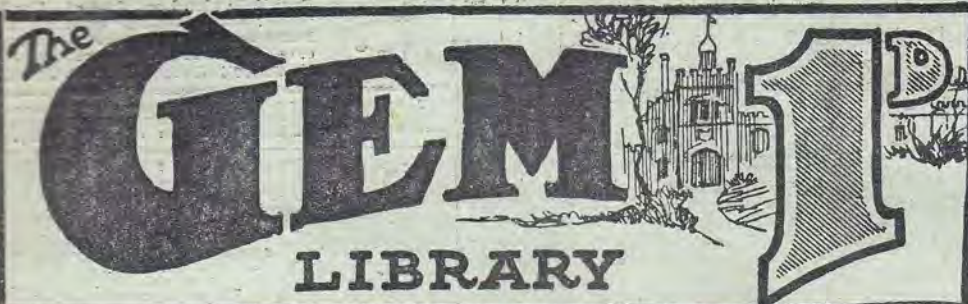


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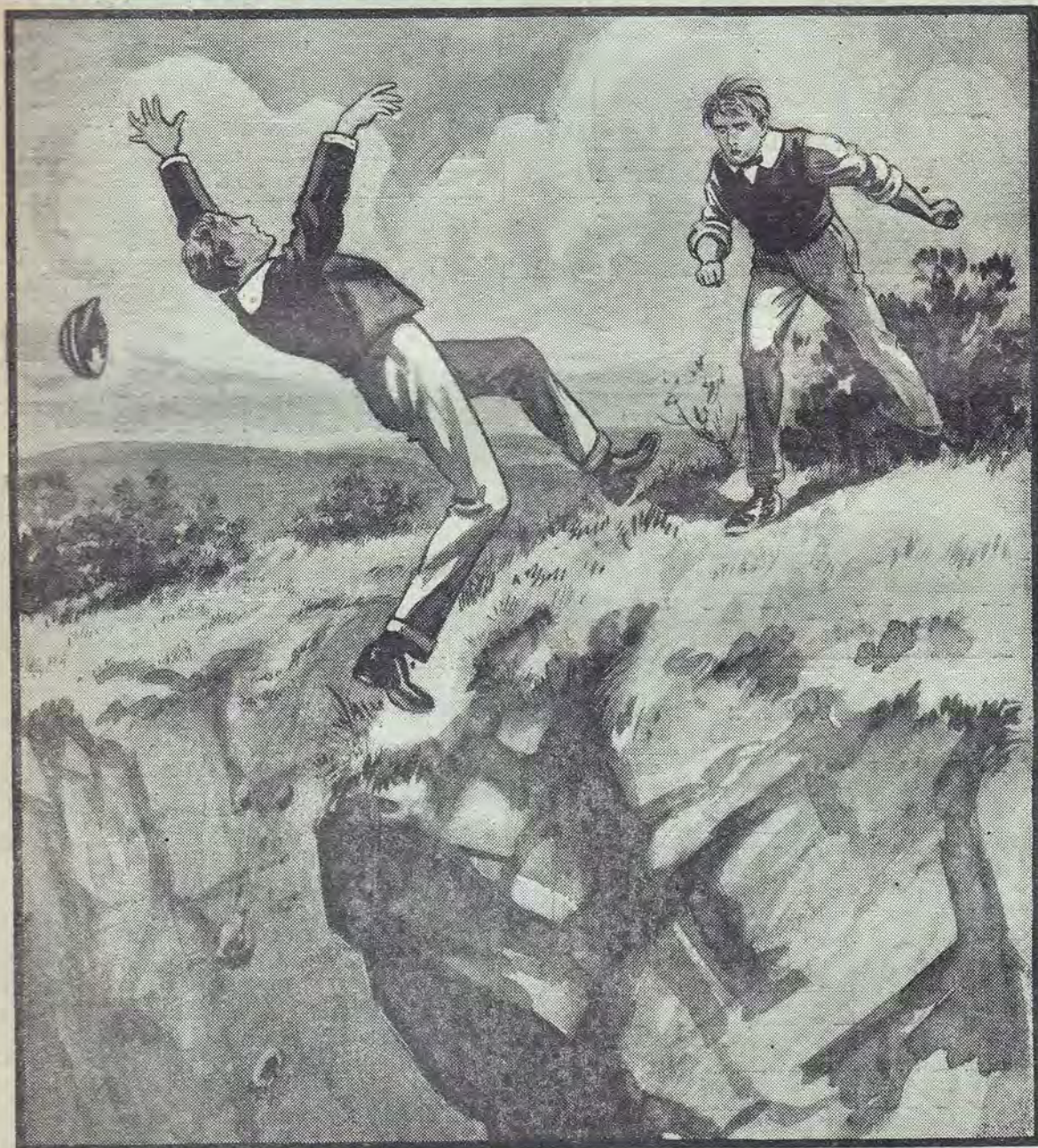
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The angry junior's fist shot out, and with a cry Lowther reeled back and crashed over the edge of the old quarry! (See the long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled: "Friends Divided," in this issue.)



The above sketch illustrates one of the many thrilling incidents in the Fine Detective Tale in this week's **PLUCK**. Out on Friday.
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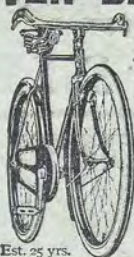


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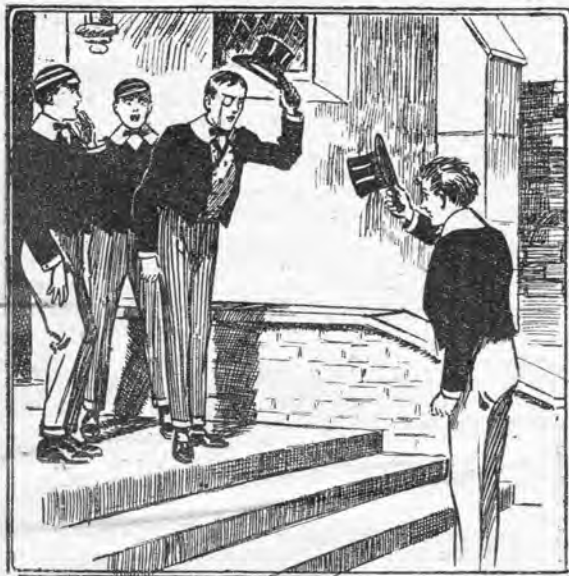
"PLAYING TO WIN!" & "THE CORINTHIAN!"

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CHAPTER 1. Very Red!

"DID you ever?" said Manners.
"Well, hardly ever," murmured Monty Lowther.
And Digby of the Fourth, who was a great French scholar, chimed in, in Fourth Form French:

"Jammy!"

By which he probably meant *jamais*.

The subject of these remarks was crossing the quadrangle of St. Jim's, from the gates, towards the School House. The group of juniors on the steps of the School House had their eyes upon him at once; and, indeed, he was rather a striking person to look at. He was evidently a new boy, as he was a stranger to the eyes of Tom Merry & Co. He was dressed in Etons, and wore a silk topper; but the topper did not quite conceal a very remarkable head of hair. The hair was very thick, not to say bushy, and it was of a most brilliant and striking red in hue. There were red-haired boys at St. Jim's—there were sandy boys—but all the juniors agreed that nothing quite like this had ever been seen at the school before. The new boy's hair was not merely red. It was fiery. It was aggressive. It was arresting.

And it attracted general attention at once.

At school all new boys are, as a matter of course, looked up and down, and round about, and asked personal questions. As Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth said, in his sporting slang, a new fellow was expected to give his name, age, form, and starting price. But of all the new boys who had come to St. Jim's since the days of Henry VIII., probably not one had been the recipient of such immediate and marked attention as this youth, who was strolling across the quadrangle with an easy air, as if it belonged to him.

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Tale of TOM MERRY & CO. of St. Jim's.

BY
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Bai Jove! It's wathah stwikin'," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth. "If gingah shows pluck, as the pwoverb says, that chap must be a wegulah hewo."

"Looks like a swot," said Lowther.

"I weally do not see that he looks like a swot, deah boy."

"He's well-read," explained Lowther. "Well red! See?"

"Bai Jove! Is that a wotten pun?"

"No, it isn't, fathead. It's a jolly good pun!" said Lowther warmly.

"Chance for the St. Jim's Fire Brigade here," said Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "The chap may think you are cacklin' at him, and wegard us as a set of wude boundahs."

"Oh, he wouldn't be put out by that!" said Monty Lowther blandly. "It wouldn't be easy to put him out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's coming to the School House," growled Herries. "I don't see why he couldn't be put in the New House. We've got enough funny merchants here—D'Arcy and Lowther."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Well, he can't help the colour of his hair," said Tom Merry, "and red is a good colour, anyway! Gentlemen, don't forget your manners."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway be décent, deah boys."

The stranger had arrived at the steps of the School House by this time. He looked at the group of smiling juniors collected there; and Arthur Augustus, who was nothing if not polite, raised his hat very courteously. The newcomer raised his hat in reply, and then the full glory of his hair, so to speak, burst upon the juniors. Blake covered his eyes

Next Wednesday:

"PLAYING TO WIN!" AND "THE CORINTHIAN!"

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with his hand, and Monty Lowther pretended to faint. Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and gave them a severe look of reprobation, and then addressed the newcomer in the most affable manner. If the wild man from Borneo, or one of Othello's famous acquaintances, whose heads "do grow beneath their shoulders," had come to St. Jim's, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would have treated him with unfailing politeness.

"Good affahnnoon, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "Are you goin' to belong to the School House?"

"Yes."

"Then you are vewy welcome."

"Jolly glad to see you," said Monty Lowther, recovering from his faint, and addressing the new-comer affably. "I heard you were dead."

The new boy stared at him.

"Did you?" he asked.

"Yes. I read it in our history-book in clas," said Lowther blandly. "You fellows will remember the passage: 'Rufus was slain by an arrow discharged by Sir Walter Tyrell, while hunting in the New Forest.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The new boy turned almost as red as his hair.

"Oh, draw it mild," he said. "I say, I suppose this is St. Jim's, isn't it?"

"Certainly," said Lowther.

"Oh, good! I thought, perhaps, I'd dropped into a lunatic asylum by mistake."

"Oh!"

"Ahem!"

"Not at all, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "Lowthah is the only one here, and we let him wun on because he can't help it."

"Why, you ass—" began Lowther warmly.

"Let my hair alone, for goodness' sake," said the new boy. "I'm fed up on it. I've been called Rufus, or Carrots, or Copper Nob ever since I can remember. Give it a rest. I can't help my hair, any more than you can help your face."

Lowther glared. He was a true humourist, inasmuch as he had no appreciation whatever for humorous remarks directed against himself.

"What's the matter with my face?" he roared.

"Don't ask me. The question is, what isn't the matter with it?" said the new boy calmly.

Lowther pushed back his cuffs.

"I can see that you've come to St. Jim's specially to get a thick ear, young Rufus," he remarked, "and I'll—"

Tom Merry and Manners seized their chum, and jammed him against the stone balustrade of the steps.

"Cheese it!" said Manners.

"Chuck it!" said Tom Merry.

"Look here—"

"Shut up! You shouldn't chip the new chap—"

"Yaas, wathah; it's a shame!" said Arthur Augustus.

"A burning shame," said Lowther, recovering his good humour, as he saw an opportunity for another pun.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's your name, kid?" asked Tom Merry kindly.

"Rook—Arthur Rook."

"Come in, Wook, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I'll show you to the House Mastah's study, if you like."

"Thanks!"

"Not at all, deah boy. Come in."

And Arthur Augustus, in the most courteous manner in the world, marched the new boy into the house, and knocked at the door of Mr. Railton's study. The School House master was there, and as Rook entered, with his hat in his hand, Mr. Railton glanced at him. He did not appear to notice the striking "top-knot" of the new boy.

"If you please, sir, this is Wook, a new chap," said Arthur Augustus.

"Thank you, D'Arcy. Come in, Rook."

Arthur Augustus retired and closed the study door. He re-joined his friends on the steps of the School House.

"You ass," growled Monty Lowther. "If you hadn't been in such a hurry, we might have planted him on the New House. Figgins & Co. would have been welcome to him."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to allow you youngstahs to chip Wook on account of his cawwotty hair. It is certainly vewy wemakable, but it is quite poss. that he is sensitive about it—you nevah know."

"Go hon!"

"I shall be up against anything of the sort," said D'Arcy firmly; "and even if he is put into our study, I shall make him welcome."

"Good old Gussy," chuckled Tom Merry. "Always the giddy champion of the oppressed. But Gussy is quite right, and it's up to you fellows to take his fatherly advice. There will be enough chipping from the New House chaps, I expect."

And when the new boy came out from his interview with Mr. Railton, he found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy waiting for him, prepared to show him that graceful courtesy which stamps—or should stamp—the caste of Vere de Vere.

CHAPTER 2.

Chucked Out!

"HULLLO, what price carrots?"

Levison of the Fourth asked that impertinent question, as he met the new boy and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the Fourth Form passage.

Rook flushed.

"You ought to carry round an extinguisher with you," observed Mellish, who was with Levison. "You're dangerous."

"You'll find me dangerous if you don't ring off!" said Rook angrily. "Chuck it!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah your wemarks as wude, you two wottahs," said Arthur Augustus severely. "Especially as Wook is to be your study-mate!"

"What?" exclaimed Mellish and Levison together.

"You said No. 8, didn't you, Wook, deah boy?"

"That's it," said Rook. "Mr. Railton says there are three in the study already. 'I'm going to make a fourth.'"

"Yaas, that's Lumley-Lumley, and these two wottahs, Levison and Mellish."

"Look here, that freak isn't coming into our study," said Levison warmly.

"No fear!" grunted Mellish. "He can go back to old Railton and ask for another. We don't want him in No. 8."

"It isn't a question of what you want, but of what you're gong to have," said Rook coolly. "This the show, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus, opening the door of No. 8 Study in the Fourth-Form passage. "Hallo, here's Lumlay! Lumlay, deah boy, pway allow me to intwoduce Wook, a new boy. Mr. Wailton has put him in this study."

"Trot in," said Harold Lumley-Lumley, looking at the new boy curiously. "Brought your extinguisher with you?"

"Weally, Lumlay—"

"Oh, let him run on," said Rook. "I'm used to it—I've had it ever since I was born."

"I say, I guess I'm sorry," said Lumley-Lumley quickly. "Don't mind me. Come in, Rook, my infant, and make yourself at home."

"Thanks!"

"That red-headed freak isn't coming into my study!" bawled Levison, following the two juniors in. "I won't stand it."

"Weally, Levison—"

"And I won't, either," said Mellish. "I should be afraid of fire! He, he, he!"

"Oh you two can go and eat coke," said Lumley-Lumley. "If Railton's put him in here, here he stops; and, anyway, he's an improvement on you two chaps!"

"I won't have it!" roared Levison. "Look here, we're enough in this study, as it is, without having a blessed fire-brand shoved in on us. Rook, or Crow, or whatever your name is, you can go back to Railton and ask him to put you in No. 6. That's D'Arcy's study, and he can have you, as he seems so precious fond of carrots."

"Levison, you wottah—"

"I'm not going back to Railton," said Rook calmly. "This study will suit me, I think."

"Bravo! Stick to your guns, deah boy."

Levison and Mellish advanced upon the new boy, exchanging a glance. Both of them were bigger than Rook, and he did not look a very difficult subject to tackle.

"I tell you Railton will shove you somewhere else if you ask him," said Levison.

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(See column 2, page 26 of this issue.)



Levison went down with a bump, Rook on top of him. The new boy dragged the water-jug from the wash-stand, and swamped its contents over Levison. "Groogh! Groogh! Ow!" "How do you like it?" grinned Rook. (See Chapter 7.)

"I'm not going to ask him."
 "We don't want you here!" said Mellish.
 "Sorry!"
 "Then you won't go?"
 "No!"

"Do you want to be chucked out on your neck?" demanded Levison.

Rook measured him with his eye.

"Well, yes, if you can do it!" he said.

Levison made a spring at him. Lumley-Lumley jumped up from the table, and pulled that article of furniture to one side, to give them plenty of room.

"Go it!" he said encouragingly. "Give me your topper, Rook—I'll hold it! Pile in, ye cripples!"

Levison and Rook seemed to be waltzing round the study. But Levison soon found that it was a little more than he could do to "chuck" out the new boy. He called to Mellish.

"Lend a hand here, Mellish!"

"Righto!" said Mellish.

He rushed forward to lend a hand. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass dropped from his eye, and he pushed back his spotless cuffs, and stepped into the way.

"Faith play's a jewel, deah boy," he said. "Pway put up your hands."

"Hear, hear!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Let's see you wallop Gussy, Mellish."

Mellish backed away. He knew that Arthur Augustus, elegant youth as he was, was a particularly tough customer in a "scrap."

"I'm not going to fight you, you ass," he growled.

"Yaas, you are!" said Arthur Augustus, giving the cad of the Fourth a tap on the nose which drew a wild yell from Mellish. "I'm not going to have the twouble of gettin' weady for nothin'. Put up your paws, you wottah!"

"Ow!" roared Mellish. "You! Yah! He retreated out of the study into the passage under a shower of blows.

"Wotten funk," said Arthur Augustus, jamming his monocle into his eye again. "Go it, Wook, deah boy. Wallon him!"

The two struggling juniors neared the door. They suddenly parted, and a flying form went through the doorway and crashed upon Mellish. But it was not Rook—it was Levison.

"Ow!"

"Yah!"

"Hawway!" shouted Arthur Augustus, as Mellish and Levison rolled over one another in the passage. "Bwavo!" Three Shell fellows were coming down the passage—Kangaroo, and Clifton Dane, and Bernard Glyn, the chums of the end study. They stopped just in time to avoid treading on the sprawling Fourth-Formers.

"Hullo! What's the row?" demanded Kangaroo. "Those two wottahs have been extremely wude to a new boy," said Arthur Augustus. "They have been chucked out. They wanted to go for him two for one, the fivightful wottahs."

"Oho!" said Kangaroo. "That sort of thing ought to be stamped out! Come on, kids—stamp it out!" "Yow-ow!" roared Mellish and Levison simultaneously, as the Cornstalk and Co. walked upon them. "Owl Gerroff! Yah! Oh!"

"We're stamping it out—" "Ha, ha, ha!"

The Shell fellows did not exactly stamp; but they trod very hard, and they walked on grinning, leaving Mellish and Levison covered with dust and panting with rage. The two cads of the Fourth did not enter the study again. They shook their fists at Rook, and tramped away—probably in search of a clothes-brush. They needed one.

"You'll be all wight here, Wook, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "If those wottahs bother you, thump them again!"

"Righto!" grinned Rook. And Arthur Augustus retired. Lumley-Lumley looked rather queerly at his new study-mate. Rook caught his glance, and flushed.

"Let my hair alone!" he exclaimed.

"I'm not going to touch it!" said Lumley-Lumley humourously. "It's dangerous to play with the fire."

Rook came across the study to him, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Look here," he said. "I'm going to be in this study. I don't want any jokes about carrots, or fire, or blazes, or anything of that kind. See?"

"I guess so!"

"Then chuck it. You look a decent chap, and I'm willing to be friends. But I'm fed up on that subject—See?"

"Precisely!" said Lumley-Lumley, with unruffled calmness.

"Let it drop then. I'm liable to lose my temper when I'm chipped about it."

Lumley-Lumley chuckled.

"If you start fighting whenever you're chipped about it you'll have enough fights on your hands here," he said. "We don't stand on ceremony in the Fourth. You'll never be called anything but Carrots, or Coppertop, or Rufus, or something of the sort, all the time you're here. Better take it good-temperedly, and you'll get the less of it. That's my advice to you, I guess."

"Oh, rats!" said Rook.

"Thanks!" said Lumley-Lumley serenely. "I won't row with you—you'll have enough rows, I reckon, if you're going to get your rag out whenever you're chipped about your top-knot. What the dooce does it matter if a chap calls you Rufus?"

