

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE SCHEMER!"

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Every

Wednesday.



Complete Stories for All, and Every Story a Gem.



THE STRIKE - AT - ST. JIM'S!

A splendid, new, long, complete School
Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Yah! Go and chop chips! Get your hair cut!"
cried the parrot. "What!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.
"Funnyface! Oh, my eye, what a nose!" continued
the parrot.

CHAPTER 1.

Mad Dog!

"WESCUE!"
"Hallo!"

"Wescue! Oh, cwumbs!"
Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, of the Shell at St. Jim's, stopped in sheer astonishment.

They were strolling round the School House, intending to visit the shed where Monty Lowther kept his white rabbits, when the sudden yell burst upon their ears. They were in no doubt as to who was calling. There was only one voice at St. Jim's with that beautiful accent.

"D'Arcy's in trouble—" began Tom Merry.

"Sounds like it!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Here he comes."

"Yawooh! Wescue!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form, came flying round the corner of the old School House.

The aristocratic repose for which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was famous, was decidedly conspicuous by its absence on this occasion.

His hat had fallen off, his eyeglass was streaming wildly behind him at the end of its cord, and his face was flushed crimson with excitement and exertion.

He came round the house like a runaway motor-car, and dashed right into the Terrible Three without even seeing them.

"Look out!" roared Manners.

"Oh, you ass!"

D'Arcy grasped wildly at Tom Merry to save himself from falling. He caught hold of Tom Merry's hair with one hand, and of his ear with the other, and hung on. Tom Merry roared with pain.

"Leggo! Yow! You frabjous ass, leggo!"

"Wun, deah boys."

"What!"

"Wun! Wun!"

And D'Arcy, having recovered his balance, released Tom Merry's hair and ear, and started off again. The Terrible Three seized hold of him.

"What's the matter?" yelled Lowther. "Figgins & Co. after you?"

"Ow! No! Wun—wun like anythin'!" gasped D'Arcy.

"But what—"

"It's the bulldog!"

"Herries's bulldog?"

"Yaas. He's gone mad and bwooken loose, and he's aftah me. Look—there he comes. Wun—wun like anythin'!" shrieked D'Arcy.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

Round the corner of the School House came the bulldog, with jaws open, and foam upon them, and bloodshot eyes glaring in search of a victim.

Herries's bulldog, Towser, was generally a tame old beast, as the juniors said, and he was never known to bite anybody

Next Wednesday:

"THE SCHEMER!" AND "SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE!"

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that let him alone—excepting sometimes a playful nip, which Herries said was only his way.

But the juniors had never seen him like this before. Whether the bulldog was rabid or not, the juniors certainly had reason to believe that he was, from his looks. He was rushing right at them, and it was not surprising that the Terrible Three, after one look, joined D'Arcy in his wild rush for safety.

"Wun! Wun!"

Gr-r-r-r!

The juniors dashed wildly for the house door. Towser dashed on their track; and there was little doubt now that he would have bitten, if he had come up with them. And Towser had tremendous jaws.

Blake and Digby, D'Arcy's study-mates, were on the steps of the School House. They were talking cricket with Kangaroo of the Shell, and Reilly of the Fourth. They stared blankly at Tom Merry & Co. as they came tearing up the steps.

"Hallo, what's the trouble?" demanded Blake. "Is it the New House bounders, or a German invasion, or what?"

"Mad dog!"

"What?"

"Mad dog!" roared Manners. "Get inside—quick!"

"Great Scott!"

"Mad as a hatter, deah boys—wun—wun—wun!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The juniors dashed into the house. The sight of the bulldog with its foaming jaws was enough for them. And the thought of hydrophobia sent a chill to their very hearts. They scrambled in, and all dragged together at the big oaken door. The door was huge and heavy, and no easy thing to move; but the juniors united their efforts, and it was swung to with a terrific clang that rang through the School House.

Outside, Towser scrambled up the steps, snarling and growling.

Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, came out of his study with a frowning brow.

The big door of the School House was always kept wide open on fine days, and the Housemaster's impression was that mischievous juniors had closed it with that terrific slam from a mistaken sense of humour.

"Boys! What have you—how dare you—"

"Mad dog, sir!"

"What?"

"Herries's bulldog has gone mad, sir, and he's loose in the quadrangle!"

"Good heavens!"

Mr. Railton rushed to the hall window. Outside, in the sunny quadrangle, the bulldog could be seen. His foam-flecked jaws were terrifying to behold, and his bloodshot eyes seemed to flame. Mr. Railton shivered at the sight.

"Good heavens!" he repeated. "This—is—is terrible! How fortunate that you got into the house. Hurry round and see that all doors are closed, and warn boys not to go out into the quadrangle."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Unfortunately, there are many boys out of doors. And—good heavens! The Head!"

Mr. Railton's face became almost frozen with horror.

The dignified and stately form of the Head could be seen approaching the School House.

Dr. Holmes had been over to the New House to see Mr. Ratcliff, the master of that House. He was crossing the quad, again with his slow and stately motion, a reverend and awe-inspiring figure—thinking probably of Greek roots, or some subject equally fascinating, and certainly not at all of mad dogs.

Mr. Railton ran to the door and tore it open again. Mad dog or no mad dog, the Housemaster would not leave the Head alone in his peril. He grasped an umbrella from the stand, the only weapon that was handy.

Gr-r-r-r!

That remark from Towser first made the Head aware of his presence.

The old doctor halted suddenly, all considerations of Greek roots vanishing from his mind. He stood rooted to the ground, his eyes fixed upon the bulldog as if he were dreaming the horrible sight. But it was unfortunately no nightmare. Towser, mad or sane, ought to have respected the reverend Head of St. Jim's. But he didn't! He hurtled right at the doctor; and the doctor, with a shriek of terror, fled.

No one had ever seen the grave and reverend Head of St. Jim's sprint before. They would as soon have thought of seeing the garden-roller sprint. But he sprinted now, with a speed that showed that he had not quite forgotten the practice on the cinder-path in the far-off days of his youth. He gathered his gown round him and ran.

And Towser ran, too. The sight of a man running will always make a dog run, and perhaps that was Towser's reason—if he had any reason. At all events, he ran, with a horrid growl that sent chills down the doctor's spine.

"Oh, dear!" gasped the Head. "Help! Bless my soul! The dog is mad! Mad! Oh, dear! I shall be bitten and inoculated with rabies! Dreadful! Oh!"

"This 'ere way, sir!" yelled Taggles, the porter.

The porter's lodge was the nearest refuge. Taggles heroically held the door open till the Head dashed in, and then closed it before Towser could come up. The Head sank upon a chair, almost fainting with excitement and exhaustion.

"Good heavens!" he stuttered. "Thank you, Taggles. You have saved my life, my good man! How did that dreadful dog get into the quadrangle! In future, the gates must be kept closed, in case of mad dogs!"

Taggles snorted.

"That there dog belongs to St. Jim's, sir," he said.

"What! Belongs to the school!"

"It's Master Herries's dog, sir," said Taggles. "Master Erries of the Fourth Form, sir."

"Bless my soul! Now I come to think of it, I have seen the dog before," said the Head. "I remember punishing Herries for bringing him into the School House. Oh, dear! The horrible creature must be destroyed at once!"

"Ye-es," said Taggles. "Twon't be so easy, sir. There ain't many pussions want to face a mad bulldog, sir—and look at them jaws."

"Bless my soul!"

"He could bite your leg in arf with them jaws, sir," said Taggles.

"Oh, dear!"

Taggles watched from the window, prudently keeping the door shut. Towser the bulldog was in undisputed possession of the quadrangle. Fellows on the playing-fields had taken the alarm, from the yell on all sides of "mad dog!" and they had taken refuge in the cricket pavilion, and locked themselves in. Other fellows had crowded into the New House; School House and New House boys both making for the nearest shelter. Mr. Railton had hurried back into the School House as soon as he saw that the Head was safe in the porter's lodge. Mr. Railton was a brave man—but hydrophobia was no joke. A man who did not fear death might well fear madness.

Towser ramped to and fro in the quadrangle, furious.

Tom Merry & Co. watched him, fascinated, from the windows of the School House.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's frightful! I always said that that beastly bulldog had no respect whatever for a fellow's twosahs. But I nevah expected him to turn out like this! He's frightfully mad—perfectly wabid. Where is that ass Hewies?"

"Where's Herries?"

"Herries, old man, where are you?"

"Here he is!"

Herries of the Fourth had been in the Form-room, doing lines, and grinding so hard over his impositions that he had not taken the alarm. Three or four fellows dragged him out, to see what his bulldog was doing. Herries came out in a decidedly bad temper. Love me, love my dog was a fixed creed with Herries. In his eyes, Towser, like the King in the British Constitution, could do no wrong. He snorted as a roar greeted him.

"Herries, you ass, your bulldog—"

"He's gone mad!"

"He's chased the Head across the quad!"

"He's raging!"

"He's raving!"

"You'll be scragged for this!"

"And you will deserve to be scawged, deah boy. I have frequently remarked to you that that wotten bulldog ought to be sent away to a beastly home."

"Silly asses!" said Herries.

"He's mad—mad as a hatter! Where are you going?" roared Tom Merry, as Herries put his hand on the door.

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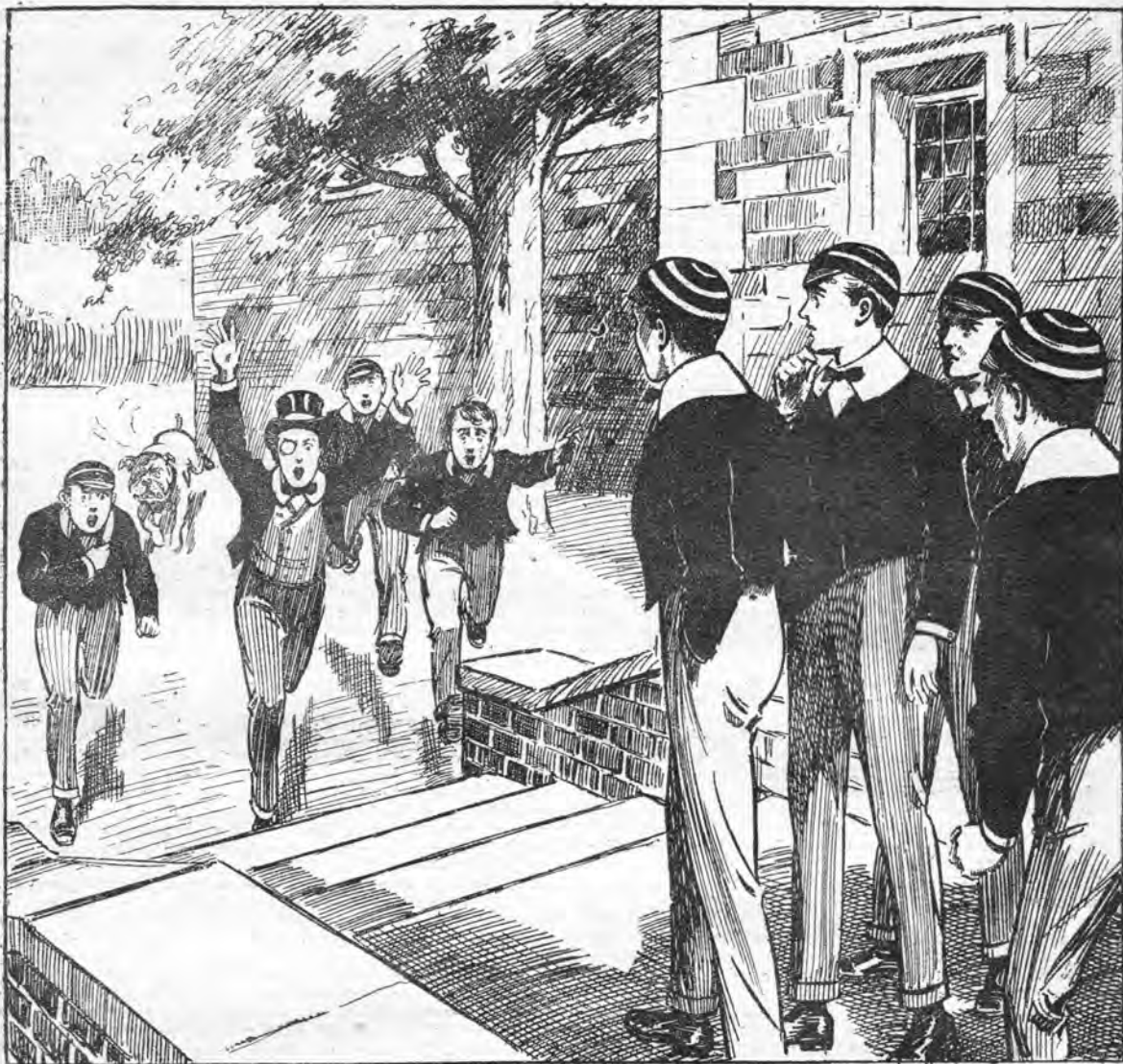
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The juniors dashed wildly for the House door, with Towser fast on their track. "Hallo, what's the trouble?" demanded Blake, who was standing on the steps. "Mad dog!" gasped the pursued. "Look out!" (See Chapter 1.)

"Didn't you say Towser's broken loose?" demanded Herries.

"Yes."

"Well, I'm going to take him back to his kennel."

"You're what—what—what?" yelled the juniors.

"Going to take him back to his kennel," said Herries calmly. "There will be trouble if he gets into the Head's flower-beds. There was last time."

"You can't go out! He'll bite you!"

"Rot! Towser won't bite me."

"He vewy neahly bit me, Hewwies—"

"Rats! Towser is jolly particular what he eats, I can tell you!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You can't go out—you sha'n't!" yelled Blake, grasping his chum by the arm. "Towser's got hydrophobia, and he'll bite you. He won't know you as he's mad."

"Towser isn't the one that's mad," growled Herries. "I think the whole school has gone dotty. Towser's all right."

"Stay in here, you ass! Mr. Railton has gone for his gun."

Herries seemed petrified for a moment.

"His gun!" he roared.

"Yes. You have to shoot mad dogs, you know."

"It's the only way, Hewwies, deah boy."

Herries gave a roar like a bull in a state of extreme exasperation.

"Let anybody try to shoot my bulldog, that's all! I'll smash him into little bits, master or not. Let anybody try—"

"Shut up, you ass! Railton will hear you."

"I don't care!"

Herries dragged the door open, and ran out on the steps.

"Collar him!" shouted Tom Merry. "He mustn't go—it'll be his death! Collar the silly cuckoo—quick!"

The juniors dashed at Herries. But Herries ran down the steps, and sped across the quad, straight to where Towser sat, with glaring eyes and foaming jaws!

CHAPTER 2.

The Head Comes Down Heavy.

"TOWSER! Towser, old boy!"

The juniors halted, gazing on in horror. They were in instant expectation of seeing the devoted Herries bitten by the mad dog, and the idea almost paralysed them. How was Towser to know his master, if he was mad? Jack Blake groaned in horror.

"Herries! He's done for—oh!"

"Towser, old fellow!"

Herries had reached the bulldog. He was holding him and fondling him, and Towser, instead of biting him, snuggled his big nose against Herries's waistcoat and mumbled affectionately. Herries stroked him, and patted him, and rumbled

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"THE SCHEMER!"

him, and Towser showed not the least inclination to bite him.

The juniors gazed at the dog and his master in wonder. "Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in amazement. "He isn't mad at all, dear boys—or else it's a sudden and remarkable weecowwy."

Towser evidently was not mad. A mad dog would not have snuggled up to his master in that way, and licked his hand. The juniors approached rather gingerly. Herries looked round at them with a frowning brow.

"What silly ass said Towser was mad?" he demanded.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"It was Gussy gave the alarm," said Tom Merry. "He was chasing Gussy, and he looked mad enough. Dash it all, Herries, he chased the Head across the quad—he'd have bitten him if Dr. Holmes hadn't got into the porter's lodge."

"The Head must have been looking at him, then," said Herries, with a grunt. "Towser doesn't like being looked at; it worries him."

"He chased us, too," said Monty Lowther.

"I dare say your face worried him," said Herries tartly.

"Why, you silly ass—"

"Somebody's let him loose," said Herries, "and somebody must have been tormenting him, to make him in such a state. He was so excited, he didn't know what he was doing. You know Brooke caught Levison tormenting him once. I shouldn't wonder if the cad has been doing it again. My hat, if he has, I'll—"

"Here comes the Head."

Dr. Holmes had seen Herries capture the raging bulldog, with horror and fear for what would happen to the junior. But when Towser was quiet it was clear that he had not been mad at all, but only wildly excited and ferocious. The Head left the porter's lodge, and advanced upon the scene. His face was flushed, and his eyes gleaming. It was not often that the kind old Head of St. Jim's was angry, but he was angry now. He had torn across the quad, under the eyes of the whole school, and he knew that he had looked utterly undignified, if not ridiculous. There would be chuckling remarks in all the studies about the way the Head had sprinted with Herries's bulldog after him. The mere thought of the ridicule made Dr. Holmes turn hot and cold all over. He had never been so incensed as he was now, as he bore down upon Herries.

"Herries! That is your dog?"

"Yes, sir," said Herries, with a grip on Towser's collar, and soothing his huge favourite. Towser seemed to get restive at sight of the doctor, as though he had a strong desire to set his teeth in those august calves.

"I understood," said the Head, "that the animal was suffering from rabies. Is it not the case, Herries?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"Then there is no possible excuse for this—this ferocious outbreak," said the Head sternly. "There has been trouble about that dog before, Herries. I have done wrong in allowing such a ferocious creature to be kept in the school. The dog must either be destroyed or sent away from the school immediately. Take it back to the kennel and chain it up, Herries. I shall expect it to be removed from St. Jim's within one hour. If it remains after that time, I shall give orders for it to be instantly destroyed."

Herries stared blankly at the Head.

"Destroyed!" he stuttered. "My bulldog—Towsy—destroyed!"

"Undoubtedly, Herries."

"D-d-do you mean killed, sir?"

"Certainly I mean killed, Herries."

"My old Towsy! Why, he's as harmless as a baby!" said Herries. "He's as gentle as a dove, sir. Obedient as—as a lamb, sir. Does everything I tell him. He'll eat anything, sir, and he's very fond of boys—"

Some of the juniors chuckled. Herries was a little confused, and he was certainly putting it in a way that might be misunderstood.

"No more, Herries. Take him away."

"But—but I can't send him away from the school, sir!" stammered Herries. "What am I to do without old Towser?"

"Cannot!" thundered the Head.

"I—I mean I'd rather not, sir."

"Herries, that ferocious animal is a public danger." Dr. Holmes raised his hand sternly. "If he is not gone from the school in one hour, he will be shot. I shall give orders to that effect."

"Oh, sir!"

"Enough!"

"But—but I say, sir—"

"That will do, Herries."

And the Head swept away. Fellows were gathering round on all sides now, now that it was known that Towser was not mad, and that Herries had a grasp on his collar. Herries had succeeded in soothing his favourite into quietness. There was sympathy in a good many faces. The affection of Herries for his bulldog was well known, though not many fellows beside Herries could see any grounds for it.

"It's rough," said Kangaroo of the Shell. "But he'll have to go, Herries. You can't expect the Head to be chased across the quad by a giddy bulldog."

"Wathah not."

"It's all Gussy's fault," growled Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, in surprise and indignation. "I fail to see how you make that out."

"You said he was mad, you chump!"

"He came wushin' at me suddenly, with his howwible jaws open," said D'Arcy, appealing to all present. "His mouth was foam'n' howwibly, and his eyes glawin'. Of course, I natuwallly came to the conclusion that he was mad. I wan for it."

"And we ran for it," said Tom Merry, grinning. "Mad or not, Towser was in an awful state, and he would have bitten anybody he could have got near. You saw the state he was in yourself, Herries."

Herries snorted.

"Yes, but you ought to have known he wasn't rabid. I knew he wasn't. Poor old Towser! He was upset. Somebody's been tormenting him. That's the only way to account for it. And I won't send him away from St. Jim's. Nobody else will take care of him as I do. They'll feed him on something that doesn't agree with him, very likely. Suppose he were to bite somebody who was in rotten bad health, and get blood-poisoning! He might. I'm jolly well not going to risk it. The Head will have to come round."

"I'm afraid he won't," said Blake.

"No fear!"

"Oh, rats!" said Herries. "Look here, Towser's chain's broken. You know what a jolly strong chain it was—you can see for yourself. What sort of a tug must he have given to break it? He must have been tormented by somebody, and wanted to get at him badly. I shouldn't wonder if it was Levison again. You know the dirty cad Levison is cruel to animals—I've seen him catapulting Mrs. Minns' cat before now. It ain't Towser that ought to be destroyed—it's Levison. The Head can have him shot if he likes. He's jolly well not going to have my bulldog shot!"

And Herries seized tight hold of the fragment of chain, and led Towser, quite quiet now, round the School House, followed by most of the juniors. Behind the School House, and near the woodshed, was a large shed where the juniors kept their pets, and which was known at St. Jim's as the "menagerie." Many of the fellows had pets, and they were not allowed to have them in the Houses. That shed had been specially constructed for the purpose, and there was plenty of room for cages galore. Tom Merry uttered a sudden exclamation as they came in sight of the shed. On the roof a junior was crouched, with a pallor of fear in his face, and wild eyes. It was Levison of the Fourth, and it was evident that he had taken refuge there to escape from the bulldog.

"Levison!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Levison glared down at them.

"Take that dog away, Herries!" he roared.

"Oh, you're there, are you?" said Herries, looking up at him furiously. "What have you been doing to Towser, Levison, you—you polecat?"

