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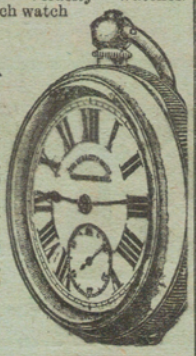
THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY'S PARTING.

"If you want me to come——" repeated Kit, hoarsely. "Mother, if you and Pety want me——" The gipsy schoolboy broke off. He gave a look round at the old elms, the stately buildings, the playing-fields, and thought of the poverty and squalor of the gipsy encampment. The old gipsy read his thoughts in his face, and smiled ironically. "You cannot come," she said. "Your path is not our path, your ways were never our ways. Good-bye, Kit! Come, Pety!"

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THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY.



CHAPTER 1.
The Gipsy's Warning.

"GUV'NOR!"

Tom Merry started.

The sudden, low, husky whisper came from the shadows, at the cross-roads in Rylcombe Lane. Darkness had fallen on the woods and lanes, and there was no moon. The Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's——were tramping home to the school, with the pleasing prospect before them of getting a hundred lines each for missing call-over. Tom Merry was a little ahead of the other two when the voice from the shadows startled him, and he stopped.

"Guv'nor!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

The whispering voice came from the clump of trees that clustered round the signboard in the centre of the cross-roads. Tom Merry, as he looked into the deep shadows, faintly discerned a boyish form there—the form of a boy much smaller than himself, clad in tatters, bareheaded, with a wild shock of curly hair. Two gleaming black eyes were looking at Tom Merry from the gloom, strangely like the eyes of a wild animal.

"Guv'nor, hold on a minute. I want to speak to you."

Tom Merry's hand went to his pocket. He naturally supposed that the tattered lad wished to beg, and Tom Merry, when he had anything to give, seldom or never refused to give it. But the boy shook his head impatiently.

"It ain't money I want, guv'nor."

"What do you want, then?" asked Tom Merry. "Lost your way?"

The boy chuckled softly, as if something in that question amused him.

"Lost my way," he repeated. "He, he, he! No, I haven't lost my way, guv'nor. Did you ever know a gipsy who lost his way?"

And he chuckled again.

Tom Merry looked at him more closely.

"Oh, you're a gipsy, are you?" he said.

"Yes, guv'nor."

"Don't let me interrupt you, Tommy," said Monty Lowther, in a tone of great politeness; "but if we don't get in pretty soon, we shall get a licking instead of lines. Of course, I don't mind if you don't, and I'll stand first on one leg, and then on the other, while you carry on this interesting conversation."

"Oh, shut up, Monty, and don't be funny. The kid wants something or other."

"Then buck up, kid," said Manners. "We're in a hurry. We're out after locking-up."

"If you can't stop, it's no good," said the boy. "You'd better get on, and I'll do the best I can alone."

Next Thursday:
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"Hold on," said Tom Merry, as the gipsy lad was retreating into the trees. "What is it you wanted? Shut up, Monty, I tell you. I'm going to know what it is."

"Oh, all right," yawned Monty Lowther. "I expect this kid belongs to the gipsies who are camped on Wayland Common, and a desperate-looking lot of ruffians most of them are. I've seen 'em. But do as you like, and we'll take the licking from Railton."

"Now, then, kid——"

The gipsy boy came out of the trees again. His dark eyes gleamed up and down the road with the look of a hunted animal. He bent his head as if to listen, to catch the slightest sound on the road.

Then he looked directly at Tom Merry again, his dark, swarthy face aglow with suppressed excitement.

Monty Lowther and Manners were interested now, as well as Tom Merry, and they forgot the painful interview that probably waited for them in the study of Mr. Railton, their Housemaster. The gipsy boy was evidently in fear of being seen or heard as he came out of the deep shadow of the trees.

"I can't 'ear it yet!" he muttered.

"What do you expect to hear?" asked Tom Merry.

"The car."

"What car?"

"There's a car going to the big school up yonder tonight," said the gipsy boy, jerking a dirty thumb in the direction of St. Jim's. "There will be a rich man in it—a lord, I reckon, going to the school."

"My hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "How the dickens do you know that, kid? It's a fact that Gussy's pater is coming down to see him this evening, you fellows. He's leaving England, and he's coming to see Gussy and Wally first."

"Lord Eastwood—yes, I remember hearing D'Arcy say so, now," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "He will come from Eastwood in his car, I suppose. But how do you know anything about it, kid?"

"I heard Melchior and the Fox talking," muttered the gipsy boy. "The car was hung up in Wayland with a burst tyre, and they found out all about it—they know the road it will take to the school—and they're on the road waiting for it. You catch on?"

Tom Merry gave a jump.

"Do you mean to say that the gipsies are waylaying Lord Eastwood's car on the road to St. Jim's?" he exclaimed.

The boy nodded.

"Yes, guv'nor."

"My hat! We shall have to stop this," said Manners. "But—but—look here, I suppose you're teling the truth, you young shaver."

The gipsy's eyes flashed.

"I ain't tellin' lies," he said, "and it ain't a safe thing, guv'nor, to call a Romany chal a liar, neither."

"Sorry," said Manners, at once. "But—but this sounds a bit thick, you know. Are they your friends who are playing this game?"

"They're the men I tramp with," said the boy.

"And you heard them planning the business?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"And what were you going to do?"

"I came here," muttered the gipsy. "The car must pass the cross-roads here to get into the lane to the school, and I was going to stop it, and warn them. But——"

"But what?"

The boy looked down at his tattered clothes, and laughed.

"They mightn't take any notice of me," he said. "They might not even stop the car. They would take me for a beggar, and mightn't even stop—mightn't believe my yarn if they did. You savvy?"

"It is very likely," said Tom Merry.

"I was going to try it, though; it was the only thing I could do."

"You could have gone to the police in the village," said Manners.

The gipsy boy laughed scornfully.

"A Romany chal never betrays others," he said. "I want to save the gentleman they are going to rob, but no more than that."

"Well, you're a queer beggar. They'll be pretty down on you if they find out what you've done," said Manners.

The boy shivered a little.

"They'll know what I've done," he said. "They know nobody else knew the game. But I don't care for that. They sha'n't make me a party to stealing. I've never been a thief, and I won't be mixed with thieves. I begged the Fox to give up the job, and he laughed, and shook his stick at me. He'll laugh the other side of his mouth soon, when the car doesn't come. He's got a wire rope across the road, and if the car doesn't stop when he calls, it will be wrecked."

Tom Merry shuddered.

"The awful villain!"

"Oh, he's a deep one, the Fox is," said the gipsy boy, in tones of mingled fear and admiration. "He's deep and as cruel as a tiger. He'll nearly kill me for this; but I don't care. I told him I wouldn't have any truck with thieving. But—but I spoke to you, young gentlemen, because you can help me if you like. Very likely the car won't even stop for me; they mayn't believe me. But if you call out, they'll stop. You see? The lord will listen to a young gentleman like you."

Tom Merry nodded.

It was only too probable that the chauffeur would not even slacken speed at a call from the dusky roadside from a ragged gipsy boy. But the St. Jim's fellows would most likely be heeded.

"You're right, kid," said Tom Merry. "You're right. Look here, you chaps, we shall have to risk making it a bit later at St. Jim's, and see this through."

"I—I suppose the kid isn't gammoning us," said Lowther hesitatingly. "It would make us look a set of asses if we stopped Lord Eastwood's car for nothing."

Tom Merry looked keenly at the gipsy boy. He could read in the brown, excited face that the lad had told the truth.

"It's straight enough," he said.

"Oh, all right. Only we don't want to be japed by a blessed gipsy, and made giddy asses of, you know."

"I know; but it's all serene. What's your name, kid?" asked Tom Merry, dropping his hand kindly on the gipsy boy's shoulder.

"Kit, guv'nor."

"Hark!"

The gipsy boy bent his head again, and raised his dusky hand. A low sound came softly through the night, audible only to the gipsy's keen ears at first, but soon heard by the others—the distant zip-zip-zip of a fast-travelling car, approaching the cross-roads.

CHAPTER 2.

The Ambush in the Lane.

KIT the gipsy clutched Tom Merry by the arm.

"It's coming!" he muttered.

Tom Merry nodded.

"We can stop it here, you fellows," he whispered hurriedly. "I wish we had a lantern, but——"

"I've got a lantern, guv'nor."

"Good! Hand it over!"

Tom Merry took the lantern from the gipsy boy, and lighted it quickly. The sound of the car, coming from the Wayland road, was very near now. Two great acetylene lights could be seen glaring from the darkness up the road.

Tom Merry ran into the middle of the lane, waved the lighted lantern towards the approaching car.

"Shout, you fellows!" he exclaimed.

And the St. Jim's juniors shouted together.

"Stop!"

Hoot-toot-toot!

The chauffeur was sounding his horn. The car came whizzing on, and the acetylene lights seemed like two great savage eyes of an animal swooping down from the darkness. But Tom Merry stood his ground, waving his lantern.

"Stop!"

There was a whirr of brakes, and the car slowed down. It halted at last within a dozen feet of the Shell fellow.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed the chauffeur sharply. "What have you stopped us for? Is the road up?"

"No. Is that Lord Eastwood's car?"

"Yes."

"Good!"

Tom Merry ran to the side of the car, followed by Manners and Lowther and the gipsy boy. Lord Eastwood was looking out in surprise. He recognised Tom Merry, and uttered an exclamation.

"Tom Merry! Why have you stopped the car? I am in a hurry to get to the school. I have had a long delay at Wayland."

"You can't go on, sir," said Tom Merry. "There are a gang of ruffians waiting for you on the road, and they've got a wire rope stretched across to stop the car, so this kid says."

Lord Eastwood started.

"Good heavens! Are you sure of that, Tom Merry?"

"This kid says so, sir, and I believe him."

"You have not seen it yourself?"

"No, sir."

"Who is this boy?" asked Lord Eastwood, looking at Kit in the light of the lantern, and noticing his swarthy face and his tattered clothes.

"A gipsy kid, sir. He belongs to the lot who are going to stop you, but he wanted to prevent the robbery."

"Oh, I see!"

"ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER!" is the Title of the Splendid, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. One Penny.



Kildare led the two masters across the dark quadrangle to where the dull red glow of a fire fell weirdly upon the trunks of the old elms. Beside the fire a boyish figure was stretched in slumber, and the searchers did not need telling who it was. It was Kit, the gipsy schoolboy!

Lord Eastwood looked very keenly at Kit. The gipsy boy met his gaze steadily. Lord Eastwood pursed his lips in a thoughtful way.

"I must get to the school," he said. "If I go round by another way, Tom Merry, how long will it take?"

Tom Merry whistled.

"You'll have to go back to Wayland, sir, and take the upper road."

Lord Eastwood shook his head.

"I cannot spare the time, as I have to go to London to-night. Besides, I do not doubt your word, my lad," he said, turning to the gipsy. "But you are a stranger to me, and I am as likely to be stopped, I think, on the upper road as on the lower. Have you any proof of your story—that this is not a trick to get my car upon the upper road, which is much more lonely and suited to purposes of highway robbery?"

Kit flushed.

"I only know what I've told this young gentleman, sir," he replied. "I wanted to stop the Fox from robbing you, sir; that's all."

"I'm sure he's telling the truth, sir," said Tom Merry earnestly.

Lord Eastwood frowned a little. He was inclined to believe the gipsy boy; yet it was only too possible that the story was a trick to entice him to the lonelier road, where he could be stopped and robbed more easily.

"I cannot turn back," he said, at length. "But you boys get into the car. I will give you a lift to the school. I suppose you are going there at this time——"

"Yes, sir?"

"Get in, then. And you, too, my boy. There is plenty of room in the car, and there will be enough of us, I think, to keep the rascals from interfering with us. If they are really there, they are expecting, I suppose, to encounter only one old man?"

"Jolly good idea, sir!" said Tom Merry eagerly. "Let's cut some cudgels in the thicket, sir, before we start. We've nothing to biff them with."

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"Very good; but be as quick as you can."

Kit hesitated.

"I—I don't want to come in the car, sir," he said, in a low voice.

The juniors looked at him quickly, and Lord Eastwood fastened a stern look upon the gipsy boy.

"Why not?" he exclaimed.

"I—I don't want to meet Melchior and the Fox?"

"You can keep yourself concealed in the car, if you choose," said Lord Eastwood. "I insist upon your coming

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in the car. If you have told me a false story, to delude me into a trap, you shall be punished."

"Oh, sir!"

"If I find that your story is true, and the car is really attacked in Rylcombe Lane, I will reward you and find you some better associates than these scoundrels," said Lord Eastwood. "If you are really an honest lad you cannot wish to remain in their company."

"I ain't got nothing else to do, sir."

"I will find you something else, then. Come, come! If you have told me the truth, you will be glad to accept that offer," said Lord Eastwood.

"I will do as you say, sir."

"Then step into the car."

The gipsy obeyed. The Terrible Three in a few minutes cut three stout sticks in the wood, and they followed the gipsy boy in. Lord Eastwood picked up a heavy Malacca cane from the seat. There was ample room for all in the big car, and the juniors chuckled softly as they thought of the surprise of the gipsies when they found the car full, instead of its being occupied by only one old gentleman. Lord Eastwood gave the word to his chauffeur to proceed at a moderate speed, and the car rolled on.

The juniors watched keenly from the side windows of the big Daimler. The chauffeur drove on slowly down the dark, shadowy lane, ready to jam on his brakes at a sign of an obstruction in the road.

Kit, the gipsy, sat in a corner, his rags seeming strangely out of place in the luxurious car. He was trembling, but it was with excitement, not with fear. His dark eyes gleamed from the corner. He had a rough, heavy stick in his hand, and his brown fingers had closed upon it tightly. His lips were drawn tight, a little open, and showing white, even teeth.

Lord Eastwood sat silent. It was very clear that he only half-believed the gipsy's warning, but he was on the alert. In the sombre shadows of the lane a highway robbery might easily have been carried out, and the car had been delayed at Wayland quite long enough for the footpads to learn all about it and its owner. Indeed, now that he thought of it, Lord Eastwood remembered that a dark, gipsy-looking man had helped his chauffeur while the repairing was going on.

There was a sudden flash of light from the deep darkness of the lane, under the trees that met in dense gloom overhead. A lantern had flashed out, and the light changed from white to red.

The chauffeur slackened down at once. If there was a wire rope across the road, it might be fatal for the car to dash into it. The juniors quivered with excitement, and Lord Eastwood's expression changed. He realised that the gipsy boy's story was true after all.

"Halt!"

It was a deep, ringing voice from the shadows of the trees. Kit gave a start.

"That's Melchior!" he muttered.

The car halted, and three burly forms came dashing out of the gloom. One of them ran to the chauffeur, and grasped him by the arm, with the other hand raising a thick bludgeon.

"Hands off that wheel!" he said savagely.

The chauffeur obeyed.

Two faces looked into the car, one on either side. They were thickly blackened with soot or charcoal, and the features were unrecognisable. Only the keen, gleaming eyes came with strange brightness from the blackened faces.

"Sorry to trouble you, my lord," said a soft, insinuating voice, "but we are compelled to stop your lordship's car."

Kit shivered.

"That's the Fox!" he muttered.

The soft, mocking voice went on:

"I am sure your lordship will excuse us. We are hard up, and we know that your lordship is well provided with money. We are sure that your lordship will have no objection to relieving the necessities of his poorer brethren."

The other man chuckled.

"You scoundrel!" said Lord Eastwood angrily. "Do you mean that you have dared to stop my car on the high road to rob me?"

"That is a harsh word, my lord," said the Fox, in the same soft, ironical tones. "Say borrow. We require a small loan—merely all you have about you, including your watch and any jewellery you may happen to be wearing. Will you have the extreme goodness to hand it over, or shall we lift you from the car and search you?"

"I shall give you nothing! Stand back and let us proceed, or take the consequences!" said Lord Eastwood angrily.

The gipsy laughed.

"The consequences will be worse for you than for us," he said. "We are desperate men. There is a rope across the road, and the car cannot proceed, and we shall not allow you to turn back until you have made us a loan. Come, now, be sensible, my lord."

"Stand back!"

"Bah! Drag him out!"

The Fox swung open the door of the car, and plunged in. It was dark inside; the electric light had been switched off, and the gipsy could not see that the car was full. He plunged in, and the next moment he reeled back from a terrific right-hander, delivered with all the force of Tom Merry's strong right arm. He reeled into the road with a gasp and a curse, and fell.

"Well done, Tom Merry!" said Lord Eastwood.

And he sprang from the car, with the juniors after him.

CHAPTER 3.

The Fight.

THE Fox staggered to his feet. He had imagined that Lord Eastwood had struck him down, and he was springing furiously towards the car again. He stopped as the juniors came pouring out, cudgels in hand. Melchior came running round the car to join him, and the man who was holding the chauffeur's arm let go, and joined him also. There were only three of the ruffians; ample to have robbed the car if Lord Eastwood had been unassisted, but the task before them was more difficult now.

But they were not disposed to give it up. After a moment of angry surprise, they rushed on to the attack.

"Sock it to them!" roared Tom Merry.

"Hurray! Give them beans!"

There was a crash as the cudgels met the gipsies' bludgeons. The chauffeur had caught up a spanner to join in the conflict, and the party were five against three. But the gipsies attacked them desperately, with lashing bludgeons, evidently reckless of what damage they did. Kit called out from the car:

"Melchior, you idiot, why don't you run while you've got the chance?"

The gipsy gave a shout.

"It's Kit! The young hound has betrayed us!"

"I will kill him!" muttered the Fox.

And leaving the combat, the Fox ran at the car, to get at the gipsy boy. Kit leaped out into the road, defending himself with his stick. The Fox attacked him with desperate ferocity, and the lad backed away, warding off the fierce blows as well as he could. But the Fox's action left his two companions at too great a disadvantage. Melchior fell, half-stunned, under Lord Eastwood's Malacca, and the third man, driven back by a shower of blows, fairly took to his heels, and ran. He disappeared into the shadows, while Melchior crawled away on his hands and knees into the trees.

Tom Merry ran towards the Fox.

In a few moments Kit would have fallen, stunned, or perhaps killed, under the gipsy's furious attack. Tom Merry brought down his cudgel on the Fox's shoulder, and the ruffian gave a yell of pain, and turned upon him, leaving the gipsy boy alone.

"You hound," said Tom Merry.

"Burn you!"

The Fox sprang at the Shell fellow. But Lowther and Manners were dashing up, free now from their other opponents. The Fox's weapon was knocked from his hand, and he reeled back under fierce blows from the cudgels. He staggered on the edge of the ditch that bordered the road, his hand fumbling in his breast. There was a gleam of steel in the light from the lamps on the car.

"Look out!" yelled Kit. "He's got a knife!"

"Stand back, my lads!" gasped Lord Eastwood. "Leave him to me!"

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But Tom Merry was ready for the gipsy. As the knife gleamed in the Fox's hand, Tom hurled his cudgel with all his force, and it caught the ruffian under the chin. The Fox gave a yell of agony, and tumbled backwards, and plunged headfirst into the ditch. The knife flew from his hand into the bushes on the farther side.

"Bravo!" yelled Lowther.

The juniors ran to the edge of the ditch, ready for the Fox when he emerged. But the gipsy dragged himself out on the farther side, and plunged into the wood.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've beaten them! Hurray!"

"See if the road is clear, Johnson," said Lord Eastwood to his chauffeur. "We must get on as quickly as possible."

"Yes, my lord."

The three gipsies were gone, taking with them plenty of bruises to remind them of their encounter with the juniors of St. Jim's. The chauffeur called back from the gloom that there was a wire rope across the road, and the juniors ran to help him cut it loose. In a few minutes the lane was clear.

"Get into the car," said Lord Eastwood. "We do not know how many of those scoundrels may be near at hand. You had better get in, too, my boy."

Kit hesitated.

"I ain't no more business 'ere," he said. "I've got to 'op it. If the Fox sees me agin, he'll murder me."

"You cannot go back to the gipsies, then."

Kit gave a short laugh.

"It's more'n my life is worth," he said.

"Then where do you think of going?"

"On tramp."

"And if those villains should find you——"

"I reckon I'll take care that they don't."

Lord Eastwood shook his head.

"You have done me a very great service," he said, "and you have run very great risks to do it. You are a brave and honest lad, and you remember what I told you—if your warning was true I would find you some better associates. You do not refuse my help?"

"I ain't a beggar, sir."

"Not at all; you can accept my help without being a beggar. Have you a father or mother among the gipsies?"

Kit shook his head.

"I never had neither that I remember, sir. Mother Barengro brought me up, so far as I was brought up at all. Her and the kid Pety is all that I ever care to see agin of that gang."

"Then come with me."

Kit stepped into the car again. The big Daimler rolled on towards the school. The juniors kept an anxious watch on the road, but there was no further sign of the gipsies. The Fox and his friends had evidently had enough.

Lord Eastwood sat very silent and thoughtful for a time, occasionally looking at the gipsy boy. The electric light was glowing in the car again now, and the gipsy's face could be clearly seen. It was a strong and handsome face, tanned by wind and sun, dark as a Spaniard's; handsome, with an almost wild quickness in every feature, an alertness of expression that had doubtless come from the wild, free life the boy had led in wood and forest and heath.

Tom Merry looked at the earl, and he could see that the gipsy boy favourably impressed Lord Eastwood. He wondered what D'Arcy's father was thinking of. Some plan for benefiting the gipsy boy, doubtless, and saving him from his evil associates, evil associates who had not been able to corrupt him so far, though there was no telling what might take place in time to come, if Kit remained with them. Could any nature, however noble, resist for ever the influence of evil associations?

"Have you ever been to school, my boy?" Lord Eastwood asked, breaking a long silence.

Kit started. He had been in a deep reverie, too, perhaps thinking of the Fox, and the revenge he would try to take for what had happened that night.

"No, sir."

"Would you like to go to school?"

Kit's eyes sparkled.

"Go to school, sir?"

"Yes, my lad. Would you like it?"

"Oh, sir!"

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"You would?"

"More'n anything else in the world, sir," said Kit, his heart in his voice. "Oh, sir! But——but it ain't possible for a gipsy kid—'sides, I've got to live."

"There are schools where you could live, my boy," said the earl, smiling. "Where you would only have to work at lessons, and at keeping yourself fit."

"But I ain't got no money, sir."

"I daresay that could be arranged. You have saved me more to-night than your school fees would be for two or three years," said Lord Eastwood. "I am not ungrateful. So you would like to go to school?"

"Oh yes, sir, yes. Oh, sir!"

"Then you shall go to school, my boy—and some school where you will be quite safe from those rascals."

"Oh, sir!"

Kit could say no more. His face was melting into strange softness, and the juniors looked another way as they became aware that there were tears on his dark, long eyelashes.

The car rolled up to the gates of St. Jim's. Tom Merry jumped down and rang the bell, and Taggles the porter came down to open the gates. He gave Tom Merry a grim look through the bars of the gate.