"Oh, go and eat coke," said Rook crossly. Lumley-Lumley laughed and left the study.

Rook was left alone in the room. The anger died out of his face, and a downcast, miserable look came over it. He crossed to the glass, and looked at his reflection in it, and shook his fist at the red head. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been quite right in his surmise—Arthur Rook was sensitive upon that subject. To a sensitive nature trifles light as air may give a deadly sting—and Rook had been deeply wounded by thoughtless banter which was carelessly uttered, and never intended to give pain.

CHAPTER 3.

An Interrupted Experiment.

THE TERRIBLE THREE of the Shell came into their study looking very ruddy and cheerful. They were fresh in from cricket practice, and ready for tea.

"I hear that new kid is in the Fourth," said Monty Lowther, as he ignited wood in the grate preparatory to making tea. "I've been thinking out a limerick about him to put in the next number of the 'Weekly.'"

"Oh, cheese it," said Tom Merry. "He mightn't like it." Stuff! How do you think this goes—"

"There's a kid in the Fourth who's named Rook, Whose napper resembles a book."

If you look at his head,
You can see that it's red,
If your eyes aren't too dazzled to look!"

"Red—read— See?" said Monty Lowther, explaining his pun at length, as he generally had to do.

"Eh?" said Manners. "What's that about the Red Sea?"

"Nothing about the Red Sea, ass!" roared Lowther. "Don't you see the pun? His head is red, and a book's read! See?"

"Yes, I see!" said Manners lazily. "Why is a book like the Red Sea? What's the answer? I give it up."

"You—you fathead—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry, who was looking into the cupboard. "Where's the crocks?"

"Blow the crocks!" said Lowther. "I'll tell you the limerick over again—"

"Oh, shurrup!" said Tom Merry. "Once is once too often! You're not going to put that rot in the 'Weekly.'"

"Rot?" demanded Lowther warmly. "It's a jolly good limerick!"

"Rats! How do you know whether Rook'd like it?"

"Bosh! I don't care twopence whether he likes it, or not!"

"I knew a chap once who had a big nose, and he was frightfully sensitive about it," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "Nobody cared twopence whether he had a big nose or a little nose, or whether he had a nose at all; but he always thought people were looking at his nose. You never can tell how people take these things. Let Rook's hair alone, in case he doesn't like jokes about it!"

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther. "I'm not going to waste my limerick!"

"Somebody's been here and borrowed our crocks," said Tom Merry. "There isn't a cup left, nor a saucer, either."

Jack Blake, of the Fourth, put his head in at the door.

"You fellows been borrowing our crocks?" he asked.

"No; somebody's been borrowing ours," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Is somebody standing a tea-party in the passage?"

"More likely that fathead Glyn taking them for his chemical mucks!" growled Lowther. "He's always doing it."

"If he's got my crocks—" said Blake wrathfully.

Gore, of the Shell, came out of his study, next to Tom Merry's, and glared in.

"You chaps got my cups and saucers?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha! No."

"Somebody has! I'll—I'll—"

"Let's go and see Glyn," said Blake.

The juniors hurried down the passage to the end study, wherein dwelt Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn, of the Shell. Bernard Glyn was a youthful inventor, and great on "stinks," as the juniors called chemistry. When he was engaged in chemical experiments, the end study was turned into a laboratory, and the smell thereof sometimes drove Kangaroo and Clifton Dane away, and sometimes drove them to violence. Glyn was a most enthusiastic experimenter; and when he was in need of vessels to contain his weird compounds he would raid them out of other studies without compunction.

Upon a celebrated occasion Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had purchased a beautiful set of crockery for Study No. 6, and the whole set had been missing the next day, and were discovered in the end study containing an indelible ink that Glyn was just then engaged upon; and the schoolboy inventor had certainly succeeded in making that ink indelible, so far as the crockeryware was concerned.

Trifles like that did not trouble a keen youth in search of knowledge, but they had an exasperating effect upon fellows who wanted tea, and found that their teacups had been used to hold ink or dye or chemical compounds with terrific smells.

Jack Blake opened the door of the end study with a powerful kick, and there was a sharp exclamation within:

"Quiet, you chaps!"

Bernard Glyn was there, and he was busy.

On the study table there were a variety of bottles and glass tubes and perforated bowls used for straining liquids. There was also a large array of teacups and saucers, and each of them contained a dark crimson fluid.

Glyn glanced round.

"Want to see the experiment?" he asked. "Come in; only don't jolt the table! I think I've got it now!"

ANSWERS

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"Got what?"

"I'm experimenting with a dye," explained Glyn. "You know the secret of the old Tyrian dye is supposed to be lost, but I fancy I've got it."

"There's something else you're going to get, too!" roared Blake. "Chuck that muck out of my teacups! We want to have tea!"

Glyn shook his head.

"Impossible! I've got the fluid in various states. If they got mixed now it would spoil the experiment. When I've finished this, I shall be able to make an indelible dye in any colour—quite permanent—"

"Do you mean to say that that muck won't come off?" demanded Gore.

"No fear!" said the schoolboy inventor proudly. "When I make an indelible dye, it's an indelible dye, I can tell you!"

"You—you—you've mucked up all my tea-things, and you've got the cheek to say that it won't come off!" roared Gore.

"My dear chap," said Glyn patiently, "what would be the good of an indelible dye if it came off?"

"Why, you—you—you—"

"Don't jolt the table!" said Glyn. "I'm waiting for the last lot to strain off!"

"I'll strain it off for you!" yelled Gore.

"You ass, let that alone! Ow! Oh! Yaro-o-o-oh!"

Gore had picked up the nearest of the cups, and inverted it over the head of the schoolboy inventor. Glyn stuttered and spluttered as the crimson dye ran down his face.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gerrooh—groogh—"

"Give him some more!" shouted Gore.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck it! Leave off, you idiots!" yelled Glyn, as the juniors tossed the cups of crimson fluid over him. "It won't come off! Ow! Stop it! Chuck it!"

"We're chucking it!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ow! Hah! Huh—hug-g-g-h! Groogh—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors carried off the stained cups and saucers, leaving the contents behind—swamping over the schoolboy inventor. Bernard Glyn dabbed at his face and head with his handkerchief in dismay.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Kangaroo, coming into the study, and staring at his chum in amazement. "What's the little game—trying to colour yourself to resemble Rook?"

"Gro-o-oh!"

"Is that a new experiment?" asked the Cornstalk, in wonder. "Will that stuff come off?"

"Groogh! Those silly asses—groogh—they've swamped me in it—yow!—because I used their—groogh—corks! Ow! And it won't come off!"

Kangaroo yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha! You'll be a pretty sight, then! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up!" yelled Glyn. "There's nothing to cackle at, you dummy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The exasperated inventor caught up a cricket-bat, and Kangaroo staggered out of the study, still yelling with laughter.

CHAPTER 4.

Mr. Lathom is Alarmed.

"GREAT Scott!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Is that Glyn?"

"It's Sitting Bull, or the Last of the Mohicans!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bernard Glyn had just come into the junior common-room. He had been busy in a bath-room for the last half-hour, rubbing and scrubbing. But the crimson dye was like the celebrated smile—it wouldn't come off. There were streaks of it down Glyn's face. He had got off the worst of it, and reduced the colour to an art shade in red. But that was all he could do, with the hottest of water and the hardest of rubbing.

Glyn's appearance was most peculiar—something like a Red Indian, and something like a zebra.

"Oh, shut up cackling, you silly chumps!" said Glyn crossly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that indelible?" yelled Blake.

Glyn made a grimace.

"Well, luckily I hadn't got it quite so indelible as I thought I had," he said. "It will come off in time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's come off the corks," said Tom Merry, grinning.

"We got it off with plenty of hot water and scrubbing. We'll give you a scrub, if you like!"

"Yaas, wathah! I shouldn't mind lendin' a hand."

"I've scrubbed till my beastly skin is nearly off!" growled Glyn.

"Does it look very noticeable?"

"Well, a blind man couldn't see it on a dark night!"

grinned Lowther. "Anybody else would spot it at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pewwaps you won't bowwow any more cwocks for your beastly expewiments!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

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

And he stamped out of the common-room.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, meeting him in the passage. "Who—what is that?"

"It's me, sir!" murmured Glyn. "I mean, it's I!"

Mr. Lathom, who was a short-sighted little gentleman, peered at him over his glasses, in great alarm.

"Glyn! What has happened, my dear boy?"

"Only a—a—a little accident, sir!"

"My poor boy! My dear lad! You are bleeding—your face is covered with blood!" exclaimed the horrified Form-master. "Is this the result of some of your experiments?"

"Yes, sir. You see—"

"You foolish, reckless boy. You must have medical attention at once. Was it an explosion?"

"No, sir. Only—"

"You feel a dreadful pain?"

"Not at all, sir. I—"

"But the injury must be terrible for it to produce such a dreadful bleeding. You must have severed an artery. My poor lad—"

"If you please, sir—"

"Not a word, Glyn. You will bleed to death in that state. You are in danger of your life. You do not realise your peril. Merry—Noble—Lowther—take Glyn to the dormitory at once, while I telephone for Dr. Short."

"If you please, sir—"

"Not an instant is to be lost. Take him to the dormitory at once." And Mr. Lathom, without waiting for another word, hurried away to the telephone.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lowther. "Come on, we shall have to carry him to the dorm. as he's so fearfully injured."

"Leggo!" roared Glyn. "I'm not injured, you know I'm not. I won't go to the dorm. Leggo, you silly asses."

"Must obey a master's orders," chuckled Kangaroo.

"Bring him up."

"Ow! Leggo. I—"

"Collar him."

And the juniors, carrying out Mr. Lathom's instructions, seized the schoolboy inventor, and bore him upstairs. Glyn struggled violently. Mr. Lathom came hurrying back by the time they had reached the first landing.

"Dear me! Is he hysterical?" gasped the kind-hearted little Form master. "Quiet yourself, Glyn, my dear boy. Calm yourself; this will make the bleeding worse. Calm yourself, I beg. Gently—deal gently with him, my boys—gently, my boys."

"Yaroooh!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Lowther! What do you mean?"

"Ow! The silly ass has shoved his silly elbow into my eye," said Lowther sulphurously.

"Never mind, never mind. He is evidently hysterical. Calm yourself, Glyn. Calm yourself, my dear lad."

"Leggo!" roared Glyn. "I'm all right, sir. I—yah—You're choking me, you silly fathead! Kangaroo! Groogh! Leggo!"

"Kim on," said Kangaroo. "This will be a lesson to you not to experiment in the study. Yank him along!"

"Gently, my boys, gently. He seems to be delirious," exclaimed Mr. Lathom, hurrying up to lend a hand with the struggling junior. "Calm yourself, Glyn. Yowwwwwww!"

Mr. Lathom gasped as the boot of the struggling Shell fellow caught him upon his watch-chain. He sat down quite suddenly.

"Ow! Oh dear! Oh! This is most painful! Oh!"

With a final rush the juniors got Glyn into the Shell dormitory, and plumped him down on his bed. Mr. Lathom came in after them, panting.

"Lie still, Glyn. Lie still, my dear boy," he gasped. "This violence may bring on a hemorrhage. Quiet yourself—calm yourself, I beg. Merry, fill a basin with water—give me a sponge. I must examine the poor boy's injury. It will be a quarter of an hour before Dr. Short can arrive here, though I asked him to come instantly. I must see to Glyn's injury myself, and render first aid as well as possible."

Glyn sat up.

"I ain't injured!" he roared. "I—"

"Pray hold him down in a horizontal position, my dear boys," said Mr. Lathom, in great distress; and the juniors

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

Every Friday.

cheerfully complied. "Noble, I am surprised to see you laughing at such a moment. I am surprised and shocked. Keep quite still, Glyn."

"I'm not bleeding," gasped the unhappy inventor. "It's dye."

"No, no," said Mr. Lathom, soothingly. "You are not going to die, my dear boy. We shall save you. Now, where is the cut?"

"I've dyed—"

"Poor, poor boy. This is delirium. He thinks he has died," said Mr. Lathom. "Poor boy, poor boy! Keep quite still, and I will stop the flow of blood."

"I've dyed—"

"Calm yourself, I beg—"

"I've dyed my face by accident!" shrieked Glyn. "It's not blood."

"What!"

"It was upset over me," roared Glyn. "I'm not bleeding. It's only dye—red dye."

Mr. Lathom dropped the sponge.

"Dear me! Is it possible that that is the case?"

"I—I think so," murmured Tom Merry. "I fancy it's that, sir."

"Bless my soul! Glyn, how dare you play such a trick?"

"Trick!" gasped Glyn. "I didn't—I wasn't—I never—"

"Yes, trick," said Mr. Lathom, with majestic indignation. "You have startled me, sir. You have caused me great distress. You are a foolish boy to play such an unfeeling prank. You will take five hundred lines, Glyn."

"Oh!" gasped the unfortunate inventor.

"I must go and telephone to Dr. Short again, not to come," exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "It is most absurd—most absurd. Glyn, I am very angry with you."

"Oh, sir, I—I—"

"Not a word! You have nothing to say in defence of such a prank. I shall mention to your Form-master that I have imposed five hundred lines. You are a very bad boy."

And Mr. Lathom bustled indignantly out of the dormitory. The juniors burst into a roar of laughter, and Glyn sat up on the bed, and glared at them as if he could eat them.

"You—you silly asses."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you spluttering chumps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You blithering, chortling jabberwocks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Glyn jumped off the bed. The juniors were almost in hysterics; and they yelled, and roared, and yelled again, till the exasperated amateur inventor grasped a bolster and hurled himself upon them, and drove them from the dormitory, still shrieking like hyenas.

CHAPTER 5.

Monty Lowther is Too Humorous!

"FIRE!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was sitting in the common-room, earnestly perusing the latest number of the "Tailor and Cutter." He jumped up quite startled, as Levison of the Fourth uttered that shout of alarm.

"Bai Jove! Fish!" he exclaimed. "Where?"

"In the doorway," grinned Levison.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked round, puzzled. Rook was coming into the room, and D'Arcy comprehended. He laid down the "Tailor and Cutter," and jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and turned it witheringly upon Levison.

"Levison, I regard that as a wotten joke!" he said.

"Go hon!" said Levison.

"I should wecommend Wook to punch your head."

"Rook's a hot-headed chap, Levison," said Monty Lowther, with the solemnity he generally assumed when he was perpetrating a bad joke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By the way, you haven't heard my limerick," said Lowther.

"Shut up," said Tom Merry.

"Rats!" replied Lowther cheerfully. "There's a chap in the School House named Rook—"

"Cheese it!"

"May be said to resemble a book—"

The new boy stared at him.

"How do you make that out," he demanded.

"If you look at his head, you can see he's well-red—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If your eyes aren't too dazzled to look!" concluded Lowther.

The fellows in the common-room chuckled. Rook coloured until his complexion resembled his hair, and came over towards Monty Lowther.

"Look here—" he began.

"Wait a minute," said the humorist of the Shell. He

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picked up D'Arcy's "Tailor and Cutter," and held it up to shade his eyes. "All right—now I'm looking."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think you're a silly ass," said Rook angrily, "and I've a jolly good mind to punch your silly head."

"Wouldn't be fair play," said Lowther solemnly. "I can't punch yours, you know. Can't play with fire without burning your fingers, you know."

"You—you silly chump!"

"Go on," said Lowther encouragingly. "Must expect you to have a fiery temper under the circumstances—or, perhaps, I should say under the top-knot."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Rook looked round angrily at the grinning faces.

"I tell you I'm fed up with this," he exclaimed. "If you're looking for a thick ear, you've only got to say so."

"Ain't he a scorcher!" murmured Lowther.

That was too much for the new junior. He made a rush at Monty Lowther, and the humorist of the Shell dodged round the table.

"Don't mind him, Rook," said Tom Merry. "Lowther was born like that—he can't help it. He was born funny."

But Rook did not listen. He was pursuing Monty Lowther round the table, and he caught up with the humorous junior and grasped him.

"Now, you funny ass—"

"Help!" yelled Lowther. "Fire!"

Then Lowther's head disappeared under Rook's arm, and the new junior hammered him. He was hammering in deadly earnest, too, and Monty Lowther roared.

"Go it, Wook, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, encouragingly. "Give him a feahful thwashin'."

"Leggo!" roared Lowther.

Hammer, hammer, hammer!

"Yaroo!"

It was evidently not a joke any longer. Monty Lowther returned grip for grip and got his head out of chancery, and the two juniors scrambled about, punching one another heartily. Monty Lowther was bigger and older than Rook, and it was soon clear that the new boy was no match for him.

Rook's head went into chancery in its turn.

"Chuck it, Monty," exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Look at my nose!" roared Lowther. His nose was indeed an interesting study. It seemed to have doubled in size, and it was streaming red.

"Well, you started it, you know."

"Rats! I was only joking," growled Lowther. "Why can't a fellow take a joke?"

Rook was struggling fiercely to release his head, and at the same time he was punching the Shell fellow in the ribs.

"By Jove! He's burning my waistcoat!" exclaimed Lowther suddenly, and he released the new junior and pushed him away.

Rook staggered against the table.

His face was crimson, and his hair was ruffled, and he was panting for breath.

Monty Lowther wagged a warning finger at him.

"Don't be an ass," he said, chidingly. "Hit a fellow your own size, you know—not a chap who can make rings round you."

"You rotter!"

"Yaas, wathah! I agree with Wook in chawactewisin' you as a wottah—"

"Pax!" said Monty Lowther. "Now, don't come on again, or I shall have to hurt you. Don't play the giddy goat. Of course, I can excuse you for being hot-headed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The best thing you can do," said Lowther, seriously, "is to put your head in a bucket of water! It's dangerous to go about like that."

Rook made a movement, and Lowther put up his hands promptly, thinking that the new junior was about to renew the attack.

But he did not.

His features were working, and to the surprise of the juniors, he suddenly burst into tears.

There was a sudden hush in the common-room.

Every fellow in the room felt awkward and worried, and Monty Lowther looked surprised and rather shamefaced.

"Oh! I—I say!" he exclaimed, in alarm. "Don't do that, you know! Don't turn the waterworks on, for goodness' sake. What's the matter?"

"Waterworks are just what are needed," grinned Levison. "You should stand on your head to blub, Rook, and you might put out the conflagration, you know."

But no one laughed.

Rook stood for a moment, trying to control his emotion, and then turned and hurried out of the common-room.

He left an awkward silence behind him.

"Blubbing ass!" said Levison, at last.

"Hold your tongue," growled Tom Merry.

"Well, Lowther didn't hurt him much," said Mellish, "what was he crying for?"

"It wasn't that, you fathead," said Manners. "He wasn't blubbing because Lowther punched him."

"He punched me!" said Lowther.

"It's his poor little feelings that are hurt," chuckled Levison. "My hat! what larks! We'll give him some more to blub for, won't we, Lowther?"

But Monty Lowther was not at all inclined to accept that overture of alliance from the cad of the Fourth. Indeed, it was a humiliation to find Levison upon his side, and it made him realise more than anything else could have done, that he had acted badly.

"Oh, you go and eat coke, Levison," snapped Lowther.

"Well, he was an ass to blub," said Gore of the Shell. "It was only a rotten joke, anyway. Of course, all Lowther's jokes make a fellow more inclined to cry than to laugh."

"Yaas, wathah, that's very true."

"Br-r-r-r!" said Lowther.

Tom Merry tapped his chum on the arm.

"You'll have to tell him you're sorry, Monty."

Monty Lowther snorted.

"Catch me," he said.

"You don't want to be a cad!"

"Oh, rats! If you're going to begin calling me names—you know I was only chipping him. What does it matter if the silly chump's hair is red—or pink—or blue, for that matter?" growled Lowther.

"You ought to tell him you're sorry—and chuck chipping him."

"Well, I won't."

"Monty—!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Well, I'll tell him for you," said Tom.

Lowther glared.

"If you do, I'll punch your silly head!" he exclaimed.

"Look here—!"