"I—I haven't been doing anything to him!" panted Levison. "I saw him loose, and bolted up here to get out of his way. He's not safe."

"I must remark that Levison is quite wight there. That beast has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs, Hewwies."

"Chain him up!" growled Levison. "I don't want to stay here all the evening."

"You rotter! I know you've been worrying him," said Herries.

"I tell you I haven't!"

"What were you doing here at all?"

"I came here to see my white mice. Then that beast went for me—"

"I don't believe a word of it," said Herries grimly.

"Look here, Herries—"

"I believe you've been tormenting Towser. I'm going to chain him up, but I'm going to put on a long chain, so that he can reach you if you get down."

"You—you rotter!"

ANSWERS

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"Look at the way Towser is looking at him," said Herries. "Just look at his face, you fellows. Doesn't that show that Levison has been hurting him?"

"Looks like it," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And, indeed, at the sight of Levison the bulldog's savage excitement seemed to be returning. His eyes glared, and he showed his teeth, and he made a vain effort to spring away from Herries in the direction of the shed. Levison turned white, though he was safe on the roof of the shed, out of the bulldog's reach.

Herries entered the shed, and returned in a minute with a long, strong chain. He fastened one end to Towser's collar, and the other to a staple in the wall. The bulldog was secure now, and could not get loose, the new chain being too thick for the strongest dog to break. But he had ample room to keep guard over Levison. The cad of the Fourth could not descend from the roof without getting within reach of Towser's teeth. And Towser's look was sufficient to indicate what would happen then!

Levison ground his teeth with rage.

"Will you take that dog away, Herries?" he yelled.

"No, I won't."

"I'll complain to the Head!"

"That won't hurt much; he can't be more down on Towser than he is now, thanks to you, you cad! You can stay there, as you've got there."

"I won't stay here! I won't—"

"Get down then, if you like to risk it," said Herries. And he walked away.

Levison panted.

"You fellows! Take that bulldog into the shed—"

"Rats!" said the fellows all together.

"Hold him while I get away!"

"No fear!"

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass severely upon Levison. "The evidence is not conclusive, Levison, but the presumption is that you have been tormentin' Towser. We know you are capable of such wassally conduct, because Bwooke found you doin' it one day. You can remain there, if it comes on to wain, as is vewy pwobable, you will get wet, and if you catch cold it will serve you right. The Head has ordained Towser to be sent away. I can't say I am sorrow myself, as the beast has no respect for a fellow's best twousahs, but it is wuff on Hewwies. You are a wottah, Levison. Wemain there and be hanged, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked away, and the rest of the juniors followed, grinning. No one wanted to help Levison, and no one had any sympathy to waste upon him. It was pretty clear that he had been gratifying his cruel propensities by tormenting Towser, not thinking that the dog would break his chain, and he deserved to be punished. Levison was left alone; watching the bulldog—and the bulldog watched Levison. Towser lay down, quietly enough, and closed his eyes as if asleep—but whenever Levison made a movement, Towser opened one eye. And Levison decided not to risk a descent from the roof of the shed. The results would have been too painful.

CHAPTER 3.

Looking for Pongo!

"ANYBODY seen Pongo?"

D'Arcy rained—Wally of the Third Form—asked that question, anxiously.

"Anybody seen Pongo?"

Wally was asking that question up and down the School House. He had been over the New House, too, asking it, and nobody had been able to answer him. Pongo seemed to have vanished. Wally came back to the School House looking very worried. Pongo, the shaggy little mongrel who was the pride of Wally's heart, was as dear to the scamp of the Third as Towser was to Herries. And Pongo was lost!

"Pongo gone?" asked Tom Merry, as Wally repeated the question to a group of juniors on the steps of the School House. "More trouble! Why don't you keep an eye on him?"

"Yes, rather!" said Monty Lowther humorously. "You should keep a watch on him, Wally, or a chain. Or a watch and chain."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Wally crossly. "This is jolly serious. The Head is in a frightful way about Herries's bulldog getting loose, and if there's any trouble over Pongo, he might have Pongo sent away, too. It's all Herries's fault, and that rotten bulldog's—"

"What's that?" growled Herries.

"Pongo was in the menagerie," said Wally. "I hadn't put his chain on; he always keeps in his kennel, except—except when he—he doesn't—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You know, Towser always goes for him if he gets a chance. Towser getting loose must have scared Pongo away, and now he's lost. There was a lot of trouble the other day through Reilly's monkey getting into the Head's garden, and if Pongo gets there and does any damage, the Head mayn't like it."

"Faith, and he's pretty sure not to loike it!" grinned Reilly of the Fourth. "My monkey didn't do much harm, but—"

"Better look out that he doesn't do any harm now," grunted Wally. "He's escaped."

"Phwat!"

Towser frightened the whole menagerie out of their wits when he got loose. The rabbits were scared to death, and they'd have scattered if they hadn't been in cages. Your monkey has bolted. Anyway, he wasn't there when I went to look for Pongo."

Reilly groaned.

"Oh, tare an' ounds! It's all the fault of that rotten bulldog—"

"Rubbish!" roared Herries. "Towser wouldn't have bitten your filthy monkey. Towser is jolly particular what he bites."

"But the monkey doesn't know how particular he is," grinned Monty Lowther. "And he can't be so very particular, as he was going to bite Levison."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There'll be trouble over that monkey," groaned Reilly. "He's a little devil intirely when he gets loose. But he was tied up; I tied him up—"

"He's loose now," grunted Wally. "Perhaps Levison untied him. It would be his idea of a joke. You know, you thumped him the other day for putting a lighted match on the monkey's nose. That chap ought to be suffocated. But the trouble is, I can't find Pongo. You chaps might help me to look for him. If there's any more trouble while the Head's in such a wax, Pongo will get it in the neck."

Tom Merry & Co. willingly joined in the search for Pongo. The sentence had gone forth against Towser, and if Pongo was guilty of any lawlessness at the same time, it was pretty certain that he would get the same sentence. But Pongo was not to be found. The juniors hunted in all likely and unlikely places—with the exception of the Head's garden. They were not allowed to enter there. Tom Merry looked over the gate into the garden. Taggles was at work there with a garden-hose, and the Shell fellow called to him.

"Taggy, old man, have you seen Pongo?"

"No, I ain't, and I don't want to," growled Taggles.

"I believe he's in there somewhere," said Wally, joining Tom Merry. "I say, Taggy, my dog's lost—"

"Jolly good thing, too, Master Wally!"

"You might look in the conservatory, Taggles, and see if he's there," suggested Tom Merry. "We don't want him to do any damage, you know."

Taggles grunted.

"I'll look," he said, "and if he's there, Master Merry, I'll give him such a larripin', he won't come there agin in a hurry!"

And Taggles laid down the hose, and picked up a stick, and went into the green house. Wally's eyes gleamed.

"He's jolly well not going to touch Pongo!" he exclaimed.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You—!" He made a clutch at Wally, but it was too late. The fag was over the gate, and dashing after Taggles.

There was a sudden uproar from the greenhouse. The angry voice of Taggles could be heard, and the loud barking of a dog. Then there was a crash.

"My hat!" exclaimed Manners. "It's Pongo!"

The juniors scrambled over the gate, and rushed upon the scene.

It was a startling scene that met their gaze as they looked into the greenhouse.

Pongo, in his rambles, had discovered—or raided—a large bone, and he had retired to the seclusion of the greenhouse to worry it and enjoy it to the full. He had been, naturally, angry at the sudden entrance of Taggles, who announced his arrival with a smart cut from the stick. Pongo barked and growled, and fled. He seemed to have an impression that Taggles was after his bone. He took the bone in his teeth, and fled round the greenhouse, with the angry porter after him.

"Get hout, you beast!" roared Taggles. "Get hout! Houtside, I say!"

He lashed at the dog again with the stick, and there was a crash. He had caught a flower-pot instead of Pongo with the stick, and the pot was reduced to fragments. Taggles said something that was certainly not suitable for the juniors to hear.

"Let him alone, Taggy!" roared Wally. "He'll come out quietly if you don't hit him."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 277.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.
Order Early.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE SCHEMER!"

"You get hout of this place, Master Wally. You ain't allowed in 'ere."

"Let my dog alone!" roared Wally.

"You get hout!" retorted Taggles.

Taggles made another rush at Pongo. Pongo had dropped the bone now, and he scrambled away among flower-pots, reckless of the destruction he was causing. He scrambled upon a shelf to escape from Taggles, and a blow of Taggles's stick went through the window, shattering the glass. Pongo barked furiously, and leaped down, and ran, and Taggles laboured after him, lashing away.

They dashed out of the greenhouse, leaving wreckage behind them. Pongo had given up his bone as a bad job by this time, and was thinking only of escape. He took a short cut across the flower-beds, with deplorable results to the flower-beds. Taggles, in his rage, trampled after him, doing as much damage as Pongo. He came up with the mongrel, and lashed at him, and smote a glass frame to fragments.

Wally ran at the school porter, and butted him furiously. Whatever happened, Wally was not going to see Pongo thrashed. He butted the stout porter fairly in the back, and Taggles sprawled among glass frames, with crash on crash.

"Oh!" roared Taggles. "Ho! Grooh!"

"You rotter!" yelled Wally. "How dare you hit my dog?"

"Ow!" groaned Taggles. "I'm 'urt! Ow! 'Elp!"

"What is all this? What—what—"

It was the Head!

As the angry headmaster came down the garden-path, there was a wild rush of the juniors to escape.

The last of them had tumbled over the gate as Dr. Holmes came upon the scene.

Taggles was still sprawling among the smashed frames, and Dr. Holmes halted and looked down upon him with an angry frown.

"Taggles! Get up immediately! How dare you get intoxicated and sprawl about in my flower-beds?" exclaimed the Head.

"Ow!"

"Get up immediately! You are discharged, Taggles! I will have no intoxication! I have spoken to you upon the subject before."

"Ow! Yow!"

"I have been loth to part with an old servant," said the Head, "but this passes all bounds. When I find you in a state of disgusting intoxication, sprawling among flower-beds—"

Taggles sat up in a broken frame.

"I ain't intoxicated!" he roared.

"Taggles!"

"It's that there dorg!"

"What! What dog?"

Taggles scrambled up. He looked so crimson and so wildly excited that the Head's suspicion certainly seemed reasonable. But for once Taggles had not been near the bottle.

"It's that dorg, sir—Master Wally D'Arcy's dorg, sir. He's been in 'ere, doin' hawful damage, and I was a-chasin' of 'im hout, and Master D'Arcy 'e pushed me hover there, sir."

The Head pursed his lips.

"Then you are not intoxicated, Taggles?"

"Ain't touched a blessed drop!" gasped Taggles. "'Sides which, sir, I'm a teetotaller. It was that there dorg; and a nice lot of dammdige 'e's done!"

The Head surveyed the damage, and his frown grew darker.

"This passes all bounds!" he exclaimed. "I myself was nearly bitten by Herries's dog, and now my flower-beds are wrecked by D'Arcy minor's dog! It passes all patience."

"And the green'ouse, sir—simply wrecked."

"I have been too lenient. I shall consider what is to be done. This cannot be endured."

And the Head stalked away in great anger.

Pongo had wriggled through the gate, and Wally had borne him off in safety. But the juniors who, on the other side of the wall, heard the Head's angry words, looked at one another grimly.

"There's going to be trouble!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah. It's wotten!"

"Faith, and I wish I could find my monkey!" said Reilly. "The silly baste ought to understand that this isn't the time to get lost."

"Reilly here?" called out Figgins of the New House, coming up at a run. "Oh, here you are. I've been looking for you. Your monkey—"

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes," gasped Figgins. "He's in the New House, and he's got into Mr. Ratcliff's study, and he won't come out!"

"Oh, help!"

And the juniors hurried over to the New House. Of all

persons at St. Jim's, Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, was the very last person to be patient with Obadiah Walker—that being the name of Reilly's pet. And just as the crowd of juniors rushed into the New House, to look for Obadiah, Mr. Ratcliff came in.

CHAPTER 4.

Mr. Ratcliff Loses His Head, and Some of His Hair.

MR. RATCLIFFE paused, and looked at the crowd of excited juniors in the hall of the New House, and his face set in a dark frown. Frowns came more easily to Mr. Ratcliff than smiles. The master of the New House at St. Jim's was not a good-tempered or a kind-hearted man. The juniors paused. They had hoped to be able to capture Obadiah and carry him off before Mr. Ratcliff discovered that he was in his study. But there was evidently no chance of that now.

"What are you School House boys doing here?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff. "I presume that this is some more of the folly I have heard too much of? You came here for a quarrel, I presume, with the boys of my House?"

That was just like Mr. Ratcliff. School House and New House at St. Jim's were always waging warfare, to settle the never-to-be-settled question which was cock-house at St. Jim's. But the House rows and raids, though they sometimes ended in bloodshed—from the nose—were always carried on in a humorous spirit, and there was perfect good-feeling on both sides. Mr. Ratcliff chose to regard them as quarrels, and to look upon them with an angry eye.

"Oh, no, sir," said Tom Merry, restraining his intense desire to tell Mr. Ratcliff what he thought of him. "Certainly not, sir."

"They—they came over with me, sir," said Figgins.

"Indeed! Then why all this air of hurry and excitement?"

"If you please, sir—"

Figgins halted. He didn't want to explain that Reilly's monkey was in Mr. Ratcliff's study. There was a chance yet that Obadiah might get out undiscovered.

"Well, Figgins?" said Mr. Ratcliff grimly.

"You—you see, sir—"

"I do not see," said Mr. Ratcliff coldly. "You School House boys will leave this House at once. I do not approve of this endless friction between the Houses. I have said so before. Kindly go."

And Tom Merry & Co. went; there was no help for it.

Mr. Ratcliff watched them out of the house, and then gave Figgins a lecture. Figgins listened to it with great outward meekness, boiling inwardly. Then Mr. Ratcliff went to his study, and went in, and closed the door with a slam.

"Oh, my only hat!" groaned Figgins. "What's going to happen now?"

"What's the trouble?" asked Kerr, as he joined his leader, with Fatty Wynn. In times of trouble the faithful Co. were always on hand.

"It's Reilly's monkey—he's in Ratty's study!"

"Oh, great Scott!"

"I fetched Reilly in to persuade the little beast to come out," said Figgins. "He won't take any notice of anybody but Reilly. Ratty's dropped on us, and sent the School House chaps away. I don't know what will happen now."

"Trouble, I fancy!" said Kerr, with a whistle.

The three juniors drew as near as they dared to Mr. Ratcliff's study door. They felt pretty certain there would be trouble. Obadiah was a very obstinate monkey, and very mischievous. He never took the least notice of anybody but Reilly. Indeed, the Belfast junior declared that that was why he had named him Obadiah Walker, because he would never give in. And Mr. Ratcliff was not tactful with animals. He disliked animals almost as much as he disliked boys.

Mr. Ratcliff grunted as he sat down in his study. He was dissatisfied. He had reprimanded the juniors, but he was dissatisfied because they had given him no excuse for inflicting fines or a caning.

Mr. Ratcliff pushed his long, thin legs under his table, and then started, and drew them out again hurriedly.

"Dear me! There is an animal in the room!"

There was certainly an animal under the table. It had taken refuge there when Mr. Ratcliff came in. The Housemaster jumped up, and picked up a cane. He fancied that it was the house cat that had wandered into his study, and he intended to drive it out. He threw open the study door, and poked under the table with the cane.

"Shoo! Shoo! Shoo!" he said.

Chatter, chatter, chatter!

Mr. Ratcliff jumped. It was evidently not a cat. He stooped down and peered under the table, and started at the sight of two glittering eyes.

"Good heavens! It is some wild animal!" Mr. Ratcliff

gasped. He retreated hurriedly to the door. Monteith of the Sixth, the head prefect of the New House, was passing down the passage, and Mr. Ratcliff called to him.

"Monteith! Kindly come here a moment."

"Yes, sir," said the prefect, coming to the door.

"There is some animal in my study," said Mr. Ratcliff, in an agitated voice. "I saw two ferocious eyes! I—I—Perhaps some wild animal has escaped from a menagerie! It may be dangerous—"

"I'll see, sir."

"Take care, Monteith! It—it might be a—panther, or—or a leopard!"

Monteith smiled as he stooped down and lifted the edge of the table-cover. He did not think it likely that there was a panther or a leopard in Mr. Ratcliff's study. He started a little as he caught the glittering eyes, but he looked long enough to see what the animal was.

"My hat! It's a monkey!"

"A monkey!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, astonished and greatly relieved. "Dear me! How could a monkey possibly get into my study? Surely no one in the House has a monkey!"

"There's been trouble among the juniors' pets, sir—a bulldog got loose, and scared some of the animals out, I think," said Monteith. "This monkey belongs to a boy in the Fourth. Shall I take it away?"

"Please do, Monteith; and I will see, too, that the owner is properly punished for allowing his monkey to get into my study."

Monteith reached under the table; but Obadiah was not to be caught. He squirmed out on the other side of the table, and promptly swarmed up the curtains at the window. There, out of reach, he grinned and chattered at the prefect.

"The—the wretched animal!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "He is tearing the curtains. He must be driven out at once!"

"Don't quite see how we're to get at him, sir," said Monteith.

"I think I can reach him with the cane," said Mr. Ratcliff, striding towards the window.

"I say, sir, isn't it rather rough to thrash the little beggar?" exclaimed Monteith, as the Housemaster lashed at Obadiah Walker with vicious cuts.

"When I want your advice, I will ask for it, Monteith," replied Mr. Ratcliff acridly.

"Oh, very well, sir." And the prefect bit his lip and left the study, leaving Mr. Ratcliff to deal with Obadiah Walker unaided.

Lash! Lash! Lash!

Obadiah Walker was just within reach of the cane, and Mr. Ratcliff's lashes made him chatter at a frightful rate. A Suffrage meeting was nothing to it. Obadiah Walker scrambled along the curtain-pole, and over the curtains, seeking to escape the cruel lashes. He made a leap from the curtain-pole to the mantel-piece, with disastrous results to the clock there. There was a terrific crash as the clock smashed down into the fender.

Mr. Ratcliff gasped with rage.

"I—I will flay the wretched beast!" he panted.

Lash! Lash!

Obadiah Walker scuttled round the study, with the Housemaster after him. In his terror the monkey did not seem to notice the open door, or perhaps the sight of Figgins & Co. in the passage frightened him from it. He scrambled up the curtains again, and sat on the pole, gasping and chattering with terror. Mr. Ratcliff lashed up at him, and caught him a terrific swipe across the back. The terrified monkey leaped down, and landed upon Mr. Ratcliff's head.

"Ow!" roared the Housemaster. "Help!"

He clutched wildly at the monkey.

But Obadiah Walker, having got a hold, was not disposed to let it go. He fastened a grip of iron on Mr. Ratcliff's scanty locks.

"Ow! Oh! Help! Help!"

There was a yell of laughter from the passage. Mr. Ratcliff, wild with terror himself now, rushed out of the study. The monkey was tearing his hair and hurting him, and Mr. Ratcliff did not like pain when he was the individual who got it.

"Help! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chatter, chatter, chatter!

"Help!"

Fellows gathered on all sides at the sight of the Housemaster rushing along the passage with the monkey clinging to his hair and his shoulders.

A yell of laughter greeted the extraordinary sight.

"Help! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff rushed into the quadrangle.

He was so frightened that he hardly knew what he was

doing. Fortunately Obadiah Walker was frightened, too, and anxious to escape. He whipped off Mr. Ratcliff's shoulders, and vanished into the ivy on the wall.

The Housemaster stood clutching at his torn locks and panting for breath.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Monteith!" yelled Mr. Ratcliff. "How dare you laugh?"

"I—I—excuse me, I—I—Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins! You are laughing! How dare you laugh? Take a hundred lines!"

"Yes, sir! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take two hundred lines! Take——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff, beside himself with rage, rushed across the quadrangle to the School House. It was no use giving Figgins lines—he wanted to get at the owner of the monkey. And he burst into Dr. Holmes's study like a whirlwind, almost incoherent in his rage.

It was the last straw!

Ten minutes later there appeared a notice on the notice-boards in both Houses which the St. Jim's fellows read with utter dismay.

CHAPTER 5.

An Indignation Meeting.

"ROTTER!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Beastly!"

"We won't stand it!"

"Never!"

"Britons never shall be slaves!"

"Hurrah!"

A wildly excited crowd had gathered before the notice-board in the School House. There, in the handwriting of the Head of St. Jim's, was the notice—the decree of fate.

"Notice to the School.—Owing to the trouble caused by pets kept by junior boys, all such pets are ordered to be sent away from the School before twelve o'clock to-morrow morning. No junior boys will in future be permitted to keep pets of any description whatever.—J. HOLMES, Headmaster."

The senior boys who saw the notice grinned for the most part. Some of them were sympathetic. But no one was surprised. After the Head had been chased by Herries's bulldog, and his greenhouse and flower-beds had been wrecked by Pongo, and Mr. Ratcliff had had his last few locks torn by Obadiah Walker, it was not surprising that a general and unsparring decree had gone forth against all pets whatsoever.

It would not have been quite just to exclude some pets rather than others. The Head had been just with a vengeance. He had excluded the whole show.

All pets to be sent away from St. Jim's on the following morning!

Not only Towser and Pongo and Obadiah Walker, but the white rabbits, and the white mice, and the parrots, and the canaries!

It was overwhelming.

More than half the junior boys in the school kept pets of some sort or another. And their indignation was at boiling-point at this crushing decree.

For once St. Jim's was united. School House and New House agreed that it was not to be stood. Gore and Mellish and Crooke, and other "outsiders" were at one with Tom Merry & Co. They all had pets.

