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No.
244.
Vol.
7.



The football match was forgotten, and the juniors made a wild break for the School House. But fast as they ran the water was faster. It came rushing on from the flooded river, and as Tom Merry & Co. were almost at the School House door, it swept them off their feet. They struggled and rolled in the water, clambering up the steps of the School House.

Contents of this Number:

"THE FLOODED SCHOOL!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By Martin Clifford; and

"BIRDS OF PREY!"

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CHAPTER 1.

Rainy!

"RAIN!" said Tom Merry.
"Rain!" growled Jack Blake.
"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus disconsolately; "and vewy wet wain!"

A group of juniors stood at the window at the end of the Form-room passage, looking out into the old quadrangle of St. Jim's.

It was raining; it had been raining for days! Football was off—very much off. With inches of water on the playing-fields, the most enthusiastic footballer felt his enthusiasm damped. Matches had had to be postponed; half-holidays were a sheer waste. As Jack Blake remarked dismally, the St. Jim's fellows looked like being reduced to playing marbles in the passages.

"What are we going to do this afternoon?" growled Monty Lowther.

"Blessed if I know!" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "We can't even raid the New House chaps; it's too wet to get across the quad."

"Yaas, wathah! Chap can't go out without gettin' his clothes wuined!"

"They say the river's rising," remarked Manners. "The towing-path has been under water for two days now. If it rises much higher we shall get it in the quad."

"Well, there would be some fun in that," re-

marked Blake, with some interest. "Anybody care for a game of chess?"

He asked the question half-heartedly, and there was a general chorus of negative grunts. Nobody wanted to play chess.

"What about leap-frog in the Form-room?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, rats!"

"Might do a rehearsal of 'Julius Caesar.'"

"Blow 'Julius Cæsar'!"

"We shall have to sit round the Form-room fire and ask one another conundrums!" groaned Blake.

Monty Lowther brightened up a little. Monty Lowther was a determined humorist, and he was great on conundrums.

"That's not a bad idea!" he exclaimed. "Why is Gussy like this rotten weather?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron," said Blake recklessly.

"Ass! Why is Gussy like this beastly weather?"

"I wefuse to be compared to this beastly weathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity. "I considah—"

"Because he never will dry up!" said Lowther.

But nobody laughed. They were past the power of conundrums. But when the humorist of the Shell was once started, it was difficult to stop him.

"BIRDS OF PREY!"

The first long instalment of Our Grand New Serial Story of Nelson Lee—Detective, on page 22.

Next Wednesday:

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS!" AND "BIRDS OF PREY!"

No. 244 (New Series), Vol. 7.

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"Why is a man with a cold like a quadruped?" demanded Lowther.

"Blessed if I know!" said Blake, yawning.

"You are an ass, Lowthah. A man with a cold does not resemble a quadruped in the least!"

"Because he's a little hoarse!" explained Lowther.

The juniors groaned.

"Don't!" said Manners. "This is worse than the rain!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why is—"

"Ring off!" roared Blake. "It's bad enough to have this blessed rain, without its raining conundrums, too! Dry up!"

"Why is—"

"Cheese it!"

"Why is a high mountain like the tropics?" persisted Lowther.

"It is not like the twopics, deah boy."

"Because it's a dangerous climb," said Lowther cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass inquiringly upon Lowther. He seemed to be trying to make it out.

"I do not wegard that as an answah, Lowthah," he said.

"I'm willin' to admit, for the sake of argument, that a high mountain may be a dangewous climb; but how can the twopics be a dangewous climb?"

"Clime!" explained Lowther. "One's a clime with a B, and the other's a climb with an E!"

"I have nevah heard of anybody climbin' with a bee—"

"B, idiot, not bee!" said Lowther. "C-l-i-m-b—see?"

"C-l-i-m-b-e!" exclaimed D'Arcy in surprise. "That does not spell a word at all!"

"My hat! C-L-I-M-B!" roared Lowther. "Do you know what that spells?"

"Yaas."

"And the other is C-L-I-M-E!"

"Is it?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead. I—"

"Do you see it now?"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No, I don't quite see it, deah boy, but I'm willin' to take your word for it."

"Oh, you ass! Listen, and I'll explain again—"

"Pway don't twouble, deah boy. I'm perfectly willin' to accept your assurance."

"One is a clime, and the other is a climb—"

"Oh, don't!" said Tom Merry. "Let it go at that. We're all satisfied."

"More than satisfied!" yawned Manners.

"I'll give you another one, then," said Lowther. "I know lots. I make them up myself. I can turn out conundrums like anything!"

"You'll be turned out yourself, if you don't cheese it!"

"Why is a cobbler—"

"Ring off!"

"Why is a cobbler—"

"Rats!"

"Why is a—"

"Shut up!" roared all the juniors together.

"Why is—"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Blake, exasperated. "It's the only way to stop him when he starts punning. Bump him!"

"Why is a cobbler— Ow! Oh!"

Three or four pairs of hands seized the conundrum-merchant, and he descended upon the floor of the passage with a loud concussion. Lowther roared.

"Oh! You silly asses! Ow!"

Bump!

"Yarrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, grinning. "I wegard that as funnay. Anything to relieve the monotony! Bump the boundah again!"

"Ow!" roared Lowther. "Leggo! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther made a wild clutch at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and dragged him over. The swell of St. Jim's rolled on the floor, and there was a loud crack as his famous monocle came into violent contact with the linoleum.

"Bai Jove! You feahful ass, you've broken my monocle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lowther. "Serve you right!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus hurled himself upon the humorist of the Shell. Arthur Augustus was generally a very placable fellow, but the loss of his eyeglass was too exasperating. The Fourth-Former and the Shell fellow rolled along the passage in a loving embrace, collecting up the dust. The other fellows, cheered by this break in the monotony, cheered them on cheerily.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Punch him, Lowther!"

"Give him beans!"

"Huray!"

In the sudden excitement, nobody noticed the door of the Third-Form-room open, and nobody observed Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, step out into the passage. Mr. Selby did not observe the struggling juniors till it was too late. They rolled against his legs with a sudden roll, and Mr. Selby disappeared suddenly into the class-room again. There was a sound of Mr. Selby sitting down, and a yell.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Cave!"

And the juniors fled.

But Lowther and D'Arcy did not have time to flee. They sat up in the doorway of the Form-room, breathless and dusty, and blinked at Mr. Selby. Mr. Selby sat just within the Form-room, and blinked back at them in speechless fury. Mr. Selby was not a good-tempered gentleman, and in rainy weather he was troubled with rheumatic pains, which made his temper a little sharper than usual.

"You—you—you—!" he stuttered.

"Sorry, sir!" gasped Lowther. "Quite an accident, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah! Awfly sowwy, sir."

Mr. Selby made a jump to his desk, and caught up a cane, and made another jump back to the juniors, who were scrambling up. Mr. Selby was not a very active man as a rule, but he displayed a remarkable and troublesome activity now. He reached the two juniors before they had a chance to escape, and the cane rose and fell with wonderful celerity.

Thwack! thwack! thwack!

"Oh! Ow!"

"Yowoo!"

"Gr-r-reat Scott!"

"Bai Jove! Ow!"

Lowther and D'Arcy fled. Mr. Selby chased them to the end of the passage, still lashing with the cane, and they darted upstairs and escaped. Mr. Selby did not pursue them upstairs, fortunately. The two fugitives came along the upper passage at top speed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Well run, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to laugh at, you fellows! I am hurt!"

"Ow!" groaned Lowther. "Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah funnay in that fwightfully bad-tempered boundah chasin' me with a cane."

But the other fellows seemed to think that there was. They roared.

CHAPTER 2.

In Spite of the Rain.

TOM MERRY looked out of his study window. The rain was coming down steadily, and the trees in the quadrangle were weeping. The gutters were overflowing, every depression in the ground was a pond, and over the school walls hung a soft blue mist from the rain. Tom Merry growled. He was a patient fellow, but patience has its limits, and he was fed up with the rain.

He glanced back into the study. Manners was cutting up films, though, as he remarked, there didn't seem any chance of getting any printing done for the next year or two. Monty Lowther was sprawling in the arm-chair, with his feet on the fender, the picture of bored depression.

"Look here," exclaimed Tom Merry decidedly, "this won't do!"

"Beastly, ain't it?" growled Lowther.

"We shall get into a state of dry rot if we go on like this!" continued the captain of the Shell.

"Wet rot, at any rate," agreed Lowther.

"I'm sick of staying indoors!"

"Like to go out in that?" demanded Lowther, jerking one foot towards the rainy window.

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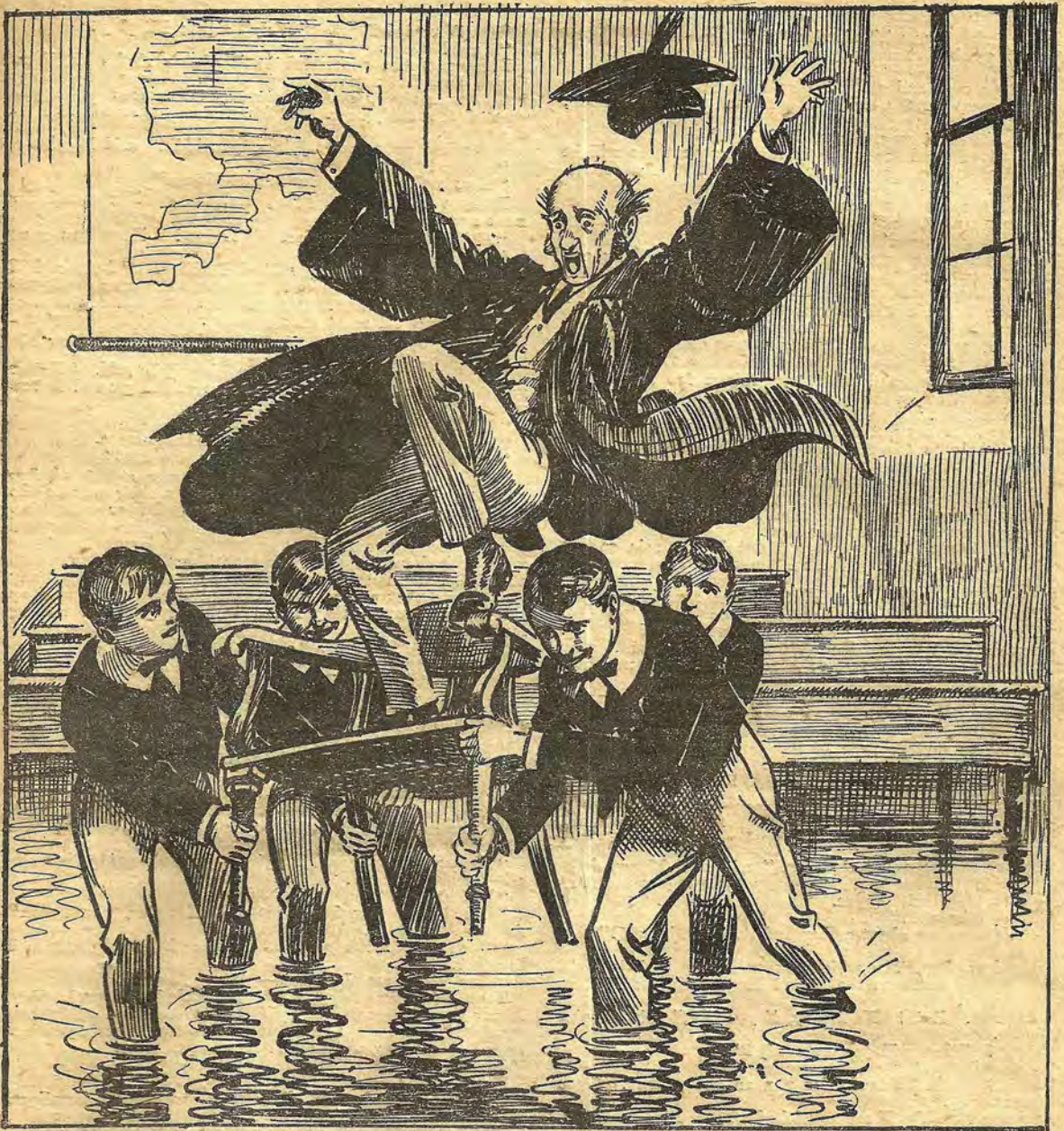
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(See column 2, page 27 of this issue.)

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OUT ON FRIDAY—"THE PENNY POPULAR"—BUY IT!



"Now, then," said Wally D'Arcy. "All together! Up she goes!" Up she went, certainly, and, whether by accident or design, the chair turned completely sideways, and Mr. Selby went with a headlong splash into the water. "Yaroo!" (See Chapter 8.)

"Better than rotting about indoors. Look here, why can't we have a match in the rain?"

"A which?"

"A match in the rain."

Lowther shook his head.

"Couldn't keep it alright," he said.

Tom Merry stared.

"What do you mean? Couldn't keep what alright?"

"A match in the rain."

"Oh, don't be funny; it's worse than the weather. I mean a footer match. Let's go over and dig out Figgins & Co., and make 'em play."

"We shall have to swim to goal!"

"That's better than getting dry rot indoors. It won't be much of a match, but it will be in the open air, anyway. We can put on our oldest things."

"And play in macintoshes?" asked Lowther.

"Rats! No! Look here, are you game?"

Monty Lowther yawned.

"Oh, yes, any old thing!"

"Let's tell the fellows, then, and then go over and wake Figgins up."

"All serene. You playing, Manners?"

"Oh, I'm on!" said Manners, rising from the table. "Anything to break the monotony!"

The Terrible Three looked a little more cheerful as they left their study. The weather was more suited to swimming than to football, as Lowther remarked; but any kind of a match was better than boring themselves to death indoors watching the rain. The chums of the Shell walked down the passage, and looked in at Study No. 6. In that famous apartment, Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy were yawning their heads off. Jack Blake looked up dismally at the Terrible Three.

"Going to play?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake stared.

"Play what? Noughts and crosses?"

"No," said Tom Merry, laughing; "footer. I'm thinking of rousing out the New House fellows and making them play in the rain. Better than slacking."

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS!"

Blake jumped up with alacrity.
 "Good egg! Get ready, you chaps!"
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "You go over and get out Figgins & Co., and I'll wake the fellows up on this side," said Blake. "It will be fun, in a way."
 "A wathah wet way, Blake, deah boy?"
 "Oh, never mind the wet! If this goes on there will be a foot of water on the field, and we sha'n't have a chance. Now or never's the time."
 "What about our clothes, deah boy?"
 "Blow your clothes!"
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "You can put on your oldest things, or a bathing costume, if you like," said Tom Merry. "Get ready. I'll soon have the New House fellows over."

And the Terrible Three went downstairs. They donned their macintoshes and took their umbrellas, and sallied forth into the rainy quadrangle. The wind was blowing considerably, and it drove great splashes of rain into their faces.

"My hat," ejaculated Lowther, "this is too thick! We shall never get across the quad!"

"Oh, buck up!"
 Linking their arms, the Terrible Three plunged through wind and rain in the direction of the New House. From the window of a junior study three New House juniors watched them coming, in considerable surprise.

"My aunt," exclaimed Figgins, "look at the duffers! They're choosing a queer afternoon for a walk."

"They're coming here," said Kerr.

"I say, Figgys, if they can get out in the rain so can we," said Fatty Wynn. "Let's cut over to the tuck-shop."

"Br-r-r-r!" said Figgins.

"Dame Taggles has some of those steak-and-kidney pies left."

"They'll stay left, far as I'm concerned," said Figgins. "I wonder what those School House bounders want. May as well rag 'em while they're here; it will be something to do."

The Terrible Three disappeared from sight in the porch of the New House. A few minutes later their wet boots were heard squelching in the Fourth-Form passage. There was a thump on the door of Figgins's study, and it was opened, and three drenched juniors blinked in. Rain was running down their macintoshes and their umbrellas, and forming little pools round them, and they left a trail of wet behind them as they came.

"Hallo," said Figgins, "you're flooding the place out! What's on?"

"Come to bring you a challenge," said Tom Merry, dashing the rain from his face. "Are you game to play footer?"

"Footer!" yelled Figgins. "In this weather?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Well, there are about a thousand reasons why not?" said Figgins.

"My dear chap, if you New House fellows funk it, we'll make up two teams on the School House side!" said Tom Merry loftily.

"Funk it? Rats! We'll play, if you like," said Figgins promptly.

"Good! When will you be ready?"

"Five minutes."

"Good! We'll be ready for you on the ground. Come on, you chaps!"

And the Terrible Three squelched away. Figgins & Co. looked at one another.

"What rot!" said Fatty Wynn. "Much better dodge the rain and get into the tuck-shop and have a bit of a feed."

"Rats!" said Figgins. "This study never refuses a challenge. Come and help me talk to the chaps."

"They'll want some talking to to make 'em play in this weather," grinned Kerr.

"Well, we'll talk all that's necessary. Come on!"

Figgins & Co. looked into the next study. Pratt of the Fourth was there, sitting over the fire, reading. Figgins gently raised his boot and kicked his book away.

"Look out!" yelled Pratt. "What are you up to?"

"You're wanted!"

"Wanted—what for, you ass?" demanded Pratt.

"Footer!"

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"I'm not being funny, my son. The School House have challenged us to a match in the rain, and we're going to play 'em."

"I'm not!" hooted Pratt. "I'm jolly well not going to get drenched!"

"Yes, you are!" said Figgins cheerily. "Take his other arm, Kerr, and we'll bump him till he thinks it over."

"Hear, hear!"

Bump!

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OUT ON FRIDAY—"THE PENNY POPULAR"—BUY IT!

"Ow!" roared Pratt. "It's all right; I'll play!"

"Good! Come on!"

Figgins & Co. proceeded to Redfern's study. Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence were at home. They were making toffee, as a strong smell of burning announced as Figgins opened the study-door. Redfern blinked round through the smoke.

"Get into your footer things, you kids!" said Figgins.

"Footer?" shouted Redfern.

"Yes; we're playing the School House."

Redfern rushed at Figgins, and clasped him round the neck and hugged him.

"Hallo!" roared Figgins. "Leggo! Have you gone potty?"

"Come to my arms!" sobbed Redfern. "Lemme fold you to my bosom and weep! You come like corn in Egypt, or the flowers in May! It's the most idiotic idea I've ever heard of, and I'll come with pleasure. Buck up, Lorry and Owen, let's get out and play the giddy ox with Figgins!"

Figgins jerked himself away.

"Well, change into your footer things," he said. "Better put on your holiest rags. We're due at the ground in two minutes!"

"We'll be ready!"

"What about the toffee?" demanded Lawrence.

"Oh, blow the toffee! Chuck it in the fire!"

Figgins & Co. were not ready in the stipulated five minutes; but soon after that, they made their way to the football ground. By persuasion, peaceful or otherwise, Figgins had got an eleven together; and before they had taken three steps outside the shelter of the house, the eleven were soaked to the skin. But that, as Figgins remarked cheerfully, was nothing; they would not be able to get any wetter, and that was a comfort. And when they arrived on the football-ground, they found Tom Merry & Co. waiting for them.

CHAPTER 3.

A Very Queer Football Match.

THE football-field was swimming in water. Water squelched over the ankles of the juniors as they moved on the field. The rain was coming down as heavily as ever. Tom Merry had a footer under his arm, and it squelched dismally as he tossed it down. The drenched and draggled juniors looked at one another with cheerful grins. As Blake had said, it would be fun, in a way, playing in a drenching downpour of rain.

"Here we are!" said Figgins. "Who's going to swim off—I mean kick off?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! My boots are full of water, you know."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

"Then you're the same at both ends now," remarked Lowther.

"You uttah ass, Lowthah—"

Tom Merry and Figgins tossed for choice of goal. Tom Merry won the toss, and elected to kick off. The ball squelched away, and the School House footballers squelched after it. The New House met them, squelching.

Squelch!

Slosh—slosh!

The wet ball shot in all sorts of surprising directions. There were more juniors on the ground than on their feet, as they stumbled and rolled in the wet. But the exercise warmed them, and they entered into the spirit of the thing.

From the distant House, the windows were soon crammed with faces watching them.

Kangaroo of the Shell was acting as referee; but, instead

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of the familiar Norfolk, he had adopted footer garb, in order to have less about him to get wet. With the rain splashing in their faces, and running down their backs and into their boots, the juniors ran and plunged after the elusive ball, laughing loudly and in great glee as they tumbled over on the soaking grass.

"Bai Jove! This is wathah fun, you know!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "I'm afraid we're gettin' awfully muddy, though!"

They were! They were smothered with mud from head to foot before they had been playing ten minutes, to such an extent that it was next to impossible to recognise faces, and quite impossible to discern colours. This, however, added to the variety of the game. Figgins scored the first goal from a pass given him by Tom Merry, under the impression that he was Lowther. There was a roar from the New House juniors as the leather plunked into the School House net.

"Goal!"

"Hurray!"

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "I—I thought that muddy image was you, Monty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you ass!" ejaculated Lowther.

"Well, there's nothing of either of you but mud and long legs," said Tom Merry.

Lorne of the Fourth tossed the leather from the goal. The teams lined up again, the New House fellows in great spirits. Tom Merry kicked off, and the School House made a most determined rush. The New House met them with equal vigour, and more than a dozen juniors slipped over and rolled at once. Monty Lowther got away with the ball, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy charged him, and robbed him of the ball in the most valiant style. Monty Lowther seemed petrified as his own winger robbed him and ran away with the leather.

"You ass!" he roared.

"Bai Jove! Ain't you Figgins?" gasped D'Arcy. "Weally, Lowthah, you shouldn't have such silly long legs, and then—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out!" shrieked Lowther.