"I'll say what I like," growled Lowther. The humorist of the Shell was exceedingly annoyed that his refined humour had led to such a painful scene, but he was in nowise inclined to admit himself in the wrong; he was annoyed with himself, annoyed with Rook, and annoyed with things in general. "He shouldn't be a soft ass. We don't want blubbing babies at St. Jim's. I'll tell him that if you like."

"Oh! cheese it."

"Yaas, wathah, Lowthah; do cheese it! You cwe Wook an apology, and it would be caddish not to tell him you're sowwy."

"Do you want a thick ear, Gussy?"

"I should wefuse to have a thick ear, Lowthah. And I am sure Tom Mewvy agwees with my statement of the case."

"Yes, I do," said Tom.

Monty Lowther bestowed a glare upon his old chum.

"So you think I'm a cad, do you?" he exclaimed.

"I didn't say that—!"

"Yes, you did—or much the same. Well, if that's your opinion, you can keep it—and you needn't speak to me again till you've changed it," snapped Lowther.

And he stalked out of the room in high dudgeon.

Tom Merry looked worried, Levison and Mellish burst into their unpleasant chuckle simultaneously.

"Quite a rift in the lute!" grinned Levison.

"Trouble in the happy family!" sighed Levison.

Tom Merry turned his back upon them.

CHAPTER 6.

Rook Takes Possession.

ARTHUR ROOK was not seen in the common-room again that evening.

After the painful scene there, some of the fellows had made up their minds not to "chip" him any more upon a subject upon which he was evidently absurdly sensitive. Some of them had made up their minds to chip him all the more. Fellows like Levison and Crooke and Mellish were distinctly pleased to find that the red-headed junior had a sensitive nature that could be played upon and tormented to any extent. They were not likely to let pass such an opportunity for displaying their peculiar gifts.

Rook probably felt that he had been ridiculous, and looked so, and so he kept out of the public eye.

He did his preparation in his study, and he was there, working on one side of the table, while Lumley-Lumley on the other, when Levison and Mellish came in.

The "class" Rook had shown at fisticuffs had quite

driven out of Levison's mind any idea of "chucking" Rook out, and making him find fresh quarters. That was evidently not feasible. But Levison was almost as well pleased, at the prospect of having the new fellow there to worry and banter.

"By Jove! warm in here!" said Levison, as the precious pair entered.

As there was no fire in the study on that summer's evening, it was clear that he was referring to Rook's fiery hair. The new boy flushed, as he seemed always to do when his unfortunate peculiarity was alluded to, but did not look up.

"Yes; what we want is waterworks," said Mellish.

Rook's flush deepened.

That allusion to his "blubbing" in the common-room cut him more deeply than the absurd jokes about his red hair.

His look showed the cads of the Fourth that their remarks were getting home, and they continued with great enjoyment.

"Somebody ought to buy an extinguisher for this study."

"Save us something for coal in the winter!"

"Dangerous to cross a field with a bull in it, I should think."

"Yes—he would see red, and no mistake."

"I guess you fellows are interrupting my work," said Lumley-Lumley. "Can't you do your jawing in the passage?"

"Got our preparation to do," said Levison. "Can anybody lend me a fan?"

And Levison, as he sat down at the table, made a pretence of fanning himself with a sheet of impot. paper.

Rook was silent.

The new junior having declined to be drawn, the cads of the Fourth settled down to their preparation. When that was finished, they were ready to resume their gentle amusement, before going to bed.

"I've thought of an improvement on Lowther's limerick," remarked Levison. "What do you think of this? 'There's a chap with a gingery mop, who looks like a furnace on top—'"

"He, he, he!" cackled Mellish.

Rook rose to his feet.

"You fellows were going to turn me out of this study when I came in," he said. "You'd have done it if you could."

"Well, you're dangerous at close quarters, you know. I don't like a study in scarlet!" said Levison.

"Well, one good turn deserves another. Now I'm going to turn you out!" said Rook.

"Wha-at!"

"I'm going to shove you out, and not let you in again till you've learned manners. I don't want any more of your humour. See?"

"He's seeing red!" grinned Levison.

Rook threw the door open wide.

"Out you go!" he said.

"Rats!" said Levison. "Do you think you can scare me, you blubbing ass? I'll give you something more to blub for!"

"I can't lick Lowther, though I'm going to try again," said Rook. "But I can lick you. I'll take you one at a time. Now, are you going?"

"You'll take us two at a time if you try any nonsense," said Levison. "I can see myself being turned out of my own study—I don't think!"

"I mean bizney. If you come for me two at a time, I shall use the poker—that will be fair play!" said Rook.

"Now, out you go!"

And he laid violent hands on Levison.

"Back up, Mellish!" shouted Levison.

Mellish was not a fighting man, but as he knew his turn was coming next, he backed up readily enough. The two juniors fastened upon Rook, and the red-headed junior struggled in their grasp. But the two of them were too much for him.

Lumley-Lumley rose to his feet, and stood regarding them calmly.

"Shall I lend you a hand, Rook?" he asked.

"You mind your own business!" roared Levison. "Hang on, Percy! Get him down, and I'll give him a walloping with the ruler!"

"You bet!" gasped Mellish.

"What do you say, Ginger?" asked Lumley-Lumley. "I'll pile in, if you like."

"Go and eat coke!" said Rook.

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"Well, manage it yourself!" he said. "Ginger tor pluck, you know! And they're both funks!"

Bump!

Rook descended heavily on the floor, with Levison sprawling across him. Mellish staggered away gasping.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"PLAYING TO WIN!"

Rook hurled Levison off, and sprang to his feet, flushed and panting. He made a dive for the grate, and seized the poker.

"Put that down!" yelled Mellish.

"Fair play!" gasped Levison.

"Two to one isn't fair play, I guess!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Rook gave you fair warning. Two to one and a poker—that's fair!"

"Yow!" roared Mellish, as the end of the poker was jammed into his ribs. "Ow! Leave off! Yah! I'll let you alone! Oh!"

"Get out!"

"But I—Ow, ow! Yah!"

Mellish fairly bolted from the study, with the poker jabbing at his back. He roared with pain in the passage.

Levison was on his feet now, regarding Rook very dubiously, his face flushed with rage.

"Don't you touch me with that poker!" he growled. "I'll—Oh! Keep off! Yah! Ow! You'll break my ribs, you idiot! Yaro-o-oh!"

Levison dashed out of the study, with the poker dumping on his ribs.

"Don't come in again!" said Rook. "Or come in one at a time, and I'll use my fists! Come in two at a time, and I'll use the poker! That's a fair warning!"

"You rotter—"

"You outsider—"

"I guess you're outsiders now!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley. "Ginger's the insider!"

Rook turned upon him.

"Do you want to be chucked out after them?" he demanded.

"I guess you wouldn't find that so easy, Ginger."

"I shall try—if you call me Ginger again!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Lumley-Lumley good-humouredly. "I won't call you Ginger if you don't like it. Don't play the giddy goat!"

"Look here, I'm coming in!" howled Mellish.

Rook stood ready with the poker.

"Come on, then!" he said.

"You can't keep us out of our own study!"

"I'm going to try!"

"Look here!" roared Levison. "Do you mean to say that you're going to try to keep us out for good—out of our own study?"

Rook nodded.

"That's it!" he said. "For good—until you learn manners!"

"Why, I—I'll smash you! I'll—"

"Come on, then; I'm ready to be smashed!"

"You—you ginger-headed freak—"

Whiz!

Levison's Latin dictionary came buzzing through the air, and it caught him on the chest and bowled him over in the passage. He roared as he went down. Blake & Co. came out of Study No. 6 to see the cause of the disturbance.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Jack Blake.

"I've turned those cads out!" said Rook coolly. "They're not coming in here again till you get better manners!"

"Bwavo, deah boy!" chortled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Gingah for pluck!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Rook.

"Bai Jove! What?" said D'Arcy, rather taken aback.

"You're touching the forbidden subject, Gussy," said Blake, with a chuckle. "You mustn't call him Ginger. Make it Coppertop!"

"Ha; ha, ha!"

Levison and Mellish made a sudden rush into the study. Rook brandished the poker in a really dangerous manner, and they rushed out again faster than they had rushed in.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Blake, in alarm. "Steady with that poker, young 'un!"

"Let 'em come one at a time, then!" said Rook.

"Yaas, wathah! Fair play, you wottahs!"

But fair play was not in Levison's line. The cads of the Fourth went down the passage, and Rook slammed the door. Lumley-Lumley looked at him with a grin.

"You're really going to keep them out—eh?" he asked.

"Yes," said Rook.

"Oh, I don't mind—glad to get rid of them!" said Lumley-Lumley. "But I think you're playing the giddy ox! If you take it as a joke, they'll get tired of it."

"It's not a joke to me!"

"Well, you are a queer fish!" said Lumley-Lumley.

And he went on with his work, and Rook, with a clouded brow, turned back to his books again.

CHAPTER 7.

Very Wet.

WHEN the Fourth Form went up to their dormitory, a good many fellows glanced at Rook and grinned. Levison and Mellish glanced at him and scowled. But the extremely rusty manner in which the new junior received chipping stopped many of the humorous remarks that would have been made. It was not worth having a fight on one's hands for the sake of a feeble joke.

Rook went to bed, and Kildare, of the Sixth, saw lights out in the dormitory.

There was the usual chatter in the dormitory before the fellows went to sleep. Levison and some others held a discussion upon the price of ginger. Some of the juniors giggled, but as Rook remained silent and refused to be drawn, the discussion died away, and the fellows went to sleep at last.

Rook was sound asleep, and the hour of eleven had chimed out from the old clock-tower of St. Jim's, when the new boy was suddenly awakened.

Swish! Swoosh!

He started up with a cry.

Water was descending upon his head in a shower—cold, icy water, that sent shivers through him as it swamped down upon him.

"Oh, oh! What—what—"

There was a chuckle in the darkness, and a sound of retreating footsteps.

Rook sat drenched and furious. He understood what had happened. It was a "ragging"—his head had been swamped with water, and the practical joker had got back into bed.

"Who was that?" roared Rook.

There was another chuckle, and then silence.

Rook sprang from bed, and seized a towel, and began towelling his head and shoulders furiously. Some of the fellows woke up.

"Hallo! What's the row?" yawned Blake.

"Somebody's drenched me with water!" yelled Rook.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Has it put out the fire?" called a voice from the darkness.

"Who was it?" shouted Rook. "Who was it—you rotten funk?"

There was no reply to the question. Rook rubbed his head as dry as possible, and then stumbled over to the switch near the door, and turned the light on. The awakened juniors blinked in the sudden flood of light.

"Better put that out," said Herries. "It will be seen from the quad., and you'll have the masters here."

"I don't care! I want to know who's smothered me with water!" said Rook.

"Bai Jove, it's a wotten twick!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Might make a fellow catch cold, you know!"

"I'm going to know who it was!" said Rook. "Was it you, Levison?"

Levison snored.

"Oh, he's asleep!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"I believe he's only shamming," said Rook. "I'll jolly soon see, anyway."

He rushed to Levison's bed, and grasped the bedclothes with both hands, and dragged at them. Levison speedily showed that he was awake then. He grasped at the bedclothes and held them back, struggling.

"So you're awake, you cad!" said Rook.

"Let my blankets alone!" yelled Levison.

"Did you throw that water over me?"

"Find out!"

"That's what I'm going to do!"

Rook dragged harder at the bedclothes, and Levison was dragged off the bed along with them, and bumped on the floor. He yelled.

"Shurrup!" said Blake. "You'll have Kildare up here."

"Blow Kildare!" said Rook.

Levison jumped up. Rook was upon him in a moment. He dragged the cad of the Fourth towards the nearest washstand.

"Leggo!" yelled Levison. "What are you up to?"

"I'm going to give you the same thing."

"Ow! Leggo! I—Yah!"

Levison went down with a bump, with Rook upon him. The new boy dragged the water-jug from the washstand and swamped its contents over Levison.

The cad of the Fourth shrieked under the sudden flood of cold water.

"Groogh! Gerooh! Grooh! Oh!"

"How do you like it yourself?" grinned Rook.

"Groogh! Ow!"

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, deah

boy," chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It was a wotten twick!"

"Grooooooh!"

Levison staggered to his feet, drenched with water. Water was running down his hair and his face, and soaking his pyjamas.

"Oh, you rotter! Grooh! Oh, you beast! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison rushed at Rook, and in a moment they were fighting furiously. There was a sudden yell of warning from Lorne:

"Cave!"

There were footsteps in the passage. But the fighting juniors did not heed. The door of the dormitory opened, and Kildare of the Sixth looked in angrily.

"What's this row about? Why, you young rascals, stop it! Separate at once, do you hear?"

The St. Jim's captain's strong grip dragged the fighting juniors apart.

"Levison, you're all wet! What does it mean? What do you mean by making a disturbance at this time of night?" demanded Kildare angrily.

"Ow! The beast swamped me with water——"

"Rook! You——"

"Wook was swamped first, Kildare, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "If you're goin' to sneak, Levison, tell Kildare the whole bizney."

"Oh, I see," said Kildare. "You have been playing a trick on the new boy, Levison, and he has done the same by you. Is that it?"

"I—I—I——"

"You will take a hundred lines, Levison, and if there's any more row here I'll bring a cane with me when I come again," said Kildare. "Now get to bed."

Rook threw his wet pillow upon the floor, and took the pillow from Levison's bed. The cad of the Fourth watched him with gleaming eyes.

"Get into bed! Do you hear?" said Kildare.

"He's got my pillow!" roared Levison.

"Mine's wet!" said Rook. "He can have it if he likes wet pillows. I don't."

"You will have to do without one, Levison," said Kildare. "You shouldn't play such tricks. It's your own look-out. Get into bed!"

Levison gritted his teeth. He folded up a coat to serve as a pillow, and turned in. The captain of St. Jim's turned out the light and left the dormitory.

"It doesn't seem quite so funny now intirely, does it, Levison darling?" chuckled Reilly.

"Oh, dry up!" growled Levison.

"Better hold your pillow over Rook's head and dry it with the heat!" said Mellish.

There was a sound of someone getting out of bed.

"Hallo! Who's that moving?" said Mellish in alarm. "I say—ah—hah—ow! Who's that dragging my bedclothes off? You cad, Rook——"

Bump!

Mellish descended on the floor and howled.

"Shurrup!" shouted Blake. "You'll have Kildare back again in a minute."

Rook turned in.

Mellish breathed fury in the darkness, but he did not approach the new junior's bed. He gathered up his bedclothes and sorted them out, and turned in again.

And that night, at least, there was no more trouble for the new fellow in the Fourth.

CHAPTER 8.

A Rift in the Lute.

TOM MERRY were a worried look the next day.

He had not made it up with Monty Lowther.

Lowther, as a matter of fact, was feeling very sore about what had happened in the common-room the previous day. He was ashamed of himself; but he would not admit it, to himself or anybody else. The best thing he could have done would have been to tell Rook he was sorry for shipping him, and there the matter would have ended. Lowther had meant no harm, and he had been surprised and pained at seeing the new fellow taking his little joke so seriously.

But Lowther, like a good many fellows who find themselves unintentionally in the wrong, did not choose to admit that he was in the wrong.

He seemed to be under an impression that it was "up" to him to prove he had been in the right.

And the result was that, instead of telling Rook that he was sorry he had clipped him, he intended to keep on the process of chipping, taking up the position that Rufus ought

to have more sense than to take offence, and that if he didn't have any sense, it was time he learned.

There was very seldom any disagreement among the Terrible Three; they were inseparable, and always on the best of terms. Any little rift in the lute never lasted. But Monty Lowther was very much "on his dignity" now. And an argument on the subject did not mend matters.

"I'm not going to tell him I'm sorry, because I'm not sorry!" said Monty Lowther decisively.

"Then you ought to be!" said Tom Merry tartly.

To which Lowther rejoined "Rats!"

"Well, let the matter drop," said Manners, in the role of peacemaker.

"The chap's a silly ass, and he ought to be cured," said Lowther. "It was simply idiotic to blub over a harmless joke."

"Well, he's touchy."

"Then he oughtn't to be touchy. What the dickens does it matter whether his hair is red or any blessed colour of the rainbow?"

"Not at all. But he thinks it does—and it's his hair, you know," said Tom mildly.

Lowther sniffed contemptuously.

"Well, my idea is that he ought to be cured, and the best way to cure him is to keep on chipping him till he takes it good-temperedly," he said.

"Oh, that's all rot. Let the chap alone."

"It's for his own good," said Lowther virtuously. "Why, if a chap lets little things like that worry him he must be spoony, and the sooner he's got it knocked out of him the better it will be for him."

"But it isn't your business to knock it out," said Tom Merry. "It's silly of him to care about such piffle, but it's his own business."

"Our business, too," said Lowther. "What is the Press for? We represent the Press or the 'Weekly.' That's just what a school magazine is for—to touch fellows on their silly little weaknesses and cure 'em. That's why I want my limerick in the 'Weekly' this week."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Better not, old man."

"I think it ought to go in, and I'll make another one, too, showing the silly ass that he ought to have more sense. Something in this style—'Shall we have a whip-round for a tub? For a fellow who goes on the blub——'"

"Look here, Monty, it won't do."

"It's going in!" said Lowther.

"It can't!" said Tom Merry.

"Who runs the Comic Column in the 'Weekly'?" demanded Lowther, with some heat.

"Who's editor?" demanded Tom Merry, in his turn.

"I'm going to run my column how I like."

"I'm going to edit the paper how I like."

"Rot!"

"Well, I mean it."

"So do I," said Lowther. "My limerick's going in."

"It's staying out."

"I won't have it left out."

"Well, I won't have it put in," said Tom Merry, beginning to lose his temper as Monty Lowther lost his. "That's flat! I'll blue-pencil it."

"You'll blue-pencil my contribution!" shouted Lowther.

"Yes; that's an editor's duty. Why, you've helped me to blue-pencil some of the fellows' rubbish," said Tom Merry.

"That's different; this isn't rubbish."

"Your mistake—it is."

"Oh, go and eat coke! I'm not going to have any of my stuff blue-pencilled. If it is, I'll resign from the 'Weekly.'"

"You can resign if you like."

"You want me to?" demanded Lowther, with blazing eyes.

"I don't care twopence either way!" retorted the editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly" in the heat of the moment; which was not quite accurate, for he did care a great deal more than twopence.

Lowther breathed hard through his nose.

"Very well, I resign," he snapped.

"Resign, and be blowed," said the editor.

Lowther quitted the study, and slammed the door. Tom Merry was looking very warm and excited, but his anger never lasted long. He gave Manners a look of dismay.

"Well, this is rotten!" he said. "I wish Rook and his blessed red head had never come here."

"Oh, Monty will come round!" said Manners.

"Well, I can't ask him to," said Tom Merry.

"Rot!" said Manners. "You can ask him to—and I'm going to make you. What a silly storm in a tea-cup. Blow Rook!"

And after morning lessons that day, Manners led Tom Merry to the library.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 286.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "PLAYING TO WIN!"

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

Merry up to Lowther to make it up. But Lowther was obdurate.

"Come, Monty, don't be an ass," said Manners. "There's nothing to row about."

"Nothing at all," said Tom Merry; "and it's only affording fun for Mellish and Levison if we fall out, Monty. Be reasonable."

"Is my limerick going into the 'Weekly'?" demanded Lowther.

"Well, no."

"Then you can go and eat coke."

And Monty Lowther strode away with his hands in his pockets. Manners gave a low whistle, and Tom Merry contracted his brows.

"Well, the fat's in the fire now," said Manners, in dismay. "When a chap gets on the high horse, I'm blessed if I know what to do with him."

"Better leave him alone till he gets more sense," growled Tom Merry.

"Oh, crumbs! Now you're getting on the high horse yourself," wailed Manners. "What am I going to do with the pair of you? I've a jolly good mind to look for that fat-head Rook, and punch his silly red head."

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"That wouldn't do any good," he said; "and from what I can see, Rook will get his head punched enough, from the way he's started. Lowther's in the wrong, and if he doesn't choose to come round, he can go and eat coke."