"We won't stand it!" roared Kangaroo of the Shell. "I'm not going to send away my white rabbits."

"I'm not going to part with my white mice!" yelled Gore.

"And what about my parrot?" howled Kerruish.

"And my spaniel!"

"And my canary!"

"It's rotten!"

"Outrageous!"

"It's the limit!"

"Now then, shut up, you kids," said Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, coming down the passage. "You'd get into trouble if the masters heard you talking that rot."

The juniors surrounded Kildare at once.

"Kildare, old man, go and tell the Head we can't have it."

"He'll listen to you, Kildare."

"Put it to him that it's not playing the game, Kildare, old man."

The Sixth-Former grinned.

"Can't be done," he said. "Those blessed pets have caused too much trouble. There's a lot of damage done in the Head's garden—"

"We'll have a whip round, and pay for it," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The Head's been chased by a bulldog——"

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD,
Order Early.

"That's Levison's fault. He was tormenting Towser," growled Herries.

"Now Mr. Rateliff's had his hair torn out by Reilly's monkey," went on Kildare.

"He was whacking him!" said Reilly indignantly. "Figgins told me so—whacking him with a cane! Obadiah Walker wouldn't stand that."

"Couldn't be expected to," said Bernard Glyn. "Why couldn't Ratty let him alone?"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Watty as a bwute!"

"D'Arcy!" said Kildare warningly.

"Yaas, deah boy?"

"You must not speak of a Housemaster like that to a prefect," said the captain of St. Jim's severely.

"Sowwy, deah boy. But he is a bwute."

"Yes, rather!"

"Go to the Head, Kildare, and explain to him——"

Kildare shook his head.

"As a matter of fact, I have spoken to him," he said.

"Good old Kildare!" said Tom Merry. "What did he say?"

"He said that all pets that were not removed from the school by twelve o'clock to-morrow morning would be destroyed."

"Destroyed! Oh, great Scott!"

"I should uttably wefuse to have my canawy destroyed."

"There'll be trouble if anybody begins destroying Towser!" growled Herries.

"The best thing you kids can do is to take it quietly," said Kildare. "Now, don't let's have any more fuss. If you speak disrespectfully of the Head, I shall have to cane you. Don't make me do it. I've done what I can for you, but the Head is really angry, and there's nothing to be done. Better grin and bear it."

And Kildare walked away.

"Kildare's a good sort," said Manners; "but he doesn't understand."

"I wefuse to gwin, and I wefuse to beah it," said D'Arcy.

"Let's go to the Head!" howled Gore. "We'll go in a deputation—the whole giddy Lower School! They're not going to shift my white mice!"

"Jollay good ideah! I'm perfectly willin' to be the chairman of the deputation——"

"Oh, come off!"

"Weally, Goah, what is wequired for the chairman of a deputation is a fellow of tact and judgment——"

"Yes, and that bars you out," growled Gore. "And if all pets are to be sent away, Study No. 6 will have to part with their pet lunatic."

"You uttah wottah, Goah! I wefuse to be chawactewised as a pet lunatic!"

"Let's all go together," shouted Tom Merry. "Some of you run over and fetch Figgins & Co. The deputation ought to represent both Houses."

"Hear, hear!"

"Every blessed fellow ought to go," said Mellish of the Fourth. Mellish of the Fourth kept pets himself, not because he was fond of them, but because he made little profits by selling them to other fellows. "Where's Levison? Levison ought to come; he can jaw to the Head better than any of you."

"Levison's on the roof of the menagerie, and he's been there an hour," said Herries; "and he's going to stop there."

"What on earth's keeping him there?" demanded Mellish, in astonishment.

"My bulldog's watching him."

"Oh!"

"Levison started all this trouble by tormenting Towser," said Herries. "If Towser hadn't been worried, he wouldn't have broken his chain, and if he hadn't broken his chain, he wouldn't have got loose, and if he hadn't got loose he wouldn't have scared Pongo and Obadiah Walker out of the menagerie, and if they hadn't been——"

"My hat! That sounds like the House that Jack Built!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "This is the rotter who worried the dog who scared the monkey who scalped the Housemaster——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't a laughing matter!" roared Herries. "The Head's down on Towser because of Levison, and I think we'd better tell him. If he wants to send anybody away, he'd better send Levison. I think——"

"Here comes Figgins."

"Coming to see the Head, Figgy?" asked Tom Merry.

"What-ho?" said Figgins emphatically. "Fancy having to send away my poor little bunny-rabbit! No fear! I was thinking of bringing over my rabbit to show the Head. What do you think of the idea?"

"Ahem! Better not——"

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,

Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers

"THE PENNY POPULAR"

Every Friday

But he's such a jolly little beggar," said Figgins. "When he sits up and strokes his ears it makes you die of laughing. If the Head saw him I think it would touch his heart. I don't think he'd have the heart to send him away if he saw him sitting up and——"

"He'll stroke your ears, and make you sit up, if you take rabbits into his study," said Monty Lowther.

"Rabbits are barred," said Tom Merry. "I don't suppose the Head will be over-pleased to see us, without the rabbits. Come on!"

"Leave the talkin' to me, deah boys."

"You want to talk?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then stay here. You can talk here without doing any harm. There's no telling what you may do if you start talking to the Head."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Come on, you fellows."

"You are intewwuptin' me, Tom Mewwy——"

"I shall interrupt you a lot if you begin talking to the Head. You fellows keep an eye on him, and tread on his feet if he begins."

"I wefuse to have my feet twodden on!"

"Follow your leader!" said Tom Merry.

And the whole crowd of juniors followed Tom Merry of the Shell to the Head's study. Knox the prefect met them in the passage.

"Clear out of here!" he exclaimed. "How dare you approach the Head's study—a disorderly crowd! How dare you? Yah! Oh, yah! Oh!"

Knox was shoved aside, and he rolled over. Prefect or not, the juniors were in no mood to be bothered by Knox. The Sixth-Former sat on the floor and gasped, and the juniors swarmed on, some of them treading on Knox's legs by accident as they passed. Tom Merry knocked at the study door, and opened it. An avalanche of juniors invaded the study.

CHAPTER 6.

Rather Exciting.

D R. HOLMES started up from his seat.

Tom Merry & Co. swarmed in breathlessly.

"Boys, what does this mean? What does this mean, I say?"

"If you please, sir——"

"Leave my study at once, all of you!"

"Weally, Doctah Holmes——"

"We want to speak to you, sir," said Tom Merry respectfully. "It's about the pets, sir. It has come out that the bulldog had been tormented by a rotter—ahem!—by a boy, sir, and that was how he came to break his chain——"

"Indeed! What boy was it?"

Tom Merry hesitated. It occurred to him, rather late in the day, that it would be sneaking to give Levison away to the Head. Cruelty to animals was an offence the Head would always have punished severely.

"Well, Merry?"

"I—I don't want to give the chap away, sir, but—but we all know it——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Have you proof?"

"Well, no, sir——"

"Does the boy in question admit it?"

"Nunno, sir."

"Then how do you know?"

"Ahem! We do know, sir—don't we, you chaps?"

"Yes, sir. We all know it."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

The Head made an impatient gesture.

"If this is the case, it is another reason why the pets should be sent away, if there are boys here who cannot be trusted to treat animals with common humanity," he exclaimed.

"Oh, sir!"

That was an unexpected view of the case.

"That's all right, sir," said Herries. "We're going to make an example of the cad, sir, so that he won't do it again. We're going to pulverise him, sir——"

"We're going to smash him——"

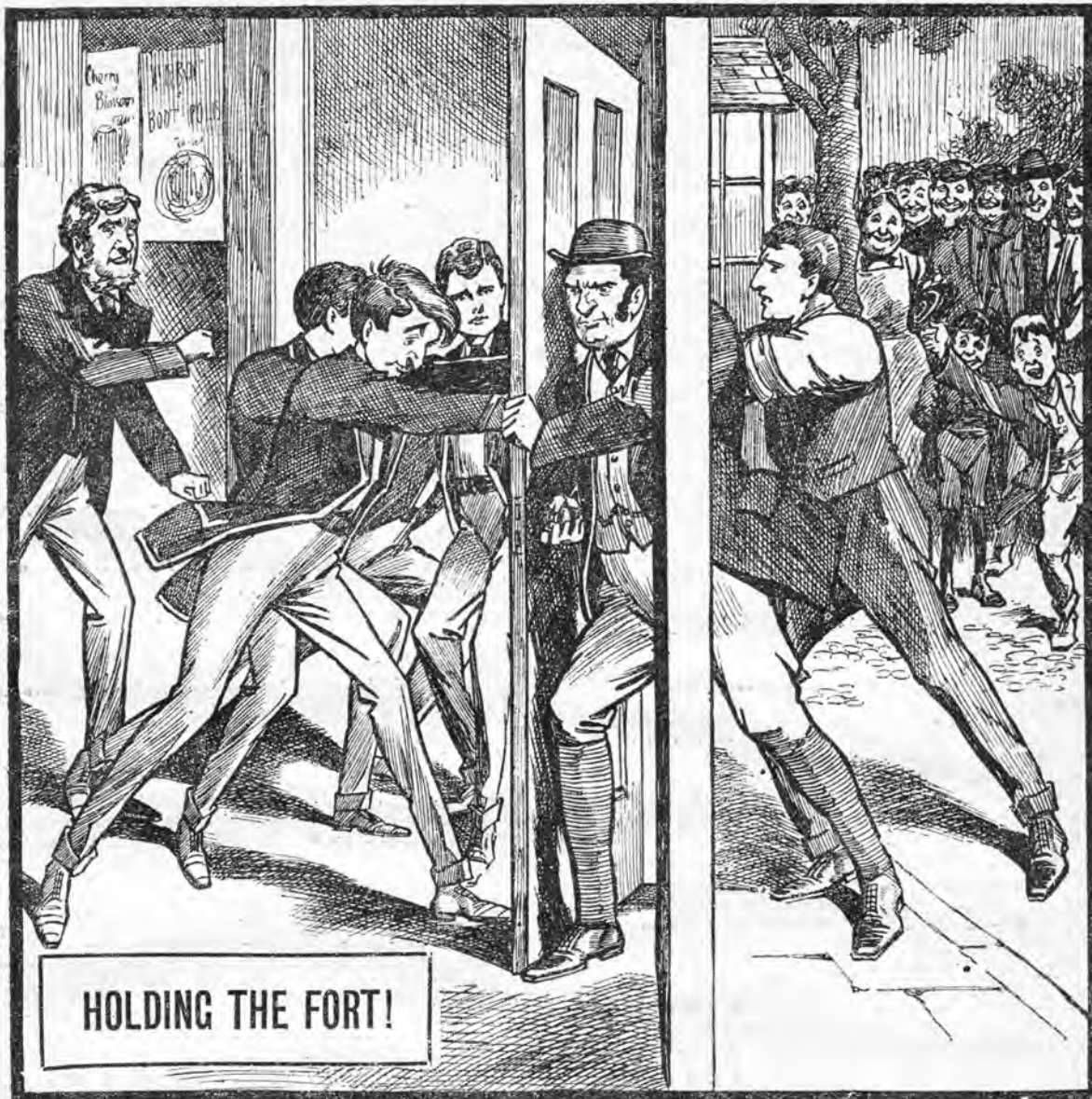
"We're going to scrag him, sir."

"What? What? I forbid you to touch the boy! How dare you utter threats of violence in my presence?" the Head exclaimed angrily.

"Oh, crumbs, on the wrong tack again!" murmured Blake.

"Betah leave it to me, deah boys. Ow! What uttah wottah was it twod on my foot?" wailed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"There have been outrageous scenes in the school to-day," said the Head, breathing hard. "I have been attacked by a bulldog; my garden has been wrecked by a—a wretched



HOLDING THE FORT!

The Greyfriars Juniors pushed with all their strength, but the door was gradually giving way to the efforts of the bailiff and his man. (Do they get in? Is Penfold's father to be turned out of the dear old home? For this incident, and the exciting events which lead up to it, see the grand, long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., in "The Magnet" Library, entitled "Holding the Fort," by Frank Richards. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

mongrel; Mr. Ratcliff has been attacked by a savage monkey—his hair has been torn out by the roots. An end must come to all this. I wish to be impartial. I shall make no distinction between one animal and another. All must be sent away from St. Jim's. I give you all until twelve o'clock to-morrow to send them away. That is all."

"But, sir—"

"The matter is now ended, Merry."

"If you please, sir—"

"Say no more, Figgins."

"Weally, Doctah Holmes—"

"Silence!"

"But—but it's awfully hard to have to part with our pets, sir," said Figgins. "If you could see my bunny-rabbit, sir—the way he sits up and strokes his ears—"

"You may go!"

"We'll all promise to look after the pets, and see that they don't get loose any more, sir, and—and—"

"Leave my study!"

"You—you won't let them off, sir"

"Certainly not. And any boy who does not leave my study immediately will be caned," said the Head angrily.

"Oh!"

The juniors crowded out of the study. There was no help for it. They rejoined the crowd in the passage. Knox the prefect was pushing his way through, to get to the study. He wanted to draw the Head's attention to the way he had been treated. But the juniors were fed up with Knox. They were in a dangerous state of excitement, and if Knox had had a little more tact he would have let them alone. But Knox of the Sixth was not gifted with tact.

"You young rascals!" the prefect said, between his teeth. "I'll report you all to the Head—every one of you! I'll—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry.

"What!" roared Knox. "Do you know you are talking to a prefect, Merry?"

"I know I'm talking to a silly chump."

Knox made a clutch at Tom Merry. That was enough for the juniors. They piled on Knox, and rolled him over on the floor, and bumped him there, hard. They jerked his collar

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE SCHEMER!"

off, and split his jacket, and trod on his legs and tore his tie off. They swarmed away, leaving the prefect on the floor, beside himself with rage, and utterly out of breath.

A noisy crowd gathered in the hall again. Knox came staggering down the passage, and Kildare, who had been brought out of his study by the noise, stared at him.

"What on earth have you been doing, Knox?" he demanded.

Knox stuttered with fury.

"It's these young hounds—they've assaulted me—they've—"

"And we'll do it again!" roared Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare knitted his brows.

"This won't do," he exclaimed sharply. "All of you go to your studies, at once! Do you hear? Every boy to his study, instantly."

The juniors did not move.

As a rule, Kildare's word was law. Not only because he was head prefect of the House, and captain of the school, but because he was the most popular fellow at St. Jim's as well. But Kildare's influence was gone now. The fellows were in a state of great excitement, and they would not obey even Kildare.

"Do you hear me?" thundered Kildare.

"Yaas."

"Then obey me!"

"Wats!"

Kildare jumped.

"What—what?"

"We're not going to our studies," said Blake determinedly, "if our pets are taken away, and we're ridden over roughshod, we'll jolly well go on strike!"

"Hear, hear!"

"They're not sending away the seniors' pets either!" roared Kangaroo.

"Shame!"

"Yah!"

"Go to your studies!" shouted Kildare.

"Sha'n't!"

"Go and eat coke!"

It was the first time Kildare of St. Jim's had been disregarded and disobeyed by the juniors. He could hardly believe his ears at first. He strode menacingly towards the mob of juniors, but they did not flinch. He laid a strong grasp upon Tom Merry, to take him away by force. Tom Merry resisted.

"Rescue!" bawled Figgins.

A dozen juniors piled on Kildare. They did not handle him roughly as they had handled Knox. They liked old Kildare too well for that. But they held him a prisoner, with so many hands grasping him that he could not stir. Kildare panted.

"You'll be sorry for this, you young rascals!" he exclaimed.

"I'll call Mr. Railton!" said Knox.

"Stop him!" shouted Tom Merry.

A score of juniors rushed after Knox; but he dodged them, and ran for the masters' room. It was a new sight in the School House of St. Jim's—that of a prefect running from a mob of juniors. Knox tore open the door of the masters' common-room and rushed in. Three or four masters were there. Mr. Railton, who was talking to Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, swung round.

"What is the matter? What—what—what does this mean?"

The Housemaster could hardly believe his eyes as Knox rushed in panting, and the juniors halted at the open doorway, whooping.

"Dear me," exclaimed little Mr. Lathom, "it is a riot!"

Mr. Railton strode from the room.

The juniors gave way before him; and the School House master came striding into the Hall, where Kildare was struggling in the grasp of the rioters. The Housemaster's brow was black as thunder.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed. "Release Kildare at once! Instantly!"

The juniors looked at one another. They could not disobey the Housemaster. Matters had not got to that pitch yet. Kildare was released, and he panted for breath.

"It's all right, sir," he said, "they—they didn't mean any harm. They are a bit excited, sir, that's all."

"Good old Kildare!" said Blake.

"Go to your studies immediately!" said Mr. Railton sternly.

And the juniors went. With slow and reluctant steps they dispersed, muttering and whispering excitedly together.

"No boy is to leave his study till calling-over!" said Mr. Railton. "Any boy disobeying my orders will be severely punished! I am shocked! I am ashamed of you! Go!"

And Mr. Railton was obeyed.

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CHAPTER 7.

Trouble Brewing.

THERE were grim, glum looks among the St. Jim's juniors when they assembled for calling-over that evening. They had remained in their studies until calling-over, by Mr. Railton's order; but the excitement had by no means died out. There was one name unanswered to when Mr. Railton read over the roll—the name of Levison of the Fourth. Mr. Railton repeated the name, as he glanced from the roll.

"Levison!"

But no voice answered with the usual "adsum."

Mr. Railton finished reading the names, while the Fourth-Formers grinned at one another. Levison was still on the roof of the shed behind the School House. Herries had grimly obeyed the order to remain in his study, which naturally prevented him from going out to release Levison from his peculiar imprisonment.

"Levison of the Fourth is absent," said Mr. Railton.

"Does anyone know where Levison is?"

"Yes, sir," said Herries.

"Indeed!" said the Housemaster, with a sharp look at Herries. "You know where he is?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well! Where is he?"

"On the roof of the menagerie, sir."

"What?"

"On the roof of the menagerie, sir," repeated Herries calmly, as if supposing that Mr. Railton's surprised exclamation meant that he was a little deaf.

"What is he doing there?" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"Sitting on the roof, sir."

There was a chuckle, and Mr. Railton frowned.

"I mean, what is he on the roof of the shed at all for, Herries?"

"He can't get down, sir."

"Why not?"

"He's afraid of Towser."

"Do you mean to say that he has been on the roof of the shed ever since the bulldog broke loose?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, in astonishment.

"Yes, sir."

"You have placed the dog there, I presume, for the purpose?"

"Yes, sir," said Herries stolidly.

"And why?"

"To punish him, sir."

"I do not know what Levison has done, Herries, but you must not take the law into your own hands in this way. You will take five hundred lines, and you will go and release Levison at once. Do you hear? You should have done so before."

"I couldn't do so before, sir."

"Do you mean that the dog is out of your control?"

"Oh, no, sir! Towser always obeys me, sir! Towser's a jolly good dog! Towser—"

"Then why could you not release Levison before, Herries?" demanded Mr. Railton, interrupting the catalogue of the eminent virtues of Towser.

"You ordered me to remain in my study, sir," said Herries. "Of course, I couldn't disobey your order by going out to release Levison."

Mr. Railton looked fixedly at the junior; but Herries was looking quite simple and innocent.

"You will go at once, Herries!" said the Housemaster, at last.

"Yes, sir," said Herries.

And he went. He grinned to himself as he made his way round the School House in the dark. Levison had been in his uncomfortable position for some hours now, and he was probably beginning to wish that he had let Towser alone. There was a rattle of the chain as Towser came to rub his nose against his master's legs. The sleepless bulldog had kept watch and ward faithfully, and Levison had not dared to venture down. The pale face of the cad of the Fourth peered down at Herries from the darkness of the shed roof.

"Is that you, Herries?" asked Levison, in a voice trembling with rage.

"Yes, you rotter!" growled Herries.

"Will you take that rotten dog away?"

"Yes; that's what I've come for. I dare say you're getting cramped up there by this time," said Herries cheerfully. "Serve you right!"

He led Towser back to his kennel, and shortened the chain. Levison slipped down from the roof and ran. The cad of the Fourth was indeed cramped, and he was tired and hungry. His face was white with rage as he came into the School House. A crowd of juniors had gathered to see him come in, and they laughed at him. Levison gave them a bitter look.

"I'm going to Mr. Railton about it!" he exclaimed.
 "Mr. Railton knows all about it now; Herries told him," said Blake contemptuously.

Levison scowled and went directly to Mr. Railton's study. He knocked, and the Housemaster's voice bade him enter.

"I had to miss calling-over, sir," said Levison. "I hope you will excuse me, as I couldn't come. I was being watched by Herries's bulldog, and couldn't get down off the roof of the shed. Herries set him to guard me."

Mr. Railton fixed his eyes very keenly upon Levison.

"Why did Herries do this, Levison?" he asked.

"It was a rotten trick, sir," said Levison. "He fancied I had something to do with Towser getting loose, and starting all the trouble. Anybody could have seen that Towser broke his chain himself. He's done the same thing before."

"You did not interfere with the dog at all?" asked Mr. Railton, still with the same keen look upon Levison, which made the cad of the Fourth feel extremely uncomfortable.

"Certainly not, sir!"

"You had not been tormenting the dog?"

"Oh, sir, of course not! I am very kind to animals, sir!"

"Very well, Levison, you are excused for missing call-over. You may go."

And Levison went. Mr. Railton remained looking very thoughtful. The Housemaster, as a matter of fact, did not approve of the Head's sweeping order, but it was not his business to say so to Dr. Holmes. He simply had to carry out his instructions—which were to see that all the junior boys' pets were removed from St. Jim's by twelve o'clock on the following day. Mr. Railton had already telephoned for a van to come to the school the next day to remove the animals.