"Which these is nice goings hon," he said.

"Yes, hain't they hawful?" assented Tom Merry.

"You are to report yourselves to the 'Ousemaster immediate," said Taggles, as he unlocked the gates. "My heye! Lord Eastwood's car! My heye! Yes, my lord, good-hevening, my lord. I 'ope your lordship is well, my lord."

And the car rolled in.

CHAPTER 4.

Kit at St. Jim's.

"BAI JOVE! Here they are!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's, said that. He was standing on the steps of the School House, with Blake and Herries and Digby, also of the Fourth Form, and Kangaroo of the Shell. The juniors were waiting for the Terrible Three to come in, and wondering whether anything had happened to them, they were so late. The sight of the great lights of the car warned D'Arcy that his "governor" had arrived, but the car stopped outside the Head's house, and D'Arcy was evidently not to see his "governor" until his "governor" had seen the Head. Then the Terrible Three came out of the gloom into the circle of light falling from the School House doorway. Kit the gipsy was with them. They had alighted from the car at the Head's house, and were coming back to report to their Housemaster.

"Here they are!" said Blake. "My hat! Whom have they got with them?"

"A gipsy, bai Jove!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Kangaroo. "Who's the kid?"

"Hallo," said Mellish of the Fourth, looking out of the doorway, "where did you pick up the ragamuffin, Tom Merry? Blessed if you're not always bringing some blessed beggar or other here!"

"Hold your tongue, Mellish!" said Tom Merry fiercely.

The cad of the Fourth backed away.

"Well, who is he?" he asked. "He looks ragged enough——"

"Shut that rotter up," said Tom Merry.

Blake gently bumped Mellish's head against the wall.

"Scat!" he said.

And Mellish, rubbing his head, ruefully "scatted." The Terrible Three came up the steps of the School House, Kit with them, with a strange hesitation in his manner. The gipsy boy had seen at a distance such buildings as the School House, but he had probably never entered one. The great building, with its ranges of windows, its great roofs lost now in the shadows, the venerable elms standing round it, the lighted hall and the great staircase visible within, the well-dressed fellows in Eton jackets, all were strange and imposing, almost scaring, to the lad fresh from the wild life of the wood and the common.

Tom Merry passed his arm through Kit's. He comprehended what the boy was feeling like, by a sympathetic instinct.

"Who's your fwiend, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus politely.

"Kit."

"Ahem! Glad to see him."

"You ought to be," said Tom Merry. "He's saved your noble governor from being robbed of all he had about him, and probably of being knocked on the head into the bargain. If he had been alone, and had shown fight, he would certainly have been knocked on the head."

"A D'Arcy would certainly always show fight, deah boy, if any wascal twied to wob him," said Arthur Augustus with dignity.

"Then this kid has saved your pater from being knocked on the head," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "And as your pater was most likely bringing you a fiver, you ought to be grateful."

"But how did it happen, deah boys?"

Tom Merry explained. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy held out his hand to the gipsy boy. Arthur Augustus, of the Fourth, was the biggest swell at St. Jim's. He had more pocket-money than many fellows in the Sixth. He dressed in a way that was the envy and despair of the dandies in the

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higher Forms. The crease in his trousers, the cut of his jacket, the way he fastened his tie, the tilt of his silk hat—they were all the very last words in elegance. The private opinion of Arthur Augustus was that the world was made for noble families to live in, his own family being the best of the bunch, and himself the most noble member thereof. Indeed, Blake had suggested that D'Arcy firmly believed that the whole universe had only started fifteen years before—on the first birthday of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. That was probably an exaggeration. But certainly the swell of St. Jim's had an opinion of himself that was very grateful and comforting to him. But with all that, there was not a trace of snobbishness about Arthur Augustus. He shook hands with the gipsy boy as he would have shaken hands with a duke or a dustman, a prince or a pawnbroker of whom he had a good opinion.

"I'm jolly glad to meet you, deah boy," he said. "You're a wippin' chap! I thank you vewy much, on behalf of my governah. My governah is a decent old boy, though he is rather obstinate in some things, but I believe in allowin' one's governah a certain amount of wope. You are a good sort, and I'm vewy pleased to make your acquaintance."

"Thank you, sir," stammered Kit.

"My name is D'Arcy, deah boy. Is your fwiend goin' to stay with you, Tom Merry?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Tom Merry. "Lord Eastwood brought him to the coll., and he's gone in to see the Head now, and he told us to look after Kit while he was engaged."

"Vewy good. You've got to go in and weport yourselves to Mr. Wailton, for missin' call-ovah," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall be vewy pleased to take charge of your fwiend while you are gone. Blake will cut across to Mrs. Taggles's shop and get in some grub, and we will stand him a study feed. Have you had your tea, deah boy?"

Kit grinned.

"I'm hungry, if that's what you mean, sir," he replied.

"Yaas, wathah; that's weally what I mean. Blake, deah boy, pway cut ovah to the tuckshop, while I intwoduce our young fwiend into the studay. Digby, you can go with Blake, and Hewwies can come with me."

The Fourth Formers stared a little as D'Arcy gave his orders, but they only grinned and obeyed. They were quite prepared to follow D'Arcy's lead in making much of the gipsy boy, the more especially as Percy Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, had greeted him with rudeness. D'Arcy tapped Tom Merry on the shoulder as he went into the School House.

"I pwesume you chaps are hungwy, aftah stayin' out so long?" he inquired.

"We could eat you, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "Can I say more?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Hungry as hunters!" said Manners cheerily. "Yes, we'll come."

"Bai Jove!"

"Expect us. Lay in a good supply! Have a good fire burning, and cushions on the chairs, and we'll come."

"Weally, you know——"

The Terrible Three, laughing, went their way to Mr. Railton's study. They had expected to get lines, at least, for being late. But the adventure with the gipsies raised their hopes somewhat. By skilfully pitching the yarn to the Housemaster it was possible that they might get off scot-free. Monty Lowther had a bruise on his forehead from Melchior's club, and he carefully pushed back his hair so as to show it in its full effect. Mr. Railton was sure to notice it, and that would lead up to the subject.

Tom Merry tapped at the Housemaster's door, and the Terrible Three were bidden to enter. Mr. Railton was talking to Mr. Tenby, the master of the Second Form. Mr. Tenby was a stout, good-natured looking gentleman, and was generally known at St. Jim's—not when he was present, of course— as the Turtle. Both the masters looked round at the juniors as they came in. Mr. Railton glanced at his watch.

"Ah! You have come in at last!" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry meekly.

"You missed calling-over," said Mr. Railton. "You have been out an hour and a half after locking up. What explanation—— Goodness gracious, Lowther! What is the matter with your forehead?"

"My forehead, sir!" said Lowther, passing his hand over that portion of his countenance.

"Yes. What is the cause of that terrible bruise?"

"I've had a whack, sir."

"A what?"

"I—I mean a blow, sir," said Monty Lowther, a little abashed.

"Have you boys been getting into any trouble?" asked the Housemaster sternly. "You surely did not get a blow like that, Lowther, in any dispute with the boys of the Grammar School?"

"Oh, no, sir! Gipsies, sir."

"The gipsy encampment on Wayland Common is out of bounds. You were perfectly aware of that," said the School Housemaster severely.

"We haven't been there, sir."

"Then what has happened?"

"Gipsy bounders tried to rob Lord Eastwood, sir, as he was coming down in his car, and we took a hand, sir," Tom Merry explained.

"Dear me! Tell me about it."

Tom Merry did so. Mr. Railton waved his hand to the door.

"You may go, my lads. As that was the cause of your being late, I shall certainly excuse you, and I think you have acted very well indeed."

The Terrible Three looked at one another hesitatingly. They certainly wanted to go without being punished, but they did not want to give a false impression which would amount to a lie.

"Well," said Mr. Railton, in surprise, "why do you not go?"

"Ahem!"

"If you please, sir——"

"Well?" said the Housemaster.

"Ahem! If you please, sir, that wasn't exactly the cause of our being late!" stammered Tom Merry. "We—we should have been an hour late anyway."

"Oh, indeed!"

Mr. Railton looked very curiously at the Terrible Three. Mr. Tenby smiled. The chums of the Shell stood waiting for the verdict.

"And what made you an hour late?" asked Mr. Railton.

"We were rambling in the woods, sir, and didn't notice the time passing."

The Housemaster smiled.

"Well, you are very frank, at all events, so I shall excuse you all the same. You may go, but don't let it happen again."

"Thank you, sir!"

And the Terrible Three left the study, feeling very satisfied with the Housemaster and with themselves.

"My word!" Monty Lowther murmured. "Georgie Washington knew a thing or two, you know. There's nothing like telling the truth, after all. Railton is an old sport. I say, I'm famishing. I wonder if Gussy's got tea ready?"

And the Terrible Three hurried off in the direction of Study No. 6, in the Fourth-Form passage.

CHAPTER 5.

A Little Feed in Study No. 6.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY ushered the gipsy into Study No. 6 in his most impressive way. Herries was grinning a little, perhaps at D'Arcy's Chesterfieldian manners, and D'Arcy wanted to show Herries that there was nothing whatever to grin about. A big bulldog was curled up on the hearthrug, and he rose with a rumbling growl as the juniors came in.

D'Arcy backed away a little.

"Bai Jove! There's that howwid beast in the studay again!" he exclaimed.

"It's all right," said Herries. "It's only Towser."

"Hewwies. I have said distinctly that I wefuse to have Towsah in the studay; and you know vewy well that it is forbidden to have pets in the House at all. You are tweatin' the pwopah authowity of your mastahs with diswespect."

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Hewwies——"

"Going to have a row to amuse your guest, Gussy?" asked Herries cheerfully.

"Bai Jove! But look here, Hewwies, pway kick that beast out. You know perfectly well that Towsah has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs. And he nevah gets on with stwangahs, anyway."

"He seems to get on with this giddy stranger, anyway!" grinned Herries.

"Bai Jove!"

Herries was certainly right. Towser had given Kit one suspicious look, and then he came lazily up and rubbed his big head against Kit's ragged trousers. Kit stroked his head affectionately.

"What a jolly dog!" he exclaimed.

Herries beamed upon him. A liking for Towser was an easy and sure way to the inmost recesses of Herries' heart.

"I should say so!" he exclaimed. "Towser doesn't take to everybody, either, I can tell you. Towser knows something. He can tell a decent chap from a rotter at once. You remember when Levison came, Gussy, Towser wanted to go for him. He knew him."

"I believe the beast has wanted to go for lots of people,"

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said D'Arcy, "and he nevah wespects the most expensive twousahs, I know that."

"He knows that this kid is all right, or he wouldn't let him come into the room," said Herries. "Do you like dogs, kid?"

"I reckon I do, guv'nor," said Kit. "Dogs and horses, and animals of all kinds, too. I've lived among 'em, and they like me, too."

"Are you goin' to kick that beast out, Hewwies?"

"No fear! Can't you see that he likes our visitor, and our visitor likes him?" demanded Herries. "There's such a thing as politeness, Gussy."

D'Arcy almost gasped. That he, the Chesterfield of the Lower School, the complete D'Orsay, so to speak, should receive instruction in politeness from the rough-and-ready Herries, was a little too much. Words failed the swell of St. Jim's. Before he could think of a suitable reply, the Terrible Three marched in, merry and cheerful after their extremely satisfactory interview with their Housemaster.

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther. "Tea not ready? I see, you're playing with Towser, Gussy!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Nice dog!" said Lowther. "I could play with him for hours—for months and months and months, in fact—if I wasn't hungry. After inviting us to tea in such a pressing way, Gussy, I must say that you have allowed the grass to grow under your feet."

"Pway excuse me, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately way. "Blake will be back in a few minutes with the gwub. Ah, here he is!"

Blake and Digby came in heavy laden. They deposited their parcels on the table, and the juniors proceeded to unpack them. Kit stood looking on, stroking Towser, who kindly and graciously allowed himself to be stroked without showing his teeth. The juniors had had long practice, and they soon had tea ready. The Fourth-Formers, indeed, had already had their tea; but they were ready for another—they had the healthy appetites of vigorous youth, and an extra meal or two did not come amiss to them.

"Pway sit down, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, placing Kit in a chair. "I do not know how long my governah will be, but we are goin' to look aftah you till he turns up. Do you care for cold chicken?"

Kit grinned.

"I reckon I do guv'nor," he said.

"Pway don't call me governah, deah boy; call me D'Arcy."

"Very well, sir."

"Pway don't call me sir, either. My name is D'Arcy—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and I wegard you as a fwiend. Are you carvin', Lowthah? Pway help my young fwiend to a wing."

"Certainly," said Lowther. "Here you are, my young fwiend! Pass him the tomatoes, Gussy—your tie's all right."

"I wasn't lookin' at my tie in the glass, you ass——"

"Well, pass him the tomatoes, then. I can't have you neglecting guests in this way!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"There are baked potatoes, too," said Blake. "Here you are, young 'un."

"Thank you, sir!"

"My name's Blake."

Kit was certainly hungry. D'Arcy, in a very stately way, extracted serviettes from a drawer, and handed them round. The juniors tucked them on with great solemnity. Those serviettes were really the private property of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had purchased them himself; for, needless to say, table-napkins were not supplied in the junior studies at St. Jim's by the school funds. They were only produced on state occasions; and D'Arcy was evidently determined to make a state occasion of this. Kit looked at his table-napkin in a doubtful sort of way, and then did with it as he saw the others do. It was probably the first time he had ever seen one, but he was quick-witted.

Kit was certainly hungry. The juniors thought that perhaps it was a very long time since he had had his last meal; and, as a matter of fact, the gipsy boy had eaten nothing since the morning, when his breakfast had consisted of a hard crust. He had a very healthy appetite to bring to the feast—an appetite that would have excited the envy even of Fatty Wynn, of the New House, the Falstaff of St. Jim's.

Cold chicken and baked potatoes and tomatoes, and watercress, and nice, white bread-and-butter, seemed little short of paradise to the hungry gipsy boy. Kit did not need telling to fall to. He fell to, and ate with a relish that delighted his entertainers. They regarded a good appetite as a compliment to their table, as indeed it was.

The feed was going joyfully enough. There came a tap at the door, and Levison, of the Fourth, looked in. There was a sneering kind of grin on the face of the cad of the Fourth Form.

"I hear you've brought home a wild gipsy," he remarked. "May I have a look at him?"

Squelch!

A pat of butter, hurled by Jack Blake, with all the skill of one of the best bowlers in the junior eleven, caught Levison full on the mouth, and he staggered out into the passage with a yell and a splutter.

"Ow! Gerooooh!"

"Goal!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing. "Come in, Levison, old man; I've got a nice, soft potato ready for you."

Levison did not accept the invitation. He stamped away down the passage, wiping his face furiously with his handkerchief, which was soon reduced to a greasy rag.

"Pity to waste good butter on a beast like that!" Blake remarked thoughtfully. "But I couldn't help it. It was right on the wicket, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kit grinned. The manners and customs of the juniors of St. Jim's were very new to him, but it was plain that he was enjoying his experience. The sight of Eton jackets, and silk hats had perhaps made him feel more keenly than he was wont, his own ragged clothes and dilapidated boots. But there was a hearty cheeriness in the study that put him quite at his ease The St. Jim's fellows were evidently very human. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, whom Kit looked upon as a being almost too lofty and delicate to be touched roughly, was as kind and chummy to him as anybody could be.

Kit looked round the cosy study, and at the animated, cheery faces of the juniors, and sighed a little. The surroundings contrasted very much with the gipsy encampment on Wayland Common, the small, ill-ventilated, dirty caravans, the hungry horses, the ragged clothes and miserable poverty. The gipsies to whom Kit belonged were not favourable specimens of their race.

Several fellows looked in at No. 6 during the feed, out of curiosity, but as they came civilly, they did not get the same reception that Levison had. Later on, three New House fellows looked in—Figgins & Co., of the Fourth, The School House juniors half rose at the sight of fellows from the rival House, expecting a raid—but Figgins waved his hand in a friendly way.

"It's all right," he said. "We've only come to give you a look in. I've heard about what the gipsy kid did—it's all over the school now—and we want to see him. I should like to shake hands with you kid."

"Thank you, sir!" faltered Kit.

"My name's Figgins. This chap is Kerr. That fellow who's eyeing the steak-pie is Wynn—Fatty Wynn for short."

Fatty Wynn gave a guilty start.

"I—I wasn't eyeing the pie!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I was just looking at it absent-mindedly, that's all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We didn't come over here for a feed, only to speak to the gipsy chap," said Fatty Wynn. "Of course, a fellow generally gets hungry about this time in the evening."

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Pway join us, deah boys!" he said. "You can find woom to sit down somewhere. We are in funds just now, and I'm expectin' at least a fivah fwom my governah, as he's going away. Pway carve the pie for Fatty Wynn, Lowthah, deah boy."

And Figgins & Co. made themselves at home. There was a fire of cheery talk in the study, two or three fellows talking at once most of the time, and Kit listened to it all—without understanding much of it, for St. Jim's talk was full of local allusions, mysterious enough to an outsider—but with deep pleasure. It came into the mind of the gipsy lad how splendid it would be to be a St. Jim's fellow, how he would like to stay at the school and chum up with fellows like this. Then he sighed. It would be splendid, but it was impossible. It was not for him.

CHAPTER 6.

Lord Eastwood's Protege.

"LORD EASTWOOD! I am glad to see you!"

Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, shook hands very cordially with his visitor.

Lord Eastwood was one of the governors of St. Jim's, and the man with most influence in the governing body of that ancient foundation. He was, besides, an old college friend of the doctor's, and their friendship had never lapsed during the great number of years that had passed since they were at Oxford together. Visits from parents, as a rule, were taken as a duty that had to be done, by the Head of St. Jim's; but he was always glad to see Lord Eastwood.

His lordship sat down a little breathlessly. The combat in Rylcombe Lane had told more upon the old gentleman than upon the tough and wiry juniors.

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"I have had an adventure on my way here," he said. "A most unusual affair! I shall stop in Rylcombe on my way back to inform the police of it—an attempted highway robbery!"

"Dear me!" said the Head.

"I should certainly have been robbed, and maltreated in all probability, but for the assistance given me by three of your boys, Dr. Holmes, and by a gipsy lad, who warned me that his associates intended to rob me."

"I am very glad you escaped!" said the Head. "I suppose the ruffians belonged to the encampment on Wayland Common? There have been two robberies in the district since they have been there."

"Now, my dear doctor, I am going to ask a favour of you," said Lord Eastwood.

The Head smiled.

"You need hardly ask," he said. "Anything that it is in my power to do, I will cheerfully do."

"You must hear what it is first, doctor. This gipsy lad who helped me has placed himself in a position of danger by doing so. One of the ruffians attacked him very savagely, and if he should go back to them I fear that even his life may be in danger."

The Head looked very grave.

"He is a brave and honest lad, and has a great deal of good in him, I believe," said Lord Eastwood. "His conduct, indeed, is a proof of that. Now, as he has placed himself in such a position to do me a service, I feel that I am bound to take care of him."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"It would be a serious matter to take care of a wild young gipsy," he said. "You want my advice on the matter?"

"Yes; and your help."

"You shall have both, certainly!"

"He has a strong desire to go to school," said Lord Eastwood.

"That is certainly very praiseworthy."

"I want to place him at some school, where he will be secure from his former associates, and cut off from any contaminating influence—where he will have a chance, in short, of growing up a decent fellow, and making his way in the world."

"A very good plan, if you are convinced that there is good in the lad," said the Head, with a nod

"I am perfectly convinced of that. You approve of my intention, then?"

"Most decidedly."

"And would you be prepared to receive him into St. Jim's?"

The Head started.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

The earl leaned forward a little, looking very earnest.

"That is the favour I want to ask you," he said. "I want the boy to be taken into this school, doctor. I want him to be taken care of. All expenses—fees, and the necessary expenses of outfit, and so on—will, of course, be met by me. That is the least important detail. But will you take this boy in charge, doctor, and do the best you can for him?"

Dr. Holmes's face was very grave now.

"You must give me time to think," he said slowly. "I have all sorts and conditions of boys in my charge—good, bad, and indifferent—mostly good, I believe. But this would be a great change—a gipsy boy."

"A very good and honest lad, I am convinced," said Lord Eastwood. "If he turned out to be anything else, of course he could be sent away. But I am sure that there is good in him. I am sure that, given a chance, he will turn out well. Of course, there would be a little difficulty at first—he would not get over all his wild ways at once. But I think he would soon settle down. I should speak to my two sons here on the subject, and ask them to befriend him, which I am sure they would do."

The Head was silent.

"If you have a strong objection, sir, tell me so, and I will think of something else for him," said the earl. "Otherwise, I should like you to take him—at least, until I return to England in a fortnight's time. That fortnight will suffice to give him a trial, and for you to ascertain whether he could remain here."

"That is true."

"I do not think you would be sorry for it, sir."

"But I suppose the boy is wholly uneducated," said the Head hesitatingly. "What Form could I place him in?"

"That is a difficulty, true. He must be thirteen or fourteen years old, and he probably knows less of school work than any child in the First Form. But he looks to me a very intelligent lad."

"Where is he now?"

"I brought him on in my car, and I left him with Tom Merry when I came in," said Lord Eastwood. "As I have to return to London immediately, to take the train for Paris, I do not know what to do with him, unless I leave him here. Owing to the delay at Wayland, where a tyre burst, I have very little time. What do you say, doctor? Will you keep him for a fortnight, and give him a chance?"

The Head smiled.

"I could hardly refuse to do so," he said. "I will certainly do that. And if it turns out to be impossible to keep him at St. Jim's, I think I can undertake to find a more suitable school for him."

Lord Eastwood rose.

"Thank you very much!" he said. "I shall see you again in a fortnight's time, doctor, and you can tell me what you think of him. In the meantime he can remain at the school?"

"Assuredly."

"Thank you! Now I will say good-bye, as I have to see my boys before I leave, and I have to leave almost immediately."

And Lord Eastwood shook hands very cordially with the Head, and took his leave. He left Dr. Holmes with a very thoughtful expression upon his kind old face. The doctor's kind heart had prompted him to assist the earl in his generous scheme for the benefit of the gipsy lad. But the Head could not help feeling some misgivings as to how the boy from the woods and the heath would act under the restraints of a school. There was likely to be trouble of many kinds in store for the gipsy schoolboy.

Lord Eastwood left the study, and made his way to the Third Form-room. The earl was a frequent visitor at St. Jim's, and he knew his way well enough—as a matter of fact, forty years before he had been a fag in the Third Form-room himself, and the old school had not changed since then. There was a loud disturbance proceeding from the Form-room as the earl approached the door, and he smiled. Until the hour when the Third Form-master took the Third in evening preparation, the fags had the room to themselves, and they preferred it to the junior common-room, where they were generally sat upon by the Fourth and the Shell. In their own Form-room, excepting when a master was present, they could do as they liked—and they usually did.