And as Lowther didn't choose to come round, there remained a rift in the lute, so to speak. And Tom Merry and his old chum did not speak when they encountered one another, which was extremely uncomfortable for Manners, who remained on good terms with both of them.

Hence the worried look that adorned Tom Merry's brow that day.

But, as the proverb says, "It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good," and Mellish and Levison of the Fourth derived considerable enjoyment from the quarrel in the camp of the Terrible Three. Mellish, with the amiable intention of making matters worse if he could, ventured to take a hand in the proceedings, but not with satisfactory results to himself. He sidled up to Monty Lowther as he discovered that wilful youth perambulating the quad, with his hands in his pockets, and a cloud upon his brow.

"I hear you've fallen out with Tom Merry," he remarked, by way of a beginning.

Lowther glared at him.

"Would you mind minding your own business?" he asked.

"Ahem! I thought I'd tell you the way Tom Merry is talking about you," said Mellish.

"Talking about me, eh?"

"Yes," said Mellish, in delight, feeling that he was getting on. "Talking about you behind your back, you know."

"Liar!" said Lowther promptly, as his fist came straight out from the shoulder, much to Mellish's surprise; and Mellish sat down in astonishment. Lowther pushed back his cuffs, and glared at him.

"Want any more?" he demanded.

"Ow! No!" growled Mellish, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. "You—you beast! I was taking your side—ow!"

"Well, you know what you'll get if you take my side any more," said Lowther, and he stalked away.

Percy Mellish was dabbing his nose ruefully, when he came upon Tom Merry. The Captain of the Shell was looking very glum.

"I say, Tom Merry—" began Mellish.

"Hallo! What's the matter with your nose?" asked Tom Merry.

"I've been fighting with Lowther," explained Mellish.

Tom Merry sniffed.

"Oh, draw it mild! Lot of fighting you could put up against Lowther," he said.

"It was about you," said Mellish.

"About me!" exclaimed Tom, in astonishment.

"Yes, about you. Lowther was running you down, and I took your part."

"Lowther was running me down?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yes, behind your back, you know. I spoke up for you, and he—"

"You worm!" said Tom Merry in measured tones. "You awful cad! Do you think you are going to make me believe a yarn like that? Put up your hands."

"Wh-a-at!"

"Put up your hands," roared Tom Merry. "I'm going to lick you."

"But I—I—I—ow!"

Tom Merry walked away, leaving Mellish in a horizontal position. The cad of the Fourth sat up, and dabbed his nose, which had suffered further injury.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 286.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
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Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
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"Ow! The beasts," he groaned. "Ow! I'd better leave 'em alone. Ow!"

And Mellish went away to bathe his nose; and even the possibility of making matters worse between the chums of the Shell could not tempt him to interfere again.

CHAPTER 9.

Prepared to Dye.

"OMIN' out, deah boy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked into Study No. 8, and asked that question.

Rook was in the study alone. He was sitting in the arm-chair, with his hands in his pockets, and a black look upon his brow. The setting sun gleamed in at the window, and showed up to full advantage the striking hue of the new junior's hair.

"No!" said Rook.

"Not mopin', eh, deah boy?"

"Why should I be mopin'?" demanded Rook fiercely.

"Oh, nothin'—no reason at all," said Arthur Augustus hastily. "I weally wish you wouldn't be so beastly touchy, Wook. Only you don't look vewy cheerful."

"I'm not feeling vewy cheerful."

"Come out to the cwicket pactice, then. It will liven you up, Wook."

"Oh, I'm fed up with it!" said Rook, getting up from the chair, and striding about the study restlessly. "I suppose you think I'm a silly ass to take offence when fellows chip me about my caroty hair, don't you?"

"Well, yaas, it seems to me wathah idiotic," confessed D'Arcy. "What does the colah of your hair mattah, deah boy?"

"It doesn't matter at all, I suppose," said Rook. "Only—only I hate it. It makes me feel queer and different from other chaps. That's rotten."

"Bai Jove. I wathah pwide myself on bein' a bit diffewent fwom othah chaps," said Arthur Augustus. "Chaps don't want to be cast all in the same mould, you know. You may have noticed that I have a wathah nice way of speakin'."

Rook grinned.

"Yes, I've noticed that," he said.

"Well, chaps chip me about that," said Arthur Augustus tolerantly. "But bless you, I don't mind. It doesn't make any difference. Why should it? But I say, if I were in your place I should make it a point to be vewy pwoud of my special shade in hair, you know, and wegard it as a distinction. If you can't do that, why don't you dye it?"

"Dye it?" said Rook.

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus, his eye gleaming behind his eyeglass as a great idea came into his mind. "There's a chap in the Shell here who can make dyes and things. You've seen that chap goin' about with a vewy wed face—the fellows upset his wotten dye ovah him because he bowwowed all the cwocks to put it in. Well, he could make a black dye as well as a wed one, and he's always lookin' out for a chance to make expewiments. He would jump at the chance of dyein' your top-knot for you."

"He couldn't do it," said Rook.

"Quite easy, deah boy. I could do it myself, if I knew how," said Arthur Augustus. "He's in his study now, muckin' about with wotten inks and stains and things. Come and see him, and we'll put it to him."

Rook hesitated.

"It would be wippin' to have a nice head of black hair, or auburn, you know."

"It's auburn now," growled Rook. "It isn't really red—I call it auburn."

"Ahem! Yaas! Wathah a pwonounced shade in auburn, that's all," agreed Arthur Augustus. "He could dye it black, or blue, or gween—"

"You—you ass. Do you think I want green hair?" howled Rook.

"No, no, of course not. I was only puttin' the case. Come and see Glyn, and see what he can do."

"Well, I may as well see him," said Rook, after some hesitation. "I'd give my whole term's pocket-money for a good dye that wouldn't show."

"Come and see him, then, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus marched the new junior down the passage to the end study. He knocked at the door, and turned the handle, but the door did not open. He knocked again.

"Glyn, deah boy—"

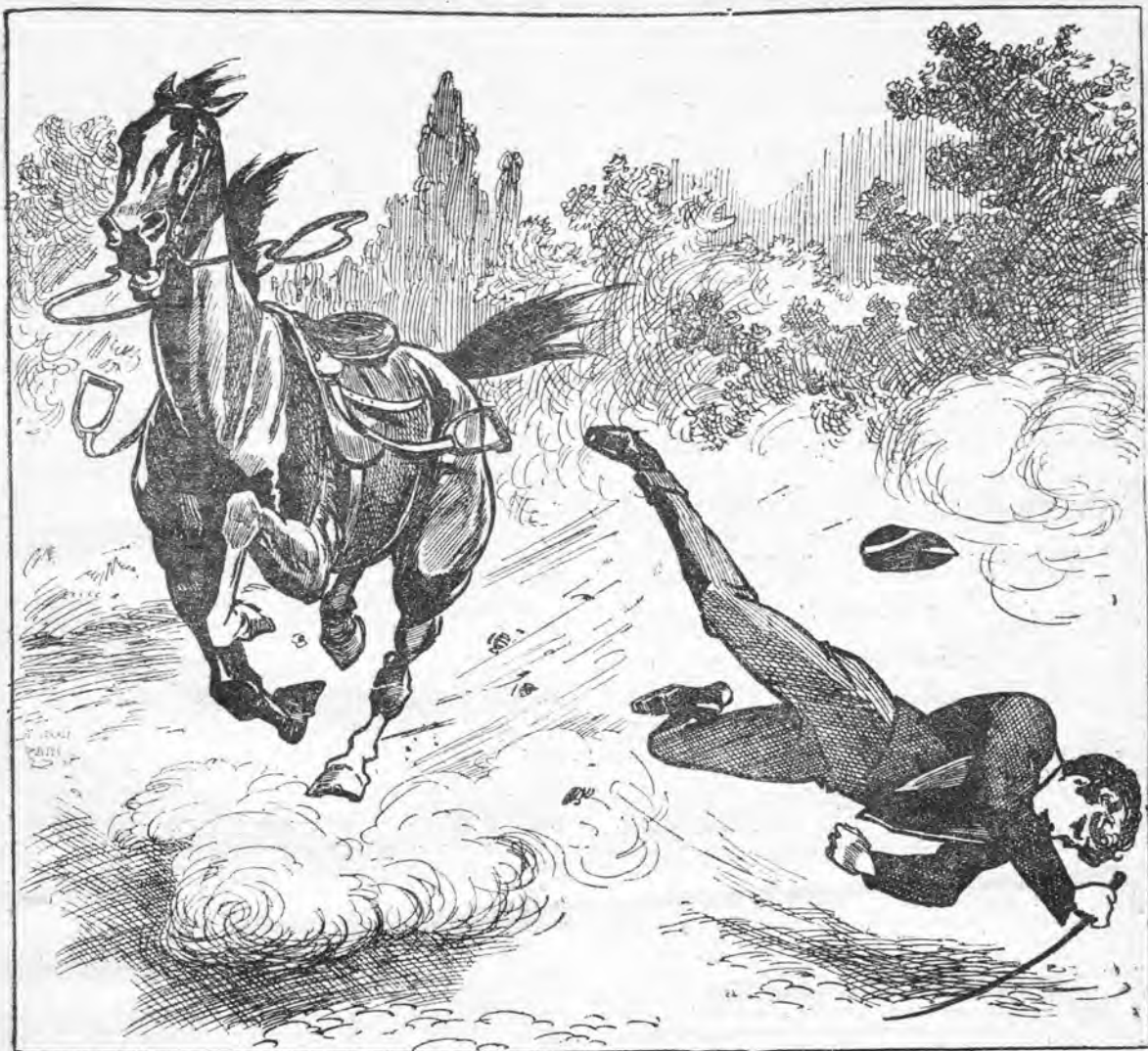
"Buzz off!" came the schoolboy inventor's voice from the study. "I'm busy."

"It's wathah important, Glyn. I've got the new chap here, Wook—"

"Go and bury him."

"He's awfully intewested in your expewiments, Glyn."

"Oh, well, you can come in if you like."



Dutton swept at top speed into the lane, and he made a desperate effort to hold the maddened horse. But the animal reared and plunged furiously, and Dutton shot fairly out of the saddle. Crash! The junior rolled into the thick grass by the side of the road, and lay there motionless. (An incident taken from "The Sports of the School," Frank Richards' splendid, long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars, which is contained in the current issue of our companion paper "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY. Now on sale everywhere. Price One Penny.)

Bernard Glyn opened the door. His face still looked very queer from the red dye, though constant washing had changed it to a pale pink by this time. He was in his shirt sleeves, and his fingers and wrists were deeply stained. The table was covered with vessels of all sorts of shapes and sizes, filled with mysterious-looking fluids.

"Pway allow me to introduce my friend Wook," said Arthur Augustus. "Wook, deah boy, this is Glyn, of the Shell, a wemarkably clevah chap. He invents things, you know."

"Glad to see you," said Glyn. "By Jove, that's a ripping colour, if I could get it in a dye!" and he regarded Rook's hair admiringly.

Rook frowned, and Arthur Augustus hastened to pour oil upon the waters that were already growing troubled.

"Wook wants you to help him, Glyn, deah boy. I suppose those wotten dyes—"

"Those what?"

"Those aw'fly clevah dyes would do for a chap's hair?"

"I could make one that would do," said Bernard Glyn. "Quite simple! By Jove! I'd like to try, for an experiment. Would you like your hair dyed, Rook?"

"If you could do it a good colour that wouldn't wash off," said Rook.

"Of course it wouldn't wash off, ass! My dye is indelible," said the Liverpool lad. "I'll try, if you like."

"If it washed off, you'd only be where you were befoah, Wook, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"It wouldn't wash off," said Glyn. "What colour would you like? I've got a beautiful green here. It looks black in the jar, but when it's dried it dries a splendid green—"

"Wook doesn't want gween hair, Glyn!"

"Well, what colour? I've only done red and green and black so far," said the schoolboy inventor.

"Black!" said Rook.

"I've got a splendid black—dead black, and it's the safest of all not to come off," said Glyn. "If you'd like to try it, I'll shove it on. It will take some time, but I don't mind taking the trouble. If it turns out a success—I mean, when it turns out a success, I'm going to patent it as a hair dye."

"Can you shove it on without touching my face?" said Rook dubiously. "I don't want to go round with a face like yours, you know."

"Get some towels from the dorm., Gussy! I'll towel him up as if he were going to be shampooed," said Glyn.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus hurried off for the towels. Bernard Glyn's eyes were gleaming now. He was keenly interested in

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 286.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"PLAYING TO WIN!"

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

the experiment. He had already asked Clifton Dane and Kangaroo to let him experiment at dyeing their hair, but his study mates were not "taking any," and they had told him so—indeed, with unnecessary emphasis. Rook's desire to have his hair dyed was a stroke of luck for the schoolboy inventor.

Rook glanced rather doubtfully over the jars on the table. The red dye was easily distinguishable, but the black and the green looked the same in the jars. Glyn explained that they dried differently.

D'Arcy came back with an armful of towels.

"I say, you'll want those towels in the dorm.," said Rook. "If they get dyed they won't be any good."

"Oh, that's all right; I've taken them from the Fifth Form dorm."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lock the door, in case any silly ass comes along to interrupt!" said Glyn, and D'Arcy turned the key. "Sit down here, Rook! Better take your collar off. That's right. Now, hand me the towels, Gussy—make yourself useful!"

"Mind you don't get any on my face and neck!" said Rook anxiously.

"I'm going to cover up your face and neck. That's all right."

Glyn passed the towels over Rook's face, and stuffed them into his collar. The new junior was blindfolded now, and could see nothing of the proceedings. Glyn was very careful to cover up all the skin below the level of the hair.

Rook could see nothing, but he very speedily felt something. He gave a yell as the schoolboy inventor started on his hair.

"Ow! You're burning me! Yow!"

"That's all right—"

"Yah! Oh—"

"It's only the feel of the stuff," explained Glyn. "Like having a dry shampoo, you know. Not dangerous at all; in fact, it assists the growth of the hair. Don't wriggle, or it will run down your face, and it won't come off. You're getting for nothing what other people will have to pay five bob a bottle for when I've taken out my patent. Keep still; that burning will soon pass off!"

"It's not passing off yet!" howled Rook.

"That's all right; it will soon!"

Glyn had put on a pair of gloves, and was working the dye into Rook's hair with busy fingers. Arthur Augustus watched in great admiration. The red hair was disappearing from sight, and becoming a jetty, shiny black in hue.

"Bai Jove! That's wippin'!" said D'Arcy.

"Feels ripping!" growled Rook. "Ripping my blessed scalp off, I think!"

"Oh, you must gwin and beah that, deah boy!"

"One doing won't be enough," Glyn remarked. "I shall have to give it a second coat to-morrow, Rook. But that will be easy enough, and it won't cost you anything. This will be enough to cover up the original colour of the hair, and nobody who saw you would ever suppose you were ginger."

"Yaas, wathah; it's covewin' it up a treat!"

Glyn worked away industriously, kneading the dye into Rook's thick hair. There was no doubt that it was a success—temporarily, at all events. The red had vanished, and a glossy black had taken its place. There was a greenish glimmer in the shiny black, but that, Glyn remarked, was only because it was wet. It would pass off when it was dry.

It was finished at last.

"Now, you ought to sit in a warm atmosphere for an hour or two to dry it," said Glyn. "Gussy will light a fire in your study."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The obliging swell of St. Jim's hurried away to light the fire. Bernard Glyn bestowed a final kneading upon his victim's hair, and then removed the towels.

"Look in the glass!" he said.

Rook did so, and gave a jump of amazement.

The red hair had vanished, and the alteration it made in his appearance was striking. His hair was jetty black, and gleaming with wet. His ruddy complexion looked very queer under the black hair. His complexion had matched his hair before, but it was very far from matching it now. His hair looked as if it belonged to somebody else.

"Black enough—eh?" said Glyn, with much satisfaction.

"Ye-es. How long will it take to dry?"

"Only about an hour—perhaps two. Keep near the fire, but not too near, as that stuff is slightly inflammable, and might catch alight!"

"What!" yelled Rook.

"No danger after it's dry," said Glyn reassuringly. "Don't shove it too close to the fire while it's wet, that's all. I'll give it another coat to-morrow—"

"And this won't wash off?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 286.

"My dear chap, when it's once dry, steam-engines and wild horses couldn't wash it off!"

And Rook went to his own study to dry his hair, keeping a dry towel wrapped over it, in case of any accident from its being "slightly inflammable." Curiously enough, successful as the dyeing experiment had been, Rook was looking only half satisfied.

It had occurred to him that it was better to have red hair that agreed with his complexion than black hair that stood out in startling contrast to it. But it was too late to think of those considerations now—he was in for it!

CHAPTER 10.

Green as Grass.

LUMLEY-LUMLEY came into his study about an hour later, and jumped.

He had cause to be surprised.

It was a hot summer's afternoon, and a big fire was blazing in the study. Near the fire sat Arthur Rook, with his head tied up in a towel.

"Jolly warm here!" growled Lumley-Lumley.

"Had to have a fire to dry my hair," said Rook. "Let it out now, if you like."

"Been washing your head?" asked Lumley-Lumley, eyeing him.

"No; Glyn's dyed my hair."

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"It won't be ginger any more," said Rook. "I'm sorry to stop the fellows having their little jokes, as they enjoy them so much. But there you are!"

"What colour have you got?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"Black!"

"Blessed if I'd let that tame lunatic muck about with my hair, if it was yellow or pink!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"What are you keeping it tied up for?"

"Glyn says it's inflammable till it's dry."

"Isn't it dry yet? I'd like to see it, I guess!"

Rook put up his hand under the swathing towel, and felt his hair.

"Yes, dry enough," he said. "I suppose I may as well have this towel off now."

He unpinned the towel, and jerked it off his head.

Lumley-Lumley gave him one look, and then uttered a wild yell:

"Oh, crumbs! Great Scott!"

Rook grinned rather sheepishly.

"I suppose it's a great change?" he remarked.

"Great change! Great pip! Great snakes and earthquakes!" shrieked Lumley-Lumley. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—"

Lumley-Lumley staggered back, gasping with laughter.

"You silly ass!" he roared. "You shouldn't have let that dotty chump muck about with your hair! He ain't safe! Ha, ha, ha! Did he tell you it was black?"

"It is black!" said Rook warmly. "I looked at it in the glass when it was finished. Its black enough. Do you mean to say the red shows through it now it's dry?"

"Red! Ha, ha! No; green!"

"What!"

"It's green!" shrieked Lumley-Lumley. "Oh, my only Uncle Joseph! Oh, crumbs! Ha, ha, ha!"

The unhappy Rook gave a wild yell.

"Green!"

"Yes, Ha, ha, ha!"

Rook made a bound to the looking-glass. He staggered back speechlessly, as he caught sight of his reflection.

There was no doubt about it. Glyn had evidently used the wrong dye—Rook remembered that they had looked the same colour in the jars. The schoolboy inventor had used the dye from the wrong jar—and Rook's hair had dried a bright, vivid green!

"You'd better get that washed off before anybody else sees you!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley.

"Washed off!" bellowed Rook. "It won't wash off! It's indelible—"

"Won't wash off! Oh, my hat!"

Lumley-Lumley staggered out of the study, almost in convulsions. Fellows came along to hear what the wild yells of laughter were about. There was a shout as a junior with a red, furious face and bright green hair dashed out of the study.

"Gweat Scott! What's that?"

"It's Rook!"

"What the dickens—!"

"What the deuce—!"

Lumley-Lumley reeled against the wall, almost overcome.

"He's been having his hair dyed!" he moaned. "He's let Glyn dye his hair, with some of his blessed scientific dyes—and it's dried green instead of black—!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Bai Jove! Poor old Wook!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think he's gone to see Glyn now!" gasped Lumley-Lumley. "Somebody had better follow him—or I think there'll be murder done."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors rushed down the passage. There were already sounds of wild strife from the end study. As the crowd of fellows reached the open doorway, there was a crash, and they looked in, and beheld the study table on its side, bottles and vessels of all kinds smashed on the floor, and Rook and Bernard Glyn rolling among the wreckage, clutched in a deadly embrace.