The excitement in both Houses was undiminished when the boys went to bed. In the Fourth-Form dormitory in the New House, Figgins & Co. were very eloquent on the subject. Figgins revived his idea of taking his bunny-rabbit to show to the Head, under the firm conviction that Dr. Holmes would be sure to give way when he saw the pretty ways of that particular bunny—especially the way he had of stroking his ears with his paws. The Co. had all their work cut out to stop Figgins.

The Fourth-Formers in the School House devoted most of their attention to Levison when they were in the dormitory. Although there was no actual proof on the subject, the fellows all felt pretty certain that Towser had been tormented by the cad of the Fourth, and that that had started all the trouble. It was well known that Brooke had caught Levison so engaged once, and had thumped him for it, thereby earning Herries's undying gratitude. Levison went to bed in a sullen temper. Outsider as he was, he could not help being affected by the black looks his Form-fellows gave him. His chum Mellish was avoiding him as much as the others. Mellish was not the fellow to stand by a friend in times of distress.

Some of the Fourth-Formers proposed tossing Levison in a blanket, and bumping him, and frog-marching him, and spread-eagling him, while more humorous spirits advocated boiling him in oil. Levison lay in bed listening to the various suggestions, quaking, and he was glad enough when the voices died away, and the juniors fell asleep.

In the Shell dormitory, too, Tom Merry & Co. talked long after lights out.

"The van's been ordered to take the pets away," Kangaroo remarked. "Are we going to let them go, you fellows?"

"What can we do?" growled Gore.

"Well, we could make a row, anyway."

"There will be a row if the pets are taken away," said Tom Merry determinedly. "We're not going to take it lying down!"

"The Head's gone too far this time," said Manners. "He really hasn't a right to order anything of the kind. Fellows are always allowed to keep pets. We gave in when it was forbidden to have them in the studies. That was giving in quite enough."

"Yes, rather."

"The Head may alter his mind by to-morrow," Lowther remarked.

"I hope he does," said Tom Merry. "If not—"

"There will be trouble."

"Yes, and a jolly lot of trouble, too!"

And the Shell fellows discussed the matter till they fell asleep.

When the rising-bell clanged out in the morning, and the school turned out, there was only one matter occupying all minds.

Would the Head change his mind?

During morning lessons that day the boys thought of little else, much to the detriment of their lessons.

When third lesson was over, and they swarmed out into the quadrangle, they had proof enough that the Head had not changed his mind.

The van had arrived.

And the order had gone forth for the prefects to superintend the removal of the pets, and to see that not one of them remained within the precincts of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 8.

Exodus.

TOM MERRY & CO. proceeded to obey orders, with grim and savage looks.

There seemed to be no help for it.

The Head's command that the pets were to be taken away was direct and emphatic, and without open rebellion in the school it could not be disobeyed.

Some of the fellows were prepared even for that length, but most of them had not yet been excited to such a pitch. The Head was popular with the boys, and they all venerated and respected him highly. He had made a mistake this time; there was no doubt about that. But to disobey his orders, and set his authority at naught—that was a big order, as Jack Blake remarked. Besides, could such a position be held, if it were taken up? It might lead to expulsions, and that was a serious matter. If anything were done, it would have to be done by all the fellows standing together, so that one would not be more to blame than another, and an organisation of that kind required time. Meanwhile, there was nothing to do but to bear it, even if they did not grin.

Cages after cages were carried into the big van. Kennels and boxes followed. Mr. Railton had made arrangements for the pets to be taken care of in Rylcombe for the present, till they were ultimately disposed of. But their owners did not want to part with them. Some of the fags were seen in tears as they put their rabbits and white mice into the van; Reilly's monkey clung to him, and Reilly was fairly "blubbing" by the time he had tied Obadiah Walker up in the van. But some of the animals gave some trouble. Towser showed his teeth at the sight of Pongo, and Pongo yelped defiance.

"Keep that blessed mongrel away from my bulldog, young D'Arcy," said Herries crossly. "You know Towser doesn't like him."

Wally snorted.

"Keep your rotten bulldog away from my terrier," he said. Then it was Herries's turn to snort.

"Do you call that a terrier?" he demanded.

"Yes, I do, ass! What do you call it?" demanded D'Arcy minor warmly.

"Some sort of a rotten mongrel," said Herries. "Blessed if I believe it's a dog at all, from its looks."

"You silly ass!"

Gr-r-r-r-r-r!

Bow-wow! Grrrrrrrrrr!

Towser made a leap, and the chain was dragged from Herries's hand. With a rush the bulldog was upon Pongo.

"Stop 'em!" yelled Wally.

"Go it, Towser!"

"Go it, Pongo!"

Towser and Pongo were both in the van, rolling over in dire conflict.

Cages and boxes were knocked right and left by the struggling animals, and there was a terrific din. The monkey was squalling, the parrots yelling, the dogs barking, and all sorts and conditions of animals and birds were uttering all sorts and varieties of noises.

Wally threw himself upon the fighting dogs, and tried to rescue Pongo. Herries grasped his bulldog's collar and strove to drag him off. The uproar was deafening. Mr. Railton came hurrying to the spot.

"What is this dreadful noise about?" he exclaimed. "Keep those dogs quiet."

"Get 'em out of the van!" yelled Clifton Dane. "You've knocked my cage over—look at my parrot. Poor old Polly!"

Screech, screech! from Polly.

Herries dragged Towser into his kennel by main force, and chained him up. Pongo was disposed of in another kennel, and chained. With the width of the van between them, the two dogs snarled at one another. But the scared animals and birds were not to be quieted. The uproar continued. Mr. Railton cast a worried look into the van.

"Are they all here?" he exclaimed.

"Yah! Whiskers! Get your hair cut!"

Mr. Railton turned crimson.

"Who was that? How dare you address me—"

"Yah! Old Funny-face!"

"What—what—"

"Go home! Go home! Go and eat coke! Screech!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. Mr. Railton gasped. He could see now that it was the parrot who was addressing those disrespectful remarks to him.

"Dear me!" he gasped. "I—"

"It's my parrot, sir," said Clifton Dane. "He doesn't know

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.
Order Early.

you're a Housemaster, sir. Of course, he wouldn't say that to you if he did."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose he does not," said Mr. Railton, with a frown at the Canadian junior. "But you should not teach your parrot to say such ridiculous things, Dane."

"Screech! Britons never shall be slaves!" shrieked the parrot. "Hurrah! I want some rum hot! Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House, came down to the van. Unlike his fellow Housemaster, Mr. Ratcliff was distinctly pleased. He was glad to have all the pets sent away; indeed, he would have been glad to have all the boys sent away, too, if the school could have been carried on without any.

"Ah, I trust we shall now soon be relieved of these wretched pests," said the New House master. "It is high time—high time, I consider."

"Yah! Go and chop chips! Get your hair cut!" said the parrot.

"What!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Funny-face! Funny-face! Oh, my eye, what a nose!"

Mr. Ratcliff turned scarlet. The juniors yelled with laughter, and Mr. Railton could not help smiling.

"It is only the parrot, Mr. Ratcliff," he explained.

"It is—outrageous!" said the New House master angrily.

"Certainly it is high time the wretched creatures were sent away, if they are taught such—such vulgarity!"

"He, he, he! Here's old Ratty! Look at old Ratty!" yelled the parrot.

Clifton Dane turned red then. He had taught his parrot to say all sorts of things, very amusing to the juniors, but hardly likely to be gratifying to Mr. Ratcliff. He had never expected Mr. Ratcliff to form part of Polly's audience.

"What—what is the wretched bird saying?" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yah! Old Ratty! He, he, he! Old sneak! Yah!"

"Good heavens!"

"Go and bury yourself! Go home! Go and eat coke! He, he, he!"

"This—this is beyond all bounds!" panted Mr. Ratcliff.

"To whom does that wretched and disgusting bird belong?"

"It's mine, if you please, sir," said Clifton Dane meekly.

"Did you teach it to say those things, Dane?"

"I—I suppose he picked 'em up from me, sir," admitted the Canadian junior.

"You have dared to teach a bird to say those things about a Housemaster?" Mr. Ratcliff thundered.

"About a Housemaster, sir?"

"Yes. That parrot was directly referring to me."

"He hasn't mentioned any names, sir," said Clifton Dane, looking astonished. "How do you know he means you by Old Sneak and Funny-face, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff gasped. He reached out and boxed Clifton Dane's ears. There was a shriek from the parrot.

"Hurrah! Pile in—pile in! Go for him—go for him! Give him beans! Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think all are in now," said Mr. Railton, trying not to laugh. "Driver, you know where to take them. Pray go."

"Yessir."

"Good-bye, boys! Hurrah!" yelled the parrot. "Keep your pecker up! Keep her moving! Who cares for old Ratty? Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Screech! Yah! Old sneak! Old sneak! Old sneak! Yah! Hurrah!"

And the van rolled away, with the parrot still screeching.

"I shall report this to the Head!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff.

"It is outrageous—disgraceful—dastardly!"

And the incensed Housemaster stalked away, with his gown fluttering in the wind in his haste.

"My hat!" said Blake. "Old Ratty got it in the neck that time! He knows what we think of him! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors laughed loud and long. Mr. Ratcliff had indeed been treated to an unexpected revelation of the estimation in which he was held by the St. Jim's juniors.

But the laughter soon died away. The pets were gone, and the juniors visited the "menagerie," and looked at the empty places, with heavy hearts. Some of the fags were "blubbing," as it was expressed in the lower Forms. Tom Merry & Co. did not blub. They were angry and indignant.

And when the time drew near for afternoon school, the juniors of St. Jim's were not thinking of lessons. They were holding an indignation meeting in the junior common-room in the School House, and feeling was running very high.

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CHAPTER 9.

A Strike Meeting.

"GENTLEMEN—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I rise to make a few remarks—"

"The fewer the better," growled Gore. "This is a time for doing something, not jawing."

"Order!"

"Gentlemen of the School House and the New House—"

Tom Merry was standing on the table in the common-room, and there were throngs of fellows round him, New House as well as of his own House. "Gentlemen, I put this question to the meeting—are we going to stand it?"

"Never!"

"Jammy!" roared Digby, under the impression that he was saying "never" in French, which seemed more emphatic.

"Are we going to put up with it?"

"Never!"

"Jammy!"

"Who's jammy?" demanded Tom Merry, looking down at himself, to see whether he was jammy or not. "If anybody's been jamming me—"

"I didn't say 'jammy,' ass; I said 'jammy,'" said Digby.

"Well, and what did you say 'jammy' for, if I'm not jammy?"

"Fathead! 'Jammy' is French for 'never.'"

"Oh, I see! You mean 'jamais,' perhaps?"

"I mean jammy, and I said jammy!"

"Gentlemen, are we going to put up with this interference with our rights as free-born citizens of an Empire upon which the sun never rises—I mean sets?"

"Never!"

"Jammy!"

"Somebody sit on that ass if he talks French here. Gentlemen, Blake of the Fourth has suggested a strike. I don't as a rule think much of suggestions from Fourth-Form kids, but—"

"Oh, go home!" roared the Fourth.

"Who are you calling kids?"

"Yah!"

"Order!"

"Jammy!"

"Gentlemen, I think that Blake's suggestion is a good one. Strikes are the order of the day. Other people go on strike, and why shouldn't we? If a miner or a railway-shunter can go on strike, and bring his governor to terms, why shouldn't we? There is an old saying that one should strike while the iron is hot."

"Hear, hear!"

"Strikes are quite the thing now. It isn't only workmen who strike now. The medical profession goes on strike when they're not allowed to kill their patients their own way. The postmasters are threatening to go on strike if they have to sell insurance stamps and things without extra pay. Why should schoolboys be left out? If everybody in the blessed country is going on strike for something or other, why shouldn't the juniors of St. Jim's go on strike? Echo answers, why?"

"Imposs., deah boy."

"What! Impossible to go on strike?"

"No; imposs., for echo to answah 'why,' deah boy. Echo would answah 'stwiqe.'"

"Suffocate him, somebody."

"I wefuse to be suffocated. Echo answahs the last word of a we mark. Therefore—oh! Ow! Don't wumple my collab, you silly ass!"

"Therefore," said Tom Merry, shouting to make his voice heard—"therefore, I suggest that the meeting do adopt and endorse the suggestion of Brother Blake, that the juniors of St. Jim's go on strike, and refuse to go to work any more until the masters have agreed to their demands?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Although suggested by a Fourth-Form kid—"

"Yah!"

"I consider it a jolly good idea! Now, who's for a strike?"

"All of us!" roared Blake. "Hands up for striking!"

A forest of hands went up.

Nearly every fellow in the crowded room was evidently in favour of a strike. The juniors were carried away by excitement, and hardly cared what they were doing. If they were licked, they did not care. Expulsion was the punishment they dreaded; but the Head could not expel the whole of the Lower School. And if the juniors all stood together, one or two could not be picked out for the severest punishment. The Head might be a beast, but he was a just beast, as Figgins remarked.

"Anybody who is against the strike can say so," said Tom Merry. "No compulsion will be used in the matter. Only any fellow who opposes the strike will be bumped, jumped on, and frogs'-marched round the quad. Every fellow is

as free as the wind to speak his mind without fear of favour."

There was not a dissentient voice raised. Perhaps the prospect of being bumped, jumped on, and frogs'-marched round the quad, was not attractive enough.

"Then this meeting is unanimous in declaring a strike?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"No lessons till the pets are brought back!" said Tom Merry. "Any fellow going into the class-rooms when the bell rings will be scragged and bumped and jumped on, but not otherwise interfered with. Only peaceful picketing allowed."

"Bravo!"

"Britons never shall be slaves! What's the good of ruling the waves, if we're to be bullied and tyrannised over in school? The Head's a good sort—a jolly good sort—and we all respect him! Anybody saying a word against the Head will be bumped! But he's put his foot in it this time. The masters are all right, except Selby, who's rather a rotter, and Ratty, who's a beast!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We've got nothing against them. They can go into the Form-rooms, and give one another lessons if they like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But no fellow in this school, from the Shell downwards, goes to lessons until the pets have been brought back. That's agreed?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am quite willin' to take up the posish of swike leadah. What is wequired for a swike leadah is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"There aren't going to be any leaders, ass! Leaders would be picked out and expelled. Every fellow is equal to every other fellow, and there isn't any lead. You will all obey my orders, that is all."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Cave! Here comes Kildare!"

There was a sudden hush in the common-room. Kildare of the Sixth looked in at the door, a serious expression upon his handsome face.

"Do you kids know that the bell has gone for classes?" he asked.

There was no reply.

"The bell has gone," said Kildare. "Go to your Form-room at once!"

Silence! Not a junior present made a movement to obey. Kildare looked astonished at first, and then a frown gathered upon his brow.

"Do you hear me?" he exclaimed.

Silence!

"Will you obey?"

Then there was a shout!

"Never!"

And Digby chimed in:

"Jammy!"

CHAPTER 10.

On Strike.

KILDARE seemed at a loss for a minute.

He had never looked upon such a determined array of faces. The juniors were in deadly earnest. It was not mere bravado and fanfaronade—Kildare could see that. Tom Merry and Co. meant business.

"You had better go," said the captain of St. Jim's, at last. "This kind of thing will do you no good, you know. You can't disobey orders. Now, buzz off to your Form-room like sensible fellows before the masters come and make you!"

"They can't make us!"

"What?"

"We're on strike!" explained Tom Merry.

"On—on what?"

"Strike! S-t-r-i-k-e! Strike!" said Tom Merry categorically. "Strikes are the order of the day. Everybody who's dissatisfied nowadays goes on strike. We're dissatisfied, and we've gone on strike. We're not going to have any more lessons until the pets are brought back to St. Jim's. We've all agreed that Britons never shall be slaves! We shall answer the chapel bell, but no other bell! No more lessons!"

"Wathah not!"

"You can't keep this up," said Kildare, looking worried. "If you don't go to the Form-rooms, the masters will come and fetch you. Then there will be trouble."

"We're ready!"

"Trot 'em along," said Blake; "we'll see!"

"Noo verrong," said Digby, who was a great French scholar. "Jammy!"

"Now, look here—" began Kildare.

"It's no good, Kildare," said Tom Merry resolutely.

"We've been treated with injustice, all because of a rotten trick played by an awful cad. You know it, only you can't say so, being a prefect. Mr. Railton knows it, only he can't say so. The Head's in the wrong. We all respect the Head, and wouldn't do anything to worry him for worlds and worlds. Only we're not going back to lessons until our just demands are conceded. That's the way they put it in strike manifestoes, I think. Our just demands—"

"If you don't go into the Form-rooms at once, it will be necessary for me to report to Mr. Railton that you refuse to obey."

"Go ahead and report, then!"

Kildare hesitated a moment more, and then walked away. The juniors looked at one another grimly. There was less noise now, but no less resolution. The fellows knew that they had committed themselves to a very serious step. But there was no thought of surrender. They felt that they were in the right.

"Now, look out for the fireworks!" murmured Monty Lowther.

The juniors waited. There was a rustle of a gown in the passage, and the master of the School House strode in. Mr. Railton was looking very stern; all the sterner, perhaps, because in his heart his sympathies were with the juniors.

"Kildare reports to me that you refuse to go into the class-rooms," he said. "I trust there is some mistake. I cannot believe that you would be guilty of such insubordination. Please go in to lessons at once!"

Not a fellow moved.

"You hear me?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, sir," said D'Arcy.

"Then obey me!"

"We're on swike, sir."

"Nonsense! Go to your lessons immediately!"

There was no movement. No junior seemed anxious to catch Mr. Railton's eye. But none of them stirred. Their minds were made up.

There was a long pause. Mr. Railton had not brought a cane with him; perhaps because he was conscious of the fact that he could not cane the whole of the Lower School. And in case of resistance, a struggle between a Housemaster and a swarm of junior boys would be too dreadfully undignified.

"I hardly know how to deal with you," said Mr. Railton.

"Am I to understand that you refuse to obey my orders?"

"We're on strike, sir, until the Head agrees to let the pets come back."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You surely cannot expect the Head to yield to threats of this sort?" said the Housemaster. "If you wish to influence the Head, it is only by submission to proper authority, and by cheerful obedience."

"Will that bring the pets back, sir?"

Mr. Railton did not answer that question.

"Now, boys, enough of this nonsense!" he said. "I am willing to excuse your—ahem!—excitement, if you return to your duty at once! Go to your class-rooms!"

There was no stir.

"I do not wish to bring the Head into this matter, if it can be helped," said Mr. Railton, after another long pause. "I will give you five minutes to reflect, before reporting the matter to him. In five minutes I shall expect you all to be your places in the class-rooms."

And Mr. Railton departed. He left a grim silence behind him. There were looks of wavering in some faces now; but the majority were grimly determined, and their determination settled the matter for the waverers. The juniors remained in the common-room, with their eyes upon the clock as the five minutes ticked away.

Mr. Railton was looking very perturbed as he rejoined Kildare in the Form-room passage. All the prefects had gathered there, wondering what they were to do. Excepting for the prefects, the Upper School had gone into their Form-rooms. Mr. Ratcliff, who was master of the Fifth, as well as Housemaster of the New House, came out of the Fifth-Form room with a sour look on his face.

"Is it true that the juniors are in a state of insubordination, Mr. Railton?" he asked.

"Quite true!"

"It is shocking—outrageous! I cannot help thinking that it is due to the leniency the Head has always shown."

"This is not a time or place to criticise the Head!" said Mr. Railton tartly.

"Perhaps not; but such is my opinion. And it is very singular to my mind that you lack proper authority over the boys of your House, Mr. Railton. I shall certainly see to it that the boys of my House obey orders, and go in to their lessons."

"The New House juniors are associated with the boys of my House in this matter," said Mr. Railton drily. "I do not think you will be able to influence them more than I could."

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.
Order Early.

Mr. Ratcliff's thin lip curled. "That remains to be seen," he said. "Where are the boys of my House, may I ask?"

"In the common-room in the School House with the others."

"I shall proceed there," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I hardly think that they will venture to defy the authority of their Housemaster."

"You will do as seems to you best," said Mr. Raitlon shortly.

"Most certainly I shall!"

Mr. Ratcliff fetched his cane out of the Fifth-Form room, and rustled away in a very stately manner to the junior common-room. The New House master was a very strict disciplinarian, and his methods were draconic. His idea of keeping juniors in order was to deal out unlimited punishments. Mr. Ratcliff did not understand that there might come a time when his orders would be disregarded, and his punishments laughed at. He had a narrow mind that could never get out of its groove.

He stalked into the common-room, and the rebellious juniors regarded him grimly. Mr. Ratcliff bestowed a sour look upon them.

"The boys of my House will go to their class-rooms at once!" he said. "With the School House boys I have nothing to do. All New House boys out of this room instantly!"

New House boys did not move.

"You hear me!" said Mr. Ratcliff, raising his voice. "Figgins, I order you to go to the Fourth-Form room at once!"

Figgins did not seem to hear.

"Figgins!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir!"

"Go to your Form-room!"

"If you please, sir, we're on strike!"

"How dare you make me such an answer! Go to your Form-room!" said Mr. Ratcliff angrily. "Go to your Form-room at once! Redfern!"

"Yes, sir!" said Redfern.

"You are a scholarship boy here, Redfern," said Mr. Ratcliff. "In case of bad conduct, it is in the power of the Head to take away your scholarship. I suppose you know what you are risking by this insubordination—Lawrence and Owen, too?"

"I'm sticking in with the others, sir. The Head will treat me the same as the others. He's not a cad, sir," said Redfern.