But D'Arcy wasn't looking out. Kerr deprived him of the ball, and sent it away to the School House goal. Lorne caught it; and then Figgins charged him into the net, ball and all. Lorne and Figgins and the ball disappeared in a sea of rain and mud—and gasped and sorted themselves out, quite unrecognisable—but it was a goal!

"Two up!" chortled Redfern. "Hurray for us!"

"Bravo, New House!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Tom Merry. "Play up, you chaps!"

The School House team played up, rain and mud dropping from them in lumps. From a heap of rain, mud, and juniors before the New House goal, Tom Merry emerged, and sent the ball in before Fatty Wynn could stop it. Then the School House yelled.

"Goal!"

Kangaroo blew the whistle; the first half was over. The drenched juniors gathered in the shelter of the pavilion, gasping and roaring with laughter as they looked at one another. Tom Merry rubbed mud out of his eyes.

"Well, this is a game!" he gasped.

"My hat, how it's raining!"

"We shall have the prefects out soon to stop us!" grinned Figgins. "My hat! We shall have a ripping crop of colds over this!"

"Never mind—it's all in the day's work!"

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry glanced out over the dripping, swimming ground.

"This ground will be fairly under water soon," he remarked. "If this rain goes on, the dam on the Ryll will go, and then—"

"Phew! That would mean a flood!"

"Yes; and the quad. under water. Hallo, time's up!"

The teams went out into the field again. Figgins kicked off, and the two teams were soon hard at it again, in spite of wind and rain and mud. Suddenly, in the midst of a scrimmage near the New House goal, Tom Merry uttered a shout of warning.

"Look out!"

"My hat!"

"Run for it!" yelled Figgins.

A great wave of water was sweeping down upon the footer-ground. The juniors stared at it for a second as if paralysed. They knew what it meant. The dam on the upper river had given way, wholly or in part. For two days the Ryll had been over its banks, and the towing-path and the St. Jim's boat-house had been flooded. But the damage was more serious now. If the dam had given, there

might be five or six feet of water in the quadrangle in a few minutes, and the juniors ran for their lives.

Football was forgotten. The footer itself floated away on the waters, and the juniors made a wild break for the School House. They all ran in the same direction—the School House was the nearer of the two houses.

Yells of warning came from the School House windows, but they were not needed. The juniors were running their hardest.

But, fast as they ran, the water was faster. It came rushing on from the flooded river, it overtook the juniors—it was round their legs, round their waists, and as they were almost at the School House door, it swept them off their feet. They struggled and rolled in the water, clambering up the steps of the School House, and fellows crowded in the doorway to help them in.

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, was there, on the top step, and he grasped dripping junior after junior, and dragged him in. Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of the school, was helping him. Tom Merry clung to the stone balustrade of the School House door, and dashed the water out of his eyes, and looked round him.

"Hurry up, Merry!" shouted Kildare.

"Are they all in?"

"Yes, I think so—you're the last!"

"Hold on!" shouted Blake. "There's another chap—Lorne hasn't got in!"

"Lorne—where's Lorne?"

"Great Scott! He'll be drowned!"

"Lorne, Lorne! Where are you?"

There was a faint cry from among the leafless elms, amid which the water was dashing and surging. Tom Merry did not hesitate for an instant. He plunged back into the dashing flood, and a yell from the crowd in the doorway followed him.

"Go it, Tommy!"

"Take care, for Heaven's sake!" cried Mr. Railton.

"Buck up, Tommy!"

"Bravo!"

"Help!" cried Lorne, from the elms, whither an eddy of the fierce flood had borne him helplessly. "Help!"

Tom Merry swam on resolutely. The waters were whirling in the old quadrangle of St. Jim's, dashing heavily against the solid stone walls, and surging among the ancient trees. Not for a hundred years had such a flood been known at the old school. The whirl and swirl of the water dashed Tom Merry against one of the elms, and he clung to it and looked anxiously about him.

"Lorne!"

"Here!" came a faint voice.

Lorne was clinging to one of the trees, his face white and drawn, above the yellow waters. Tom Merry made a plunge towards him, and caught hold of the junior.

"Help me!" gasped Lorne. "I—I can't swim!"

"Right-ho! Hold on to me—I'll get you in!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

Lorne took a tight grip upon Tom Merry's shoulder, and the hero of the Shell swam steadily towards the School House doorway. There were five feet of water under him, and it was getting deeper every minute. Even in the midst of the peril and exertion, the strangeness of it struck him, that he was swimming in the quadrangle, with the gravel path five feet below him under the swirling waters.

"This way, Tommy!"

"Buck up, old man!"

Kangaroo and Figgins and Blake and two or three more juniors plunged down the steps, and caught Tom Merry and his burden, and dragged them in. Tom Merry staggered into the School House, gasping, the water pouring from him.

"M-m-my hat!" he gasped. "This is a go!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The door was shut and fastened. Outside the waters of the flooded river swirled and whirled in the old quadrangle, and the old elms groaned and quivered.

CHAPTER 4.

Plenty of Water!

ST. Jim's was not bored now. The rainy weather of the past week had bored the fellows to death, but there was excitement enough now, and to spare. The eldest inhabitant of St. Jim's could not remember a flood in the quadrangle. Even old Taggles, the school porter, who was popularly supposed by fags in the Second Form to be hundreds of years old, could not remember it. It had happened before, but that was many a long year ago, before the new dam on the Ryll had been built—and the "new" dam was more than seventy years old. Nobody had ever expected it to happen again. But, as Kerr sapiently remarked, it is the unexpected that always happens.

St. Jim's was excited from end to end. Even Dr. Holmes,

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the Head, was disturbed from his usual serenity. The water was five feet deep in the quadrangle, and deeper on the playing-fields, which were on a somewhat lower level; and Taggles' lodge was flooded, and the porter and Dame Taggles were driven into the School House. The little tuck-shop of St. Jim's was flooded, too, and the fountain in the quad. had disappeared under water. The gym. was washed out, and the crypt of the ruined chapel was overflowing. There was water, water everywhere, to use the description of the Ancient Mariner; but, unlike the case of that old gentleman, there was plenty to drink, if anybody had wanted it. The question at St. Jim's was whether there would soon be anything to eat. As Monty Lowther pointed out to a really alarmed group of juniors, the tradesmen's carts could not drive up through five feet of water.

"And it will be deeper soon," Tom Merry remarked, looking out of the hall window upon the swirling flood. "The dam can't have given way, or it would be deeper now. When it goes for good, we shall have water in the Form-rooms."

"Bai Jove!"

"Lucky we're built on high ground, or it would be in the passages now," Blake remarked. "The water's just lapping over the top step now."

"It's in the cellars," remarked Digby. "I heard cook say so."

"And in the vaults," growled Manners. "My dark-room is flooded out."

"You know what Shakespeare says on this subject," remarked Kangaroo of the Shell, in a thoughtful way.

"Oh, blow Shakespeare!" yawned Digby.

"Bai Jove, deah boy, was St. Jim's flooded in Shakespeare's time, and did he say somethin' about it?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with great interest.

The Cornstalk junior chuckled.

"Not exactly," he replied. "Shakespeare says 'There is some soul of goodness in things evil.' That's how it is here—while this flood lasts, it looks to me as if there can't be any lessens."

"Whole holiday all through the flood!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "My hat, that would be ripping! It can wash away as long as it likes!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How are you New House kids going to get back to your house?" asked Blake.

Piggins shook his head.

"Not going back!" he said cheerfully. "We should have to crawl round the end of the quad. from one roof to another, and it's not good enough. I hear that Kildare is going to try to get a boat round. Then it will be easy enough."

"My hat! I never thought we should ever come to boating in the quadrangle!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, it's wathah remarkable, deah boys. Gweat Scott! Where are you goin', Hewies?"

Herries of the Fourth made his appearance in a long coat, under which his bare legs were visible. He was in swimming costume.

"Going out for ducker?" asked Blake.

"I'm going for Towser."

"Towsah, Hewies!"

"Yes," said Herries anxiously. "Towser's out in the shed, and it's flooded already, and if the water rises he'll be dished. Same with the white rabbits and things—only, of course, they're not so important as Towser."

"Bai Jove! But it's dangewous to go out in the water, Hewies; and it's a good swim to fetch Towsah, too."

"I know it is," said Herries, "but it can't be helped. I'm not going to have Towser drowned."

"Dogs ain't allowed in the School House," said Levison of the Fourth.

Herries snorted.

"Get outside, then!" he replied.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! He had you there, Levison, you wottah!" "Where are you going, Herries?" asked Mr. Railton sharply, coming out of his study.

"Going to swim round for Towser, sir."

The School House master shook his head.

"Impossible, Herries; it is too risky. The animals are quite safe so far, as the shed is on high ground, and there will be a boat here soon. I have telephoned for one, and it may be here any minute now. The animals shall be removed to a safe place as soon as it arrives, and you may go in the boat."

"Very well, sir," said Herries reluctantly.

Mr. Railton, who was looking very troubled and sombre, returned to his study. The juniors did not see anything to look troubled about. There was a great deal of fun in a flood, from their point of view.

"G-r-r-r-r-r!"

Herries started, as he was going back to his study to

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change his clothes again. He looked round quickly as he heard a dog growl; but it was not Towser. D'Arcy minor of the Third Form was coming up the passage, drenched with water, and with a shaggy, drenched cur under his arm. The little beast was striving to escape, and Wally was holding it very tight. Wally knew there would be trouble if Pongo escaped inside the house.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Herries. "Did you fetch him?"

"He got loose, and I saw him swimming," explained Wally, "so I floated out on a chair and collared him. He's scared, poor kid. No wonder! Poor old Pongo! Good old Pongo!"

And he caressed his shaggy favourite.

"Like to kiss him, Gussy?" he asked cheerfully.

D'Arcy major backed away a pace in great disgust.

"Weally, Wally, you young wascal—"

"Ain't he a duck?" said Wally, holding up his ragged, shaggy, dripping pet for general admiration. "A regular little pippin!"

"Pway don't use those slangy expressions, Wally, deah boy. I considah—"

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

"Weally, Wally—"

"Blessed if I know where to put him!" said Wally. "It's disgusting that we don't have studies of our own in the Third. If I keep him in the Form-room, old Selby is sure to make a fuss. He doesn't like dogs."

"Go hon!"

"If one of you fellows would like to have him in your study—"

"Bai Jove!"

"I expect we shall have Herries' bulldog planted in No. 6," grinned Blake. "One in the family will be quite enough. You can keep that mongrel."

"Yaas, wathah! And I object most decidedly to Towsah. That wotten bulldog has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs!"

"Like him in your study, Tom Merry? You could use the lower half of the study cupboard as a kennel."

"Why, I keep my photographic things there!" roared Manners.

"They could be shifted out."

"Could they? Well, you cheeky young bounder—"

"Put him in Selby's bed-room," suggested Monty Lowther. "Wrap him up in Selby's bed. He'll be nice and warm and cosy there, and it will be a pleasant surprise for Selby when he goes to napper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass!" said Wally. "Selby would kill him!"

"That's where the great advantage of the plan comes in," Lowther explained blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally grunted, and walked away with his shaggy pet in his arms. He was wet through, and he had to go to the Third-Form dormitory to change his clothes. He dried Pongo on a number of towels, reckless as to their ownership. Pongo consented to lie quietly in Curly Gibson's bed while Wally was changing; but when he had changed, Wally was a little doubtful what to do with him. He could not let the dog wander about the house, and he did not like the idea of tying him up somewhere—to say nothing of the probability that somebody else would untie him again.

"Time for prep., nearly, Wally," said Joe Frayne, looking into the dormitory.

Wally nodded.

"I was just wondering what to do with Pongo," he said. Frayne of the Third pointed to the dormitory window.

"Flood very handy!" he suggested.

"What do you mean?"

"Drown him!"

Wally made a rush at Joe Frayne, who chuckled and dashed out of the dormitory and fled.

The hero of the Third wrinkled his brows in deep thought, trying to decide what to do with Pongo. He decided that it wouldn't do to allow the dog out of sight, and yet to take him into the Form-room, where Mr. Selby was to meet the Third Form for evening preparation, was a risky proceeding. But, risky or not, D'Arcy minor decided that it had to be done. He jammed the squirming mongrel under his jacket, and hurried down to the Third Form-room.

It was close upon the time for evening preparation, and most of the Third were in their places. Some New House boys were absent, owing to the flood in the quadrangle, which was keeping them away. There was a general exclamation as Wally came in, with the little black muzzle of Pongo peeping out from under his arm.

"What have you got there, Wally?"

"Is it a monkey?"

"Rats!" growled Wally. "It's my dog Pongo!"

"Phew! You'd better clear him out; old Selby may be in any minute now!" exclaimed Jameson.

OUT ON FRIDAY—"THE PENNY POPULAR"—BUY IT!

"He's going to stay!"

"Selby will cut up rusty."

"Selby won't see him!" growled Wally.

There was a cupboard in the corner of the Form-room, where blackboards and easels and things were kept. Wally deposited Pongo in the cupboard, stroked him and soothed him, and shut the door on him. Then he took his place in the Form, and waited with great composure for Mr. Selby to come in.

CHAPTER 5.

Boating in the Quad.

TOM MERRY & CO. were debating an important matter in the Form-room passage.

The great question was, whether there were going to be any lessons on the following morning. If the flood rose, the Form-rooms would be flooded, there was no doubt about that. And if the Form-rooms were flooded, there would be no lessons. And if there were going to be no lessons, there was no need to do any preparation overnight. As Jack Blake pointed out eloquently, it would be a sheer and sinful waste of labour.

It was a knotty problem. As Tom Merry remarked, Form-masters were queer fish, and you never knew where to have them, or where they were going to have you. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, might be relied upon to play the game, and to dismiss his class if the Form-room was washed out. But with Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, it might be different. Monty Lowther remarked that it would be just like Linton to take a class in a box-room, or on the roof, rather than let them off a morning's work. The juniors shook their heads solemnly over the unreasonableness of Mr. Linton. And yet, as Kangaroo said, it would be simply awful if they did their preparation, and there weren't any lessons, after all. Bernard Glyn suggested putting it plainly to Linton, and asking him; but Tom Merry remarked that that would look as if they wanted to miss their lessons. They did, as a matter of fact, but the least sagacious of them recognised that it would not do to explain their views on the subject to a Form-master.

The discussion was interrupted by the news that a boat had arrived. In the gathering darkness, a light gleamed from the direction of the gates, and the splash of oars was heard in the quadrangle.

Curious enough it was to the juniors to watch a boat pulling among the old elms, coming across the quadrangle from the direction of the gates. The juniors waved their hands from the window to the village boatman, as he brought the boat up to the steps of the School House, and it jarred there on the stone balustrade. Old Billy, the boatman, grinned up to the juniors.

"Nice goings hon, gentlemen!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking out of the window. "How is the flood at Wylcombe, Billy?"

"Ouses under water," said the boatman. "The Green Man is flooded out, and the Red Cow has the water up to the second floor."

The juniors chuckled. Old Billy was evidently best acquainted with the state of the public-houses in the village. Kildare of the Sixth opened the door, and the boatman touched his cap to the captain of St. Jim's.

"Ere we are, sir!" he said.

"Good!" said Kildare. "I want to get round to the shed behind the New House first, to get the animals out. They're in danger!" He stepped into the boat.

Mr. Selby came down to the open door, and looked out upon the flood with a sniff. Mr. Selby was a very precise gentleman; he had exact manners and customs which he did not like to be disturbed or changed, and anything that happened out of the common was annoying to Mr. Selby. He seemed to look upon the flood as a most preposterous occurrence; a kind of practical joke on the part of Nature at which he, Mr. Selby, had a right to be offended.

"Is that the only boat here, Kildare?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!"

"Then let the boatman bring across the Third-form boys from the New House. Otherwise they will not be able to attend evening preparation in the Form-room."

"I was just going round to get the pets out of the shed, sir," said Kildare. "There are a lot of white rabbits, and white mice, and Herries's dog, and they are in danger."

Mr. Selby frowned.

"The business of the school cannot be put off for the sake of those useless animals, Kildare," he said snappishly.

"They must take their chance. Kindly ferry over the Third-Form boys from the New House first."

Kildare's lips set obstinately.

"Mr. Railton has given me directions to get the pets out first, sir," he said.

The Third-Form-master frowned.

"Really, Kildare—"

"I will ask Mr. Railton, if you like, sir!"

The School House master came down to the doorway as Kildare was speaking. Mr. Selby looked at him, containing his angry impatience with a great effort.

"I wish Kildare to bring over the boys from the New House," Mr. Selby said. "I do not wish any of the Third Form to miss their preparation owing to this flood!"

Mr. Railton nodded.

"Quite so," he said. "The boat will be at liberty in a quarter of an hour. Be as quick as you can in rescuing the animals, Kildare. The water is rising, too!"

"Yes, sir!" said Kildare.

"Mr. Railton, surely those useless and, indeed, troublesome animals can be left, while the work of the school is proceeded with," exclaimed the exasperated Mr. Selby.

Mr. Railton looked at him.

"I should certainly not think of sacrificing the life of any animal, especially an animal that a lad was fond of, for the sake of evening preparation," he said coldly.

"Oh, very well!" said Mr. Selby, his eyes glinting. "Very well, indeed!"

And he walked away biting his lips.

"Go at once, Kildare," said Mr. Railton, apparently not having observed the bitter annoyance of the Third Form-master. "Lose no time!"

"I'm going, sir!"

Herries jumped into the boat, and Tom Merry and Blake jumped in after him. All the juniors wanted to have a hand in the novel navigation of the quadrangle; but Kildare waved back the crowd on the steps.

"That's enough," he exclaimed, laughing. "We don't want an army!"

"Pewwaps I had better come, Kildare! It will be wathah difficult steawin' the boat woud the houses, you know—"

Kildare laughed and pushed off. Billy the boatman rowed away past the old elm, and round the New House. Herries held up a lantern to light the way, while Kildare steered. They reached the slated shed, in

which the juniors kept their animals, and Herries, careless of the water, plunged into it. There was a joyous growl from Towser, as Herries found him, and brought him into the boat.

The cages and boxes were transferred quickly to the boats. There had already been some mortality among the smaller animals, but the greater number were saved. It looked as if there would be some more mortality when Towser caught sight of the white rabbits.

"Keep that beast quiet, Herries, old man," said Tom Merry. "He will be on the rabbits in a minute!"

"Well, he hasn't been fed yet," said Herries. "I dare say he's hungry."

"Don't you let him get near my white rabbits, you fat-head!" bawled Blake.

"Oh, rats!"

"I'll brain him with a boat-hook if he does!" yelled Blake excitedly.

"Rot!" said Herries disdainfully. "Towser wouldn't touch your old rabbits. Towser is jolly particular what he eats, I can tell you."

The boat pulled back to the School House through the deep dusk.

The rain was still coming down, the water was above the top step, and flooding into the hall within. Tom Merry chuckled.

"The Form-rooms will be flooded, and no mistake!" he exclaimed. "We shall be washed out of them to-morrow! What larks!"

The juniors were crowding round the flooded doorway to receive their pets. Herries carefully landed Towser, and D'Arcy backed away from the bulldog.

"Keep that unwuly beast away fwom my bags, Hewwies, please," he said.

Herries grunted.

"Rats! Keep your bags away from Towser!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"He's wet all over," said Herries. "Lead me your handkerchief, Gussy."

"What for?"

"To rub Towser down!"

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS!"

"You uttah ass——"

"Lend me yours, Blake, old man."

"Why can't you use your own?" demanded Jack Blake.
"Well, he's jolly muddy," said Herries. "It will muck up my handkerchief!"

"What about mine?" yelled Blake.

Herries did not reply. He led Towser away in search of something to rub him down with. There was a sharp exclamation in the passage, and Towser growled. Mr. Selby, on his way to the Third Form-room, had nearly walked into Herries and his bulldog. Mr. Selby was not fond of dogs, and dogs were not fond of Mr. Selby. Herries had a firm conviction that a man who was not liked by dogs was no good, and he did not take the trouble to conceal it. He took a tight grip upon Towser's collar, however. As he said afterwards to Blake, he didn't want Towser to bite old Selby; there was no telling how it might have turned out for Towser.

"Herries," rapped out the Form-master, "how dare you bring that animal into the House? How dare you, I say?"
"There's no other place for him, sir," said Herries, as respectfully as he could, considering that Towser did not approve of Mr. Selby. "I've got permission, sir."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Selby. "That dog is a dangerous brute. He tried to bite me once. He cannot remain in the House."

"You see, sir, the shed's flooded, and——"

"Take him away at once!"

"But, sir——"

Towser growled and made a jerk at his collar. Mr. Selby backed away.

"Have you got hold of that collar safely, Herries?" he asked gaspingly.

"Yes, sir. He might slip through it, though."

Mr. Selby did not wait to continue the conversation. He hurried away towards the Third Form-room; and Herries, grinning, piloted the bulldog to Study No. 6, and installed him there.

CHAPTER 6.

Pongo Causes Trouble.

MR. SELBY wore a deep frown as he entered the Third Form-room to take the Third in evening preparation for a happy hour. Mr. Selby's unamiable temper was worse than ever now. All that had happened since the river rose exasperated him. Floods were abnormal things, and Mr. Selby detested anything out of the normal. The rainy weather gave Mr. Selby sharp twinges of rheumatism, and that annoyed him still more. The School House was upset generally and in confusion, and there were dogs in it, and altogether Mr. Selby was feeling in a mood to pour out the vials of his wrath upon everybody he came in contact with. The Third Form saw it plainly enough when he came into the Form-room, and they were very much on their best behaviour. It was only too probable that even their good behaviour would not save them from their Form-master's wrath.