Lord Eastwood knocked at the Form-room door, and opened it. Two youths were confronting each other on the hearthrug, and there was a strong smell of burning bloaters. One of the two was Wally—otherwise, Walter Adolphus, the youngest son of Lord Eastwood—and the other was his bosom chum Jameson. Evidently there was a rift in the lute at the present moment, however, as Wally and Jameson were brandishing their fists in each other's faces, and shouting at the same moment at one another.

"You utter, silly, frabjous ass!" roared Wally. "You biffed the bloaters over, I tell you, and now they're no good!"

"I didn't!" yelled Jameson. "You biffed them over, you burbling jabber! Now they won't be fit to eat!"

"You fathead——"

"You chump!"

"Ahem!"

Wally swung round in alarm.

"My only Aunt Jane! It's the pater!"

"Oh, my hat!"

In an instant all signs of warfare vanished. Wally came sheepishly towards Lord Eastwood.

"I—I didn't know you'd come, pater," he said. "As it was getting so late, we'd given you up. I—I was just talking to Jameson about bloaters."

Lord Eastwood laughed.

"You can go on talking to Jameson about bloaters, soon," he said. "I have only a few minutes to stay. I want to speak a few words to you, Wally."

The other fags drew back respectfully. Wally dragged out a chair for his lordship, and stood before him as he sat down.

"Go on, pater."

Wally spoke resignedly. It was evident that he expected a lecture. But it was not a lecture for the scamp of the Third this time.

"It seems that you have not heard what happened to me on the road this evening, Walter," said Lord Eastwood.

"No, dad. Tyre burst?"

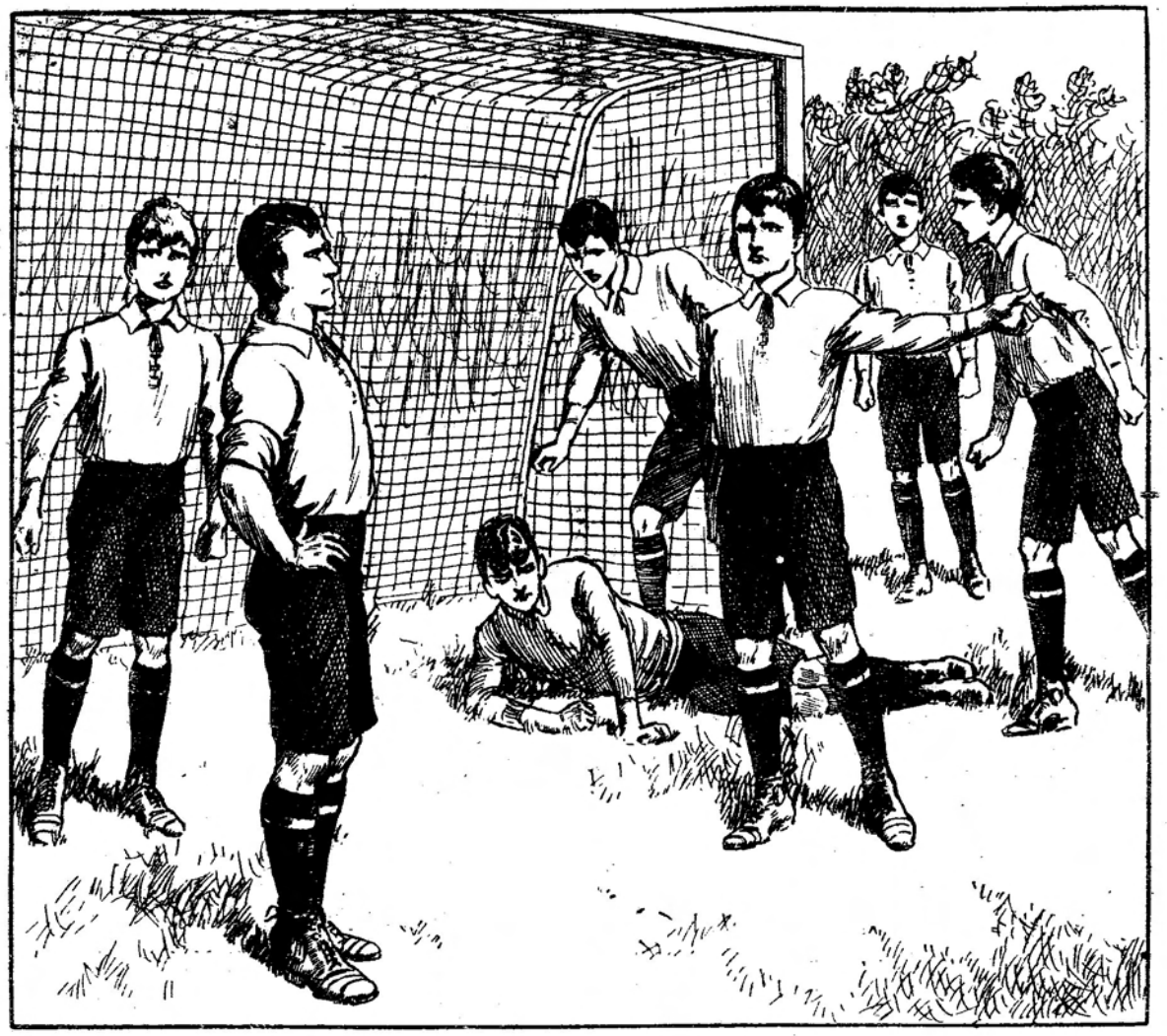
"I was attacked by footpads."

"My only Aunt Jane!" exclaimed Wally, with wide-opening eyes. "Oh, why wasn't I there? Fancy me being stuck in here jawing to Jameson, while a row like that was going on!"

Lord Eastwood laughed.

"I escaped injury, Wally, owing to a warning from a gipsy lad, whom, in return, I have taken charge of, and whom I am leaving at this school. He will be put in a very low Form, Wally, I want you to be a friend to him, and

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Bulstrode pointed with his hand. "Get off, Bolsover! I order you off the field. Go!"
(An incident from the grand, long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled, "ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER," contained in this week's issue of "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.)

help him in every way you can. He is a wild, but, I believe, a thoroughly decent little fellow, and you will oblige me greatly, Wally, if you do everything in your power to help him on and make things easy for him at this school."

Wally nodded cheerfully.

"Certainly, dad!" he exclaimed. "I'll be only too glad! I wish I'd been there, though. Was anybody hurt?"

"Yes; some of the gipsies were hurt."

"Don't I wish I'd been there!"

Certainly, Wally appeared to worry more over the fact that he hadn't been there, than over anything else in connection with the matter. But when Lord Eastwood took leave of his hopeful youngest son, he felt that he could rely upon Wally to do his best. Wally, scamp as he was, was a fellow of his word, and he was certain to keep his promise to stand by the gipsy schoolboy.

CHAPTER 7.
Good News for Kit.

"PWAY will you have anothah cup of tea, Kit, deah boy?"

"Thank you, sir, no."

"As I have wemarked befoah, my name is D'Arcy."

"Thank you, D'Arcy, no."

"Vewy well. Will you twy the gingah-pop?"

"Thanks, D'Arcy, no."

"Another jam tart?"

"I will," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll have some ginger-pop, and some more jam-tarts, if you like, Gussy."

And he did.

"Well," said Tom Merry, "I must say you have done us down well on this occasion, Blake, my son. I move a vote of thanks to the founder of the feed."

"Hear, hear!"

There was a tap at the door, and Lord Eastwood looked in, with a smile. The juniors turned towards him respectfully at once.

"May I come in?" asked the earl genially.

"Pway do, patah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We are vewy glad to see you. I hope you will be able to stay to suppah."

Lord Eastwood shook his head.

"I have to leave immediately," he said, "but I have a few words to say to you before I go. I have already spoken to Wally. I suppose you know, Arthur, what service this gipsy lad has rendered me?"

"Yaas, wathah; I've had it fwom Tom Mewwy. I wegard him as a weally decent chap."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Arthur, because I wish you to be his friend. Kit, come here."

The gipsy boy advanced towards Lord Eastwood, his cheeks flushing. The other fellows drew back a little, as far as the confined limits of the junior study would allow.

"You told me that you wanted to go to school, Kit," said Lord Eastwood. "You are sure upon that point?"

The gipsy's black eyes gleamed.

"Oh, yes, sir," he exclaimed eagerly, "I'm quite sure! Of course, I know I should have to live among the gorgios;

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but I do not feel like the other Romany chals about that, and I should not mind being among the house-dwellers."

Lord Eastwood looked a little puzzled. He did not know what a gorgio or a chal might be, but he gathered the meaning of the gipsy's speech.

"Would you like to remain at this school?" he asked.

Kit's eyes danced.

"At this school?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Yes."

"With these—with these?" exclaimed Kit, with a wave of his dusky hand towards the juniors.

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"Yes, certainly!" he said. "You would be put very low in the school at first, but I have no doubt you would see a great deal of these juniors, with whom you appear to have made friends already."

"Yes, rather, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We'd look after him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I should think so, sir!" said Herries. "He's a ripping good sort, sir. Towser took to him at once."

"You'd like to stay here, Kit?"

"Oh, sir!"

"I have spoken to the headmaster, and he has agreed to take you, for a fortnight at least, to give you a chance as a St. Jim's boy," said Lord Eastwood. "If during that time you prove yourself suitable for the school, you will remain, and be educated here. If not, I shall find another place for you. But I will say that my belief is that, if you take care, you will be able to remain here, and perhaps distinguish yourself in the school. I am sure you will do your best."

The tears started to the gipsy boy's eyes.

"Oh, sir," he faltered, "I—I'll do my best! I'd die for you, sir, to repay you for giving me a chance like this!"

"So long as you work hard, obey your masters, and try to rise in the school, and do yourself credit, I shall consider myself repaid," said Lord Eastwood, holding out his hand to the gipsy boy. "Good-bye!"

He shook hands with Kit.

"Good-bye, my lads!" said Lord Eastwood. "Arthur, you may come down to the car with me."

"Yaas, wathah, patah!"

Arthur descended the stairs with his noble parent. It was ten minutes later when he came up. Kit was the centre of the crowd of juniors, and he was telling them of his gipsy life—of a wild poaching escapade in which he had been associated with Melchior and the Fox. D'Arcy paused to listen to it as he came in.

"Bai Jove," he exclaimed, as Kit finished, "that won't do here, you know!"

Kit looked at him.

"Why not, sir?" he asked.

"Poachin' isn't allowed, you know, deah boy. Hares and wabbits are pwivate pwoperty, and it is stealin' to take them."

The gipsy boy laughed incredulously.

"Yes, rather, you'll have to bear that in mind," said Tom Merry. "No poaching while you're at St. Jim's, my son. We'll teach you to play footer instead."

"Footer!" said the gipsy. "Ah, I have often wanted to play that game, sir! Shall I be able to play it here?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You'll have to," he said. "Footer is compulsory at St. Jim's, unless you've got a doctor's certificate for slacking. We'll take you in hand, my son, and you'll find going for the ball is better than going for other people's rabbits."

"What have you got there, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"A tennah deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's, with considerable satisfaction. "I was expectin' a fivah, but the governah has spwung a tennah this time. I wegard it as vewy decent of him. By the way, Kit, deah boy, the Head wants to see you in his study."

Kit rose, changed colour a little. The boy who had not shown a sign of fear when he was attacked by the Fox seemed to be quite unnerved at the prospect of facing the quiet, scholarly old gentleman who ruled the destinies of St. Jim's.

"It's all wight, deah boy!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Doctah Holmes is an awf'ly decent old sport, and he'll tweat you all wight. Don't be afwaid. Come with me, and I'll show you the way."

"Thank you!" muttered Kit.

Arthur Augustus led the way to the Head's study. He knocked at the door, and opened it for the gipsy.

"This is Kit, sir," he said.

"Thank you, D'Arcy! Come in, my boy!"

Kit entered the study. Dr. Holmes gazed keenly and earnestly at the gipsy boy. The nervousness Kit betrayed did not tell against him with the Head. It was only natural that a lad of his age should be unnerved in such strange and new surroundings.

"Sit down, my boy," said the Head quietly. "You are going to remain at St. Jim's, and we shall see how we get on together. I think I shall place you in the Second Form at first; but if you work hard, you will soon rise to be among boys nearer your own age. We shall see. Now, I want you to tell me something of your history and your associations, so that I shall understand with whom I have to deal. You have no objection?"

"I reckon not, sir."

"Very well, then."

And the Head asked questions, to which the gipsy boy replied frankly and freely enough. It was clear that there was, at all events, no deception in his nature. The Head frowned a little at the description of Melchior and the Fox, and the hint of poaching expeditions in which the boy had been very useful to the two ruffians.

"Do you not know that poaching is wrong, my boy?" the Head asked gently.

"Nobody ever told me so, sir."

"But you knew that it was punished?"

"Yes, sir."

"You must remember it is wrong, and must not be done," said the Head. "Is it likely that your old associates may attempt to get you back among them?"

"Very likely, sir."

"In that case, you had better be careful to remain within the school gates until the gipsies have moved on from their present encampment," said the Head. "They are not likely to come here for you."

Kit was a quarter of an hour in the Head's study, and when he left it, he left it an enthusiastic admirer of the Head of St. Jim's, and thoroughly determined to do his very best to get on at St. Jim's, and become a credit to his new school.

CHAPTER 8.

Gipsy and Schoolboy.

THE news that the gipsy boy was to remain at St. Jim's caused considerable interest among the juniors. During the evening nearly every fellow in the School House came to have a look at him, and Kit bore the general inspection with fortitude. A few fellows, like Levison and Mellish, seemed determined to make a set against him from the start; but he had found friends in Tom Merry & Co., and he was likely to have more friends than foes in the School House.

His chief difficulty was likely to be his being placed in a very low Form, among boys years younger than himself. His education was so fragmentary that anything else was impossible. He had a knowledge of his letters, but that was very nearly the sum of his knowledge. He had never heard of Julius Cæsar or of the Latin tongue; he was ignorant of all but the simplest rules of arithmetic; and his writing resembled the exploits of a spider who had dipped his legs in ink and crawled over the paper. But he was quick and intelligent, and there was little doubt that he would soon show a great improvement.

It was settled that he was to be placed in the Second Form, and Mr. Tenby, the master of that Form, had an interview with the Head on the subject, and promised to do his best for the gipsy. And Kit was so humble about his shortcomings, and so eager to learn, that it quite touched the heart of the genial Turtle. The First Form, indeed, would have been ahead of the gipsy boy in school knowledge, but it was impossible to place him among the "Babes." And Tom Merry & Co. had agreed among themselves that they would all help in coaching the kid, as they called him, and helping him on with his lessons. And for that offer of help the gipsy was very grateful.

Not that Kit was, in his own peculiar line, an uneducated lad. He could snare a rabbit or a partridge; he could hit the bullseye on a target every time; he could follow a track through a wood or across a heath; he could shoe a horse and make the shoe; he could tell the weather by the clouds, and the time by the stars. But such knowledge was not of much use in the Second Form at St. Jim's. The Second-Formers could tell the time by the Form-room clock, which was quite good enough for them, and they did not want to foretell changes in the weather, and were never under the necessity of shoeing horses. Kit had a great deal to unlearn, as a matter of fact, as well as to learn.

Lord Eastwood had left a sum of money to be expended on his outfit. In the meantime, the juniors, among themselves, provided him with clothes and other necessaries. Wally's Etons were found to fit him pretty well, and the change into a white shirt and collar and an Eton jacket made a tremendous difference in the gipsy boy. And a thorough

ANSWERS

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wash made a still greater difference. And a thorough combing of his wild hair reduced it to something like order; and he was initiated, too, into the mysteries of clean finger-nails and shiny boots. But he took to every change like a duck to water; there was no hesitating and no arguing, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy declared that it was a pleasure to instruct him.

Wally said that he was sure he would get on with him, and wished that he could be in the Third Form. And Wally, too, was the fellow whom Kit took to most of all, and he, too, most sincerely wished that he could get into the Third.

"I s'pose if I work hard and learn I shall get into your Form, Master Wally?" Kit said, when Wally was expounding his views on the subject just before bedtime.

"Oh, yes!" said Wally confidently. "You don't really have to know much, you know; and it's a lot of rot, too, compared with the things you do know. You'll have to teach me that dodge about catching rabbits. I'd rather be able to light a fire without matches than construe that awful stuff about the Gallic War. What does it matter to us which part of Gaul was inhabited by the blessed Aquitani, hey?"

"The—the what?" asked Kit.

"Aquitani," said Wally. "My only Aunt Jane, but you are a refreshing chap, you are! I never knew there was a kid in existence who didn't know that all Gaul was anciently divided into three parts, of which one was inhabited by the What-d'ye-call-ems, and the second by the Thingumbobs, and the third by the Whatshisnames. You'll learn all that in the Second Form. You know who Julius Cæsar was, of course?"

"We had a dog called Julius," said Kit timidly.

Wally grinned.

"I expect he was named after Julius Cæsar," he replied. "Julius Cæsar was an old johnny who lived I forget when; it was before my time, you see. He used to go to war in all sorts of places, and write rotten books about it, and we have to learn up the rotten books. He got himself done in at last—chap named Brutus knifed him in a row—or he might have written a frightful lot of commentaries, and we should never have got to the end of 'em."

"I should like to learn all about that," said Kit wistfully.

"Oh, I'll give you some tips," said Wally airily. "How are you in English history? Gimme the date of the Conquest."

"The what?"

"The Conquest."

"What was that?"

Wally whistled.

"You lucky bargee!" he said. "You've never heard of the Conquest. That was when our family came to England, along with an old codger called William the Conqueror. I can't remember the date, or I'd tell you. Don't you know your kings and queens, either?"

"I—I'm afraid I don't know any of them," said Kit. "I know that King George and Queen Mary are King and Queen of England."

"Well, yes, you could hardly help knowing that, I suppose," said Wally, with a touch of sarcasm. "You'll have to learn up a whole bunch of 'em. I don't mind giving you some tips ready for old Turtle. There were seven Edwards, and eight or nine Henrys, and King John signed Magna Charta at Runnymede."

"Did he?" said Kit. "What was Magna Charta?"

"I believe it was a paper of some sort, or something," said Wally cautiously. "Of course, you don't go very deep into these things in the Second Form. King John was an awful old spoofer, and he signed Magna Charta, that's really enough for a chap to know. Then there was Henry the Eighth. He was a sort of Mormon, and had no end of wives, and used to chop their heads off. And you ought to know something about Queen Elizabeth—good Queen Bess, you know. She was a sort of Suffragette, I believe, and believed in votes for women, and that sort of thing; anyway, she was a tough old bird, and used to make 'em hop, I can tell you. Look here. We'll have a jaw sometimes when we're fishing or rowing, and I'll give you a lot of tips."

"You're very kind, Master Wally."

"I'm Wally, you young ass. Don't give me any of your gammon," said Wally. "Look here, you buck up and get into the Third Form, and we'll have some jolly times together. Don't stick in that rotten Second among those inky kids."

And Kit promised that he wouldn't if he could help it.

That evening was one of intense excitement to the gipsy boy. His new surroundings almost took his breath away, and the kindness he met with on all sides softened him almost to tears, though he was far from being of the crying kind. But when bedtime came, he had to part from the fellows he had come to know, and to go among the strangers of the Second Form. Mr. Tenby took him in hand, and led him to the Second Form dormitory in the School House, when the Second went to bed.

All the Second, of course, had heard about Kit, and were curious to see him. Gander, the biggest boy in the Form, who ought to have been in the Third long ago, had announced his intention of putting the gipsy boy in his place if he tried any nonsense, but that was Gander's unpleasant way of putting it. Gander resented the furore that the gipsy seemed to have caused, and seemed to fear that it might have the effect of putting him in the shade. He looked grimly at Kit when Mr. Tenby brought him into the dormitory.

"This is your new Form-fellow, my boys," said the Turtle, in his genial way. "I am sure that you will give him a very hearty welcome to the Second Form."

"I don't think!" murmured Gander.

Mr. Tenby looked at him.

"Did you speak, Gander?" he asked.

"I only said we should do everything we could for the new boy, sir, if you wanted us to," said Gander submissively.

"Quite right—quite right, Gander," said Mr. Tenby, unsuspiciously. "I am very glad to hear you say that, Gander, very glad, indeed."

And Mr. Tenby left the dormitory, leaving the Second to go to bed. The fags were not in a hurry to undress. They gathered round Kit, the gipsy.

"What's your name?" demanded Gander.

"Don't begin ragging the poor kid, Gandy," murmured a fair-haired and kind-looking lad, touching the cock of the Second on the arm.

Gander glared at him.

"You mind your own bizney, Wallace!" he snorted.

"Yes, but——"

"Oh, shut up! What's your name, kid?" shouted Gander.

"Kit," replied the gipsy simply.

"Got any other name?"

"No!"

Gander gave a sneering laugh.

"Nice sort of kid to come to this school—I don't think!" he remarked. "Hasn't a blessed surname. Where did you get those togs?"

"Master Wally gave them to me."

"Oh, I thought you might have found 'em," said Gander humorously. "I believe you gipsies find lots of things, don't you?"

Kit flushed.

"I'm not a thief, if that's what you mean," he said hotly.

"I don't know that you're not, you young ruffian," said Gander. "I think it's rotten having a wild gipsy stuck in here with us. That's what I think."

"Oh, let him alone, Gander," urged Wallace.

"Shut up, Wallace!"

"The kid hasn't done anything."

"Well, if he likes to keep his place, and keep a civil tongue in his head, that's all right," said Gander. "But I'm not going to have any of his cheek. Mind, you gipsy bounder, if I get any sauce from you, you'll get it in the neck."

"I reckon——"

"Don't talk to me," said Gander loftily. "As a matter of fact, I think I ought to give you a hiding to start with, to teach you civilised manners."

Kit's eyes flashed.

"I don't want to quarrel with you," he said, "but if you touch me, I shall hit back, I warn you of that."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gander, coming close to Kit, and towering over him with his broad shoulders and bullet head. "Well, I like that. Ha, ha, ha! Why, you young savage, I could knock you into the middle of next week with one hand."

"I don't think you could, guv'nor."

"Would you like me to try?" bellowed Gander.

"I don't want any row."

"Do let him alone, Gander."

Gander peeled off his jacket.

"I can see that this gipsy bounder is going to begin by being cheeky," he said. "I shall have to put him in his place sooner or later, and I may as well begin now. Put up your hands, you outsider."

Kit had no choice about putting up his hands. Gander was rushing at him, slogging out with all his might. But he found a great surprise in the gipsy boy. Kit was certainly a head shorter than Gander, but he was in the pink of condition, and he had learned, in his rough life, to use his hands in a way that the fags of the Second never dreamed of. He knocked Gander's fists up almost without an effort, and let out his right, and Gander tumbled over backwards as if a cannon-ball had struck him.

There was a shout from the fags.

"Gander's down!"

"My hat!"

