with me."

Gore shivered.

"Oh, father! I—I—I—"

"Is your cap here?" asked Mr. Gore.

"No, it's downstairs, father. I—I—I—"

"Then follow me downstairs."

Mr. Gore opened the study door. Gore followed him into the passage despairingly.

"Father, I—I—I'll promise anything, only don't take me away from St. Jim's."

Mr. Gore halted.

Levison of the Fourth was just coming round the corner from the Fourth Form passage, but as he heard Gore's words he halted, and drew back behind the corner. From that spot he could hear every word that was spoken in the Shell passage, and Levison's besetting sin was curiosity. Neither father nor son was looking in his direction, and they had not noticed his momentary appearance and his sudden backing away. Gore was in too anxious and disturbed a frame of mind to notice anything just then.

Mr. Gore was regarding his son with hard, stern eyes.

"You are willing to promise, George?"

"Ye-es!" groaned Gore.

"Mind, if you should break the promise the punishment will be more severe than merely being taken away from school," said Mr. Gore harshly. "If I found my son to be dishonourable as well as bullying and overbearing, I should cast him off, sir. I should no longer regard him as a son of mine."

"I—I shall keep the promise, father."

"You had better! Now, then, you promise me, on your word of honour, to enter into no quarrel at all during the four days that I am absent at Edinburgh. Even if you are

ANSWERS



The boy drew back from the examination papers, a cold sweat breaking out over him. "Oh! I—I won't touch them! Heaven help me, I won't touch them!" It was like a cry of despair from one who felt himself sinking—sinking—he knew not whither, but into black depths. All that was best in Dick Russell was in that cry.

(A dramatic incident from "DRIVEN TO THE WALL," the splendid, complete school tale by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's issue of "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

attacked in the most unprovoked manner you will not retaliate. You will take any insult and even any blow without raising your hand. If you can pass through that ordeal I shall consider that you are learning self-control, and I shall give you a further chance to remain at this school, and adopt the career that was originally intended for you. If you fail, I shall remove you from the school. You understand?"

"Yes, father."

"And you promise?"

"Yes, father."

"On your honour, mind?"

"Yes, on my honour," groaned Gore.

"Mind," said Mr. Gore, "I am not to be deceived. On my return I shall make strict inquiry here. I shall question the masters, I shall question the boys—I shall investigate in the strictest manner, and if a single quarrel comes to light in which you have taken the part of aggressor, either in attack or defence, I shall consider that you have broken your promise."

"Yes, father," Gore groaned.

"That is all. You need not come to the station with me. Good-bye!"

And Mr. Gore, without shaking hands with his son, tramped away. Levison heard his heavy footsteps coming, and dodged into a study in time to escape his sight. Mr. Gore passed on, and descended the stairs.

In the hall he glanced at his watch, calculating whether

he had time to call in at the Head's study and complain of the trick an unknown junior had played upon him. But he had left himself only just time to walk to the station; for economical reasons he had not taken the station cab. He strode out of the house, marched squarely across the quad, and tramped away towards Rylcombe, with his hat set very firmly upon his head, and his lips set very firmly over his teeth, and his hand grasping his broken cane very firmly. There was so much firmness in Mr. Gore's character, that he was almost a terrifying person to come into contact with.

"That's Gore's pater," said Monty Lowther, who was lounging in the gateway with Manners. "Nice, gentle expression on his chivvy, isn't there? Gore must be awfully keen about getting home for the vacation—I don't think!"

"I don't envy Gore the visits," grinned Manners.

"My hat! Rather not!" Monty Lowther turned into the quad. "That reminds me—I've got to talk to Gore. I was keeping off the grass while his pater was here—it's rotten having rows with a chap's parents hanging round. But I owe Gore a dot in the eye, and I think it's time to pay up."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners.

And the chums of the Shell went to look for Gore. The bully had sown the wind that afternoon, and now he was going to reap the whirlwind. There were quite a number of fellows at St. Jim's who had little accounts to settle with George Gore that afternoon, and it was certainly the most awkward time they could have chosen—for Gore.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY."
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

and

"DEEP SEA GOLD."
By REGINALD WRAY.

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CHAPTER 8.

The Path of Peace.

GEORGE GORE went back to his study.

He grasped the door to slam it, as some expression of his feelings; but he did not slam it. He allowed it to close very gently. His terrible parent might be within sound of the echo of the slam. Then Gore threw himself into a chair, and drove his hands deep into his pockets, and thought it out.

He had got himself, this time, into about the biggest scrape of his career at St. Jim's. He realised that, although he had been in a good many scrapes before. On one never-to-be-forgotten occasion he had been "sacked" from the school, and only by the mercy of the Head had he been allowed to return. But this was worse than that—for if his father took him away from St. Jim's there was no hope at all of return. And if he entered into a single fight of any kind during the next four days his father would take him away.

How was he to avoid it?

He had several outstanding quarrels, in the first place, which might come to a head at any moment. He had a habit, in the second place, of flying into a temper without pausing to think, and that might lead to a row at any time. And, besides, there were quarrelsome fellows in the school who might pick a row with him, unprovoked. How he was to keep quite clear of all quarrels for four days was a puzzle.

But he had to do it. It was either that, or leaving the school; and the more he thought of leaving the school, and commencing work in his father's office, under the shadow of his father's frown, the less he liked the idea.

And if he broke his promise, there was little hope of concealing the fact. When Mr. Gore returned he would inquire. If Gore had been in any fights in those four days the fact would come out. Fellows like Mellish and Levison would give him away with pleasure, especially if they could seriously injure him thereby. They had been associates of Gore's in his worst days; but they hated him pretty thoroughly now. And certainly Gore's treatment of them that very afternoon had not given them any cause to regard him with kindness. But even if his schoolfellows did not betray him, the masters or prefects would know the facts, and would tell his father the truth.

He had to keep clear of fighting. But how?

That was the question. Gore had a sharp temper—sometimes almost ungovernable. He had a habit of bullying and ragging and cuffing. Besides that, he had a certain amount of bulldog courage, which would not allow him to submit to bullying himself. For all these reasons, it would be little short of a miracle if he kept clear of a fight for the space of four days.

And it was essential that he should. The penalty of a single row was imprisonment in a stuffy office in a roaring city, in the place of his easy existence at St. Jim's and its excellent prospects for the future.

The door of the study opened.

Skimpole of the Shell came in. Skimpole had two bruises on his ample forehead and one on his cheek, and his spectacles were more sideways than ever. Skimpole found it difficult to see through them, and he was blinking his eyes in a way that was really painful to look at.

There was an expression of unusual determination upon Skimpole's face. As a rule Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, was the meekest and mildest of juniors. He buried himself in the contemplation of such questions as Evolution and Determinism, and was quite lost to practical things. He never lost his temper, and, in fact, was supposed not to have one. But for once in his life Skimpole was looking warlike.

"Shut the door, idiot!" growled Gore.

Skimpole folded his arms and faced Gore, looking like Achilles in his wrath—if one can imagine Achilles in Etons, with large spectacles.

"I refuse to close the door, Gore," said Skimpole.

Gore stared at him.

"What!" he roared.

"Close the door yourself, if you wish it to be closed!" said Skimpole, in accents of great firmness.

Gore clutched at the inkpot. Skimpole pushed back his cuffs. Gore let go the inkpot again. He remembered in time that fights were barred; and he was almost too astonished at what Skimpole was doing to think of throwing the ink over him. He had heard that the worm will turn, but he had never expected to see it happen. But the meek and patient Skimpole was evidently turning.

"I have sometimes endeavoured to explain to you, Gore," said Skimpole, "that the brutal instincts in your nature are probably due to some remote ancestor, who was perhaps a cannibal or a vivisectionist, or something of that sort. These qualities are transmitted to you by heredity, and are not your fault, and, therefore, I have endeavoured to bear your unexampled ruffianism with patience and fortitude."

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That was not a long speech for Skimpole—it was quite brief.

Gore chuckled.

"But patience has its limits," said Skimpole. "You have inflicted personal injuries upon me, and, by enlarging the protuberances upon my physiognomy, you have made it impracticable for me to see with comfort through the spectacles with which I usually assist my imperfect vision. For this reason, as my studies and researches are now interrupted, with the addition of considerable pain to the nerves of my optics, I consider that I must stop you from further brutality by inflicting personal and corporal chastisement upon you."

"My hat!"

"Kindly rise and put up your hands," said Skimpole, assuming guard himself—in a way that would have made a fag of the Second smile. Skimpole knew as much about fighting as he did about Sanskrit or Chinese, and he could not see clearly enough to hit straight, in any case. But he had plenty of pluck. "I am going to thrash you, Gore. As I cannot see at all without my glasses, I shall be obliged to wear them; but I rely upon you, as a decent fellow, not to smite me above the level of the nose, as it would be extremely dangerous to have the glasses broken over my eyes. I am sure you will appreciate that circumstance. Now, come on!"

Gore did not come on.

He lay back in his chair and roared.

Skimpole blinked at him in great surprise. He did not understand the bully of the Shell at all. He was in deadly earnest himself.

"Gore, will you rise and put up your hands?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore.

"I am going to inflict bodily chastisement upon you, Gore!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Unless you are prepared to fight me, after your brutality, I shall administer the coward's blow!" said Skimpole.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Gore—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gore did not seem to be able to leave off laughing. He stretched out his legs and lay back helplessly in his chair, shrieking. Truly, Skimpole on the war-path was come enough to cause much merriment.

But the genius of the Shell was earnest and serious; he always was, at a matter of fact. Having made up his mind to declare war, he meant to carry it through. He projected a large and bony fist towards Gore.

"I have warned you, Gore, that I shall give you a coward's blow, and I shall acquaint the whole Form with your pusillanimity!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gore.

Biff!

Skimpole, extremely wrathful, reached out to give the coward's blow. Gore moved a little, and Skimpole's bony fist crashed on the back of the armchair.

The genius of the Shell uttered a howl.

"Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Gore.

"Really, Gore—"

Gore had laughed himself into a good temper, and Skimpole's barking his knuckles gave the finishing touch to his satisfaction. The bully of the Shell rose to his feet, and clapped Skimpole on the shoulder.

"It's all right, Skimmy—"

"Ow!" groaned Skimpole, sucking his knuckles. "Ow! I do not feel all right! I am suffering from considerable contusions upon the joints of my digits!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really—"

"It's all right. I'm sorry I buzzed the ink over you, and buzzed you out of the study," said Gore. "It was entirely due to the influence of my heredity, and that alone. But in future I'm going to be more influenced by my environment, and sack heredity. See?"

Skimpole brightened up.

"My dear Gore, of course I am only too willing to overlook any little offence!" he exclaimed. "I am only too glad and exhilarated to see you in such a mood of politeness and consideration. Under the circumstances, I am quite—"

"Exactly. Good-bye!"

"I should be very pleased to read you a chapter from Professor Balmycrumpet's work on the subject of heredity and environment, considered as the causes of the effects which they produce," said Skimpole.

"Thanks! When I can't get to sleep some night, I'll let you do it," said Gore; and he quitted the study, leaving Skimpole blinking in a dubious way.

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole. "I should be glad to afford Gore any enlightenment at any time on the important subject of Determinism. But I cannot help suspecting that he intended that last remark in a humorous sense. Dear me!"

And Skimpole shook his head seriously, and set his spectacles straight once more.

CHAPTER 9.

Very Peaceful.

TOM MERRY joined Monty Lowther and Manners in the doorway of the School House. He had finished his German imposition, and taken it to Herr Schneider, and he was thinking of cricket. It was still light enough in the evenings for a good deal of practice after afternoon school; though cricket was now dying a natural death at St. Jim's, and the fellows were all talking of footer.

"Hallo, my son!" said Monty Lowther. "Have you seen Gore?"

"Yes, awhile ago," said Tom Merry, frowning. "He checked me, and I don't know whether I ought to go for him or not. I suppose I can let it slide; it's not good going round looking for trouble."

"Same thing with me," said Monty Lowther. "Only I'm not going to let it slide. Gore has got his ears up much too much lately, and it's about time somebody gave them a pull."

"Yes, rather!" said Manners emphatically. "He has been bullying the fags this afternoon. Jameson and young Wally are groaning over it now."

Tom Merry frowned.

"What has he been doing?" he exclaimed.

"Knocking their heads together."

"The silly cad!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the swell of St. Jim's joined the Terrible Three. "I have just seen Wally, and he has a fearful headache. Jameson's head appears to be vewy hard. He has a headache, too, though. I weward it as wotten. And you always wun the wisk of injuwin' a chap if you biff him on the nappah."

"Yes! The brute! Better give him a licking, Monty—or will you leave it to me?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, I don't care which."

"Pway stand out of the mattah altogether, deah boys. I am goin' to give Goah a feahful thwashin'; and one will be enough for the pwesent."

"Oh, you can go and eat coke, Gussy!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Oh, run away and play!"

"I am goin' to look for Goah, Lowthah. Otherwise, I should pwobably thwash you for your impertinent wemarks."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched off with his aristocratic nose very high in the air. He was going away to search for Gore. Gore was at that moment coming downstairs, but D'Arcy turned the corner before the bully of the Shell appeared in sight. The Terrible Three lined up in George Gore's path.

Gore halted.

"Hallo!" he said. "What's the trouble?"

"The trouble is, that I want you to step into the gym," said Tom Merry, frowning.

"Thanks; I won't!"

"Then, you'll jolly well get carried there."

"What for?"

"To put the gloves on."

"I don't want to fight with you," said Gore.

"You should have thought of that sooner. You are a bully and a cad, and you are badly in want of a licking," said Tom Merry scornfully.

Gore coloured.

"I don't want to fight you," he said, putting his hands in his pockets. "You are a decent chap, Tom Merry, and that ought to be enough for you."

Tom Merry hesitated.

"Well, if you don't want to—"

"I don't!"

"Then you can take a back seat, Tommy," said Monty Lowther. "You're too soft-hearted—I won't say anything about your head—to deal with a rotter like Gore. Gore, my dear boy, will you come into the gym?"

"You, too!" said Gore.

"Thou too, Brutus!" grinned Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," said Gore uneasily. "I don't want a row with you, Lowther. I'm sorry if I spoke a bit rudely to you this afternoon. I can't say more than that."

Monty Lowther dropped his hands.

"Well, if—if you put it like that!" he said.

"I'm not looking for rows," said Gore. "The fact is, I've just seen my pater, and—and I've had enough rowing

for some time. My pater can pater it hot and strong—but you've seen him, and you know. I think you fellows might let me alone for a bit, while I get over having seen my pater."

Tom Merry was touched at once. It was easy enough to turn away his wrath with a word.

"Oh, it's all right, Gore!" he exclaimed. "We don't want to lick you, as far as that goes—but you'll have to stop the bullying bizney you've started again. Mind, if you lay your paws on young Wally again, there will be trouble."

"I'm sorry I touched him," said Gore. "Only—only I was worried about my father coming, and—and, well, I suppose I was in a rotten temper, and that's the truth."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, the truth is a good thing," he remarked. "Keep your hands in your pockets, Monty; you're not going to row with Gore this time."

"Oh, all right!" growled Monty Lowther.

Gore breathed a deep sigh of relief as he walked on. He had easily made his peace with Skimpole; but he had been in doubt about the possibility of doing so with the Terrible Three. But he had succeeded there as well!

Gore had not said a word of his promise to his father. It was useless, or worse than useless, to allow that to become known. In the first place, he might not be believed, for he was far from bearing a reputation as a truthful boy, and his story might be considered merely a transparent excuse for cowardice. In the second place, if he was believed, and the fellows regarded him as bound by such a promise, he would be at the mercy of every boy who chose to take advantage of it.

And he knew that fellows like Mellish and Levison would take the most merciless advantage of such a state of affairs.

If they knew that his hands were tied in this manner, they would lead him a dog's life for the next four days; he was perfectly sure of that.

His business was to keep the promise strictly secret; if it once leaked out, he shivered at the thought of the consequences.

He was thinking it over, as he walked out of the School House, and at the bottom of the steps almost ran into Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of the School House uttered an exclamation.

"Bai Jove! Goah! Stop!"

George Gore paused.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Pway put up your hands, deah boy."