Preparation began under these dismal circumstances, to the accompaniment of the surging of water under the windows and the lashing of the heavy rain upon the panes. Mr. Selby's glittering eye was on the look-out for trouble, but the Third were equal to the occasion, and they were so careful, that for a time even Mr. Selby could not possibly find a fault with them. But after preparation had lasted ten minutes or so, Mr. Selby pricked up his ears, as it were. There was a low sound of scratching in the Form-room, and Mr. Selby's eyes glittered over his Form.

"Who is making that noise?" he demanded.

No one replied.

The scratching sound came, as a matter of fact, from the hidden Pongo in the Form-room cupboard, and Wally began to tremble inwardly for his favourite. Mr. Selby did not suspect the presence of a dog in the Form-room; he would not have suspected even Wally of such an example of cool "cheek" as that, and he imagined that one of the fags was deliberately japing him. He looked round in search of a victim, but the scratching sound ceased, and he was baffled.

Five minutes passed, and Wally hoped that Pongo had gone to sleep. Mr. Selby was sitting at his desk, with his eyes on the Third-Formers. Suddenly, in the silence of the Form-room, there came the strange sound again.

Scratch! scratch!

Mr. Selby started.

"Who is that?" he shouted.

Scratch! scratch! scratch!

"This is deliberate impertinence!" said Mr. Selby, in a voice trembling with rage as he rose from his desk. "I am determined to find out which boy is playing this foolish prank. D'Arcy minor, were you scratching on your desk?"

"No, sir," said Wally.

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The scratching ceased, or Mr. Selby would probably have detected that it came from the cupboard in the corner. He moved along the Form, questioning the boys.

"Were you scratching, Frayne?"

"No, sir," said Joe.

"Was it you, Gibson?"

"Certainly not, sir."

One after another the boys were questioned, and each denied being guilty of producing the sound that had irritated the nerves of the Form-master. Mr. Selby breathed hard.

"One of you has lied to me!" he said between his teeth.

Scratch! scratch!

Mr. Selby jumped.

"Who is that?" he shouted.

Silence.

"The whole Form will take an imposition of fifty lines!" shouted Mr. Selby. "If that noise is repeated, I will cane every boy in the Form!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Jameson.

Scratch! scratch! scratch! Whine!

The master of the Third stood petrified. The whining, following the scratching, showed him that there was an animal in the room.

"One of you has a dog here!" he exclaimed.

Silence.

Whine! Scratch-scratch-scratch! Whine!

Mr. Selby spun round towards the corner cupboard. He had detected whence the sounds proceeded at last. He snatched a cane from his desk and darted towards the cupboard, and threw the door wide open.

Pongo, with a joyous bark, bounded out.

"A—a dog—here!" gasped Mr. Selby. "Shoo! shoo! shoo!"

If it had been Towser, Mr. Selby would probably have given him a wide berth. But he was not afraid of the little mongrel, and he sprang towards Pongo, lashing at him with his cane. Pongo's bark of joy was changed to a howl of anguish.

Wally leaped to his feet.

"Let him alone, sir!" he yelled.

Lash! lash!

Wally ran out of his place to save Pongo, and Mr. Selby turned upon him in a fury.

"Is that your dog, D'Arcy minor?"

"Yes, sir."

"You brought him into the Form-room?"

"I—I had to put him somewhere, sir," stammered Wally.

"Did you bring him into the Form-room?" shouted Mr. Selby.

"Ye-es, sir."

"Hold out your hand!"

Wally obeyed, setting his teeth. He knew that he was going to get it hot, and he did. Mr. Selby gave him three upon each hand, and each of them was what the Third Form fags called a "twister." Wally was simply doubled up. He stood before Mr. Selby with his hands under his arm-pits, squeezing them to assuage the pain, and looking as if he were trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife.

"Go back to your place, D'Arcy minor."

Wally returned to his form.

Mr. Selby strode to the door and opened it. Then he made for Pongo with the cane again, to drive him out of the Form-room. But Pongo apparently did not understand that his presence was not desired. He curled up under Wally's desk at his master's feet. Mr. Selby stooped by the desk and lunged at him with his cane, and poor Pongo whined pitifully as the cruel blow came across his back.

Wally's blood boiled up. If it had been the Head himself, Wally could not have stood it quietly.

"Let him alone, sir!" he gasped. "I'll take him out of the Form-room, sir. Don't hit him."

"Keep your place, D'Arcy minor!" rasped out Mr. Selby.

"But, sir, let me——"

"Silence!"

Lash! lash!

The unfortunate Pongo did not retreat, he only crept closer to his master's feet and whined for protection. Wally could stand it no more. He stooped and picked Pongo up, and caught him to his breast, covering him with his arms.

"Let him alone!" he panted.

"D'Arcy minor, put that dog down at once!"

"You're not going to hit him!" said Wally determinedly.

"Obey me!"

"I'll take him out of the Form-room, sir," said Wally, rising from his seat and leaving his desk.

"Put that dog down at once!"

Wally did not obey. He started for the door. Mr. Selby started after him, and the cane lashed down upon Wally's shoulders instead of upon Pongo.

Wally gave a terrific roar.

"Ow! ah! oh!"

D'Arcy minor——

OUT ON FRIDAY—"THE PENNY POPULAR"—BUY IT!



The made-up amateur actors imitated Mr. Tozer's stride, keeping step with his fat little legs. The school gates were reached, and there was a yell as the peculiar procession was sighted. A crowd of fellows came swarming round at once. "Great Scott! What's all this?" (*An amusing incident from the splendid complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "THE SCHOOLBOY POLICEMAN!" by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's issue of our popular companion paper, "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.*)

"Ow! yah!"

Wally made a rush for the door, and Mr. Selby made a rush after him. The fag dropped Pongo in the passage, and Pongo ran on. He disappeared at top speed round the corner of the passage, and Wally turned back to face his Form-master.

Mr. Selby was pale with rage. He caught him by the collar, and lashed him across the shoulders with the cane again and again. He was so enraged that he hardly seemed to know what he was doing.

"Shame!" yelled Jameson.

Mr. Selby left off then. Perhaps the fag's yell warned him that he was going too far. He released D'Arcy minor.

"Go back to your place, D'Arcy minor!" he said savagely. "If there is any more insubordination, I shall report you to the Head, and you shall be flogged."

Wally went back to his place without a word.

He sat with a fixed white face for the rest of the time the

Third were under the charge of Mr. Selby without speaking, but with glittering eyes.

When the preparation was over, and the Form-master quitted the room, the fags were left to themselves, and they gathered round Wally sympathetically.

"Does it hurt?" asked Jameson, as Wally rubbed his shoulders.

"No!" groaned Wally, with painful sarcasm. "It's nice—simply ripping! Ow!"

"Rotten!" said Curly Gibson. "It's a pity it wasn't Towser, instead of Pongo. You should bring up Pongo to bite, with a special taste for Form-masters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Wally did not laugh. Wally was very tough, but the caning he had received had penetrated through his toughness, and Wally was revolving plans of retaliation in his mind.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS!"

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

CHAPTER 7.

Washed Out!

ST. JIM'S went to bed that night in a state of great excitement. It was the first time the fellows had ever been to bed with a flood raging in the quadrangle, and water dashing in waves against the old stone walls. The New House fellows were ferried over to their house for the night. There were two or three boats in the quadrangle now, Billy the boatman having fetched them from the flooded boathouse down by the river. The stars came out when the rain slackened, and glimmered upon a wide flood, flowing over the quadrangle and the playing-fields, over the high-road and the fields adjoining. The school grounds and the road and the fields and the river were indistinguishable. All the landmarks were lost in the flood, save the trees and the buildings. Trees that had been torn up by the raging waters were floating about, and a big trunk bumped against the steps of the School House, and floated away over the ruined chapel. And the water was rising. The cellars were flooded, and the kitchen swimming in water, and the passages were several inches deep now. It was very probable that on the morrow there would be no lessons at St. Jim's—a prospect that fully comforted the fellows for the inconveniences of the flood.

Many of the fellows awakened in the night, to listen to the dashing of the waters on the old walls. The lull in the rain was only temporary; it came down harder than ever towards midnight.

The rising-bell did not ring as usual in the morning. Taggles was a prisoner in the School House. Many of the fellows rose late, and turned up very irregularly to breakfast. Breakfast was a scratch meal. Cooking was impossible, and the fellows had what they could get. Indeed, unless supplies were procured by boat from Rylcombe or Wayland, even bread and butter were likely to run out.

Instead of chapel as usual, prayers were held in the lecture-room, and then it was announced that work would be given to the boys to do in their studies, instead of their assembling in the Form-rooms as usual.

The announcement was very agreeable to the fags of the Third and Second. They had no studies, and they therefore expected to escape lessons altogether. But the Third, at least, were doomed to disappointment. Mr. Selby was not to be escaped so easily.

"The Third Form will assemble in the school library," Mr. Selby announced.

And the Third Form grunted discontentedly.

The school library was not upstairs, but was on a higher level than the main building. St. Jim's had been built at various times, and the work of the fourteenth or fifteenth century was to be seen close beside the erections of the nineteenth and twentieth. The library was up four steps from one of the long passages, and was a very ancient apartment, with panelled walls and deep mullioned windows. It was several feet above high-water-mark of the flood so far, and was supposed to be safe. The fags of the Third made their way there glumly. Mr. Selby's announcement had dashed to the ground their hopes of an easy day.

"Just like Selby!" muttered Jameson. "Why couldn't he give us a task, like the other fellows, and leave it to us to get it done?"

"Ear, ear!" said Joe Frayne. "And we should do it, of course."

"Oh, don't argue!" growled Jameson. "What a fellow you are for jawing! You'd jaw the ears off a donkey!"

"Hold 'em on, then," advised Frayne.

"Why, you ass—"

"Kindly do not chatter," said Mr. Selby's voice from behind. "Take fifty lines, Frayne and Jameson."

Frayne and Jameson gasped. The Third Form marched into the library. Wally cast a glance out of the window, in the faint hope of seeing the water rising. It had only to rise a few more feet to flood the library as well as the Form-rooms.

Some of the fags carried in chairs from the lecture-room, and the Third Form settled down to work. Mr. Selby left his class a little later, and, ten minutes afterwards, the Fourth Form came streaming in, carrying chairs in their hands. The Fourth-Formers were looking simply wild. Mr. Selby had kindly suggested to Mr. Lathom that there was room for two Forms to work in the library, and Mr. Lathom had quitted the cheery fireside in his study with a sigh, at the call of duty and Mr. Selby.

The Fourth Form did not in the slightest degree appreciate Mr. Selby's concern for them. They could have missed the morning's work with perfect equanimity. Blake and D'Arcy, and Herries and Digby, and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, and Redfern & Co., and all the Fourth, came filing in, and they planted their chairs at the other end of the long, lofty room. Blake cast a hopeful glance into the quadrangle, as Wally had done, and he grinned.

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"My hat!" he murmured. "The water's rising fast!"

"Hear, hear!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Take your places, my boys," said little Mr. Lathom, blinking at his Form over his glasses. "I am afraid we shall be working under some inconveniences this morning, my dear boys, but I shall not be exacting. We must all do our best."

"Yes, sir," said the Fourth-Formers loyally.

Then Mr. Selby's harsh voice was heard at the other end of the library.

"You will kindly pay attention to your lessons. I shall not allow the present confusion in the school to be made the pretext for any idleness or carelessness."

The difference between the two masters was very marked. The Fourth-Formers felt a little more satisfied as they looked at the Third.

Wally had a seat near a window, and he glanced out of the window continually. The water was rising fast, and it was evident that the torrential rains had done further damage to the dam on the upper river. The wreck of the dam was probably nearly gone by this time, and the water was coming down in a terrific flood. There were a good seven feet in the quadrangle now, and the passages and Form-rooms were swimming with water, and it was only a question of a short time before it was in the library. Wally was the only fellow in the room in a position to watch the progress of the water and he wondered whether he had better warn Mr. Selby. Mr. Selby's sharp, disagreeable voice broke in upon his meditations.

"D'Arcy minor!"

"Yes, sir?" said Wally, starting.

"If you look out of the window again, instead of attending to your lessons, I shall cane you."

"But, sir—"

"Silence!"

"I was going to say, sir—"

"Take fifty lines!"

Wally held his peace.

But, in spite of Mr. Selby, he could not help stealing a glance out of the window a little later. The water was swishing almost as high as the stone window-sills, and an uprooted tree floated by, its branches scratching the lower panes. And the water was still rising.

"It will be here in five minutes!" Wally said to Jameson in a whisper.

Jameson grinned.

"What larks!" he murmured.

"But it will spoil all the books!" said Wally.

"Oh, blow the books!"

"Oughtn't I to tell old Selby?"

"Oh, blow Selby!"

Mr. Selby's voice rapped out again.

"You are talking, Jameson. Take fifty lines."

Jameson grunted.

D'Arcy minor rose in his place. He felt it his duty to speak, in spite of Mr. Selby's forbidding aspect. The books in the library were of almost unlimited value. Besides many valuable bindings, there were old manuscripts in the cabinets that could never be replaced—ancient blackletter records of the earliest days of St. Jim's. Mr. Selby fixed a basilisk look upon the scamp of the Third.

"If you please, sir—" began Wally.

"Sit down, D'Arcy minor."

"I think I ought to tell you, sir—"

"If you say another word, D'Arcy minor, I shall cane you."

"But, sir—" persisted Wally.

Mr. Selby strode towards him.

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy minor!"

"Oh, sir!"

Wally was caned. He sat down with a grim look, and was silent. If Mr. Selby was determined not to let him utter his warning, there was nothing to be done.

The lesson went on.

Outside the window a log was bobbing up and down on the flood, tapping gently against the window-sill. The rising of the water floated it upon the sill, and it scraped against the glass. Several of the fags noticed it then, and there was a general exclamation. Mr. Selby's unpleasant voice rasped out.

"Silence in the class!"

"I say, sir—" began Frayne.

"Silence!"

Crash!

A rush of the water brought the log with a crash against the lower panes, and they were shivered to atoms. There was a rush of water through the broken glass. Then Mr. Selby understood, and he uttered an exclamation of alarm. Everybody in the library was upon his feet now.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, running towards

OUT ON FRIDAY—"THE PENNY POPULAR"—BUY IT!

the broken window in great agitation. "The room will be flooded! Surely you boys must have noticed—"

"I did notice, sir," exclaimed Wally, "but Mr. Selby would not let me tell him."

"Hold your tongue, D'Arcy minor!" exclaimed the Form-master angrily.

Blake & Co. rushed up at once.

"Shall we get the books out, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "All of you set to work at once; be very careful, take out the books, and carry them to the next floor above. Be very careful indeed. I will go and get the keys of the locked cases. Some of you carry out the cabinets as they are."

"Yes, sir."

And the Fourth Form and the Third set to work with a will. Mr. Lathom dashed away, his gown fluttering wildly behind him, to seek the Head; and he returned in a few minutes with Dr. Holmes. Bookcases were unlocked on all sides, and juniors, laden with great volumes, formed a procession out of the library door. Fellows came from all sides to help—the Shell, the Fifth, and the Sixth were soon busy. And as they carried out books and cabinets and chairs and rugs, the water swamped in at the window where the glass was broken, and trickled in at the other windows. There was soon a foot of water on the floor, and the juniors trampled and splashed and plunged through it in high spirits. They were making themselves useful, and, as Jack Blake remarked, it was better than lessons.

CHAPTER 8.

Quite Wet.

TOM MERRY & CO. "wired" into the work of clearing out the library with a will. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Ralton gave directions, and masters and boys worked at saving the valuable property from the flood. Mr. Selby stood frowning. All this disorder upset and worried him, and he was angry with the boys and angry with the flood. He looked as if he would have liked to cane everybody present, from the Head downwards.

"Would you mind getting out of the way, sir?" asked Tom Merry politely, as he and Manners and Lowther came by with a large cabinet in their hands. The cabinet was a very valuable inlaid one, and they were being very careful with it. The water was up to their knees now, but the Terrible Three did not mind. Mr. Selby, however, minded very much. He did not want to get his feet wet, and he had mounted upon a chair to get out of the water, and he was puzzled to know how to escape from the room without walking in the water. He had been thinking of asking Kildare, and Darrel of the Sixth, to carry him out on their shoulders, but he hesitated. The prefects would probably not have abandoned their task of preserving valuables for the sake of saving Mr. Selby from getting his feet wet.

Mr. Selby glared at the Terrible Three. He was in the way, certainly, but he could not get out of the way without stepping down into the water.

"You're in the way, sir, if you don't mind," said Manners.

"Don't be impertinent, Manners!" rasped Mr. Selby.

"But we can't get by, sir," said Monty Lowther.

"You must get round," said Mr. Selby.

The Terrible Three grunted. They were very much inclined to run the cabinet right into the Form-master, and bowl him over like a ninepin. They exchanged a quick glance, and were just starting forward, when the Head came sloshing through the water, his gown dragging dragged behind him.

"Ah, be very careful with that cabinet, my dear boys!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

And the Terrible Three had to spare Mr. Selby, and they carried it round the Form-master very carefully, under the Head's eye. The Head glanced rather grimly at Mr. Selby. The Head had wetted his own feet recklessly, and he did not see why Mr. Selby should not do the same; but he made no remark.

Wally & Co. had been whispering together, and now they came splashing towards their Form-master. Wally had not forgotten the thrashing of Pongo the evening before. He could forgive the licking he had had himself, but he remembered Pongo's licking with undying resentment. And it seemed to the scamp of the Third that his turn had come now.

"Shall we help you out, sir?" he asked.

"D'Arcy minor, if you are impertinent—"

"Not at all, sir! Jameson and I, and Curly, could stoop down and lift up that chair, sir, and carry you out," said Wally.

Mr. Selby hesitated. It would not be an easy task; but it was certainly the only way of escaping from the flooded room without a soaking.

"Get some bigger boy to help you, then," he said.

"Yes, sir. Blake, come and lend a hand, will you?"

"What is it?" called out Blake.

"Mr. Selby wants to be taken out without getting wet."

Jack Blake snorted.

"I'm saving valuables," he replied.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Selby's eyes glittered. Blake's reply hinted that he did not consider Mr. Selby very valuable, which was indeed his precise opinion.

"Come and lend a hand, Gussy!" called out Wally.

"Sowwy, deah boys. I'm diwectin' opewations here," replied Arthur Augustus.

Arthur Augustus was indeed directing operations. Nobody was listening to his directions, or heeding them in any way, but that was not his fault. He was doing his best.

"Kildare," called out Mr. Selby at last, "will you come and help them get me out?"

Kildare growled.

"I am busy, sir. Surely you do not mind wetting your feet when we have so much to do? It would be necessary to carry you all along the passage."

"Kildare, pray do not be insolent!"

Kildare strode away.

"You'd better let us carry you out, sir," said Jameson. "The water's getting higher, sir. There will be six feet of it here soon."

"Seven or eight feet," said Wally.

"More likely nine or ten," said Curly Gibson. "Think how awful it would be if you should be drowned, sir! The Third Form would never get over it, sir."

"Darrel, will you lend some assistance here?"

"I have no time for it, sir!" said Darrel abruptly.

Mr. Selby gritted his teeth.

"Very well, D'Arcy minor; but pray be careful," he said.

"Right-oh, sir!"

"Awfully careful now!" said Jameson. "Take one leg of the chair each. You take one, Wally, and Curly one, and I'll take one. Hobby, you come and take the other. Mind you don't upset Mr. Selby. He would get wet."

Hobbs grinned, and joined the fags in their task. They stooped down into the water, and each of them took a grip on a leg of the chair.

It swayed, and Mr. Selby panted.

"Pray be careful—prayer be careful!" he exclaimed. "I—I feel as if I were going over!"

"You're all right, sir," said Wally cheerily. "When we get the chair high enough, sir, you can sit on it, and then we can carry you out in good style, just like a Fifth of November guy, sir."

"What! You impertinent boy!"

"Steady on!" shouted Wally. "One leg at a time!"

"You're pushing me!" gasped Hobbs.

"Ow, it's heavy!" said Curly Gibson. "I didn't know you weighed so much, sir. But it's all right. We'll manage it somehow."

"Now, then, all together! Heave away!"

"Up she goes!"

Up she went, certainly; and, whether by accident or design, the chair turned almost completely sideways, and Mr. Selby went with a headlong splash into the water.

"Yarrah!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Selby had fallen at full length into the water. His feet were wet now, and so was the rest of him. He was wet from head to foot, and as he scrambled up the water ran down his infuriated face in streams, and it ran down his neck, and filled his eyes and ears and nose. He coughed and snorted furiously.

"Grooh—hoo—yoooh!"

"So sorry, sir!" murmured Wally.

"You did that on purpose, you young villain! Groo—hoooh!"

"Oh, sir!"

Smack! Mr. Selby's open hand caught D'Arcy minor on the side of the head, and the scamp of the Third staggered away with a yell. Then Mr. Selby went tramping and splashing out of the library and down the flooded passage, snorting.

"Ow!" said Wally, rubbing his ear. "Ungrateful beast! After all the trouble we've taken with him, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jameson.

"You young rascals!" said Kildare, laughing. "Don't waste time! Carry out some of those books."

"We had to look after our Form-master, you know, Kildare."

"Yes, I know; and you deserved what you got," said Kildare.

Wally rubbed his ear ruefully, but upon the whole he was satisfied. He had got back a little of his own, as he

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expressed it, upon Mr. Selby. The fags joined again in the labour of transporting the valuables out of the library and up the stairs to the next floor. They were kept busy till nearly dinner-time, and by that time there were five feet of water in the library. In the Form-rooms the flood was almost up to the ceiling. The dining-room was flooded out, and dinner—a cold dinner—was eaten in a very scratch fashion in the upper passages.