The juniors shrieked.

It was no laughing matter for Arthur Rook; but the sight of the junior with green hair almost convulsed the other fellows.

His red hair had been striking enough; but its new colour was much more striking than the old colour had been.

Rook was evidently in a state of frantic rage.

He was rolling over on the floor with Glyn, hammering him wildly. Glyn would have been fully a match for the Fourth-Former under ordinary circumstances. But Rook seemed to have the strength of three or four fellows at this moment.

Glyn seemed like a child in his hands. He was yelling for help, under the impression that Rook had suddenly gone mad.

"Help! Help! Lend a hand! Draggimoff! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Green as grass!" roared Manners. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall have to call him Greens instead of Carrots," chuckled Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! it's wotten! Glyn has no wight to make such a widdlewuss mistake! And that awful colah won't come off, you know. Poor old Wook is gween-haired for life now."

"Oh, my aunt! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" moaned Glyn, "he's killing me! Help!"

Thump! Thump! Thump!

The juniors rushed in and dragged the infuriated Rook off his victim.

Rook struggled furiously in their grasp. He evidently did not consider that he had finished yet. Bernard Glyn sat up dazedly, with one hand to his eye, and the other to his nose, and panted.

"What's marrer with him?" he gurgled, "is he mad?"

"No, only green."

"Gween as gwass, you awful ass! You made a mistake with the dye."

"Great Scott!" Glyn stared at Rook, and then, in spite of his injuries, he burst into a yell of laughter. "My hat! Isn't it funny! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme gerrat him!" roared Rook.

"I must have taken the wrong jar," gasped Glyn. "You see, they look the same colour when they're wet. I thought it looked a bit greenish, though. But—it was all Gussy's fault, he was talking—!"

"Weally, Glyn—!"

Rook made a desperate effort, and broke away from the juniors who were holding him, and hurled himself upon Glyn again.

"Ow! help! help!"

"Collar him!" roared Kangaroo. "He's dangerous."

Rook was collared once more.

"Lemme alone!" he shrieked, "I'm going to smash him! I'm going to pulverise him! I'll put a stop to his scientific experiments! Leggo!"

"Weally, Wook, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, laying a restraining hand upon the new junior's shoulder.

Rook gave him a ferocious glare.

"You're as bad as he is," he yelled. "You got me into this!"

"Oh, bia Jove! My deah Wook—!"

"Take that—and that—and that—and—!"

"Ow! Bai Jove! Help! Dwg him off! Oh!"

Rook was dragged off D'Arcy, and the swell of St. Jim's staggered back clasping his nose in anguish.

"Ow! You awful wuffian! You wottah! Is this the return you make for my friendship, you frightful beast? Ow!"

"Your friendship's rather dangerous to a chap, when he's going to have his hair dyed," chuckled Tom Merry.

"I did my best for the uttah wottah! Ow!"

"You silly ass!" roared Rook.

"I wufuse to be called a silly ass—"

"You—you burbling jossar—"

"I decline to be chawactewised as a jossah. I shall wettire from the studay, and I twust you will apologise when you are coolah," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity, and he marched off with his nose in the air.

Rook turned a ferocious glare on Bernard Glyn.

"Now, how are you going to get this stuff off my head?" he demanded.

"Can't be done!" said Glyn. "It's a fast dye—quite indelible."

Rook panted.

"Do you mean to say it won't come off?"

"Why, you made a point of that yourself!" said the schoolboy inventor. "You wanted a dye that wouldn't come off. You know you did!"

"Not a green dye, you villain!"

"That was an accident, of course. Accidents will happen. All scientific experiments are liable to accidents, just as a surgeon sometimes cuts off the wrong leg and a doctor sometimes poisons you by mistake, or a dentist yanks out the wrong tooth. I don't claim to be infallible," said Glyn indignantly. "I've never said that I'm above making an occasional mistake."

"You—you—you—"

"The dye is fast enough. It won't wash out. It's all right in that respect, just as I said. It's only the colour that's wrong."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will it wear off?" yelled Rook.

"Well, in the course of time, perhaps; I wouldn't say for certain. In a year or two—"

"A—a—a what?"

"A year or two—perhaps two or three years—"

"Let me get at him!" shrieked Rook.

"Better not," chuckled Blake. "You've spoiled his beauty already as much as he's spoiled yours. Better come and see what you can do with hot water and soap."

"Come on; we'll all lend a hand at scrubbing," said Tom Merry.

And Rook agreed to that, as the last hope.

CHAPTER 11.

Fast Colours.

THE juniors, almost in hysterics, marched the unfortunate Rook away to a bath-room. Tom Merry turned on the hot-water tap, and Blake whipped off his jacket and rolled up his sleeves and took a brush and a cake of soap.

"Now shove your head under the water, and I'll scrub it," he said.

"Hold on! It's boiling water!" said Manners.

"Well, the hotter the better," said Blake.

"Idiot!" yelled Rook. "I don't want to be scalded!"

"Well, if you're going to raise silly objections to every trifle, I don't see how you're going to get that dye off—"

"Fathead!"

Rook turned on the cold-water tap, and the bath filled. He plunged his head into the hot water, and the obliging Blake worked soap into his hair and scrubbed. He scrubbed with great energy, and Rook roared with pain.

"Groogh! Don't rub my scalp off! Groogh!"

"Well, the harder the better—"

"Is it coming off?" spluttered Rook.

"No, no; your scalp's all right—"

"I mean the dye, idiot!"

"Oh, the dye! Yes, some of it's coming off. The water's turning green."

"Does it look better?"

"No, it looks just the same, but some of it's coming off."

And Jack Blake scrubbed away industriously. Rook roared with pain, and snatched the brush away from him and began to rub his head himself. There was no doubt that the hot water was taking on a greenish tinge. Some of the dye was coming off, in spite of its boasted "fastness."

"Getting on," said Tom Merry encouragingly. "It still looks green—rather a fresher green, in fact. But in the long run—"

"Ow! My head's sore already!" groaned Rook. "I can't stand any more of it!"

"Better keep at it," said Blake.

"Chump! I feel as if I'm being skinned!"

And Rook hurled the brush into the bath, and took a towel and began to towel his head. A greenish tinge came over the towel as he rubbed his hair.

His face was crimson with exertion now, and he looked a great deal like a freshly-boiled beetroot. He looked into the glass, and gave a yell of rage as he saw that his hair was almost as green as ever. It was simply a somewhat lighter green.

"Oh, the villain! I'll pulverise him!" he groaned.

"It's rotten hard lines," said Tom Merry. "But it's bound to wear off. All Glyn's blessed inventions have something wrong with them; and I'll bet you that this isn't a really fast dye."

"Besides, when the hair grows, it will grow red, like the old lot," said Blake, "and you can have the green crop cut off."

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"PLAYING TO WIN!"

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

then. Only, for a time, you'll be partly red and partly green."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Rook rubbed his head dry, and replaced his collar and tie. His scarlet face and his green hair formed a remarkable contrast.

"Oh, what a silly ass I was to let him touch it!" he groaned.

"Well, you were," agreed Blake. "What's the matter with having red hair? It's as good as any other colour—and better than green."

"I wish I could get it red again," muttered Rook.

He stamped out of the bath-room.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy met him in the passage, and stopped him.

"Wook, deah boy," he said kindly. "I'm willin' to ova-look the wemarks you made in the excitement of the moment, and to excuse you."

Rook glared at him.

"I'm not willing to excuse you, you fathead," he said.

"Weally, Wook—"

"You're as big an idiot as Glyn."

And Rook stamped on to his study, leaving Arthur Augustus in a state of great indignation.

Rook was not seen downstairs again that day.

He remained in the study, keeping his green hair to himself as much as he could, and looking forward with horror to appearing in the class the next morning.

That the horrible dye would wear off in time was very probable. But how long would it take? That was a very pressing question for the unfortunate junior.

Bernard Glyn looked into the study later on. The school-boy inventor was showing plain signs of the rough handling he had received. His nose was swollen, and one of his eyes was closed. But Glyn did not bear any malice. He generously admitted that it was only natural for Rook to be annoyed at the way the experiment had turned out. Rook glared at him as he looked in.

"I say, Rook, I'm sorry the way that's turned out," said Glyn. "But I can make it all right for you, if you like."

"Can you get it off?" howled Rook.

Glyn shook his head.

"That's impossible; it's a fast dye. But I can dye it black for you, if you like. Come to my study, and I'll do it over again with the right dye."

"Yes, I'm likely to trust myself in your hands again, you dangerous lunatic. I suppose you'd make it pink or purple next time."

"Oh, no! I'd be jolly careful—"

"Oh, get out!"

"I'll bring the stuff here, if you like, and—"

"If you bring it here, I'll make you drink it," yelled Rook. "Get out, you lunatic!" He grabbed up a cricket-stump and charged at Glyn, and the schoolboy inventor slammed the door and fled.

But Rook had a good many more visitors. The story of the unsuccessful dyeing operation was soon all over the house, and fellows came from far and near to see it. They opened

the door and looked into the study with various excuses, and went into a kind of convulsions at the sight of Rook's hair, and fled. Fellows came over from the New House to see it; and even seniors of the Fifth Form looked in. Rook was in a state of growing exasperation, and he took to hurling things at whoever opened the door.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn came over from the New House together, and looked into the study. Rook had a pile of missiles ready on the table.

"I say," began Figgins affably. "I hear you—oh! Yah!"

A pat of butter caught Figgins in the eye.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Kerr. "What the—yah—oh!" A jam-tart squashed in his ear, and he retreated into the passage.

A Latin grammar followed him, and Fatty Wynn hastily shut the door.

"The chap seemed to be annoyed," said Fatty Wynn.

"Groogh!" said Figgins, wiping butter out of his eye.

"Groogh! The silly ass."

"Better let him alone," grinned Blake. "It's having a very bad effect on his temper. Hallo! Here comes Cutts." Cutts of the Fifth came along the passage grinning.

"Where's the chap with the green hair?" he asked. "I want to see him."

"He's very ratty," warned Blake. "He's chucking things."

"He'd better not chuck things at me," said Cutts.

And he opened the door of No. 3 and looked in, and burst into a yell of laughter at the sight of Rook.

"Oh, crumbs! Ha, ha, ha!"

Whiz!

A loaf came hurtling through the air, and it smote Cutts on the chest, and fairly bowled him over. He reeled out and sat down in the passage.

"I told you so," grinned Blake.

Cutts of the Fifth jumped up in a fury.

"I'll smash him!" he roared.

"Look here, Cutts—"

Cutts did not heed. He charged into the study. Rook drew the poker from the fire, where it had been getting red-hot. Cutts suddenly halted as the hot poker was flourished under his nose.

"I'll—I'll—I'll— Oh! Yah! Keep that poker off, you young villain!"

Cutts retreated out of the study with a yell of pain as the red-hot poker came into contact with his person.

Cutts of the Fifth was Rook's last visitor. Red-hot pokers were not a joking matter, and the green-haired junior was left alone in his glory after that.

CHAPTER 12.

A Close Crop.

ROOK came into the dining-room to breakfast the next morning with his cap on. Mr. Latham, the Master of the Fourth, who was at the head of the table, greeted him with a frown. All the fellows in the dining-room knew why the cap was there, and they grinned. But

NUMBER 13.

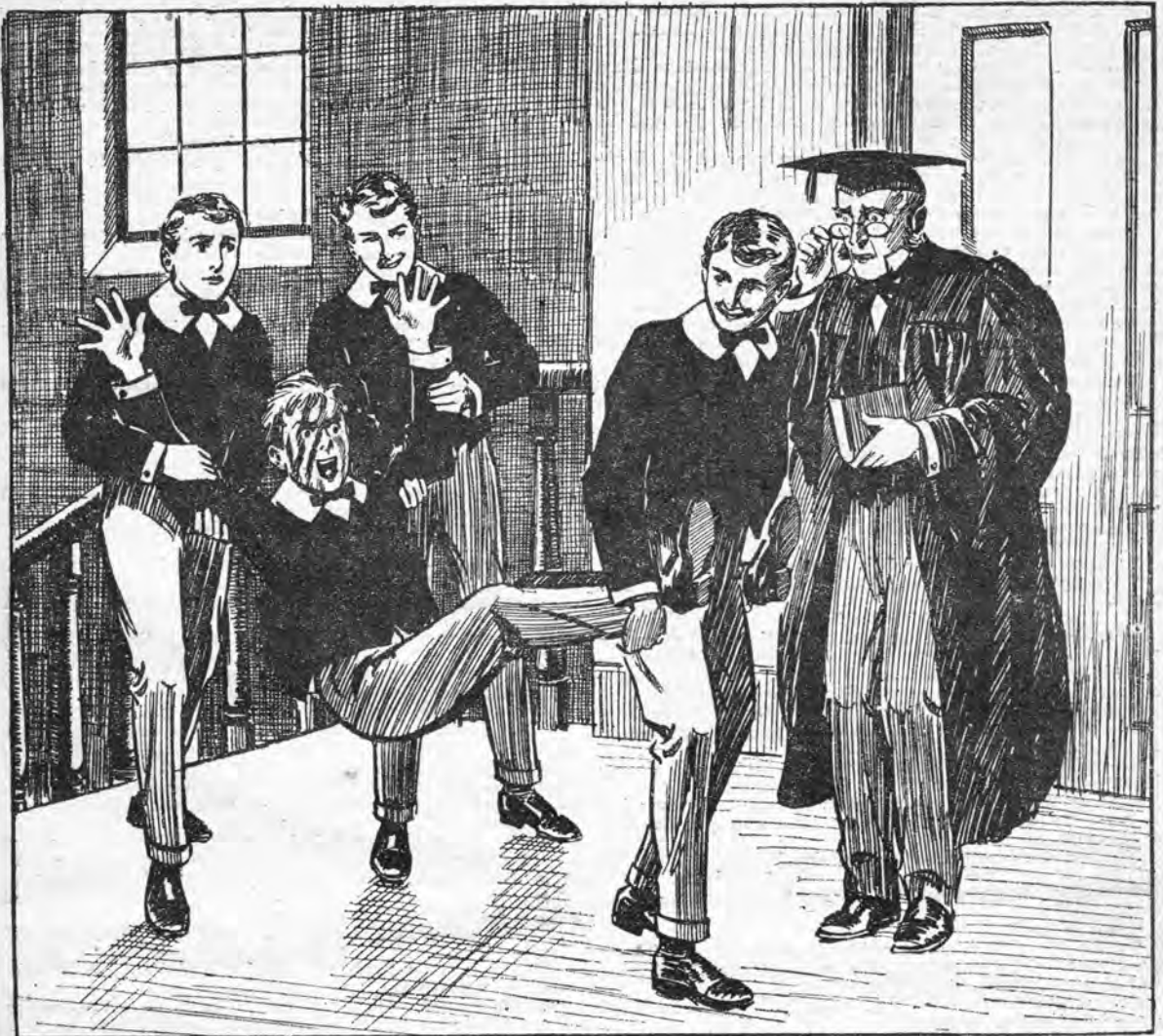
"THE GEM" LIBRARY PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 14. NEXT WEDNESDAY

Mr. Railton, Monteith,
Joe Frayne,



1. HARRY NOBLE.
2. DICK BROOKE.
3. KIT, THE GIPSY.



The juniors seized the schoolboy inventor and carried him upstairs. Mr. Lathom came along as they reached the first landing. "Dear me! Is he still hysterical?" gasped the kind-hearted master. "Leggo!" roared Glyn. "I'm all right sir! I-yah!—you're choking me, you silly fatheads!" (See Chapter 4.)

the Fourth Form-master knew nothing about that dyeing operation, and he was angry.

"Rook!" he rapped out, as the new junior sat down.

"Yes, sir," said Rook.

"How dare you sit down at the breakfast-table with your head covered?" exclaimed the Form-master. "Have you no manners, sir?"

"If you please, sir—"

"Take your cap off instantly."

Rook turned scarlet.

"I—I—if you please, sir, I want to keep it on."

"What! What! Have you a cold in the head?"

"No, sir."

"Then why do you wish to keep your cap on, Rook?"

"To—to—to cover up my hair, sir."

"What! I do not understand you, Rook. Why do you wish to cover up your hair?" demanded Mr. Lathom, in angry surprise.

"The—the colour, sir—" stammered Rook.

"Nonsense, boy. If you mean that jests have been made about your hair being red, you are very foolish to take notice of them. Take your cap off at once."

Rook hesitated.

"If you p-p-please, sir, m-m-my hair isn't red now," he stammered.

"What! What do you mean, Rook?"

"It's green, sir."

Mr. Lathom stared blankly at him.

"If this is a joke, Rook, I must point out that your Form-master is not a proper person to be joked with. Take fifty lines, and remove your cap at once."

Rook removed his cap.

Mr. Lathom looked at him, and adjusted his spectacles carefully and looked again. There was a ripple of laughter through the room. Mr. Lathom seemed astounded. He rose from his place, and came down the long table to have a closer look at the peculiar head of hair sported by the new boy.

"Rook! What the dick—I mean—what in the name of goodness have you been doing to your hair. It is green."

"It's been dyed, sir."

"Dyed! Boy! Do you mean to tell me that you have been so utterly absurd as to have your hair dyed green?" shrieked the Form-master.

"It was a mistake, sir. It was meant to be black; and the silly idiot used the wrong dye, sir."

"Good heavens! This is utterly ridiculous. Go and wash it off at once."

"It won't wash off, sir. I've tried."

Mr. Lathom seemed quite staggered.

"You—you mean to tell me that that horrible colour will not wash off, Rook! That you are going about with green hair."

"I can't help it, sir. It won't come off."

"It is extraordinary—unheard of! Rook, you cannot possibly appear in the Form-room in that state."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 286.

Rook looked a little more cheerful. He was not specially anxious to appear in the Form-room, so far as that went.

"Very well, sir. If I am to miss lessons—"

"But—but something must be done. You must go down to the barber's in Rylcombe this morning, and ask him what he can do to remove that absurd dye, Rook. And if you make any further attempts to dye your hair, you will be caned most severely—most severely."

The usual decorum of the dining-room was not at all observed that morning. Nobody seemed to be able to look at the new junior without laughing. Even the masters could not help smiling when they saw the green hair.

When the fellows went into the Form-rooms, Rook made his way to the village. He put on the largest cap he could find, and pulled it down over his forehead and his ears, to conceal the peculiar colour of his hair, and avoid trouble with the village boys. By this device he was able to reach the village barber's without half the population of Rylcombe following at his heels, which would certainly have been the case if they had seen the remarkable colour of his hair.

Mr. Mopp, the village barber, was fortunately alone in his shop, excepting for the boy who aided him in his labours; he was not a busy man in the mornings.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Mr. Mopp. "Shave, sir?"

Rook grunted. Mr. Mopp sometimes secured a tip from senior boys by asking them whether they wanted a shave; but Rook was not in a mood for compliments.

"No," he said.

"Hair cut, sir?"

"No!" growled Rook.

"Ahem! Then what can I do for you, sir?"

"I suppose you know something about hair dyes?" said Rook.

Mr. Mopp rubbed his shiny hands.

"Certainly, sir! You have come to the right place for that. We have Scrooger's dyes at six shillings a bottle, and something of our own which is quite as good—in fact, better—at half the price. What colour do you prefer, sir?"

"I don't want my hair dyed!" growled Rook. "I've been dyeing it—I mean a silly idiot has been dyeing it for me—and I want to get it off!"

"Ahem! That is a different matter. But I will do my best," said Mr. Mopp. "Kindly take a seat, sir."

Rook sat down. He was unwilling to remove his cap; but it had to be done; and Mr. Mopp almost fell upon the floor at the sight of Rook's hair.

"G-goodness gracious!" he exclaimed.

"He, he, he!" yelled the barber's boy hysterically.

"It's not a laughing matter!" yelled Rook. "I want this stuff got off!"