"Eh! What for?"

"I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'."

Gore groaned.

CHAPTER 10.

As One Gentleman to Another.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was ready for business. He had put on his oldest pair of trousers, and his worn jacket. He remembered his last encounter with Gore, and the havoc it had wrought in his attire.

He pushed back his cuffs carefully.

"Will you have it here, or will you come behind the chapel, Goah?" he asked.

"You see—"

"Pewwaps you would pwefer to have it in the gym?"

"I—I—"

"I am quite willin' to have the gloves on, if you like, deah boy," said D'Arcy, very considerably. "I am bound, undah the cires, to give you a feahful thwashin'. But I weally do not want to hurt you too much."

"You—you see—"

"Are you weady, Goah?"

"What's the matter?" asked Gore. "Have I offended you in any way, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus extracted his monocle from his waistcoat pocket, and adjusted it in his right eye, and took a scornful survey of Gore.

"Pway, wpeat that wemark," he said.

"Have I—I offended you?" asked Gore.

"Weally, Goah—"

"I'm sure I didn't mean to," said Gore. "As a matter of fact, I regard you with very great respect and friendship."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"If I've ever done anything that seemed at all disrespectful, you must put it down to thoughtlessness," said Gore, with great solemnity. "Of course, no chap in his right senses could think of offending you."

D'Arcy coughed.

Gore was quite right, of course, and he put it very nicely; but the swell of St. Jim's was not wholly satisfied.

"You tweated me in a vewy wuff and wotten mannah when I was thwovin' you out of Levison's studay," he said.

"But you started it, you know."

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"I was takin' up the cause of the oppressed," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "I had no resource but to lend Levison a helpin' hand, undah the cires."

"And you gaye me a fearfully rough time," said Gore. "Yaas, wathah! And I'm goin' to give you a feahfully wuffah time now."

"If anything occurred in Levison's study to displease you," said Gore, "I'm sorry. I can't say more than that, can I?"

D'Arcy coughed again. He was quite surprised at this tone from Gore. "Vewy well," he said. "If you choose to apologise, as one gentleman to anothah—"

"I do!" said Gore. "You express pwofound wegwet for what occurred in Levison's studay?"

"Most profound," said Gore. "You apologise?"

"Certainly!" D'Arcy reflected. "Well, deah boy, undah the cires, as you apologise, I am pwepared to ovahlook what occurred in Levison's studay, as one gentleman to anothah. But there is anothah mattah. You have bullied and wagged my young bwothah in a weally wotten way."

"Oh! Young Wally!"

"My youngah bwothah, Walth Adolphus," said D'Arcy severely. "You knocked his head against Jameson's. It is not only that it was an act of gwoss diswespect to knock a D'Arcy's head against that of a common person; but you hurt Wally."

"I'm sorry."

"Yaas, that's all vewy well," said D'Arcy. "But I've pwomised Wally to give you a feahful thwashin'. I'm pwepared to ovahlook your wuffianly conduct towards myself, but I am bound to give you a thwashin' on Wally's account. So I must twouble you to put up your hands. Will you come wound behind the chapel?"

"No, I won't."

"Will you have it here?"

"No."

"Then pewwaps you will come into the gym?"

"No."

D'Arcy jammed his monocle a little tighter in his eye. "Weally, Goah, I fail to undahstand you," he said. "I twust that you will not force me to stwike you to make you put up your hands."

Gore retreated a step. "Now, look here, Gussy—"

"I am Gussy to my fwends," said the swell of St. Jim's frigidly. "You will have the extweme goodness to call me D'Arcy."

"Very well, D'Arcy, then," said Gore pacifically. "I'm sorry I banged your minor's napper against Jameson's."

"Yaas; so now will you put up your hands?"

"I give you best," said Gore. "That is not suffish, deah boy."

"I'll tell Wally I'm sorry, if you like."

"I am afwaid that Wally would not wegard that as suffish, sither."

"Now, look here, I don't want a row," said Gore. "I've just had a jawing from my pater. He doesn't want me to fight. Of course, you wouldn't think of advising a fellow to disregard his father's wishes."

D'Arcy shook his head. "I should wegard that as tweatin' a pawent with diswespect, which is wotten bad form, Goah," he said.

"Then you see how it is," urged Gore. "My pater has forbidden me to fight. I've apologised. What more can I do?"

Arthur Augustus thought it out. "Of course, if you are not wottin'—"

"Honest Injun!" said Gore. "Then I do not sec what you can do," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Of course, between gentlemen, an apology is suffish. But Wally has a pain in his nappah, you know, and he wants you to have a lickin'."

"Suppose you convey my apology to him," suggested Gore, "and explain to him that I'm sorry, and that it ought to be enough."

D'Arcy nodded. "Vewy well, deah boy, I will do so; and I must remark that I considah your view of the case as weally gentlemanly."

"Oh, good!"

"I will acquaint my minah with what you have said, and it will be all wight, as fah as I am concerned," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Thanks."

Arthur Augustus nodded, and walked away. It was easy enough to placate the swell of St. Jim's, by mounting the high horse, so to speak, and meeting him on his own ground.

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Gore grinned, but it was a very uneasy grin. He had escaped another encounter, but he wondered whether his luck would hold out.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made his way to the Third Form-room. Wally and Jameson we-e there, with a crowd of fags, and Wally was still rubbing his head. Wally's head was hard, and had stood a good many hard knocks in its time; but Gore had hurt him, and Wally wanted satisfaction. He looked up eagerly as his major came in.

"You've seen Gore?" he exclaimed. "Yaas, Wally, I've seen him."

"Licked him?" asked Jameson. "No, deah boy."

"But it's arranged, I suppose?" said Wally. "I wish I were big enough to lick the beast. I'm blessed if I think you can do it, either; but you can give him as much as he gives you, anyway. And I want to see the fight, too. Where is it to be—in the gym?"

"Ahem! No!"

"Behind the chapel's better," said Curly Gibson. "It's more private, and we can all be there to see it. Is it to be behind the chapel, D'Arcy major?"

"Ahem! No!"

"Then where?" demanded Wally. "Ahem! Not at all, deah boy."

"What?" howled Wally. "Goah has apologised," D'Arcy explained. "He has apologised to me, and has given me an apology to convey to you. As one gentleman to anothah, he expresses his wegwet for what has occurred, and, of course, that ends it."

Wally glared at his major. "That ends it?" he yelled. "Ends it, does it?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"You—you ass!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"You fathead!"

"Wally—"

"You clump!"

"I wefuse to remain here and listen to these uttably diswespectful and oppwobwious expwessions," said the swell of St. Jim's.

"So you're going to let him off, you clump?"

"As one gentleman to anothah—"

"Oh, you ass! Do you think I'm going to let him off, after he's banged my napper against Jameson's wooden head?"

"Look here—" began Jameson. "Goah has apologised—"

"Do you think he can apologise my headache away?" yelled Wally.

"Well, no; still, fwom one gentleman to anothah, an apology should be suffish—"

"Oh, kick him out!" said Wally. "We'll settle this matter ourselves! Anybody who likes to kick my major can do so, and I won't interfere."

"Weally, you young wuffian— Oh! Yow! Stop! You diswespectful young wottahs. Stop immediately! I wefuse— Oh! Yawooh!"

A crowd of fags had taken Wally at his word. They rushed at the swell of St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus was hustled to the door of the Form-room so quickly that it made his head swim. Boots of all sorts and sizes—and not over clean boots either—were planted behind him, and he went into the passage, sprawling.

"Kick him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Oh! Ow! Yow! You young wottahs! Wally—Oh! Yowp!"

Slam!

The Form-room door closed after the swell of St. Jim's. He made a wild rush at it, but it was locked on the inside. Arthur Augustus limped away down the passage.

It was pretty clear that even an apology, from one gentleman to another, was not regarded by the victims of Gore's bullying as "suffish."

CHAPTER 11.

Seeking a Champion.

"TOM MERRY!"

Tom Merry looked up from his prep. Wally, of the Third, was looking in at his door, and there was a bump showing under Wally's curly hair. Tom Merry greeted him with a smile.

"Come in, kid," he said. "What do you want?"

"I'm looking for a chap."

"Well, unless I'm the chap, you'd better look further, as there's nobody else in the study at present," said Tom, with a smile.

"Perhaps you are the chap," said Wally, coming in and closing the door.

Tom Merry looked surprised.

"I don't quite catch on," he said. "Explain."

"You see, the case stands like this," Wally explained.

"Gore banged my napper against Jameson's. Jameson's napper is as hard as bricks, and I'm hurt."

"I heard about it," said Tom Merry. "I'm sorry."

"Gore's a bullying cad."

"I'm afraid he is."

"I'm not big enough to lick him," said Wally wrathfully.

"He could make mincemeat of me with one hand. Gussy was going to wallop him, but he's come it over Gussy with soft sawder. You know what an ass Gussy is."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Gussy thinks that an apology from one silly ass to another makes it all right," said Wally. "It doesn't extract this blessed ache from my napper, and he hasn't apologised to Jimmy, anyway. I want somebody to lick Gore."

"H'm!"

"You could do it quite easily," said Wally. "If you lick the beast, we'll stand you a feed in the Form-room. What do you say?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," said Wally. "Will you do it?"

"I'd do it, without the feed in the Form-room," said Tom Merry. "Only it happens that Gore is in a peaceable temper for once, and I've made it up with him. Under the circumstances, I can't very well jump on him, though I know he treated you rottenly. I've really agreed not to have a row with him."

Wally snorted.

"Oh, rats! I don't see what you wanted to do that for, especially just now."

"Well, you see I didn't know you were looking for a champion. But I dare say you'll find somebody else to lick Gore."

Manners and Lowther came into the study as Tom Merry was speaking. Wally turned his eyes upon them.

"Will you take it on, Lowther?" he asked.

"Take what on?"

"We're ready to stand a feed in the Form-room—a really decent feed, bloater-paste, and no end of things—to anybody who will lick Gore for us."

Monty Lowther grinned.

"I'm sorry; but I've made my peace with Gore."

"My only Aunt Jane! You're jolly peaceable in the Shell all of a sudden!" Wally grunted. "Will you take it on, Manners, or have you made your rotten peace with Gore, too?"

Manners laughed.

"No, I haven't done that," he said. "But I've got some films to develop, and I haven't any time for fighting fags' battles. Go and ask Gussy."

"No go."

"Ask a New House chap, then. Fatty Wynn would take it on, I should think, if there was a feed at the end of it."

Wally brightened up.

"My only Aunt Jane! That's a jolly good tip!" he exclaimed. "Thanks!"

And he ran out of the study, leaving the Terrible Three laughing. Jameson and Curly Gibson, of the Third, were waiting in the passage. They looked eagerly at Wally.

"Well?" they demanded together.

"Nothing there," said Wally. "But I've got a tip from Manners. Let's get over to the New House. Fatty Wynn's the chap."

"Fatty Wynn!"

"Yes. He's a jolly good boxer, fat as he is, and he could lick Gore hollow. If he takes it on, Gore is booked for a whipping. Come on."

"Good egg!" said Jameson.

The three fags left the School House. They crossed the quad, in the dusk, towards the New House. There was rivalry between the two Houses at St. Jim's, and as a rule, the fellows stood by their own Houses through thick and thin. But this was an exceptional case. It was urgently necessary for Gore to be licked—at all events, it seemed so to Wally & Co. And they would have fetched in a fellow from the Grammar School at Rylcombe to do it, rather than have left such an important thing undone.

There was a light in the window of Figgins's study in the New House—the study shared by Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, of the Fourth. Wally marched in boldly, as if the House belonged to him, and went upstairs, and knocked at Figgins's door.

"Come in!" sang out the voice of Figgins.

Wally and his comrades entered. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were seated round the table at prep. There was a dis-

contented expression upon the fat and usually sunny face of Fatty Wynn. He was talking when the fags entered, and he did not leave off. Fags were not considered of much account by the heroes of the Fourth.

"I'm not complaining," said Fatty Wynn, in a tone that was very full of complaint. "If the study funds have run out, it was necessary to have tea in hall. But to expect a fellow to look cheerful after a tea of thick bread and butter—Gross!"

"Well, you had a feed in the tuckshop this afternoon," said Kerr.

Fatty Wynn sniffed.

"Do you call that a feed? I had a couple of pork-pies and a few sausages, and a pound or so of cake, and some tarts, besides the dough-nuts and the apples—and apples, as a matter of fact, only make a chap hungry. It was a mistake to have the apples—it would have been better to have had some more pork-pies. Of course, I was simply famished at tea-time."

"Of course you were," agreed Kerr sarcastically. "I don't believe I ever remember you when you weren't."

"Well, a chap gets hungry in this September weather. I always get an extra keen appetite at this time of the year. The worst of it is, that Dame Taggles has stopped tick. She says there's to be no more till I've settled up."

"Quite right, too."

"That's all very well, but I'm hungry! Sure you chaps can't raise anything?"

"Broke!" said Figgins.

"Stony!" said Kerr.

Fatty Wynn granted.

"Well, I suppose I shall have to stand it," he said. "I've looked in to see Pratt, and he's stony. French is out of funds, too. I think it's rotten! I wonder if we could scrape up a feed in the School House. After all, these House rows are a mistake. I think that the two Houses at St. Jim's ought to pull together, and stand shoulder to shoulder, you know."

"Especially at meal-times!" suggested Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"Well, it isn't that I'm fond of eating!" said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "I'm afraid for my health; that's what it is. But for that, I shouldn't care a bit. I—"

"Ahem!" said Wally.

"What are these blessed School House fags doing in our study?" demanded Fatty Wynn crossly. "I don't see why we can't have our study to ourselves, anyway!"

"We've looked in—" began Wally.

"Well, now you've looked in, you can get out!"

"But—"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"We wanted to say—"

Fatty Wynn rose, and picked up a cricket-stump.

"Are you going?" he queried.

"We wanted to ask you—"

"Outside!"

"—if you'd care to come to the tuckshop—"

"Eh?"

"And have a bit of a feed?" said Wally blandly.

Fatty Wynn's expression was changing. The frown gave place to a sunny smile. He replaced the cricket-stump in the corner of the study.

"Now, you're talking!"

"You'll come?"

"What ho!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Kerr and Figgins.

Fatty Wynn stared at them.

"I don't see where the cackle comes in!" he said. "I was just saying—"

"That you'd turn those fags out! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem! I was just saying that the two Houses ought to stand shoulder to shoulder, and pull together—"

"At meal-times!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I haven't time to talk to silly asses!" said Fatty Wynn. "Come on, young D'Arcy! Let's go down to the tuckshop before it closes!"

And Fatty Wynn walked away with Wally & Co. with a beatific smile upon his plump face, and Wally, Jameson, and Curly Gibson exchanged winks behind his back.

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CHAPTER 12.

The Champion.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY sat down at the table in Study No. 6 with a ruffled expression upon his aristocratic countenance. The way he had made his exit from the Third Form-room was not soothing to his dignity, and he was disappointed in Wally. He was very much shocked to find that an apology, from one gentleman to another, was not sufficient to satisfy any D'Arcy.

Wally evidently had other views on the subject, and Arthur Augustus could not help feeling it. Perhaps, if he had had the headache and the bump, he might have taken the same view as Wally, but he had not either the headache or the bump, and so they did not influence his views.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were grinning a little. They knew the cause of D'Arcy's ruffled looks, and they appeared to consider the matter in a comic light, although it did not appear in the least comic to the swell of St. Jim's.

There was a kick at the door, and it flew open. The subject of Arthur Augustus's disappointed reflections walked in. D'Arcy looked at him through his eyeglass in an inquiring way.

"Hallo, old cock!" said Wally cheerfully.

"Weally, Wally, I regard that as a dreadfully vulgar expression—"

"Come off, old son!" said Wally. "I'm in a hurry, and I've no time to waste! You see—"

"I twust you have come to tell me that you have thought the mattah ovah, Wally, and have decided that, as one gentleman to another, Goah's apology was quite suffish. to end the mattah."

Wally grinned.

"Well, not exactly," he said. "I've come to borrow some money. If you won't lick Gore, the least you can do is to lend me some tin!"

Arthur Augustus dived into his pocket.