"Well, this is a giddy go!" Monty Lowther exclaimed, as he sat on the window-seat at the end of the Shell passage and ate bread and cheese. "Railton says the dam is quite gone on the river, and the water is not likely to go down for days—not till the rain stops; and I don't believe it ever will stop. It's fun, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "But my tuousahs are ruined."

"And what about the grub?" said Fatty Wynn dolorously.

"What's the matter with bread and cheese?" demanded Figgins.

"There's nothing the matter with it," said Fatty Wynn ruefully. "It's all right. But I don't know how we're to keep alive on it. I shall be frightfully hungry."

"They say we're to stick in the School House for the present," remarked Kerr. "The New House is going to feed with the School House. It seems that it's easier to feed us all together—such as it is."

"Feed us?" groaned Fatty Wynn. "Do they call this feeding us? I think I shall be ill!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, we might try to get in some supplies ourselves," said Fatty Wynn. "What price collaring one of the boats, and getting down to Rylcombe for some grub?"

"They're going to bring it up in boat-loads," said Tom Merry.

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"Yes; potted beef, and bread and cheese," he said. "We can't get anything cooked; the kitchens are under water. Can't even get any tea made, unless we make it in the studies. What price getting down to Mr. Bunn's in Rylcombe, and having a whacking big feed?"

"Poor old Fatty!" said Monty Lowther, sympathetically. "Jolly lucky we've got Fatty here, when you come to think of it."

"Why?" asked Fatty. "If there was anything to cook, it would be all right."

"I mean, in case the flood gets worse, and we're cut off from supplies," exclaimed Lowther. "Then we shall have to cast lots, you know, as they do in an open boat at sea. And as you are the fattest—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Fatty Wynn.

"What lovely chops he would make!" said Monty Lowther, looking at the fat Fourth-Former with quite a famished expression. "Cooked in lard or butter, with some tomatoes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Fatty Wynn, looking quite uneasy.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, Wally, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as his minor came along the passage with a chunk of bread and cheese in his hand, and a black look upon his face.

"I'm getting fed up!" growled Wally.

"What's happened?" asked Tom Merry. "Wasn't Selby grateful for the way you carried him out of the library?"

"The rotter!" growled Wally. "He's caned me for it—after all the trouble I took. He says he got wet!"

"Ha, ha! Well, he must have got wet, you know. You can't fall into a couple of feet of water without getting wet."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm fed up!" grunted Wally.

"I wish I were," said Fatty Wynn, with a sigh. "I've almost forgotten what it's like to have enough to eat!"

"My hat!" said Redfern. "You managed a pretty good supper last night, I remember."

"Not much," said Wynn. "Only a steak-and-kidney pie, and a cold sausage, and some beef and potatoes, and the ham and eggs and cake. I went to bed hungry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Yow-ow-owl!

Wally jumped up at the voice of Pongo. The mongrel came tearing down the passage, with Herries's bulldog in fierce pursuit. Wally rushed to the rescue, and caught Pongo up in his arms. Towser yapped round his legs.

"Call that beast off!" roared Wally.

"Towser! Towser!" called out Herries. "Come here, old boy! Has he bitten him, D'Arcy minor?"

"I don't think so—no!"

"Good!" said Herries, with a great deal of relief. "Towser is very careless sometimes what he bites, and I've often been afraid of blood-poisoning—"

"You—you silly ass!" said Wally, and with a glare of unspeakable scorn, he marched off with Pongo in his arms.

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CHAPTER 9.

The S.P.C.P.

TOM MERRY sat in his study. The junior studies were out of reach of the flood, which was not likely to rise any higher. The masters' studies were not so fortunate, and all the masters had been washed out. Tom Merry's tea-table was spread with the best spread the Terrible Three could raise under the unfortunate circumstances. There was plenty of bread, and a good allowance of butter, and there was tea. Beyond those things there was very little.

"Never mind," said Monty Lowther. "The fellows are all bringing with them what they can raise. Besides, this ain't a tea-fight—it's a meeting!"

The door opened, and the chums of Study No. 6 came in. Jack Blake solemnly deposited a loaf upon the table; Herries laid down a plate bearing a chunk of cheese; Digby some eggs, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a bun. Tom Merry surveyed the supplies with a grin.

"We're getting on," he remarked. "Hallo, Kangy, what have you got?"

Kangaroo came into the study, and laid a tin of potted shrimps on the table. Reilly of the Fourth followed him in, with a tin of condensed milk.

"Sure, it's all I've got," he remarked. "We must share and share alike in these hard times, darlings."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Any more coming?" asked Kangaroo.

"Yes; D'Arcy minor."

"Having fags to tea?" asked Blake.

"It's a meeting," Tom Merry explained.

"A meeting—what about?"

"A meeting of the S.P.C.P.," said Tom Merry.

The juniors stared at him. They had never heard of the S.P.C.P. before.

"What on earth's that?" demanded Blake. "Is it a jape?"

"No; very serious, and frightfully important. Here's Wally!"

D'Arcy minor came into the study. He carried Pongo in his arms.

"You can chuck that away," said Kangaroo. "If that's your contribution, young D'Arcy, you can cook it yourself!"

"And eat it, too!" said Digby.

Wally snorted.

"Oh, don't be funny," he said. He stroked his shaggy pet, who was whimpering in his arms. "Have you told the fellows what the meeting's about, Tom Merry?"

"Yes; the S.P.C.P.," said Tom Merry.

"The which?" exclaimed Wally.

"S.P.C.P.!"

"What the dickens is that?"

"Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Pongo!"

"Wha-a-a!" exclaimed Blake.

"Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Pongo!" repeated Tom Merry blandly. "It seems that Pongo hasn't been treated with sufficient respect, and Wally has called upon us for our assistance to see him righted."

"Bai Jove!"

"Gentlemen, the meeting is now open," said Tom Merry.

"You can talk while you eat, and if there isn't much to eat, you can take it out in talking."

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, you are aware that St. Jim's is flooded—"

"Well, I fancy I've heard something about it," said Blake, with a nod, as he jammed the end of the poker into the shrimp-tin to open it. "Go ahead!"

"Owing to the flood, the school is rather upset, and Mr. Selby, the master of that most important Form the Third, has taken advantage of the general upset to show off his rotten temper. He has found fault with Digby—"

"Checked me in the passage!" growled Digby.

"He has been quite personal to Lowther, and Manners, and me!" said Tom Merry. "Nice, inoffensive fellows like us! He has called Kangaroo names."

"And, faith, he's called me names, too!" said Reilly. "He referred to me as a bog-trotter, and sure I've never trotted on a bog in me loife!"

"He was wathah wude to me," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, thoughtfully. "He told me I was as twoublesome a wascal as my youngah bwathah. That was not only wude, but it was untrue."

"He has made himself obnoxious all round," said Tom Merry. "Now, it isn't as if he were Housemaster, or master of a senior Form, or the Shell—he's only master of a set of blessed fags—"

"What?" said Wally.

"Ahem! I mean, he's only master of the Third, and he ought to be pleased at being tolerated by fellows like us. Instead of which—"

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"He's a beast!" said Wally. "I've had frightful lickings. I can show you marks on my back. I'd show 'em to the Head, and get Selby called over the coals, only it would be sneaking. I shall ache for days."

"It is certainly frightfully impertinent of him to stwike a D'Arcy," said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther. "Nothing ever strikes a D'Arcy—not even the knowledge that he is talking out of his hat—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Gentlemen, I have not yet stated the head and front of his offending. He has taken the liberty of thrashing Pongo. Now, a man can lick a fag, and the fag is all the better for it, as a rule—"

"Why, you ass!" said Wally.

"But when it comes to licking a dog, I think it is time for the line to be drawn. Pongo is an offensive beast, of course—"

"Look here—" roared Wally.

"And if Selby gave him a kick or two, we would pass it over. But he has licked Pongo with his cane, and Wally says that he found him in his study to-day and chased him round the table with his cane, licking at him."

"Pongo was only gnawing a cushion," said Wally. "He likes gnawing things, and he's rather fond of cushions—poor old Pongo!"

"He's marked with Selby's cane," said Tom Merry.

"Look at him!"

Wally held up the kicking mongrel for inspection. There were undoubtedly the marks of Mr. Selby's cane upon Pongo, and the juniors frowned as they discerned them. The dog was evidently still in pain, and the juniors felt that, like the prophet of old, they did well to be angry. There was no excuse for cruelty to a dog, whatever the state of Mr. Selby's temper and digestion might be.

"Rotter!" was the general verdict.

"Therefore, gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "the present society has been formed—the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Pongo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mr. Selby has got to be gently but firmly restrained."

"Hear, hear!"

"He must be made to learn that he cannot be rude to the Fourth, and call the Shell names, and that cruelty to animals is severely barred."

"Bravo!"

"Therefore, gentlemen—"

"We've had that before," said Blake.

"Therefore, gentlemen," repeated Tom Merry firmly—"therefore, this meeting of the S.P.C.P. has been called to deliberate deliberately on the matter."

"Hear, hear!"

"To cut the cackle and come to the hoeses," said Monty Lowther, "we're on the warpath, and Selby is going to have beans. And the only question is how."

"Good!" said Blake. "Let's put our heads together and think it over, and I'll give you my opinion when I've finished the shrimps."

"Wally has suggested boiling him in oil, and chucking him out of the window into the flood," pursued Tom Merry. "We can't possibly do both, and it really doesn't seem possible to do either. But I have a wheeze—"

"Go it!"

"Suppose the flood were to rise as high as the bed-rooms to-night, and Selby were to get flooded out of bed—"

"But it won't," said Blake, staring. "The water can't rise any higher. It's reached its highest level."

"We can make it!"

"Make it rise higher?"

"Exactly."

"Bai Jove! I'd like to know how you're goin' to do that, deah boy!"

"Not all of it," explained Tom Merry. "Some of it."

"How?"

"By carrying it upstairs in cans!"

"You ass!"

"Well, it's perfectly simple. And if somebody swamped a couple of big cans of water over Selby's bed to-night, and yelled 'Run for your life!'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think he would run, and it would be funny!"

"Not for the chap who did it, if Selby caught him!" grinned Kangaroo.

"No; that's why Wally must keep out of it. He will be the first chap suspected. Selby doesn't know what a dear little innocent dove he is, as we do."

"Bai Jove!"

"So Wally must be able to prove a first-class alibi. Gentlemen, we are going to do this—the first proceeding of the S.P.C.P.!"

And the members of the S.P.C.P. chimed in cordially with "Hear, hear!"

CHAPTER 10.

Mr. Selby Runs for His Life.

THE lowest floor of St. Jim's was deserted that evening, and when the fellows went to bed, it was to the accompaniment of the sound of water washing on the staircases and along the passages. Outside, in the quadrangle, the rain was drenching down as hard as ever. Rain dashed against the panes of the windows, and splashed upon the surging flood that surrounded the old school. In the darkness, with lanterns gleaming over the wild waters, the New House fellows were ferried across to their House for the night. Tom Merry & Co. went up to bed with their little scheme fully formed in their minds. Mr. Selby, as if to earn fully the resentment of the juniors, made himself more obnoxious than ever that evening.

Wally was late for evening preparation in the Third Form-room owing to the keen interest of the proceedings of the S.P.C.P. in Tom Merry's study, and he was caned for being late; and, not content with that, Mr. Selby complained to Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, of the conduct of the Terrible Three in detaining the fag from his preparation. Mr. Linton reprimanded the chums of the Shell for it, and they listened to Mr. Linton in silence, but with smouldering eyes.

It was a little more added to their score against the Third Form-master, and their desire to avenge Wally's wrongs was made all the keener by the fact that they had wrongs of their own to avenge.

"Unpleasant beast!" said Monty Lowther, as he sat on his bed in the Shell dormitory, and kicked off his boots. "It's curious that Selby should go round specially looking for trouble, just when we're ready to give him all he wants."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I've got the two cans under my bed," he remarked. "The unpleasant beast will be sorry for himself presently."

Kildare came into the dormitory to see lights out for the juniors. The Terrible Three discreetly ceased to speak of their little plan, and the captain of St. Jim's saw lights out, and retired, without any suspicion that anything was "on."

Neither had Mr. Selby any suspicion, when he retired to his room about half-past ten, and went to bed. He had given lines to about half the Third Form, so he was feeling almost cheerful when he went up to turn in.

Silence fell upon the old school, broken only by the surging sound of the flood round the School House, and the lashing of the rain upon the windows.

Everybody was in bed or, at all events, ought to have been in bed. Mr. Selby was fast asleep, dreaming that he was caning the whole of his Form in turn, and a pleasant smile diffused itself over his face.

He awoke suddenly.

Splash! Splash! Splash!

"Gerroo-oh!" gasped Mr. Selby.

He sat up blindly in bed.

Water was swamping over him from somewhere! The bed was dripping! There was a crash as a chair was overturned, and the door banged open. A voice yelled from the darkness:

"The flood! The flood! Run for your life!"

The Form-master gave a gasp of terror.

He leaped out of bed, and stumbled over a chair, and rolled on the floor and yelled. He groped his way blindly to the door, and escaped into the passage.

All was dark there, but the dashing of the rain filled the passage with sound. Mr. Selby rushed along the passage at top-speed in the dark, making for the upper staircase. In the belief that the water had risen, and that the bed-rooms were being flooded, the Form-master thought only of himself and his own safety. The Third Form dormitory was on the same level, and it was certainly his duty to see first to the safety of his pupils, but he had forgotten the existence of the Third Form in his terror. He reached the upper stair-

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case, and clambered up blindly in the dark, and did not pause till he was on the landing at the top.

There he sank down, shivering, in his pyjamas, and gasping for breath.

"Good heavens!" he muttered. "What a narrow escape! Oh, dear!"

He recovered his breath, and some of his composure, as he felt himself out of danger. He was surprised by the silence of the house. Had the rest of the school been overwhelmed in their sleeping quarters and drowned? He shuddered at the thought. Who was it that had warned him of his danger? It was amazing that no one was stirring—that the silence of the house was broken only by the wind and rain without!

Mr. Selby staggered to his feet, and shouted. "Wake up! Help! The flood—the flood! Run for your lives!"

His voice rang shrilly through the silent house.

"The flood! Run! Run!"

In the passage below there was the sound of a faint chuckle.

"Time we got back to bed!" murmured the voice of Monty Lowther.

"Yes, rather! My hat! He'll wake up the house!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Three dim forms glided into the Shell dormitory, three more into the Fourth. The passage was silent and deserted; but not for long. Mr. Selby's yells were waking the house, and there was a sound of opening doors and calling voices. Lights gleamed from bed-rooms and dormitories.

"What's the matter?"

"Who's that?"

"What's happened?"

"The flood!" roared Mr. Selby. "Get up the stairs! The water's risen!"

"Great Scott!"

"Run!"

A crowd of fellows, half-awakened and wholly alarmed, dashed for the upper stairs. Kildare came along the dormitory passage with a lamp in his hand. Kildare was not alarmed. The light showed him that there was no water on the floor of the passage, and that was evidence enough that the flood had not risen in the night.

He threw the light of the lamp upon the upper staircase, and stared at Mr. Selby above.

"What's the matter, sir?" he demanded.

"The flood! It is rising!"

"It is not rising!" rapped out the captain of St. Jim's.

"Wha-a-t!"

"There is no water here!"

"N-n-no water there!" stuttered Mr. Selby. "You—you must be mistaken! The water is swamping my bed-room, which is on the same level."

"You've been dreaming, sir. The water is at the same level, and it is not above the first floor," said Kildare curtly.

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Selby.

He descended the stairs in a gingerly fashion, but he could not help seeing that Kildare's statement was correct. The other fugitives from the upper stairs followed him down.

"It must have been a dream, sir," said Lefevre of the Fifth. "That's what I say! You were dreaming about the flood, sir!"

"But someone called to me to run!" gasped Mr. Selby.

"Nightmare, sir," said Darrel.

"It was not a nightmare!" shouted the Third Form-master. "I tell you that my room is swimming in water! It has risen higher than my bed!"

"Impossible, sir!" said Kildare.

"Kildare! How dare you—"

"It would flow out here, sir, if it were in your room," said the captain of St. Jim's as patiently as he could.

Mr. Selby could not help recognising that obvious fact himself; and he was amazed. But he knew that he was wet; that was a fact, too!

"Come and look in my room!" he exclaimed angrily.

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"Very well, sir. But it can't be flooded."

The prefects followed the Third Form-master into his room. Half the House was awake now, and crowding into the passages with loud exclamations of alarm. The prefects called out that all was right, but the tumult was not easily quelled.

"There, sir, you see your room is not flooded," said Kildare as he held up the light in Mr. Selby's bed-room.

The Third Form-master stared at the room in amazement. There were splashes of wet on the carpet, and that was all. He rushed to the bed. The bed was dripping. Mr. Selby pointed triumphantly to the wet bed-clothes.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "What do you say to that?"

"By Jove! somebody's been drenching your bed, sir," said Kildare. "I—I suppose you don't walk in your sleep, do you, sir? Looks as if the water-jug has been upset there."

"It's a jape," said Lefevre, with a grin. "Somebody has been frightening you, sir."

Mr. Selby glared.

"I was not frightened," he said savagely. "I—I was a little startled. Yes, you are right; it is a wicked practical joke; and I am sure I know the author of it."

Mr. Selby, glowering, bundled on a dressing-gown and slippers, and rushed away to the Third-Form dormitory. There was a general chuckle as the fellows went back to bed. Kildare followed the Third Form-master to the dormitory. He guessed that Mr. Selby was going to see Wally; and Mr. Selby was in such a towering rage that there was no telling what he might do.

CHAPTER 11.

A False Accusation.

THE Third were all awake, and someone had turned on the light in the dormitory. Half a dozen of the fags were at the door, looking out, as Mr. Selby rushed up, with the sturdy captain of St. Jim's striding in his wake. Mr. Selby glared at the fags; but D'Arcy minor was not among them, and he pushed his way roughly through them and entered the dormitory.

Wally was in bed, looking quite peaceful. His peace was suddenly interrupted. Mr. Selby gripped him by the shoulder, and dragged him out of bed. Wally came down upon the floor with a bump and a yell.

"Yar-o-o-h! Wharrer you up to? Yowp!"

"You young rascal—"

"Oh, sir!"

"It is useless for you to pretend that you have been asleep!" thundered Mr. Selby. "I know perfectly well that it was you."

"Wh-wh-what was me, sir?"

"You have been in my room!" roared Mr. Selby. "You have drenched my bed with water, in order to make me believe that the floor was flooded."

"I, sir!"

"Yes, you, D'Arcy minor. Don't tell me any falsehoods; you know it perfectly well."

"I didn't, sir."

"I shall punish you—"

"I haven't been out of the dormitory, sir."

"It is false."

"The fellows will all tell you the same, sir," said Wally, getting up, and retreating round the bed. "I haven't even been out of bed."

"I do not believe you."

"Well, I can't help that, sir. It's true."

"It's true, sir," said Curly Gibson, in surprise. "Wally hasn't been up, sir."

"Oh, sir; no, sir!" said Hobbs.

"He ain't been out of bed, sir," said Frayne.

Mr. Selby gritted his teeth. Two or three more fags gave evidence to the same effect. But Mr. Selby was not to be convinced.

"I know perfectly well that it was you, D'Arcy minor!" he said, between his teeth. "I shall cane you severely before you go back to bed."