Gander sat up, looking very sheepish. That blow might have been dealt by a grown man, from the force that Kit put into it, and Gander did not want any more. He had his position to maintain as bully of the Second Form, but nothing

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would have induced him to face another knock-down blow like that.

"Had enough, Gandy?" said Wallace, with a roar of laughter.

Gander staggered up.

"Oh, I was only funning." he said. "I don't want to hurt the kid."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Gander went to bed without another word. Kit smiled quietly as he undressed himself. He was not in the least inclined to crow. He had seen that Gander was no match for him at the first glance. The other fags looked at the gipsy boy with a new respect. A fellow who could knock out the biggest fellow in the Form with a single blow deserved respect. There was not much danger of Kit being ragged in the Second Form, whatever his shortcomings. When the Turtle looked into the dormitory to put lights out, he found the Form very peaceably in bed, and peaceablest of all was the truculent Gander.

CHAPTER 9.

Driven Off.

"LOOK out! The gipsies!"

Tom Merry uttered the sudden exclamation. It was early morning, and the Terrible Three were standing on the steps of the School House, looking out into the sunny quad. From the direction of the open gates of St. Jim's, four or five burly figures in rough garb had suddenly appeared.

Two of them, at least, were familiar to the eyes of the Shell fellows. Although their faces had been blacked, and therefore unrecognisable, on the previous evening in Rylcombe Lane, Melchior and the Fox could be known by their general appearance and their clothes. Melchior was wearing the same fur cap, and the Fox the same leggings, and both of them bore big bruises plain to the view, proofs of a late encounter. The two rascals were looking savage and determined, and they evidently had come to the school for a purpose.

Mellish, who was in the doorway, laughed softly, and called out to Kit, who was in the passage.

"Hallo, young gipsy! Here are your friends come to see you."

Kit ran quickly to the door.

His dark face changed colour at the sight of the gipsies.

"Who are they, Kit?" asked Monty Lowther.

"That one with the red moustache is the Fox, and the big fellow is Melchior," said Kit, in a low trembling voice. "They all belong to our gang. They've come to take me back."

"Have they?" said Tom Merry grimly. "They won't find that so jolly easy, I think."

"That's what they mean to do, I reckon."

"We'll stop them fast enough. Blake, Gussy, Kangy—line up here!"

The juniors ran up at the call.

"Get some cricket-stumps, Monty, quick!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying the approaching gipsies through his famous monocle. "Bai Jove! If the wottahs twy any of their wotten twicks here, they will get a feahful thwashin'."

"You don't want to go with them, Kit?" Tom Merry asked.

The boy shuddered.

"Oh, Master Merry! They'd half murder me for what I did last night. I don't want to go back. I want to stay here."

"And you're jolly well going to stay, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The gipsies caught sight of the boy standing behind the juniors. The Fox muttered something to the others, and all four of them ran forward towards the School House. Tom Merry raised his hand.

"What do you chaps want here?" he called out.

The Fox gritted his teeth.

"We want that kid!" he exclaimed.

"Rats!"

"He's a Romany chal, and he belongs to us," said the Fox. "He's coming back with us. He's run away, and we're going to take him back."

"Quite right of him to run away from a set of thieves," said Tom Merry. "Two of you, at least, tried to rob Lord Eastwood last night."

The Fox laughed sneeringly.

"Perhaps you can prove that, young master," he said.

"I suppose I can't," said Tom Merry, "as you were disguised. I wouldn't swear to you, certainly, but I feel pretty certain, all the same. And Kit knows you, anyway."

"And a Romany boy is going to give evidence against his own pals, eh?" said Melchior.

Kit uttered a cry.

"You know I'd never do that, Melchior. I'm not going to say a word, but I don't want to come back."

"Do you think we'll trust you?" sneered the Fox.

"You'll have to," said Tom Merry calmly. "Kit certainly isn't coming back with you. You had better clear off!"

"Kit! Come here!"

The gipsy boy shook his head.

"I can't, Fox!"

"You're coming back with us!"

"I can't!"

"You've got to!"

"I won't, then!" said Kit, with a flash in his eyes. "These young gentlemen will stand by me! You sha'n't take me away!"

"Wathah not!"

The Fox came up the steps. Tom Merry & Co., grasping the cricket-stumps Monty Lowther had hurriedly fetched, lined up, keeping the gipsy boy behind them. They evidently intended to give battle if the ruffians came on, and the Fox halted.

"Will you give that boy up to us?" he demanded hoarsely.

"No."

"He belongs to us. He's a Romany, and he belongs to us! We can't let him go! We're his people, his own blood, and he can't leave us!"

"He has left you!"

"He's got to come back! Kit, if you don't come peaceably, I'll cut you into pieces when I do get you!" said the Fox hoarsely.

Kit was very pale, but he did not waver.

"I can't come!" he said.

"We'll take you by force if you don't come!"

"Better not try!" said Tom Merry.

"For the last time——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

The Fox said no more. He dashed up the steps, his companions at his heels. The juniors did not flinch. In a moment more a terrific combat was raging on the steps of the School House.

The gipsy gang made a desperate rush, but the juniors stopped it. The cricket-stumps lashed out heavily. The juniors did not care how hard they hit. Melchior rolled down the steps, and lay groaning at the bottom. Another man went reeling down, and fell upon him, and Melchior grunted dismally.

Down went a third man, clasping both hands to his head, where Tom Merry's cricket-stump had smitten hard.

The Fox still came on, brandishing his cudgel. His face was white with fury. It seemed as if he would succeed in breaking through the defenders, and reaching the gipsy boy. But the juniors closed in upon him, lashing out fiercely, and Fox rolled down the steps after his companions.

"Hurray!" roared Blake.

The din of the disturbance had brought a crowd rushing to the spot. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, and several other Sixth-Formers came running up. A crowd of juniors swarmed upon the scene. As the gipsies staggered to their feet, they found themselves in the midst of a crowd.

"Better hook it!" muttered Melchior, with a groan.

"Kick them out!" rose the shout.

And the gipsies were hustled and kicked to the gates of the school, and sent sprawling out into the dusty road. A mocking crowd lined the gateway, as they crawled away. The Fox turned back, and shook his fists at the crowd of fellows, muttering imprecations in a strange tongue.

Kit, in the hall of the School House, stood pale and silent. Tom Merry clapped him upon the shoulder.

"Safe enough now, Kit!" he said.

Kit nodded.

"I know that, Master Merry—thank you!"

"No need to wowwy about those wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus. "You're all wight now, deah boy!"

"I know—I know!" Kit passed a hand over his eyes. "I know! But—but they're my own people, after all—my own people!"

He moved restlessly away. Tom Merry glanced after him, but did not speak again. He understood very well the conflict of feelings in the heart of the gipsy schoolboy.

CHAPTER 10.

The First Morning in Class.

"KIT—I suppose I must call you Kit?" said Mr. Tenby thoughtfully—"I understand that you have no other name. Kit, I think I will place you a little apart from the rest of the Form, at least, and give you some—er—separate instruction."

"Yes, guv'nor," said Kit.

"Ahem! Please call me sir, and not governor!" said the Turtle, in his mild way. "It is the—the custom here, Kit."

"ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER!" is the Title of the Splendid, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. One Penny.

"Yes, guv'nor—sir!"

Mr. Tenby sat down beside Kit at the desk, a little apart from the rest of the Second. The Second were busy working out problems set on the blackboard. Mr. Tenby surveyed the gipsy boy in a thoughtful way. Kit was willing and eager and keen to learn, but his knowledge on school subjects were so lacking all round that the Second Form-master hardly knew where to begin with him.

"Have you any—er—knowledge of Latin at all?" he asked.

"No, guv'nor—I mean, sir!"

"Any—ahem!—acquaintance with Roman history?"

"I've 'eard of Julius Cæsar, sir," said Kit cautiously, remembering what he had learned from the hero of the Third the previous evening.

Mr. Tenby brightened considerably.

"Very good!" he said. "Tell me what you know about Julius Cæsar, my boy!"

"Yes, sir. He was an old johnny——"

"A—a what!"

"An old johnny, sir, who lived a long time ago!" said Kit innocently.

"Bless my soul!"

"He was knifed in a row with a chap named Brutus, sir!"

"Dear me!"

"He wrote a lot of rotten books, sir!"

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Tenby. "This is—is amazing! If I were not convinced that you were quite ignorant, Kit, I should think that this was intended for impertinence!"

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Kit.

"There, there! I am sure you do not mean it in that way!" said the Turtle soothingly. "But—but it is most extraordinary, all the same! We—we will take another subject. Can you do—ahem!—long division sums?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know anything of arithmetic?"

"What is that, sir?"

"Ahem! We—we will take, say, English history. Do you know anything of the history of your own country, my poor lad?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Kit. Kit had a retentive memory, which was not in every way an advantage when D'Arcy minor, of the Third, was his instructor. "There were seven Edwards, sir——"

"Good—very good!" said Mr. Tenby approvingly. "We are getting on—getting on famously! What more can you tell me, my lad?"

"There were eight or nine Henrys, sir——"

"Eight, Kit—eight!"

"Yes, sir. Henry the Eighth was a Mormon, sir——"

"A—a Mormon!" stammered Mr. Tenby.

"Yes, sir; he had a lot of wives, and used to chop their heads off!"

"Dear me!"

"Then there was Queen Elizabeth, sir," said Kit, feeling that he was getting on, and feeling very grateful to Wally for his hints upon English history. "She was called Queen Bess, sir."

"Very good! And what can you tell me about Queen Bess?" beamed Mr. Tenby.

"She was a tough old bird, sir!"

"What!"

"And she used to make them hop, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"And—and King John signed Magna Charta, sir!" said Kit timidly.

"Ah! You know something about King John, then? Now, what can you tell me about King John, my lad?"

"He was an awful old spoofer, sir!"

Mr. Tenby almost fell off the form.

"Dear me! I—I am afraid that your somewhat slight knowledge of English history has been gained in—in a somewhat irregular manner, Kit! May I inquire where you learned these extraordinary facts?"

"D'Arcy minor told me, sir."

"Oh, I understand now! As a matter of fact, Kit, your information is mostly correct, but—but it should have been couched in far better language. Queen Elizabeth was a severe old lady, not a tough old bird! Do you comprehend?"

"I—I think I do, sir!"

"And Julius Cæsar was not knifed in a row—dear me!—he was assassinated in the Capitol of Rome!"

"Yes, sir?"

"But I perceive in you a great aptitude to learn," said Mr. Tenby. "I am sure we shall get on very well together, Kit."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"Now, I will set you a task—a very simple task," said Mr. Tenby. "We shall see."

Mr. Tenby kept a kindly eye on Kit during that morning, and did not neglect him. He found that the boy made astonishing progress. Kit's mind was like a field that had lain fallow for a very long time. It was all ready for the reception of the seed of knowledge, and the seed took root and grew with wonderful rapidity. The boy who had never heard the word arithmetic in the morning, was able to do simple sums by the time classes were dismissed that noontide, and Mr. Tenby was well satisfied.

Tom Merry & Co. were waiting for Kit when the Second Form came out.

Tom clapped the new fag cheerily on the shoulder.

"How did you get on?" he asked.

"Very well indeed, I think, sir," he said. "Mr. Tenby said that I had done very well for a beginning."

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah; jollay good!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard that as wippin'!"

"How do you get on with the Turtle?" asked Monty Lowther.

Kit looked puzzled.

"The Turtle?" he asked.

"Yes; old Tenby!"

"He is very kind," said Kit. "But why do you call him the 'Turtle'?"

"Ahem!" said Monty Lowther. "We call him the 'Turtle,' because he tortoise, you know!"

"Bai Jove! Because he taught us!" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard that as a wotten joke, Lowthah!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I considah——"

"Let's go down and have a kick at the leather," interrupted Tom Merry. "I want to see how this kid will shape at footer. Have you ever played, Kit?"

The gipsy schoolboy shook his head.

"No, Master Merry; but I've kicked an old ball about on the commons, and I think I can kick pretty straight. But I never had a chance of playing a game."

"You shall have a chance now, then, kid."

The Terrible Three marched Kit out into the sunny quad. They were taking him in the direction of the playing-fields, when Kit suddenly halted.

"Lemme stop a minute, guv'nor!" he muttered.

"Certainly! But what——"

"It's Mother Barengro and little Pety!"

CHAPTER 11.

The Gipsy's Farewell.

KIT turned eagerly towards the old gipsy woman who was crossing the quad. towards him, with a little swarthy lad holding her hand. Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances. The new-comers were evidently more visitors from the gipsy encampment on Wayland Common; but these had not come with hostile intentions.

"Who is it?" asked Tom Merry.

"Mother Barengro," said Kit, with a catch in his voice. "She brought me up, sir, and did a lot for me. That's little Pety."

"I suppose they've come to say good-bye?"

"I s'pose so, sir."

The Terrible Three stepped back as the old gipsy woman came up. Kit's face was pale, and there was a troubled look in his eyes. He had gained what had been his life's ambition in coming to a good school. But it was with a wrench that he parted with the old free life and the only two people he had cared for in the gipsy camp.

The old woman came up. There were tears on her dark eyelashes. She did not glance at the chums of the Shell. All her attention was given to Kit.

"Kit, my little chal," said Mother Barengro, "you're leaving us, then? You don't mind your old mother coming to say good-bye, even in this grand school?"

"Of course I don't, mother," said Kit, kissing her dusky cheeks. "I should have come to the camp to say good-bye, only I couldn't come. The Fox would never have let me get away again, even if he hadn't half-killed me."

The gipsy woman nodded.

"It's best for you to keep away, Kit," she said. "It won't be safe for you to see the Fox again anywhere where he could harm you."

"I know that, mother."

"We are moving on to-day," said the old woman, with a sigh. "I brought little Pety to say good-bye to you. You won't ever see us again."

Kit's face worked.

"I shall see you again, mother—some time. I sha'n't always be at school, and when I'm a man I sha'n't be afraid of Melchior or the Fox or the others. I'll take you with me then, to live in a house."

The old woman shook her head.

"No house for a true Romany woman," she said proudly. "I was born in a tent, and I've lived all my years on the

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road and the heath, and I shall not die among the house-dwellers. But perhaps I'll see you again, Kit—if you grow tired of walls and house, and want to come back among your own folk."

Kit shook his head.

He knew that that would never be. Life had a path for him different from that known to the gipsies.

He threw his arms round the little boy, and hugged him. Pety was crying. Kit had been a good friend to him in the gipsy gang, perhaps his only one excepting his mother. Kit's heart was heavy. How the "kid" would miss him, and Mother Barengro, too! Had he been selfish in thus making his choice of a new life?

"Oh, Kit, what am I going to do without you?" muttered Pety.

Kit's eyes were wet.

"Mother, if you want me to come back——"

Mother Barengro shook her head.

"No, Kit. You were always different from all the rest, and you have a strain of the blood of the house-dwellers in your veins. You will go your way, Kit, and we shall go ours. But good-bye, lad, and an old gipsy's blessing upon you!"

She drew her shawl over her wrinkled, swarthy face for a moment.

"Come, Pety!" she said.

The child was climbing to Kit's knees, and crying.

"Won't Kit come, mother?"

"He can't, Pety."

"If you want me to come——" repeated Kit hoarsely. "Mother, if you and Pety want me——"

He broke off. He gave a look round at the old elms, the stately buildings, the playing-fields, and thought of the poverty and squalor of the gipsy encampment. The old gipsy read his thoughts in his face, and smiled ironically.

"You cannot come," she said. "Your path is not our path, your ways never were our ways. Good-bye, Kit! Come, Pety!"

Kit walked down to the school gates with them in silence. A caravan was waiting in the road. It was true; he could not go. The old life, though only twenty-four hours behind him, seemed as if it had passed centuries ago. He could no more have become a wandering gipsy again than he could have become a little child.

"Mother, if you would like Pety sent to school, perhaps——"

"Pety is a Romany," said the old woman proudly. "He will stay with his people."

Kit flushed.

"If you mean that as a reproach, mother——"

"I don't, Kit—I don't reproach you. I say that your ways were never ours, and I wish you well. Bless you—bless you! May you thrive and prosper! That's the last wish and prayer of the old gipsy."

The clumsy caravan lumbered down the road.

Kit stood in the gateway, staring after it dully, his eyes blurred with tears. The old woman had not meant to reproach him, yet every word she had uttered stung him like a reproach. She had been kind to him from his earliest years, yet how lightly he had left her. It lay heavy upon her heart now. Yet was he to blame? For kind as Mother Barengro had been to him, the old woman was of the light-fingered fraternity, and Kit had had many a miserable hour when he saw in the old woman's caravan articles that he knew did not belong to her. It had been impossible for him to remain in such surroundings, where his scruples brought general dislike upon him, and, indeed, had often brought long naggings from Mother Barengro herself.

It was fate. The gipsy life was behind him, a new and unknown career was in front. But the gipsy schoolboy stood watching the van with blurred eyes as it rumbled down the dusty road, and his heart was very heavy as he turned back into the gateway of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 12.

The Last of the Old Life.

KIT'S face was pale as he entered the School House again.

The Terrible Three had gone down to the football-ground; they realised that Kit would not be in a mood for playing footer just then, nor would he want company. Glad as he was to stay at St. Jim's, they knew that it must be a wrench to him to part with his old friends, to say farewell to his old life.

Kit went slowly up the stairs. He tapped at the door of Study No. 6, and entered.

There was no one there.

As a fag in the Second Form, Kit, of course, had no study, Second Form work being done in the Form-room. But both Tom Merry and Blake had urged him to use their studies and to use their books as much as he liked, and the gipsy schoolboy was glad enough to avail himself of the permission. He wanted to work—to work hard. In the Second Form work was called swotting, and generally frowned upon. A fellow who swotted was suspected of trying to curry favour with the Form-master, the most heinous of sins in the eyes of the fags.

And indeed, excepting during lessons or evening preparation, there was generally too much din in the Form-room for anybody to be able to do much work. Kit was very glad of the refuge of a study.

He had come to No. 6 with the idea of doing some work, thinking that the best plan for driving miserable thoughts out of his mind.

But he sat by the window, looking out, and his books remained unopened. His eyes were fixed dreamily upon the landscape.

From the high window he could see past the elms and past the walls of St. Jim's, and could see a long stretch of country with woods and meadows.

In the direction of Wayland, too far for him to see, was the gipsy encampment.

There were his people.

His own people—flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone! Kind as the St. Jim's fellows had been to him, after all they were gorgios (strangers). He was a stranger in a strange land.

The farewell of the old gipsy, the implied reproaches in her every word, had plunged the lad into the blackest gloom. And little Pety's tears and the sadness of the old woman all weighed upon his mind. They would miss him. How much would he miss them? Not so much when he was once in the full swing of his new life. He knew it, and he reproached himself for it. But he knew that it was so.

"Poor old mother!" muttered Kit. "Poor little Pety! I never had a mother or a brother, but they've been as good to me. I'm an ungrateful dog!"

He gazed restlessly out upon the landscape.

He started.

On the long, dusty road, visible from the window, a gipsy caravan appeared, and then another and another.

It was the party he had belonged to—the Fox and his gang, Mother Barengro, and little Pety—the whole band on the road.

The sight of the caravans brought a lump into Kit's throat. They were wending on slowly along the dusty road, far from him, and going farther every moment.

Wending on, and wending out of his life.

He watched them with a fascinated gaze. Slowly the great clumsy vehicles rolled on; the clouds of dust disappeared after them down the long, white road.

They were gone!

It seemed to Kit as if something were gone out of his life, too, as if he had lost something that he would never find again.

Yet his life with the gipsies had been one of hard work, and struggle, and hard usage, and privation.

But it was gone now; a chapter in his life had closed. He was alone—alone among the house-dwellers.

The gipsy schoolboy's face dropped into his hands, and the tears trickled softly through his fingers.

The door of the study opened, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in in his football clothes.

He stared at the gipsy.

"Bai Jove!"

Kit started to his feet.

He passed the back of his hand quickly before his eyes, but D'Arcy had seen the wet on his cheeks. But the swell of St. Jim's was tactful. He affected to have seen nothing.

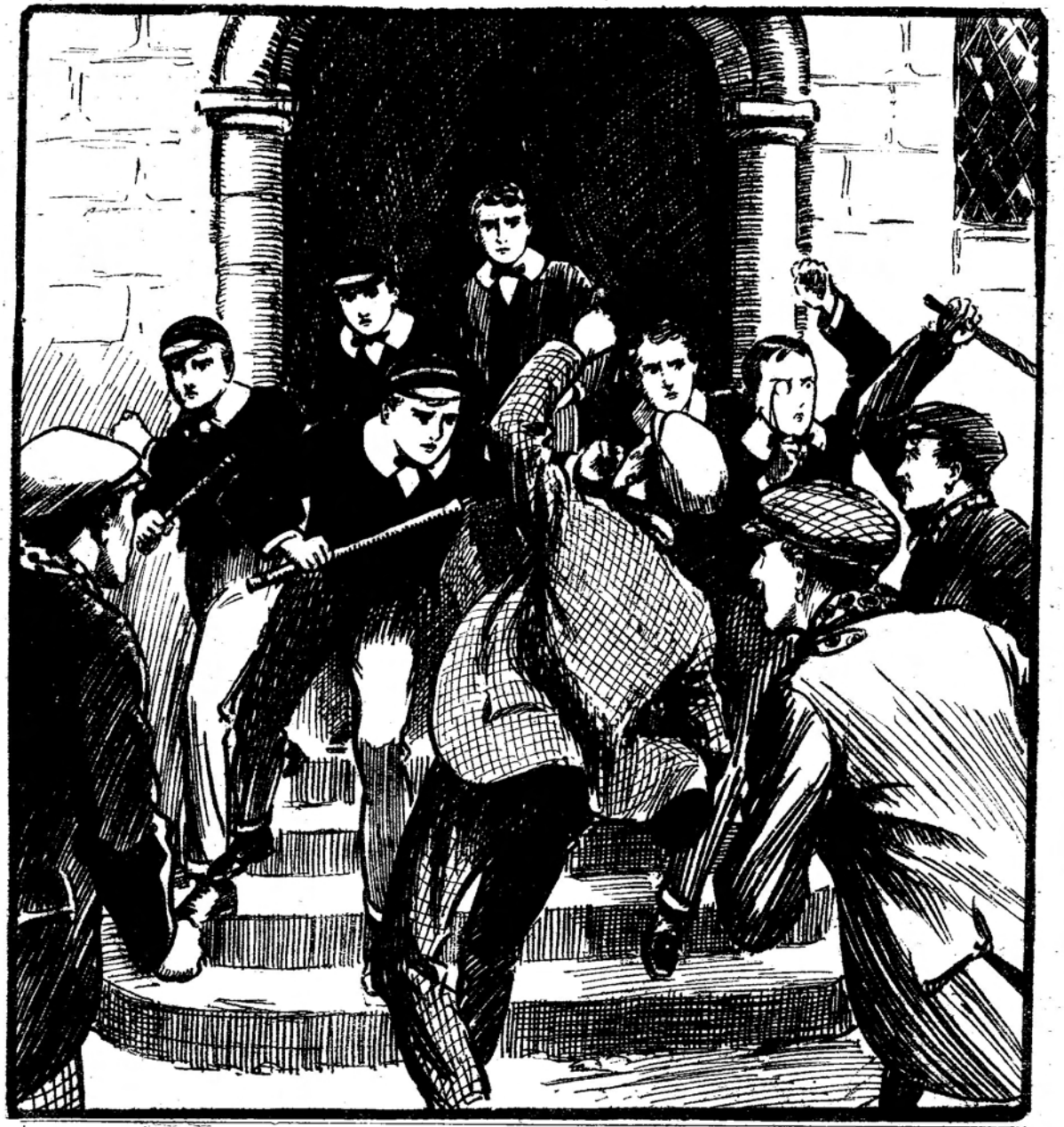
"All wight, deah boy, don't let me disturb you," he said. "I'm goin' up to the dorm. to change; I'm howwibly dirtay. That boundah Blake wolled me on the gwound in the wudest possible way; and, in fact, I am wathah doubtful whethah I can continue to wegard him as a fwiend."