"I shall be vewy pleased to make you a loan, Wally," he said. "How much do you want?"

"A pound."

"Vewy well."

Arthur Augustus was generally well supplied with money by the noble lord, his father. He tossed a sovereign over to Wally, who caught it dexterously.

"Thanks, old son!" said Wally. "I'll pay this back—perhaps!"

"You need not twouble about weturnin' the loan, Wally, though I weally do not wish to encourage you in extravagant habits. But I twust you will think bettah of it, and forgive Goah!"

"Ye-es; I'll forgive him when he's been licked!" said Wally. "No good being in too great a hurry about these things, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows, I don't see any reason for laughin'! Wally is takin' an altogethah w'ong view of the mattah! Do you mean to say that you are goin' to tackle Goah, Wally?"

Wally shook his head.

"He's too big," he said. "I can't do it. But I'm going to make Fatty Wynn lick him!"

"Bai Jove! How?"

"I'm going to feed Wynn, you see."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus jumped up. "Is that what you want the soveveign for, Wally? Bai Jove!"

"That's it, kid!"

"Then I wefuse—"

"Too late!" said Wally, slapping his trousers pocket.

"But—but you ought to have told me—"

"If I had, you wouldn't have dubbed up the dibs!" said Wally.

"Bai Jove! What an uttally howwid expression—"

"So-long!" said Wally.

"Sorry I can't stop and listen to a sermon, Gussy; my friends are waiting for me at the tuckshop!"

And Wally walked out of the study. Arthur Augustus looked at the other fellows. They were roaring with laughter.

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"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy ejaculated. "What an uttally young wascal my minah is! Do you think I should be justified in takin' the soveveign back, Blake?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"But undeh the cires,—"

"Under the cires, go on with your prep., and let Wally alone!" said Blake. "Gore has been in want of a hiding for weeks, and if Fatty Wynn gives him one, more power to his elbow, as Reilly says, that's all!"

Wally hurried down to the tuckshop across the quad. Fatty Wynn was already there, and Curly Gibson and Jameson were keeping him in talk while he waited for Wally. The scamp of the Third rushed in.

"It's all right!" he announced. "Mrs. Taggles! Where are you? Hurry up!"

Dame Taggles came out of her little parlour. Wally laid the sovereign on the counter, and gave orders. Fatty Wynn's eyes glistened. He had what he would have called a first-class hunger, and the sight of the golden coin was very pleasant. He did not lose time. He began on the first thing that Dame Taggles handed out, and went on without a pause. It was not till the keen edge was taken off his appetite that he found time to speak at all.

"These pork-pies are ripping!" he remarked then.

"Yes, rather," said Jameson.

"And the salmon steaks are splendid!"

"So they are!"

"As for the sardines," said Fatty Wynn enthusiastically, "I've very seldom tasted better sardines!"

"Yes; they're all right!"

"It's jolly decent of you to stand me a feed in this way, D'Arcy minor!" said Fatty Wynn. "Yes; I'll have some of the plum-cake, please, Mrs. Taggles!"

"Not at all," said Wally. "You see, we like you, and you're such a decent chap, too, and we believe in the two Houses pulling together!"

"Quite right!" said Fatty Wynn. "If I could do anything for you chaps, I'd do it with pleasure. I wish you could dig in our House—I do, really! Yes; some of the strawberry ones, Mrs. Taggles!"

"Ginger-pop, Wynn?"

"Please!" Fatty Wynn paused for a moment in masticating, to take a deep draught. "I say, this is ripping! That's a bad bump you've got on your head, D'Arcy minor!"

D'Arcy minor rubbed the bump tenderly.

"Yes. Gore gave me that—bully cad!" he said.

"So he is!" agreed Fatty Wynn. "These dough-nuts are just right! Somebody ought to give that cad a hiding!"

"Yes; some more, please, Mrs. Taggles!"

"Supposing you give him a hiding?" suggested Wally diplomatically. "You see, I'm not big enough, and Gussy has dropped the matter. If you'd give Gore a hiding, Wynn, I'd take it as a personal favour!"

"Could he do it?" suggested Jameson, very cleverly.

Fatty Wynn sniffed.

"I could lick any School House rotter in the Fourth or the Shell!" he declared belligerently.

"Well, if you could lick Gore—"

"Of course I could!"

"And if you would—"

"Like anything!" said Fatty Wynn. "He's no right to treat you like that! I think he's a beastly bully! I think these tarts are ripping—I mean, I think Gore ought to have a hiding! I could do it easily! Where is he?"

"In his study!" said Wally, highly delighted.

"I'll go and see him there!" said Fatty Wynn. "You chaps can wait in the passage, and keep watch—we don't want a lot of chaps rushing in and making a House row of it!"

"That's right!"

"I'll have a snack, first, though!" said Wynn. "I never could fight, or anything else, unless I laid a solid foundation!"

"Go ahead!" said Wally heartily. "Try the marmalade-tarts! Make it up to the sov., Mrs. Taggles!"

"Yes, Master Wally!"

The heroes of the Third were brimming with satisfaction. They would have fed Fatty Wynn out of a golden trough if they could. Fatty Wynn, fat as he was, was an athlete.

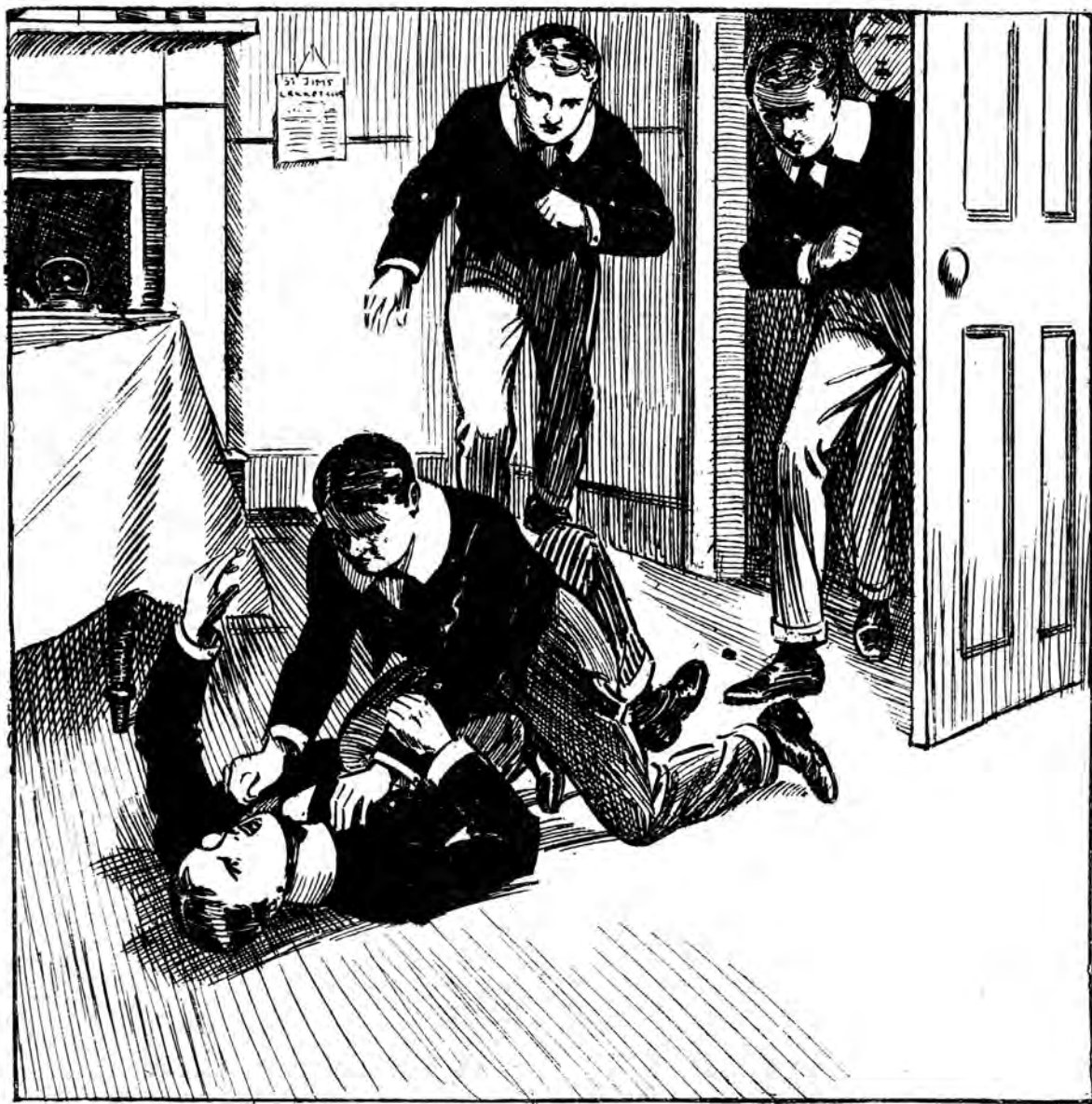
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"What's the row about?" cried Digby, dashing into the study. "I'm chuckin' this wottah out!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he rolled over on his back, and Bully Gore sat astride of his chest.

and he was the champion bowler of the junior eleven, the champion goalie of the junior footer team. He was known as a fighting man, when he chose to take the trouble to exert himself.

There was no doubt that he could lick Gore if he tried. Everything in the garden was lovely now, as Wally whispered joyously to Jameson. And Jameson nodded and rubbed his head.

The sovereign was expended at last. Fatty Wynn rose from the high stool with a sigh of contentment.

"Ready?" asked Wally.

Fatty cast a longing look round the shop. He had had enough, perhaps; but, like Alexander, he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer. But he nodded.

"Yes," he said; "I'm ready!"

"Come on, then! You'll give him a thorough licking?"

"Oh, simply smash him!" said Fatty Wynn.

"A good dodge would be to turn the key in the lock, and then he couldn't get out," suggested Curly Gibson. "Then you could simply hammer him!"

"I'll do it!"

"Good egg!"

And the three fags marched Fatty Wynn into the School House, and escorted him up to the junior passages in great state, and planted him outside Gore's door. Fatty Wynn knocked at the door and opened it.

CHAPTER 13.

Steak and Kidneys.

GEORGE GORE was alone in the study. He was at work with his preparation. Skimpole was not there, doubtless being too busy with some vast problem to think of such small matters as preparing his to-morrow's lessons. Gore looked up from his work as the fat Fourth-Former came in, and he stared in blank amazement as he watched Fatty Wynn's proceedings. Fatty stepped quickly into the study, closed the door, and turned the key in the lock. Then he slipped the key into his pocket, and turned towards George Gore.

Gore rose to his feet. Fatty Wynn's mysterious conduct.

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gave him a suspicion that the plump Fourth-Former had gone suddenly mad.

"Hallo!" said Gore.

"Hallo!" said Fatty Wynn, wiping a smear of jam from his mouth. "Bully!"

"What?"

"Rotter!"

"Eh?"

"Cad!"

"I—I—"

"Boulder!"

"But—"

"Put up your hands!"

And Fatty Wynn placed himself on guard, and advanced upon the bully of the Shell in an extremely warlike way.

Gore stared at him blankly, his suspicion growing stronger that the fat Fourth-Former had taken leave of his senses. He retreated round the table in considerable alarm.

"What's the matter?" he exclaimed.

"I'm going to lick you!"

"Lick me!" gasped Gore dazedly.

"Yes! Put 'em up!"

"B-b-b-but what's the row?" stammered Gore.

He hadn't the faintest idea why Fatty Wynn should visit him in this warlike way. He had several quarrels ripening, so to speak, but not one of them was with Fatty Wynn. He had had no quarrel whatever with the Falstaff of the Fourth. Indeed, Fatty Wynn was so good-natured and easy-going that very few fellows quarrelled with him. He was often deep in House rows, but Gore took little part in House rows, and seldom came in contact with Figgins & Co. at all. Why Fatty Wynn should go for him in this manner was a complete mystery to Gore.

At any other time he would have "sailed in" with good-will, and have hurled the fat junior forth into the passage. But his promise lay heavily upon him. He must not fight with Fatty Wynn any more than with anybody else.

"You're a rotten bully!" said Fatty Wynn. "You've treated D'Arcy minor in a rotten way, and I'm going to lick you for it! Savvy?"

"Oh, blow D'Arcy minor!"

"Put 'em up!"

"What does it matter to a New House chap, anyway?" demanded Gore.

"I'm looking after D'Arcy minor," said Fatty Wynn loftily. "I'm going to stop your rotten bullying! Put up your hands!"

"But—but—"

"Come round from behind that table, and put up your hands!" shouted Fatty Wynn. "D'Arcy minor is a decent young kid, and I'm going to protect him. He's stood me a very decent feed when I was practically famishing, and I'm not going to see him badly treated."

Gore comprehended.

"Oh! He's stood you a feed?"

"That's not why I'm going for you, of course," said Fatty Wynn rather hastily. "I'm doing this on general principles. Bullying ought to be put down."

"Yes, but—"

"And you're a beastly bully, ain't you, Gore?"

"Yes," said Gore, with unexpected submissiveness. "But—but I'm going to turn over a new leaf. I don't want to have a row with a New House chap. The fact is, I—I think that the two Houses ought to try and pull together a bit more than they do. Don't you think so, Wynn?"

"No, I don't!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Ahem! You see—"

"Are you going to come round from behind that table, or shall I come round for you?" asked the fat Fourth-Former truculently.

"I—I'll come in a minute. You see—"

Fatty Wynn made a rush round the table. Gore dodged round it still more quickly, so that they still faced one another, with the table between. Fatty Wynn puffed for breath. He was not much inclined for exertion after the feed he had had in the school shop.

"Look here, you cad!" he roared. "I'm going to lick you! You may as well take it quietly. Put up your fists."

"I—I— Wait a minute. I was just going to send you a message, Wynn, asking you to come over here," said Gore.

"Rats!"

"Yes, I was, really," said Gore. "I know how fond you are of steak pies and kidneys, and I thought you'd join me in a little feed."

Fatty Wynn dropped his hands.

"Steak pies?" he repeated.

"Yea."

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"And kidneys?"

"Yes."

"H'm!" said Fatty Wynn. "Of course, if you're really sorry that you banged young D'Arcy's napper in that way—"

"I'm awfully sorry!"

"And you won't do it again?"

"Never!"

"Well, I don't see that a kid could want more than that," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "I don't much like the idea of punching a chap who wants to stand me a feed. It's not exactly right in return for hospitality."

"Of course it isn't!" said Gore. "And you'll like the steak and kidneys. Look here!"

The burly Shell fellow crossed to the cupboard and opened the door. Fatty Wynn's eyes glistened at the sight of the large steak-and-kidney pie and the handsome pudding on the next dish to it. When Gore was in funds he generally did himself down, as he expressed it, very well. He had intended to ask Crooke and Lumley-Lumley to a little feed that evening, and he had had as much intention of inviting Fatty Wynn as of inviting the man in the moon. But it was a case of a drowning man catching at a straw. If one feed had sent Fatty Wynn to his study on the warpath, another feed might send him home in gentle peace.

And Fatty Wynn was evidently very much impressed. All the warlike ardour had faded out of his plump countenance at the sight of the steak-and-kidney pie.

"It looks ripping," he said.

"Yes; and don't you think these House rows are carried too far?" suggested Gore amicably. "How much better for two fellows to sit down quietly and have a decent feed instead of hammering one another!"

Fatty Wynn nodded.

"That's just what I was thinking myself," he remarked. "It's a much better system to talk things over and—and come to an amicable understanding, and—and have a bit of a snack together."

"Of course it is!" said Gore.

"And I was always rather fond of steak-and-kidney pies," said Fatty Wynn.

"This one is ripping."

"It looks ripping."

Fatty Wynn sat down. Gore did not join in the feed; he played the part of waiter, helping Fatty Wynn with liberal helpings. It was surprising the number of helpings that Fatty Wynn was able to negotiate, especially considering the feed he had lately had in the tuckshop. But Fatty Wynn had wonderful powers in that line. There was a very considerable difference in the size of the steak-and-kidney pie by the time the Falstaff of the Fourth had finished.

"You'll have some of the pudding?" said Gore hospitably.