"Bravo, Reddy!"

"Silence! I order all New House boys to their Form-rooms! Am I to understand that you disobey my orders?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff.

There was no reply. Mr. Ratcliff was left to draw what conclusion he pleased from the silence, and from the fact that the juniors of his House did not move. The Housemaster's face grew a dull red with rage.

"You disobey me?" he said. "Very well! I shall now

cane most severely every boy who disregards my orders, beginning with you, Figgins. Go to your class-room!"

Figgins seemed rooted to the floor.

Mr. Ratcliff waited a moment—a short moment. Then he advanced upon Figgins, and grasped him by the collar, and swished the cane in the air.

Kerr and Wynn closed up with dangerous looks; but Tom Merry's voice rang out:

"School House chaps to the rescue!"

There was a rush of feet. Many hands were laid upon Mr. Ratcliff—all School House hands, too, so that he could have no pretext afterwards for punishing boys of his own House, who would be in his power.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther and Digby and Kangaroo and Herries and Reilly and Lumley-Lumley, and several more fellows, grasped Mr. Ratcliff at once, and he was wrenched away from Figgins.

Figgins grinned, and put his hands in his pockets. It was not necessary for him to resist the Housemaster. There were plenty of School House fellows ready to do that.

"Chuck him out!"

"Yaas, wathah; chuck Watty out!"

Bump!

Mr. Ratcliff alighted in the passage—on his back. He lay there sprawling and gasping, wondering whether an earthquake had smitten St. Jim's, or whether it was the end of the universe. Angry faces glared at him from the doorway, only too plainly telling what would happen if he ventured into the room again.

Mr. Ratcliff blinked at them as he sat up. He was in too great a fury to speak for some moments. He scrambled to his feet at last, and made a dash at the crowd in the doorway, slashing recklessly with the cane.

There was a roar. Then hands were laid upon Mr. Ratcliff again, and the juniors swung him off his feet, and rushed him down the passage.

Gasping and shrieking, helpless in the grasp of the young rebels, Mr. Ratcliff was swept along, and tossed headlong into the Form-room passage, where he rolled breathlessly at the feet of Mr. Raitlon and the prefects.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Monteith.

The School House master and the prefects stared grimly at Mr. Ratcliff as he picked himself up. His gown was torn, he was dusty and rumpled, and he was stuttering with rage.

"I was afraid you would do no good, Mr. Ratcliff," said Mr. Raitlon quietly. "I must say that you have made matters worse!"

"I do not require your opinion, sir!" shrieked the New House master. "I am going to the Head! They shall be punished—flogged—expelled!"

He rushed away.

In the common-room the juniors gathered again, excited and resolute. As Monty Lowther remarked, they had fairly done it now. They had laid violent hands upon a Housemaster, and it was too late to think of turning back. The Head would be upon the scene now—it was Dr. Holmes himself that they had to deal with. And in spite of their

NUMBER 4.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY PORTRAIT GALLERY.



1. ROBERT DIGBY.

2. GEORGE GORE.

3. HERBERT SKIMPOLE.

No. 5. NEXT WEDNESDAY.

Cousin Ethel, Dr. Holmes,
Eric Kildare.





Mr. Rateliff rushed into the quadrangle, and a yell of laughter from the juniors greeted the extraordinary sight. "Help! Help!" roared the frightened Housemaster, as the monkey fastened a grip of iron on his victim's scanty locks. (See Chapter 4.)

courage and their determination, there was an anxious look upon all faces as a step was heard in the passage, and an uneasy murmur ran through the room:

"The Head!"

CHAPTER 11.

Trouble in the Form-rooms.

DR. HOLMES came into the room, in the midst of a heavy silence.

The Head looked pale and worried.

Perhaps, on reflection, the good old doctor realised that he had been harsh, but it was impossible to give way now. A headmaster could not submit to dictation from the boys in the Lower Forms of his school. It would be an end to all authority, and it was not to be thought of. But the revolt of the juniors placed the Head in a very awkward position. Heavy and incessant punishments went very much against the grain with him, but he had left himself no recourse now but to coerce the juniors into obedience. And it was very doubtful, too, if he could do it.

The juniors had expected the Head to stride in in angry mood, with a frowning brow and a cane in his hand. They

were ready for that. But when they saw him looking pale, worried, and troubled, their hearts smote them. They had thrown Mr. Rateliff out of the room without hesitation. But the most reckless young rascal there would never have dreamed of laying a finger on the Head. If any fellow had thought of such a thing, the other fellows would very quickly have stopped him, and in the roughest possible way. The person of the Head was sacred.

"My boys," said Dr. Holmes, with a tremble in his voice, "I am very much surprised—very surprised and very shocked and hurt—by this state of affairs. I am sure that you do not realise what you are doing—you do not mean to set your headmaster's authority at defiance. I am sure that you will not make it necessary for me to order a flogging for the whole of the Lower Forms, and to expel boys whom I should be sorry to see go from St. Jim's."

There was an uncomfortable silence. This was not the line the juniors had expected the Head to take, and it made them waver.

"I understand that there has been some—some excitement," said the Head. "You fancy you have a grievance. Rather than resort to extreme measures, I am willing to overlook the insubordination of which you have already been

guilty. But I order you to go to your Form-rooms at once. I am sure that no boy here will think of disobeying me!"

There was a long pause.

"Go!" said the Head.

All eyes were upon Tom Merry. He was the leader, and it was "up" to him to say what should be done. Whatever he decided to do, the other fellows would back up most loyally. It was not easy for Tom Merry to decide. To climb down, without having gained their point, was impossible. But to make the kind old Head look ridiculous by directly disobeying him—that was not pleasant, either.

"Very well, sir," said Tom Merry at last. "We don't mean any disrespect by what we're doing, sir. Any fellow here who treated you disrespectfully, sir, would be jumped on at once. We've gone on strike because we've got a grievance, and we think—"

"I cannot discuss that with you, Merry. You must go to your Form-rooms at once."

"We can't disobey you, sir. We will go!"

The Head looked relieved.

"Very well; go at once!" he said.

And he quitted the room.

"Well, that's a rotten climb down, I must say!" growled Thompson, of the Shell.

"Ripping strike-leader we've got—I don't think!" sneered Gore.

"It's not a climb down," said Tom Merry quietly. "I'm not going to cheek the Head! He's made a mistake this time, but he's a brick—we all know that! Any fellow who cheeks the Head in my presence will get a thick ear!"

"Yaas, wathah! I should feel called upon to give him a feeful thwashin' myself," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Play the game, deah boys! The Head is a bwick, though he has put his foot in it this time."

"And we're not climbing down," said Tom Merry. "We've gone on strike against all lessons till we've won our point. The Head has ordered us into the Form-rooms. We'll go. You can take a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink. We'll go into the Form-rooms, but we won't do any lessons. It comes to the same thing. It doesn't matter twopence whether we're inside the Form-rooms or outside them. We're not going to do any lessons till the Head has given in!"

There was a chuckle in the crowded common-room.

"Good egg!" said Blake heartily. "I can answer for it that there won't be any lessons in the Fourth!"

"And I'll jolly well see that there aren't any in the Third!" said Wally.

"And we'll look after the Shell!" said Tom Merry. "We can't cheek the Head! But the strike goes on just the same!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the juniors crowded out.

There was much relief among the Form-masters when the juniors were seen filing quietly into the Form-rooms. They flattered themselves that the trouble was over, but they flattered themselves a little too soon. The juniors were in as deadly earnest as ever. It was only the scene of the struggle that was changed.

Tom Merry & Co. took their seats in the Shell room, and Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, came in. Mr. Linton had some tact, and he intended to go on with lessons, as usual, as if he had heard nothing whatever of the strike. But he discovered very quickly that the Shell were not yet subdued.

Mr. Linton's first remarks were received in stony silence. The lesson happened to be Roman history, but the Shell fellows were afflicted with bad memories, and had apparently forgotten all they had learned upon the subject. Not a fellow answered when Mr. Linton addressed him, and the Form-master began to understand.

"Merry!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?"

"You do not seem to have brought your books."

"No, sir."

"Go and fetch them!"

Tom Merry did not move.

"Did you hear me, Merry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why do you not do as I tell you?"

"We're not doing any lessons to-day, sir!"

"What!"

"We're on strike, sir!"

"Merry! How dare you! Stand out here!"

Tom Merry did not leave his form. Mr. Linton's face grew very red. He advanced to the Shell desks, with a cane in his hand.

"Hold out your hand, Merry!"

"I cannot, sir!"

"Do you wish me to lay the cane across your shoulders, Merry?" demanded Mr. Linton, breathing hard.

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"No, sir."

"Then hold out your hand!"

"Can't, sir!"

Swish!

The cane circled in the air, and descended upon Tom Merry's shoulders. Tom gave a gasp. It was a doughty blow. The next moment Mr. Linton gave a roar. A book, hurled from the back of the class, caught him under the ear, and he staggered.

"Who threw that book?" he shouted.

"Yah!"

"Go home!"

All the Shell roared it out together. Mr. Linton stood transfixed for a moment. Then he brought the cane into operation again. Swish, swish, swish!

"Oh, ow, ow! Ow! Yow!"

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

Books and exercises and paper pellets and other missiles whizzed through the air in volleys, and Mr. Linton was smitten all over. A stream of ink from a squirt caught him in the eye. It ran all over his face, transforming him into a queer imitation of a nigger minstrel.

"G-g-goodness gracious!" stuttered Mr. Linton. "I—I—Oh—oh dear! This is outrageous! Good heavens! Oh!"

And Mr. Linton backed away in horror and dismay. The Shell were warming to their work now. Books pelted at Mr. Linton in showers, and inkpots began to fly, and Mr. Linton fairly gathered his gown about him and fled from the Form-room. A roar from the Shell followed him:

"Hurrah!"

CHAPTER 12.

Going Strong!

"@AVE!"

"The Head!"

The Shell-room was in an uproar when the alarm was given. But the juniors quieted down as the Form-room door opened and the Head came in. Dr. Holmes was looking more worried than ever. Mr. Linton had rushed into his study, red and breathless and smothered with ink, to acquaint him with the revolt of the Shell. And the Head realised that the trouble was not over, although the boys had submitted to be sent into the class-rooms.

"Boys! Silence at once!"

The boys were silent.

"This outbreak is disgraceful!" said the Head. "Every boy in the Shell will take five hundred lines, and will stay in for four half-holidays."

Grim silence.

"I shall take the Shell myself for the rest of the afternoon," went on the Head. "Now, if there is any further disorder, I shall be very severe. Go to your places."

The Shell looked to Tom Merry for guidance, and Tom made them a sign to obey. They were not to disobey the Head. Whenever Dr. Holmes was present in person, obedience was to be the order of the day. That was the game, and the fellows played it. The Shell had done enough for the strike, and Tom Merry knew that he could depend upon the Fourth and the Third to play their part. As for the Second and the "Babes," they did not matter.

Under the stern eye of the Head the Shell settled down to lessons; and, exasperated as he was by the revolt in the Lower School, Dr. Holmes could not help appreciating the compliment to himself implied in their conduct.

But Dr. Holmes could not be in two places at once, and it was soon evident that he was wanted as much in the other Form-rooms as in the Shell.

Little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, came dashing into the room before the Shell were through one lesson. There was ink on Mr. Lathom's gown and on his face and on his glasses.

"Dr. Holmes," he gasped, "I appeal to you! I cannot manage the Fourth this afternoon; they are quite out of hand!"

The Head suppressed a groan.

"What is the matter, Mr. Lathom?"

"The boys are in revolt, sir—actually in revolt! They refuse to do their lessons. I have been pelted with paper pellets soaked in ink, sir! They are quite beyond my powers. I appeal to you for assistance, sir!"

"I leave you in charge of the Shell for the present, then, Mr. Lathom."

"Very well, sir."

And the Head quitted the Shell-room.

"Now, my boys," said Mr. Lathom nervously, "pray keep order while the Head is gone—"

"Hurrah!"

"Silence, please!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah! No lessons! We're on strike!"

"Chorus, gentlemen!" roared Manners.

And the Shell started a roaring chorus, which rang through the Form-room and the whole House. Mr. Lathom gazed on in helpless dismay. He was far from being able to deal with the unruly juniors.

The Head came back in ten minutes. He had suppressed the revolt in the Fourth Form-room, the juniors becoming docile at once in the actual presence of the Head.

But he found the Shell in an uproar.

The doctor's eyes gleamed; he was losing his temper now. He took the cane from the Form-master's desk.

"Silence!" he shouted. "I shall cane the whole Form!"

And he did. The Shell fellows passed the Head in file, and were caned in turn, and that put their loyalty to Tom Merry's leadership to a very severe test. But they stood it, and when the Head ordered them back to their places, they went, rubbing their hands.

But now a new uproar was audible in the Form-room passage. The Head hurried out of the Shell-room, accompanied by Mr. Lathom. The door of the Third Form-room was open, and a struggling mass of fags was visible.

Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, came hurtling out, and he sprawled in the passage. Mr. Selby was very unpopular in his Form, and Wally & Co. had not been sorry for the opportunity of squaring accounts with him.

The Head's eyes started out as he saw the Form-master rolling on the floor, entangled in his gown.

He rushed down the passage.

"Look out! Here comes the Head!" gasped Wally.

The fags crowded back into the room, and Wally promptly locked the door on the inside. Mr. Selby staggered to his feet, stuttering with rage. The Head knocked at the door of the Form-room.

"Open this door at once!" he shouted.

There was no reply, but there was a sound of desks being piled against the door.

The Head gasped.

"Dear me! What is to be done? The boys are actually barring me out of the Form-room! This is—this is dreadful!"

"It is unbearable!" shouted Mr. Selby. "Send for the police, sir!"

"Nonsense, Mr. Selby!" said the Head sharply. "I am hardly likely to send for the police and tell them that I cannot govern my own school!"

"The boys are quite out of hand! They have assaulted me! They would actually not allow me to cane D'Arcy minor—"

"Open this door, my boys!"

No answer.

"It is dreadful!" said the Head. "I am afraid there is nothing for it but to expel the ringleaders. But it does not seem clear who are the ringleaders. It is dreadful!"

Mr. Selby rapped savagely on the Form-room door.

"Open this door at once!"

"Oh, that's not the Head's voice!" came a cheerful voice inside. "That's only old Selby! Give him a yell!"

And the fags yelled:

"Yah! Go home! Go and eat cocoanuts!"

"You young scoundrels! I will flog you—I will—"

"Rats!"

"Buzz off!"

"Go back to the monkey-house!"

Mr. Selby retreated, grinding his teeth. His authority over the Third Form at St. Jim's was evidently at an end for the present. What was to happen now?

The Head stopped as he passed the door of the Fourth Form-room. He had placed two prefects in there to keep the Fourth in order, as Mr. Lathom had given it up. A terrific uproar was going on in the room, and the Head looked in in dismay.

Knox and Rushden, the two prefects, were sitting on the floor, tied back to back, and unable to get up, and looking crimson and furious. The Fourth-Formers were executing a war-dance round them.

"Boys!" thundered the Head.

"Bai Jove! It's the Head again!"

The war-dance came to an end. Rushden and Knox looked up helplessly at the Head. They had been overcome by force of numbers, and they had simply not had a chance against the Fourth.

The Head breathed hard.

"Boys! How dare you? Untie Knox and Rushden at once!"

"Yaas, sir. Always obey your ordahs, sir."

The two prefects were untied. They stood looking very sheepish. The Head was about to speak again, when there was an uproar from the Shell-room. He hurried back to the Shell.

The room was in the wildest disorder. Mr. Linton's desk had been overturned into the middle of the Form-room, all the canes that could be found had been broken into pieces,

and the Shell were roaring and yelling at the top of their voices.

"Silence!"

Silence followed.

"Tom Merry, I fear you are the ringleader in this—"

"We're all in it together, sir," said Kangaroo.

"Hear, hear!"

"It's a strike, sir!" shouted the Shell fellows. "We only want justice!"

"Silence! Go back to your places! You are deprived of holidays for the rest of the term—the whole Form." The next boy who makes a noise will be flogged!"

The Shell settled down quietly enough now.

But the moment the Head had turned his back on them there was a fresh outbreak. Loud yells answered from the quadrangle. The Fourth-Formers had marched out of their Form-room, and were in the quad., laughing at the prefects who ordered them back.

The Head gave it up in despair.

The Lower School was utterly out of hand, and they could not be flogged into obedience, because they had shown quite plainly that they would resist.

School was dismissed for the afternoon. It was the only thing that could be done, and it was a bitter pill for the masters to swallow.

But it was a great triumph for the juniors.

Dismissed from lessons more than an hour before the usual time, they crowded out into the quadrangle, shouting and cheering and parading. And the seniors, who were still grinding away in the class-rooms, listened enviously to the sounds of freedom. The strike at St. Jim's was going strong.

CHAPTER 13.

Levison Knows Nothing.

D R. HOLMES was in his study.

He looked pale and worn.

Outside, in the quadrangle, the yells and cheers of the juniors rang far and wide, and the sounds penetrated into the Head's study. He listened to them with a gloomy brow. He seemed to have lost his hold upon the old school he had ruled so long and so well. He shrank from the only practical method of dealing with the revolt—unsparing expulsions and unlimited floggings. To call in the stablemen and gardeners and outside help against his own boys was too bitter and humiliating. And to "sack" the boys he suspected of being the ringleaders—that would be to send away the boys he liked best—the fellows who were a credit to the school. Tom Merry, Blake, Figgins, D'Arcy, Noble, Kerr, Redfern—they were all of the best.

Mr. Railton entered the Head's study with a grave brow. He gave his headmaster a glance of concern. Dr. Holmes looked white and ill.

"I am afraid this is very serious, sir," said Mr. Railton: "the juniors are utterly out of hand! They have ducked Kildare in the fountain—Kildare, the most popular of the prefects!"

"This must be put down!" said the Head, frowning.

"I suppose so, sir. I suppose—"

Mr. Railton hesitated.

"Well, Mr. Railton? Say what you wish!" said the Head wearily. "You have a right to offer me advice, and I can depend upon you."

"I suppose you could not reconsider your decision—about the boys' pets, sir?" Mr. Railton suggested.

"Impossible!"

"The boys hold the view that all the trouble was caused by a certain lad tormenting the bulldog in a cruel way. If the bulldog had not got loose, the other animals would not have done so. The whole trouble seems to have been caused by one cruel lad. The boys consider it unfair to punish the whole for the fault of one."

"Unfair, Mr. Railton?" said the Head, frowning.

"That is how they look at it, sir."

"Is there any proof against the boy in question, Mr. Railton?" asked Dr. Holmes, after a pause.

"Unfortunately, it appears not. But I know who the boy is, and I cannot think he is incapable of it. He is the worst boy in the Fourth Form."

"What is his name?"

"Levison!"

"Levison!" said the Head. "The boy who plotted against Brooke, of the Fourth, and was almost expelled? The only other occasion when there was an outbreak at St. Jim's was on account of this same boy Levison!"

"Yes, sir. And I have heard, indirectly, that the trouble between Brooke and Levison, on that occasion, was caused by Levison tormenting the dog, and Brooke interfering. That shows that the boy Levison is capable of such actions, and lends colour to the suspicion against him now."

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD,
Order Early.

"But it would be grossly unjust to condemn a lad upon suspicion, Mr. Railton, especially as all the other boys are so prejudiced against this lad Levison!"

"I cannot help thinking that their suspicion is well-founded, sir; and if it should prove to be so, it would be an honourable ground for deciding to change your sentence, sir—if you decided to do so."

The Head looked very thoughtful. He realised that he had acted hastily, and had placed himself in a false position. Any honourable means of retreat would be welcome. It was impossible to retreat before the attitude of the boys. But if it could be made clear that Herries's bulldog had been tormented into that outbreak, and that the whole trouble had been caused by Levison, it would be a good reason for rescinding the sentence against the animals, and then the "strike" would stop of its own accord. There was no disguising the fact that the authorities of St. Jim's were "up against" a very serious difficulty.

"Perhaps you are right, Mr. Railton," said the Head, after a long, long pause. "If it could be clearly proved that this boy Levison was to blame, then perhaps— But, then, the boy is not likely to confess."

"With your permission, sir, I will question him."

"Pray do so, Mr. Railton."

"Very well, sir."

The Housemaster left the study. Toby, the House page, was sent in search of Levison, of the Fourth. Levison was not taking part in the strike, though he did not venture to take any opposing attitude. He was simply keeping clear of it.

Toby, who was grinning hugely over the whole affair, inquired for Levison in the quadrangle.

"Who wants Levison?" demanded Blake.

"Mr. Railton wants 'im in his study, Master Blake," said Toby.

"Well, he can have Levison there, but he's not going to have any of the strikers!" said Tom Merry. "Hunt up Levison, you fellows! Anything to be obliging!"

Levison was found, and informed that Mr. Railton wanted him. Levison was extremely unwilling to proceed to the Housemaster's study.

"I'm jolly well not going to be picked on!" he exclaimed. "Railton's going for me, because he knows you fellows won't back me up."

"We won't back you up, that's a cert," said Tom Merry. "You caused all the trouble. And you should have joined in the strike if you wanted us to back you up. We're not backing up funks and outsiders!"

"Wathah not!"

"Well, I haven't done any lessons," said Levison.

"That's because you're a slacker, and glad of a chance to slack," said Tom Merry. "You're not one of us!"

"No feah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emphatically.

"I'll join you now—"

"No, you won't; you'll go and see Railton!"

"I won't!" roared Levison.

"Won't you? We'll soon settle that! Collar the cad!"

"Hands off!" yelled Levison. "I tell you I won't go! I'll— Ow, ow! I'll— Yah!"