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The gipsy gang made a desperate rush, but the juniors stopped it. The cricket stumps lashed out heavily, for Tom Merry & Co. did not care how hard they hit.

And, with a nod, D'Arcy quitted the study.

Kit rose to his feet. He took a last glance from the window. The long, white road was bare; the caravans were gone.

He turned to his books. After all, he had come there to work, and he still had time before dinner. There was a low chuckle at the open door, and Levison and Mellish looked into the study. Kit glanced at them.

"Here's luck!" muttered Levison. "Here's the gipsy cad alone!"

"Good!" said Mellish.

The cads of the Fourth came quietly into the study. Mellish closed the door behind him, and Levison advanced towards the gipsy, while his chum put his back against the door. Kit regarded Levison quietly.

"So here you are," said Levison.

"Yes, here I am," said Kit. "Do you want anything with me?"

"Yes; I want to give you my opinion of you, you gipsy thief!" said Levison, in the most insulting tone he could contrive. "I suppose you have come to this school on the look-out for something to steal—eh?"

Kit flushed. The soft feelings that had filled his breast and brought the tears to his eyes were gone now. His eyes gleamed.

"No!" he said. His tone was very calm, but there was something in it that should have warned Levison of danger.

But the cad of the Fourth did not observe it. He was bigger than the gipsy, and so was Mellish, and they were two to one. He had been looking for an opportunity of ragging the gipsy, and the opportunity had come. Levison did not mean to let it pass unimproved.

"Oh, you are all thieves and wastrels!" said Levison. "I suppose you are going to let your friends into the school some fine night to steal the silver—eh? Look after your pockets while you're in this study, Mellish!"

"Are you a friend of Blake's?" asked Kit.

By the way the two juniors had come into the study he

thought that that might be the case. And if they had been friends of the fellows who had befriended him, the patient lad would have allowed them to say what they liked.

Levison chuckled.

"Well, not exactly," he replied. "I don't think I should care to be a friend of a chap who chums up with a gipsy thief, and gives him the run of his study."

Kit's eyes blazed.

"You are insulting me," he said. "What have I done to you?"

"Oh, you're a rotten outsider," said Levison, "and we don't want you in the school!"

"Most of the chals have been very kind to me."

"Most of the what? One of your rotten gipsy words, I suppose?" sneered Levison. "You can't even talk the King's English."

"I only want you to let me alone."

"That's just what I'm not going to do," said Levison, very much encouraged by the quietness of the gipsy schoolboy's manner. "I'm going to lick you for your cheek in coming into a decent school."

Kit smiled grimly.

"I can see that you want to bully me," he said, "and if that is your game, you have come to the wrong place. I would never let anybody bully me—not even Melchior or Fox, and certainly not you."

"Oh, give him a hiding!" said Mellish. "I'm looking after the door, and he can't get out."

"I don't want to get out," said Kit contemptuously. "I don't want to quarrel with you, but I'm not afraid of either of you, or both of you as far as that goes."

Levison came round the table towards the gipsy boy. He expected Kit to dodge; but the gipsy stood his ground quietly.

"You had better not touch me," he said; "you will get hurt if you do."

"Ha, ha, ha! I don't think you could hurt me much."

"Better not try."

"Bah! You gipsy cad! Take that!"

Levison's hand flew out, but to his surprise it did not reach the dusky face of the gipsy boy. A dusky hand came up, and Levison received a sharp blow on the wrist, and his hand flew up into the air. He started back with a cry of pain. He was at the gipsy's mercy; but Kit did not hit out.

"You had better let me alone," he said.

Levison did not answer. He was in too great a rage to speak. He simply hurled himself at the gipsy junior.

"Go it!" said Mellish encouragingly. "Oh! My hat!"

There was reason for Mellish's exclamation of surprise. Kit had knocked Levison's hands up and planted his clenched fist full upon the jaw of the cad of the Fourth. Levison dropped heavily upon the carpet.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Mellish.

Levison sat up holding his jaw, which was aching terribly, and stared stupidly at the gipsy boy. For the moment he could hardly believe that the gipsy had been able to hit so hard.

Kit looked across at Mellish quietly.

"Do you want any?" he asked. "If you do, you had better come on."

Mellish hesitated. As a matter of fact, he didn't want any. Levison staggered to his feet, his face convulsed with rage.

"Help me, Mellish," he muttered thickly. "We'll smash him! Come on!"

"Two to one. Is that what you call fair play?" asked Kit scornfully.

The two juniors did not reply. They rushed at him, attacking fiercely. If Kit had not been able to take care of himself, he would have suffered pretty severely at the hands of the two Fourth-Formers.

But Kit was ready for them. He backed away a little from the furious attack, and as they pressed on, he came on himself, hitting out savagely. His blood was up now, and his black eyes were gleaming.

Left and right, right and left. Several savage blows fell upon the gipsy's dusky face, but he did not appear to notice them. His own hammering blows crashed into the faces of his two opponents with terrific force.

Mellish gave a yelp, and rolled on the floor. Levison defended himself as well as he could, but in a minute he went down before the onslaught of the gipsy junior. He fell across Mellish's legs, and the two juniors lay gasping and groaning, and Kit stood over them with blazing eyes.

The door of the study opened, and Jack Blake came in. He stared at the scene in amazement. He had heard the disturbance as he came along the passage, and had wondered who was rowing in his study. But he was far from expecting this. He looked at the two groaning juniors and then at Kit.

"My hat!" he exclaimed.

Kit dropped his hands at once, and the fire died out of his eyes. He looked apologetically at Jack Blake.

"I'm sorry," he said impulsively. "But—but they came for me, and I had to hit out. They won't deny that they started it."

Blake grinned.

"It wouldn't make much difference if they did," he replied. "I shouldn't believe a word they said—I know 'em too well. My hat! You must know how to handle your fists, kid, if you can knock out two fellows in the Fourth. By Jove!"

Levison and Mellish staggered up. They showed no desire to come to close quarters with the gipsy schoolboy again. They had had quite enough.

Blake grinned at them.

"You woke up the wrong passenger this time, you beauties!" he exclaimed.

He pointed to the door.

"Get out!"

And the cads of the Fourth got out. They did not feel the least desire to linger within the walls of Study No. 6. Jack Blake patted the gipsy schoolboy on the shoulder, with a delighted chuckle.

"Good man!" he said. "My hat! You'll get on all right if you can look after yourself like that. You shall have the gloves on with me in the gym. this evening."

CHAPTER 13.

Goal!

KIT was not wholly easy in his mind for the next few days. Although the gipsy band had moved on from Wayland, he could not quite believe that the Fox and Melchior were gone, and that he would not see them again. But it seemed to be true. The police were looking for the attempted highway robbers, and although the gipsies knew that Kit would not give evidence against them, they were probably glad to place themselves beyond the reach of inquiry. The one desperate attempt they had made to get Kit away from the school had failed, and they had left the countryside without attempting it a second time.

Kit realised at last that they were really gone, and he breathed more freely. He thought often of Mother Barengro and little Pety, and thought of them sadly; but he had much to occupy his mind in these days. Even the game of football, which he longed to play, was not allowed to take up any of his spare time yet. He was almost feverishly anxious to qualify himself to take his proper place in the school, and Mr. Tenby reported to the Head that his progress in the course of a few days had been wonderful.

"I do not think it will be necessary to keep him long in the Second, sir," the Turtle said. "Of course, he is much too big and too old for the Second Form. He shows a marvellous aptitude for learning, and I think that in the course of a few weeks it will be safe to put him in the Third."

"I am very glad to hear it, Mr. Tenby," said the Head. "And as for his general conduct—what is your opinion of that?"

"Exemplary, sir!" said Mr. Tenby, with emphasis. "A harder working boy I never saw; and he is very kind and peaceable in his manners. He has been engaged in two or three fights, I think, since he has been here, but I believe that the quarrels have all been forced on him. Certainly the boys he has had trouble with are far from being the most favourable specimens in the Lower School. With the best boys, such as Tom Merry, and Blake, and Figgins, he is on the best of terms."

"Then your opinion, Mr. Tenby, is that the experiment is a success—that we shall be able to make a scholar and a good citizen of our wild gipsy?" asked Dr. Holmes, with a smile.

"I certainly think so, sir," said the Turtle.

"That is good news, and will be good news for Lord Eastwood. I shall certainly write to him and repeat your report of the boy."

All Mr. Tenby's encomiums upon the gipsy schoolboy were well deserved. But there was one point the master had not considered. Kit was still very new to St. Jim's. He was in the first flush of his eagerness to learn—to take a good place in the school. When he had settled down to school life, it was possible that the wild gipsy blood would wake in him again—that he would grow sick and weary of the restraints of the classes, the regular meals, the order and discipline of the school, and would feel a restless longing for the savage freedom of the old life by wood and heath. It was only too possible; in fact, it was certain, and it remained to be seen whether the boy's good sense would be able to combat successfully the wild promptings of the gipsy blood.

Tom Merry came up to his study after school on the fourth or fifth afternoon, and found Kit there. The boy had a Latin grammar open before him, and was working away at the first conjugation, steadily and patiently.

"Amo, amas, I love a lass," sang Tom Merry cheerfully.

Kit looked up with a smile.

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"You've done enough swotting for to-day," said Tom Merry, taking the grammar and tossing it across the study. "You'll make yourself ill, my son, if you don't get some outdoor exercise, especially after what you've been used to."

"I want to get on in the Form," said Kit.

"Yes; but there's such a thing as making haste slowly—festina lente, you know," said Tom Merry, laughing. "You are beginning to look quite pasty."

"Am I?" said Kit, with a sigh. "Perhaps I am, sir. But I do want to get on."

"You shall go on mugging Latin presently," said Tom Merry. "Just at present you're coming out for a run. I'm going to try you at footer. You've been dodging footer."

"I didn't mean to, Master Tom. But——"

"But it will do you good. Come on!"

And Tom Merry picked up a footer in one hand, grasped Kit by the other, and marched the gipsy schoolboy out of the study.

Thus constrained, Kit made his appearance on the playing-fields.

Football was beginning at St. Jim's, and most of the fellows were turning out to practice in all the time they could spare. No matches were on yet, but the ground was well filled with fellows practising passing and kicking. Fatty Wynn, of the Fourth, could be seen between the posts, and a score of juniors were taking turns to kick, trying to get past Fatty's defence. But they could not. Fatty Wynn was a mighty goalkeeper, and it was not easy to beat him. Monty Lowther said it was because he almost filled up the space between the posts with his plump person; but that was an exaggeration.

"Hallo!" said Figgins. "New recruit, hey? Let's see how he can kick against Fatty."

"Oh, go it!" said Fatty Wynn, with a good-natured grin. "If he gets a goal, I'll stand him a stick of toffee."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ever kicked a ball before, kid?" asked Kerr.

Kit nodded.

"Often," he replied. "I used to have an old ball, and practised with it; but I've never had a chance of playing footer."

"Well, let's see what you can do."

Figgins tossed a ball to the gipsy schoolboy. Kit took a little run and kicked. Fatty Wynn, in goal, seemed all eyes and hands.

But Fatty Wynn, for once, was caught napping. He made a wild spring at the ball, but it escaped his finger-tips, and sailed into a corner of the net. There was a shout from the juniors.

"Goal!"

"Fatty's beaten!"

"My hat!"

"Rotten fluke, of course!" said Levison, who was looking on—not playing. Levison seldom played unless the prefects forced him to.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "That wasn't a fluke. Why, the kid is a born footballer; he beat Fatty to the wide. Didn't he, Fatty?"

Fatty Wynn nodded, with a rather curious expression upon his face. He admired good footer—no one more—but he did not exactly like being beaten in this way, at the first attempt, by a fellow who confessed that he had never played in a football match in his life.

"Yes; he beat me," the fat Fourth-Former confessed. "But I don't think he could do it a second time. Try, kid!"

Fatty Wynn kicked out the ball. Kit ran at it, and Fatty was on the watch. At the last instant Kit changed his feet and kicked the leather into the corner of the net where Fatty Wynn was least expecting it. Then there was a roar.

"Goal!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn. "I've lost that stick of toffee!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, gipsy!"

Kit's eyes glowed as Tom Merry clapped him on the back.

"Bravo, kid!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Why, it's ripping! You just want licking into shape a bit, and you'll play in the Junior Eleven, and no mistake! Bravo!"

CHAPTER 14.

The Gipsy Breaks Out.

"GWEAT Scott!"

"What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Look at that young ass!"

Tom Merry looked upward as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pointed with a shaking finger. It was the day after the footer practice, where Kit the gipsy had so distinguished himself, and the juniors were in the quad. after morning lessons. Tom Merry had glanced round for the gipsy schoolboy, but had not been able to see him; when Arthur Augustus's startled exclamation caught his ears.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

They were standing by the old tower of St. Jim's—the most ruinous part of what was left of the ancient edifice. The old stone walls, windowless, shattered, were covered with thick and clinging ivy. Broken and shattered as the old tower was, it still rose to a dizzy height, and from the top a splendid view could have been had far over the Sussex downs, and away to the sea.

But the stone staircase within was broken away; and boys were strictly forbidden to attempt climbing the ivy. There was a contest sometimes among reckless fags as to who could climb the highest on the old tower, but no one was known to have climbed higher than the first casement. But as D'Arcy now caught sight of the gipsy schoolboy, he was far above the first casement, clinging to the ivy like a cat, and working his way up to the next shattered aperture in the stone wall of the tower.

Tom Merry turned quite pale.

"The young ass!" he muttered. "He'll break his neck!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Call out to him!" exclaimed Blake, who had just come up.

Tom Merry laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"No. It might startle him. Let him keep on—I believe he intends to get in at the second window—he can't be mad enough to climb higher!"

The juniors watched the climbing gipsy with a strange fascination. He was in instant peril of his life—a false hold, the snapping of an ivy tendril, would have hurled him down to a terrible death on the earth at their feet. But he was perfectly cool, quiet, methodical. It was very clear that this was not the first dangerous climb he had undertaken. It was the wild blood of the gipsy asserting itself once more.

In the Form-room and the study Kit had worked hard—harder than any other junior at St. Jim's had ever worked probably. But that was not natural to himself. What was natural to the gipsy was the free life of the heath—he could run, swim, and climb—that was where his strength really lay.

And Kit was his natural self again now for the time. He was the gipsy boy, climbing the ivied tower as he had climbed risky walls and trees to escape the keepers in forbidden woods; climbing the perilous wall of the old tower because the exercise and the skill and the danger all had a fascination for him.

The gipsy schoolboy did not even look below. He did not know whether he was watched or not. He climbed to please himself. The juniors below watched him with wide eyes, in incessant fear for his safety, and gradually a crowd gathered there to watch him.

Seniors and juniors collected, with anxious faces, as the nimble figure of the gipsy grew smaller to their view, higher up the wall of the old tower. But they all refrained from calling out. Knox the prefect would have done so, but Kildare stopped him. A call might startle the gipsy into losing his hold. They could only watch him, and hope that he was going in at the second casement, and that he did not intend to climb on to the dizzy top of the tower.

"Oh, the young ass!" murmured Wally, of the Third. "Why, I wouldn't risk that myself—and I can climb! I wish he'd buck up!"

But there was one person present who felt no fear or sympathy, and who only sneered. That one was Gander, of the Second.

Gander had been on the worst of terms with the gipsy junior ever since that fight in the Second-Form dormitory, on Kit's first night at St. Jim's. Gander had been cock of the walk in the Second Form before that; Gander was nothing at all now. Nobody cared for Gander now; indeed, when Gander was high-handed with some of the smaller fags now, they had driven him off with threats to "tell the gipsy."

Gander intensely disliked the gipsy schoolboy, and he was not disposed to give him the slightest credit for anything. He sniffed contemptuously as he heard the muttered remarks on the climbing abilities of the gipsy.

"What rot!" he muttered to Wallace, of the Second. "Blessed if I can see anything to make such a fuss about! I could climb up there quite easily if I tried."

Wallace chuckled softly.

"I shouldn't recommend you to try, then!" he exclaimed.

"Do you think I couldn't do it?" demanded Gander fiercely.

"I jolly well know you couldn't!" said Wallace serenely.

"Look here, I'll jolly well show you——"

"Quiet!" said Kildare.

The voice of the St. Jim's captain silenced the fags. But Gander looked very angry and aggressive. As a matter of fact, he would never have dreamed of climbing the ivied tower if he had not seen Kit climb it. But his licking still rankled

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sorely with him, and he was determined not to be outdone on every point by the gipsy junior. He stood watching the gipsy, and calculating his chances of making the same climb.

"You idiot!" whispered Wallace, "Don't you think of doing it, that's all! You'd lose your nerve, and come a cropper!"

"Oh, rats!" said Gander.

"Dear me! What is this—what is this?"

It was the gentle voice of the Turtle. Mr. Tenby came up, looking alarmed and distressed. He peered up at Kit through his glasses, and gasped.

"The foolhardy boy! Oh, dear!"

"Better not say anything, sir," said Kildare. "He's nearly reached the second window, and I think he'll manage it."

"Yes, yes; do not alarm him, for goodness' sake!"

And Mr. Tenby watched the gipsy with the rest.

Kit was climbing more slowly now, and perhaps the long, severe strain was telling on his arms. The wall of the old tower was pierced by two windows, both of them in a very shattered state, and almost choked up with the thick masses of the ivy. The first window was thirty feet from the ground, and the second was twenty feet higher. Above the second window, the blank wall ran up higher to thirty feet more, and there was broken away. The tower had been much higher originally, but the summit was gone.

Cromwell's cannon, in the days of the Parliamentary wars, had accounted for some of it, and the wind and weather for the rest. There came a faint rustle from the thick ivy as the gipsy boy climbed on.

"The kid's got plenty of nerve," Monty Lowther whispered. "I don't believe it would make any difference if we called out to him. He's got nerves like iron."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I wish he'd get into the window, all the same," he muttered.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There he is—at last!" muttered Kildare, with a deep breath.

The gipsy boy was plunging through the masses of ivy in the broken casement. He disappeared in at the opening.

Then the juniors raised a cheer.

"Hurrah!"

But Mr. Tenby's face was very stern.

"I shall speak most severely to the boy!" he exclaimed. "He has no right to give us a fright like this. When he comes down——"

"My hat!" exclaimed Kildare. "The little beggar's coming out of the window again!"

"Dear me! Stop him!"

"Bai Jove!"

The head of the gipsy boy, with its untidy curly black hair, came out from the thick ivy. He looked down at the crowd, and showed his white teeth in a smile. Mr. Tenby waved his fat hand.

"Go back!" he shouted.

Kit looked astonished.

"I'm going to climb down, guv'nor!" he called back.

"I forbid you to do anything of the sort! Go back immediately, and descend by the steps inside the tower!" exclaimed the Second-Form master.

Rebelliousness gleamed for a moment in the gipsy's dark eyes; but only for a moment. Then he was the disciplined schoolboy again.

"Very well, sir," he replied.

And he disappeared from the window.

His steps could be heard pattering down inside the tower, and in a few moments he emerged into the quadrangle. Mr. Tenby signed to him to approach. The gipsy boy came up, dusty and dishevelled from his climb.

"Do you not know that boys are forbidden to climb the tower?" exclaimed the Second-Form master severely.

"No, sir! I—I didn't know!"

"Ahem! Ignorantia legis excusat neminem," said Mr. Tenby impressively.

"Yes, sir," said Kit, who did not know in the least what that might mean.

"However, under the circumstances I will excuse you," said the Turtle. "But it must never happen again—never, do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well!"

The Form-master departed. Then Kit was surrounded by juniors. They slapped him on the back, slapping out great clouds of the dust of the old ivy.

"You're a nervy young beggar!" said Tom Merry. "But don't do it again. We had our hearts in our mouths all the time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kit laughed.

"I'm sorry," he said. "But that wasn't much for me. I've climbed in much more dangerous places than that. And I couldn't help it—I like climbing. But I won't do it again if it's against the rules."

"Better not, deah boy!"

"What a lot of rot about nothing!" said Gander. "I could do it easily."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you——"

"I dare say you could," said Kit good-naturedly. "There's nothing in it."

"Oh, you shut your jaw!" said Gander ungraciously.

At which the gipsy shrugged his shoulders. There was evidently no getting on with the defeated cock of the Second.

CHAPTER 15.

A Wild Escapade.

KIT turned to his lessons that afternoon with all the more zest from having let himself go for once. Already, though he had been less than a week at St. Jim's the gipsy blood was reasserting itself. Once a gipsy always a gipsy, was a true saying; and Kit felt the truth of it. Old Mother Barengro's hint that he might grow sick of stone walls and windows, of roofs and doors, had much of truth in it.

On a fine night Kit pined for the open sky, and the wind on his face as he slept. He would wake in the night, expecting to see the dark-blue canopy of heaven over his head, and would feel a sense of being crushed by the ceiling over him, of being cribbed, cabined, and confined by the walls and doors and windows. It seemed that St. Jim's, large as it was, was not large enough for him to breathe in freely.

Such thoughts and feelings the gipsy schoolboy kept to himself. He confided them to no one. He felt that the other fellows would not understand—that they might even think him ungrateful and repining.

He did not repine. At the times when he felt most cramped by the restrictions of school life, he never felt a desire to change back to his old life. What he would have liked was an occasional outbreak into the free life of the gipsy, and his school life to run on just the same. That could hardly be managed at a place like St. Jim's. And so Kit, as well as he could, crushed down his vague longings for the sky and the heath, and kept grimly to his work.

Football afforded him great relief; and he threw himself into the game with a keenness that delighted Tom Merry. He had a turn of speed, a sureness of eye, that stood him in great stead in the grand old game, and it was pretty clear that ere long he would be a tower of strength to the junior team—a fact that soothed the pride of the Second Form—a Form that had certainly never given a player to the junior team before.