"Yes, with pleasure!"

And Fatty Wynn started on the pudding. There came a tap at the door of the study, and a muffled voice through the keyhole.

"Have you licked him yet?"

Fatty Wynn started. He had forgotten all about the fags in the passage. It seemed that Wally & Co. were growing tired of waiting. They had heard no noise from the study, and they could understand that something had gone wrong with the programme.

"It's all right!" called out Fatty Wynn, with his mouth full of pudding.

"Have you licked him?"

"N-no."

"When are you going to begin?"

"Oh, don't be in a hurry. Go and keep watch."

"That's all very well; but—"

"Oh, go and keep watch!"

There was a muttering sound of discontent in the passage but the fags obeyed. Fatty Wynn wired into the pudding, and it was a mere wreck by the time he had finished. He rose to his feet at last, with a very shiny and contented face.

"Just a little more?" asked Gore.

"N-no, thanks!" said Fatty Wynn. "I've done myself down splendidly. I say, Gore, I—I really think you're a ripping sort of chap, you know. I shall come and see you again."

"Do," said Gore.

Fatty Wynn unlocked the door.

"Good-bye!" he said, quite affectionately.

"Good-night, old chap!"

And the door closed behind Fatty Wynn, and Gore turned the key in the lock after him to secure himself from any further interruptions.

CHAPTER 14.

Exit Fatty Wynn.

WALLY & CO. were waiting in the passage, with growing impatience. There were no sounds of strife in the study, and Fatty Wynn could hardly be thrashing Gore in perfect silence. It was odd, to say the least of it. The fags did not know what to make of it, and they were very nearly at the end of their patience by the time Fatty Wynn emerged from Gore's study.

They surrounded him at once. Fatty Wynn wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and looked a little sheepish. In the intense interest of the feed he had forgotten everything but the steak-and-kidney pie and the pudding, but now it occurred to him that he had not done exactly what his friends of the Third Form had expected of him. He had to explain it away somehow, and he was a little at a loss.

"Well?" demanded Wally, Jameson, and Curly Gibson, with one voice.

Fatty Wynn coughed.

"Well?" he replied.

"Have you licked him?"

"N-no; not exactly."

"What have you done, then—arranged it for to-morrow behind the chapel?"

"N-no."

"What, then?" demanded Wally.

"I've—I've given him a good talking to," said Fatty Wynn.

"A what?" roared Wally.

"I put it to him very plainly, and told him what I thought of him," said the fat Fourth-Former, "and he said he was sorry for what he had done, and—"

"You've been feeding!" shrieked Jameson.

"Well, perhaps I had a little snack—"

"You—you—you—" gasped Wally.

"Well, after making friends I couldn't refuse a bite when he offered it to me," said Fatty Wynn argumentatively. "Gore is really quite decent when you come to know him. I'm convinced that he's not going to bully you fags any more, and that's really what you want, isn't it? No good punching the poor chap's head when he's going to turn over a new leaf, and is trying his hardest to be decent."

The three fags glared at Fatty Wynn. They could not find words to express their feelings for some moments.

"Well, I must be getting along," observed Wynn. "The House will be closing soon. Good-night, you kids!"

"You—you—you fat worm!" gasped Wally. "You—you swindler! You spoofer! You haven't licked him—you're not going to lick him! You—you fat blighter! My hat! You'll go back and lick Gore, or else you'll go out of the School House on your neck."

"Look here—"

"Rescue, School House!" roared Wally. "New House cads, rescue!"

Fatty Wynn looked alarmed.

"Here, shut up!" he exclaimed. "I came in here at your invitation, and—"

"Yes, to lick Gore. Have you done it?"

"Well, you see—"

"You keep your part of the bargain, and we'll keep ours," said Wally savagely.

"Well, it wasn't exactly a bargain."

"If it wasn't a bargain, we needn't keep it on our side, then," said Jameson.

"I don't mean that."

"I don't suppose you do; but we do. Rescue, School House! New House cads, rescue!"

Study doors were already being flung wide open.

That call was enough to bring out the whole of the junior section of the School House at any time.

Fellows poured out of the studies. Fatty Wynn made a run for the stairs. He knew that the School House juniors would not stop to ask questions, in any case. The sight of a New House fellow would be enough for them.

"Rescue, School House!"

"Kick him out!"

"Throw him out!"

"New House cad! Yah!"

"Oh!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Oh, my only Uncle Sam! Oh!"

He scudded for the stairs. Levison put a foot out of his study doorway and tripped him up, and the fat Fourth-Former rolled along the linoleum in the passage. In a second the juniors were upon him in a crowd.

There was no need for Wally & Co. to take a hand. Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers were on the scene in dozens.

Jack Blake took Fatty Wynn by one leg, and Herries by another. Digby and Reilly and Macdonald took his shoulders. They carried him to the staircase, with a yelling crowd of juniors round them.

"Pway take care, deah boys!" called out Arthur Augustus.

D'Arcy. "The New House wottah has no biznai in a respectable House, but don't spoil his clothes. That would weally be goin' too fah, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" roared Fatty Wynn. "Yow! Leggo! Yah! Oh!"

"Chuck him out!"

"Roll him down!"

"New House cad! Yah!"

Fatty Wynn was rolled down the stairs. He seemed built for rolling, and he went along as easily as a cask turned upon its side. He was rolled to the bottom, and then, gasping and breathless, he picked himself up to run. Dozens of hands and boots helped him to find the door of the School House, and he sprawled outside and rolled down the steps.

Kildare, of the Sixth, came out of his study.

"What's all this row?" he demanded sharply.

Tom Merry looked round with a grin.

"Only kicking out a New House bounder," he said.

"What has he done?"

"Blessed if I know!"

Kildare laughed.

"Well, not so much row about it," he said.

"I don't think there'll be any more row," grinned Tom Merry. "I think he will stay out now he is out."

Tom Merry was right. Fatty Wynn sat up and gasped at the bottom of the School House steps. His clothes were rent and dusty, and his fat face was crimson, and he had a somewhat queer feeling in his inwards. The rough handling, immediately after that very hearty meal, had disturbed the steak and kidneys.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh, oh! Phew! Ow!"

"Let's frog's-march him round the quad., and then chuck him in at the door of the New House," suggested Kangaroo.

That was enough for Fatty Wynn. He picked himself up and ran. He was gone in the twinkling of an eye, leaving the School House fellows roaring with laughter.

The fat New House junior tottered breathlessly into his own House, and crawled upstairs to the Fourth Form passage, and rolled into Figgins's study, and sank down into the arm-chair, puffing and blowing. Figgins and Kerr suspended their work to stare at him.

"Hallo!" said Figgins. "Anything the matter?"

"Ow!"

"Had that feed?"

"Ow!"

"What's the matter?"

"Grog!"

Figgins chuckled.

"I suppose you still think it's a good idea about the two Houses standing together, and pulling shoulder to shoulder, and so forth?" he remarked.

Fatty Wynn gave an expressive snort.

"I think it's all utter rot," he said. "Look here, I think we'd better have a House raid to-morrow, and put those School House rotters in their proper place. Ow!"

And Figgins and Kerr yelled.

CHAPTER 15.

Wally Loses a Chance.

"COME in!" said Levison.

Wally & Co. were passing Levison's door when he looked out and gave them that invitation. Wally paused. He did not like Levison—few did—and he was not inclined to accept his invitation unless he saw a reason for it.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I've got something to tell you—how to get even with Gore, if you like," said Levison.

"Oh! Good!"

The fags stepped into the study, and Levison closed the door. Mellish was sitting at the table, and he gave the Third-Formers quite a friendly nod. Wally was regarding Levison rather suspiciously. He did not trust the cad of the Fourth.

"Gore has been ragging you chaps, I know," said Levison. "You brought Fatty Wynn in to lick him, didn't you?"

"How the dickens do you know?"

"I happened to see you in the tuckshop," grinned Levison. "But it hasn't come off, has it?"

Wally snorted.

"Gore fed the beast up," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you've brought us in here to listen to you cackling—" began Wally wrathfully.

"I haven't," said Levison. "Look here, I can tell you something. Gore's pater was down to see him this afternoon."

"I know that; I saw the old boy."

"Well, I happened to hear him talking to Gore—"

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Wally's lip curled.

"Oh, I understand!" he said. "You happened to be behind a door, or round a corner, or at a keyhole, or something."

"Never mind that," said Levison, with a slight flush. "Never mind how I heard it. I did hear it, and that's enough. Gore's pater was going to take him away from the school, for being a rotten bully; and he's only left him here on probation. Gore has solemnly promised him to keep out of all rows for four days, till his pater comes again."

Wally whistled.

"He's not even to defend himself if he's attacked," went on Levison. "You see the position it places him in. If Gore gets into a single row, his pater is going to take him away from the school, and Gore would just as soon go to prison as go home. His pater isn't exactly a sweet-tempered man."

"My only Aunt Janet!" said Wally. "That accounts. Gore has been making his peace with everybody—Tom Merry and Lowther, and he's even soft-sawdered Gussy, and he's wasted his grub on Fatty Wynn. That accounts."

"Of course it does!" said Levison.

"And don't you see," broke in Mellish eagerly. "it's a jolly good chance for you fags to go for him?"

"We're not big enough to tackle a chap his size," said Wally, with a shake of the head.

"No, no, under ordinary circumstances," said Levison. "But just now he's bound by his promise, and he can't hit back."

"What?"

"Even if you dot him on the nose, he can't hit back," said Levison, with a grin. "He dare not. Don't you see what a chance it is for you?"

"You unspeakable cad!" said Wally.

"Eh?"

"You rotter! Do you think I'd hit a chap, however beastly he was, if I knew he couldn't hit back?" demanded Wally savagely.

"You young ass—"

"If this is true about Gore, it won't make us go for him; it will just prevent us from going for him," said Wally. "If you weren't the rottenest kind of a beastly worm, you'd see that for yourself."

Levison's eyes gleamed with anger.

"Oh, you're rotting!" he exclaimed. "You know perfectly well that you'd be glad of a chance of going for Gore, if you could do it safely."

"Rats!"

"I tell you he dare not hit back," persisted Levison; "and if he did lose his temper, and forget about his promise, and go for you, it would ruin him with his father. He would be taken away from St. Jim's, and we should be rid of the beastly bully for good. It's worth getting a black eye or so for the sake of that."

"You cad!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, come on!" said Wally, turning to his comrades. "Let's get out of this study; that chap makes me sick."

Levison followed them to the door, his face dark with anger.

"Do you mean to say you're going to let this chance slip?" he demanded.

Wally gave him a scornful look.

"We're not going to get Gore into a row with his pater, if that's what you mean," he exclaimed. "If the chap can't hit back we sha'n't go for him. He's a beastly bully, and we've got an account to settle with him, but there's such a thing as fair play and decency, though you don't seem to know about it. Come on, you chaps! That fellow will make me ill if I talk to him any longer."

And Wally marched off down the passage.

Levison turned back into his study with a savage expression upon his face. He could not understand Wally's scruples in the least.

"I suppose he doesn't believe me," he remarked.

"I suppose it's that," agreed Mellish.

Levison gritted his teeth.

"Gore's pater will be back in four days," he remarked. "Before that time's up, we ought to have made Gore's existence a regular torture to him. We can pay him back all the old scores now."

"Yes, rather!"

"Look here, suppose you go to his study and pick a row with him, Mellish," Levison suggested. "He dare not hit back, and you could simply wipe up the study with him."

"Why don't you do it?"

"Besides," went on Levison, unheeding the question, "if he did hit back, his father would take him away from the school; and that would be even better."

"Yes; but it wouldn't console me for being half killed in Gore's study," said Mellish, with a grin. "And that's what you don't want to risk, either. Gore may keep his promise."

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to his father, but he's got a bad temper, and he's got a habit of hitting out before he stops to think. I don't want to get one of his right-handers on the jaw, even if his pater goes for him afterwards. Thanks, but no."

Levison set his lips.

"Then I'll take it on myself!" he exclaimed.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Mellish heartily. "That's the style!"

Levison hesitated a little. Like the monkey in the story, he preferred to find a cat to pull his chestnuts out of the fire. But it was pretty clear that Mellish was not inclined to act as a catspaw for him.

And there was very real danger that Gore might forget his promise, weighty as it was, and hit out in his old manner. It was a very great risk to be run; and yet, even that was worth while, for the satisfaction of getting Gore dragged away from the school.

Life would certainly be more tolerable there without the bully of the Shell; and it would be a terrible revenge upon Gore. And Levison was spiteful and revengeful by nature; it had never even occurred to him to forgive an injury.

"I'm going," he said.

"Good! I'll watch you."

Levison went down the passage. Mellish stood outside the study door, and watched him turn the corner into the Shell passage. Then he followed him to the corner and watched him from there. Further than the corner of the passage he did not go. Mellish never believed in running unnecessary risks.

Levison, taking his courage in both hands, so to speak, marched up to Gore's door, and kicked upon it. Gore's voice was heard from within.

"Hallo! Who's that?"

Levison turned the handle. The door did not open. He kicked upon the door again, greatly encouraged by the fact that it was locked. In the first place, the locked door prevented Gore from getting at him, and in the second place, it hinted that the bully of the Shell was afraid.

"Open this door!" shouted Levison.

"Oh, go and eat cake!"

"Cad! Coward!" bawled Levison, through the keyhole.

"Yah! Coward!"

Gore jumped up from the table, and stepped towards the door. His hand was upon the latch; and Levison heard him, and he felt his heart sink. But Gore did not open the door; he turned back, and sat down quietly at the table again. He could not afford to quarrel with Levison.

Levison heard him retreat, and his courage rose. It was pretty clear that George Gore wanted to avoid trouble. And the more he wanted to avoid it, the more, of course, Levison wanted to force it upon him.

The cad of the Fourth kicked at the door again. His kicks and blows resounded along the passage, and fellows looked out of their studies up and down.

"Open this door!" roared Levison.

"Rats!"

"I'm going to lick you! Coward!"

Gore's ears burned, but he did not answer.

"Coward!" yelled Levison. "Cad! Bully! Rotter! You're afraid to come out."

And he kicked savagely at the door.

"Stop that row!" called out Tom Merry.

"I'm trying to get Gore out," said Levison. "He was going for me to-day, and I want him to fight me. He's afraid to come out."

"Well, I'm not afraid to come out, and if you don't stop that row, I'll come out, and wipe up the passage with you," said Tom Merry.

And Levison decided that he had better give it up for the present.

CHAPTER 16.

The Coward's Blow.

GEORGE GORE wore a decidedly worried look when he took his place in the Shell Form-room the following morning. His promise to his father was weighing upon his mind. He had succeeded in avoiding Levison so far. But he knew that when the Shell was dismissed after morning lessons, the cad of the Fourth would be waiting in the passage for him. And what was to happen then?

At any other time Gore would have licked Levison, probably in a brutal way. But that was impossible now—unless he was to leave St. Jim's. It was the first of the four days of his probation, and it seemed that he was not to be able to get through it without a fight.

Levison meant to make him fight, or else make him take the coward's blow in public. And if he took that, and took it lying down, it would be an end to all his prestige in the Shell.

After that, fags in the Second and Third Forms would rag him with impunity; fellows would turn up their noses at him; he would be considered a coward and despised accordingly. The prospect was a terrible one for any boy in a school; and especially for one who had made many enemies by his bullying proclivities. When it was once generally known that for some reason Gore would not hit back, he could imagine how many old foes would come up to settle old scores with him—old scores that had been unsettled because he was too big and strong to be reckoned with, but which had rankled deeply all the same. Few of his foes were likely to take Wally's generous view of the matter.

Gore could not help thinking that Levison must have some inkling of his promise to his father. Otherwise, the conduct of the cad of the Fourth was inexplicable. As a rule, he carefully avoided any chance of a row with Gore, knowing perfectly well that he was no match for the bully of the Shell.

Levison's sudden heroics looked as if he had information; and Gore knew that the cad of the Fourth generally did get informed of what was going on, by some mean method or other. And if Levison knew, and chose to take a merciless advantage of his knowledge, what was Gore's life likely to be like during the next four days? It was no wonder that George Gore had a clouded brow that morning, and that he gave absent-minded answers to Mr. Linton, and earned a goodly crop of lines thereby.