"He, he, he!"

"George! Hold your tongue!" gasped Mr. Mopp. "How dare you laugh in the presence of this gentleman? Ha, ha, ha! I mean, leave the shop at once!"

George left the shop, yelling. His yells could be heard dying away in the distance.

Mr. Mopp made a heroic effort to be grave.

"I—I presume the wrong dye was used!" he gasped.

"Yes," growled Rook.

"I will see what I can do."

Mr. Mopp saw what he could do. He tried all kinds of concoctions upon Rook's hair, most of them with terrific smells.

But it was all in vain.

After all Mr. Mopp's labours, the green dye still clung obstinately to the hair, and refused to budge.

"Got it off?" asked Rook, at last, as the exhausted barber ceased from his labours.

"I have made a difference to it—a distinct difference," said Mr. Mopp. "It is lighter now—decidedly lighter."

Rook looked in the glass, and scowled at his reflection.

"It's the same as ever," he grunted.

"No, no; a little lighter—decidedly lighter," said Mr. Mopp. "If you come to me every day for—for a week or two—"

"Week or two!" yelled Rook. "I want it off now—at once."

"Ahem! I'm afraid that is impossible. I will cut your hair very short if you like," said Mr. Mopp. "Then it will be less noticeable. The new hair, of course, will grow its natural colour, and at your age hair grows quickly."

"Cut it, then," said Rook surlily.

Mr. Mopp set to work with his scissors.

He cut off all the hair he could get at, and that certainly made a difference. Rook looked a great deal like a convict when he had finished. The hair was cropped off quite close to his head all over, but what was left persisted in glaring a vivid and offensive green.

"There! That is very much better," said the barber.

"Look in the glass!"

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,

Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

Every Friday.

Rook looked in the glass and snorted.

"Can't you get any more off?" he demanded.

"I have shaved it quite close," said Mr. Mopp. "I assure you that when the new hair grows, it will be its natural colour. If you come to me in a few days for a fresh cut, I think this—this extraordinary colour will all be gone."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"If you would care to try a new dye—"

"Rats! I've had enough dyes!" growled Rook. "How much?"

"Five shillings, please."

"I'll make Glyn pay it, the beast!"

Rook handed out the five shillings, which was certainly a reasonable charge considering the time Mr. Mopp had spent on his labours. Then he jammed his cap down on his head and left the shop. When he was gone, Mr. Mopp sat down and laughed till he wept.

The boys had come out after morning lessons by the time Rook arrived at St. Jim's.

"Here he is!" roared Gore, of the Shell.

And an interested crowd gathered round Rook as he came in.

"Got it off, Rook?"

"Is it greens or carrots now?"

"Let's see it."

"Go and eat coke!" snorted Rook.

Gore jerked off his cap, and there was a yell of laughter at the sight of the close-cropped head.

"Convict 99!" howled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rook snatched his cap from Gore, and jammed it on his head, and strode away to the School House. Mr. Railton met him as he entered. The School House master was trying not to smile.

"I hope you have succeeded in getting that absurd dye removed, Rook," he said.

"It won't come off, sir," growled Rook. "Would you mind if I wear my cap indoors, sir, till it's gone?"

"H'm! Perhaps you had better do so, Rook; I will speak to Mr. Lathom. My dear boy," added the Housemaster kindly, "I trust you realise now that you acted in a ridiculous manner in wishing to have your hair dyed at all. It was very foolish of you to take notice of thoughtless jokes about your hair being red. I suppose that was your motive?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"The colour of one's hair is a matter of the very smallest importance—and red, too, is a sign of virility, and should be a cause of pride rather than otherwise," said Mr. Railton. "I hope you will never think of doing anything so foolish again, Rook."

"Yes, rather, sir! I only wish it were red now!" groaned Rook.

"It will soon resume its natural colour, Rook. Pray take a more sensible view of the matter in future, and do not show an absurd sensitiveness upon a point that is not of the slightest importance. Extreme sensitiveness upon such a trifling matter, Rook, is a sign of personal conceit."

And Rook, after receiving that little lecture, went to his study to hide his remarkable hair from the general view. That afternoon he appeared in the Form-room with his cap on, and he seldom appeared with his head uncovered after that—till the natural growth of his hair gave Mr. Mopp another chance—and then a fresh hair-cut relieved Rook of the green dye.

CHAPTER 13.

Friends Divided.

MONTY LOWTHER was seated in the study in the Shell passage, a few days later, when the new boy came in. Lowther was looking glum. His breach with his study-leader had not been healed, and matters were extremely uncomfortable in Tom Merry's quarters. It was time now for the "Weekly" to appear, and the proofs were about to be returned to Mr. Tiper, the local printer, who had the honour of printing the school magazine. Monty Lowther was very sore about the exclusion of his contribution by the heavy hand of the editor. He felt that it was not chummy, and he declined to admit that his contribution was not in good taste, and therefore ought to be excluded.

He frowned at Rook as he came in.

"Well, what do you want, Ginger?" he demanded. His feelings towards the new junior were far from amiable just then.

Rook's eyes gleamed.

"Never mind the ginger," he said. "I've come to talk to you. I've heard from Mellish that you are putting something about me in your rotten school magazine."

"Well?"

"Well, it's not going in," said Rook.

"Have they made you chief editor by any chance?" asked Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"No, they haven't. But I have a right to say that I won't be made fun of in your rotten silly paper, and I mean it!"

"You can go and eat coke!"

"I want you to undertake not to put in the limerick, or whatever it is," said Rook, breathing hard.

"And if I don't undertake it?" suggested Lowther.

"Then I shall jolly well stop you."

"Oh, you'll stop me, will you?" said the Shell fellow, in a reflective sort of way. "And how are you going to do that?"

"I shall find a way soon enough," said Rook angrily. "I think it's caddish of you to think of doing such a thing. It's in rotten bad taste!"

"Go hon!"

"And I won't have it, so that's plain."

"And I don't care twopence whether you'll have it or not," said Lowther, his own anger rising. "Clear out of my study, and don't be cheeky."

Rook clenched his hands.

"Will you do as I want?" he demanded.

"I'll do as I like!"

"Then we may as well settle it now," said Rook, throwing off his jacket. "Come on!"

"Don't be an ass, young fellow-me-lad!" said Lowther.

"You know, I can easily lick you."

"Then you can do it. I'm going to lick you if you don't."

"Oh, chuck!" said Lowther uneasily. "I don't want to hurt you. But you ought to know that a Shell chap can't let a Fourth-Form kid come into his study and bully him."

"The Shell chap shouldn't be a rotten cad, then!"

Lowther jumped up.

"If you want to go out of this room on your neck, Rook, you're going the right way to work!" he exclaimed.

"Come on, then!"

"Look here—"

"Will you leave that foolery out of your rotten paper?" demanded Rook.

Now, as a matter of fact, the "foolery," as Rook politely termed Lowther's poetic efforts, had already been excluded by the chief editor. But Lowther, from a feeling of pride, did not choose to explain that.

"No, I won't!" he said.

"Then take that!"

"That" was a drive with the right, and Lowther took it—upon his nose. That was enough for Monty Lowther.

He simply jumped at Rook.

In a second more they were fighting hammer-and-tongs—tramping to and fro in the study, crashing into the furniture, and hammering one another with terrific energy.

Rook was not up to Lowther's form in that kind of work, and he received plenty of punishment, but he put up a stout fight. "Ginger for pluck" certainly seemed to be true in Rook's case.

"Hallo, hallo! What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Tom Merry, coming into the study with Manners, as the fight was raging its hottest.

"I'm licking Rook—"

"I'm licking Lowther—"

Manners and Tom Merry hurled themselves upon the combatants, and dragged them apart. Rook gasped and dabbed his nose with his handkerchief; Lowther caressed his eye. And they glared at one another savagely.

"Now, what's it all about?" said Tom Merry pacifically.

"Chuck it! You've slogged one another quite enough."

"He's a cheeky cub, that's what the matter is," said Lowther.

"I'm not having any rot about me put in the paper," said Rook. "I tell you, I won't stand it from anybody!"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom Merry. "That's settled. Lowther isn't going to put anything about your blessed top-knot into the 'Weekly.'"

"I'm going to do as I like about that!" roared Lowther.

"But it's settled, Monty—"

"You needn't call me Monty—and it's not settled. I was going to leave it out; but now that Fourth Form whelp has tried to bully me, I'm going to put it in!" said Lowther angrily.

"You sha'n't put it in!" said Rook.

"I will!"

"You won't!"

"You can't put it in, Monty," said Tom Merry, looking very worried. "We agreed on that."

"We didn't agree on that. You took it on yourself to say so!" growled Lowther. "I'm not under your orders, and you can go and eat coke! I'm going to put that limerick

in, whether you like it or not, Mister Chief Editor, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"Look here, Monty—"

"Oh, shut up with your Monty! My name's Lowther!" growled the other.

"Well, Lowther, then, if you like that better. That rotten limerick is scratched, and it's not going in, and that settles it."

"I'm satisfied with that," said Rook.

"You won't be so satisfied when you see the paper!" sneered Lowther. "You'll find it there all right."

"If I do there will be trouble."

"Pooh!"

Rook's eyes began to blaze again, and Manners pushed him out of the study.

"You cut off!" he said. "We'll settle this with Lowther."

"So long as it doesn't go in, all serene," said Rook. And he went down the passage, still dabbing at his nose.

"Now, Lowther," said Tom Merry, "don't play the giddy goat. Be a reasonable chap. The proofs are all made up to send to Tiper, and you don't want to alter them, just to worry a kid who hasn't done you any harm."

"Look at my eye!"

"Well, it's no worse than Rook's nose."

"I'm not going to be bullied by a Fourth-Form kid!" howled Lowther.

"But Rook was in the right, you know," said Manners, rather unfortunately.

"Oh, was he?" said Lowther. "Well, I tell you that limerick's going in. And if you chaps want to side with a gingery freak against an old chum, you can do it; but I'll shove that limerick into the 'Weekly' in spite of you. So there!"

And Lowther tramped out of the study and slammed the door.

"Oh, blow Rook!" said Manners dismally. "There's Monty gone off on his ear, as Lumley calls it, and all the fat's in the fire. What are you doing with those proofs, Tommy?"

"I'm going down on my bike to take them to Tiper's," said Tom Merry quietly.

"But Lowther—"

"Lowther can go and eat coke!"

"He will be frightfully ratty if his precious limerick is left out after this, Tom."

"Let him be."

And Tom Merry, with the proofs of the "Weekly" tied up in a bundle on his handle-bars, cycled down to the village, and handed the precious copy into the hands of Mr. Tiper himself.

Monty Lowther saw him go, with a brow like thunder.

When he came back, he met Lowther in the quadrangle, and made one more overture towards peace.

"Monty, old man—" he began.

Lowther interrupted him roughly.

"You've taken the proofs down to Tiper's?"

"Yes."

"Without my stuff in the paper?"

"Without that limerick—yes," said Tom. "You see—"

"That's enough."

"But, Monty, old chap—"

Monty Lowther turned his back. Tom Merry, with a heightened colour, walked away to the house without another word. The breach was complete now.

CHAPTER 14.

Monty Lowther Has His Way.

KILDARE of the Sixth was at tea in his study, some time later, when Lowther knocked at his door.

"Come in!" Kildare sang out cheerily.

The captain of St. Jim's looked rather curiously at Monty Lowther as he entered. The junior's usually sunny face was darkly clouded. Darrel, who was having tea with Kildare, looked at him very curiously, too, and Lowther flushed a little under their gaze.

"Hallo! What's the trouble with you?" asked Kildare.

"Nothing. I want a pass out of gates, please, Kildare."

"What for? Going ragging the Grammarians, I suppose?"

"No; only going to the village."

"Important?" asked Kildare. "It's getting dark."

"Something's been left out of our paper—the 'Weekly,' you know," said Lowther. "I want to go down to Tiper's and rectify it."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Kildare. "You can have a pass for that."

And he wrote it out at once.

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

Monty Lowther left the captain's study, and went out into the dusky quadrangle. Levison and Mellish were in the doorway, and they glanced at him curiously.

"Going out?" asked Levison.

"Mind your own business!" snapped Lowther.

Levison laughed.

"Where did you pick up those lovely manners?" he queried.

"Oh, shut up!"

And Lowther strode away in the dusk.

"Quite a rift in the lute, and trouble in the cheery family circle," said Levison, with a grin. "Lowther and Tom Merry don't speak now. Shocking, ain't it?"

Mellish chuckled with great enjoyment.

"They've fallen out before, and made it up again," he remarked. "It looks a bit more serious this time. I heard Lowther ask Gore to let him do his prep. in his study this evening. As a rule, he's on fighting terms with Gore. But he prefers him to Tom Merry and Manners just at present. I wonder what he's gone out for?"

"I fancy I know."

"You generally know a precious lot of things!" yawned Mellish. "What is it this time?"

"They've been rowing over Lowther's stuff being shoved out of the 'Weekly,'" said Levison. "My belief is that he's gone down to Tiper."

Mellish whistled.

"To have it shoved in, after all?"

"That's it."

"There will be trouble when we get the 'Weekly,' then? Tom Merry will be bound to get his back up over that."

"Well, it's like Lowther's cheek, as Tom Merry is chief editor, and Knight of the Blue Pencil!" grinned Levison.

"I wouldn't stand interference."

"Suppose we drop him a hint?"

"He might drop you a thick ear in return. Better let Lowther have his way; all the fat will be in the fire then."

"He, he, he!"

Monty Lowther, quite unconscious of the enjoyment of the two cads of the Fourth, strode away to Rylcombe with a gloomy brow. If he had realised how he was playing into the hands of his old enemies, he might have desisted. But he did not know it, and all the obstinacy in his nature was aroused now.

The other fellows had tried to overrule him, and he was not going to be overruled—that was how he persisted in looking at it.

He arrived at Mr. Tiper's, and found Mr. Tiper himself there, in the composing-room. Mr. Tiper was helping his solitary assistant to "set up" the local paper, which was a more important enterprise in Mr. Tiper's eyes than the school magazine of St. Jim's.

"The 'Weekly's' not printed yet?" Lowther asked.

"Not yet, Master Lowther," said Mr. Tiper. "We're starting on it this evening."

"Good! Can you let me see the proofs? There's something been left out," Lowther explained. "I want to shove it in."

"Certainly! 'Enry, give Master Lowther the proofs of the 'Weekly.'"

Lowther spread out the proofs on a table, and took out a pencil. The Comic Column in "Tom Merry's Weekly" was under Lowther's supervision, and he had left a space in it where the famous limerick should have been. That space was still empty, and would have had to be spaced out in the printing. Lowther wrote in the limerick concerning Rook and his red hair in pencil.

Mr. Tiper had no suspicions. It was not uncommon for the schoolboy editors to come down to make some alteration at the eleventh hour. And he knew nothing, of course, of the dispute between the editor and sub-editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

"That's all," said Lowther. "It wasn't much—only a limerick left out. When are we going to have the copies?"

"To-morrow afternoon, Master Lowther."

"Righto! Good-night!"

And Lowther quitted the printer's.

He was very thoughtful as he walked home to St. Jim's. He had taken a great deal into his own hands in making that alteration without the editor's knowledge and consent, and his heart smote him a little when he was half-way home.

He paused in the lane, half minded to turn back and cut out the offensive limerick after all.

But he thought of Rook and his dictatorial manner, and his heart hardened.

He kept on to the school.

Taggles let him in, and assured him that he would report him for being out after locking-up, and Lowther snorted and showed him the pass.

Then he went into the School House.

"Done it?" asked Levison, meeting him in the passage.

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
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Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

Lowther started a little, and stared at the cad of the Fourth.

"Done what?" he asked roughly.

"I know where you've been!" grinned Levison. "Shall I tell Tom Merry?"

Lowther flushed with anger.

"Tell him, and be hanged!" he said. "Let me alone!"

And he swung away.

Rook was coming down the passage, and Lowther gave him a glance of grim dislike, and passed him without a word. Rook looked at him, and then glanced at Levison's grinning face. He could see that something was "on."

"What's the joke?" he asked.

"You'll see when the 'Weekly' comes along to-morrow!" grinned Levison.

Rook started.

"Tom Merry has agreed that that rotten limerick won't go in, if that's what you mean!" he said. "I said I wouldn't have it!"

"It might be in, all the same," said Levison. "Lowther's just been down to Tiper's, the printer's, I fancy!"

Rook set his lips.

"I understand. If it's in, after all, I shall know who did it—and there will be trouble. Not that I believe you, either. You'd be glad to make trouble, anyway; you're cad enough!"

And he turned his back on Levison.

Monty Lowther had gone up to the Shell passage, but he did not go to Tom Merry's study as usual to do his preparation. He took his books into the next study, where Gore and Vavasour and Skimpole were at work at the table. George Gore made room for him to sit down, giving him a curious look.

"Still on fighting terms next door?" he asked.

"Yes," growled Lowther.

"I'm sorry," said Vavasour. "Nothing serious, is it?"

Lowther did not reply to that question. He sat and did his work with a grim and gloomy brow, and, when it was finished, left the study without a word.

"Cheerful chap to dig with, ain't he?" said Gore.

"I'm sorry he's on bad terms with Merry and Manners," said Vavasour.

"Oh, they'll get over it!"

"Perhaps it would be a good idea for a tactful fellow to step in and make friends of them again," Skimpole remarked thoughtfully, blinking at Gore through his big spectacles. "I should be very pleased to do anything I could. Perhaps if I were to point out to Lowther that it is absurd of him to act in this manner—"

"Take off your specs first," said Gore.

"My dear Gore, why should I take off my spectacles before making that very sensible and timely remark to Lowther?" asked Skimpole, in surprise.

"Because he's pretty certain to dot you on the nose, or in the eye," said Gore, with a grin.

"Ahem!" said Skimpole thoughtfully. "Perhaps it would be wiser not to interfere?"

CHAPTER 15.

A Fateful Blow.

THE next day was a half-holiday at St. Jim's. The School House juniors were playing a House match with Figgins & Co. from "over the way," and Tom Merry was somewhat exercised in his mind about it. Monty Lowther was a prominent member of the School House junior eleven, and his name was down to play in the House match. As Tom and his old chum were not on speaking terms now, it was somewhat difficult to speak to Lowther about it; but after morning lessons Tom Merry made the plunge. He came up to Lowther as the Shell came out from the Form-room.

Lowther met him with a glance like steel.

"Monty, old man—" Tom began, in a conciliatory manner.

"I think I've mentioned that my name's Lowther," said the other elaborately. "I'm Monty to my friends!"

Tom reddened.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" he said.

"If that's all you've got to say, you can go and say it to somebody else!" said Lowther.

"Well, that isn't all," said Tom, trying to keep his temper and speak good-humouredly. "I suppose you haven't forgotten we're playing the New House this afternoon? Are you going to play—same as usual?"

"No; I don't want to play this afternoon. I'm going out!"

"Look here, Monty—"

"Lowther, please!"

"Lowther, then—look here, you're not going to cut the cricket because of that silly rot about your limerick being left out of the 'Weekly'!"

"Perhaps it isn't left out, after all," said Lowther unpleasantly.

"Yes, it is. The proofs have been with Tiper since yesterday, and they're to be delivered this afternoon. They're printed now."

"Yes—with the limerick in."

"I don't see how you make that out," said Tom, puzzled. "It was left out of the proof."

"I called on Tiper last night, and put it in again," said Lowther deliberately.

"You put it in," exclaimed Tom Merry, "without consulting me!"

"I think we'd had enough consultation on the subject—too much, in fact. I told you I wouldn't be bullied into leaving it out—and there you are!"

"Nobody wanted to bully you. I think you're a wrong-headed ass!" said Tom Merry angrily. "You know what we did to Levison when he meddled with the 'Weekly,' and put something insulting into it!"

"You wouldn't find me so easy to handle as Levison!" said Lowther, with a curl of the lip. "But if you want to, go ahead, I don't mind!"

"I've a jolly good mind—" began Tom Merry, clenching his hands.