But all that was gall and wormwood to Gander. Gander seemed to be the only enemy that Kit had, since Levison and Mellish had let him severely alone of late. Gander tried his luck in a second fight, and was more hopelessly beaten than before. After that Gander contented himself with words and sneers, which Kit bore patiently, feeling in his heart sorry for the conceited fellow, whose conceit had had so terrible a fall.

Gander, indeed, was not able to trouble the gipsy schoolboy very much. Kit was so kind and good-natured that he was becoming very popular in the Form, and in the Lower School generally. Mr. Tenby's reports to the Head were all favourable, and the Head was pleased to hear them.

When the fortnight Lord Eastwood had stipulated for was expired, there was no doubt that the gipsy schoolboy would remain at St. Jim's. Of the vague wild longings for the freedom that was now forbidden, of the gipsy blood that sometimes ran riot in the boy's veins, quiet and sedate Mr. Tenby knew nothing, and guessed nothing.

That climb up the ivied tower was Kit's first surrender, as it were, to the promptings of the gipsy blood. But it was not the last. In the night—one moonlight night with a soft wind—Kit sat up in bed in the Second-Form dormitory.

The hour was late—he had heard half-past ten strike. All the Lower School were in bed, and probably most of the seniors. The dormitory seemed insufferably hot to Kit, and the walls as if they were about to fall upon him. He turned from side to side in the bed, but could not sleep.

He slipped out of bed at last. He did not mean to do so, but he was acting upon an instinct; the instinct of the gipsy. He dressed himself, hardly knowing what he intended to do, only he must escape from the walls, and roofs, and windows, or else suffocate.

The School House was very quiet as the gipsy boy stole from the dormitory.

Lights gleamed under several doors as he groped his way downstairs, but he made no sound; he was accustomed to

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treading too lightly to disturb a rabbit. In a few minutes more he was in the spacious quadrangle, with a cold, clear wind blowing on his cheeks. He threw back his head and drew in deep draughts of it.

Kit's eyes were gleaming now.

For the time, he was a schoolboy no longer—he was a gipsy—the quadrangle was the heath, where he could sleep under the glimmer of the stars, with the wind on his face.

In a dark and secluded corner of the old quad. the gipsy had gathered fuel, whipping twigs and small branches from the trees, and built himself a fire. In the red glow of it, as he blew it into a blaze, his dusky face glowed happily. He was happy now—he was Kit, the gipsy, once more—the wanderer of the wood and the heath, the son of the wild.

He was muttering to himself now in the Romany dialect as he lighted the fire. St. Jim's, the great range of buildings, the walls, the tower, the gymnasium; all was swallowed up in the darkness, and the trees hid from him the gleam of the lighted windows.

The gipsy had forgotten St. Jim's. The fire smoked, and blazed up, and glowed in the darkness of the quadrangle. The gipsy schoolboy curled up beside it with a sigh of contentment. He was happy now. He fell into a peaceful slumber, with a smile of contentment playing over his dusky features.

In the Second-Form dormitory there was one wakeful. It was Gander. Gander, of the Second had seen Kit leave his bed, and had sat in his own, wondering. All kinds of black suspicions were moving in Gander's mind. He did not make a sound as Kit went—but he sat thinking it out. His bitter dislike of the gipsy boy quickened his suspicions.

What had the gipsy schoolboy left the dormitory for?

What could his motive be? He had dressed himself, and crept out with such caution, that it was clear to Gander that he had some underhand motive. Was he going to join some crew of revellers in the village—as certain black sheep in the Sixth Form of St. Jim's were suspected of doing? Was he going—Gander shuddered at the thought—to rob the school, and leave in the darkness, or to admit some gang of gipsy burglars to the place, who would raid the school silver, and perhaps commit murder if they were molested.

Gander sat in bed shivering with fright and excitement. Had he not been blinded by his dislike of the gipsy junior, he would have known that his suspicions were wildly exaggerated; but he was too glad to suspect the boy he hated. It was not long before Gander came to the conclusion that it was his duty to warn the Form-master that Kit had left the dormitory in the middle of the night.

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If mischief came of it, Gander would be blamed afterwards for not having told—that was certain. He crept out of bed, hastily put on his trousers over his pyjamas, and quitted the dormitory, and a couple of minutes after he was tapping at Mr. Tenby's door. The master of the Second had not gone to bed. He called out to Gander to come in, and the fag entered, to be greeted with a stare of astonishment.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Tenby. "Is that you, Gander? Bless my soul! What are you doing out of bed at this time of night?"

Gander was shivering, between cold and excitement.

"If you p-p-please, sir——"

"Whatever is the matter, Gander?"

"It's about the gipsy, sir."

"Kit! Yes?

"He's gone out, sir."

Mr. Tenby jumped.

"Gone out! Kit has gone out?"

"Yes, sir."

"Goodness gracious! You mean that he has left the dormitory?" asked the Turtle.

"Yes, sir, more than half an hour ago."

"You don't mean that he has left the house?"

"I don't know, sir; but I think he has. I shouldn't be surprised if he's run away, sir," said Gander.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Form-master abruptly. "Why should he run away? Stuff and nonsense!"

"I—I thought it my duty to tell you, sir," said Gander submissively. "If he should be playing any—any tricks, he might come to some harm, sir."

"Quite right, Gander," said Mr. Tenby. "Quite right and proper. You may go back to bed now, and I will look into this matter. Ahem, I will go with you, in order to make quite sure that Kit is absent!"

Mr. Tenby went back to the Second-Form dormitory with Gander. There was no doubt that the fag's information was correct. Kit's bed was certainly empty.

"Go back to bed, Gander," said Mr. Tenby, "I will look for the boy."

"Yes, sir."

Gander turned in, with a comfortable feeling that Kit was booked for a licking at last.

Hitherto, the gipsy had kept on the right side of the Form-master; but he could hardly escape punishment for this escapade, Gander thought.

Mr. Tenby hurried away, and called in at the study of Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, for assistance in his search. Mr. Linton was amazed and alarmed. Perhaps a suspicion of gipsy burglars being let into the school crossed his mind, as it had crossed Gander's. He suggested calling Kildare. The captain of St. Jim's was in bed, but he turned out at once when Mr. Linton called him. He dressed hurriedly and came out.

"Kit is missing from the dormitory," Mr. Tenby explained. "It is necessary to search for him. He appears to have left the house."

"By Jove, sir!"

"I fear that it may be a case of bad associates," said Mr. Linton. "We know that all the boy's old associations were bad."

"I think not, sir," said Kildare, "if I may say so—more likely it's a freak on his part—you know he's a gipsy, sir, and he may have wanted to get out for a run at night; but I'm sure he doesn't mean any harm."

"Your faith in him does you credit, Kildare," said the master of the Shell a little stiffly; "but we shall see. Let us search for him."

And the search began; and Kit, unconscious of it, lay quietly sleeping by the fire in the distant corner of the quadrangle, dreaming of green fields and cool streams and long, white roads.

CHAPTER 16.

The Camper Out!

"HE is certainly not in the house," said Mr. Linton, ten minutes later.

"The Form-room lower window is unfastened, sir," said Kildare. "I think it's pretty certain he's let himself out into the quad."

"Then we will look there."

They quitted the house quietly. It was growing towards midnight now, and most of St. Jim's was asleep. Unless there was real cause for alarm, they did not wish to awaken the house.

The quadrangle was dark where the shadows of the trees and the buildings fell. The moon was peering over the old tower, and gleaming on the ivy. All was silent and still. There was no sound or movement in the dim old quad.

"No sign of him here," said Mr. Linton, somewhat sharply. The Shell-master's temper was not being improved by this midnight experience, "and we certainly cannot search every foot of ground here."

Kildare started.

"Look there!" he muttered.

"What is it?"

"I saw a light."

"Indeed! Where?"

Kildare pointed. The two masters followed his finger with their gaze; but blackness had swallowed up the light, if there had been one.

"I can see nothing," said Mr. Linton, with asperity.

"I'm sure I saw a light," said Kildare. "It was very close to the ground—a red glow, like a fire blazing up for a moment in the wind."

"It is impossible that there can be a fire in the quadrangle, I suppose."

"I suppose so, sir," Kildare nodded.

"My goodness!" exclaimed the Turtle. "Dear me! There it is—I saw it then! Look!"

There was no doubt of it now—even Mr. Linton could not doubt it. The wind was blowing, and in the far distance, from the darkness of the trees, came a red glow close to the ground, as if a fire were flaming up under the wind.

"Amazing!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "Can it be——"

"I'll bet it is," muttered Kildare. "This way, sir."

They crossed the dark quadrangle quickly.

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Kildare led the way through the elms. There was no doubt now about the fire. It was burning with a dull red glow, that fell weirdly upon the trunks of the old trees. They came up to the fire breathlessly, and halted. Beside the fire a figure was stretched in slumber, and they did not need telling whom it was.

It was the gipsy schoolboy.

They looked down upon him in silence. Mr. Linton looked angry, Mr. Tenby amazed, and Kildare was grinning quietly. He was not surprised at this escapade on the part of the half-tamed gipsy.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Tenby, breaking the silence. "Dear me! Most surprising! What can have induced the boy to act in this extraordinary manner? Is he a little weak in the head, do you think?"

Mr. Linton compressed his lips.

"I think it is a wild gipsy trick," he said. "I consider it absurd to admit such a boy to the school at all. As you have found him, there is no need for me to stay here. I do not wish my rheumatism to revive."

And the master of the Shell walked away.

Mr. Tenby looked at the sleeping gipsy again, and then at Kildare.

"This is most extraordinary, Kildare," murmured the Turtle.

"I don't think so, sir; the kid is a gipsy, and I dare say used to sleeping in the open air," said the St. Jim's captain. "It's really quite natural, under the circumstances."

"Ahem! Then as a prefect you would not punish him?"

"No, sir; I'd give him a good jaw—ahem!—I mean a talking-to!"

Mr. Tenby smiled.

"Then that is what I will do, Kildare. Wake him up!"

Kildare stooped, and shook the gipsy boy by the shoulder. Kit started into wide wakefulness at once.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed.

He sprang to his feet.

"What do you mean by this, you young rascal?" demanded Kildare.

Kit hung his head. The enormity of his offence rushed upon him at once. His dusky cheeks were crimson.

"You have caused me a great deal of anxiety, Kit," said Mr. Tenby.

"I'm so sorry, sir," said Kit penitently. "But—but——"

"I'm afraid you are more of a gipsy than we understood, Kit," said Mr. Tenby seriously. "If you feel that you cannot submit to the restraints of school discipline, my lad, you should not have come here."

"Oh, sir——"

"If you wish to change——"

"Oh, I don't, sir—I don't!" Kit exclaimed, in dismay. "I—I'm very sorry, sir. I know I've done wrong. But—but I couldn't help it, sir. I felt suffocated indoors. I—I've slept in the open air nearly all my time, sir. When I wake up and can't see the stars, sir, I feel as if I were in prison. But I won't do this again, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Tenby. "If you will undertake not to do it again we will let the matter rest there, my lad. Come in now."

Kit reluctantly trampled out the remainder of the fire, and followed the master of the Second and Kildare into the House.

"Go back to your dormitory; and, remember, no more escapades of this kind," said Mr. Tenby, laying his hand upon the boy's shoulder.

"Yes, sir," said Kit.

Gander was awake and sitting up in bed when Kit came in and closed the door quietly behind him. Gander peered through the shadows.

"Is that you, gipsy?" he asked.

"Yes," said Kit quietly.

"Where have you been?"

"In the quad."

"Oh! I thought perhaps you'd been out to let burglars into the school, or something of that sort!" sneered Gander. As a matter of fact, Gander was extremely annoyed to find that Kit had evidently not been out of doors for any dishonest purpose.

Kit's eyes flashed in the gloom.

"Do you want me to come and bump you out of bed, Gander?" he demanded.

"N-no!"

"Then you'd better shut up, I think."

Gander thought so, too.

Kit turned in. But he had little more sleep that night. In the quad. he had been sleeping soundly; in the dormitory he was restless and uneasy. Once a gipsy, always a gipsy. It was hard to live with the house-dwellers. But Kit had thought it out and made his choice, and he realised, with a sigh, that he must stand by his choice—that he must be the one thing or the other, and that he could not be sometimes a gipsy and sometimes a schoolboy.

He realised that it would not do; and in the morning he realised it more clearly still. For when the fellows were up the burnt patch under the trees in the corner of the quadrangle was immediately discovered, and a crowd gathered round it.

Kit found Tom Merry & Co. on the scene when he came out, and he coloured as he heard the comments and the exclamations of wonder and the surmises as to what had caused it.

"Somebody's been campin' out heah, deah boys," pronounced Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, after surveying the burnt patch for quite a long time through his eyeglass.

Blake clapped the swell of St. Jim's upon the shoulder.

"Bravo, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "That's ripping! Sherlock Holmes couldn't have done better with a telescope and a magnifying-glass—he couldn't really!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"I hear that it was that blessed young gipsy," said Kangaroo. "Somebody says he was sleeping out in the quad last night."

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

"Why, here he is!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Hallo, kid! Come here! Are you responsible for damaging this sacred spot in such a reckless way?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kit flushed under the eyes that were turned upon him.

"Yes," he said.

"Bai Jove!"

"I camped out here last night," said Kit awkwardly. "Mr. Tenby knows, and he's looked over it. I was sick of the dormitory. That's all."

He walked away. He left the juniors laughing and talking.

The story of the gipsy's camping out in the quad was soon all over St. Jim's. Kit was not surprised after morning lessons to receive a summons to the Head's study. The story was certain to reach the Head, and it was pretty certain that the Head would take notice of it.

Kit entered the Head's dreaded apartment with a shiver in his knees.

Dr. Holmes was looking more stern than usual.

"I have heard of your extraordinary escapade, my boy," he said. "I am surprised and shocked."

Kit groaned inwardly. It was not likely that this quiet, scholarly old gentleman, brought up in the most disciplined way, accustomed to order all his life, would understand the wild promptings of a gipsy boy's heart. It was useless to attempt to make him understand.

"I am very sorry, sir," he said.

"Your Form-master tells me that he has consented to overlook the matter, upon your promising not to do such a thing again," said the Head severely. "I am willing, therefore, to allow the matter to rest where it is. But please remember that I am very disappointed in you. That is all. You may go."

And Kit went—with a heavy heart. He was paying dear for that midnight freak. The Head was disappointed in him—and the Head did not understand how sharply, how bitterly his words had cut the gipsy boy. It was hard for Kit to keep back his tears as he walked slowly down the passage. The Head, the kind old gentleman whom he had learned to respect and almost venerate, was angry with him, disappointed in him! How could he set himself right again in Dr. Holmes's estimation? That was the question now that troubled the mind of the gipsy schoolboy.

CHAPTER 17.

In Peril of His Life.

"CHUCK it, my son!" said Wallace of the Second admonishingly.

Gander snorted.

"I tell you I can do it."

"I tell you that you're an ass!"

"Do you think I can't do anything that that gipsy cad can do?" demanded Gander, with withering contempt.

"Certainly," said Wallace. "He can lick you, and you can't lick him."

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Wallace——"

"I'm not. You asked me the question."

"I'm going to climb the tower, and get in at the second window," said Gander, standing with his hands in his pockets and regarding the tower, with its masses of clinging ivy, black against the setting sun—"or, rather, I'm going to pass the second window and go higher than that gipsy cad went."

"Oh, don't play the giddy goat!"

"I'll show you," said Gander, taking off his jacket.

There was a chorus of objection from the fags who were there. Gander took no notice of it. Whatever Kit could do, he could do—that was a fixed idea in his mind. He took a hold on the ivy and prepared to climb.

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Wallace ran forward.

"Gandy, old man, don't be a silly ass," he entreated. "You can't do it—you know you can't! I know you can't, anyway. Don't break your neck."

"Oh, rats!"

Gander drew himself up into the ivy.

The fags watched him breathlessly. Gander had been a great man in the Second Form before the gipsy boy came. After all, he might be able to climb the tower as Kit had done. He was committed to it now, at all events.

Gander climbed up steadily and quickly enough till the first window was reached. Many fellows at St. Jim's had done as much as that. But when the window was passed, and he drew on towards the second casement, Gander's progress became slower. He was seen to pause and hang on with hands and feet while he took breath. The strain of the weight upon his arms was telling upon Gander. He had not the elastic wiriness of the gipsy in his limbs, he had not been so trained.

"Come back!" shouted Wallace.

Gander did not reply. He needed all his breath for climbing. He climbed on after a long pause, and the fags watched him breathlessly. On, higher and higher, till he was as high as the second window. But he was a good distance from the window to one side, and would have had to scramble sideways to reach it. He had announced his intention of passing the window and outdoing the gipsy boy, and evidently he intended to carry out his boast.

"The fathead will break his neck!" said Jameson. "It's all very well going up. But how's he going to get down again?"

"My hat! Yes, that's a jolly good deal harder."

Gander was still climbing. But now he was seen to pause; and the fags gave a breathless gasp as a loud crack was heard. A strong tendril of the ivy had parted under the weight of the climber, and Gander was seen to sway.

"He's falling!"

But he did not fall. He clutched wildly, and caught a fresh hold with his left hand—his right had never lost it. But the effort extracted every ounce of wind he had left, and the crack of the breaking ivy had sent a thrill of terror through him. He was half a dozen feet above the level of the second window now and some way to the left of it. He hung on to the ivy without motion.

"Come down!" shouted Wally.

There was no reply and no movement from Gander. It flashed upon the fags what was the matter. He had lost his nerve, and did not dare to move.

"My hat!" muttered Wally. "He's going to fall—he must fall now."

Gander did not move.

The excited exclamations of the juniors soon brought a crowd to the spot. Tom Merry & Co., in football garb, arrived from the playing-fields, and Kit came from under the elms with a book in his hand. Kildare of the Sixth dashed up with Darrel, his face very pale. The crowd thickened at the foot of the old tower, but they stood well out from the ivy. For there was a conviction now that Gander would fall. If he had lost his nerve he would never make the descent successfully. And he had evidently lost it. From above, from the depths of the dusty ivy, came a faint cry:

"Help!"

Faces were deadly pale now. Kildare looked up at the old tower, his lips white.

"Can't you climb down to the window, Gander?"

"Help!"

Gander could do only one thing—he could cling desperately to the cracking ivy, with every nerve in his body quivering with terror, till his strength failed him and he fell.

Kildare took a quick step towards the tower, but Darrel caught his arm.

"Don't be an ass, Kildare! The ivy wouldn't bear your weight at that height—it will hardly bear the kid himself."

The stalwart Sixth-Former paused. It was only too true!

"The ivy's thinner and weaker higher up," muttered Tom Merry. "It would never stand you, Kildare. I doubt if it would bear one of us, along with the kid there."

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy slid his eyeglass into his pocket. "I weally think I had bettah have a twy to weach him, Blake."

Blake grasped the swell of St. Jim's.

"Keep back, you ass!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"I couldn't do it," said Blake. "So I know you couldn't! I——"

"I'm going, guv'nor."

Kit ran into the tower. The crowd outside waited. Kildare had raised his hand to stop the gipsy boy, and dropped it again. Surely enough, Kit had more chance than anyone else of reaching the unfortunate fag in the ivy. If anyone could save him, the gipsy could. But could he? Would it not mean two deaths instead of one upon the hard stones?

There was no ladder at St. Jim's to reach to half the height. Kildare muttered to the juniors to fetch blankets to hold under the ivy, and a dozen fellows raced off to the dormitories to get them; but it was not likely they would be in time to be of any use. Besides, a fall from so great a height would drag the blankets from the strongest hands.

Nearly all St. Jim's were on the spot now. The Head had come out, pale as death, as he saw the peril of the rash climber.

There was a murmured cheer as the form of the gipsy schoolboy was seen to emerge from the second window, high up the old tower. Kit climbed out upon the ivy, and his soft voice reached the ears of Gander a dozen feet or more from him.

"Buck up, old fellow! I'm coming!"

Crack—crack!

The ivy was cracking and cracking, and it was only by a marvellous dexterity that Kit secured hold after hold as the tendrils failed in his grasp.

But he reached Gander at last.

His strong grasp closed upon the trembling fag, giving him new life and hope.

Gander turned a haggard look upon him.

"The gipsy!" he muttered.

"Yes, the gipsy," said Kit softly. "It's all right now, Gander—it's all right. Courage!"

"Help me—oh, help me! I—I'm afraid!"

"Hold to me, and I'll help you to the window."

Kildare, and Darrel, and Tom Merry, and several more had rushed into the tower now. They understood the gipsy's intention, and they made haste to reach the upper window, to help him into the tower with his burden. In a few seconds they were at the window, and Kildare leaned out.

Gander was clinging convulsively to the gipsy boy. Kit worked his way back to the window, finding a hold for Gander's nerveless hands and a hold for his own, always keeping an arm round the shaking form of the fag, lest he should lose his hold and fall. The exertion for the gipsy boy was terrible. The perspiration stood out in large beads upon his dusky forehead, and there was a grinding ache in his arms and legs and back. But he never thought of giving in.

He had barely reached the window when Gander's strength utterly failed. He hung a dead weight upon the gipsy, his arms grasping Kit blindly round the neck. Kit clung to the ivy, holding on, but too exhausted and too heavily weighted to move. Kildare leaned far out of the window, Darrel holding his belt behind. Kildare's grasp closed upon Gander's collar, and he drew the Second-Former bodily into the window.

"Hold on, Kit!"

The gipsy gasped:

"I'm all right!"

He climbed in, with a helping hand from Tom Merry. Gander had fainted, and Kildare and Darrel carried him down the steps of the tower. Kit, exhausted, panting, descended, leaning heavily upon Tom Merry's arm. There was a roar of cheering as they emerged from the old tower into the quad.

"Bravo! Well done, Gipsy! Hurray!"

Dr. Holmes grasped the gipsy's hand. Gander, his face dashed with water from the fountain, sat up, gasping, white, still trembling. His eyes turned upon the gipsy, and there was a strange mingling of feelings in his face.

"I—I say," he said, chokingly. "I—I say, Gipsy. You—you've saved my life! I ain't fit to speak to you!"

And Gander fairly burst into tears.

"It's all right," said Kit. "I don't bear any malice."

Dr. Holmes pressed his hand.

"You are a noble lad, Kit!" he said, with emotion. "I am proud of you! The whole school is proud of you! You are an honour to St. Jim's!".

Kit's eyes glistened. This from the Head! There was a rush of the juniors as the Head concluded. Kit was hoisted upon the shoulders of Tom Merry and Figgins, and a cheering crowd surrounded him, waving caps and shouting.

They bore him in triumph round the old quad., amid yells and cheers, and waving caps; and Gander's voice was as loud as any in the cheering. And Kit could not help his face glowing with pride. It was a glorious triumph for the gipsy schoolboy.

THE END.

(Another splendid, new, long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co., next Thursday, entitled: "THE DORMITORY SECRET," by Martin Clifford. Also a magnificent instalment of our grand new serial story, entitled: "DEEP SEA GOLD," by Reginald Wray. Please order your copy of next week's "GEM" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

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DEEP SEA GOLD!