When the Shell left their Form-room for the morning recess after third lesson, Gore did not go out with them. He had lines to do, and he took that opportunity of doing them. It gave him a respite from Levison's kindly attentions; but the respite could not last long. He could not remain in the Form-room for ever.

When the hour of dismissal came after morning lessons were over, Gore had to go out with the rest of the Form. He went out with them, with a troubled look.

The Fourth were already out; and, as Gore expected, Levison was waiting in the passage. He came directly up to Gore.

"Are you ready, Gore?" he demanded, in a loud voice that reached the ears of all the fellows near at hand, and brought them round in a crowd.

Gore backed away a step.

"Ready for what?" he asked.

"To come and have the gloves on with me."

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "Is Levison developing into a giddy hero? This is the first time I've ever heard you ask anybody to have the gloves on, my son."

"Gore was bullying me yesterday," said Levison, looking round. "He's bigger than I am, and he thinks I can't tackle him. That's why he does it. But I've made up my mind to have a try; and he's got to fight me."

There was a murmur of approval. Levison generally gained his ends, and paid off his grudges in ways that were dark and sly; and this open and courageous conduct made the fellows think much better of him. All eyes were turned upon Gore. He was expected to lead the way to the gymnasium with the utmost promptness. But he did nothing of the sort. He put his hands in his pockets, and backed away.

"I don't want any trouble with you, Levison," he said, in a low voice.

Levison laughed sneeringly.

"You should have thought of that before you ragged me yesterday," he said.

"I'm sorry!"

The juniors gasped. What was the matter with Gore? This sudden repentance looked rather too good to be true. It looked rather as if Gore were afraid to fight—though why he should be afraid to fight Levison was a mystery.

Levison laughed again, his most unpleasant laugh.

"Most bullies feel sorry, when they're called to account, and don't want to put up a fair fight," he remarked. "That's not enough for me. Are you ready?"

There was a long pause before Gore replied. The fellows were all looking at him very curiously.

"No!" he said at last.

"You're afraid?"

"I'm not."

"But you won't fight?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"Because I don't choose."

Levison advanced closer to him.

"You can't have it that way," he said. "You choose to bully, and you don't choose to fight. You can't expect to have it like that."

"Wathah not! It is quite wight of Levison to challenge you, Goah, and you are bound to fight or to offah an apology."

"I'm willing to apologise," said Gore, pale to the lips.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Bai Jove! That should be quite suffish, fwom one gentleman to another," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I'm waiting for you, Gore," said Levison quietly.

"I'm not going to fight you."

"Coward!"

A thrill ran through the crowd of juniors. Surely Gore would not take that quietly. But he did! His face was very pale, and his eyes had a hunted look in them. But the blow the word should have called forth did not come. Gore's hands remained down at his sides, and he backed away a pace further.

"Coward!" repeated Levison tauntingly.

"Coward! Cad!" said Mellish, taking courage to join in, as it became perfectly clear that Gore would not fight.

"Rotter! Yah!"

"Bai Jove! If you stand that, Goah, deah boy, I shall wegard you as a weptile!"

"What's the matter with you, Gore?" demanded Tom Merry.

Gore was silent.

Levison stepped towards him, and raised his hand. Gore half raised his own arm, and dropped it again.

Smack!

Levison's open hand smote him full across the face, and he staggered back. A deep red mark showed across the pale cheek.

The juniors drew a deep breath.

They expected to see Gore leap forward, hitting out; but he did not. He put up his hand to his cheek, and turned away.

He had taken the coward's blow—without replying.

Levison laughed tauntingly.

"Coward!"

"My hat!" said Tom Merry, in blank astonishment.

"What's the matter with Gore? He must be ill!"

"Oh, he's a coward!" said Mellish.

And he pushed up roughly against Gore, and sent him reeling. The bully of the Shell did not even look round at him.

"Bai Jove!"

"Let him alone, Mellish," said Tom Merry roughly.

"Whether he's a coward or not, you're not going to begin bullying. Shut up!"

And Mellish shut up.

George Gore went out into the old quad., and walked under the trees, his heart beating almost to suffocation; rage and chagrin and shame struggling in his breast. He was keeping his promise to his father—the promise upon which so much depended. But it was costing him dear.

Contemptuous looks met him on all sides—scornful looks and sneers. Fellows he had bullied jostled him when he passed them—fags called out taunting names from a safe distance, and afterwards ventured quite near to do so.

And Gore struggled with himself, and bore it quietly.

For the alternative was worse—the office, the desk, under his father's cold and pitiless eye, was always before his vision. Even this was better than that; and this would not last for ever. After four days he would be free again—but what were the four days to be like?

CHAPTER 17.

Very Rough on Gore.

GORE sat by himself in the Form-room that afternoon. Other fellows made plenty of room for him; nobody wanted to have much to do with Gore. He had earned for himself general contempt. As Monty Lowther remarked, if a fellow was born a coward perhaps he couldn't help it; but there was no need for him to be a bully as well. What Gore suffered, he had brought upon himself; no one would have discovered that he was a coward, if he had not started as a bully. No one felt sorry for him; the feelings towards him were of contempt and anger. For in taking a blow from a Fourth-Former, Gore was felt to have "let down" the Shell. It was a disgrace to the Form.

Gore, that afternoon, was about as thoroughly miserable as it was possible for any boy to be. He was a bully, but he was not a coward; but he had no choice excepting to lie down under the imputation. If he stated what promise he had made to his father, he knew that he would not be believed; it would be taken as an improbable invention to excuse his cowardice.

He could only grin and bear it.

But it was hard to bear. When the Shell came out after lessons, several Fourth-formers had something to say to Gore. They had burning recollections of pulled ears and twisted arms, and were not likely to let the bully of the Shell escape now that they believed him too cowardly to fight.

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Gore pushed his way through them, and went up to his study.

"Cad!"

"Coward!"

"Yah! White feather! Yah!"

The hoots and jeers followed the bully to his study. He went in, and closed the door, and sank down in a chair breathing hard. How was he to stand this? He was making a great sacrifice for the purpose of staying at St. Jim's. But would St. Jim's be worth staying at, at this price?

Skimpola came in. He blinked benevolently at Gore through his big spectacles.

"You seem to be having a somewhat unpleasant experience, my dear Gore," he said. "But pray console yourself. It is not your own fault that you are a coward; it is undoubtedly a strain in your blood, and is to be wholly attributed to the influence of heredity. If you would care to look up the subject in the hundred and fortieth chapter of Professor Balmgumpet's book on Heredity and Environment—dear me, how very singular that Gore should walk out of the study while I am speaking to him."

Gore went into the junior common-room.

A hiss greeted his appearance there.

Gore cast a savage glance round him. His temper was at boiling point, and he was dangerously near breaking out.

"You'd better keep out of here," exclaimed Crooke.

"You're a disgrace to the Form, and you are not wanted!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Gore angrily.

Crooke came towards him, Crooke had never risked a row with Gore before, but he was quite ready to risk one now.

"What's that?" he demanded, in a threatening tone.

"Shut up!" said Gore.

"Take that!"

Smack!

Crooke's fist came crashing into the burly junior's face, and Gore rolled on the floor. He jumped up in a fury, and clenched his fists, and rushed at Crooke. But he stopped before he reached him, and put his hands into his pockets, and walked out of the room.

A veil of derisive laughter followed him.

"Blessed if I ever saw anything like it," said Manners. "What can have come over Gore. He was always a bully, but I never knew he was an utter coward."

"Yass, wathah! I wogard him with feahful contempt." "He does seem to be a rotten worm," said Blake. "But I don't see piling on him because of that. Better let the poor brute alone."

Blake's chums agreed with him. But many fellows in the Lower School did not. Levison and his set did not give the bully of the Shell a moment's peace.

Gore spent some time that evening walking in the quad, keeping to himself. But when he entered the School House again, Levison & Co. were ready for him. The Shell fellow tramped upstairs to a chorus of jeers and sneers. He opened the door of his study—the room was a wreck. Furniture had been displaced or broken, glasses were smashed, drawers and boxes turned out, papers torn and scattered.

Gore gave a howl of wrath.

"Oh! The hounds! I'll smash them—I'll—"

He paused. He could do nothing, and the raggers knew that he would do nothing; although only Levison knew why. Gore turned out of the study with a groan. Down the passage a voice floated to his ears.

"Yah! Coward!"

Gore winced.

He moved along to Tom Merry's study, and tapped at the door and went in. The bully of the Shell had taken a resolve.

CHAPTER 18.

Tom Merry Makes a Stand!

THE Terrible Three were all at home, working at their prep. They stopped as George Gore came in; and their looks were not polite. They waited in grim silence for him to speak. Gore closed the door, and then he turned an almost haggard look upon the chums of the Shell.

"I want you fellows to help me," he said huskily.

"Help you out of the study?" asked Monty Lowther, rising.

"With pleasure."

"Shut up, Monty," said Tom Merry. "The poor beggar looks pretty down at the month. What do you want, Gore?"

"I—I don't know what to do," said Gore miserably. "I'm having a beast of a time now."

"Well, a fellow shouldn't be a coward as well as a bully, or a bully as well as a coward," said Manners.

Gore flushed.

"I suppose I've been a bit of a bully," he said. "But I'm not a coward, and I never was one. I—I—"

"Then why didn't you stand up to Levison?"

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"I couldn't."

"Why not?"

"I—I—it was a promise."

Monty Lowther grinned.

"That's rather too thin," he remarked. "You should think of a better one than that? You promised your dying grandmother, holding her thin white hand in yours—hey?"

Manners chuckled.

"No," said Gore; "I promised my pater."

"Oh! Your pater!" said Lowther. "I've seen your pater, and I don't see how you could work up a pathetic scene with him. Still, you never know. Does he do the 'come to my manly chest and weep on my bosom' bizney?"

"He's as hard as nails," said Gore miserably. "He's an awful bully himself, but he won't let anybody else be one. He's down on me because I'm a bully, he says. I suppose I've got my faults—"

"You never supposed a truer thing in your life," commented Monty Lowther.

"Well, he made me promise not to get into a fight of any kind for four days," said Gore. "I had to promise not even to defend myself if attacked. And if I don't keep my word, he's going to take me away from St. Jim's as soon as he comes back from Edinburgh. You see what's at stake."

Tom Merry whistled. Monty Lowther winked at the ceiling.

"You don't believe me?" said Gore.

"I don't," said Lowther.

"Same here," said Manners candidly. "Make up a better one."

"I believe you," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Oh, you're an ass, Tommy!"

"Look here, you chaps, we've seen Gore in plenty of fights before," said Tom Merry. "He's a bully, but I don't believe he's a coward. And his pater, from what I've seen of him, was just the man to make him make a promise like that. I believe that Gore's telling us the truth."

"Thank you!" said Gore gratefully. "It's the solid truth, every word of it—honest Injun. And it's put me in a horrible position. Levison must have been listening. I think—I remember father was speaking in the passage, after he'd left the study. Levison must know something, or he'd never dare to act as he's doing. He wants to score off me, or to drive me into doing something that will make my pater take me away. I don't know what to do. You fellows might help me—if you believe me."

"Oh, I believe you if Tommy does!" said Monty Lowther resignedly. "Anything to oblige."

"What can we do?" asked Tom Merry.

"I—I don't know. Advise me, or help me somehow," said Gore. "I—I depend on you. I can't stand this that's going on—I know I shall break out soon, and if I have a single fight in the next four days, I'm ruined!"

"My hat! It's rough!"

"It's a lesson not to be a rotten bully," said Manners. "It's all your own fault."

Gore groaned.

"I know it is. But that doesn't make it any pleasanter."

"No; I suppose it doesn't."

"Look here," said Tom Merry. "We can help you—but it will have to be a compact. At one time you turned over a new leaf, and became quite a decent chap. You've dropped back into the old ways. That's got to stop. If you're ready to promise us now, on your word of honour, to keep clear of bullying in the future, and be a decent chap, we'll stand by you."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther.

"I meant to do that, anyway," said Gore. "I—I meant to do it, I swear. I don't know what made me such an ass—but you watch me, if I get a chance, that's all."

"You promise, then?"

"Yes; honour bright!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry, rising. "Now, we'll let the whole House know the promise you've made to your father!"

Gore gasped.

"They'll pile on me more than ever, then, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not if they know that the Terrible Three are ready to fight all your battles for the next four days!" he replied.

"Oh! You mean that?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!" Gore's face was bright again now; a load was gone from his mind. "You're a jolly good sort, Tom Merry. When this is over, you shall see that I'm not the ungrateful brute you've thought me. You shall see it."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I think you'll keep your word," he said. "You've had lesson enough, anyway. Come on!"

And the Terrible Three and Gore walked downstairs.

They entered the junior common-room together. There was a hiss from a group of Fourth-Formers.

"Hallo, you rotten coward!" said Levison. "Have you made up your mind to fight yet?"

"Oh, he couldn't fight a white rabbit!" said Mellish. And there was a jeering laugh.

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "I have a few words to say! 'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!'"

"Rats!"

"Order!" said Blake. "Go ahead, Tommy!"

"Gore has explained to me that he's promised his pater to keep clear of rows for four days, hence his shirking trouble. Levison most likely knows it, or he wouldn't be so jolly brave all of a sudden!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a lie!" said Levison fiercely.

"What!" exclaimed Tom Merry, advancing towards him.

"I—I mean, you're mistaken!"

"That's better! Well, the case is as I say, and we have decided to see Gore through it. We've taken up the cause. Gore is going through the next four days without having any rows, but any fellow who tries to put upon him in any way will have to deal with us. If Levison is spoiling for a fight, he can select Mauners or Lowther or myself. He can take his choice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't want any row with you fellows!" said Levison sulkily.

"Then you'd better let Gore alone. If you say a single insulting word, or touch him, you will have to fight one of us, and that applies to every fellow present!"

"Bai Jove! I regard that as quite wight, and I fully approve of it!"

"Then it must be right!" said Blake. "The one and only Augustus has said it! The great chief has spoken!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I hope it's clearly understood?" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah; and I will back you up, deah boy!"

The common-room was in a buzz of discussion. Some of the fellows believed Gore's statement with regard to his promise to his father, and some did not. But there was one thing that all of them had to believe, and that was that the Terrible Three were backing up Gore, and that if Gore were ragged, there would be a serious fight on the hands of the ragger.

And after that Gore was left severely alone. The best fellows had not troubled him at all, and the others did not want trouble with the Terrible Three.

That day of torment had had its effect upon Gore, but the succeeding days were not like it. A calm peacefulness descended upon the bully of the Shell. He gave no cause of offence, and he received none. And it was very clear from Gore's manner that he remembered his promise to Tom Merry, and meant to keep it.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked to his chums. "Goah is becomin' quite decent, and I shall be quite sowwy if his governah takes him away. I can weally stand Goah now, if it wasn't for the colour of his neckties—weally, you know!"

On the fifth day came Mr. Gore.

The stout gentleman marched into the school with a hard, grim face, and a glance at him was sufficient to show that he expected to catch his son tripping. He was shut up with the Head for some five minutes, and then with Mr. Railton for

an equal length of time, and then with Gore's Form-master, the master of the Shell.

He came forth looking disappointed. Was it possible that he was disappointed because he had not caught Gore in fault? It was possible. He proceeded to ask questions of the prefects, but the prefects had the same report to give. Gore's conduct for four days had been exemplary—so far from entering in a row, he had been seen to take blows without returning them.

Mr. Gore finally dropped into his son's study. Gore met him with fear and trembling. He had kept his word, but his father was not a pleasant man to deal with. Mr. Gore regarded his son from under his heavy brows for some moments before he spoke to him.

"You have kept your promise, George?" he said.

"Yes, father."

"You have not fought with anyone, or struck a blow, since I saw you last?"

"No, father."

"Fortunately, the statements of the masters and the prefects bear out yours," said Mr. Gore grimly. "I believe you!"

"Thank you, father!"

"I shall keep my word, as you have kept yours, and allow you to remain at this school," said Mr. Gore.

Gore's face brightened up.

"Oh, thanks, father—thanks!"