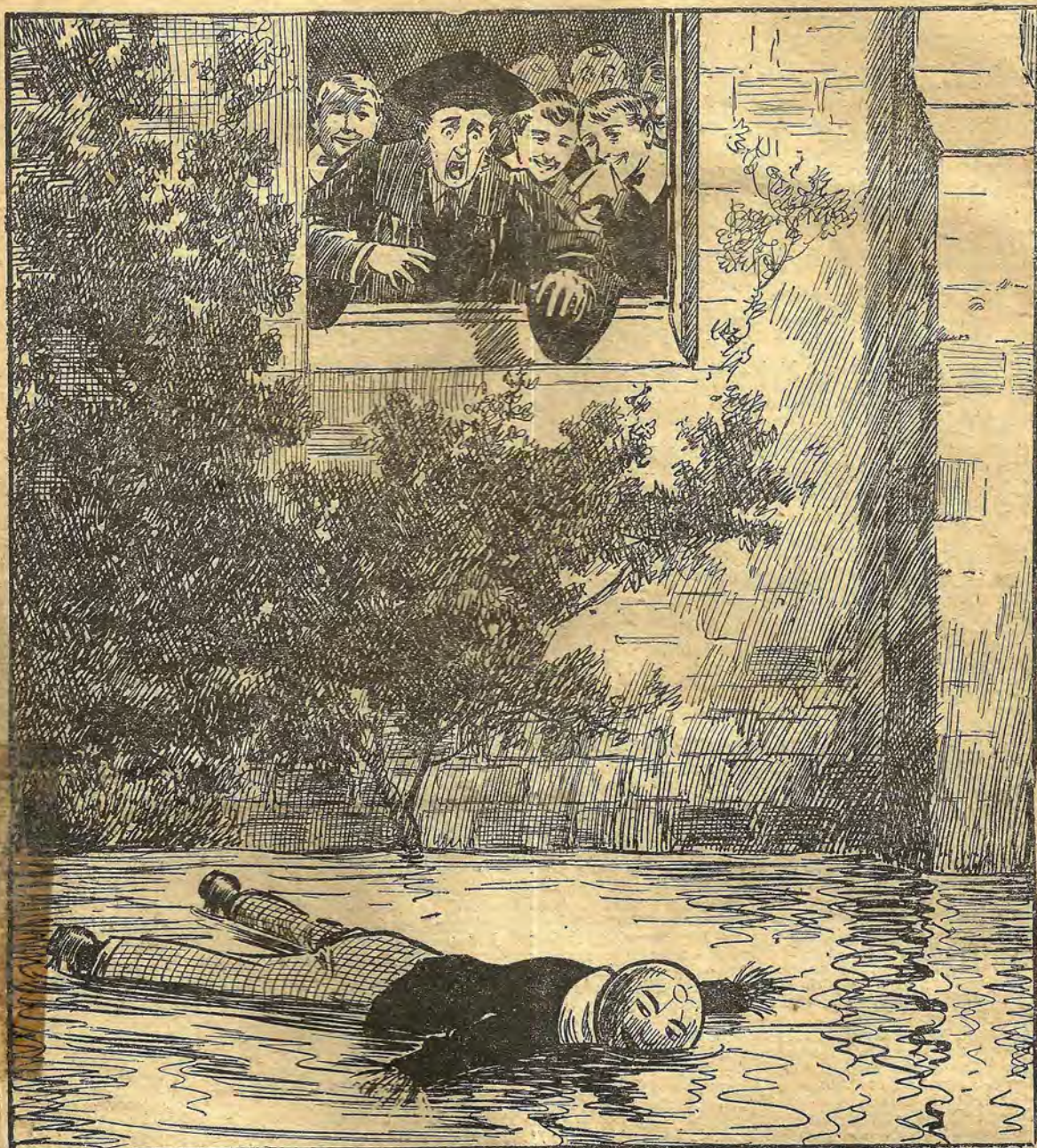
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Mr. Selby gazed down from the window upon the dusky waters with a horror-stricken face. The Third-Formers made a wild rush to the window and peeped out. Curly Gibson gave a yell. "It's D'Arcy minor, I know those clothes! Jump in, sir! Save him!" "I—I—I cannot swim!" panted Mr. Selby. "It—it would be no use my jumping in. Help! Help! (See Chapter 13.)"

"Excuse me, sir," said Kildare. "The kids all say that D'Arcy minor hasn't been out of the dorm., sir. It's absurd to suppose they're all telling untruths. It must have been somebody else, and not D'Arcy minor."

Mr. Selby glared at the captain of St. Jim's.

"I do not want any interference from you, Kildare!" he exclaimed.

Kildare flushed.

"Very well, sir. If you persist in punishing D'Arcy minor for something he hasn't done, I shall call Mr. Railton!" he said firmly.

"I am here!" said the Housemaster's voice at the door. "What is the matter? What has happened, Mr. Selby?"

Mr. Selby calmed himself a little at the appearance of the senior master. He pointed to D'Arcy minor with a trembling finger.

"That boy has drenched my bed with water, and alarmed me by calling out that the flood had risen!" he exclaimed.

"I left my bed in the belief that the whole floor was flooded, and ascended to the top of the house. I shall catch cold! The wicked young rascal—"

"I am sure Mr. Selby must have been dreaming, sir," said Wally demurely. "He must have dreamed all that, sir."

"D'Arcy minor!" said Mr. Railton sternly.

"I am sure of it, sir. If Mr. Selby thought that the whole floor was flooded, he must have thought that this dormitory was flooded, too; and then he would have come in to get us out, sir, instead of running away to save himself."

Some of the fags chuckled. Mr. Selby seemed transfixed. Wally spoke in a perfectly quiet and respectful way, as if he were firmly convinced that Mr. Selby would indeed have done his duty in that unselfish manner; and most certainly he ought to have done. Mr. Railton suppressed a smile.

"Did you not come here for the boys, Mr. Selby, when

you imagined that the whole place was flooded?" he asked. "No-no, I did not!" gasped Mr. Selby. "I—I was confused, and—in haste—"

"It must have been a dream, sir," said Wally. "You wouldn't have run away and left us to be drowned, sir."

"Silence!" yelled Mr. Selby.

"You must not be impertinent, D'Arcy minor," said Mr. Railton.

"But I'm not being impertinent, sir," said Wally, looking perplexed. "It would be impertinent to suppose that Mr. Selby would run away and leave us to be drowned. I can't possibly think such a thing of my Form-master, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Joe Frayne suddenly.

"Silence, Frayne. D'Arcy minor, it appears that in the confusion of the moment, Mr. Selby did indeed forget his duties in this dormitory. That, however, does not excuse you for having played such a trick—"

"But I didn't play it, sir," said Wally. "I haven't been out of bed. All the fellows here know that I haven't."

And the Third Form chimed in with their testimony.

"It is all false," said Mr. Selby. "They are not speaking the truth."

"Ahem! That is hardly likely, Mr. Selby; I think that you have really jumped too hastily to this conclusion," said Mr. Railton. "D'Arcy minor appears to me to be cleared. It must have been someone else, from some other dormitory."

Mr. Selby clenched his hands.

"I do not believe it!" he said. "But I shall lay this matter before the Head in the morning, Mr. Railton, and leave it in his hands."

"Very well, Mr. Selby."

And the Third-Form master stalked out of the dormitory. "Return to your beds, my boys," said Mr. Railton quietly.

The fags went back to bed, and Mr. Railton and the captain of St. Jim's retired. In the darkness a series of cackinnations sounded from the beds.

"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!" gasped Wally. "What larks! Fancy old Selby scooting up to the top of the House in the dark—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And leaving us all here to be drowned dead!" chuckled Joe Frayne.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a show-up for Selby!" grinned Hobbs. "Nice kind of Form-master to rely upon in a dangerous time—I don't think."

"He will be grinned to death over this, to-morrow," chuckled Wally. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Third Form chuckled themselves to sleep.

Mr. Selby did not get to sleep so soon.

When he returned to his room, he found his bed drenched, and it was impossible to sleep in it again. Mr. Selby dressed himself, and passed the rest of the night in an arm-chair with a rug over him. He did not sleep well; and he was very glad when the morning light glimmered through the wet panes. He rose unusually early that morning!

He went downstairs in the dim October morning, raging inwardly. He was still firmly convinced that D'Arcy minor had been guilty of the unparalleled outrage of the night, but he knew that it would be difficult to bring it home to the scamp of the Third. The whole Form were evidently in the plot to protect Wally.

As soon as the Head was down, Mr. Selby raged into his study, and placed the matter before him. And he very nearly forgot the respect due to the reverend Head of St. Jim's, when he found that Dr. Holmes took Mr. Railton's view, that it was impossible to convict the whole Third Form of bearing false witness.

"Then—then the young rascal is not to be punished, sir!" stuttered Mr. Selby.

"I cannot believe that it was D'Arcy minor, my dear sir," said the Head soothingly. "But if the real author of the outrage can be discovered—"

"I am convinced that it was D'Arcy minor—"

"If the real author of the outrage can be discovered, he shall be flogged," said the Head. "That is all I can say. The matter shall be strictly inquired into."

And that was all the satisfaction that Mr. Selby could obtain from the Head. He left Dr. Holmes's study trembling with anger.

CHAPTER 12.

A Sudden Alarm.

THE rain was still coming down heavily. From the windows of the School House, the St. Jim's fellows looked out upon the sea of swirling waters, from which the old elms emerged with dripping branches. From the New House the boats brought the New House fellows over for morning lessons. Dr. Holmes and his staff were grappling with the difficulties of the situation most manfully;

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although their efforts were not exactly appreciated by the juniors. Lessons did not cease. The Form-rooms being flooded, and even the library washed out, the dormitories were called into use, and at that safe distance from the surging waters, the juniors set to work as usual.

Tom Merry met Wally as they came out after third lesson. The scamp of the Third was squeezing his hands as he came along the passage, and the expression of his face was far from amiable. The captain of the Shell looked sympathetic.

"Catching it again?" he asked.

D'Arcy minor groaned.

"Selby's an awful beast!" he said. "He's convinced that I damped him last night, and he's been taking it out of me. I've had six this morning. I'm getting fed up!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's too wotten! If this goes on, I shall regard it as my duty to wemonstwater with Mr. Selby."

"Fat lot of good that would do!" grunted Wally.

"Weally, Wally, that is a vewy vulgah expression—"

"Oh, rats!" groaned Wally. "Look here, you chaps, I'm not going to stand it. I'm going to wring old Selby's heart with remorse by committing suicide!"

"What!"

"Don't you think he would go simply green if my dead body were found floating under the windows?" asked Wally.

"I dare say he would," said Tom Merry. "But where would you come in, you ass?"

"I forbid you to think of anythin' of the sort, Wally, you awful young duffah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a shocked tone.

"Besides, it's impossible," said Monty Lowther. "You know the old proverb—those who are born to be hanged cannot be drowned—"

"Well, you'll see," said Wally. "I'm jolly well going to be found drowned, and you'll see what old Selby will say then. And you fellows are going to help me. I shall have to prove another alibi when the body is seen."

"What do you mean, you young ass?" said Tom Merry, laughing. "What wheeze have you got in your head?"

Wally lowered his voice cautiously.

"I'm thinking of stuffing a suit of clothes, and dropping it into the water," he explained. "We can let it out on a string, and keep it bobbing up and down outside the window. Then, when I'm missing—"

"Bai Jove!"

"It will give Selby a shock, and make him realise that he's on the wrong tack," Wally explained. "When I turn up again alive and well, he will hug me like a long-lost son. I should think!"

"Yes, I can see old Selby doing that," said Tom Merry.

"I don't think!" murmured Lowther.

"It's rather too thick, Wally," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head.

Wally sniffed.

"Well, if old Selby begins on me again this afternoon, I'm going to do it," he said. "I'll make him sit up somehow. The Head wouldn't let him rag us as he does if he knew."

"Wally, deah boy, I cannot consent—"

"That's all right, Gussy, I can manage it without your consent," said Wally cheerfully; and he walked away to save further argument.

During dinner, Wally and Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne were seen to be exchanging a good many whispers, and after dinner they disappeared into a box-room. The Terrible Three gave them a look-in there, and found them very busy. Wally's oldest suit of clothes lay upon the floor, and the juniors were stuffing it out with straw and rags and all kinds of rubbish, into a semblance of the human form. Wally was busily engaged in manufacturing a head to be fastened upon the figure. He had painted a football white, and was daubing features upon it, and the effect was ludicrous. A wig, taken from the properties of the Junior Dramatic Society, was glued upon the end of the footer. The other end was fastened in the collar, and sewn upon the stuffing of the body.

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther. "It's awfully like you, Wally, only a little better looking. And that won't be noticed in the water."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will take old Selby in when he sees it," said Wally, sewing away industriously. "He will be sorry when his brightest and most promising pupil has been drove to despair, as Frayne would say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wally, old man, I should recommend you to draw the line," said Tom Merry seriously. "It will give Selby a turn; but when it comes out—"

"There will be a row," said Manners.

OUT ON FRIDAY—"THE PENNY POPULAR"—BUY IT!

"And a fearful licking for you, Wally," said Monty Lowther.

"I'm getting the lickings now," said Wally. "Old Selby can't be a worse beast than he is, anyway, that's one comfort. You chaps can keep out of it, you know; I don't want you to get into a row."

"Oh, rot!" said Tom Merry. "We're not thinking of that. As members of the S.P.C.P., we're bound to take a hand. We're giving you good advice now—"

"Thank you for nothing!" yawned Wally. "I think we'll have a pair of your boots fastened on to it, Curly. I haven't any to spare."

"I think you won't," said Curly, very decidedly.

"Must have some boots," said Wally. "If you fellows want to make yourselves useful, you can go and dig up a pair of old boots somewhere."

Tom Merry laughed, and fetched a pair of ancient, discarded boots. Having proved unable to dissuade Wally from his scheme, the Terrible Three lent him assistance in perfecting the weird figure, and it was satisfactorily finished before the bell rang for afternoon lessons.

The juniors went into the dormitories to their lessons. Mr. Selby was already in the Third-Form dormitory when the Third came in. Wally was one minute late; and Mr. Selby, remembering his fright of the night before, did not let the opportunity pass.

"You are late, D'Arcy minor!" he rapped out.

"Only a minute, sir," said Wally.

"You will take fifty lines."

The Third Form took their places in the rows of chairs which had been arranged in the dormitory in the place of forms. Mr. Selby was more snappish than ever that afternoon. He devoted his special attention to Wally. Dr. Holmes was too just to allow D'Arcy minor to be punished for the jape he had not committed; but Mr. Selby had no doubts on the subject, and he was determined that Wally should be punished one way or another. And in the lessons he had many opportunities. Wally was not distinguished for hard work or for scholarly attainments, and his little failings were ruthlessly visited now. Before the afternoon was half over, Wally was in a desperate frame of mind; and when he was called out to be caned for the third time, he did not stir.

"D'Arcy minor, come out here!" said Mr. Selby.

Wally did not move.

"Do you hear me, D'Arcy minor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then come out at once!"

"I think I've been caned enough, sir," said Wally resolutely.

Mr. Selby gasped. So did the Third. The Form-master strode towards D'Arcy minor, caught him by the collar, and jerked him out before the class.

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy minor!" he thundered.

Wally put his hands behind him.

"You'd better not touch me, sir," he said. "You'll be sorry for it. You'll drive me to jump into the water and drown myself, sir."

"How dare you say such things, D'Arcy minor?" exclaimed Mr. Selby, shocked as well as angry. "I shall cane you severely for uttering such a wicked threat."

"Well, you know what to expect now, sir," said Wally. "When I'm found missing, you'll know what has become of me."

"Silence! Hold out your hand!"

Wally obeyed, and was caned. He went back to his seat with a dogged expression, and a gleam in his eyes. Mr. Selby glanced at him once or twice; and perhaps he realised that he had done enough, for he did not trouble Wally again that afternoon. When the Third were dismissed, Wally went out with the rest, with a grim expression on his face.

Tea in hall was no longer possible; hall was under water. The fellows who had studies had their tea there; but the Third Form had tea in the dormitory. Mr. Selby had charge of them there, and when the Third assembled to tea, D'Arcy minor did not appear. The Form-master noticed his absence at once.

"Where is D'Arcy minor, Gibson?" he asked.

As if in answer to Mr. Selby's question there came a sudden sound from the direction of the windows.

Splash!

Mr. Selby started up.

A loud cry rang in the air, and Mr. Selby, turning very white, rushed to the window, and looked out. A dozen feet below the dormitory windows, the water washed against the walls of the School House. The October dusk was very thick in the quadrangle, and the branches of the elms cast deep shadows. But even in the dusk Mr. Selby could make out a form in Etons floating under the window.

He gave a stuttering cry.

"D'Arcy minor! Good heavens!"

CHAPTER 13.

Found Drowned.

MR. SELBY gazed down from the window upon the dusky waters with a horror-stricken face. The Third-Formers made a wild rush to the windows and peered out upon the waters. Curly Gibson gave a yell.

"It's D'Arcy minor! I know those clothes!"

"Wally! Poor old Wally!"

"He's drowned himself!"

Jameson caught hold of Mr. Selby's sleeve in his excitement.

"Save him, sir!" he shrieked.

"What—what—what!"

"Save him, sir! Jump in after him!"

"What—what—what!"

"Are you going to let him drown, sir?" shrieked Jameson.

"Jump in, sir! Save him!"

"I—I—I cannot swim!" panted Mr. Selby. "It—it would be no use my jumping in! Oh, good heavens! The unfortunate boy! Help—help!"

"Jump in, sir!"

"Save him, sir!"

"Help!"

All the Third were yelling at the top of their voices. Mr. Selby's face was like a sheet. He gazed at the floating form, and could discern no sign of life. It floated with the motion of the water, and knocked gently against the stone wall below the window. The face was almost hidden, but when it surged up from the water it was seen to be of a deadly whiteness. There was no doubt in Mr. Selby's mind—the chilling conviction forced itself upon him—the unfortunate fag was already drowned.

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Selby hoarsely. "A—a boat! quick!"

He staggered away from the window.

Two or three of the fags rushed into the passage, shrieking for help. Tom Merry & Co. were the first to arrive upon the scene.

"What's the matter?" shouted Tom Merry, dashing into the dormitory.

"Wally—"

"He's drowned—"

"He said he would if Mr. Selby caned him again!" sobbed Curly Gibson.

"Silence, Gibson!" shrieked Mr. Selby. "I forbid you to say so! I—I—"

"You know he did, sir! Boo-hoo!"

"Get a boat! Call somebody! Help—help!" stuttered the Third Form-master.

The Terrible Three rushed to the window. They looked out upon the floating form, and drew back with horror-stricken faces.

"No good sending a boat, sir," said Tom Merry. "It wouldn't do him any good now."

"Better recover the body, though," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"The body!" gasped Mr. Selby. "Oh, dear!"

"Poor chap!" said Manners. "I wonder what made him do this?"

"He said he would!" sobbed Curly. "Boo-hoo! Mr. Selby knows—"

"Silence, Gibson!"

"He mayn't be quite dead, sir," said Kangaroo. "Haden't you better go in for him, sir?"

"I—I cannot swim, Noble!"

"Is this a time to think of that, sir?" asked Monty Lowther. "The whole school would admire you, sir, if you lost your life in attempting to save one of your Form, sir."

Mr. Selby shuddered. He had no desire whatever to win the admiration of the school upon those terms.

"Run and fetch a boat!" he panted. "You boys—quick! Run—run!"

"Very well, sir," said Tom Merry. "Come on, you chaps!"

The Terrible Three dashed out of the dormitory, and down the stairs. One of the boats that had brought supplies from Rylcombe was moored above the submerged steps of the School House, and the Terrible Three jumped into it and pushed off. They rowed swiftly out upon the dusky waters, and came round under the windows of the Third Form dormitory. From the window of a half-flooded room under the dormitory a grinning face was looking out, but they did not seem to notice it. They pulled alongside the floating body, which was bobbing up and down with the motion of the water.

Mr. Selby gazed down anxiously from the window above.

"Get him into the boat—quick!" he gasped.

"Yes, sir. Keep her steady against the wall, Monty, while I hook him in," said Tom Merry, standing up, boat-hook in hand.

"Right ho!" said Lowther.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS!"

"I'll have him in a minute! It's only like catching salmon!" remarked Tom Merry.

"Merry! How can you be so heartless!" gasped Mr. Selby. "Take care!"

Tom Merry made a lunge at the floating figure with the boathook, and drove it under water.

"Merry! Be careful!" shrieked Mr. Selby.

"It's all right, sir. He's past being hurt."

"Get him in! Quick—quick!"

"All right, sir, I'll hook him by the neck if I can, or I might catch him in the ear."

"Merry! This levity is infamous—infamous! How dare you!"

"If you'd rather jump in for him, sir—"

"Impossible! Be quick—quick!"

Tom Merry hooked at the figure as it bobbed up, and brought it alongside.

"Got it!" he shouted.

"Fair catch!" said Manners. "Hurrah!"

"Ome they brought the warrior dead!" chanted Monty Lowther.

"Got him, sir!" called out Tom Merry. "Not a sign of life, sir, I'm sorry to say. But it really couldn't be expected, under the circumstances."

"No fear—not under these giddy circumstances," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Are you sure he is dead, Merry?"

"Not alive, anyway, sir."

"Oh, this is terrible—terrible!"

"Yes, sir. He was always a troublesome young bouncer—wasn't he?"

"Merry! How can you? Take up the body!"

"Might make us wet, sir. Better float him after us, and we'll get him indoors. No good mucking up the boat, sir, as he's past help."

"Merry! You wicked, unfeeling boy! I—I—"

"I'm not unfeeling, sir. I've been feeling for him—with the boathook—for five minutes," said Tom Merry indignantly. "We'll bring him home all right, sir. You can come down to the door and help us get him in, sir. He won't kick."

"Merry! I am astonished at you! I—I—"

"Come down to the door, sir."

"Yes—yes. I will do so."

Mr. Selby disappeared from the dormitory window. From the lower window a grinning face looked out, almost on a level with the water, and a voice whispered:

"Don't take that giddy body in, you chaps. Let it be lost in the flood."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry.

"Knock it to pieces with the boathook first. Don't want it to be found when the water goes down."

"Right-ho!"

Wally disappeared from the window of the flooded room. The Terrible Three pulled away into the deep dusk of the trees, Tom Merry trailing the body after the boat with the hook. Under the elms, concealed from view by the branches, he smote the unoffending dummy with mighty smites, and it came to pieces, and the clothes, and the boots, and the painted footer floated away separately. The Terrible Three chuckled gleefully.

"Shan't be able to take the body in now," grinned Lowther.

"No. Never mind. Save funeral expenses, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the chums of the Shell composed their faces into dreadful seriousness as they rowed back to the doorway of the School House. Mr. Selby was there, in the midst of a huge crowd. The news of Wally's untimely death had spread over the House, and the hall was crammed with fellows knee-deep in water. Even Mr. Selby had forgotten his objections to getting his feet wet, in the excitement and anxiety of the moment. He uttered a cry as the boat loomed through the gloom and bumped on the top step.

"Have you got it?" he cried.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"It floated away under the trees, sir," he said.

Mr. Selby groaned.

CHAPTER 14.

Brought to Book.

"WHAT is the matter here?"

It was Mr. Railton's voice. The Housemaster of the School House came striding down the passage, his boots splashing in the water. Mr. Selby turned a haggard face upon him.

"It—it is D'Arcy minor," he groaned.

"What has happened?"

"He is drowned."

Mr. Railton stood transfixed.

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"D'Arcy minor drowned?"

"Yes," moaned Mr. Selby.