"Good mind to what?"

"To give you a jolly good licking!" exclaimed Tom, his anger flashing out. "That's what you want. It was like your cheek to meddle with the 'Weekly' after it had gone to the printer's, and you know it!"

"I'm ready to step into the gym, if you mean it about the licking," said Lowther. "With or without gloves, just as you like!"

Tom Merry was greatly inclined to take him at his word for a moment or two; but he restrained his temper.

"I think it was rotten of you!" he said. "I promised Rook that it shouldn't go in, and now he'll think I've broken my word!"

"That's all right; I'll let him know who put it in."

"Then you'll be fighting him again; and that's rotten of you, too, as you know you can lick him easily. It would be better for you to pick rows with a chap who can stand up to you!" said Tom scornfully.

"I seem to be pretty rotten all through, in your opinion," said Lowther. "You can stand up to me, I suppose, if Rook can't! And I'm ready?"

"I'm not going to fight you, Monty," said Tom Merry quietly. "We've been chums too long to start hammering one another now, especially about such rot as this! But if it had been anybody else—"

"Don't let that trouble you; we're not chums any longer, as you've thrown me over for that red-headed cad!" said Lowther bitterly.

"I haven't. It was you who—"

"Oh, give us a rest!" said Lowther. "Of course, it was my fault—I know that! You are never in the wrong, and I always am. I don't want any more of that. And I'm not going to play in the cricket team so long as you're skipper, anyway. You can put Rook in, as you're so fond of him!"

"Look here, Lowther, you'd better play—you don't want to go out—"

"I'm going for a stroll over Wayland Moor," said Lowther. "If Rook wants to find me, when he sees the 'Weekly,' you can tell him I'm there. I feel just in the humour to give him a hiding!"

"But, I say—"

"You've said quite enough."

And Lowther stalked away. While the other fellows were preparing for the House match, Lowther walked away by himself, and left the school.

Tom Merry went down to the cricket-ground in a worried frame of mind.

"Where's Lowther?" asked Blake.

"He isn't playing to-day," said Tom shortly. "I'll put Gore in, if he'd care to play."

"What-ho!" said Gore emphatically. "I'm your man!"

"Get into your things, then!"

Gore dashed away for his flannels. He did not have many opportunities of playing for his House, and he was glad of the chance. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up to the School House junior skipper with quite a worried brow.

"I trust you are not still on wotten terms with Lowther, deah boy?" he said.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"I'm awfully sorry. If I can do anythin'—"

"You can't, Gussy; thanks, all the same!"

"I don't know," said Arthur Augustus, with a wise shake of the head. "In mattahs of this sort, a fellow of weal tact and judgment—"

"Here come Figgins & Co."

And the House match began. That Tom Merry was in a worried mood was evident from the fact that Fatty Wynn, of the New House, bowled him for a duck's egg. Fatty was

a great bowler, but it was very seldom that Tom Merry's wicket went down for a duck's egg to any bowling.

"Nevah mind, deah boy," said D'Arcy consolingly, as Tom came back to the pavilion. "I will make it a point to knock up a weally big scoah!"

"Do!" said Tom Merry, with a faint smile.

And Arthur Augustus went in with a flourish and a determination to do great things for his House—an intention that was unfortunately nipped in the bud by a fast ball from Fatty Wynn, which whipped his leg stump out of the ground in the twinkling of an eye.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, in surprise.

And he walked back dolefully to the pavilion, disdaining to answer sarcastic inquiries as to the market price of ducks' eggs.

Tom Merry was looking on at the batting with a far from cheerful brow, when the consignment of the "Weekly" arrived.

"May as well go in and look at it while the fellows are battin'," said Arthur Augustus. "The chaps who aren't playin' would like to see the numbah."

Tom Merry nodded.

While the School House innings continued, Blake and Manners knocking up runs at a good rate, Tom Merry unfasted the bundle from the printer's in his study, and the copies of the "Weekly" were handed out.

Rook was there to receive one, and he took it away without a word, and started reading it in the lower passage. He was not long in finding the uncomplimentary limerick that referred to himself. His eyes were gleaming over it when Levison joined him.

"Something about you there," said Levison, with a grin.

Rook looked up from the copy.

"Do you know where Lowther is?" he asked.

"Do you want to see him?"

"Yes," said Rook, clenching his hands.

"I heard him telling Tom Merry he was going for a stroll on Wayland Moor," said Levison. "He's not playing cricket this afternoon. But I should advise you—"

Rook did not stay to hear Levison's advice, good or bad. He crushed the paper in his hand, jammed on his cap, and strode away. Levison looked after him with a grin. Rook took the lane towards Wayland, and Levison knew what he was going for.

"More trouble in the family," he remarked to Mellish.

"Rook's gone to look for Lowther."

"The more he hammers him the better I shall like it," said Mellish amiably; "and if Lowther licks him—and I expect he will—it will serve him right for keeping us out of our study. I'd lick him myself if—if—if—"

"If you could?" suggested Levison.

"Well, you can't, either!" growled Mellish.

"My dear chap, it's more sensible to let the cat pull the chestnuts out of the fire!" grinned Levison. "Lowther is the catspaw just now, though he doesn't know it."

"He, he, he!"

And the two amiable youths strolled down to the school gates, to see Rook off. Rook was striding down the lane at a great rate, and he turned into the footpath through the wood and disappeared. And Mellish and Levison chuckled, and strolled away to the tuckshop.

Rook strode on with a grim brow.

He understood that Tom Merry was not responsible for the appearance of that unfortunate limerick in the pages of the "Weekly." It was Monty Lowther, and he meant to deal with Monty Lowther himself. The fact that he was no match for Lowther in a fistic encounter did not make him hesitate for a moment.

Rook had not been long enough at St. Jim's to know the surrounding country very well, but he found his way to the moor at last. It was a wild and lonely stretch of country, rich with gorse, and full of dangerous pitfalls for the unwary.

Half-hidden in the gorse and thickets were great gaps where in old times quarries had been worked. Those near the road had been fenced in, but out on the lonely moor there were no fences, and wandering animals had often been lost in the old quarries; and there was a story of a wretched drunken tramp, who, staggering on his way across the moor at night, had fallen into one of the old pits, and perished there miserably.

Rook, tramping across the moor knee-deep in thick ferns, found himself unexpectedly on the verge of a yawning chasm, and started back with a shiver.

The great gap barred his way, and as he paused and looked about him, he caught sight of a St. Jim's cap among the gorse on the other side. Then he made out the back of Monty Lowther's head.

Lowther was seated near the old quarry, leaning back against a mass of rugged stone, and reading a book that rested on his knees. He heard Rook give an exclamation and glanced round.

"So I've found you!" said Rook.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"PLAYING TO WIN!"

He was not a dozen yards from Lowther, but the intervening quarry made it impossible to reach him. Lowther looked across at him coolly.

"Have you been looking for me, Rufus?" he asked.

Rook clenched his hands.

"I've seen that foolery of yours in the 'Weekly'!" he said.

"And you couldn't wait for me to come in?" said Lowther cheerfully. "I suppose that's what comes of being hot-headed?"

"If it wasn't for this gap between us——"

"So near and yet so far!" said Lowther, with provoking good-humour. "The deadly vengeance will have to wait. But you're very useful standing where you are, you know—you answer the purpose of a danger signal!"

"You cad!" roared Rook. "If I could get at you——"

"Don't let that trouble you," said Lowther politely.

"You can go round. You have only to walk a hundred yards or so to the left, and it's narrow enough to jump over—if you care to risk it. Ginger for pluck, you know!"

"I'll give you ginger!" said Rook, between his teeth.

"Will you wait there for me?"

"Well, I'm not going to run away," said the Shell fellow.

"I'm not a soldier, but I'm ready to face the fire!"

Rook made no reply, but hurried along the edge of the quarry in the direction the Shell fellow had indicated. At some distance, it narrowed to a width of six or seven feet—an easy jump for an active lad, but one that many would have avoided. For, narrow as the gap was, the depth was more than two hundred feet, and the bulging of the sides prevented one from seeing what was below. There was a splashing of water—most of the old quarries being flooded with the rain—as a stone was displaced by Rook's foot. The splash came from far, far below. But Rook did not hesitate. He took a little run, and jumped.

Monty Lowther was still seated by the big stone when Rook came striding along the side of the old quarry towards him.

The red-haired junior halted in front of him, trembling with rage.

"Warm, isn't it?" said Lowther.

"Get up, and come on!" said Rook, throwing his jacket into the ferns.

Lowther rose lazily to his feet.

"Anything to oblige!" he said. "I'll give you a licking, if you want one. You've caused me enough trouble, with your silly red head and your silly ways, and if you want a licking in return, I'm ready to give it you!"

"Come on, you cad!"

And Rook rushed to the attack. Lowther met him with left and right, and the new junior staggered back. Lowther laughed.

"Better think twice," he suggested. "You can't touch me, you young ass! I don't want to hurt you, but—— Ah! Oh!"

Rook, blind with rage, was springing at him. Lowther put up his hands, but not before a heavy blow crashed in his face. The Shell fellow reeled, and his foot caught in the ferns on the edge of the quarry.

"Look out!" shrieked Rook, realising the other's danger.

Lowther made a fearful effort to recover his balance, his face going white as chalk as he felt himself swinging over space, but the effort did not save him. Before Rook could think of helping him, he was gone.

Rook stood dazed on the edge of the quarry.

There was a rush through the air—he heard it; he thought he heard a cry—a faint splash from fearful distance.

Then silence.

The wretched boy, with all the rage gone out of his face now, stood alone, dazed—alone on the moor!

CHAPTER 16.

Ginger for Pluck.

R OOK did not move—he did not speak.

He could not.

The suddenness of that fearful happening had deprived him of all power of speech or movement.

He stood alone—with the wild moor round him, the sun shining, the birds circling over his head—as before; but in that minute what a fearful change!

He groaned aloud at last.

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Lowther was gone—gone to his death—and the unhappy boy felt that the brand of Cain was upon his brow.

He had not meant it, but the boy who had reeled under his blow was gone to his death whether he had meant it or not. It seemed to the lad that the very sun was darkened as he dashed his hand over his eyes and looked wildly about him.

His first thought was to call for help. But there was no building within miles—there was no help to be had. His second thought was to throw himself upon his knees on the edge of the chasm and call to Lowther. There was a chance—a faint chance yet. He remembered the splash. The fall might not have killed the unfortunate junior.

"Lowther! Lowther!"

The echo of his voice alone answered him. It reverberated through the hollows of the quarry with a sound like thunder.

"Lowther, I'm sorry! I didn't mean it! Lowther, answer me if you can—one word!"

But only the dim rolling echoes came back.

"He's dead! He's dead!"

Rook staggered to his feet and looked wildly, frantically, round him. It was not punishment he was thinking of; he did not think of himself at all in that fearful moment. Lowther lay at the bottom of the quarry—perhaps dead, perhaps stunned, perhaps drowning in the accumulation of rain-water. Rook had sent him there unintentionally, but his hand had struck the blow, and it was for him to save the junior if he could be saved. It was no time to think of himself.

And then his coolness returned. His very blood seemed frozen with horror at the thought of what the bulging walls of the quarry might be hiding from his eyes, but his brain was strangely clear and cool now. He knelt again by the dangerous verge, and looked down. To look down alone required courage and a steady nerve. He tried to pierce the darkness below, but he could see nothing.

He scanned the sides of the chasm. They were almost perpendicular, with stones and roots cropping out of the earth. At any other time the thought of such a descent would have made him giddy; now he grasped at the ferns on the edge of the quarry and swung himself over.

Below him the side of the quarry bulged, and he clambered downwards, clinging to the roots and digging his fingers into the clayey earth.

Down and down, till his feet swung over space where the quarrieside receded inward, overhanging the gulf below.

Above him was a steep slope of fifty feet; below him unknown depth, and no support for his feet—and his arms were already aching under the strain.

Yet he did not hesitate.

Suddenly from the space below came a sound, a splashing sound, and then a voice:

"Rook! Good heavens! Is that you?"

A thrill ran through the junior.

It was Lowther's voice, and he turned almost giddy with the relief. He clung on desperately to the roots in his hands. Stones, displaced by his weight, rattled past him and fell into the quarry.

"Rook! Hold on, for goodness' sake!"

Rook panted.

"I'm holding on, Lowther! I—I thought—" He could say no more.

"I'm all right," came back Lowther's voice faintly. "I'm in a foot of mud and water. I've hurt my leg, I think—that's all."

"Thank Heaven!"

"Take care—take care, Rook! Were you coming down for me?"

"Yes."

"Oh, you ass! You can't do it—you can't! Go back!" shouted Lowther.

"I'm not going back!"

Rook groped with his feet below, but could get no hold. He lowered himself further, till he was hanging with his hands upon the outermost bulge of the quarrieside.

Then Lowther's voice came again:

"Steady on, Rook! Another inch or two and you can get your foot on a rest. The wall bulges out just under you."

Rook made an effort, and his foot rested upon the spot Lowther had seen from below. It was time, for his muscles seemed to be cracking under the strain.

Slowly, slowly he worked his way down.

Then suddenly the roots to which he held came out in bunches in his hands. He gave one faint cry and fell.

A rush through the air—splash, crunch!

He was in thick mud and water, blinded, stunned. But he struggled up, gouging water from his eyes, and looked wildly round him.

Far above his head the opening at the top of the old quarry was a mere line of blue sky.

Mud and clay and foul water splashed round him as he moved. He gazed round him. Lowther was lying half embedded in it, his face white as death.

"You're hurt, Rook?"

"No, I—I think not," gasped Rook. "But you—I thought you were killed. You did not answer when I called. I thought—"

"I didn't hear you call! I think I was stunned for some minutes," said Lowther. "I don't remember hitting the ground here. You awful ass, to climb down here! You might have been killed."

"I don't think I should have cared, if—if—"

"Lucky for both of us the rain's been here," said Lowther, trying to speak cheerfully.

"You're hurt!" said Rook.

"Only my leg—a bit of a sprain. I came jolly nearly drowning in that muck, though. If I'd fallen with my face in it—ugh!"

Lowther shuddered.

"I—I'm sorry, Lowther! You know I never meant—"

"Of course I know it, fathead!" said Lowther. "I'm to blame. Rook, old man, I've treated you like a cad, and it's up to me to say I'm sorry."

"If you had been killed!"

"Well, I'm not killed. But how the dickens are we going to get out of this?" said Monty Lowther. "We can't climb out—at least, I can't! And I don't think you could climb up. You can't fall upwards, you know, and you did the last twenty feet like a plummet."

Rook shivered as he gazed up at the side of the quarry.

"I couldn't climb it," he said.

"It was jolly plucky of you to try to get down," said Lowther. "Ginger for pluck, and no mistake. Excuse me," he added quickly.

Rook grinned ruefully.

"You can 'Ginger' me as much as you like," he said.

"When I think of what might have happened, I could kick myself for being such a silly chump. You can call me Rufus, and Coppertop, and Ginger, and Carrots, and any old thing after this."

"After this I jolly well sha'n't!" said Lowther. "Do you know, you ass, that you've risked your life a hundred times coming down here, and that we're not out of the wood yet. I don't know any way out of this quarry, and we're miles from a house."

"May be a way out if we follow it along," said Rook hopefully.

"May be. They say a man fell in here once and died of hunger," said Lowther. "That's what you've let yourself in for."

"And you?" said Rook.

"Well, I fell in; and you followed me of your own accord," said Lowther. "Do you know what I think you are?"

"A prize idiot, I suppose," said Rook. "Call me anything you like."

Lowther gripped his hand.

"I think you're the bravest chap I've ever come across, and you're the only chap who's ever made me feel downright and thoroughly ashamed of myself," he said. "Give me your fin. If we get out of this all right I'm your friend for life—if you care to have such a silly ass and rotter for a friend."

"Ginger and all?" said Rook, with a faint smile.

"Ginger and all!" said Lowther.

"Done!" said Rook.

He rested for some minutes in the mud. Then he squelched his way up.

"We've got to get out of this before night," he said.

"Can you walk?"

Lowther made a grimace.

"I can't; I've got a sprain. Look here, Rook, you buzz off, and if you get out you can bring help for me."

"I'm not going to leave you," said Rook quietly.

"But I can't walk!"

"I'm going to carry you."

"But—but I say—"

"Get on my back!" said Rook.

Lowther gave in. With the Shell fellow on his back Rook tramped away, squelching through the mud along the bottom of the old quarry. He stopped at last—a wall of earth shut him in. He paused with a groan.

"It's no good, Lowther, there's no way out."

"Put me down!" said Lowther quietly.

He slid to the ground. Rook stood panting with exertion. Far above a bird winged across the blue. The juniors were silent for a long time.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 286.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"PLAYING TO WIN!"

"The fellows know we came in this direction," Rook said at last. "They'll search for us."
 "If they don't find us, kid—"
 Rook scanned the sheer walls of the quarry.
 "I'm going to try it!" he said.
 "Don't! You'll break your neck."
 "I'm going to try."

And the brave-lad tried. And Lowther watched him anxiously, with terror in his face, as he slowly won his way up the quarrieside. How long did that climb last? To Rook it seemed hours; to Lowther, watching him from below, years. But at last, with aching limbs and reeling brain, he crawled out over the verge of the quarry.

He lay in the gorse, breathing hard in exhaustion, for ten minutes or more. Then he called down to Lowther.

"Keep your pecker up. I'll have help here as quick as I can!"

"Righto!" sang back Lowther.
 And he waited—waited, while the sun sank lower in the west, and the old quarry darkened with black shadows—till at last voices sounded above, and a rope came rattling down the quarry side—with Rook clinging to it—and Lowther, at last, was dragged from the depths of the quarry—from the jaws of death!

CHAPTER 17. The Clouds Roll By!

"WHAT the dickens—"
 "Bai Jove! It's Wook!"
 "And Lowther!"

A trap had driven into the old quad., and stopped before the School House. The driver got down and helped out two muddy-grimed juniors to alight—one of them leaned heavily upon the shoulder of the other as he stood on the ground.

They were so covered with mud and clay that they were scarcely recognisable, but Rook's red hair told who he was. And then the juniors recognised Lowther.

"What on earth have you been doing?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Lowther winced as the pain in his leg gave him a twinge. But he replied with his usual airy cheerfulness:

"I've been falling into the Old Quarry on the moor."
 "Monty!"
 "And Rook, like a silly ass, climbed in to help me out," said Lowther.

"Climbed down into the Old Quarry!" said Tom Merry, dazedly, "Rook did!"

"Yes. What do you think of that for a duffer?"

"Bai Jove! Wook, old man, it was wippin'!"

"Lowther's hurt his leg," said Rook. "Give him a hand in. And I want a wash."

"You can pay the man with the trap, Gussy," said Lowther. "He will want paying. Give him something extra for pulling me out."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

An excited crowd of juniors gathered round Lowther and Rook as they went into the School House. Mr. Railton met them in the hall, with a startled exclamation:

"Goodness gracious! What ever has happened to you?"

"Fell into a quarry, sir—!"

"Lowther! Are you hurt? You are limping?"

"Only a bit of a sprain, sir—no damage done," said Lowther.

"But Rook—did he fall in too?"

"No, he climbed in to fish me out; very plucky of him sir. Then he had to climb out again to get help. I'm afraid he's spoiled his clothes."

"Never mind his clothes now, Lowther," said Mr. Railton. "Rook, you did a most courageous thing—though

it would have been wiser to go for help without descending into the quarry at the risk of your life."

"I—I wanted to see if Lowther was—was—!" stammered Rook.

"I understand," said the Housemaster softly, "you are a brave lad, Rook—a very brave lad indeed. Your House should be proud of you."

"So we jolly well are, sir," said Tom Merry.
 "Yaas, wathah."

"Good old Copper-tóp," said Kangaroo. "Bravo, Ginger."

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry and Co. helped the two muddy and clayey juniors up to the dormitory, and helped them to scrape off the mud. Tom Merry examined Lowther's damaged leg, apparently forgetting that he was on bad terms with its owner. The leg was not much hurt, it was only a big bruise and a twist of the muscle, which was likely to cause the Shell fellow to limp for a few days.