"There is nothing to thank me for," said Mr. Gore; "and I warn you that I shall keep a careful eye on you in the future, and if I receive any more unfavourable reports on your conduct, George, it will be the worse for you!"

"I'm going to be very careful, and—"

"Mind you are! Good-bye!"

And Mr. Gore hurried off to catch his train.

Gore executed a cake-walk round the study in his glee, and then went out. He met Levison in the passage. The cad of the Fourth backed away.

"Hands off!" he exclaimed.

Gore gave him a grim look.

"You were spoiling for a fight a little while ago?" he remarked. "I'll come into the gym, now! You gave me the coward's blow! I'm ready to return it! Come on!"

"I—I—"

"You don't want to fight?" said Gore contemptuously.

"N-no!" muttered Levison.

"You treated me as you did, and you don't want to fight!" said Gore. "By Jove! I won't give you any choice about it! I'll smash you, and Crooke, too! I'll—"

"No, you won't!" broke in the quiet voice of Tom Merry, as the hero of the Shell came out of his study. "Let bygones be bygones, Gore! You've paid for being a bully—you deserved all you got! Let the whole matter drop!"

Gore hesitated for a moment. Then he showed plainly enough that his better nature was uppermost.

"Right you are!" he exclaimed. "You can cut, Levison!"

And Levison gladly "cut." Tom Merry linked his arm in Gore's, and they walked down the passage together. And that was a proud moment for Gore.

THE END.

("THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY" is the title of next Thursday's grand, new, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford. "DEEP SEA GOLD," our amazing new adventure story, will beat all records next week, so do not forget to order your copy of THE GEM Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

New Storyettes.

REAL PUSH.

He had motored over twenty miles to Little Pippleton to deliver his lecture to the Little Pippletonians on the "Art of Getting On."

As he proceeded with his subject he warmed to it, and by the time he reached the peroration he was red with enthusiasm.

"Effort is the keystone of success!" he cried. "The successful man is the man who strives persistently and consistently. His motto is 'Push, and keep on pushing,' for by that alone we may reach our goal. Push—"

A yokel in the back row burst into a fit of unseemly laughter.

"Ah," cried the lecturer, "you may laugh, but you, too, my friend, will have to push—"

"So'll you, I reckon, mister," cackled the man, "for there's half a dozen boys been an' pinched all yer petrol to light a bonfire with!"

LOGICAL CONCLUSIONS.

They were seated round the family tea-table—papa, mamma, little Nora, little Mary, and little Margery—tucking away at watercress and currant buns as hard as they could go. The conversation—in between the bites—turned to Ireland, and little Nora asked her papa what her name was in Irish.

"Noreen!" said papa.

"And what is mine?" asked little Mary.

"Maureen."

"And mine?" clamoured little Margery.

"Oh," answered papa, "I don't know what yours is!"

"Well," reflected the little girl, "if Nora is Noreen, and Mary is Maureen, I suppose I must be Margarine."

Shoe Dealer: "Here are a pair of boots that will suit you exactly in your dash to the Pole. How did you like the last pair I sold you?"

Arctic Explorer (reminiscently): "The best I ever tasted."

"My next Academy picture," said the artist, "will be entitled 'Driven to Drink.'"

"Ah! Some powerful portrayal of baffled passion. I suppose?"

"Not at all. It is a study of a four-wheeler being driven to a watering-trough."

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The First Three Instalments Explained Briefly.

Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde, chums at Weltsea College, are having a before-breakfast dip in the sea, when long, flexible steel arms, like the tentacles of some huge octopus, appear suddenly and mysteriously from the depths of the sea, and, seizing upon the chums, swiftly drag them down beneath the waves. Dick and Jack think their last moments have come as they are rushed down into the dark depths, when suddenly a trapdoor opens to receive them, and closes after them with a snap. Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde are in the power of Captain Flame, the Lord of the Undersea World, which he rules from his wonderful submarine motor-car, the Octopus. This amazing vehicle is Captain Flame's own invention, and enables him and his crew, which consists entirely of boys whom he has captured, just as he captured the chums of Weltsea College, to traverse the bed of the ocean as easily and rapidly as an ordinary motor-car travels over dry land.

The Octopus is bound for the Pacific, and while on the journey is forced to stop, owing to a breakdown of the engines. Captain Flame suggests a day's shooting under the sea, and immediately Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde consent to go with him, and are accompanied by Will Avery and Mopsa. Mopsa falls into a pit, and is at once surrounded by squids. Captain Flame and Dick Dauntless immediately go to his rescue, slashing at the squids with their swords. Suddenly Dick utters a warning cry, as his sword clashes against steel.

(Now read the next instalment of this breathless adventure serial.)

The Sea Cucumbers.

The next moment Dick Dauntless breathed more freely, as a voice, which he recognised as Jack Orde's, cried:

"Steady on there, or you'll be stabbing us!"

"Glad to hear you say so! Thought you were mermen or some other strange sword-armed creatures of the sea!" laughed Dick. "Seems to me our foes have made themselves scarce. I know I have not hit anything for the last three minutes."

"Vely much same here," agreed Mopsa.

"You're right, lads; the squids have gone, and, unless I am very much mistaken, the water is growing clearer," asserted Captain Flame.

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It was true.

The water on the sandy floor of the pit was growing clearer every minute.

Like mists rising above trees, the black waters ascended, until, at last, the searchlights blazed brightly through the blue sea.

"You all black debils, welly black debils," grinned Mopsa. The Octopians looked at each other and burst out laughing. It was as though they had been dipped into a lake of ink. Clothes, helmets, swords, guns, everything was stained as black as ebony.

Captain Flame had not joined in the boys' merriment.

He was looking round the pit with an anxious frown showing through the glass of his helmet.

His quick eye had already told him that they had only escaped one peril to encounter another, and perhaps a greater one.

Turning slowly on his heels, he flashed the light from his head-lamp round the rocky walls which hemmed them in on every side.

It was as he feared.

High above their heads a faint speck showed the hole through which they had entered, but no other exit presented itself.

They were in a trap, from which there was no visible means of escape, for the walls sloping towards the hole in the centre was absolutely unclimbable.

They stood at the base of an inverted funnel of solid rock.

Beckoning Dick Dauntless aside, Captain Flame pointed out the peril of their position.

"But surely, sir, there is some way out?" cried Dick.

"There may be, though I doubt if it is a way we will care to follow," was the reply. "Do you know where we are?"

"Except that we are underground somewhere, I have not the slightest idea," confessed Dick.

"We are in the crater of an extinct submarine volcano," explained the inventor solemnly, "and unless we are fortunate enough to find a blow hole similar to the one above us, we may never see the Octopus again."

"Why not remove our lead-soled boots, and float out?" suggested Dick.

"Because above our heads lurks certain death," was the startling reply. "Watch!"

As Captain Flame spoke, he aimed at the sloping roof, and pressed the trigger of his gun.

There was the usual reverberating report, and the next moment a horrible-looking monster, writhing in its death agonies, sank slowly to their feet.

It was not a fish, for it had no fins, nor was it a snake, as the alarmed boys at first believed, for its blunt head was provided with a huge, round, suckerlike mouth, inside which could be seen circle after circle of cruel, sawlike teeth.

"What a fearful monster! What is it?" asked Jack Orde, with a shudder.

"I cannot exactly say, but I believe it to be an enormous beche de mer or sea cucumber," replied the inventor.

"Whatever the creatures are I have often found them in caves beneath the sea. They fasten themselves by their broader ends to the roofs, and sides of places like this, and seize any luckless fish that comes within reach of their iron jaws, then their round teeth cut into their victim's flesh, and it is all over with it. I have seen a huge Southsea shark killed in a few seconds by one of these awful monsters. No, no, my lads, we must find some other way to the upper ground earth, for if we were carried within reach of one of those monsters, nothing could save us."

As he ceased speaking, Captain Flame led the way to the wall of rock that surrounded them followed by the now alarmed boys.

Presently the inventor halted, and gazed earnestly at some floating seaweed, which, borne onward by an invisible current, shot from out a hole near the floor of the pit, and, whirling round and round, was carried swiftly towards the opening above their heads through which they had entered.

The next moment Captain Flame flung himself on to the earth, crying:

"Down with you! Quick! For your lives!"

Instinctively the boys obeyed.

The precaution availed them nothing.

A wide stream of hot, almost boiling water, shot from out the cavernous opening near which they stood, and, raising them from the floor in a perfect pillar of sand, bore them, rolling over and over, towards the roof.

The heat was intense. And, gasping for breath, Dick Dauntless found himself being raised with fearful velocity, straight towards a row of the horrible sea cucumbers.

As he approached, the monsters extended their terrible suck-like mouths as though striving to draw him on to their sawlike teeth.

Fiercely Dick struggled to avoid those fearful heads.

The force of the stream was irresistible, and he had already given himself up for lost, when, to his unspeakable relief, the round, gaping mouths closed, and the monsters drew their hideous heads into their stout bodies as the hot water which had raised their supposed victim towards them, poured down their throats.

The next moment Dick felt himself pressed amongst their loathsome bodies.

But he no longer feared them.

He knew that whilst that intolerable heat remained, they would not touch him.

Besides, a swift glance had shown him Mopsa, Jack Orde, and Will Avery disappearing through the circular opening down which the little Chinaman had so unfortunately been hurled.

Overcoming his loathing of the sea cucumbers, Dick Dauntless pressed his hands against the body of the nearest. Exerting all his strength, he thrust himself towards the opening, and, caught by the fierce current, was hurled like a stone from a catapult into the outer sea.

As he passed, Jack Orde and Will Avery, who were peering anxiously into the surging stream below, caught him by the legs, and drew him down.

Breathless, and almost overcome with heat, Dick flung himself on to the weed-covered ground, revelling in the cool water which flowed around him.

Suddenly he looked up.

"Where is Captain Flame?" he demanded anxiously.

Will Avery shook his head.

"He is still in that awful place below there," he declared.

Dick Dauntless staggered to the edge of the pitlike opening.

The thought of Captain Flame, helpless in the maw of one of the fearful denizens of the cave, filled his heart with horror.

Careless of the danger that might await him, he raised his hands above his head, and plunged head-foremost through the opening.

Dick Dauntless was brave, but not foolhardy.

Directly he felt the waters close in upon him, as though he had been seized in a vice, and found himself being borne with incredible swiftness downwards, he feared he had thrown his life away for nothing.

But regrets were unavailing.

No earthly power could stop him now.

Down he went, passing like a lightning-flash through the funnel-like cave, to find himself being drawn down a pipelike passage that apparently led into the very bowels of the earth.

Once his heart stood still as his head came in collision with the roof of the passage with a force that made his ears ring again, for he feared lest the blow should have broken the glass of his helmet.

But the tough, pliable glass resisted the impact, and, to save himself from a similar danger in the future, Dick embraced his head with his arms during the whole of the time that he was in the grip of that resistless stream.

After a short time—it seemed an eternity to the terrified boy—he found himself on the outer edge of a huge whirlpool, from the centre of which shone occasional flashes of many-coloured flame, evidently reflected from some distant fire.

Striking out with all his might, Dick Dauntless put up a gallant fight for life.

Instinctively he knew that if he was drawn into that glowing whirlpool, he was doomed, so, swimming as he had never swum before, he strove to force his way out of the whirlpool's grasp.

Suddenly he started, and instinctively loosened his sword in its sheath. Something had brushed against his legs.

The next moment he thrust back his weapon, and, forgetful of his own danger, was swimming with all his strength after the living body of Captain Flame, which was being tossed round and round at the mercy of the waves.

How Dick Dauntless managed it he never knew.

All he was conscious of was one fierce, ceaseless, heart-

breaking struggle against the waves; then, with a sigh of relief, he found himself, panting and well-nigh spent, but with Captain Flame's unconscious body held tight in his arms, on a soft bed of sand just out of reach of the fierce vortex which had so nearly swallowed him.

Slowly Captain Flame opened his eyes.

He smiled faintly when he saw Dick's anxious face pressed close to his own.

"Good boy—brave lad!" he murmured; then, struggling to a sitting position, looked around him.

Man of iron though he was, he shuddered as his eyes fell upon the whirling vortex.

"Further—further away!" he muttered, in a weak, faint voice. "Beware the reflux!"

Exhausted by the effort, the inventor lapsed into unconsciousness.

Vague though Captain Flame's words were, Dick Dauntless guessed their meaning.

The surging forth of the waters which had so miraculously hurled his comrades and himself from the funnel-like pit, their irresistible return, showed that, for some unknown reason, the sea was being drawn into the bowels of the earth, and hurled forth at regular intervals.

There was no time to waste in vain surmises.

Raising Captain Flame in his arms, Dick staggered towards where a rocky wall forbade escape in that direction.

But barely had he taken a dozen steps ere an earth tremor, accompanied by a noise like the artillery of a thousand battle-ships fired in a Royal salute, seemed to shake sea and rock alike.

He was hurled to the ground, but, staggering to his feet, glanced wildly behind him.

The sight which met his gaze seemed to freeze his heart's blood.

The whirlpool was gone, but in its place appeared a wild, surging waste of lurid, fire-redened waters.

Even as he gazed, the terrible flood was parted as a huge mound, filled with wreaths of steam, rose in its centre.

Larger and larger it grew, until it seemed to reach as far as Dick's eyes could pierce.

The tremors increased a hundredfold. The ground swayed like a ship in the trough of a stormy sea; then, with startling suddenness, a deafening report thundered on every side, and a wild cry of horror burst from Dick's lips as he saw the solid wall of rock before him crumble before his eyes, whilst huge masses of rock, falling from the roof of the cavern, buried themselves in the sand to right, to left, in front, behind him.

A Fearful Climb.

Expecting every moment to be crushed by one of the falling pieces of rock or shrivelled to a cinder by the fearful flames that played around him, Dick Dauntless clung bravely to the limp body of Captain Flame.

Pale, but dauntless to the end, he awaited the death which seemed inevitable.

Suddenly an even louder report than that which had half deafened him shortly before rang out.

The next moment he was lifted, as though by a giant hand, and hurled at breathless speed straight towards a gap torn in the side of the submarine mountain by the first explosion.

Rolled over and over, tossed this way and that like a feather in a whirlwind, Dick and his burden were carried far out from the mountain, the chasm through which he had been hurled closing with a noise like thunder directly he had passed through.

As his speed through the water diminished, he began to sink. Turning his searchlight, which still blazed as brightly as ever, downwards, he found he was sinking into an enormous gulf, so deep that the beams of his lamp failed to find its bottom.

The law of falling bodies in the sea is exactly opposite to that on land. In the air, the further one falls the quicker he moves; in the sea, the deeper the fall the slower the descent, and soon Dick found his downward progress so slow that he had a difficulty in persuading himself that he was moving at all.

The pressure on his body was awful, and realising that he could not hope to live if he dropped much further, he braced himself for yet another fierce struggle for life.

A little to his left he could just see a dark, rugged wall of rock, evidently the side of the chasm into which he had been hurled.

Tightening his grip on Captain Flame, Dick leaned in the direction he wanted to go, and, though every movement caused him excruciating pain, half swam, half scrambled towards the face of the rock.

Again and again a feeling of utter exhaustion seemed to render further effort impossible, but with that unconquerable

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determination which is the peculiar birthright of Britishers, he persevered, and was rewarded by reaching a narrow ledge, some two feet in width, on which he sank with a sigh of relief, and, despite the peril of his position, dropped into a sound, dreamless sleep.

Two hours later Dick Dauntless was awakened by what he at first took to be the subterranean thunder which had preceded the volcanic eruption, but when the sound was repeated, he felt convinced that it came from the throat of some living creature in deadly peril.

Wondering what new peril the future might have in store, Dick listened intently.

Again that fear-laden cry boomed forth.

It came from somewhere beneath him.

Peering over the edge of the plateau on which he had slept, he gazed upon a sight such as surely no living human being had ever seen before.

By the light of a lurid glare, the source of which Dick Dauntless could not so much as guess, he saw a wide, rock-strewn valley some five hundred feet beneath him. Along this valley strange monsters, like misshapen shadows, were hastening, their backs turned to the entrance to the valley, where the glow was brightest.