"Impossible! How could he be drowned? Has he fallen into the water?" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Even so, D'Arcy minor is a good swimmer, as I know, and the water is calm. Is this some joke?"

"It is no joke," muttered Mr. Selby. "The—the unhappy boy has—has committed suicide."

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Selby stiffened up.

"These boys went out to get in the body, sir," he said.

"They can tell you."

The School House master fastened an expressive look upon the Terrible Three.

"Is it true, Merry?"

"Ahem, sir!"

"Has D'Arcy minor been drowned?"

"I—I think not, sir," faltered Tom Merry.

"I think not, too," said Mr. Railton angrily. "What is this all about? I—"

"You think not, Merry?" shouted Mr. Selby. "You know perfectly well that D'Arcy minor threw himself into the water and was drowned!"

"Why should he do so, Mr. Selby?" snapped the Housemaster.

"He—he was punished this afternoon, and—and he said something of the sort," faltered Mr. Selby. "Of course, I took no notice of it at the time; but—but when I heard the splash I knew the foolish boy had carried out his dreadful intention. I saw the body floating."

"Did you see it, Merry?"

"No, sir," said Tom Merry.

Mr. Selby glared at him.

"Have you lost your senses, Merry?" he exclaimed. "Did you not go out to get in the body? Have you not just told me that it was lost among the trees?"

"It—it wasn't a body, sir."

"What! Not a body!"

"N-n-no, sir."

"Then what was it?" shrieked Mr. Selby.

"Some old clothes, sir, that had got into the water, somehow," said Tom Merry. "It—it really didn't look like a body when you got close to it, sir."

"Oh!"

"It is some foolish joke, I suppose, as I suspected at first," said Mr. Railton, frowning. "Where is D'Arcy minor?"

"Are you asking for me, sir?" said a weak voice on the stairs.

Mr. Selby swung round. Wally was on the stairs, just above the level of the water, looking down upon the wet crowd in the hall with an expression of innocent inquiry.

Mr. Selby stared at him as if he had been a spectre.

"D'Arcy minor!" he stammered.

"Yes, sir. Here I am, sir."

"Did you—did you jump into the water, D'Arcy minor?"

"I, sir! No, sir!"

"What have you been doing, D'Arcy minor?" asked Mr. Railton sternly.

"Nothing, sir. Only throwing away some old clothes, sir," said Wally innocently. "No harm in throwing away old clothes, is there, sir?"

"Old clothes!" shrieked Mr. Selby. "It was a body, or—or an imitation of some sort. I distinctly saw a face!"

"I don't see how the old clothes could have had a face, sir," said Wally, in astonishment. "Of course, I don't dispute your word, sir. But I've never seen a suit of clothes with a face myself."

There was a chuckle in the hall.

"Don't be impertinent, D'Arcy minor," said Mr. Railton. "It looks to me as if you have played a very reckless trick upon Mr. Selby."

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Selby was trembling with rage. He realised now that he had been taken in, and that all his anxiety and remorse were wasted. He was not feeling any remorse for his treatment of D'Arcy minor now. Quite otherwise.

"You—you young rascal!" he yelled.

"Oh, sir!"

"You deliberately plotted to make me believe that you were drowned!"

"I, sir!"

"Yes, you!" roared Mr. Selby. "You knew that I should take that—that figure for your body, D'Arcy minor, when I saw it from the dormitory window."

"But you couldn't have taken it for me, sir," said Wally cheerfully. "If you had believed that I was drowning under the window, sir, you'd have gone in for me. You would have tried to rescue me, sir."

"Silence, D'Arcy minor!" said Mr. Railton, taking pity upon the shame and mortification in Mr. Selby's face. "You must not speak to your Form-master like that. You have

played a very foolish and inconsiderate trick; and this certainly makes it appear as if you were the person guilty of the outrage in Mr. Selby's room last night."

"Oh, sir!"

"I have said all the time that it was D'Arcy minor," said Mr. Selby, between his teeth. "I take this as proof. I trust that the Head will take it as proof. I shall take the young rascal to the Head at once."

Mr. Selby grasped Wally by the collar and marched him away.

Tom Merry & Co. left the boat, and retreated upstairs. They were looking, and feeling very much concerned for Wally. In the upper passage, all the S.P.C.P. met together, and they all looked worried.

"Bai Jove, Wallay has done it this time!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy ruefully. "He has put his foot in it, deah boys."

"Been and gone and done it, and no mistake!" said Monty Lowther.

"Well, we warned him," said Manners. "It was bound to come out. He couldn't keep it up for ever that he was drowned."

"Wathah not!"

The chums of the School House waited anxiously for Wally to come out of the Head's room. When he appeared in the Fourth Form passage, they surrounded him. Wally was looking very rueful.

"What's the verdict?" asked Tom Merry.

"Rotten!" said Wally. "They seem to think that I played that trick on Selby."

"So you did, you young ass!"

"Well, yes; but I don't see why they should jump to conclusions in that reckless way," said Wally, in an aggrieved tone. "If a chap likes to throw away his old clothes, and paint features on an old footer to throw along with them, I don't see why he should be supposed to be japing his Form-master."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The worst of it is, that it's taken as a proof that I japed Selby last night," said Wally. "The Head seems quite sure about it."

"Have you been licked?" asked Tom Merry.

"No; that's to come."

"Not a flogging!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with a deep breath.

Wally nodded.

"Bai Jove, that's wotten!"

"Rotten for me, not for Wally," said Tom Merry quietly. "It was I who damped Selby last night, and Wally's not going to be flogged for what I did."

"Oh, rot!" said Wally. "I can stand it."

"You can't—and sha'n't! I'm going to the Head!"

"Hold on!"

"Rats!"

And Tom Merry walked away. There was only one thing that Tom Merry could do, as a fellow of honour, and that was to own up. And he meant to do it without stopping to think of the consequences.

CHAPTER 15.

Sentenced to be Flogged.

DR. HOLMES was looking worried and troubled. Mr. Selby was with him still, attempting to make it clear that D'Arcy minor ought not only to be flogged, but expelled from the school. A tap at the door interrupted the Third Form-master.

"Come in," said Dr. Holmes.

Tom Merry entered.

"Well, Merry, what is it?" said the Head, rather crossly.

"I want to tell you something, sir. I hear that D'Arcy minor is to be punished for the jape, the—the trick played on Mr. Selby last night, sir, in his room?"

"That is correct, Merry."

"He didn't do it, sir."

"He has been adjudged guilty, Merry. After what he has done to-day, I cannot reasonably entertain any doubt upon the subject."

"There is no possible doubt upon the subject!" snapped Mr. Selby. "I have not had any doubt from the first."

"I can prove that he was innocent, sir," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Indeed! How?"

"Because I did it, sir."

The Head drew a quick breath. Mr. Selby stared at Tom Merry open-mouthed.

"You, Merry!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes.

"Yes, sir."

"You entered Mr. Selby's room last night, and threw water over him to make him believe that the flood had risen, and to frighten—ahem!—to alarm him?"

"Yes, sir."

"What—what astounding impudence!" ejaculated Mr. Selby. "How dare you come here and tell Dr. Holmes so in this barefaced way, Merry?"

"Because Wally is going to be flogged for what I did, sir."

"Merry, what was your reason for acting in that outrageous way?" asked the Head, in a gentler voice than Mr. Selby's.

Tom Merry hesitated.

"It was a jape, sir," he said at last.

"But what was your motive? Surely you knew that such an alarm in the dead of night would give Mr. Selby a most unpleasant shock."

"Yes, sir."

"If you have no excuse to offer, Merry, your punishment will be very severe."

"Well, if—if Mr. Selby doesn't mind my saying so," said Tom Merry, "he has been very hard on all of us since the flood came. He has ragged us all, not only the kids in his own Form, but nearly everybody. We were getting fed-up. Besides that, he was very cruel to D'Arcy minor's dog, and we—we were standing up for Pongo, sir."

"Merry, this is absurd!"

"I have never heard of such astounding impertinence," gasped Mr. Selby, "and I am sure Merry was not alone in this! He had accomplices—D'Arcy minor among them."

"D'Arcy minor did not leave his dormitory last night, sir," said Tom Merry. "I hope you can take my word."

"I can take your word, certainly, Merry," said the Head.

"And I must say that it is very frank and manly of you to own up in this way, and take the punishment upon your own shoulders. You understand, of course, that you will now be flogged in the place of D'Arcy minor."

"Yes, sir; I understand that."

"And his accomplices, too!" said Mr. Selby viciously.

There was a knock at the door, and it opened, and five juniors walked sedately in. They were Manners and Lowther of the Shell, and Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy of the Fourth.

"What do you want?" asked the Head testily.

"Come to own up, sir," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We were all in it, sir," said Monty Lowther. "Tommy's not going to have all the credit. We were all on the war-path last night, sir."

"I knew he had accomplices," said Mr. Selby.

"Which of you actually threw the water over Mr. Selby?" asked the Head.

"I did, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"Where were the others?"

"We waited in the passage, sir," said Herries. "We were all in the game."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ahem! You will take two hundred lines each!" said the Head. "I think that will meet the case as far as you are concerned. It is quite clear to me that Tom Merry was the ringleader, and he appears to have done the damage."

"Weally, sir—"

"It is quite right, sir!" said Tom Merry. "The other chaps only came out to back me up."

"Yaas; but—"

"That is enough!" said the Head. "Merry, you will be flogged to-morrow morning before the whole school as a punishment for this most disrespectful and lawless outrage! You may go!"

"Yes, sir."

"May I make a remark, sir?"

"You may not, D'Arcy!"

"But I considah—"

"Leave the study!" said the Head.

"Yaas, sir; but—"

Blake put his arm through Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's, and jerked him out of the room. The rest of the juniors followed, and the door was closed.

"Bai Jove! Welease me, Blake, you ass! I was goin' to explain to the Head what an awful wottah Selby is—"

"No good your getting flogged, too, you ass!"

"I should decline to be flogged!"

"That wouldn't make much difference if the Head decided to do it," said Blake, with a grin. "Well, you're fairly in the soup now, Tommy, my boy! The S.P.C.P. is a ghastly frost!"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY!

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS!"

Tom Merry grinned ruefully.

"Can't be helped," he said.

"No; it can't be helped now. But what rotten luck!"

There was a great deal of sympathy for Tom Merry when the news spread through the School House. A public flogging was a very severe punishment, and the disgrace of it was worse than the infliction itself.

The Terrible Three looked glum enough as they gathered in their study after tea. The chums of Study No. 6 paid them a visit of sympathy. They brought a gift of toffee and roast chestnuts, which the juniors demolished in moody silence.

"It's rotten!" said Blake at last. "If you get the flogging, Tommy, we ought all to share alike, and take the same. We were all in it as much as you were."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"That would be no good," he said. "No good you fellows getting it as well as me. It wouldn't make it any easier for me—harder, in fact!"

"Yaas, that's so," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Othahwise, deah boy, I should insist upon takin' my share of the lickin'!"

"I suppose it's no good talking to old Selby?" suggested Digby.

"Bai Jove! That's not a bad idea," said D'Arcy. "Suppose we went in a deputation to the wottah, and put it to him, you know? If you left all the talkin' to me, I have no doubt that I could make him see reason!"

"Yes; that's very likely—I don't think!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"He wouldn't let me off," said Tom Merry. "He's more ratty with me than with Wally, as a matter of fact. Besides, I wouldn't ask him. I can stand it."

"But it's beastly!"

"I know it is, but it can't be helped."

Wally looked into the study. The scamp of the Third was looking unusually serious, and decidedly miserable.

"I'm sorry how it's turned out, Tom Merry," he said. "It's rotten! I'd have taken the licking myself, if you'd have kept your head shut!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"It's all right, kid," he said. "I shall have to grin and bear it, that's all. As a matter of fact, it was rather thick, you know, playing a game like that on a Form-master."

Wally snapped his teeth.

"I'll play some more games on him yet!" he said. "Anybody but Selby would ask the Head to let you off, as you owned up of your own free will."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Catch Selby doing that!" he said.

"Not likely!" said Blake. "But look here, Tom Merry, I think we might go to him, and ask him to look over it."

"Yaas, wathah! I should be quite willin' to be chairman and spokesman of a deputation, Tom Mewwy."

"No!" said Tom Merry decidedly. "It wouldn't do any good, for one thing; and, if it would, I tell you I won't ask any favours of Selby. There are some men you can ask favours of, and some you can't, and Selby is one of that kind."

"Yaas; that's vewy true!"

"But you can't be flogged, Tom Merry!" said Wally, in great distress. "It's all on my account, too; and you warned me not to jape Selby with that stuffed dummy."

"Don't worry, kid! I tell you it can't be helped now."

"I wish I could think of some way out," said Wally.

"I'm awfully sorry!"

"That's all right!"

Wally slipped off his seat on the corner of the table. It was time for evening preparation for the Third Form, and Wally knew what would happen if he was late. He left Tom Merry's study with a very gloomy brow. His retaliation on the obnoxious Form-master had got the captain of the Shell into serious trouble, and Wally felt that he was to blame; and the worst of it was, that there was nothing he could do to save Tom Merry.

Mr. Selby's rasping voice rapped out to him as he entered the Third Form dormitory for preparation, but Wally hardly noticed it. He was thinking of Tom Merry, and wondering whether, even yet, something might be done to avert his punishment.

CHAPTER 16.

Man Overboard.

MR. SELBY wore a more contented expression now. The fact that Tom Merry, of the Shell, was to be flogged on the following morning was a great solace to him. It was a salve to his wounded dignity. He was almost amiable during preparation, excepting to D'Arcy minor.

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Wally still experienced the sharpest edge of Mr. Selby's sharp tongue. He was the richer by a hundred lines before prep. was over. But Wally did not care for lines now. He was thinking only of the fellow who was to suffer for his sake on the morrow morning.

When prep. was over, Mr. Selby left them alone. Wally's chums tried to comfort him, but Wally, like Rachel, was not to be comforted.

"It's 'ard on Master Tom!" said Joe Frayne dolefully.

"I wish I could be flogged in his place—I do, really!"

"I don't know that I'd go so far as that," said Jameson, with a grin. "But it does seem a rotten shame!"

"Beastly!" growled Wally.

"Well, if you jape Form-masters, you must expect to get it in the neck sometimes!" remarked Hobbs. "Better give Selby a wide berth after this."

"Rot!" said Wally. "I'm going to make him sorry for it, somehow!"

"My dear chap—"

"Look here, Jimmy, I'll tell you what you can do—"

began Wally.

Jameson made a negative gesture.

"I know what I can do," he said. "I can be off the grass!"

"You're a New House kid," resumed Wally, unheeding. "Selby takes you over to the New House in the boat after supper. Suppose the boat was upset—"

"Well, you ass," said Jameson, "we might be drowned!"

"Oh, you can swim, you know!"

"Selby might be drowned; he can't swim!" said Hobbs.

Wally looked thoughtful.

"Well, I don't know that I actually want him drowned," he confessed. "But a jolly good ducking would do him heaps of good."

"Not for me!" said Jameson emphatically. "Besides, how the dickens am I going to upset the giddy boat? We shall have a couple of prefects in it, rowing it."

"Suppose you buff Selby over the side—"

"I jolly well shan't do anything of the sort!" said Jameson, with emphasis. "I don't want to join Tom Merry on Taggles' shoulders before the whole school to-morrow morning!"

Wally snorted.

"If I were going in the boat, I'd jolly well manage it—"

he said.

"Rats!" said Jameson.

"You're a blessed fink!" growled Wally.

"And you're a silly ass!"

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

They finished the argument on the floor. Jameson rose at last with red streaming from his nose. He dabbed it with his handkerchief, and glared at Wally. Wally's methods of argument had not convinced his chum; indeed, Jameson was more determined than ever that he would not have a hand in upsetting Mr. Selby in the water. He would have been as glad as anybody to give his Form-master a ducking; but, as he said emphatically, it was not good enough.

Wally stared gloomily out of the window. The rain had ceased at last, and the stars were glimmering down upon the wide waters, surging and murmuring in the quadrangle. Out of the glimmering waters the great trees rose with spectral branches.

"Not even raining now!" growled Wally. "No chance of his even catching cold! Was there ever such rotten luck?"

"Never!" said Frayne.

"Well, hardly ever!" grinned Curly Gibson.

The juniors had finished their supper of bread-and-cheese, when Mr. Selby came into the dormitory. The master of the Third had his overcoat on, and a thick muffler about his neck. It was his duty to take the New House portion of his Form over to the New House to retire for the night.

"New House boys will follow me," he said. "The others will go to bed here, and I shall see lights out when I return. I shall expect you all to be in bed."

And Mr. Selby marshalled his flock out of the dormitory. The New House Third-Formers descended the stairs of the School House to take the boat. In the flooded hall of the School House the electric lights were burning, and strange enough was the scene, with the lights gleaming upon the waters surging in at the great doorway.

A boat had pulled away with the New House Fourth-Formers, and Figgins & Co. shouted good-night up to the window of Tom Merry's study.

Tom Merry & Co. were at their study window, with the blaze of light behind them. They waved their hands down towards the New House boat, as it glided away over the flood towards the dark belt of trees.

"Good-night, Figgy!"

"Good-night!"

Monty Lowther thoughtfully drew a pea-shooter from his pocket.

OUT ON FRIDAY—"THE PENNY POPULAR"—BUY IT!

"They're out of reach now," said Tom Merry, laughing.
 "I wasn't thinking of Figgins & Co.," said Lowther.
 "Who, then?"
 "Our respected and esteemed friend, Selby. He is going over with the Third Form fags who dwell in the tents of Kedar, otherwise the New House."

Tom Merry pushed the pea-shooter back.

"Don't!" he said.

"But he won't know what hit him!" pleaded Lowther.

"He will jolly well guess. Better let him alone; it's like treading on a snake to jape Selby. He's certain to turn round and bite."

"But just one behind the ear—"

"Don't be an ass, Monty. You don't want to catch it tomorrow morning along with me, do you?"

Monty Lowther sighed, and slipped the pea-shooter back into his pocket. The Terrible Three leaned in a row on the window-sill, and looked down at the radius of light outside the School House doorway. There were a good many fellows at the other windows, watching the scene. It was a novel and interesting sight, fellows being ferried across the quadrangle of St. Jim's, where the boys were accustomed to stroll in perfect safety.

"There goes the Third Form boat!" said Manners.

"And old Selby in it!" grunted Lowther. "Within easy range, Tommy! Shall I give him just one—say under the chin?"

"No, you ass!"

"Just one—for his mother's sake!"

"Fathead!"

The boat pulled out of the great stone porch of the School House. It was crammed with fags, and Mr. Selby, sitting in the stern, had none too much room. Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, was pulling, with Thompson of the Shell, and Mr. Selby steered.

"Keep her well away from the trees, sir," said Monteith.

"I suppose there is no danger," snapped Mr. Selby.

"Might run into the branches, sir; some of them are under water now," Monteith explained. "The boat might capsize if we buffed on a big branch just under the surface."

Mr. Selby glanced round him nervously on the dark waters. Outside the radius of light from the door and windows of the School House, the waters were very dark, and the glare of distant lights only made the sight confused. The pale glimmer of the stars was lost as the boat glided under the trees.

Jameson was holding a lantern, which shed light upon the water as the boat advanced. Monteith and Thompson pulled steadily.

Scrape! And the boat rocked violently.

"Look out!" shouted Monteith. "We're getting on a branch! I can feel it dragging under the boat. Port!"

"Which—which is port?" gasped Mr. Selby, in confusion.

"Look out!" yelled Jameson.

The boat rocked violently, as it dragged on the submerged branch, and as it rocked under the tree, it glided beneath a low branch, which scraped along it as low as the rowlocks.

"Duck!" yelled Monteith.

Everybody ducked excepting Mr. Selby. That gentleman had quite lost his presence of mind. As the low branch scraped along the gliding boat, knocking off the caps of the juniors, Mr. Selby, instead of flattening himself down in the boat, jumped up in great alarm.

The branch caught him fairly across the chest, and he was knocked backwards as if by a giant's hand.

Splash!

A shriek!

The boat shot onward, and bumped heavily against a trunk, and the fags were thrown over one another in confusion. Thompson let his oar slip into the water, and fell into the boat. The lantern slipped from Jameson's hand as he was knocked over by Thompson's fall, and dropped into the water. Sudden darkness plunged upon the scene.

"Keep your heads!" shouted Monteith. "Steady!"

"Ow! Oh!"

"Gerroff!"

"Yow! Who's that on my chest!"

"Yaroo!"

"Steady!" shouted Monteith. "Keep still. What was that dropped overboard?"

"I—I've lost the lantern!" gasped Jameson.

"Thank goodness that's all! Wait till I get a light. Keep still!"

The boat was rocking violently, but the juniors, obedient to the voice of the prefect, ceased to struggle, and Monteith fumbled in his pocket for a matchbox. He found it, and struck a match, and as he held it aloft, the juniors scrambled

back into something like order. The prefect glanced quickly through the boat.

"Mr. Selby! Where is Mr. Selby?"

"Isn't he here?"

"No. Mr. Selby!"

"Great Scott! That must have been the splash!" muttered Jameson, with frozen lips. "He—he can't swim! He'll be drowned."

"Mr. Selby, where are you?"

The match went out in Monteith's fingers. He listened in the darkness for a cry. The boat glided out from under the dark branches, and the starlight glimmered upon white and terrified faces. But to Monteith's shout there came no reply.

"Mr. Selby!"

But only the echo of the prefect's voice answered him.

CHAPTER 17.

At the Risk of His Life.