Levison was swept off his feet in the grasp of the juniors, and carried bodily into the School House. Tom Merry knocked at Mr. Railton's door, and opened it.

"You want Levison, sir?" he asked respectfully.

"Yes, Merry."

"Here he is, sir."

Bump!

Levison was tossed bodily into the study, and the juniors closed the door and departed. Levison rolled on the floor, gasping for breath. Mr. Railton jumped up. He had ordered Levison to be sent to him, certainly, but he had not expected the cad of the Fourth to be delivered to him in that manner.

"Get up at once, Levison!" said Mr. Railton, frowning.

Levison groaned, and scrambled up. His face was red with fury. The School House master bestowed a decidedly disavouring glance upon him.

"You do not appear to be popular among your school-fellows, Levison," he said drily.

"That isn't my fault, sir," said Levison, recovering himself a little. "Tom Merry is always against me!"

"Why should he be against you?"

"Because he's a rotter!" said Levison, between his teeth.



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"Nonsense, Levison! I fear that the fault is on your side. However, I will not go into that now. I have sent for you, Levison, to ask you to tell me the truth about this matter. The boys believe that you caused the trouble with the pets yesterday by tormenting Herries's bulldog, and causing him to break his chain. The first impression was that the dog was mad. He was not mad, as it proved; but the state of furious excitement he was in showed very plainly that he had been worried and tormented. If you did this, you were the cause of the whole trouble, Levison. Is it true?"

"No, sir!" said Levison promptly.

"Please think before you reply, Levison. If you admit being the cause of the trouble, the Head may possibly rescind his order, and allow the pets to return to the school. That will put an end to the present trouble. I trust you understand me?"

Levison's teeth set hard. He did not care twopence about the trouble in the school; he was glad to see Tom Merry & Co. at war with the masters, and he hoped it would end in their expulsion from St. Jim's. And he was far from wishing to please the fellows by having the pets brought back. He would rather have inflicted injury upon them than pleased them, at any time.

"I understand you, sir," said Levison calmly.

"Well, what have you to say?"

"I think it's very hard that I should be made a scapegoat of, sir! If the Head wishes to give in to the boys, sir, I don't think I ought to be picked on like this, to make an excuse!"

"You must not say that, Levison!" said the Housemaster, frowning and biting his lip.

The cad of the Fourth, with his usual cunning, had seen at once how much use his confession would be in extricating the Head from his difficulty—if he should confess. But he had not the slightest intention of confessing.

"Very well, sir," said Levison, with mocking meekness. "I'm sorry I haven't anything to confess, sir. You wouldn't want me to say I did a thing when I didn't do it, would you, sir?"

"Certainly not, Levison! But if you did it, it is your duty to confess, so that further trouble may be avoided!" said Mr. Railton sharply. "Under the circumstances, I think I may say that you shall not be punished if you make a full confession, although, as a rule, I should punish such cowardly rascality as cruelty to animals very severely!"

"I have nothing to confess, sir!"

"You say that the boys are mistaken in their impression?"

"Yes, sir. It's because they've got a grudge against me!"

"It appears that you took refuge on the roof of the shed, Levison, when the bulldog got loose yesterday. What were you doing there at all?"

Levison hesitated for a moment; he was nearly caught. But his ready wit seldom deserted him for long, and a lie cost Levison very little.

"I had gone there to see Mellish's white mice, sir! I feed them for him sometimes. I'm very fond of white mice, sir."

"And you had not meddled with the bulldog?"

"Not in the least, sir."

"Did you find him loose?"

"Yes, sir—he made a sudden rush at me, and I whipped up on the roof of the shed to get out of his way. He's a very dangerous animal, sir. He nearly bit Mr. Ratcliff once."

"I hope you have told me the truth, Levison. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Levison demurely.

And he went. Mr. Railton was left with a worried frown on his brow. That means of escape from the present difficult position had been closed—there was nothing to be gained from Levison, of the Fourth. What was to happen now? The yells of the strikers, that still rang out in the quadrangle, were proof enough that the juniors did not intend to return to order until they had gained their point. And it was impossible for the Head to concede it. What was to be done?

CHAPTER 14.

Bad News!

THE evening passed in a state of suppressed excitement in the school. The young rebels had been successful, so far; the strike was going strong. Lessons had been abandoned that afternoon for the Lower Forms. What was to happen on the following morning? Would the effervescence die out of its own accord, and the boys turn up in the class-rooms as usual? Or would the strike go on? Tom Merry & Co. had quite made up their minds about it. The strike was going on.

And the boys having once got out of hand, matters naturally went from bad to worse. When bed-time came, the

juniors remained in the common-room, and a prefect, who stepped in to remind them that it was bedtime, was pelted with books and ink-balls till he retired. It was not till after ten o'clock that the juniors went up to their dormitories; and then they spent a considerable time in roller-skating in the passage, and leap-frogging in the dormitories, before they turned in.

All was quiet at last, however.

In the morning, the rising-bell clanged out at the usual hour; but the Lower School did not get up. As there were to be no lessons, there was no need to rise, and the juniors yawned, and turned over for another snooze.

Kildare looked into the Shell dorm. in the School House, and called to the juniors there.

"Time you kids were down!"

"Rats!" said the Shell, all together.

Kildare frowned angrily.

"Get up!" he commanded.

"Rats!"

"I shall come and warm you!"

"Rats!"

The captain of St. Jim's strode into the dormitory. There was a volley of pillows and bolsters at once, and Kildare was simply swept off his feet.

"Clear out!" roared Gore. "We're fed up with you, Kildare. Buzz off!"

"We don't want to hurt you, Kildare," said Tom Merry apologetically. "But—we're on strike, you know."

"You young rascals!" roared the St. Jim's captain, sitting up among pillows and bolsters galore, on the floor of the dormitory, and blinking dazedly. "You are going the right way to get sacked."

"Then we'll all be sacked together," said Clifton Dane.

Kildare left the dormitory. There was nothing else to be done. The Shell fellows were quite prepared to throw him out if he did not go.

The juniors came down very late. When the chapel bell rang, they turned up for morning prayers, however, in good order. They were on strike, but, as Arthur Augustus remarked, that was no reason for being guilty of bad form, and it would have been bad form to cut prayers. Dr. Holmes did not take prayers as usual that morning; perhaps he did not care to face his unruly pupils. When the bell rang for classes, the juniors were in the quadrangle, and they showed no sign whatever of going into the Form-rooms.

A cricket-match was soon in progress between the juniors of the School House and the New House. Other fellows played fives or rounders, and some strolled about doing nothing. Gore and Mellish and fellows of their kind had quite a carnival of cigarette-smoking, and looked considerably yellow after it. At dinner-time the juniors crowded cheerfully in to dinner, and dinner went on amid a babel of voices, very different from the usual orderly meal-times.

"Looks as if we're going to have it all our own way," Jack Blake remarked, as they strolled out into the quad. after dinner. "I wonder the Head doesn't do something. He can't let us go on like this for ever. Suppose one of the governors should drop in."

"Phew! There would be trouble—for the Head more than for us," said Manners.

Tom Merry looked serious.

"We don't want that," he said. "The Head's made a mistake, but I'd rather chuck up the strike than cause him real trouble. He's a good sort."

"What do you think about it, Brooke?" asked Blake, clapping the day-boy on the shoulder.

Brooke shook his head.

"I'm sticking to you, of course," he said. "But I must say that I'd rather be in the Form-room. I'm working up for an exam., you know, and this will throw me behind. That's serious."

"Blessed if I thought about that," said Tom Merry reflectively. "After all, when you come to think of it, we come here to learn things, really."

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"Still, Britons never shall be slaves," said Tom Merry. "We're not giving in."

"No feah, deah boy!"

"The Head will have to toe the line sooner or later," said Figgins confidently. "You should see Ratty now. Ever since we chucked him out, he's quite tame. Goes about pretending not to see us. He daren't interfere."

"Selby wants them to send for the police," said Mellish.

"Let 'em all come!" said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But I wonder what the Head's doing?" said Tom Merry uneasily. "We haven't seen him all the morning."

"He looked pretty seedy yesterday," said Manners. "I hope he's not ill. I suppose this has upset him a lot."

"Oh, crumbs, I hope not!" said Tom in dismay.

And all the young rascals looked extremely serious.

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD,
Order Early.

If the Head should be so upset by the outbreak as to become ill, that would put quite a different complexion on the matter.

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully, "I think I'll go and ask Waitton!"

"It's ripping to be free all day, though," said Fatty Wynn. "Look at those Fifth-Form bounders going into class. They're going to have an afternoon with Ratty, and we're going to play cricket."

And the strikers gave the Fifth-Formers a yell as the latter went into Form. Cutts, of the Fifth, gave the juniors an envious look. On that sunny afternoon, Cutts would very willingly have cut lessons himself. But it was miles beneath the dignity of a senior Form to think of joining in the outbreak of the juniors.

Fifth and Sixth went into class as usual. The juniors roamed about the quadrangle free as air. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came upon Mr. Railton as he was going to the Sixth Form room to take the top Form that afternoon.

Mr. Railton gave the swell of St. Jim's a stern glance.

"What do you want?" he asked curtly.

"Pway excuse me, sir," said D'Arcy. "I should like to inquire about the Head? I twust he is all wight?"

"You can hardly be concerned about that, D'Arcy, as you seem to be doing your best to cause him trouble and worry."

"Oh, weally, sir—"

"The Head is not well," said Mr. Railton. "He is keeping his room to-day. Otherwise, measures would have been taken to bring you young rascals to your senses."

"He's not ill, sir?" said Arthur Augustus, in dismay.

"Yes."

"B-b-but it is not sewious, sir?" gasped D'Arcy.

"I hope not, D'Arcy."

And Mr. Railton passed on. The swell of St. Jim's went out into the quadrangle with a very grave face. Blake caught him by the arm.

"Waiting for you, you ass!" he exclaimed. "We've got to bat."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I don't feel quite inclined for cwicket, deah boy," he said. "I have just heard ffrom Mr. Waitton that the Head is ill, and it wowwies me."

"Not really ill?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Staying in his room?"

"Yaas."

"That's why we've not seen him, then," said Monty Lowther, with a whistle. "Oh, I say, that is rotten, you know."

The juniors all agreed that it was rotten. The cricket-match died a natural death; no one wanted to play. The juniors were very serious now. There were very few of them who did not care for the fact that the Head was ill.

"But we can't give in," said Tom Merry. "Might as well have toed the line all along, if we're going to give in now."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Can't possibly give in," said Herries. "I'm not going to have my bulldog sent away. I'm not giving in till Towser comes back."

"Weally, Hewwies, considewin' that that wotten bulldog has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs—"

"Oh, rats!" grunted Herries. "It was all Levison's fault. All his fault the pets were sent away, all his fault we went on strike, all his fault that the Head's off colour."

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed as a new idea occurred to him.

"If it could come out that it was all Levison's fault, I think it would work round all right," he said. "You know Mr. Railton sent for Levison yesterday, and jawed him in his study. Levison said something afterwards about Railton trying to make a scapegoat of him. I think it's pretty clear what Railton wanted—if Levison had owned up, that would have been made a reason for rescinding the Head's order."

"Quite wight, too!"

"Only you wouldn't catch that cad owning up," said Blake bitterly. "He's glad to see us on fighting terms with the Head, and he doesn't care if the Head's ill. The more trouble we all get into, the better Levison likes it."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I think we might speak to Levison. He can't be wottah enough not to care about the Head bein' seeday. Suppose we appeal to his bettah feelin's, and request him to stop all the bothah by ownin' up."

"He wouldn't do it!"

"He might be made to," said Tom Merry quietly. "There are ways and means. Let's look for Levison! I fancy we've hit on the solution at last. Levison is going to see the Head, and own up that he caused all the trouble."

"And if he won't—"

"We'll scrag him till he does."

"My hat! What a ripping idea!"

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"But I considah that we ought to appeal to his bettah feelin's first, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You leave it to me."

"You can appeal to his better feelings if you like," said Tom Merry, "and then I'll appeal to his other feelings—with a cricket stump. Come on."

And they went to look for Levison.

CHAPTER 15.

Levison's Feelings are Appealed To.

LEVISON was in his study. The juniors found him there, and the smell of tobacco as they opened the study door showed that the cad of the Fourth was at home. Levison was seated in the armchair, with his feet upon the table, smoking a cigarette, and several cigarette stumps lay in the fender. He did not take it from his mouth as Tom Merry & Co. came in. He stared insolently at them through a blue haze of smoke.

Tom Merry snorted, and Arthur Augustus coughed. Tom Merry strode right over to Levison, jerked his cigarette from his mouth, and threw it on the floor, and put his heel on it. Levison jumped up with an exclamation of rage.

"You interfering cad—"

Tom Merry gave him a rough push on the chest, which made him sit down in the armchair again quite suddenly.

"Shut up!" he said. "A fellow can be decent, even if he's on strike. Smoking's not allowed."

"You're the right one to preach, aren't you?" sneered Levison. "You're turning the school into a bear-garden, and making the Head ill."

Tom Merry flushed.

"Well, we think we're in the right," he said. "And that's just what I've come to speak to you about. You know the Head isn't well."

"Yes, I know it."

"And you don't care?"

"No more than you do," said Levison coolly.

"You cad! You know I care!"

"Yes, you look as if you do," said Levison, with a sneer.

"You've done it, anyway, not I. You fellows are to blame."

"You caused all the trouble, in the first place, by interfering with Towser!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, you rotter—"

"Pway allow me to speak, Tom Mewwy. It was agweed to appeal to Levison's bettah feelin's. Levison, deah boy, I twust you have got some bettah feelin's."

"Oh, go and eat coke."

D'Arcy's eyes gleamed for a moment, but he restrained his temper. He had determined to be very kind and gentle with Levison, in order to stir his better feelings—if he had any.

"Now, Levison, deah boy, listen to me. You caused all the twouble, and you could put an end to it by ownin' up. If you go to the Head or Mr. Waitton, and admit that you were to blame in the first place, the twouble would be ovah. The Head would allow the pets to be bwrought back, and we should all express our wegwet to the Head, and go back to work."

"And everything in the botanical department would be lovely," said Monty Lowther.

"Pway don't intewwupt me, Lowthah. Undah the circs., Levison, it is up to you to mend mattahs. You can do it. We can't inform about you, as that would be sneakin'; and, besides, we have no actual pwoof of what you did, apart ffrom the fact that you are well known to be a feahful wottah."

"Look here—" began Levison fiercely.

"Under the circs., Levison, I appeal to your bettah feelin's. You have done a gweat deal of harm, but it is in your powah to set it wight. It is up to us to remain on stwike till we get the pets back; but now the Head is ill, it puts a diffewent complexion on the mattah altogether. Levison, deah boy, you can do all that is wanted; you can stop the twouble by ownin' up, and takin' your lickin' like a man."

"You silly ass—"

"I appeal to your bettah feelin's, Levison," urged Arthur Augustus. "Ewery chap has some bettah feelin's, howevah gweat a wottah he is. Now, Levison, deah boy, let your bettah feelin's wize to the occasion."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Levison.

"The doctah is ill, you know!"

"I don't care twopence whether he's ill or not."

"If this wov goes on, he will vewy likely become illah—I mean, worse."

"I don't care!"

"Levison!" Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass very severely upon the cad of the Fourth. "If you weply in that

stwain, Levison, I shall be dwiven to the conclusion that you have no bettah feelin's."

"And perhaps when you've come to that conclusion you'll shut up," suggested Levison, "and then you'll clear out."

"Bai Jove! Tom Mewwy, deah boy, I'm afwaid you were wight, and the awful wottah has no bettah feelin's at all. I leave him to you."

"Get out of my study," said Levison.

"We've given Gussy a run," said Tom Merry grimly.

"But I knew it wouldn't be any good. But there are other ways. Levison, we know that you tormented Towser, and caused all the trouble. You're going to own up to the Head."

"I'm jolly well not!"

"We give you an opportunity of doing it of your own free will!"

"Rats!"

"That's your answer?"

"Yes."

"Right! This is where the persuasion begins. Lay him across the table, you fellows, and I'll put in some whacks with this stump. He's got feelings of some sort, better or worse, and we'll appeal to all of 'em, if we break a stump over him."

"Hear, hear!"

Levison made a wild spring for the door; but the study was crowded with juniors now, and Levison had no chance to escape. Blake and Lowther and Figgins and Redfern seized him, and the cad of the Fourth, struggling wildly, was whirled across the table, and held face downwards there, still resisting and yelling.

Then Tom Merry raised the cricket-stump. There was a terrific yell from Levison as it descended.

Whack!

"Yaroooh!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, oh, oh, oh! Ow!"

"Say when!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh! Ow! Help! You rotters! Yah! Lemme alone! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, help! Stop it! Chuck it! Yah! Oh!"

"You've only got to say when you want me to leave off," said Tom Merry, pausing to take breath. "You're going to be thrashed till you own up!"

"I didn't touch Towser!" shrieked Levison, almost sobbing with pain and rage.

"Liar!" said Herries grimly. "We know you did! We know that Brooke caught you once, tormenting him, didn't you, Brooke?"

"Yes, I did, and jolly well thumped him," said Brooke, of the Fourth, "and you all know how he tried to get even with me, and nearly got sacked from St. Jim's for his rotten trick. If he didn't do it this time, he did it then, and so he deserves the licking, anyway!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Are you going to own up, Levison?"

"No!" yelled Levison.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Ow, ow! Stop it, you fiend! I'll own up—yow—ow!"

Tom Merry ceased the castigation. Levison was squirming wildly in the grasp of the four juniors, and tears of pain ran down his face. He had never had a thrashing like that before, though he had deserved dozens of them.

"The truth, mind," said Tom Merry.

"I—I didn't mean to hurt him!" moaned Levison, "and I didn't think the beast could break his chain—ow!"

"Jolly sure of that!" grunted Herries. "You wouldn't have dared to touch him, you funk, if you'd thought poor old Towser had a chance of getting at you."

"What did you do?" demanded Blake.

"I—I only tickled him with a pin in the end of a stick," said Levison, gasping. "He wasn't really hurt, only—"

"You rotter!" roared Herries. "You—you stuck pins in my bulldog! You stuck pins in Towser! I'll—"

"Hold him!" said Tom Merry.

"Let me get at him!" yelled Herries, as the juniors dragged him back. "I'll smash him! I'll pulverise him! Stuck pins in Towser! The cowardly beast! I'll slaughter him! Let him go, Blake, or I'll punch your silly head. I tell you I'm going to smash him!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Let me go, you idiots! I'm going to—"

"Shut up!" said Tom Merry. "Levison's had a licking, and he's going to own up. The beast makes me feel sick, but you can let him alone. He's been licked, and if he owns up to the Head, that will make it square."

"I tell you—"

"Oh, sit on him, somebody."

Herries was held back from Levison by main force. Levison had slid off the table now, and he was looking very white. If Towser's master had succeeded in getting at him just then, the cad of the Fourth would have had reason to be sorry for himself.

"Shut up, Herries!" said Blake. "It all depends on Levison whether Towser comes back, you know. Are you ready to go to the Head, Levison?"

"I—I can't!" stammered Levison. "If I told the Head he'd expel me—you know how he is on cruelty to animals, as he would call it—"

"What do you call it yourself, you cad?"

"Well, I didn't really hurt him—"

"You must have hurt him a lot, to make him so excited," said Blake. "You tortured him—that's what it amounts to—like a cruel beast, as you are. A chap who would hurt a dog is capable of anything. I jolly well wish the Head would sack you. Anyway, you're going to own up and chance it."

"I—I can't—"

"Lay him over the table again!" said Tom Merry quietly. Levison backed away in terror.

"Let me alone! I—I can't go to the Head now—he's in his room—"

"Mr. Railton will do."

"He's taking the Sixth this afternoon—"

"The Sixth can go and chop chips. If you're ready, we'll take you to Mr. Railton at once. If you're not ready, we'll lick you till you are. Now—"

"Hands off, you beasts! I'll go!"

"Mind," said Tom Merry warningly. "We shall all be with you when you own up. If you don't make it fair and square, we shall settle with you afterwards. What you've had will be nothing to it. I give you my word, if you don't make it square with Railton, you shall be licked till you can't stand."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'll do it!" growled Levison sullenly.

"Then come on!"

And Levison left the study in the midst of a crowd of juniors.

CHAPTER 16.

All's Well That Ends Well.

MR. RAILTON was busy with the Sixth when there was a tramp of feet outside, and a knock at the door. The door opened, and the School Housemaster looked round, and stared at the crowd of juniors who appeared in view. The Housemaster's face grew very stern. For the moment he concluded that the strikers intended to invade the sacred precincts of the Sixth Form.

"Go!" he exclaimed, striding towards the door. "How dare you come here!"

"If you please, sir—" said Tom Merry.

"How dare you!"

"Levison wants to speak to you, sir. He wants to confess!"

Mr. Railton's expression changed. He could see now that it was not an invasion. He stepped out into the corridor and

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closed the door. His eyes were fixed upon the cad of the Fourth, but Levison was careful not to meet them.

"What is this?" he asked.
"Levison's ready to own up that he caused all the trouble, sir!" said Figgins.

"I have already questioned Levison on the subject, and he declared his innocence," said Mr. Railton.

"If—if you please, sir," stammered Levison, with an apprehensive glance at the juniors round him, "I—I—it was not quite accurate what I said to you, sir—"

Levison would gladly have explained what had taken place in his study, and have appealed to the Housemaster for protection. But he dared not. He knew what to expect afterwards, if he did not play the game, and he played it—sorely against his grain.

"I am ready to hear you, Levison," said the Housemaster coldly.