A Wonderful New Story of Amazing Adventure.

By REGINALD WRAY.



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 on the journey Captain Flame tells the two chums that he is bound on a certain mission, and asks if they will remain with the Octopus and share the perils of the deep, or whether they will leave the car at the first port. They choose to remain on the submarine motor-car. The whole crew of the Octopus go out for a day's shooting under the ocean. Dick Dauntless is accompanied by Charlie Fleet, the youngest Octopian, and together they enter a sea-glade in quest of sport.

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

In the Clutch of the Sea Spider.

Two water wallabies fell to Dick Dauntless's gun ere he retraced his steps.

Charlie did not follow; he was peering through the water at some strange object on one side of the glade.

"Dick, Dick! Come back! Quick!" he cried, in a low whisper.

"What's up?" demanded Dauntless, returning to the boy's side.

"Look! There is someone fishing!" declared Charlie, in awed tones.

"Fishing! Nonsense! Who could be down here but ourselves? And I doubt if there is a rod and line in the Octopus," asserted Dick.

"Can't you see it? There—just over the mouth of that cave!" insisted Charlie, pointing ahead.

Dick looked, started, rubbed the glass of his helmet, and looked again.

Yes; the boy was right!

There was certainly a rod and line there.

The butt of the rod arose from immediately over the entrance to the cave, and—Dick could scarcely believe his eyes—suspended from the line was a bait of some kind—a big, gaudy, many-coloured something, not unlike an enormous butterfly.

Filled with amazement at so strange a spectacle deep down on the bed of the ocean, Dick walked slowly towards it.

As he approached the bait was moved slowly to and fro, as though the unseen fisherman was endeavouring to lure him on.

He took two steps nearer the strange object, then came to an abrupt halt, and laid a detaining hand on Charlie's arm, for the boy, allowing his curiosity to overcome his discretion, was advancing straight towards the cave.

There was something about that cave Dick did not like.

Its shape was too regular, and the indentation around its arch too much like teeth for his fancy.

For nearly a minute the boys watched the dangling bait, then, picking up a piece of rock, Charlie hurled it into the cavernous opening.

The missile fell short, for it is impossible to hurl a missile any great distance under water.

"Hang it all, I believe it is only a cave, and a strangely-shaped seaweed stalk, after all!" declared Dick.

Shouldering his gun, he was about to enter the opening, when a large fish darted past him and seized the bait.

With cries of horror, the two lads sprang back.

For even as the fish swallowed the coloured, tassel-like object, the arch of the cave dropped, and Dick distinctly heard a sharp click, as though a huge set of teeth had been snapped together.

In place of the cave appeared a huge, scaled head, on either side of which shone a pair of bright, glittering eyes, which rolled as though in ecstasy, as the monster swallowed its prey.

Then the huge upper jaw slowly lifted, disclosing the same cavity empty, and the pretended bait dangling over the fish's mouth once more.

Sick with terror, Dick Dauntless and Charlie Fleet reclimbed the gully's sloping bank.

"Good heavens, Charlie, another moment and that fish's fate would have been mine!" ejaculated Dick, in awed tones.

Charlie shuddered.

"Don't speak of it, Dick; it is too horrible to think about!" he declared.

Turning their faces towards the Octopus, they walked for some minutes in silence.

Presently Dick came to an abrupt halt.

"I have it, Charlie! I was sure I had seen something like that monster before. It was an angler fish!" he asserted.

"I know. I have seen the picture of one in a natural history book, but I did not know they grew as big as that," returned Fleet.

"Neither do they in the shallow waters, where they are generally caught, but no one except we lads of the Octopus know what monsters the ocean's depths contain," said Dick thoughtfully.

They had just reached a submarine forest of giant seaweed, which lay between themselves and their destination, when a strange, weird sound rang in their ears.

Dick turned in the direction from whence the sound had come, then, pointing to the Octopus, said:

"You can find your way back alone now, Charlie. That was the captain's call."

Charlie Fleet looked apprehensively at the tall, swaying trunks.

With Dick he would not have been afraid to go anywhere,

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but his heart quailed at the thought of the strange denizens of the deep he might encounter when alone.

"Can't I come with you, Dick?" he asked.

"Of course, you can't, Charlie! You know one blast is for me, two for Mopsa, and three for a general rally," explained Dick, adding encouragingly: "There's nothing to be afraid of. You can't miss your way, for we blazed the trees as we came along. Besides, you have your sword, and I have always found that one taste of steel makes the most ravenous fish keep a respectful distance. There are no monsters in shallow water like this."

Charlie Fleet thought of the angler fish, but raised no further objection, and, drawing his sword, plunged boldly into the forest.

He had not gone far before he had an encounter with gave him that confidence in oneself which is the foundation of all true courage.

From behind a huge weed-covered rock a young conger eel some six feet in length, swam towards him.

Charlie's heart sank into his boots, but he remembered what Dick had said, and, not waiting the eel's attack, slashed it across the nose, whereupon the hideous creature wriggled off quicker than it had come.

Half-way through the forest Charlie came to an abrupt halt, and gazed, with a puzzled frown, before him.

He was certain Dick and himself had come that way, for the cuts with which the elder boy had blazed his way were there, but he could not recall the screen of trailing, vinelike creepers that barred his path.

However, he could see the long line of blazes stretching away in the distance beyond the interlaced creepers, so hesitated no longer. Hoping to burst through without much trouble, Charlie hurled himself at the barrier.

The stout creepers gave to his charge, but did not break, and when he tried to thrust them aside, he found that his fingers were glued to them.

Nor was that the worst.

Additional creepers alighted upon him from somewhere overhead, and twisted round his legs and body, until only his sword arm remained at liberty.

Frantically the entrapped boy fought for liberty.

The more he struggled, the tighter the strands clung to him, and the more hopelessly he became enmeshed.

A tremor shook the inter-crossed creepers.

He looked up.

The sight which met his gaze seemed to freeze the very blood in his veins.

Slowly descending from the web of creepers was an enormous sea-spider. Its huge, round body was supported on six long, claw-armed legs, and from its small, beak-armed head came a stream of the sticky, glue-like stuff with which the creepers were covered.

Its saucerlike eyes fixed upon its victim, the sea-spider descended until within some eighteen inches of the semi-conscious boy.

Then its cold, clammy tentacles touched the boy's hand.

A sudden tremor shook Charlie Fleet's frame.

Beside himself with terror, he lunged blindly at his horrid foe.

He felt the keen steel pierce yielding flesh, then a claw-armed foot seized him by the shoulder, and he remembered no more.

A Find and a Fearful Discovery.

In the meantime, all ignorant of the fearful fate that threatened little Charlie Fleet, Dick Dauntless hastened in the direction from whence Captain Flame's summons had come.

He found the inventor kneeling beside some object lying half buried in an accumulation of sand and shells, which had been swept by the current into a depression in the sea-bed.

Captain Flame looked up as Dick approached, and beckoned him to his side.

"What do you make of that, my lad?" he asked, pointing to a shell-encrusted object over which he had been bending.

"Looks like a cannon, sir," replied Dick, adding, immediately afterwards: "But no, it is more like an image of some kind, that is if those pillar-like arrangements were intended for legs."

"Both guesses are right, Dauntless," asserted Captain Flame. "It is a cannon, cast in the shape of a tiger, and was one of three captured by the French at the taking of Trimalee, and sent by the victorious general as trophies of war on board the French frigate Le Monde to France.

"The same vessel carried the famous Pheasant Throne of the Maharajahs of Trimalee, so called because it was surmounted by a life-size pheasant, the gaudy plumage of which was worked in precious stones. It is reported to have been worth a million sterling, and to outshine in beauty anything ever seen in India before or since.

"The Le Monde also carried a company of about sixty disbanded gentlemen adventurers, who were returning to their native country with pockets well lined with Indian gold; yet probably they had not secured so much booty but that they cast covetous eyes towards the captain's cabin where the Pheasant Throne was placed.

"Be that as it may, the Le Monde, after leaving Pondicherry, was never heard of again. Several months later it transpired that a ship of about the Le Monde's size and appearance, but with her name covered with sailcloth, and showing no flag, was chased by a British frigate off the Cape, and only escaped capture owing to a lucky shot having carried away the British ship's foremast."

"Then you think that she went down shortly after her escape, and is lying at the bottom of the ocean somewhere about here?" cried Dick excitedly

"Not quite so fast, my lad. I certainly do think she went down with all hands, for there were diamonds in the Pheasant Throne which must have been heard of before this had they ever reached shore," explained Captain Flame. "My theory is that the adventurers captured the ship, intending to run her ashore on some sparsely inhabited coast, but that they ran into foul weather after their encounter with the British ship—probably their rigging had been damaged, for our tars were good shots then as they are now—and were compelled to throw these guns overboard to lighten the ship. If I am right, and their peril continued, the ship's armament would follow, so we ought to have a clear trail to follow."

"But how will you know which end of the trail we are at? We may be running on a back trail," objected Dick Dauntless.

Captain Flame nodded.

"A good point, Dick, if it were not for these tiger guns," agreed the inventor. "You see, these guns would be useless to the mutineers, for they dare not attempt to sell them, and most probably they were useless as weapons; consequently they would be the first things sent overboard, whilst the frigate's guns would only be got rid of as a last resort."

To this Dick agreed, and, eager to begin the hunt for the Pheasant Throne, Captain Flame led the way back to the Octopus.

As they walked along the bottom of the sea, Dick Dauntless related Charlie Fleet's and his own adventure with the angler fish.

Eager to see so enormous and strange a monster, the inventor asked Dick to show him the gully, as, according to the boy's description, it would only be a little out of their way.

But when they reached the spot where the angler fish had hung out his tempting bait, the monster was gone.

Disappointed, the two retraced their steps.

Thus it happened that, instead of skirting the forest as they would have done had they returned directly to the moving house, they followed the "blazes" on the seaweed trunks which Dick Dauntless had cut on his outward journey.

Presently they found, as Charlie Fleet had done, their way barred by interlaced creepers, and were astonished to find a large cuttlefish and a number of smaller fish entangled in its meshes.

Though greatly exhausted, the cuttlefish was still struggling to break free from the clinging strands of rope-like seaweed, and was sending forth dark streams of sepia, which darkened the waters until it seemed as though a black curtain had been drawn across their path.

Fortunately a stiff current was carrying the darkened waters from them. For some minutes Captain Flame and Dick Dauntless watched the struggles of the evil-looking monster, which has tentacles like an octopus, but a long body not unlike that of a codfish.

"It's a sea-spider's web, composed of the long stalks of a certain species of creeping seaweed, joined together by the glue-like substance with which the spider covers his web to catch his prey," explained Captain Flame; adding, as he turned to the right: "But come on; it would be too dangerous a task to attempt to cut our way through, for the sea-spider is one of the most dangerous marine monsters we can encounter, so we must go round."

Dick did not answer, he was gazing intently into the waving branches of the trees above his head.

"What is that?" he cried, a ring of anxiety in his voice which speedily brought the inventor to his side. "That speck of white in the clump of weeds, like a big nest, immediately above the web."

At first Captain Flame could see nothing, but, stepping to Dick's side, he stooped until his head was on a level with the boy's, then looked upward.

"It's a boy's hand! Good heavens, the sea-spider has got one of our comrades!" he ejaculated.

"It is Charlie! Poor little chap, he did not want to go through the forest alone, but I made him. If he is dead I have killed him," moaned Dick, in a paroxysm of self-condemnation.

"Come back, Dauntless! You are no match for a sea-

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spider, lad!" cried Captain Flame, as Dick rushed towards the nearest tree.

But the boy did not hear, or, if he heard, heeded not.

In a few strides he had reached a tree, and, twisting his arms and legs round the trunk, was soon climbing up it.

He soon found that it was very different to climbing a tree on shore.

The trunks, or stems, of the giant weeds were as slippery as a well-greased pole, but they were soft, and yielded to his embrace in a way which allowed his legs and arms to make good their hold on the trunk.

Captain Flame made no attempt to follow the gallant lad, but, gun in hand, kept his eyes fixed on the spider's den, ready to send a bullet crashing through the monster's brain if it thrust its loathsome head through the entrance hole.

As Dick neared the mass of weeds, from which he could now see the boy's limp hand hanging, he paused, and, drawing his sword, allowed it to hang by its knot from his wrist; then, ready to take the defensive on the slightest movement from within the den, resumed his climb.

The tree up which he had mounted was about six feet from the spider's den, but huge, flat leaf-like boughs or fronds grew from out the trunk, along one of which Dick crept, his weight gradually bending it down, until its spear-like tip rested on the spider's lair.

Sword in hand, Dick leaned over, trying to peer into the hollow nest, which reminded him of a field-mouse's nest he had once seen built on a wheat straw in an English harvest field.

It was so dark within that at first Dick could see nothing.

Presently he made out Charlie Fleet's white face, showing through the clear glass of his helmet; then, immediately above him, a huge rounded body, covered with short, stumpy spikes of horn or shell.

Enormous long, crooked legs were sprawled out in every direction.

"Steady, Dick; don't be foolhardy, lad! Entice the brute out, and let me have a shot at him," cried Captain Flame, as Dick made as though he would spring from the broad leaf into the yawning mouth of the den.

Dick looked down, and, seeing that Captain Flame was ready with his gun at his shoulder, nodded.

A hideous claw-armed leg lay well within reach of Dick's sword.

Steadying himself on the swaying frond, he lunged forward, and pierced the forearm just above the claw; then drew rapidly back, expecting to see the enraged monster hurl itself at him.

But nothing happened, and, after a short pause, Dick looked into the den once more.

The claw still lay where it had been when Dick's sword pierced it. The repulsive body had not moved.

Could the brute be dead, or was it lying low until it could make sure of him?

Charlie Fleet opened his eyes.

They met Dick's laden with such a world of terrified appeal that he hesitated no longer.

Springing to his feet, he steadied himself on the swaying leaf, then sprang straight into the mouth of the den.

As he alighted on the bone-strewn floor he sprang aside, then lunged with lightning quickness at one of a pair of huge, cold, lifeless eyes, that were glaring at him from the sea-spider's repulsive head.

The keen point glanced off the bony structure with which the brute's eyes were protected, but passing between the eyeball and the frontal bone, sank a good eight inches into the monster's head.

But the spider neither moved nor flinched, and Dick realised that it was dead.

Bending down, he tried to draw Charlie from under the huge, misshapen form, but in vain.

Rising to his feet, he slashed at the weeds around the entrance to let in more light.

A minute later he almost wished he had not done so.

So fearful did the sea-spider look, that it was days before he could banish the memory of it from his dreams.

Yet he must not only see the monster, but handle it, if he would not leave Charlie Fleet beneath the fearful weight of that enormous body.

For nearly a minute he hesitated.

A shot ringing out from below warned him of yet another danger to be faced.

He looked down to see that the cuttlefish had freed the majority of its long tentacles, and was dragging himself up the web, evidently intent upon doing battle with the sea-spider.

It is true the spider was dead, but Dick Dauntless drew scant comfort from the knowledge just then.

Mad with rage and pain, the cuttlefish would not rest content until it had slain all within the den.

Another shot rang out.

A hissing roar burst from the cuttlefish's hideous mouth.

Captain Flame was firing into its huge body as quickly as he could load and press the trigger.

The wounds seemed only to spur the fearful monster on to fiercer efforts.

An almost irresistible impulse possessed Dick to leave his helpless comrade and fly, whilst yet he had time.

A flush of shame mantled his cheek that he should even have thought of so dastardly an act of desertion.

Stooping, he grasped one of the spider's huge, spike-armed legs. So cold and slimy was it to the touch that he almost released his hold.

Setting his teeth, he exerted every muscle to the utmost in a vain attempt to drag the heavy body from off his chum, from whose pale lips arose shuddering moans of terror.

Suddenly Dick felt his whole frame stiffen, a feeling of utter despair shot through his heart, his hair felt as though it was standing on end.

It seemed as though a score of red-hot needles had pierced his flesh. His ankle had been seized in a remorseless grip.

Instinctively he knew what had happened.

One of the cuttlefish's groping tentacles had closed round his leg.

Swift as thought he grasped the hilt of the sword which hung to his wrist, and with a quick slash cut the tentacle in halves.

A wild shout of exultation burst from his lips as he felt that awful grasp relax.

His relief was short-lived.

Even as he nerved himself to grasp that awful dead thing beneath which poor Charlie lay, he saw something like the lash of a huge whip flash past him, and curl round the horn-covered body of the dead spider.

Again Dick Dauntless's ready sword flashed above his head.

But the blow never fell.

Instead, he sprang forward, and, seizing Charlie's arm, held on to it with all his might, to keep it from being dragged with the spider's body, as the cuttlefish's longest tentacle drew the dead spider towards its horrid, beak-like mouth.

Fascinated by the horror of the scene, Dick saw that cruel, curved beak bite deep into the spider's body.

Then the combined weight of the monsters proving too great for the glue which had held the cuttlefish captive, both rolled heavily to the ground.

Calm as ever, except that, perhaps, his emotionless face was a trifle whiter than usual, Captain Flame stepped close up to the monster cuttlefish's body, and, with the muzzle of his gun almost touching its head, sent a bullet crashing through its brain.

With a fearful hissing roar the huge fish released its prey, writhed in its death agonies a few moments, ere its tentacles straightened out in death.

Barely had the fish's struggles ceased ere Dick Dauntless, with Charlie clasped tightly in his arms, reached Captain Flame's side.

"Well done, my lad; you have acted nobly!" cried the inventor, his voice trembling with emotion. "But I will speak of this later. At present our only thought must be to get Charlie Fleet to the Octopus as quickly as we can. Recover your sword. It is too good a blade to be lost."

Dick looked at the hilt of a sword that protruded from the spider's body, close against its repulsive head.

"Mine is in its scabbard; that must be Charlie's!" he declared.

It was true. The gallant youngster's last despairing thrust had inflicted a mortal wound, which had only left the sea-spider strength to drag its body into the den ere it fell dead over its victim.

The Moving Wall of Ice.

Captain Flame had proved a true prophet.

A wide cast round the first tiger gun had led them to a second. Moving off in a straight line from the two, they soon came to the third.

With Captain Flame in the centre, Dick, Jack, Will, and Tom on either side, the little force moved in skirmishing order before the Octopus, searching caves, and even sands, for the guns, which were picked up sometimes in couples, but more often singly, as they had been thrown overboard to lighten the doomed ship.

Presently the trail of abandoned guns ceased, and they continued their widespread march for mile after mile without result.

Still Captain Flame persevered, urging the boys onwards with words of encouragement to the willing, threats to the sluggards and discontented.

Thus they continued their search, only retiring to the Octopus for meals, and to snatch a few hours' sleep.

Day succeeded day, yet Captain Flame would not hear of relinquishing what even Dick Dauntless was beginning to regard as a hopeless search.

"ASHAMED OF HIS FATHER!" is the Title of the Splendid, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. One Penny.



As Jack Orde slid cautiously down the frozen ropes of the old treasure-ship a huge white body hurtled past him, and fell with a heavy thud on the deck below.
(See page 27.)

Swiftly every member of the little party obeyed the signal, for each knew Captain Flame's almost foolhardy contempt of danger, and realised that nothing but the most imminent peril had caused him to give the signal for so precipitate a retreat.

"Quick, boys! Make haste, as you value your lives!" cried Captain Flame, throwing open the door of the water-dock.

Swiftly, but without confusion, the boys obeyed.

As the door closed on the last boy, a distant bell tinkled, and the next moment the swaying of the Octopus told that she was travelling at full speed.

Wondering from what unknown peril Captain Flame was fleeing, Dick Dauntless hastened to a small chamber in the stern of the moving house which commanded a view of the ground they had just covered, and in which were levers and steering gear for use in case the Octopus had to be driven backwards for any distance.

Sliding back the shutter that protected the plate-glass look-out, he switched on the searchlight.

The next moment he started back, holding his hands before his eyes to shield them from the fierce rays that flooded the sea immediately before him.

Captain Flame believed the ship was still before them. Winds, he declared, did not change from their wonted course, and at the time the Le Monde was lost the north-east winds would be blowing with unwavering persistency towards the south-west, as they did at the same season of the year at the present day.

Presently even Dick Dauntless lost heart.

To add to their discomfort, the water had been growing shallower and colder each day, until now, instead of the pleasant warmth which had bathed their limbs, they felt as though they moved through an ice-chilled stream, so cold had the bottom of the sea become.

One day, as they pressed south-east, after a wreck which Dick Dauntless firmly believed lay in warmer waters far behind them, Captain Flame, who was stalking moodily on ahead of the line of skirmishers, came to an abrupt halt, then turning abruptly on his heels, made for the Octopus, uttering the signals of danger which served as a rallying cry to the scattered Octopians.

Slowly removing his hands, he looked again. At first he thought he was witnessing another subterranean eruption, for, so close behind the Octopus that it seemed he could almost have stretched forth his hand and touched it, was a swiftly-moving huge mass of ever-changing lights.

Presently, his eyes growing accustomed to the brilliant glare, he saw what he at first took to be another octopus in pursuit of them.

His first thought was that some enemy had managed to get hold of a car similar to the Octopus. Then he noticed that whilst they were moving forwards the stranger was moving backwards.

Like a flash the truth burst upon him. The mysterious coloured lights which had so puzzled him were the reflections of their own searchlight, and the second Octopus a reflection also.

The mystery was solved.

The Octopus was fleeing from a huge wall of ice that,

NEXT WEEK: "THE DORMITORY SECRET." A Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Lumley-Lumley. and "DEEP SEA GOLD." By REGINALD WRAY. ORDER EARLY!

carried forward by some mighty ocean current, was travelling over the bed of the sea at a tremendous speed.

Even as Dick gazed he saw a huge rock appear for a moment between the Octopus and the base of the iceberg. The next moment the mighty mass of glistening ice struck the rock, and it disappeared, ground literally to powder beneath that moving island.

Dick Dauntless turned pale as he realised what the fate of the Octopus would have been but for Captain Flame's vigilance and prompt action.

To his relief, he found that the gallant Octopus was quite equal to the effort her owner and maker had called upon her to make.

Slowly but surely she drew away from the iceberg, and Dick breathed more freely than he had done since he first realised the nature of the danger which had threatened them.

Suddenly he uttered a loud cry of dismay, then rushed headlong back to the chart-room, where he found Captain Flame as calm and self-possessed as though he had not escaped death by the skin of his teeth, poring over a chart of the Antarctic Basin that was pinned to a sloping desk before him.

The inventor turned with a displeased frown as Dick burst thus unceremoniously into the room. But his face cleared when he saw who it was.

"What is it, Dick? Keep a tighter hold on your nerves, boy, or you will never be fit to brave the thousand-and-one dangers of the deep," he said.

Dick Dauntless scarcely heard him.

"Stop the Octopus at once, do you hear? At once!" he cried, in frenzied tones.