In the centre of the valley, one huge hind-leg pinned beneath a mighty rock as big as a house, which had evidently been hurled from the shattered mountain, was an enormous creature—whether animal or reptile Dick could not determine—whose fearful bellows of pain, rage, and fear had awakened him.

Its huge body, quite two hundred feet in length, was protected by a row of enormous spikes, which reached from the tip of its long, thick tail to its enormous head, and terminated in three horns, the smallest of which was as big round as the mast of a full-rigged ship.

Now and again the monster would lash out with its tails, sending the huge deep-sea creatures, as big as elephants, rolling to right and left as though they were flies, as it tugged and pulled at its imprisoned leg in a vain attempt to break free.

So engrossed was Dick Dauntless with this strange and terrible monster, that it was not until a loud hissing, like hot iron plunged into water, reached his ears that he realised the danger from which these undreamt-of inhabitants of the lower seas were fleeing.

Looking in the direction from whence the sound came, he saw, to his horror, a huge wall of molten lava slowly creeping down the valley.

It was a wonderful and an impressive sight.

The wave of fire was at least sixty feet in height.

From its glowing summit arose clouds of bubbles laden with steam, which burst as they reached the cooler waters above.

Already the heat was intense, and Dick realised that when that fearful molten mass was beneath him it would be more than flesh and blood could stand.

Eagerly he cast his eyes up the jagged face of the cliff, and found to his joy that, difficult though the path, it was not unclimbable.

His sleep had renewed his strength, and after a moment's reflection he determined to make the attempt.

With his own and Captain Flame's belt he fastened the unconscious inventor to his back, then, with a final glance at the approaching wall of lava, commenced his hazardous climb.

Not for a moment did Dick Dauntless hide from himself the peril that beset his every step.

A single slip, and he would be precipitated into the wall of molten lava.

He had not the remotest idea how far he had to climb.

All he knew was that every foot surmounted would be a foot further from the overpowering heat cast forth by the raging fire beneath him.

Laden as he was, Dick Dauntless could never have surmounted the almost precipitous face of the cliff had it been on land.

But at that depth the pressure of the water around pressed him close to the cliff, and thus enabled him to take advantage of projections which in the open air would not have offered foothold to a cat.

Foot by foot, yard by yard, Dick Dauntless bore Captain Flame up the precipice, until at length, with limbs that seemed about to fail him, his head throbbing as though the bloodvessels in his brain must surely burst, he reached the top, and flung himself down with a weary sigh on the seaweed-covered rocks of the upper plateau.

Then his greatly-tried powers of endurance gave way.

He was dimly conscious of a wild, fearful, pain-laden bellow from the darker depths of the valley, which proclaimed that the monster had met its doom, then the sea-

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scape swam around him, and he fell unconscious across the form of the man he had risked so much to save.

Two hours later Jack Orde, Will Avery, and Mopsa found them on the dizzy edge of the chasm, and making a litter with their guns and belts, carried them back to the Octopus.

The Bully's Punishment.

Dick Dauntless was little the worse for his thrilling adventures, but Captain Flame was confined to his bunk for several days, during which the Octopus continued on her southward way, at greatly reduced speed, lest a sudden jar should disturb the patient.

The chums soon noticed the difference in their companions made by the captain's absence.

Both Harry Monston and Karl Munchen threw all thoughts of discipline to the winds, and absolutely refused to work save when Mr. MacIntyre was actually with them, and this, as his engines occupied the greater part of his time, was not often.

It was the evening of the third day after Captain Flame had been confined to his bunk that Dick Dauntless hastened from the chart-room, where he had been watching the life of the sea through the plate-glass walls, into the general room, summoned thither by low moans and occasional bursts of sobbing.

He was alone, for Jack Orde, Will Avery, and Jack Allstraw were in the engine-room, taking lessons in mechanics from the engineer, for it was Captain Flame's policy that every boy should thoroughly understand the working of the Octopus, so as to be able to prove of use in case of emergency.

On the threshold of the general room Dick came to a dead halt. The sight which met his eyes made his blood boil in his veins.

Suspended some eighteen inches from the floor by his pig-tail, which was fastened to an iron ring in the ceiling, was Mopsa. The Chinaman's face was contorted with pain; large tears chased each other down his cheeks; now and again low moans forced their way from his obstinately compressed lips.

He was evidently suffering terribly, but he bore the pain with the stoicism of his race.

Charlie Fleet hung from a similar ring some four feet away. The rope that held him passed round his waist. His feet could scrape against the floor.

At the moment of Dick's entrance, Karl Munchen and Harry Monston had grasped the trembling youngster by the heels. Drawing him back as far as the rope would allow, they then sent him swinging at the Chinaman, who made frantic efforts to escape the impact, whilst Charlie, beside himself with terror, waved his arms about, careless of the fact that his elbows, knees, and fists poured blow after blow on to his fellow sufferer.

"Go it, you Kilkenny cats! Fight it out!" roared Monston.

"Jah, Herr Mopsa, is dat to your liking?" yelled Karl Munchen, dancing round the swaying boys, and uttering peals of cruel, heartless laughter.

The next moment a loud howl of pain burst from his own lips, as he was sent rolling on the floor by a blow from Dick Dauntless's indignant fist.

Then Harry Monston sprang aside, in a vain attempt to avoid the avenger's charge.

He was just half a second too late, and, receiving the well-merited blow between the eyes, sprawled heavily on the top of the amiable German.

"Lie there, you cowards! Next time you had better inflict your torments on someone better able to protect themselves," cried Dick, as he cut Charlie Fleet down.

With a grateful cry the youngster clung to Dick's arm.

"Don't let them touch me again, Dauntless; I can't bear any more," he sobbed. "Before you came in Munchen and Monston were thrashing us with ropes-ends because we would not fight."

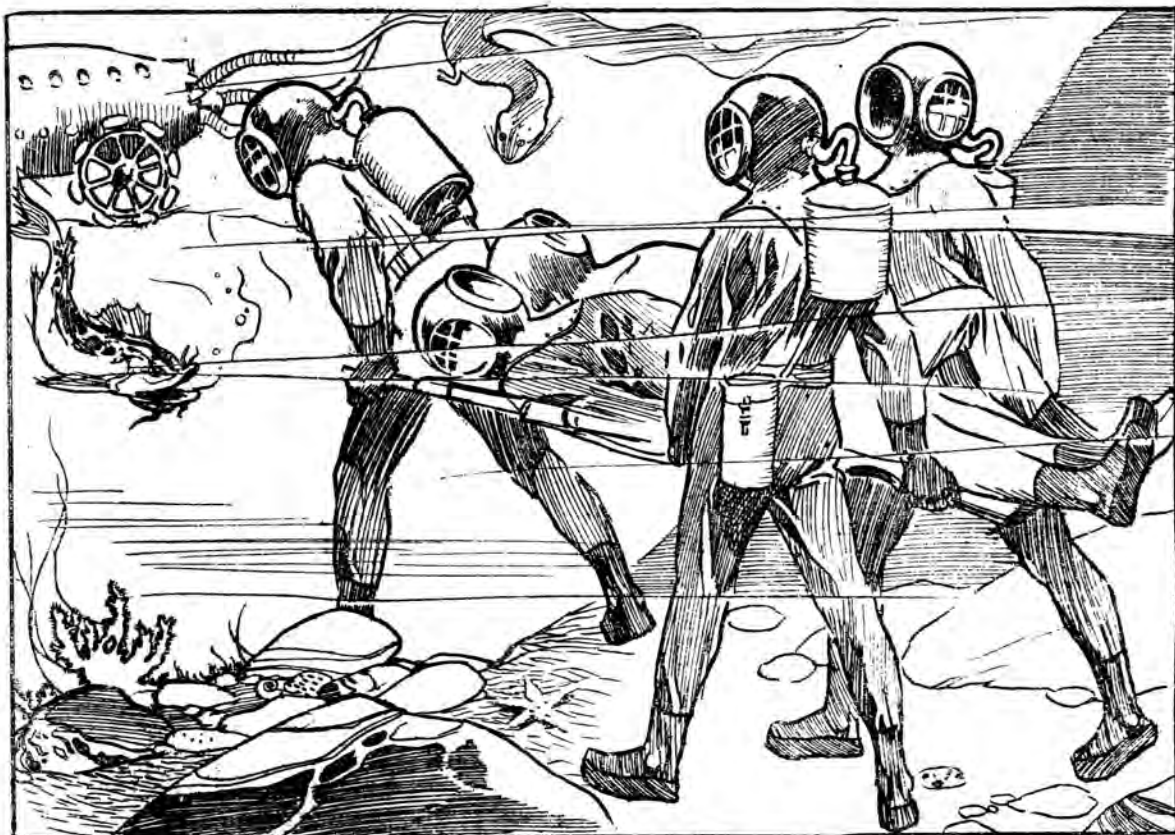
"The brutes!" ejaculated Dick indignantly, adding, as the two, after exchanging a hurried whisper, rushed at him: "What, want some more, eh? Well, you have come to the right shop for it!"

As he spoke he backed to the nearest wall, then, dodging, allowed Monston to bark his knuckles against the steel bulkhead, and sent Karl reeling back with a scientifically planted blow that put the German lad's left eye out of action for the remainder of the fight.

Baffled in their first attack, the two bullies drew back.

"Velly good, Dauntless; knock their shoulders off their heads!" shouted Mopsa, delighted at finding the tables turned on his oppressors.

"You shut up, you yellow-skinned freak!" roared Monston, springing at the Chinaman and striking him across the mouth with the back of his hand.



Making a litter with their guns and belts, the three carried the unconscious Captain Flame and Dick Dauntless back to the submarine motor-car. (See page 24.)

The next moment he was on the floor again, sent there by a left-hander straight from Dick's shoulder.

Then Dick was "sent to grass" by a cowardly blow in the back from Harry Munston, who, scrambling to his feet, had hastened to his chum's assistance.

Swift as lightning Munston fell, doubled up by a well-planted kick in the middle from Mopsa's swinging foot.

"How your little Mary likee that?" grinned Mopsa, grinning, with a loud shriek of alarm: "Lookee out, Dick!"

The warning came in the nick of time.

Snatching up a heavy ruler from the floor, Karl rushed at Dick, with hatred in his heart and injury in his eyes.

If Dick had attempted to have turned he would have been caught at a disadvantage, so he did the next best thing by dropping on his hands and knees, and allowing the infuriated German to sprawl headlong over him.

But though Dick Dauntless thus skilfully disposed of one foe, another remained. Ere he could rise to his feet Munston was upon him.

Pressed face downwards on the floor, Dick strove in vain to rise.

He might perchance have got rid of the English boy, but ere he could do so Karl Munchen rolled over on the floor, and seized him by the throat.

In vain Dick exerted all his strength to release his throat from the other's grasp.

Karl Munchen tore at him like a wild beast, whilst Munston knelt on his back, and drummed mercilessly upon his ribs with both fists.

Dick's senses reeled. His eyes seemed starting from his head. It felt as though the shower of blows was bending his ribs in one at a time.

"Munston! Munchen!"

As the angry voice rang out from the doorway the German released his hold. With a cry of alarm Munston sprang to his feet.

Standing in the doorway, his white face set stern and determined, was Captain Flame.

Pale and trembling the culprits regarded the angry inventor with terror-stricken eyes.

"Oh, he! Oh, he! De bad fit is on him!" moaned Mopsa. Little Charlie Fleet, who had sprung to the door with a

cry of joy directly he had seen Captain Flame, drew back with an ill-suppressed cry of fear.

Dick Dauntless gazed at the inventor, and felt the blood chilled in his veins.

To a casual observer Captain Flame might have seemed as calm and collected as ever. But it was his eyes which had cooled the fierce passions of Munchen and Munston, as water quenches fire, which had drawn that terror-stricken cry from Charlie Fleet, and had brought a sense of unwelcome fear to Dick Dauntless's brave heart.

Sparks of living fire seemed to flash from them. Letting his eyes rest for a moment on Mopsa's swinging form, he pointed the first and little finger of his right hand at the guilty couple, as he thundered:

"That is your doing, cowards, brutes, without feeling or sense, that you are!"

He took a step nearer the bullies. With wild wails of terror they fell on their knees.

They tried in vain to plead for mercy. They could not form a word with their parched lips.

Another step, and Captain Flame was almost upon them. Raising his long, white hands above his head, until they looked like the talons of some fearful bird of prey, he towered over the shrinking boys.

A piercing shriek of despair broke from Karl's lips. It was answered by a fearful, mirthless laugh, so cruel, so hate-laden was it that Dick shuddered.

He forced himself to look into the inventor's pale, rage-contorted face.

What he read there caused him to spring forward and thrust himself between Captain Flame and the objects of his wrath.

"Captain Flame, sir, what would you do? For Heaven's sake don't kill them!" he cried, scarce knowing what he said.

A sudden contortion, as though a spasm of unbearable pain had shot through his frame, crossed the inventor's face. His eyes shone with fearful intensity upon the daring boy; then, without a word, he wheeled round and strode from the room.

A sigh of unspeakable relief burst from Dick's lips. He glanced at Karl and Munston.

Shivering to such an extent that their teeth rattled like

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castanets, they were creeping rather than walking to the engine-room.

A whimpering cry from Mopsa reminded him that the little Chinaman was still suspended by his long hair to the iron ring.

Drawing a chair to beneath the suffering little creature, he sprang on to it, and raised him under one arm whilst he disengaged his pigtail from the ring.

The mannikin was trembling in every limb. His wizened face was a fearful pale yellow.

"What Mopsa tell you, Dick?" he asked, in an awestricken whisper. "Captain Flame one big debbil when he got bad fit on him."

Dick nodded. Captain Flame's face, as he had seen it transformed into that of a fiend, rose before his eyes.

"Where are those two going?" he asked, looking after his late foes, who were in the act of passing through the doorway that led to the engine-room.

The little Chinaman looked fearfully around him.

"To their punishment, perhaps to their deaths," he whispered, in hushed, awed tones.

Dick Dauntless inquired no further. Truth to tell, he was too exhausted to take much interest in anything just then, and having escorted Mopsa and Charlie to their dormitory, he walked thoughtfully to the chart-room.

Captain Flame was standing before the plate-glass wall, gazing straight before him, motionless as a statue.

As Dick entered the inventor turned, and the boy was struck with the fearful change that had taken place in his visage.

His kindly smile was gone; his usual calm had deserted him. His face was that of an angry fiend rather than the face of a human being.

Without a word the inventor walked swiftly from the room, and though he fixed his eyes on the boy as he passed, Dick knew he did not see him.

The next morning, when Dick Dauntless entered the general-room, he found all the boys, except Harry and Karl, gathered round the notice-board.

Wondering what new order had been issued during the night, he approached, and read as follows:

"Karl Munchen and Harry Monston to undergo forty-eight hours in the engine-room without water. Richard Dauntless to be second in command of the Octopus."

Pledged!

For several days after the fight in the general-room, Captain Flame wandered about the Octopus enveloped in a moody silence, which none dare attempt to break.

A heavy cloud seemed to have settled on the moving house. Even Mopsa, under the depressing influence of the captain's "bad time," had no heart for his usual jokes and mischievous pranks.

It was as though the Octopus was peopled with ghosts, so silently did the occupants move about, talking in whispers and shrinking away into dark corners whenever the inventor approached.

A sense of fear seemed to hang round the grim, silent, and lowering man.

The depression was not lessened by the reappearance of Karl and Harry, who emerged from the engine-room broken, spiritless relics of their former selves.

Nor was that the worst.

Even when, under the influence of rest and good food, they slowly recovered their former condition, their whole natures seemed to have become soured. Refusing to mix with the other boys, they spent every moment of their spare time whispering apart.

Now and again Dick Dauntless caught them glancing at him with looks of concentrated hatred that filled him with a vague uneasiness.

In vain he attempted to gain their friendship. Gibes and insults met his approaches.

"All right, you fellows; if you don't want to be friends, I am not going to force myself upon you," he said at last, after the two had literally turned their backs on him whilst he was speaking.

With a snarl like that of a wild beast Karl Munchen turned upon him, crying:

"Friends! Do you think Harry and I would be friends with the jumped-up jackanapes who has been put over our heads?"