TOM MERRY stared anxiously from his study window towards the gloomy shadows of the trees far out in the surging water. The lights of the School House extended for some distance upon the flood. Beyond that radius all was blackness. The water, with the flood of the river behind it, was flowing towards the School House, from under the dark trees, and the light glimmered upon a floating oar that came rocking by on the surge.

"They've lost an oar!" said Monty Lowther.

"Bumped into a tree, most likely," said Manners. "I was sure I heard some shouting."

Tom Merry raised his hand.

"Hark! What's that?"

From the distance, in the darkness of the flooded quadrangle, they heard the loud tones of Monteith, shouting for the lost master.

"Mr. Selby—Mr. Selby!"

The Shell fellows exchanged startled looks.

"My hat!" breathed Manners. "Is Selby overboard?"

"He can't swim!" muttered Lowther.

Tom Merry leaned out of the window, scanning the glimmering surge with eager, anxious eyes. If Mr. Selby was overboard, the surge of the water should bring him from under the trees into the radius of light from the School House before it swept him past the building, and away into the flooded woods beyond. A dark object glimmered into view, bobbing on the water from the shadow of the trees, and a hand was flung into the air.

Tom Merry set his teeth.

"Good heavens!" he muttered. "It's Selby!"

"Where—where?"

"Look!"

They could see him now. The Form-master's gown was floating on the water. Again that despairing hand was thrown up into the air, and they caught a glimpse of a white face. But there was no cry. Mr. Selby was evidently past crying out. Perhaps he was no longer conscious. While the chums of the Shell gazed in horror at the form as it floated nearer on the rush of the waters, it disappeared below. It came up again nearer at hand, and Tom Merry scrambled through the window, and stood upon the sill, his face white and resolute.

"Tom," yelled Lowther, grasping him, "what are you going to do?"

"I'm going in for Selby."

"You—you can't!"

"Let go!"

"You can't—you sha'n't!" screamed Lowther frantically, tightening his grip upon his chum. "The water isn't deep enough for a dive from this height. You'll be smashed."

"I think it's deep enough. I'm going to risk it."

"Tom—Tom—"

"Let go, Monty. Let go, or you'll spoil my dive, and I shall be done."

"Tom—you're mad, I tell you—"

"Let go!"

Tom Merry jerked himself free from Lowther's detaining grasp. Lowther let him go. He knew Tom Merry meant to dive, and a grasp upon him then might have made the dive fatal.

Tom Merry put his hands together, and dived from the study window-sill.

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 244.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS!"

Splash!

Deep, deep down he went, cleaving the waters—down, down, till it seemed that his descent would never stop, and a strong jar ran through him as his finger-tips barely touched something solid; but that was the limit of his impetus, and he shot up to the surface again.

Up and up and up, till his head was in the air again and he could breathe, and he struck out with powerful arms.

His gaze turned wildly round for the Form-master, but Mr. Selby had disappeared. There was a shout from the study-window.

"There he is, Tom! On the left—on the left!"

The Form-master rose into view, and Tom Merry, guided by the shout from above, turned towards him, and with a few strong strokes reached him. His strong grasp upon the sinking man brought his head above the surface again. Two glassy eyes stared wildly at him, a frantic clutch was fastened upon him, and he was almost dragged under the water. Mr. Selby had not lost his consciousness, but he had lost his presence of mind.

"Hold on, sir!" gasped Tom Merry. "Hold on! Give me a chance to swim!"

"Save me—save me!" panted the Form-master in husky, inarticulate tones.

"I'm saving you, sir; but don't drag me down!"

"Save me! save me!"

It was evident that the man was past reasoning with. Tom Merry took a firm grip upon the back of his neck, and held him there. So long as Mr. Selby did not struggle he could keep him afloat.

"It's all right, sir!" he gasped. "I've got you!"

"Save me! Oh!" moaned Mr. Selby.

The surge of the water dashed them on. They were being whirled towards the corner of the School House, and, once past the building, they would be swept away into the darkness—to death. Tom Merry made a desperate effort, and succeeded in reaching the School House wall, where a rain-pipe descended from the roof-gutter. He caught the rain-pipe in his free hand, holding Mr. Selby with the other.

"Catch hold here, sir!" he exclaimed.

But Mr. Selby was too far gone. He hung a helpless weight upon the junior. Tom Merry held him fast, and shouted for help.

The alarm was over the whole school now. Every window was crammed with faces, and a boat had put off from the School House steps, with Mr. Railton and Kildare and Darrel in it. Monteith's boat had pulled back through the elms. Monteith would have had little chance of finding the Form-master in the dark, but for Tom Merry's dive to the rescue. But now it was only a question of Tom Merry holding on to the water-pipe until the rescuing boats reached him.

"Save me!" moaned Mr. Selby feebly.

"The boats are coming, sir," said Tom Merry encouragingly. "You're all right. Look, sir, there are the lights!" Kildare was standing up in the nearest boat, holding a lantern. Tom Merry shouted to him, and Kildare's voice came ringing back over the surge of waters.

Mr. Selby's eyes blinked at the approaching light, and he understood. A little calmness came back to him.

"Can you hold on?" he panted.

"Yes, sir!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"Who are you? Are you Tom Merry?"

"Yes, sir!"

A shiver ran through Mr. Selby.

"How did you come into the water?" he asked in a shaken voice.

"I was at my study-window——"

"You jumped in?"

"I dived in, sir."

"For me?"

"Yes, sir. I saw you floating out from under the trees. Jolly lucky I saw you, wasn't it, sir?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, indeed, for me," said Mr. Selby in a choking voice.

"Merry, I—I am sorry I—I have been so harsh to you!"

Tom Merry started. For the first time it flashed into his mind that he had risked his life to save the man who had condemned him to a flogging.

"Oh, that's all right, sir!" he said. "I oughtn't to have japed you as I did; and you couldn't help being ratty. Never mind that now."

"But—but——"

"Here you are!" said Kildare, as the boat grated against the wall, and he reached out and dragged the Form-master in. "Who's that—Tom Merry?"

"Yes, rather!" gasped Tom Merry. "Lend me a hand. I'm pretty well done, Kildare, old son."

Kildare dragged him into the boat.

Tom Merry sank down exhausted, panting for breath, the water forming a pool round him in the boat. Mr. Selby sat exhausted beside him.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 244.

OUT ON FRIDAY—"THE PENNY POPULAR"—BUY IT!

"Got him?" shouted Monteith.

"Yes; it's all right."

"Good egg!"

Kildare's boat pulled back to the School House steps. The two drenched figures were lifted into the house. Lowther and Manners rushed forward knee-deep in water to seize their chum and carry him in.

"Oh, Tom, you ass!" said Lowther, fairly hugging his chum. "You fathead! You might have biffed your napper on the ground and busted it! Oh, Tom, you silly josser!"

Tom Merry laughed breathlessly.

"All's well that ends well," he said.

"Bravo, Tommy!" roared Blake. "Good old Tommy! Hooley!"

"Hip, hip, hooray!"

Mr. Railton pressed Tom Merry's hand.

"You have acted like a hero—like a hero!" he exclaimed.

"We are all proud of you, my boy!"

"Bravo!"

"Hooray!"

Tom Merry coloured.

"Oh, draw it mild, you chaps, and don't make a fellow feel a silly ass!" he exclaimed.

"Bai Jove! Huwway!"

Mr. Selby, drenched, dripping, but wonderfully good-tempered for once, clasped Tom Merry's hand, and shook it with great emotion.

"You have saved my life, Tom Merry," he said, "and it was at the risk of your own. I shall not forget it. Of course, you may be sure that the flogging will not take place. I shall beg the Head——"

"It will not be necessary, Mr. Selby," broke in Dr. Holmes' voice, as he took Tom Merry's other hand. "If Merry's sins were much greater, I should forgive them all now. We are all proud of you, Tom Merry!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwway!"

And Tom Merry was glad to be helped upstairs by his own chums, to be bundled into a warm bed, after a rough toweeling, and to escape the cheers and congratulations of the whole House.

Tom Merry was as well as ever the next day; but Mr. Selby was laid up with a cold, which kept him confined to his room for more than a week. During that time the flood went down, and St. Jim's resumed something of its normal aspect. It was a pleasant time for the Third Form, and they did not look forward with pleasure to Mr. Selby's recovery.

But when Mr. Selby resumed his place in the Form-room, it proved that his cold, or his narrow escape, or something else, had made a change in him decidedly for the better. His temper was almost amiable, and he was kind even to D'Arcy minor. After the first morning of the new regime, Wally rubbed his eyes as he left the class-room, as if in doubt whether he was dreaming. He met Tom Merry in the Form-room passage, and thumped him on the back.

"We were thinking of ragging you for fishing Selby out," he remarked, "but the washing must have done him good, or else something's gone wrong with the works. He's in a ripping good temper to-day. What do you think of that?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Try to make it last," he suggested.

"Well, I don't suppose it will last long," said Wally, "but it's a welcome change while it does last."

But as the days passed on it looked as if it would last, and the Third-Formers found it much pleasanter in the Form-room since the days when St. Jim's was washed out.

THE END.

(Next week's splendid long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. is entitled "THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS" by Martin Clifford. Order a copy of "The Gem Library" in advance. Out on Wednesday. Price 1d.)

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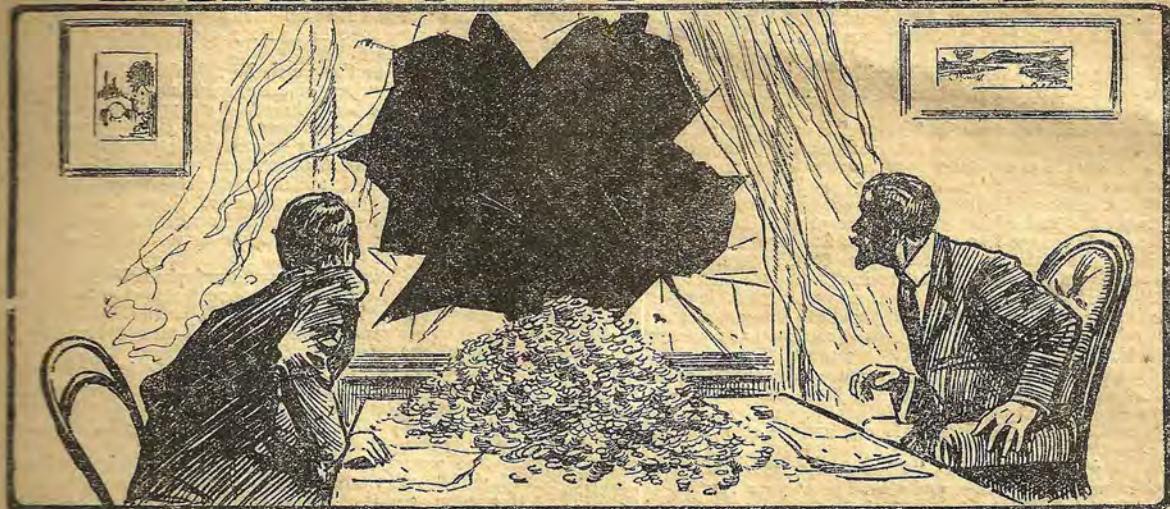
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CHAPTER 1.

The Man in Black.

It was most mysterious.

The man stepped out of the train at St. Paneras at a quarter to four on a cold, raw afternoon in mid-November. He was tall and thin, with a short black beard and closely-cropped black hair. From head to foot he was clothed in black, even to his necktie and his gloves, and the only spot of colour in his composition was a small, brown leather portmanteau which he carried in his hand.

On alighting from the train he stood for a moment outside the carriage door, and swept the crowded platform with a circling glance. A porter darted towards him, and touched his cap.

"Hansom, sir?" he said.

The man pretended not to hear. In an absent-minded manner he placed his hand on his breast, and drew a tiny circle with the top of his thumb. The porter gave a start of surprise; then he quietly raised his hand and repeated the sign.

"Good!" said the man, in a low voice. "I knew that several of our men were stationed here, but I hardly expected to drop across one at the first attempt. What's your number?"

"One thousand three hundred and thirty," said the porter.

"What's yours?"

"Two," said the man.

Again the porter started, and a look of mingled awe and trepidation crossed his face.

"Then you are—" he began. But the man in black flashed out an angry glance that froze the words on his lips.

"Never mind who I am," he said. "Where can I give you your orders?"

The porter pondered for a moment, then nodded his head.

"In the lamp-room," he said.

They elbowed their way through the jostling crowd, and presently came to the lamp-room. The porter opened the door and peeped inside.

"It's all right, sir," he said; "there's nobody here."

The man walked in, the porter slipped in after him, and closed the door.

"At what time do you come off duty?" asked the man.

"Six o'clock, sir," said the porter.

"Good!" said the man again. "From a quarter-past five to a quarter to six you will arrange to be on duty in the station-yard. About half-past five a hansom will drive up. There will be two men in the hansom—myself, and a tall

young fellow, with flaxen hair. You will open the hansom door for us. You will take our bags, and ask us where we are going."

"I shall tell you we are going to Sheffield by the 5.45, and that we wish to travel in a first-class smoker. While we are booking our tickets, you will place our traps in an empty first-class smoker in the train I have named, and as soon as we've taken our seats you will lock us in. You will then mount guard outside our carriage door, and on no pretence whatever must anybody else be allowed to enter that compartment but myself and my friend. Those are my orders for the present. Have I made myself clear?"

"Perfectly!" said the porter, in a humble, deferential voice.

"Then take my portmanteau and find me a hansom."

The porter picked up the bag and led the way to the cab-rank outside.

"Where to, sir?" said the porter, as he closed the door.

"Albion Chambers, Ludgate Hill," said the man in black.

The porter touched his cap, and repeated the address to the driver. The driver whipped up his horse, and the hansom rattled away.

What did it all mean?

Trapped!

At the top of Ludgate Hill stood a handsome block of buildings, arranged in suites of offices, and known as Albion Chambers. On each side of the principal door was a curved brass plate, on which were inscribed the names of those who rented rooms on the various floors. One of these ran as follows:

"First Floor,
JOHN LANGLEY,
Consulting Electrical Engineer."

The man to whom this inscription referred was a stalwart young fellow, with a clean-shaven, boyish face, and curly, flaxen hair. Amongst his chums he was known as "Lucky Jack," for, although he was not yet thirty years of age, he had already gained a reputation as an electrical engineer which was second to none in the kingdom.

On the bleak November afternoon when we first make his acquaintance, he is sitting in his office, writing out a report on a new electrical motor, which had been submitted to him for examination, when his clerk came in and handed him a visiting-card.

"Mr. Simeon Flegg," said Jack, reading the name on the card. "Does he wish to see me?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No 244.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS!"

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

"Yes, sir," said the clerk; "and he said that I was to tell you he was in a 'great hurry.'"

"All right; show him in!" said Jack, throwing down his pen.

The clerk retired, and presently ushered in the man in black.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Langley!" said the latter, as he dropped into a chair Jack pushed towards him. "I haven't had the pleasure of meeting you before, but I dare say you will know my name. I am Alderman Flegg, the Chairman of the Electrical Tramways Committee of the Sheffield City Council."

"Oh, yes; I am quite familiar with your name!" said Jack. "Very glad to make your acquaintance. Do you wish to consult me professionally?"

"I do," said the man in black. "I came up to London three days ago, intending to remain here until the end of the week. About four o'clock this afternoon, however, I received an urgent telegram from the Mayor of Sheffield, informing me that a serious breakdown had occurred in connection with the tramways, and asking me to return at once, and bring you with me. It is now five minutes past five, and I should like, if possible, to leave by the 5.45 from St. Pancras. Can you be ready to go with me by that train?"

"Oh, yes!" said Jack. "I always keep a travelling-bag at my office here in readiness for any sudden emergency; but it is only fair to warn you that I cannot consent to run down to Sheffield for any sum less than fifty guineas."

"That is a matter of no importance whatever," said the man in black, with a lordly wave of his hand. "Come with me to Sheffield, show us what is wrong, and how to put it right, and any fee you choose to ask will be only too cheerfully paid."

"Very well," said Jack. "Give me five minutes in which to make my preparations, and then I'm at your service."

It should be explained that Jack Langley was a bachelor, and an orphan, without a relation in the world. He lived in a small but well-appointed house in Lordship Park, Stoke Newington. This house was connected with his office by telephone, and as soon as he had rung up his housekeeper, and had told her not to expect him home that night, he locked up his papers, fished out his travelling-bag, put on his hat and overcoat, gave some instructions to his clerk, and then announced that he was ready. Two minutes later he and the man in black were on their way to St. Pancras.

On arriving at the station they were taken in tow by the porter who had received such precise instructions from the man in black a couple of hours before. He opened the hansom door for them, and whilst they were taking their tickets, he placed their bags in an empty first-class smoker in the Sheffield train. As soon as they had taken their seats he locked the carriage door, and mounted guard outside; but, as events turned out, nobody else attempted to get in, and when the train steamed out of the station the man in black and the young engineer had the compartment to themselves.

There is no need to describe the journey in detail. Suffice it to say that up to a certain point it was one of the pleasantest journeys which Jack had ever made, for the man in black proved an admirable companion, and the time slipped by so swiftly and agreeably that when the train pulled up in Chesterfield Station the young engineer could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Why, we're at Chesterfield!" he exclaimed, rubbing the mist off the window with his sleeve, and reading the name on the station lamps.

"That's so," said his companion. "The next place we stop at will be Sheffield."

"Well, I'm blest!" said Jack. "I'd no idea we were half so far. Upon my word, it doesn't seem more than an hour and a half since we left St. Pancras, does it?"

"It doesn't," said the man in black, as the train resumed its journey. "As a matter of fact, however, it's over three—which reminds me, by the by, that I've been sitting all that time with a flask of whisky in my pocket, and have never asked you to have a nip! Why didn't you remind me?"

"How could I, when I didn't know?" said Jack, with a laugh.

"Ah, well, better late than never!" said his companion.

He fumbled in his pocket, and produced a flask. He unscrewed the stopper, and removed the metal cap. He filled the latter three parts full, and handed it to Jack.

"Real Glenlivet," he said. "Not a headache in a bottleful."

Suspecting nothing, Jack drained it off at a single draught; but the moment he had swallowed the stuff he knew that he had been drugged, for his temples instantly started to throb, whilst a curious numbness began in his legs and mounted rapidly towards his head.

"What have you given me?" he demanded, staggering to his feet.

"Whisky, of course!" said the man in black, in tones of ill-suppressed triumph.

"You—you lie!" gasped the young engineer, grasping the rail of the hattrack for support. "You've drugged me, you—you—"

The rest of the sentence died away in an inarticulate moan, and, after swaying to and fro like a drunken man, he sank back on to the seat and lapsed into unconsciousness.

For a second or two the man in black regarded him in gloating silence; then he whipped out his watch.

"I shall just have time to doff my disguise before I hand him over!" he muttered.

Suiting the action to the word, he raised his hands to his head, and in the twinkling of an eye his short black beard, and his closely-cropped black hair had disappeared, revealing him as a freshly-complexioned man, with a clean-shaven face, and iron-grey hair. Then he opened his portmanteau, and took out a Raglan overcoat of fawn-coloured cloth, a scarlet tie, brown leather gloves, and a pair of light-grey trousers. Having donned these various articles of apparel in place of the sombre garments he had previously worn, he packed the latter away in his bag, and once more consulted his watch.

"Four minutes yet!" he muttered.

He lowered one of the windows and unlocked the door. He opened the door to its widest extent, and fastened it back with a small steel wedge. Then he stepped out on to the footboard, and fixed his gaze on the long, dark stretch of railway-line in front of the train.

By-and-by a row of twinkling lights came into view far away in the distance ahead, and low down by the side of the line. There were four lights in all, twenty yards apart, and between the second and third—invisible in the darkness—were four masked men holding a tarpaulin sheet.

Nearer and nearer came the lights as the train sped on, until at last they were not much more than half a mile away. Then the man on the footboard climbed back into the carriage, raised the unconscious engineer in his arms, and partly dragged him across to the door.

A moment later the train flashed past the first of the lights—a lantern at the foot of a telegraph-pole.

"One!" said the man, in a hoarse, excited voice.

A second light flashed past.

"Two!" he said, and even as he muttered the word he put forth all his strength and hurled Jack through the open door.

After pausing for a second in order to recover his breath and balance, he snatched up Jack's portmanteau and silk hat, and tossed them after him. Then he stepped out on to the footboard again and gazed back in the direction of the rapidly-vanishing lights.

Five—ten—fifteen seconds passed; then the train swept round a curve, and the lights were hidden from view.

"Is it possible that they have failed?" he muttered anxiously. But the words had scarcely crossed his lips ere a rocket soared up into the sky.

"Good!" he exclaimed, with a heartfelt sigh of relief. "They've got him all right!"

He stepped back into the carriage, removed the wedge, and closed and locked the door. Having rearranged his disordered dress, he nestled down in a corner seat and lit a cigar.

"Heaven help you now, Jack Langley!" he mused, as he blew out a cloud of filmy smoke. "Unless you're a weaker man than I give you credit for being, you've said good-bye to the outside world for ever and a day."

The Underground Mint.

When Jack recovered his senses he was lying on a couch in a large and handsomely-furnished room. Two men were standing over him, each with a revolver in his hand, and almost before he had fairly opened his eyes he heard one say to the other:

"He's coming round! Ring for the Squire!"

The man addressed walked over to the bell-pull and gave it a vigorous tug. He then returned to the couch and favoured Jack with a prolonged and searching stare.

"Feeling better?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, I'm all right now, thank you!" said Jack, gazing round the spacious room with an air of bewildered surprise. "But where—where am I?"

"That is a question which is best left unanswered for the present," said the man. "It is enough for you to know that you are completely in our power, and that the slightest show of resistance will be followed by instant death."