Captain Flame laughed with the mocking good-nature with which one would meet the foolish request of an unreasonable child.

"Why?" he demanded.

"Because my chum Jack Orde was left behind when we all ran into the Octopus, thinking only of our own precious skins like the cowards we are!" cried Dick indignantly.

The smile vanished from Captain Flame's face. Facing Dick Dauntless, he grasped him by the shoulder.

"What do you mean, boy? Where is Orde? Speak!" he demanded, in stern tones.

"Clinging to the face of the iceberg in momentary peril of slipping and being crushed out of existence!" was the reply.

Without a word Captain Flame hastened to the stern chamber, closely followed by the agitated lad.

The iceberg was by this time almost a quarter of a mile behind them, but so clear was the water in those frozen regions, that they could see every mark and crack on that glasslike surface.

"Look! There he is, in that zigzag crevice to the right! Thank Heaven he is still safe!" cried Dick, pointing to where, looking like some sprawling insect on that mighty mass, was a small form, half standing, half lying in a mighty crevice of the ice.

Even as he gazed a cry of dismay escaped his lips, as, with a loud, thunderous report, the huge mass of ice swayed, as though about to fall, stirring up a century's accumulation of sand, which, for a time hid it from view.

Presently the sand cleared away, and Dick felt his heart sink like lead within his bosom.

Jack Orde had disappeared.

There could be no doubt regarding his fate. The crevice had entombed him in its icy embrace.

Alone in a World of Ice.

But though the grounding of the berg had made the crevice into which Jack Orde had crept for safety close up, the kindly fortune which had ordained that he should find a refuge on the only ledge large enough to hold him on the face of the great berg, saved him.

As the mighty mass shivered beneath the shock he was hurled forward, and found himself in a small ice-cave. For some minutes he remained stretched on the floor of the cave, expecting every second to see the transparent walls fall in and crush him.

But though now and again a tremor shook his icy prison, nothing further happened to alarm him. After a time he ventured to rise and gaze around him. The first thing he saw was the Octopus, distorted by the many cracks and air-bubbles in the ice through which he gazed, but still undoubtedly the house on wheels he had already come to look upon as his home, slowly disappearing in the distance.

Maddened by despair, he dashed at the wall of his narrow prison, kicking it, striking it with his fists, and calling frantically upon Dick Dauntless and Captain Flame to come to his assistance.

His appeals were, of course, in vain.

Presently the Octopus was lost to sight entirely. After a time he grew calmer, and proceeded to examine his prison for some means of exit. He might be able to climb above the level of the sea, and thus reach the open air.

A glance overhead seemed to justify his hope. Immediately above him a sloping tunnel-like passage led apparently into the very heart of the berg.

Drawing the axe which he carried in his belt, he cut steps in the ice, and after about half an hour's hard work reached the tunnel.

Then commenced one of the most painful journeys Jack Orde was ever called upon to undertake. The floor of the tunnel was studded with sharp pieces of ice, which cut through his thick rubber suit, letting the icy water penetrate to his flesh, and chilling him to the very marrow.

At times his path would turn so abruptly to right or left that he had to hew his way round the bends. But the tunnels of ice mounted ever upwards, until at last he pushed his way through a thick crust of partly-frozen snow with a cry of joy, and emerged into the bright sunlight of the upper world once more.

With eager hands he tore off his helmet, and drew in deep breaths of the cold, clear, invigorating air.

He looked around him with wondering eyes. He was standing in the centre of a snow-filled valley, hemmed in on every side by towering pinnacles of ice, carved by the hand of Nature into mighty spires, rounded minarets, and flat-topped, embattled towers.

Overawed by the wondrous grandeur of the scene, Jack stood for nearly half an hour drinking in its wondrous beauty.

At last he turned his attention to the walls of ice that hemmed him in. To his left a less precipitous slope promised a path to the ramparts of ice.

Invigorated by the clear air, eager to find out what lay beyond the valley, he breasted the slope, and after nearly an hour's exhausting struggle, stood upon the summit of the ice-range and gazed upon a strangely beautiful scene.

At the foot of a gentle slope, and about half a mile away, the ice-field ended in a precipitous cliff, several hundred feet beneath which could be seen a calm, iceberg-dotted sea. Behind him stretched as far as the eye could reach a succession of pinnacled ice mountains.

It was all very grand, but very desolate, and a great loneliness settled on the boy as he remembered that he was all alone on that floating continent, far away from his friends on the Octopus, and far away from any hope of rescue.

Though the sun was hot, the wind was icy cold. Anxious to find a more sheltered spot, Jack Orde set out along the rocky crest towards what, for want of a better term, we must call inland.

Presently he reached a level plateau bounded on the windward side by a sheer wall of ice, towards which he made his way, and, sheltered from the keen wind, lay down on the snow to bask in the heat of the sun.

Wearied with his long climb through the tunnel, he had barely flung himself down ere he fell fast asleep.

He was aroused by what at first he took to be a clap of thunder. Springing to his feet, he gazed around him in alarm.

Louder, clearer, more distinct than before, the reverberating roar rang out.

The sight that met his gaze held him rooted to the ground with terror. Coming towards him over the snow, its sharp-pointed head and snakelike neck swaying from side to side as it ran, was a huge polar bear!

So fearful and unexpected was this new peril that it was some minutes ere Jack Orde could shake off the overwhelming terror that possessed him; then, as the bear broke into a lumbering gallop, he turned on his heels, and sped swiftly towards where a break in the icy walls showed a glimpse of blue sea.

As Jack reached the gap a glance over his shoulder showed him that the bear was gaining rapidly. Unscalable walls of rock hemmed him in on every side. Before him the snow sloped gently to the sea.

Spurred by the thought of escape, even though it were by death, from those cruel fangs, Jack Orde dashed off at redoubled speed. As though it guessed his intentions, the bear quickened its pace. Nearer and nearer it came, until Jack could hear the soft pad of its feet on the snow and feel the hot, fetid breath playing round his neck and fanning his heated cheeks.

On he pressed, eager only to reach the edge of the cliff and hurl himself into the calm, placid sea beneath.

But even that desperate way of escape was forbidden. When barely a score of yards separated him from the extreme edge of the cliff, he stumbled over a protruding hummock of ice and sprawled heavily in the snow. Expect-

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ing every moment to feel the bear's cruel claws tearing at his flesh, he tried to scramble to his feet.

In vain. His fall had broken the thin crust of frozen snow that had been formed over the drift, and he found himself sinking deeper and deeper into the soft, yielding, icy-cold flakes.

An earsplitting roar of disappointed rage rent his ears. He looked up, and saw the baffled bear tramping fiercely backwards and forwards over the snow. Instinct warned him that it was too soft to bear his weight.

The next moment Jack Orde forgot the bear in a fierce struggle to keep the snow from closing over his head. Down he sank lower and lower, until, with startling suddenness, he felt the pressure around him withdrawn, and the next moment was falling through the air in the midst of a perfect avalanche of snow.

Suddenly his descent was checked by some hard substance. His groping fingers closed over something hard, rough, and round. It was a frozen rope. The next moment his half-conscious grip of the strands was torn apart as he slid against what he afterwards discovered was a running block. Then he fell again for a short distance on to something which yielded to his weight, and all was blank.

How long Jack Orde remained unconscious he never knew. It was probably but a very short time, and when he opened his eyes it was with a wondering cry as he struggled to a sitting position and gazed in mingled horror and surprise around him.

He was lying on the raised quarter-deck of a strange, old-world ship such as he had never seen before save in pictures. Once she had doubtless been a staunch frigate, for though her deck was littered with wreckage, and the main and mizzen masts had gone by the board, whilst the gun-ports round her bulwarks were destitute of ordnance, hammocks were yet spiked to her bulwarks, and round the masts were stands of pikes like the palings round trees in public parks.

Presently Jack's roving glance was arrested. He felt his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth with horror. The sight which had so disturbed him was nothing more nor less than that of a tall, well-built man, who was leaning against a gun-port, his head resting on his arm as he gazed steadfastly at something hidden from Jack's view by the tall bulwark.

He was clad in a strange, old-world uniform. A long blue coat looped up at the sides and ornamented with a pair of heavy gold epaulettes, covered his body, a pair of many-buttoned gaiters rose high up the white breeches which covered his long legs. A sword with an elaborately-chased ivory hilt swung from his waist.

For several minutes Jack watched the motionless figure, half hoping, half fearing that it would turn round. There was something about the man's attitude that spoke of hopeless grief, and the boy was conscious of a feeling of sympathy with a sorrow the very nature of which he could not so much as guess at.

Gradually the silence that brooded over the ship got on Jack's nerves. Inaction became intolerable. Rising to his feet, he raised his head to the quarter-deck above him.

With a cry of terror he sprang back, gazing with starting eyeballs at a fearful, rage-contorted face which peered down into his own.

It was that of a swarthy, black-bearded man, and he lay with his head and shoulders hanging from the quarter-deck. A round hole in his forehead showed where the bullet which had robbed him of life had entered.

Something caused the terrified boy to glance from the man lying on the quarter-deck to the silent figure standing by the gun-port, and he noticed for the first time that the hand which was hanging straight down by his side held a long-barrelled, old-fashioned flint-and-steel pistol. As well as though he had seen the deed committed, Jack knew that the still figure before him had slain the other.

Then his eyes returned towards the sailor, but they were arrested by something which caused him to forget for the moment the horrors that surrounded him.

Nailed immediately above a low door that gave admittance to the cabins beneath the poop was a gilt escutcheon, on which were emblazoned the royal arms of France, and immediately beneath the words:

"LE MONDE."

A mirthless laugh burst from Jack Orde's lips.

Fate, that plays such strange tricks on human beings, had decreed that he, lost on that floating island of ice, should discover the French frigate that Captain Flame had scoured the bed of the ocean in a vain attempt to find.

On Board the Frozen Frigate.

The astounding discovery that he had found the French frigate, Le Monde, for which Captain Flame had been searching, imprisoned within an enormous cave of ice, drove all thoughts of the horrors by which he was surrounded from Jack Orde's mind.

He remembered only that somewhere on board that ship was the long lost Pheasant Throne, with its setting of priceless jewels. Eager to find out if it was indeed on board the frozen frigate, he moved towards the door leading into the poop.

On the threshold he paused, his eyes dilated with horror, his heart throbbing like the piston of an engine.

On the floor immediately before him were stretched numerous bodies, all in the strangely-contorted attitudes of those who have died violent deaths.

Some sprawled over the table that ran the whole length of the cabin, others in the rich uniform of naval and military officers stood against the richly-carved wooden walls, or sat, motionless in death, on chairs at the further end of the table.

Each held a pistol or a drawn sword in his hands.

Their faces were turned towards the door as though ready to repel an expected attack.

Then his wandering glance wandered to the end of the table.

He shrank back in alarm.

He was looking straight into the yawning muzzles of a brace of pistols that were pointed straight at his head.

The next moment he had recovered from the momentary panic the sight of the levelled weapons had thrown him into, and looked nervously at the dead man who held the threatening weapons.

He was a tall, aristocratic-looking man, clad in rich uniform. The diamond star of some courtly order adorned his left breast.

Above his head arose a life-sized pheasant, gaudy with the precious stones which surmounted the ivory and gold throne on which he sat.

Jack Orde touched the arm of the nearest officer, which was stretched across the table as though in expostulation.

It was frozen as hard as the ice that composed the floating berg in which the ship had been entombed so many years.

In a moment the fate that had overtaken the ship and her crew was revealed.

She had been driven by some fearful storm into a cavity in a glacier, and the waves, dashing against the wide entrance, had sealed it up with an impenetrable door of ice.

How the end had come it was impossible to say, but certainly with a startling suddenness which had frozen the blood in the veins of living and dead alike.

It was also certain that it had come at the very moment when one portion of the Le Monde's crew were engaged in deadly strife with the remainder, probably for the possession of the pheasant throne.

Strangely enough, the discovery that the forms by which he was surrounded were indeed dead, banished all sense of fear from Jack Orde's heart, although he was careful to avoid coming in contact with the wonderfully preserved bodies as he searched the ship for the food of which he stood so much in need.

This he found in sufficient quantities to prove that the ill-fated crew of the Le Monde had not been called upon to suffer the pangs of starvation ere they succumbed to the bitter cold of their icy tomb.

It is true the provisions were frozen hard, but with the aid of some papers he found in the captain's cabin, a flint-and-steel pistol, and wood ripped from the partitions between the cabins, he soon had a fire blazing in the cook's galley, where he thawed out and boiled some salt horse from the lazarette.

For three days Jack Orde remained on board the Le Monde rummaging her cabins, and bringing to light a large amount of hidden treasure, evidently the plunder of Indian cities gathered by the gentlemen adventurers in their campaigns against the native States.

This Jack conveyed to a roomy cabin amidships, which he had taken as his own.

The pheasant throne and the valuable order that decorated the dead colonel's breast he did not venture to touch.

On the fourth day a strange thing happened.

As he stood in the cross-trees of the shattered foremast, whither he had climbed at the bidding of some caprice, he suddenly found himself covered with a mantle of snow, which fell from the roof of the ice cave.

Barely had he time to wonder what this strange snow-storm might portend, ere a huge white body hurtled past him, and fell, with a heavy thud, on the deck below.

Wonderingly Jack looked down, to see a huge polar bear—probably the one from which he had so narrowly escaped—writhing in its death agonies.

(To be continued in next Thursday's number of the "GEM" Library. Will regular readers kindly hand this number containing the opening Chapters of "Deep Sea Gold" on to their friends?—The EDITOR.)

NEXT WEEK: "THE DORMITORY SECRET." A Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Lumley-Lumley. and "DEEP SEA GOLD." By REGINALD WRAY. ORDER EARLY!

OUR NEW WEEKLY FEATURE—



Next Thursday.

"THE DORMITORY SECRET"

is the title of Martin Clifford's latest effort, which I can only say is something for GEM readers to look forward to. The tale of how the mystery in which Lumley-Lumley finds himself involved develops to a climax, which, to say the least of it, is startling, will thrill and interest you to the last line. I do not want one of you to miss

"THE DORMITORY SECRET,"

so let me again impress upon you the importance of ordering your copy of the GEM Library in advance.

From a Canadian Reader.

I have received a very interesting letter from a Canadian reader, aged 24, who says that he pays twopence for his copy of the GEM every week, but if it were sixpence he would still buy it, because he has become so interested in Tom Merry & Co., and looks forward so keenly to the arrival of the paper every week.

My Canadian friend, whose initials are J. B., goes on to tell me of the success he has met with during his fourteen years in the Colony, and makes a very generous offer to assist any fellow-reader who may be going out to Montreal, provided that they are real hard workers. In conclusion, my Colonial reader promises to write again and tell me something about the life on a lumber camp, where he has worked for nine years. Many thanks, J. B. I shall be delighted to hear from you at any time.

A Reader's Request.

Miss Grace Williams, of 30, Opal Street, Kennington Park Road, London, who says she is "seventeen, very dark, and ordinary-looking," and a great admirer of the GEM Library, would like a boy-chum to correspond with her.

A Sensible Letter.

Mrs. Carlton, of Dublin, writes me a very nice, and withal, a most sensible letter, which I was immensely pleased to get. This reader does not hesitate to make comparisons between the GEM and the "Magnet" Libraries, and some other papers, and her comments on the subject leave no doubt as to which journals she would recommend all and sundry to read.

It is true that the GEM and the "Magnet" have done more than anything else to kill the "Penny Dreadful" type of paper, and this fact is evidently realised to the full by loyal Mrs. Carlton, whom I thank heartily for writing me such an able letter.

A Tribute from New South Wales.

Here is one of the latest additions to the budget of welcome letters which I am constantly receiving from enthusiastic readers dwelling in far-off lands beyond the seas.

"5, Hunter Street,
Newcastle,
New South Wales.

"Dear Editor,—I have now been reading the GEM Library for upwards of three years, and I think I can safely say that every one of them has been a real gem. I am also a constant reader of the 'Magnet,' of which I have read every one yet published. Of the GEM I have also read a great number, and I have never had cause to regret the paltry penny a week for them. It is a book that every right-minded boy should read. And not only boys, but girls and men and women. I am writing this as a testimonial from New South Wales, as I have not seen one published from there yet. Mr. Clifford's tales of St. Jim's are great.

"I will write you again upon receipt of acknowledgment from you.

"Wishing the GEM and the 'Magnet' every success,

"Yours sincerely,
"R. MAYO."

Very many thanks R. M. I much appreciate your good opinion of our two bright little journals. With regard to the postscript you append, inquiring if I can let you have any back numbers of the old series, I am sorry to say that I am unable to grant your request, the numbers now being out of print. Perhaps this may catch the eye of some fellow-reader willing to oblige you with some back copies.

From a Bradford Reader.

Here is a letter from one of my Bradford chums, which I have pleasure in publishing:

"Bradford.

"Dear Editor,—It is with pleasure I pen these few lines to you, congratulating you on the splendid tales now appearing in the old GEM. I think that Tom Merry & Co. are more popular than ever they were, and the serial story is the kind of adventure tale I like. I read with pleasure the announcement you made about a page being set apart for correspondents. I want to ask you what book you would advise to teach me about boxing and physical culture. I hope you will let me know through the correspondence page on Thursday next.—Yours truly,

"CONSTANT READER (H. S. B.)."

Many thanks for your little note, H. S. B. Certainly, I will answer your question, but I am afraid not so promptly as you expect. I must remind you that it is impossible for my readers to see replies to their letters printed on this page until some weeks after they have written to me, as each number of the GEM Library has to be prepared some time in advance. Besides, space is so limited, and each reader must wait his turn. So let me urge you, H. S. B., as well as your fellow-readers, not to be in too great a hurry to see their letters and replies to them printed. To return to your query, "Boxing at a Glance," by Murray Wright, is a useful handbook of the noble art, as it shows all the chief blows, counters, and guards. This book can be obtained from L. Upcott Gill, Bazaar Buildings, Drury Lane, London. As regards physical culture, my Bradford chum could not do better than to write for Mr. Sandow's free book on the subject, particulars of which will be found on another page in this issue of the GEM Library.

On the Feeding of Puppies.

J. G., of Chatham, writes to ask me to advise him as to the best food for him to give his puppy, which has just been weaned. He says he is puzzled between the numerous brands of puppy foods which crowd the market, each one of which is advertised as being "the best."

I can quite understand you being puzzled, J. G., as the variety of foods on sale is quite bewildering. I will give you a few hints on puppy feeding. In the first place, do not give your puppy any meat at all until he is at least six months old. He will always be ready to take meat if he can get it, but it is not easy for him to properly digest it. Very many of the ailments which puppies so often have are directly caused by improper feeding. The best diet is formed of Lactol, well-made oatmeal porridge, stale brown bread, and best dog biscuits, soaked in milk or gravy. After a course of this diet, one meal a day may be given of dry biscuits, broken up small. The puppy should be kept upon this food for twelve months at the rate of five meals a day from weaning-time until six months, from six to twelve months four per day, and subsequently this should be reduced to two. Puppies should be allowed to eat as much as they will at meal-times, and they should also be provided with large bones to play with, for the benefit of the health.

THE EDITOR.

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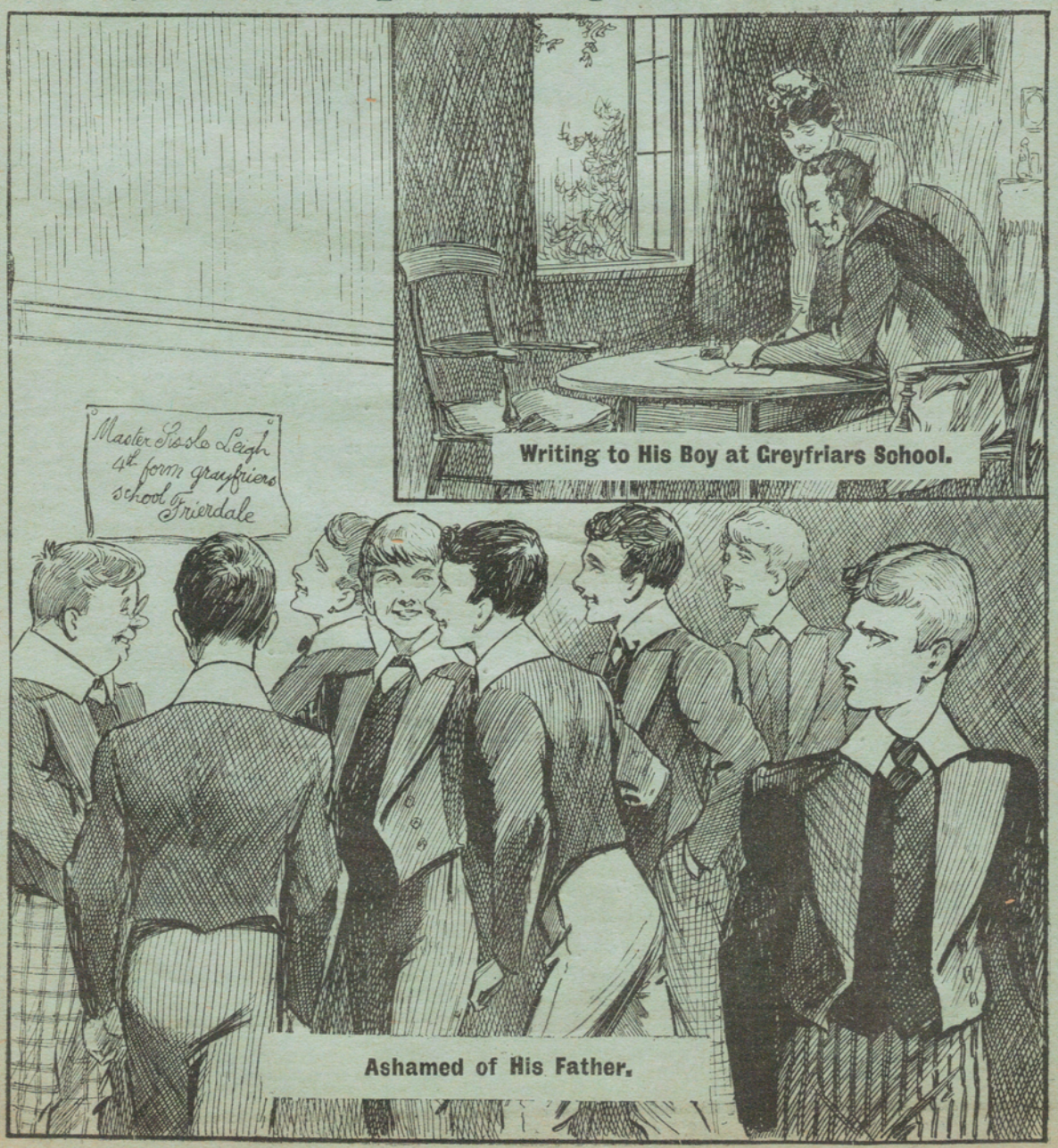
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