"I—I—I was to blame, sir!" said Levison, seeking for words. "I—I've been thinking it over, sir, and—I want to own up. I feel that it is my duty to clear up the trouble if I can, sir."

"That is quite right and proper, Levison, and I hope you are speaking sincerely. You wish to say that you lied to me yesterday."

"N-n-not exactly that, sir. I—I was not quite accurate. I—I was afraid to speak out, as a matter of fact, sir. But I want to make it right now."

"Very well; go on!"

"It—it was my fault that Towser broke out the day before yesterday, sir. I didn't hurt him—I mean I didn't mean to hurt him. I was just having a little game with him, sir, but he got excited—"

"You mean that you were tormenting the bulldog to such an extent that he became enraged, and broke his chain!" said Mr. Railton.

"Well, ye-es, sir!" said Levison helplessly.

"You were guilty of a cowardly action, Levison. A boy who torments dumb animals is a criminal. In consequence of your rascally conduct, Levison, the poor animal might have been shot."

"I'm very sorry, sir."

"You have caused a great deal of trouble, Levison, by an act of cowardly cruelty. I suppose you know that you will be severely punished for this."

"As—as I'm owning up, sir, I—I thought you might look over it, and—"

"I cannot look over such an offence as cruelty to animals, Levison. You did not know that your act would have such consequences as it has had; but you knew that you were guilty of wicked conduct. And you must have tormented the poor animal in a very cruel way to throw him into such a state of excitement, and to cause him so great an effort as to break his chain. You are a thoroughly bad boy, Levison, and I can promise you that you will be soundly flogged. But for your bad conduct, none of this trouble would have arisen—though that is no excuse for insubordination," added Mr. Railton, with a stern glance at the strikers.

Tom Merry & Co. looked somewhat sheepish.

"We—we're all sorry, now the Head's ill, sir!" stammered Tom Merry. "I—if you'd explain to him, sir, how Levison caused all the trouble, I'm sure he'd let us have the pets back, as—as—"

"You cannot think of coercing your headmaster, Merry. But I will promise you this much, that now I know the facts of the case, I will place them before the Head, and do my utmost to have your wishes granted—but upon condition that you all return to your duties at once, and that this folly ceases!"

There was a short silence. The juniors looked at one another. Give up the strike and surrender, and trust to Mr. Railton's influence with the Head! It was a big thing to ask of the young rebels, in the full tide of success as they were. But Tom Merry was keen enough; he had an idea that the strikers' demands would be granted, and that Mr. Railton's object was to "save the face" of the headmaster. What Dr. Holmes could not possibly concede to rebels, he might with perfect propriety grant to boys who had returned to their duty. Tom Merry understood.

"Very well, sir," he said; "and—and you'll tell the Head that we're all sorry we've given him trouble, and we hope he will forgive us!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And we're all sorry he's ill, sir," said Figgins.

"And that we never for a minute meant any disrespect to the Head by going on strike, sir," said Blake anxiously. "I think the Head ought to know that!"

Mr. Railton smiled.

"You have very peculiar ideas of respect," he said. "However, I will explain to Dr. Holmes. Now go back to your Form-rooms."

"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Railton went at once to the Head's house, and the juniors retired. Gore of the Shell sniffed contemptuously.

"Rotten surrender, I call it," he said.

"That's because you're a silly ass," said Tom Merry politely. "The Head can't give in; it would be too awful a climb-down for him. But it's pretty plain that if we save his dignity for him, we shall get what we want."

"We could always go on strike again, if we don't!" said Herries.

"Exactly. We wanted the pets back—not to score over the Head. I should be jolly sorry to score over him, even if we could."

"Yaas, wathah! Bad form, deah boys!"

"Rot!" said Mellish. "We could have brought him to his knees if we'd held out."

"You wouldn't want to, if you weren't a beastly cad, Mellish!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm going back to lessons, for one!" said Tom Merry. "We've gained our point, and it would be fatheaded to keep on strike after that."

"Hear, hear!"

In ten minutes all the juniors of St. Jim's were in their Form-rooms.

The masters discovered the fact, and they came in to take their various Forms, looking a little uncertain at first.

But even Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, was tactful enough to take matters as they were, and to make no allusion to the past.

And most of the fellows were particularly good, and particularly respectful that afternoon, in order to show that they could be good when they liked. They had gone on strike for a principle, not for the sake of ragging, and they wanted to make that fact quite clear.

An unexpected calm had descended upon St. Jim's.

After last lesson the boys were dismissed as usual, and they came swarming out of the Form-rooms, anxious for news.

A shout from Wally of the Third announced that there was a new notice on the board. The juniors crowded round to read it. The notice was in Mr. Railton's hand, and it brought tidings of great joy to the readers. It ran:

"It having transpired that the recent outbreak was caused by an act of cruelty on the part of one boy, who has now confessed, the headmaster has consented to rescind his order for the exclusion of the junior boys' pets from the school. In view also of the fact that the junior boys have voluntarily returned to their duty, they will be pardoned for their recent insubordination, on condition that they apologise publicly to the headmaster!"

"Three cheers for the Head!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Hurrah! Hip, pip, hurrah!"

"Yaas, wathah! The Head's a bwick! Huwvah!"

And there was satisfaction in all faces. Some of the more truculent youths were inclined to "jib" at the idea of a public apology to the Head. But most of the fellows felt, very rightly, that they were well out of what might have been a very serious scrape.

"It's up to us to apologise, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "We have wagged the Head, and we owe him an apology."

"Hear, hear!"

"Most unusual conduct," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"It's more the rule to wag the tail than the head—"

"Oh, don't be funny, Lowthah! When I say wag, I don't mean wag, as you know vewy well. I mean wag—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course we shall apologise to the Head," said Tom Merry. "It's the least we can do. And the pets are coming back."

"Hurrah!"

"And here they come!" shouted Figgins.

There was a rush to the door. The van was in sight. Mr. Railton had evidently telephoned an order when he put the notice on the board ready to meet the eyes of the juniors when they were dismissed from classes.

There was an uproar from the van as the juniors surrounded it. The barking of Pongo and the growling of Towser, mingled with the squalling and shrieking and screeching of the other animals and birds. But it was music to the ears of the juniors. Herries dragged out his bulldog and fondled him, almost with tears in his eyes. Pongo snuggled into D'Arcy minor's jacket, whimpering with joy. Reilly captured his monkey, taking care to keep a tight hold on him. Clifton Dane took out his cage with the parrot in it, and Polly screamed an ear-splitting welcome to her master.

"Hurrah! Polly wants sugar! Old Ratty! Old sneak! Ha, ha, ha!"

(Concluded on page 26, column 1.)



SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE!

*A Splendid Serial Story
dealing with Public-
School Life.*

By R. S. WARREN BELL.

READ THIS FIRST.

Sir William Percival Travers, Bart.—to give him his full title—is a slight, fair lad of twelve when he is first sent to "Fighting Greyhouse" by his guardian. His Form-fellows in the Lower Fourth are considerably older than "Sir Billy," as the youngster is soon nicknamed, and he has to put up with a good deal of bullying. His great hero is Wardour, the captain of the school.

Sir Billy chums up with a boy named Carew, commonly known as Parsnip, and they become inseparable. One June Sunday they quarrel, and Parsnip waits for Sir Billy outside the chapel, and hits him in the face.

Billy clenched his fists, and for a moment it looked as if the two were about to indulge in a real mill. Then Sir Billy's fingers relaxed; he turned on his heel and walked away, leaving Parsnip in open-mouthed astonishment and triumph.

(Read on from here.)

Thinking It Over.

Roses, red and fragrant, clustered round the window of Wardour's study. And there was a window-box full of gay blooms, for Wardour had a pretty taste in flowers.

Billy was fagging this term for Wardour, and it was his duty to keep the contents of the green box watered. Had nothing occurred to interrupt the harmony of his and Parsnip's friendship, he would have dashed into Wardour's study, splashed a big can of water over the flowers, and dashed out again, so as to walk round the upper playing-field with his chum.

It was the custom of the whole school to "walk round" after chapel on Sunday evening, and you always walked round with your especial friend. If you had had a row with your chum during the week, you made it up with him "after chapel" on Sunday—unless the row were a very bad one.

Half an hour was allowed for this pleasant spell of pedestrianism; then it was supper and bed. Fellows crammed all the talk they could into that brief space of time—talk of home or exams., of cricket—of everything. And chaps didn't interfere with you; it seemed to cry a short truce to the usual bully-ragging and horse-play, this walking round.

Great and small went in a long procession. Wardour and Hallam, arm-in-arm, would come swinging along close on the heels of their respective fags; Upper and Lower, "swotters" and idlers, bullies and bullied, brainy men and dunces—all joined in the circling throng.

And so, round the field, you would hear a ceaseless murmur of voices, some pitched high and some low, and laughter, but not too boisterous. For the chaplain, in Wardour and Sir Billy's day, was just the man to preach to a boy, and many things he said in his sermons would "stick," and a few of the fellows would talk about them after, often in a half-ashamed way, for a schoolboy hates to be thought "pi."

And there was Mr. Kitt's wonderful music. This had, on certain natures, a subduing effect. And so, you see, the "walking round" time was perhaps the best time in the Greyhouse week. So thought many, at any rate; and one of these was Sir Billy.

But this Sunday night—
Sir Billy walked into Wardour's study, quite expecting that Parsnip would follow him. But Charles Henry Carew

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD,
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was quite satisfied with his bloodless victory. He would be able to make a nice shout about it in the juniors' room, and come it over the young funk as much as he pleased in the future.

So thought Parsnip, in his hot and angry state, and went off to find somebody else to walk round with. But he couldn't, and had to hang about in the quad, by himself until the supper-bell called promenaders into Hall.

It will be observed that Parsnip carefully avoided going to Wardour's study—where he knew Sir Billy could be found—and it is just possible that Parsnip, as he cooled down, didn't feel quite happy. He had hit his best chum in the face, and his best chum hadn't hit him back. Parsnip, as the cooling-down process continued, didn't care to ask himself who had done the braver thing that Sunday night—he or Sir Billy?

When the bell rang he went into Hall, and, after gorging himself with bread and cheese, sneaked up to his dormitory without troubling to mention his magnificent victory to anybody. Afterwards he dreamed that he was being scalped by Red Indians, which served him right, for, after eating too much bread and cheese, he had read one of Fenimore Cooper's prairie books until the lights were turned out.

Wardour had been invited to supper with the Head. Now the Head's wife—who was young and pretty—was particularly fond of roses, and as Wardour was invariably "a very perflignt gentil knight" in all matters concerning the fair sex, he intended to present Mrs. Patterson with a bouquet of the finest blooms that grew without his study window. He was due at Headmaster's about ten minutes after the other fellows had gone into Hall, and so he had just got time to cut the roses. He had inspected them in the morning sun, and knew pretty well which ones he wanted, but he had omitted to gather them earlier so that he might present them "all a-growing and a-blowing," fresh from the trees which had borne them.

As he entered the study, lo! the captain beheld a small boy sitting at his table—in short, Sir Billy, his fag. As, with head averted, and leaning on his elbow, Sir Billy didn't offer to move, Wardour concluded that something was "up."

"Hallo, young 'un! What's the matter?" he inquired, laying his hand on the other's shoulder. "You're not—bless me, Travers!—you're not—"

This was too much for Billy, who sprang up with an indignant look on his face.

"Of course not, Wardour!"

But his lips quivered, in spite of his brave tone.

Wardour—always quick to read faces and to guess at the thoughts behind them—turned aside to look for his scissors.

"Look here, Travers, I want some roses for Mrs. Patterson. Hop out of the window and begin to pick some of the best—the best, mind. Here, I'll give you a chair."

Billy obeyed with alacrity, glad of the relief to his feelings the task afforded him.

"Where are those scissors? All right, I can reach out. Get that big chap low down. Spanker, isn't he? And some leaves. Mind they're young and fresh—'fag' leaves, you know."

This kindly chaff elicited a tearful giggle from Billy. It was rapidly getting dark, and Wardour couldn't see him distinctly. Sir Billy was glad of that. He wasn't blubbing—no, certainly not!—he never blubbed now. He got cured of that during his first term. But—but—well, he was glad it was dark.

Wardour knew exactly how Sir Billy was feeling. Lighting the gas in his study, he began to arrange the roses in a neat bunch; meanwhile, with his back to Sir Billy, he talked.

"Been walking round, Travers?"

"No, Wardour."

"Oh! Tired, I s'pose, and don't want any supper?"

"N-no; I don't think I want any supper, Wardour."

"Not sure—eh? Well, there's some cake in my cupboard. You may lay into it when I've gone. And I want you to arrange my books, so I'll give you leave to sit up a bit—see?"

"Y-yes—th-thanks, Wardour."

"All this time the captain was busy with his bunch, and he ought to have been at Headmaster's House."

"How's your friend Carew going along?" inquired Wardour carelessly.

Sir Billy breathed hard.

"His mater's dying," he replied, bending over the roses.

"Eh? That's bad!"

"He heard from home this morning, and was awfully put up," said Billy. "I said I'd help him with his Greek Test, after chapel, when we had walked round; but I was listening to Kitt and forgot all about the Greek Test, and Parsnip's mater, and when Parsnip wanted me to go with him I told him to shut up."

"H'm! Shouldn't have said that if you'd promised to help him."

"I know I shouldn't. I forgot to say that Hodges licked Parsnip because Parsnip disturbed Kitt, and Kitt dried up sooner than he generally does on Sunday—"

"So then Parsnip felt sore and let fly at you, I suppose, and you punched each other's heads?"

"N-no; I didn't punch Parsnip's head. It wasn't till he hit me that I remembered about his mater."

Wardour began to whistle.

"I see! Well, I expect you'll make it up. There, that's enough roses; I must be off."

So saying, the captain hurried away to Headmaster's House. Of course he had to apologise to Mrs. Patterson for being late, but paid penalty with the roses; and then, after supper, he told the Head and his wife what had partly detained him, not forgetting the Greek Test, and Carew's non-appreciation of Mr. Kitt's playing.

They listened attentively to the little story, and it was not forgotten—at any rate, by one of them.

As you shall see.

Friends Again.

During the week—on the Friday, to be exact—came news of Mrs. Carew's death. It was expected, several letters from home having prepared poor Parsnip for the sad intelligence.

Naturally, Parsnip was very much knocked over at first by the news, but grief cannot abide long with youth. On the Sunday he was still a little depressed, but the primary shock had spent its force.

He was to go home on Monday for the funeral. Of course, Sir Billy went to Parsnip and frankly told him how sorry he was to hear about his mother's death. Parsnip said, "Thanks, Billy," shook hands limply, and then, rather red in the face, turned again to the book he had been reading when his friend entered the classroom.

Billy lingered a moment, eyeing Parsnip wistfully, but Parsnip did not say anything else. So Billy went slowly out, repenting him sorely of having refused to help Parsnip with his Greek Testament.

Parsnip was mooning about the Upper Field after dinner on Sunday—Sir Billy was pretending to read "Ivanhoe" under a tree some little distance off, but was really watching Parsnip, and Parsnip knew it—when that magnificent gentleman, the Head's butler, approached him.

"A note for you, sir."

"Thanks, Saunders!"

He tore open the dainty pink missive, which ran as follows:

"Headmaster's House, June 15th.

"Dear Carew,—Will you and Travers come to tea with us at 4.30 this afternoon?—Sincerely yours,

"ELEAZOR PATTERSON."

Parsnip blushed up to the roots of his flaxen hair. Some fellows, he knew, liked going to tea with the Head and his wife—they said Mrs. Patterson was so jolly, and didn't make them feel awkward, and insisted on their tucking in all they knew—but Parsnip was not a society man. He loathed the idea of sitting still and behaving properly. An "after-footer-on-Saturday" sausage fight in the juniors' room was about his mark; he was in his element then.

And Billy was included in the invitation. He wondered how that was! Why should he and Travers be bracketed together in this significant manner? How did Mrs. Patterson know that they were—he meant, had been—chums? However, he had to go, and so he proceeded to the tree beneath whose shade Sir Billy had stretched his listless length—what there was of it—and silently handed him the invitation.

"She wants you to come, too," he observed stiffly. "Meet you at the gravel when it's time."

At 4.30, to the second, two top-hatted, Eton-coated, and irreproachably gloved young gentlemen presented themselves at the Head's front door and rang the bell. Mr. Saunders gravely ushered them through the hall and so on to the lawn,

where the Head, Mrs. Patterson, and their three children were gathered together in the shade, making a happy family group, innocent-looking and peaceful enough to disarm the awkwardness of anyone but Parsnip.

Tea—and such a tea!—was brought out by a white-capped maid, and the boys fell to. And really, you know, Parsnip soon began to call himself an ass for having funk'd coming, for the Head didn't worry them a bit—just made jokes and danced the baby on his knee precisely as any ordinary man would have done.

And presently the children dragged Sir Billy off to see the rabbits, and the Head, suddenly finding he had a letter to write, Parsnip was left alone with Mrs. Patterson.

After finishing his letter, the Head went out and helped show Billy the rabbits, after which they all moved on to the paddock and interviewed the horse and the rough Shetland pony. Then they invaded the kitchen-garden, and at length got back to the lawn, where they found Mrs. Patterson and Parsnip walking up and down together, and talking "no end."

Yes; Parsnip was talking, and Billy noticed with gladness how changed his face was—how much happier he looked—what a better fellow he seemed all over!

"Carew and I have made great friends," said Mrs. Patterson, with a smile, "and he has told me what his nickname is!"

"And Travers has quite cut me out," cried the Head. "These young people won't let him out of their sight."

Thus this most pleasant party ended, for the chapel bell was tolling for evensong.

"I say," said Parsnip, as they crossed the gravel, "she is a good sort! She's comforted me awfully, Billy!"

He slipped his hand inside his friend's arm.

"She told me why you didn't hit me back, Billy. I say, I was a beast! You'll forgive me, won't you, Billy?"

"Of course," said Billy, in an off-hand way. "I forgave you last Sunday, old man!"

And so after chapel that evening, being good friends again, they walked round arm-in-arm, talking of many things.

The Top Room.

School v. Old Greys was always a popular cricket match. Not a few swagger county bats and men from the Varsity elevens turned up to see what sort of stuff Present Greyhouse was made of. This term there was an unusually large gathering of old boys, thanks to the energetic invitations sent out by one of the masters, Mr. Phillips, who, an Old-Grey himself, was this year acting as secretary to the O.G. Club. And as this gathering was responsible for a very singular occurrence, I must take you back a dozen years and begin the tale at the proper place.

It was about the middle of a Christmas term that a senior, named Parsons, told Moody, whose inches were not many, and who composed part of the tail of the Lower Fourth, to run "down town" (as going into the village was termed) and buy him a sixpenny packet of cigarettes at Mother Cadby's. At that time Mother Cadby's was in bounds to all boys who were allowed leave west. Only the Sixth and the Upper Fifth enjoyed leave west—the remainder had to keep "east" of the school when they took walks abroad if they didn't want to be gated or flogged. If one desired to go west it was necessary to obtain a pass from one's Form-master.

The time came when Mother Cadby was excommunicated by the school authorities for giving "tick," lending money, and so forth. But at the period I am speaking of she was allowed to trade with the boys, although the old Head, Dr. Leicester, as he walked down the village, often glanced suspiciously at her shop windows.

He was beginning to distrust the old woman; and rightly. In spite of the fact that she hadn't a shadow of a licence, Mother Cadby used to purvey dry packet tobacco, infamous cigars, cheap cigarettes, and clay pipes! Yes, many a lordly senior have I seen wobbling up to the school with a face as white as a sheet—the result of smoking in Mother's back garden!

In this back garden was a little arbour, and here, it was reported, Mother Cadby would serve bottled beer to certain favoured customers. She was as wily an old caution, was Mother Cadby, as any I ever did meet. Her greedy little eyes twinkled under bushy brows, her nose dipped in like a hawk's beak, her chin seemed to be gradually approaching her nose, she had only got about two teeth, and her shrivelled skin hung in loops and layers from her face-bones. Of course, she couldn't help being ugly and ancient, but she could help advancing coin at wicked interest.

Before "school shops" were instituted there were thousands

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of Mother Cadby's in the land; they robbed the schoolboy much as Marryat's bumboat women used to prey on the simple sailor-man. Nowadays, the "shop," a beautifully neat, well-managed, well-paying concern, absorbs the public schoolboy's shillings and pence, and some school institution thrives on the large profits which most school shops yield. Of course, this is as it should be, but it is a prosaic way of buying tuck. A successful deal with Mother Cadby, when she was "out of bounds," gave one the same sort of thrill that the old-time smuggler must have enjoyed when he managed to dodge the coastguard!

"But I haven't got leave west, Parsons," said Moody. "Then do without leave," said Parsons; "and if you're caught I'll lick you. Get along now, and look sharp!"

With this threat Parsons limped away to his common-room—a severe hack at football having incapacitated him from playing, consequently leaving him a large amount of idle time to get through.

Young Moody pulled his cap over his eyes, stole round the chapel, climbed over the red iron railings, and scanned the road leading down the village. He could see neither master nor monitor. At the present time there are twenty masters at Greyhouse, but then there were but twelve. This being a Wednesday half, the masters not playing football would be all out golfing or cycling. As for the monitors—well, Parsons was in the Fifteen, and it was not likely that a monitor would go out of his way to turn back a fellow who was fagging for Parsons—that prime favourite with the crowd on the touchline.

So Moody—not at all liking the job, but knowing that he must go through with it—trotted stealthily down the road, keeping a very sharp eye open as he sped on his way.