He had scarcely finished speaking ere "the Squire" appeared—a tall, thin man, with a clean-shaven face, and iron-grey hair.

"Mr. Langley, I believe?" he said, advancing to the couch, with a courteous bow. "Allow me to congratulate you on your safe and speedy return to consciousness."

At the sound of his voice, the young engineer gave a start of surprise.

"Are you Mr. Simeon Flegg?" he asked.



The train flashed by the first lamp placed at the foot of a telegraph pole. "One!" said the man in a hoarse excited voice. The second lamp flashed by. "Two!" he said, and even as he muttered the word he put forth all his strength and hurled Jack through the open door. (See page 24.)

"I am not!" said the Squire bluntly.

"You are!" said Jack, in tones of profound conviction. "At least, you're the man who came to my office this afternoon, and gave that name to my clerk. You were then dressed in black, with hair and beard to match; but, although you have changed your disguise, I recognise you by your voice."

"In that case," said the Squire, "I may as well admit that I am the man in black."

"Then, the name you gave me was a false one?"

"Why, certainly!"

"And your statement that the Mayor of Sheffield had wired to you to bring me down to Sheffield by the first available train—was that false, too?"

"Every word of it! In fact, as you have doubtless guessed, the whole affair was a clever plot to lure you into my power."

"And may I ask what your object was?"

"Certainly!" said the Squire. "My friends and I are the owners of some electrical machinery. One of our machines has unaccountably broken down, and we want you to repair it. That's all."

"But, if that was your only object," said Jack, "why was it necessary to resort to forgery, doctored whisky, and all that sort of thing? If you merely wished me to repair a broken machine, why couldn't you come to my office and tell me so in an open and straightforward way?"

"Because," said the Squire, "it was absolutely essential, from my point of view, that you shouldn't know where you were going, or what it was I wished you to do, until you were safely inside my house. If I had been open and straightforward with you, it's a thousand to one that you wouldn't have come."

"Why not?" asked Jack, growing more and more bewildered.

"You will be able to answer that question for yourself by-and-by," said the Squire, with a peculiar smile. "In the meantime, you will perhaps allow me to remark that we are wasting valuable time, and that the sooner you set to work, the sooner you will be free to depart."

"Then, am I to understand," said Jack, "that if I consent to repair your machine, I shall then be allowed to leave this house without any further molestation?"

"Certainly!" said the Squire. "We shall take certain precautions, of course, to prevent your finding out where you

have been; but otherwise you will not be interfered with in any way. I pledge you my word of honour on that."

"Very well, then," said Jack, rising to his feet. "I have no wish to remain in this house any longer than is absolutely necessary, so please allow me to see the machine at once."

"Pardon me, but there's just one little precaution to be taken first," said the Squire, producing a black silk handkerchief. "You don't object, I hope?"

The Squire accordingly bound the handkerchief over Jack's eyes, and signed to his two confederates. The latter immediately ranged themselves on each side of their prisoner, linking their arms in his, and a moment later, in obedience to another signal from the Squire, they marched him out of the room.

In the course of the next ten minutes the young engineer was conducted through a perfect maze of rooms and passages. The size of the room in which he had recovered consciousness had already convinced him that the house in which he was imprisoned was a large one; but when his guides had escorted him through fifteen rooms and half a dozen passages, all on the same floor, he began to think that the house must be a palace. As a matter of fact, however, they were simply trying to confuse him, by leading him through the same rooms and passages over and over again, in order that he might not be able to form any clear idea of what the house was like.

At last the long tramp came to an end, and the Squire called a halt. For a second or two they all stood perfectly still, and then, to Jack's dismay, the ground began to sink from under his feet. His alarm, however, was not of a long duration, for he soon discovered that he and his captors had merely entered an electric lift, for the purpose of descending to some lower region of the house.

When the sinking motion ceased, his guides let go their hold upon his arms, and the Squire commanded him to take three strides in front of him and six to the right. When he had obeyed, he was turned round half a dozen times in rapid succession; and then, before he had time to recover from his giddiness, the handkerchief which covered his eyes was suddenly whisked away.

For a moment or two he was blinded by the dazzle of a dozen electric-lights, but as soon as his eyes had become accustomed to the glare, he saw that he was in an underground vault, whose size and contents literally staggered him. Never in his life before had he ever seen its equal. So

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS!"

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

astounding was the scene, in fact, that he rubbed his eyes and pinched himself to make sure he was awake.

The vault in which he stood was an underground mint for the minting of counterfeit coin!

At one end was a furnace, in which the metal—which was stacked in ingots hard by—was melted, mixed, and annealed. At the other end was a powerful-looking engine, and between the two, ranged in a row down the middle of the vault, were intricate machines for rolling the metal into bars, for cutting out the blanks, for raising and milling the edges, and for stamping the spurious coins with the requisite designs. In fact, to sum up the matter in a single sentence, the whole place was a reproduction on a small scale, and not a very small scale, either—of the Royal Mint in London.

When Jack had fully grasped these facts, and had realised that the Squire and his "friends" were engaged in the manufacture of counterfeit coins, his first impulse was to fold his arms and refuse to assist them in any way whatever. A moment's reflection, however, convinced him that such a course would be tantamount to throwing away his life, for he was absolutely at the mercy of these men. None of his friends knew where he was—he did not even know himself—and the stern gleam in his captors' eyes, as they narrowly watched his every movement, convinced him that no idle threat had been uttered in the room above when one of his gaolers had warned him that the slightest show of resistance would be followed by instant death.

"So you and your friends are coiners?" he said, turning to the Squire, and striving to speak calmly.

"It would seem so!" said the Squire, picking up a handful of spurious coins, and allowing them to dribble through his fingers. "Did I not speak truly when I said, that if I had been open and straightforward with you, the odds were a thousand to one that you would not have come with me?"

"You did!" said Jack. "Nothing in the world would ever have induced me to accompany you if I'd known for what purpose you desired my assistance!"

"I knew that," said the Squire, with a chuckle. "That's why I was compelled—as you said just now—to resort to forgery and doctored whisky, and that sort of thing. But now that you are here, you will doubtless see the wisdom of bowing to the inevitable, and doing what we wish."

"Suppose I refuse?" said Jack.

"You will be shot!" said the Squire. And he signed to the two men by his side, who instantly covered Jack with revolvers.

"And if I consent to do as you wish?"

"Have I not already pledged my word?" said the Squire. "You will be placed in my carriage—blindfolded, of course—and driven to a certain spot in the middle of a lonely heath. You will be released, on promising not to remove your hand-

age for the space of fifteen minutes, and at the end of that time you will be free to act as you please."

"Then, it seems to me, that I haven't any choice in the matter," said Jack, conquering his repugnance with an effort. "Which is the machine that you wish me to repair?"

"This," said the Squire, leading him to a small electric dynamo. "It supplies the current to the vats in which we electro-plate our coins. Two days ago it ceased to work, and as we have five thousand half-crowns waiting to be silver-plated, and two hundred sovereigns ready to be gilded, you will readily understand that we want it put to rights with as little delay as possible."

Jack examined the machine, and saw at a glance what was wrong. It would only weary the reader to enter into the technical details, so let it suffice to say, that in less than an hour, the young engineer had remedied the defect, and he had made the machine almost as good as new.

"There! Thank goodness it's finished!" he exclaimed, when he had tested it, and found that it was all right. "Will you now be so good as to order the carriage, and let me go?"

"Well, no; I'm afraid I can't," said the Squire, beckoning to his two accomplices, who once more ranged themselves on either side of the young engineer.

"Why not?" demanded Jack. "Didn't you pledge your word of honour that when I had finished my work, I should be allowed to leave without any further molestation?"

"I did," said the Squire. "But you didn't really think I meant it, did you?"

"Of course I did!" said Jack, with a strange sinking at his heart.

"Then, all I can say is that you're a bigger simpleton than I took you for!" said the Squire, with a mocking laugh. "Fancy thinking that I was such an idiot as to set you free after all you have seen and heard in this house to-night!"

"Then, what are you going to do with me?" asked Jack.

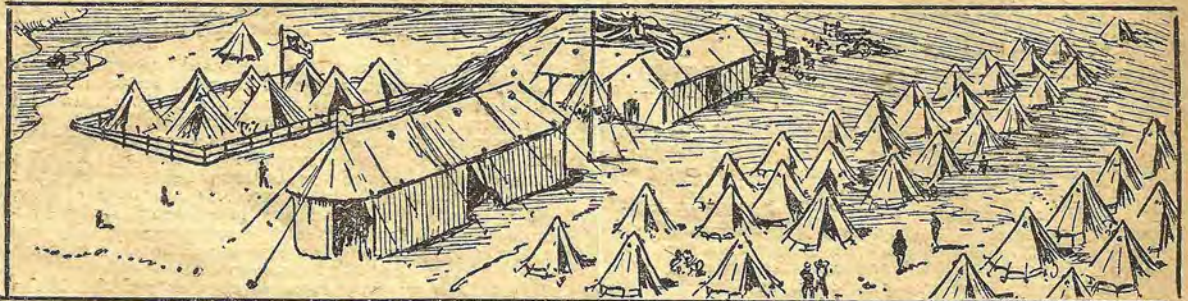
"If I had my own way," said the Squire, "I would shoot you forthwith, and have done with you. But I'm not exactly my own master in the matter, and my orders are to offer you your freedom on condition that you consent to throw in your lot with us—to become one of ourselves, in fact—and to give us in the future the benefit of your valuable advice and help. In return for this, you will not only receive your freedom and a regular salary as a consulting engineer, but a certain share of the profits will be—"

"Enough!" cried Jack, facing him with flashing eyes. "Your proposition is an insult! Sooner than purchase my freedom on the infamous terms you have named, I would rot in this vault for ever!"

(The second instalment of this thrilling adventure serial story will be published in next Wednesday's issue of THE GEM LIBRARY. Order a copy in advance. Price 1d.)

THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS!

By
PROSPER HOWARD.



The Concluding Chapters of Our Rousing School Tale of Gordon Gay, Frank Monk & Co.

Frank Monk's Wheeze.

"What about a simultaneous performance—just ourselves?" suggested Lane. "There are three of us, all jolly good performers, though I say it."

Monk snorted.

"Nobody would look at us. They'll all be laughing at Gay's version of Shakespeare. We can't expect to be so funny with simple nigger minstrels."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, my pater's going to be present—all the masters in fact. They wouldn't have a nigger minstrel show. That's the worst of it—the masters are always on the side of the classics, however deadly they are. They back up a fellow

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who plays Shakespeare or Euripides, and frown down a really good thing in the nigger minstrel line."

"Then we shall have to chuck it."

"I'm not going to chuck it," growled Monk.

"What can you do?"

"I don't know."

And the discussion dropped for a time.

Frank Monk strode into camp with a corrugated brow. It was really too bad that the Cornstalks should score all the time, but he did not quite see how it was to be helped. All the Fourth were Shakespeare mad just at present; and Gay's wheeze of letting them all upon the stage had bagged the whole Form in his favour. The play being destined for

OUT ON FRIDAY—"THE PENNY POPULAR"—BUY IT!

the open sands, the stage was, of course, large enough to accommodate any number.

Monk glanced in at Gordon Gay's tent, and smiled wrathfully. The Cornstalks were rehearsing. Mont Blong looked queer enough in the garb of a Doge of Venice, and Wootton major and minor were also very picturesque. Gordon Gay was as black as the ace of spades, having made up as Othello. In the gorgeous garb of a Venetian, with his black face surmounting it, he looked very striking. His voice was rolling out as Monk passed.

"Of antres vast and deserts idle.

"Rough quarries, rocks, and hills where heads touch Heaven,

"It was my hint to speak."

"Rats!" growled Frank Monk; but he had to admit that the Cornstalk actor delivered the great lines with telling effect.

"She loved me for the dangers I had passed;

"And I loved her, that she did pity them!"

"Bravo!" exclaimed Cassio—Wootton minor. "Hear, hear!"

"Ripping!" said Harry Wootton enthusiastically. "First show!"

"I zink zo," said Mont Blong. "I zink zat zey are ze splendid lines. 'She loved me for ze dangers I had passed; and I loved her zat she did pity zem!' Yes, razzler!"

Gordon Gay smiled.

"I think we shall knock them," he remarked.

"Yes, razzler!"

"Hallo, Monkey!" called out Gordon Gay, catching sight of the chief of the rival Co. outside the tent. "How are you getting on with the nigger show?"

"Rats!"

"Better get Punter of the Fifth to help you," suggested Jack Wootton. "I'm afraid we've bagged all the Fourth. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I'll tell you what, Monkey!" said Othello-Gay. "Come into our show, and we'll give you a good part."

Monk shook his head.

"I'll stick to the nigger show, thank you," he said.

"But where are you going to dig up an audience?"

"Oh, rats!"

Othello grinned, and turned back into the tent. Frank Monk grinned, too, and dashed away in search of Lane and Carboy. The sight of Othello's black face had given him an idea.

Lane and Carboy were still on the sands, yawning at the sea, when Monk dashed up. He nearly fell over them in his excitement.

"Hallo!" said Lane. "What's the row?"

"I've got it!"

"Eh?"

"I've got it!" roared Frank Monk.

"Got what—the jumps?"

"Or a bee in the bonnet?" asked Carboy.

"The wheeze, you fatheads—the wheeze!"

"Oh, good!"

"I've just seen Gay. He was spouting Othello," said Monk. "He's got his face blackened up in Day and Martin style for Othello's part."

"Well, that's all right!" said Lane. "I suppose he couldn't play Othello without colouring up his chivvy, could he?"

"No!" roared Monk. "But he's not recognisable in Venetian clobber and with a face like the ace of spades."

"No; I don't suppose you'd know him if you met him in 'Venice—a Street!'" grinned Lane. "Nobody will know him, excepting from the programme."

"Naturally."

"If he were pinched away after the first act—"

"Eh?"

"And tied up, and checked into a tent—"

"What?"

"And another chap—about my size—went on, rigged up as Othello—"

"My hat!"

"And did a nigger minstrel show, instead of Othello's part—"

"Great Scott!"

"I think the Old Co. would score over the Cornstalks!" yelled Frank Monk. "What do you think?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lane and Carboy rolled on the sands and kicked them up with their feet, in an ecstasy of mirth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monk sat down and roared.

"It will be as easy as rolling off a log!" he gasped. "I'll

be made up as Othello ready, and you two chaps will have to collar Gay. As the play's in the open air, and it will be after dark, that won't be difficult. You've simply got to get him away from the stage and collar him. Have a rope ready, and rope him up. Then I go on for the second act—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And do a song and dance—"

"They'll think Gay has gone off his rocker!"

Not a word did the Old Co. say of that precious scheme. They chuckled over it, and kept it to themselves. But as the night of the entertainment came near they made their preparations silently, cautiously, and effectively.

And Gordon Gay & Co., quite unconscious of the wicked plans of the rival Co., went on cheerfully rehearsing.

The great night had come!

A clear, starry night, with a glimmer of moonlight on the sea and the shore. On the level sands the open-air theatre had been arranged with much care. Innumerable seats rose in row after row, to be filled by an eager audience—an audience, at all events, whether eager or not.

Dr. Monk, the Head of the Grammar School, was to be present—and when the Head was present at any show, it was the proper thing for everybody else to be present, too.

As the hour of the show drew nigh the seats filled. All the fags turned up in force at an early hour; the Fifth and the Sixth came in with more majestic slowness; and last of all the masters arrived, and the Head himself.

The curtain was still down, but the footlights—a row of bicycle-lanterns—were burning away cheerfully. The stage was the bare sand; but poles had been set up, and canvas walls erected, to partition off the wings and the green-room.

During the afternoon Gordon Gay's assistants had been raising and lowering the curtain for practice. It was now, as Jack Wootton remarked, more likely than not that it would go up and down in the right way at the right time.

All the Fourth who were not in the Othello company were scene-shifters or supers, so there were plenty of hands to do the work. The only exceptions were Monk, Lane, and Carboy. Those cheerful youths were out of it, and they were expected to turn up in the audience. But they had not appeared in the audience so far.

The performance was timed to begin at seven. At a quarter-past seven there were sounds behind the curtain that indicated approaching liveliness. At half-past seven whispering voices were heard anathematising fellows who didn't know how to raise a curtain. At twenty to eight the curtain went up.

(To be continued.)

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns will be from those readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl, English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons. One taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet." Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C., England."

Owing to want of space this week's list of names and addresses has been unavoidably held over.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

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OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE—



For Next Wednesday.

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS,"

by Martin Clifford. Next Wednesday's splendid long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, under the above title, deals with the amazing events which take place at the old school on the occasion of the visit of Colonel Rake, to review the St. Jim's Scouts. The peculiar behaviour of the great man causes great mystification, but not for a moment do

"THE SCHOOLBOY SCOUTS"

suspect the truth until it is too late.

FRIDAY IS "PENNY POPULAR" DAY.

Thousands of my chums all over the Empire will be looking forward with eager impatience to Friday of this week, when the long-promised and anxiously-expected New Story Paper

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

will make its welcome appearance.

This wonderful budget of the best stories could not be more aptly named; its title,

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

fits it to perfection—and for a very good reason. Its popularity was absolutely assured before the preparation of the first number was even commenced.

"The Penny Popular" is absolutely the only paper that has ever been really "Made to order!" Thousands and thousands of letters having been received, it was at length felt that something must be done to fill the universally expressed want, or else there might be trouble. The result will be seen in Friday's Grand New Paper

No 1. of "THE PENNY POPULAR,"

in which the pick of the most famous characters in the world of fiction are introduced, in

THREE GRAND COMPLETE STORIES

for the first time between the covers of a single story-paper. The varying tastes of fiction-lovers have been carefully studied and most thoroughly catered for, and everyone who appreciates really first-class reading matter, will heartily welcome this splendid variety of fine tales, dealing as they do with the widely different yet equally interesting adventures of

SEXTON BLAKE,

the World-Renowned Detective;

JACK, SAM, and PETE,

the three Famous and Adventurous Comrades;

and TOM MERRY & Co.,

the Most Popular of all Schoolboy Characters.

The latter of these items will be of particular interest to Gemites, consisting as it does of a powerful series of splendid stories by Martin Clifford, dealing with the most interesting, amusing, and exciting incidents of Tom Merry's early school-days.

With such a matchless list of contents, "The Penny Pop." must prove an irresistible attraction to a vast number of readers, who will at once recognise the new story paper as **THE IDEAL COMPANION for the WEEK END!**

Don't forget, then, my readers, that the First Number of this wonderful New Story Paper—a veritable feast of fiction—comes out on Friday; then, in future, every

FRIDAY IS "PENNY POP." DAY.**Profitable Pastimes for Winter Evenings—"Poker-work."**

An excellent employment for the long winter evenings, now drawing on, which is both easy and profitable, is "Pyrography," or, as it is more commonly known, "poker-work." This pastime, which is a method of decoration, is not very well known, and many readers may not have heard of it before. Poker-work not so very long ago used to be confined to the decoration of wooden articles, but since the introduction of the pyrography outfit most pleasing work can now be done on such materials as leather, cardboard, velvet, and plush.

Before the introduction of the pyrography outfit, the old method of doing this work was with a red-hot poker—hence the name poker-work—by drawing the heated metal along the lines of a design, which had previously been drawn on the wood. This left a brown-coloured line in place of the pencilled sketch. This method was very unsatisfactory, however, as the poker cooled very quickly, with the result that the design was not burnt in the wood evenly, some parts being darker than others. At the best of times a red-hot poker is a dangerous tool, besides being cumbersome and awkward to work with. Nowadays, a complete pyrography outfit, with which the finest work can be executed, can be bought for a few shillings. This initial outlay should not be looked upon as exorbitant if the apparatus is to be used with the idea of making a little extra pocket-money, as the articles such as photo-frames, door and cupboard panels, wooden plaques, tasteful table-centres, and cushion-covers, etc., will always find a ready sale amongst your friends. Thus it will be seen the outfit should soon pay for itself. The apparatus consists of a spirit-lamp and a small bottle containing benzoline. To the cork of the bottle two pieces of rubber tubing are attached, one ending in a rubber bulb, and the other in a metal tube, having a fine platinum or steel point. By keeping this point in the flame of the spirit-lamp until it is red-hot, and pressing the rubber bulb, a continuous flame is kept up, and is directed on to the design. Full directions are given with each set, so that anybody should be able to work one within a few minutes. The design is sketched on the article to be worked, and the flame directed on to the lines, thus burning away the surface, leaving lines of a brown tint.

There are two styles of poker-work—the "line" and the "solid." The line method is used for such articles as table-centres, while the solid is used for decorating such things as door and cabinet panels. To make a table-centre, first obtain a piece of white velvet—plush will do, only it is not so good—about eighteen inches square, and pin it on to a board. Then trace or sketch the design chosen upon it. Go over the lines with the flame, just burning off the pile, taking care not to burn the material right through. When the whole design has been worked, take the velvet off the board, and trim round the edges of the design with a pair of sharp scissors, at a distance of about a quarter of an inch from the outside line. The centre is then complete, and should be readily saleable if carefully executed.

The panel is a totally different kind of work, and is usually done on white wood, which can be bought specially prepared for poker-work at such places as Gamage's, of Holborn, London, E.C. The design must be first traced or sketched on the wood, and the flame directed on to the deep shadows. Solid work is composed only of shadows and high lights, and to get the effect of the high lights the white wood is left entirely untouched. The shadows are, of course, burnt evenly on the wood, by passing the flame backwards and forwards over the space until it is sufficiently darkened, with most effective results.

THE EDITOR.