"If Dick Dauntless has been made second in command, it was because he deserved it. Which of you would have stuck to Captain Flame when he was unconscious, and have brought him safely out of that awful chasm?" cried Jack Orde, up at arms in defence of his chum.

"Neither of us. We would rather have left him to die, and have returned home rejoiced to think that a cruel tyrant was no more," hissed Karl Munchen, in low, guarded tones.

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"You think a great deal of him now. Wait until you have been on the Island of Lost Hopes. Wait until you have seen the works, and the hopeless ones slaving out their lives in the mines. Who is this Captain Flame, that he should steal us from our friends, should keep us shut up in this moving prison against our wills?"

He paused to recover breath, then added, more vehemently than ever, though in lower tones:

"But I tell you he will not tyrannise over us much longer. There are brave hearts on the island who have sworn that—"

He ceased speaking, his chin dropped almost to his chest. His face grew livid, and he trembled in every limb, as his haggard eyes gazed in mute despair upon the stern form of Captain Flame, which stood framed in the doorway.

A silence as of the grave filled the room. All eyes were turned upon the inventor. A sense of coming tragedy filled the air.

Suddenly a low laugh escaped Captain Flame's lips.

"Plain speaking, Herr Karl Munchen," he cried, and though there was a ring of menace in his tones, Dick Dauntless rejoiced to hear that he spoke more like himself than he had heard him since the fight in the general-room. "There are new graves on the island since we were there last. Perhaps, who knows, yet another may be waiting for one of us!"

A moan of terror burst from the German lad's lips. He essayed to speak, perhaps to excuse himself.

But Captain Flame silenced him with a look, and beckoning Dick and Jack to follow, led the way into the chart-room.

Closing the door behind him, he placed a hand on either boy's shoulders.

"I need not warn you not to let the vapourings of Karl Munchen disturb you," he declared. "I am what man's injustice has made me—one with a mission, to further which it is necessary that I should employ many men. What and who these men are you will understand when we reach the island. Until then, are we friends?"

Dick Dauntless glanced at the pale, calm, determined face, looking so kindly into his own, and impulsively held out his hand.

Captain Flame took it in his own.

"It is well, lad; you saved my life, and I would be loth to lose you," he said, with more emotion than Dick had believed him capable of showing. "I make you this offer. We are within a day's run of the Cape of Good Hope; I will land you there with sufficient wealth to make you both rich men for life, or you shall share whatever fortune Fate has in store for me. Take time to consider, lads, for mind, your decision once given will be irrevocable."

Dick Dauntless would have spoken, but Captain Flame held up his hand.

"Stop!" he cried impressively. "It is but fair that I should tell you something of the life I lead—the life that you must share if you remain on the Octopus. It is a life of peril, a life of adventure, a life of devotion to duty, the very nature of which you may not know. But I tell you, boy, the welfare of a great people is in my hands, and that the task to which you will be pledged will be the noblest to which a man can devote his life. Death will ever be at our elbows. When we rise in the morning we will not be able to say if our next sleep will not be the long one which knows no awakening. When we retire to rest none can say if we will ever wake again. Does not the prospect appal you?"

"No!" was the simultaneous reply of both boys.

"Then let me know your minds within an hour."

"Mine is already made up. I will stick to you through thick and thin," interrupted Dick Dauntless.

"And you, Jack?" demanded Captain Flame, turning to Orde.

"I stick to Dick!" was the youngster's reply.

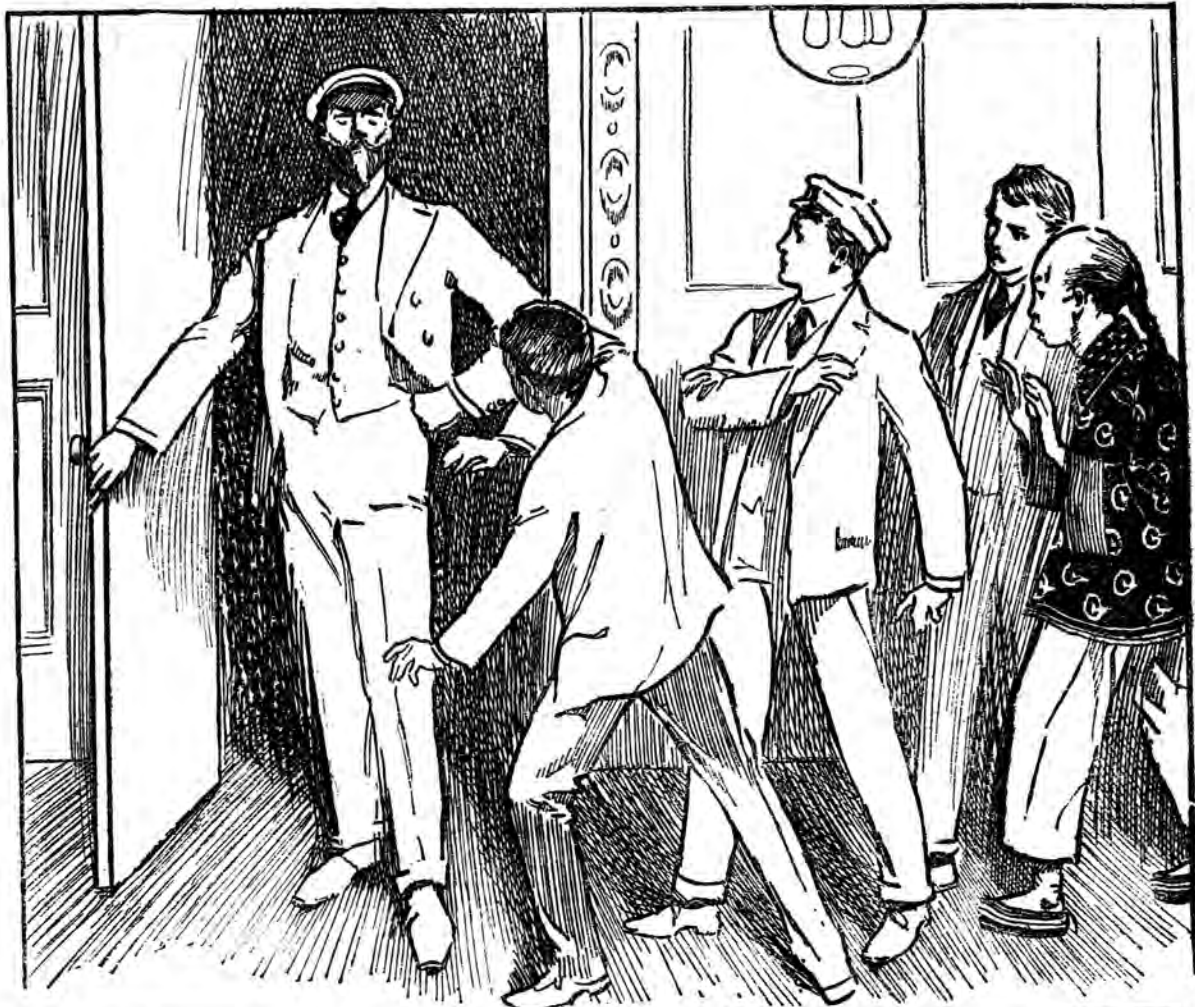
"Bravely spoken!" cried Captain Flame, the satisfaction that shone from his eyes showing how much he appreciated the boys' expressions of loyalty. "And I, in turn, promise to deal faithfully and rightly by you, and when my mission ends—as end it shall—in victory to the cause of right, you shall share my triumph!"

He paused once more, and the gleam of happiness which had lightened his face faded, to be replaced by the only look of hesitation Dick Dauntless ever saw on those strong features.

"And when my evil hour—what Mopsa calls my 'bad time'—is upon me, think of what I have suffered, and judge me not," he said, almost pleadingly.

With a sudden movement he tore off his upper garments, and, turning his back to the astonished boys, showed that it was crossed and recrossed by long, white scars.

Without a word of explanation he replaced his clothes, then said in his ordinary tones:



"But I tell you," said Karl Munchen, "Captain Flame will not tyrannise over us much longer. There are brave hearts on the island who have sworn that—" He ceased speaking suddenly, his chin dropped almost on his chest. His haggard eyes gazed in mute despair upon the stern form of the commander of the submarine motor-car, which stood framed in the doorway. (See page 86.)

"Come, lads, we have been confined far too long in the Octopus. What do you say to stretching our legs a bit? Bring your guns in case we run across anything worth shooting."

From Peril to Peril.

"Tired, Charlie?" asked Dick Dauntless of the youngest Octopian.

"Not a little bit," declared the youngster readily. "But aren't we getting rather a long way from the Octopus?" he added, glancing uneasily towards where the searchlight of the moving house shone dim and indistinct in the distance.

They had left the Octopus about an hour before, and, pairing off, had set out to explore the ocean depths in search of sunken treasure.

Dick Dauntless had chosen Charlie Fleet to accompany him, and to carry any game he might chance to shoot.

Everyone had taken the opportunity of a ramble over the uneven bottom of the ocean.

Even Mr. MacIntyre had been induced to leave his beloved engines to take care of themselves for once.

The Octopus was absolutely deserted.

None anticipated danger to her. Who was there to interfere with her in those untrodden depths?

Dick glanced carelessly towards the car.

"Perhaps we are, but we can still see her searchlight, so we are not disobeying orders," he replied, in answer to Charlie's question.

As Dick spoke he looked towards a gully, its banks overgrown with bright green seaweed.

As Charlie had intimated, the Octopus was certainly some

distance away, but surely there would be no harm in exploring that beautiful and inviting sea-glade.

Strange forms darting about the seaweed stalks at the bottom of the glade decided him.

They were evidently fish of some unknown species, and he determined to carry one back to the Octopus.

Signing Charlie Fleet to keep behind him, Dick descended the sloping bank with his gun at the ready, then pressed eagerly forward, knee deep in the swaying weeds.

Suddenly he threw his gun to his shoulder, and pressed the trigger, as a strange creature, with a body some eighteen inches in length, long, grasshopper-like legs, at least twice as long as its body, sprang from out the weeds at his feet and fled through the water, its long legs stretched out behind it.

Dick had by this time grown an adept with his weapon, and pierced by the bullet the grotesque little creature sank dead amongst the weeds.

Dick picked the creature up, and threw it to Charlie, saying:

"Here, kiddie, put it in your bag, it may be good to eat. At any rate, the captain will like to skin it for his collection."

"What is its name, Dick?" asked Charlie, as he obeyed.

"The Water Wallaby," replied Dick, giving it the first name he could think of.

And Water Wallaby the long-legged jumpers were called ever afterwards, for they proved delicious eating, with flesh more nearly approaching deer's meat than anything yet found in the forests beneath the sea.

(Another long instalment of this thrilling adventure story next week.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 187.

NEXT WEEK: "THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

and

"DEEP SEA GOLD."

By REGINALD WRAY.

ORDER EARLY!

OUR NEW WEEKLY FEATURE



Next Thursday.

"THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY."

This is the title for next week's splendid long, complete school tale, dealing with the further adventures of Tom Merry & Co. Martin Clifford has written about a new-comer to St. Jim's—as the title suggests—and you will be interested from the first chapter to the last, when you read of the stirring adventures which befall.

"THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY."

Please do not fail to place an early order for your copy of the GEM Library.

Held Over.

Many readers may be disappointed this week because there is no article on this—their page, as owing to want of space, I have been obliged to hold it over until next Thursday. My friends have so inundated me with letters and suggestions that I am anxious to reply to as many as possible, and so have devoted a whole page to them this week.

A Good Suggestion.

"Dear Editor,—Just a line to tell you how I enjoy reading the GEM every week. It is simply fine. In my opinion there are no books on the market for boys half so good as the old GEM, and its companion 'The Magnet.' I know I should find the week jolly dull without having these two ripping libraries to look forward to on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

"I can find no fault with them, but I would like to make a suggestion, if it would not make you angry with me. My idea is, could you run two complete stories each week in one of the papers, the GEM or 'The Magnet,' instead of one and a serial? Not that I don't like the serials. I think they are ripping, but a rattling complete story about the subject of various sports, for instance, would be absolutely A1, coming in the same book as the Tom Merry or Harry Wharton stories. Please don't think I am complaining, dear Editor, but perhaps you could find out from your other readers how my idea would go down.

"With best wishes,

"Your faithful reader,

"HARRY S."

The above strikes me as being a good suggestion, which might be carried out in future numbers of the GEM; but I should like to know what the rest of my friends think of it.

A Reader's Plot.

A constant reader of "The Magnet" Library, our popular companion paper, writes me a letter, in which he takes the trouble to outline a complete plot round which he suggests that popular Frank Richards should weave one of his famous stories of Greyfriars School. This is very praiseworthy of my reader, and I am very grateful for any suggestions or ideas; but in connection with this particular one I must point out to him that his plot bears a very close resemblance to that contained in No. 172 of "The Magnet" Library, the story being entitled "The School on Strike." This seems to be a very curious coincidence, and perhaps my friend, for some reason, failed to read that particular number of his favourite paper. In any case, I am much obliged to him for his letter, and hope to hear from him again.

A Chat Page in "The Magnet."

In a long and welcome letter, a Liverpool reader of the GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries makes an interesting suggestion. After praising our lively companion paper in the most generous manner, and enumerating all his favourite

characters, he appeals to me to start a Chat Page in "The Magnet," just as I have done in the GEM.

I wonder what "Magnet" readers in general think of my Liverpool reader's suggestion? Of course, all my chums of the GEM also read "The Magnet," so that I know I am appealing to the right public to tell me whether they wish my correspondent's suggestion carried out or not. Perhaps my chums will kindly drop me a postcard giving their opinions on the question. My Liverpool chum also requests me to ask if some London boy or girl reader will write to him and give him their opinion of "The Magnet" Library. Here is my chum's address: Master E. J. Nelis, 177, Lincolne Road, Litherland, Liverpool, North End.

One of the Right Sort.

Here is a postcard I recently received from a reader who is evidently one of the "right sort":

"Norwich.

"Dear Editor,—I am a constant reader of your famous paper, and I am trying my hardest to get all who are non-readers to get it. I keep passing it round to several chums, and all who read it vote the new serial better than the last.

G. B."

Thanks, G. B. If each of my readers would do me as good a turn as you do, the GEM would be even better known than it is at present, which is saying a great deal.

More Back Numbers Wanted.

I am constantly getting requests from readers for back numbers of the GEM and "Magnet" Libraries, which, being out of print, cannot be obtained from these offices. All I can do, therefore, for the applicants is to publish their requests, together with their names and addresses, on the chance of some fellow-reader being able to oblige them. This week I, Houghton, of 11, Zenoria Street, East Dulwich, S.E., and L. Wells, of 113, Cator Street, Peckham, S.E., are both anxious to procure back numbers of the GEM, the former desiring "very old" numbers—presumably the halfpenny ones; the latter, any number below No. 160.

Measurements of a Cricket Bat.

C. B. F., of Twickenham, writes to inquire whether there are any hard and fast rules laid down by the M.C.C. as to the measurements of a cricket bat, and if so, what the correct dimensions are. Naturally, C. B. F., the measurements of a cricket bat are confined to strict limits, otherwise who knows what freakish implements would be turned out by some enterprising makers.

The blade of the bat must not measure more than four and a quarter inches across in any part, and the overall length, including handle, must not exceed thirty-eight inches. I trust you are satisfied, C. B. F., and am glad you have had such a successful season. With famous initials like yours, you ought to be an expert at the game.

Concerning Pall Mall.

"James S.," a reader of an inquiring turn of mind, puts rather an interesting query to me. He says that he has heard that the famous thoroughfare in the heart of London's "clubland," known as Pall Mall derives its name from some kind of game that used to be popular in England in the olden times, and would like to know if this is true. Yes, "James S.," you have been quite correctly informed. Pall Mall was called after the ancient game of the same name, which was much in vogue in this country in the Stuart times.

The game originally came from France, and consisted of driving a ball with a wooden mallet through hoops driven in the ground or suspended from poles. It can thus be considered the forerunner of croquet.

We are told that St. James's Park was the favourite rendezvous of the followers of the game.

THE EDITOR.