He reached the shop in safety—not a soul connected with Greyhouse did he even catch a glimpse of. Mother Cadby was standing at her door.

"Well, what is it?" she asked sourly.

"Packet of cigarettes, please, Mrs. Cadby."

"Cigarettes! What does a baby like you want with cigarettes? Besides, I only sell sweets and cakes," she added in a tone of great innocence; "I'm not a tobacconist."

"Oh, come," retorted Moody, gathering confidence, "that won't wash, you know, Mother! Every chap knows you sell baccy. I say, hurry up! I haven't got leave!"

"I'll trouble you to be more respectful," retorted Mrs. Cadby. "Mother, indeed! Little boys should learn better manners."

"Oh, I say—stop this jawing! Look here, they're for Parsons—not for myself."

"Oh, Mr. Parsons!" returned Mother, in a less surly tone.

"Yes, I know Mr. Parsons. Well, how many?"

"A sixpenny packet."

"All right," she grumbled, as she turned into the shop.

"Come in, and I'll see if there's any left."

There was a quick step on the path. Moody turned his head. By Jove—Phillips!

Phillips was captain of Greyhouse. He had been "up" for a scholarship at Cambridge, and was now returning from the station, gladstone bag in hand.

"Hi, Moody!" he called. "Here, I want you!" Moody went obediently, for he happened to be Phillips's fag.

"Yes, Phillips?"

"Just cart this bag up to my study, and then get tea. The Head said he wanted to see me directly I got back, so I'll take a short-cut through the garden."

Phillips looked very bright. He had done excellent papers—he intended to show Dr. Leicester his questions—and had every reason to believe that he had won the scholarship.

As Moody took over the bag Mother Cadby waddled to the door with: "Here's the cigarettes. Tell Mr. Parsons it's the only sort I have left."

Phillips glanced inquiringly at his fag.

"Did Parsons send you to buy those cigarettes?" he demanded.

There was nothing for it but to admit it, and Moody did so, though with evident reluctance.

"Have you got leave west?"

"No, Phillips."

"That makes it worse—well, take my bag. If Parsons sees you, tell him you're fagging for me. Never mind the cigarettes."

Moody slunk off with the bag, and Phillips strode into the shop, Mother Cadby retiring before him.

"Now, Mrs. Cadby, just listen to me. I don't want to do you any harm, but if I hear of your selling any more tobacco to the fellows I'll report the matter to the Head."

And with this one incisive warning he turned on his heel and left her. Mother Cadby sank into a chair, trembling. She knew who Phillips was, although he never entered her shop, and she stood in great awe of him. She knew that he would keep his word, too.

Twenty minutes later Phillips walked into Parsons' room.

"Parsons, I understand you sent Moody down town to buy cigarettes, and without even a pass?"

"Well, what if I did?"

"Only this—that I've told Mother Cadby I'll report her to the Head if she sells any more tobacco to any Greyhouse fellow. In addition, I told Moody not to bother about your cigarettes."

"Well, that was pretty good cheek of you. I must say," retorted Parsons, "and bad for the kid, because I shall have to thrash him now."

"If," said Phillips, coming up to where Parsons was sprawling, "you thrash Moody, I will thrash you."

And Parsons, like Mother Cadby, was aware of Phillips's splendid reputation for keeping his word.

A Cowardly Revenge.

I know of few states of mind so unenviable as that of a small boy who has earned the displeasure—even the hatred—of a vindictive big fellow of bullying propensities. The small boy knows that the big fellow is biding his time—awaiting a favourable opportunity to wreak his vengeance on the object of his dislike—and the small boy's life, consequently, becomes an unending stretch of fear and trembling. He is at school, penned in, under the same roof as his persecutor. They probably meet a dozen times a day, and instinct tells the small boy that the big one has not forgotten. He is merely waiting.

A fellow like Phillips, had he been guilty of a gross avoidance of duty, would have administered, on the first offence, a few sharp words of rebuke; on the second, a few sharp cuts with a drill-stick. Then it would have been over. But Parsons was made of different clay. His nature it was to nurse his revenge. Had he been a straightforward fellow, recognising when he was in the wrong—as he undoubtedly was over this matter—he would have accepted the situation with as good a grace as possible. Viewed in any light, the whole affair was discreditable to him. If he wished to buy an article of so contraband a nature as a packet of cigarettes, he might have bought it himself. True, he had a game leg, but it would not have hurt him to have limped as far as Mother Cadby's. Then again, it would have been bad enough sending Moody on the errand had Moody possessed a pass down town from his Form-master; but, as it happened, he caused Moody to commit a double breach of rules. Hence his own fault was a most heinous one. He did not wish to come to blows with Phillips, because he had made sufficient acquaintance with Phillips's prowess with the gloves to know that it would not be wise to seek further acquaintance with Phillips without the gloves. He was not a coward, but he recognised the captain's superior ability as a boxer.

However, Parsons fully intended to get even with Moody, and he at length hit on an idea. It would hurt Moody much more than physical violence, and at the same time render unnecessary any conflict with Phillips.

Espying Moody one day in a solitary part of the quad., he hailed him. Moody, having perceived the enemy, had glided behind a pillar, but Parsons's eyes were sharp.

"Come here, Moody."

"Now for it," thought Moody, vaguely wondering whether punishment would be administered by boot or hand. It proved to be worse than that, however. "Why didn't you bring me those cigarettes the other day?"

"Because Phillips told me I wasn't to."

"How did Phillips know they were for me?"

"He heard Mother Cadby say so."

"How did Mother Cadby know?"

"I told her they were for you."

"What on earth did you do that for?"

"Because, before I told her that, she said she hadn't got any cigarettes."

"And so you were mug enough to give me away! I believe you told Phillips, too."

"He heard Mother Cadby say so first," protested Moody.

"As Phillips was passing she came out of the shop with some, saying that I was to tell you they were the only sort she had left, and Phillips heard her."

Parsons knew that this was quite a reasonable and probably a truthful version of the affair, but he preferred not to recognise it as such. He caught hold of Moody's ear, and gave it a twist. Moody set his teeth, and prepared to take his licking like a man. To his surprise, however, Parsons let him go. But the relief was only momentary.

"I haven't time to lick you now," said Parsons, "it must wait. Probably it'll have to wait till Last Day. Yes, I think it must keep till then. Something for you to look forward to. If you say anything about it to Phillips you'll get a double dose."

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand school serial will appear in next Wednesday's issue of "The Gem Library." Please order your copy in advance. Price 1d.)

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NEXT
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"THE SCHEMER!"

THE STRIKE AT ST. JIM'S

(Continued from page 22.)

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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."

F. Dobson, P.O. Box 179, Baberton, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 16.

F. H. Leggott, P.O. Box 73, Baberton, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 15-16.

F. Harris, 56, Plein Street, Cape Town, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Australia, age 14-15.

C. Marchant, St. John's Avenue, New Town, Tasmania, wishes to correspond with readers with a view to exchanging postcards.

F. Ninow, 91, Great Brunswick Street, Turfontein, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers of "The Magnet" and "The Gem."

R. Telfer, Lane Street, off Brazil Street, Broken Hill, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in Japan with a view to exchanging stamps.

F. H. Roberts, 16, Jenkin Street, Fremantle, West Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader.

J. Denner, 38, Seventh Street, La Rochelle, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in Australia and America, age 16-17.

R. C. Kay, 60, Signal Road, Bloemfontein, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 18-20.

B. W. Veary, Railway Bureau, S.A.R., Bloemfontein, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 18-20.

H. Beardall, care of Mr. Lewell, Clarence Road, Rochdale, Sydney, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England.

D. M. McRae, Gloucester, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in Gloucester (England), age 16-18.

A. L. Mincham, Operator, Telegraph Office, Coolgardie, West Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers in the United Kingdom, age 14-16.

L. R. Wiggins, care of Tasmania Hardwood Corporation, Tasmania, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in any part of the world.

J. Hopwood, care of C.P.R. Telegraph Co., Box 302, Nelson, British Columbia, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in Australia or New Zealand.

P. Lepper, 16, Jenkin Street, South Fremantle, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England or Ireland, age 17-21, and E. Matthews, of the same address, wishes to correspond with girl readers in Wales, age 17-21.

C. Souza, 11, Woosung Terrace, Shanghai, China, wishes to correspond with a Catholic Irish girl reader, age 15.

J. Acaster, care of Post Office, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in England, age 18-21.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

"Here's the Head!" All eyes turned on the doorway of the School House. The Head had come down, and the juniors' hearts smote them as they saw how pale and worn he looked.

Arthur Augustus set the example. He advanced towards the Head, taking off his silk hat in his graceful fashion.

"Pway allow me to apologise most humbly for my recent webellious conduct, Dr. Holmes!" he said; "and also to thank you for your great kindness in allowin' us to have our pets back to the school."

"Hear, hear!"

"We all apologise, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"All of us, sir!"

"And we hope you know that we didn't mean any disrespect, sir," said Blake, quite anxious upon that point.

The Head frowned a little.

"Your conduct has been what I can only call outrageous," he said. "It has caused me very much pain and anxiety—"

"Oh, sir! We're sorry!"

"Vewy sowwy indeed, sir!"

"I accept your assurance upon that point," said the Head. "If anything of the kind should occur again, I shall be compelled to take stern measures. If this rebellion had continued, you would have put me to the pain of expelling boys whom I should be very sorry to see leave this school. But upon your promise to make up for your disorderly conduct by good behaviour in the future, I shall forgive you!"

"We all promise, sir!"

"Honah bwight, sir!"

"Very well; the matter is ended now."

"Hurrah! Good old boy—good old boy! The Head's a brick—the Head's a brick—the Head's a brick!"

Dr. Holmes looked round in astonishment. It was very flattering, no doubt, to be regarded as a "brick" by his boys, but it was "cheeky," to say the least of it, for anyone to address him in that manner.

"Good old sport!" went on the shrill voice, as Clifton Dane vainly tried to quiet his parrot. "Old sport! Polly wants sugar—Polly wants sugar! Go and eat coke! Hurrah!"

There was a yell of laughter.

"Dear me!" said the Head, in amazement. "Who—What is that—"

"It is the parrot, sir," said Mr. Railton, laughing, in spite of himself.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

The parrot screamed again.

"Hurrah! Give 'em beans, boys! Pile in, pile in! Polly wants sugar! Levison's a rotter—Levison's a rotter! Go home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Polly wants sugar! Poor Polly—poor old Polly! Hurrah! The Head's a brick! Give him some sugar! He's a brick!"

The Head laughed heartily.

"Please take the animals away," he said. "I must observe that that parrot is a very clever bird. Whom does he belong to?"

"He's mine, sir," said Clifton Dane.

"Did you teach him to say those things?"

The Canadian junior coloured.

"Well, sir, I—I suppose he picked them up through hearing the fellows talk in my study. He picks up things very quickly, sir."

"In your study!" said the Head. "I understood that the pets were not allowed in the House, Dane!"

"Oh, my hat!" said the junior, in dismay. "I—I mean, my goodness, sir! I—I—"

The Head smiled.

"There's no harm in your having a parrot in your study sometimes, Dane," he said kindly; "I give you my permission to do so. I am afraid dogs and monkeys cannot be allowed in the studies, but a parrot can do no harm."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"Hurrah!" screeched the parrot. "Give him some sugar! The Head's a brick! Give him some sugar, boys! Pull his whiskers! Hurrah!"

The Head retreated into the house, laughing.

The strike at St. Jim's was over, and, as all the fellows agreed, all was well that ended well!

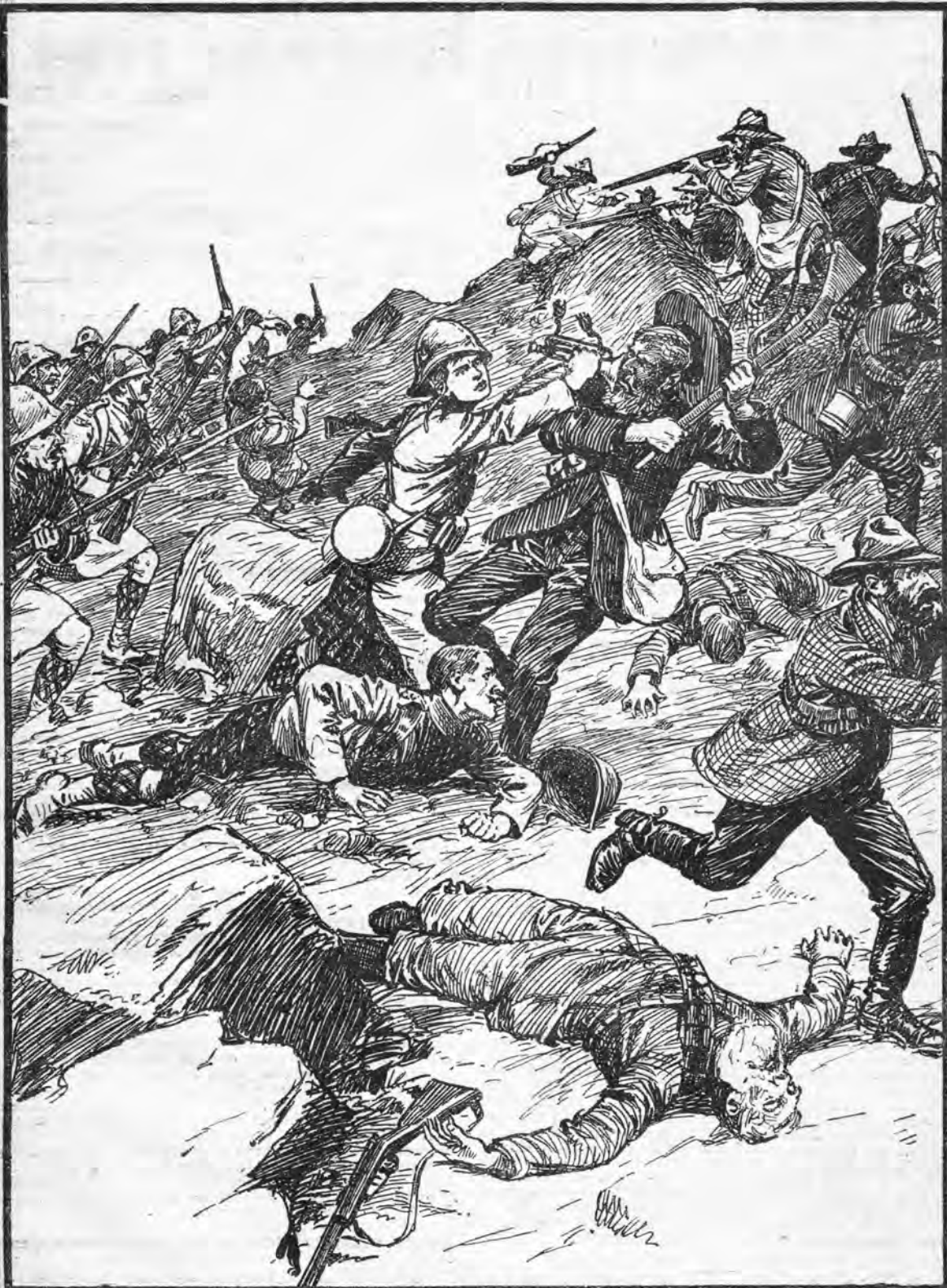
THE END.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 277.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

FAMOUS FIGHTS FOR THE FLAG. No. 4.

Specially drawn for "THE GEM" Library, by C. H. Blake.

On May 29th, 1900, at the battle of Doorn Kop, in the last South African War, the Gordon Highlanders with a gallant rush carried the enemy's position by storm, the Boers fleeing before them for their lives. During the charge, a captain in the Gordon Highlanders tripped on the rough ground, and for the moment lay helpless, at the mercy of a burly burgher; but Bugler McAllister, springing forward, dashed his bugle full in the Boer's face just in the nick of time, saving his officer's life by his prompt action.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 277.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



WHOM TO WRITE TO :
EDITOR,
"THE GEM" LIBRARY
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY.
 EVERY MONDAY
 AND
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

For Next Wednesday.

"THE SCHEMER!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

In this grand, long, complete tale of the juniors of St. Jim's, Levison, who is commonly known as the cad of the Form, is dismayed at being taken away from St. Jim's by his father, who has suffered a severe financial loss. Levison bears his misfortune with very ill grace, and declares that he will come back, by hook or crook. He manages to keep his word, and the trouble he causes Tom Merry and his chums thereby is related in Martin Clifford's own inimitable way next Wednesday in

"THE SCHEMER!"

"GEM" WAISTCOAT COMPETITION RESULT.

The novel and interesting "Waistcoat" Competition which appeared in "The Gem" Library, No. 270, resulted in an immense number of tasteful and attractive designs which, if made up into actual waistcoats, would draw large crowds round the windows of any City hosiery who exhibited them. Such richness of colour and originality of pattern as many of the competing designs displayed would serve to bewilder the one and only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy himself. The task of judging such an array of artistic efforts was naturally no light one, but the final selection was left to your Editor, Mr. R. J. Macdonald, "The Gem" special artist, who expressed himself as highly pleased with the artistic quality of the work submitted to him.

The waistcoat finally selected as the first prize-winner was a most tastefully-coloured creation in brown, blue, and green, with a green-and-black tie. This was sent in by Miss Joyce Hart, 63, Regent Street, Gloucester, to whom the prize of ten shillings has therefore been forwarded. The second prize of five shillings goes to Master James Graham, 10, Seaford Road, Dundee, Scotland, whose waistcoat was a tasteful grey, powdered with gold fleur-de-lis, set off by a red-and-black striped tie. The other seven winning waistcoats were only very slightly behind the foregoing in beauty of design, and it is unfortunate that space does not allow me to describe them all in detail. The names and addresses of the seven prize-winners are as follows: Miss Bessie Noblet, 51, Mount Street, Fleetwood, Lancashire, and Harry S. Swain, 48, Sandgate Road, Folkestone (half-a-crown each); and W. Midiomter, Park Cottage, Upper Abbey Road, Belvedere, Kent; W. A. Wells, 27, Marcia Road, Old Kent Road, London, S.E.; Miss Elsie Chippendale, 29, Evershot Road, Tollyington Park, N.; Miss Phyllis Broadhurst, 134, East Dulwich Grove, S.E.; and Fred. A. Hand, 12, Northampton Street, Julian Road, Bath (one shilling each). In addition to these prizes, I have decided to award a special prize to one of my fifteen-year-old girl readers—Miss Elsie Mason, 21, Port Arthur Road, Nottingham—who sent in the most exquisite design worked in silk. This was so artistically and beautifully carried out in a wonderful flower pattern that I felt my clever girl reader deserved special recognition of her skill. I am, therefore, sending her a first-class lady's wristlet watch, with my hearty congratulations.

Replies in Brief.

"A Puzzled Reader" (Essex).—Very many thanks for your letter. With regard to the problem you sent me, I must inform you that if you look carefully at it you will note that

in the first instance the men buy two drinks more than the second lot. Because the number of the men and the price of the drinks are the same in both cases, it does not necessarily mean that the total amount of each bill will agree. Men's thirsts differ!

G. Holland (Canada).—You are still very young, and have fully another six years to grow in, therefore, do not undergo any treatment.

B. Tolley (Ireland).—You can obtain outfits of the various nations you name from Messrs. Gamage's, of High Holborn, London, E.C.

Will Mr. James A. Raeburn, of Glasgow, who on March 28th sent me one of his stories to read, kindly let me know his address, which he forgot to put on his letter or MS. I should like to write him a personal letter.

HOW TO WRITE A PICTURE-PLOT.—No. 3.

By a Successful Photo-Playwright.

Assuming that you have perused Articles 1 and 2, and have made some attempt to write out a plot, I will proceed to explain what is now the universally accepted form of the scenario. There are, of course, producers who have their own particular fads; but they need not trouble the beginner. The scenario is divided up as follows: Title, cast, synopsis, scene-plot, and scenario proper. Cast contains a list of the principal characters—and when I say "principal" I don't mean half a dozen—for an ordinary picture story such as you can see on the screen, lasting about eight minutes, three leading characters are sufficient. Give a brief description of each—just enough to suggest the type of person in view—and mention the connection between the characters in the story. Specimen: "Harry Burnis, impecunious artist, in love with Mildred," etc., etc.

Synopsis.—If any one part of a scenario demands more care than another, it is undoubtedly the synopsis. A scenario editor has hundreds of plots sent in every day, and he and his staff are expected to keep up to date in dealing with them. For that reason a scenario is generally judged upon its synopsis, and provided that is attractive and suitable, the plot is put aside for a second reading. A good plot, with a poorly written synopsis, therefore, is likely to be rejected on that score, and vice versa; only, in the latter case, your scenario would be returned to you, and an offer of 10s. 6d. or so made for the idea of the story. Opinions differ on this point, but I am a believer in short, but well-written synopses, and rarely go above 250 words myself. The true test is—don't cut your length to the detriment of your meaning; in other words, get the story of your plot in as few words as possible. If you can't do justice to it in 250, then use another hundred or so; but never exceed 500. Take for your motto, "The story's the thing!"—to misquote—and keep the main thread of your plot before you when writing synopsis. Once it is written, you must revise, and, where possible, cut down as many times as you have patience to. A famous British producer frankly admits that he revises his scenarios at least eight or nine times ere they are finally passing them for production.

Scene-Plot.—Really nothing to do with your plot, but helpful to the producer inasmuch that it gives him some idea of the settings required. The scene-plot is merely a list of the different settings, with the numbers of the scenes laid therein appended, after the following manner:

Settings.	Scenes.
Garden, with rustic seat.....	1—3, etc.
Drawing-room	2, etc.

(Another of these splendid Articles next Wednesday.)

THE EDITOR.