"Thank goodness it's no worse, Monty—I—I mean Lowther."

Lowther chuckled.

"Don't keep that up now, Tommy—you don't want to row with an old pal when he's down, do you?"

"You know I don't, Monty."

Monty Lowther stretched out his neck.

"Punch my head!" he said, "as hard as you like; I deserve it! I made Rook the same offer in the trap, but he wouldn't take it on."

"I won't, either," said Tom, laughing. "You deserve to have your head punched, if ever anybody did. But give me your fin instead, you ass!"

"But you haven't told us how you came to fall into the quarry," said Blake.

"It was a collision—!"

"Bai Jove! what sort of a collision, Lowthah, deah boy?"

"Between my nose and Rook's knuckles. Like a pair of silly asses, we started slogging one another too near the quarry. Rook might have gone in, but as it happened, I was the chap who took the tumble. It would have served me right if I had broken my neck," said Lowther. "Glad I didn't all the same. Tom, old man, I'm sorry I put that rot into the 'Weekly,' and I apologise."

"Never mind that, Monty, old man," said Tom Merry, "if you've made it up with Rook—!"

"That's all right, isn't it, Rook, old fellow?"

"Yes, that's all right," said Rook, "and you can call me Ginger as much as you like, and as long as you like. I don't mind."

"I think we've both had a lesson," said Monty Lowther, thoughtfully. "I don't mind admitting that I've played the giddy ox—and Rook admits that he played the giddy goat. So we're quits—and chums! Rook's my pal now, and anybody who says anything against old Rook will have to talk it over with me, when I'm able to stand on my blessed leg again."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake, heartily. "I was going to pulverise you when you came in, because the New House have won the match; but under the circumstances, we'll stand you tea in the study instead. Gussy, go and blow the rest of your fiver; and don't spare expense. I hereby authorise you to blow the lot."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy."

And there was a very cheerful party in Study No. 6 to tea, that evening. Rook was the guest of honour; and Rook only grinned serenely when Tom Merry rose to propose a toast—in ginger-beer.

"Ginger for Pluck—and here's long life to Ginger, and long may he wave!"

And all the School House might have heard the roar that followed:

"Ginger for Pluck! Hurrah!"

THE END.

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CHAPTER 1.

Hilary Bevan Goes to London.

There was little about Hilary Bevan, saving the dust thickly covering his shoes and stockings, to indicate that he was nearing the end of a thirty-mile walk, and as he swung along Pall Mall from St. James's Park at a good four miles an hour pace more than one head was turned for an appreciative glance after his lithe, sinewy-looking figure, set off to the best advantage by the closely-fitting costume of cutaway coat and knee-breeches.

Nevertheless that forenoon he had left the little Surrey hamlet close by Leith Hill where he lived, and he was making for his father's house, No. 45, St. James's Square, in the last days of George the Third's reign, as at the present time, a locality given over to the fashionable and the wealthy.

Five smart rappings upon the great door producing no effect, the sixth time the youth made use of the big iron knocker he did so with such effect that the whole house resounded.

"Surely some of the lazy rascals are within," Hilary told himself.

His long jaunt had not tired him, but the delay was irritating.

The last knock was heard. The door was opened, and a splendidly-attired footman with a very red and angry face looked out. The sight of Hilary did not seem to please him.

"Begad, an' what d'ye want to hammer like that for?" he demanded. "Are ye trying to split the door? What is it you want?"

He spoke insolently, seeing only a youth, though a biggish one, and noting his unfashionable-looking garments and general dustiness. Such a person was plainly of no consequence.

"Sir Patrick Bevan is at home?" asked Hilary quietly, coming forward a step.

"No, he isn't!" the fellow snapped. "An' what would the likes of you be wanting with him if he was?"

"I wish to see Sir Patrick, and he will doubtless be glad to see me," said Hil, still keeping his temper.

"Then you won't, for he isn't here! And look here, my fine—"

"I will come in and await Sir Patrick's return."

The footman's eyes opened widely. Then he broke into a sneering laugh.

"You will, will you? Such as you don't come in here any time you wants," he said. "You waits until you're sent for. There's a public-house in Jermyn Street—the One Tun. You go there, an' I'll tell Sir Patrick when he's home about you, and you—"

This was going too far, and Hilary's face flushed. But to wrangle with a servant was impossible; moreover, it was quite possible that the man was but newly engaged, and had no knowledge of Sir Patrick's son.

It was three years since Hil had gone to live at Coldharbour, and during the whole of that time he had not been to London once, nor had his own father set eyes upon him during the period, having no time to spare from his fashionable companions and their amusements. The footman's presumption was pardonable.

"My name is Hilary Bevan, and my father—" the lad began.

A roar of laughter interrupted him.

"You're a funny cove, you are!" shrilled the footman. "Blow me dicky, but the joke's too good, though! One o' the family, are ye? Why, strike me, but I'll die o' laughing! Here—"

He was in the act of closing the door as Hil stepped upon the threshold, placed one hand on the door, and with the other took the fellow by the collar. To the man's infinite amazement he was twisted aside and propelled backward.

"Send someone here better informed than yourself!" ordered Hil, now within the hall. "I am Sir Patrick Bevan's son, but as it is possible you have acted in ignorance I will say nothing of your insolence!"

Whatever the fellow believed, he was overawed by the authority in the lad's manner. A scared expression came into his face, and he retired hurriedly to the regions below. Thence, in a very short while, came hurrying another servant, a soberly-dressed, hard-faced man, who looked as though he had served in the Army.

Such was the fact, for the man was John Foster, and he had been a trooper in the regiment of Heavy Dragoons commanded by Sir Patrick Bevan before a severe wound received at the Battle of Talavera had necessitated the latter's retirement from military service.

Foster, a favourite with his colonel, had been bought out.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"PLAYING TO WIN!"

when the latter left the Army, and he was attached to Sir Patrick as his confidential servant. He remembered Hilary well enough, and his apologetic comments upon the footman's stupidity and impudence would have done that worthy good to hear.

"Come in, Mr. Hilary, sir, and glad I am to see you!" he said. "I'll give that fool Willis a real sergeant-major's talking-to by and by. But you've changed a bit, sir. Not much of the boy of fifteen, sir, I saw last left now. The colonel won't know you, sir. What coach did you come by, sir?"

"My own feet, John," Hil laughed, following Foster into a small reception-room. "Coach-riding costs money, and the exercise of walking does me no harm."

"Walked thirty miles, sir! Then you'll be needing some refreshment. I'll see to it at once."

"And I won't say no, Foster. But my father—where is he? The man who opened the door said that he is not at home. Is that right?"

"Quite right, sir. The colonel isn't at home. He hasn't been here all day."

Foster's face was turned away, otherwise Hilary would have seen the curious expression in the servant's eyes as he answered the question.

"Where, then, is my father?" the lad persisted. "Has he left London?"

"No, sir," came the answer quickly. "The colonel went away three days ago about this time, and he hasn't been home yet."

"There is nothing the matter with him?" Hil asked sharply.

"The colonel's health is quite good, sir," Foster said, in a precise tone. "He went to the house of Sir Vincent Brookes." There was a pause. "I have no doubt, sir, he is there now."

Hilary was about to ask if his father and Sir Vincent Brookes were particular friends, but checked himself. It was not seemly to discuss his parent's personal friendships, even with John Foster. The baronet's name was not unfamiliar to him. He had heard it mentioned at the house of Squire Oliver, of Holmwood House, a large landowner and great sportsman in the neighbourhood where he lived, and at whose table he was a frequent guest. Also in Dorking, at shooting-parties, on the village greens, and in blacksmiths' forges Sir Vincent Brookes had more than once figured as the topic of conversation.

A mighty patron of sport was Sir Vincent. He was a fine rider and a splendid shot. The prize-ring had no more devoted adherent and supporter. Not a match of any consequence but he was sure to be at the ringside, and his money was always ready for the backing of any man he fancied.

"A Corinthian of the right sort; an out-and-outer," the bruisers and their following termed him. And such fame had travelled even to such an insignificant little place as Coldharbour.

Only a few days before, while watching a quiting match, Hilary had heard the rustics discussing the recently decided battle between the hitherto invincible Dutch Sam and Nosworthy, the baker. The Jew's defeat had cost his supporters a matter of one hundred thousand pounds, and not a little of this immense sum had come from the pockets of Sir Vincent Brookes.

Buried in the country as he had been for three years—but enjoying himself hugely all the same—Hilary knew practically nothing of his father, his friends, or his pursuits. The brief letters from Sir Patrick that had come at rare and uncertain intervals had not been enlightening, and Hil was too proud to ask for information of his parent from the farmer in whose house he had been placed. From what Foster said, however, it was plain that his father must be on friendly terms with Sir Vincent Brookes.

"Does the colonel know, sir, that you have come to town?" the servant asked respectfully, busying himself with arranging on the table the materials for a cold meal that he had directed a footman to bring without delay.

"No, Foster. I came up because—well, because I wanted to come," Hil answered.

Closely questioned, Hilary would have been hard put to it to say definitely what was the precise reason that had induced him to leave Coldharbour so suddenly. He was not altogether dissatisfied with his life, but latterly he had been asking himself for what reason he and his father were separated.

He was eighteen years of age, no longer a boy, and there was growing within him the feeling that something more than the indulgence in field sports was required to content him. Three times he had written, making reference to his father's intention to get him a commission in the Army, but no answer had come; and this had occasioned him some uneasiness.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 286.

ness and concern. It had been a relief to hear from Foster that his father was in good health.

Sitting down at the table, he fell to work heartily upon a ham and a cold roast chicken. He had not eaten since mid-day, and walking had bred a fine appetite. Foster, stiff as though he was still in uniform, and looking as though he had got into someone else's clothes by mistake, stood on the further side of the table. He had wanted to leave Hilary by himself, but the lad had stopped him.

"My father will be home this evening, of course?" Hil asked between mouthfuls.

"The colonel did not say, sir."

Something about the man's manner caused Hilary to look up sharply. He knew Foster's crisp, almost blunt habit of speech, the trick of giving an answer and no more; but just now the impression was conveyed to Hil that the soldier-valet knew more than he cared to say, and was afraid that he might be called upon to say it. Hil's curiosity was sharpened.

"Where is this house of Sir Vincent Brookes that my father has gone to?" he inquired.

"Grosvenor Street, sir—No. 21."

Hilary knew where Grosvenor Street was, and it struck him as odd that his father should have stayed three nights at a house within a mile of his own. More odd still was the fact that the valet had no idea when his master would return home. Hil could not understand it at all. A great longing to see his father came upon him.

"You'll be staying the night, sir?" Foster asked suddenly.

"Yes. And, Foster—"

He was interrupted. Outside sounded scuffling feet and noisy voices, the door flew open, and the footman Hil had already seen following behind, into the room burst a little, shabbily-dressed man, dirty of face, and with a nose that plainly indicated the owner to be of the Jewish race.

"Where's Sir Patrick? Where's Sir Patrick?" he cried excitedly. "This fellow tell me he was not here, but I know—"

Before he got any further Foster was by his side, one hand gripping his collar.

"You rascal, showing your dirty face here again!" cried the ex-soldier. "Haven't I told you to keep away?"

"And haven't I told Sir Patrick that my monish I vill 'ave?" squealed the Hebrew. "I find him not 'ere, not there, and so I come to this house."

"And out you go again, quick! You let him in again, Willis, and I'll—"

"Who is the fellow, and what does he want here, Foster?" broke in Hil.

"My name ish Morris Levy," said the Israelite, answering for himself, "and it was the monish I have lent Sir Patrick, and that he vil not pay me, I am wanting. And I mean to have it even if he 'ave to go to prison first!"

Hilary eyed the little man with amazement. His father in the debt of this miserable creature! It was impossible to believe.

"My father owes money to you!" he cried incredulously.

"Don't you listen to him, Mr. Hil!" put in Foster. "I'll twist—"

But it was the Jew who twisted—out of the valet's grip. He ran to Hilary, his beady eyes sparkling.

"Sir Patrick was your fadder, young shentleman?" he shrilled. "Vell, it is to me he owes monish, t'ousands of pounds; and he vill not pay me. And there are oders as vell; and he vill pay none. And all because he vill have monish so dat he may play—play—play night after night, because he t'inks to vin back his losings. Bah, he is a fool! But I am poor—so poor—and I vill not let minself be robbed of de monish I—"

Hilary rose from his chair suddenly, and at something in his white face the Jew came to an abrupt standstill.

"Put this fellow out of the house, Foster!" said the lad quietly. "And send someone who will show me where I may take a bath. And let my clothes be brushed, please."

Following a footman, Hilary, his head held high, went up the wide staircase. No need to wonder now why his father had not been at home for three nights, or why he was at the house of Sir Vincent Brookes. The lad felt angry; but he felt ashamed also.

CHAPTER 2. The Last Coin.

WRAPPED in a loose overcoat, Hilary Bevan walked slowly along Grosvenor Street. Excitement and anger had left him, and he felt depressed. To learn of his father what he had learned from the Jew Levy was indeed a shock. But it was the humiliation of the discovery that hurt him most keenly.

He knew that his father, shortly after the enforced retirement from the Army following upon an honourable career, had inherited a large fortune from a distant relative. That had been little more than three years earlier, and just before Hilary—his father had said that life in London was not healthy for a growing boy—had gone to the farm at Coldharbour. That in so short a time his father should have spent his inheritance, and come to be the debtor of villainous Jews, appeared to the lad almost unbelievable.

He had intended awaiting his father's return to St. James's Square. But his mind was changed; he would go to see his father at the house of Sir Vincent Brookes. His name would be sufficient to obtain him entry.

Proceeding slowly along the street, his eyes on the lookout for the number he sought, Hilary found himself addressed by one of a couple of men lounging on the kerb.

"Lookin' for something in particular, covey?" the fellow inquired.

"I am seeking No. 21."

"'Ouse of Sir Vincent Brookes—eh?"

"Yes," Hil said sharply.

They were rough-looking fellows, wrapped in greatcoats—not the kind with whom he wished conversation, even although he was not in a hurry.

"Ah!"—both men chuckled thickly—"there's many o' our sort keeps an eye on that 'ouse one time an' another! And vas you yanting anyone in particular?"

"That's my business."

"Course it is—an' ours, too!" laughed one of them. "Does it 'appen as 'ow you're anxious to see Sir Pat—im who's called 'Plunger Bevan,' I means?"

There was a distinctly insinuating manner about the man, together with a familiarity the lad found annoying. He walked on; but the men kept pace with him, and put the question again.

"And what if I am?" he at last answered, stopping and looking at the men, wondering who they could be.

"Vell, young feller, if that's yer lay—an' we rather thought it vas—just you take this for a tip. Ve could see with 'arf an eye you vas about the same game as we are, though you does look as though you're new to the game, an' that's vy we're warnin' you. The Plunger is our meat. Ve vas 'ere first, an' ve doesn't mean lettin' you nor no vun else get 's looks on 'im. Ve got our warrant all right!" And the fellow tapped his coat-pocket. "You may 'ave got yours. But ve're first, an' don't you forget it. Becos you're a country cove, don't think you're a-goin' to score over two Lunnons!"

Hilary knew now what were the two men. What had been said was quite enough to show what was their interest in Sir Patrick Bevan, and he thanked his lucky stars for the chance that had set them talking to him. They were tipstaffs—sheriffs' officers—and at another time he would have laughed. He had concluded that he was one of their own kind—that he, too, had a warrant to serve on "Plunger Bevan"; and they were warning him that, first on the field, they did not intend he should have anything to do with the baronet's arrest. A small sum of money would be paid on the handing over of the prisoner to the authorities. He was not to think he was going to have a share in it.

He had gained valuable information. But for his knowledge, his father would be arrested immediately he stepped out of No. 21. In some way or other, it was for him to prevent this.

"Hard luck on me," he replied to the man, in a grumbling tone. "How much is it?"

"How much is vot? The debt our warrant is against? Twenty shiners, cully. And ven he's in the jug, there'll be about ten thousand more, vun atop of the other. It's the King's Bench for him, if he lives till he's a Methusalem. 'Ow much are you up for?"

"It doesn't matter, since I'm too late," said Hil.

"Ah, you country coves may be early risers"—and the two men laughed—"but you has to get up werry early to be there afore us!"

But their mirth changed to something very different when they saw Hil spring up the steps leading to the door of No. 21; and they shouted angrily and insultingly when they beheld the servant who opened it admit Hil after the exchange of a few words.

"The son of Sir Patrick Bevan, sir?" said the servant respectfully, as he assisted Hil to remove his coat. "I cannot remember that my master was advised of your visit; but if you will kindly wait here I will acquaint him!"

Hil had not long to wait. In a few minutes there came into the room a tall, well-dressed, well-made man, with a dark-skinned face that would have been handsome, but for the expression of his eyes. These were small, piercing, and set very close together, and not for an instant did they appear

to be at rest. As they regarded him interestedly, the peculiar expression given by their perpetual movement was strongly apparent, and filled Hilary with aversion.

The gentleman came forward with a smile of welcome. The message his servant had brought him had surprised him—as much as he ever permitted himself to be surprised. That Sir Patrick Bevan had a son he had not been aware; but he had smiled to himself, murmured an excuse to his guests, and hurried from the room.

That night, if all went well, Sir Patrick Bevan would rise from the card-table a hopelessly ruined man, and the twenty years' secret enmity of Sir Vincent Brookes would be satisfied. When his enemy left the house it would be to become the prisoner of the men waiting there by his instructions; and once in the debtors' prison, for him to be kept there would be an easy matter for a man with the scheming brain of Sir Vincent. Certainly it would be an added joy for this son of his enemy to be a witness of his father's ruin and disgrace.

"Mr. Hilary Bevan," he said, in a pleasant voice, as he could make his when it suited him, "I am indeed vastly pleased to make your acquaintance. That I have not done so before must, I fear, be placed to your father's account. It was not kind that he should have withheld so deep a pleasure from one who has known him so long and intimately, as myself!"

"You are most kind, sir," Hil answered. "You accept my apologies for disturbing you before they are made. I would not have intruded—"

"It is an intrusion I sincerely welcome!" And Sir Vincent smiled. "You will please come upstairs, where are my friends. But I fear I cannot disturb your father to mention your arrival. He is vastly interested in the game of which he is so fond, and to disturb him may be to change his luck. But you shall not be neglected."

He led the way into a brilliantly lighted and handsomely furnished room. A long, green-covered table ran down the centre, at which sat half a dozen gentlemen card-playing. Other gentlemen, finely dressed, stood talking together in low voices, or leaned behind the players. Signs of hilarity, or excitement there were none. No one present seemed to be enjoying himself; and even the players, losers as well as winners, pale though they might be, appeared calm and deliberate. Here and there a hand trembled, or a quick expression of despair or triumph flickered across a face; but such emotion was quickly overcome.

To some of the men Sir Vincent made Hilary known. They offered him the tips of their fingers, or bowed slightly, spoke a few drawing words, and appeared to forget him at once. One man present he knew—Squire Oliver. The latter saw him, looked surprised, nodded slightly, but did not speak.

Nor was Hil sorry. He had seen his father, who never for a moment glanced up from the cards dealt him or played, and all his interest was centred upon Sir Patrick's pallid, lined face.

Hil could see a wonderful alteration in his father in the past three years. Scraps of conversation he caught, and a terrible excitement took possession of him. He understood why his father appeared to be in such ill-health. For three nights and days he had been in Sir Vincent's house, and had been playing almost without interruption.

So strong was the gambling passion, it had overcome natural fatigue. Food had been taken while playing. Never, Hilary gathered, had such play been known. A dozen times luck had changed. One hour Sir Patrick had been a rich man; the next, he had been upon the verge of beggary. Still, he had been unable to cease. Everything had been forgotten save the cards. That play of Sir Patrick Bevan was going down to history.

For an hour or more Hilary remained, mechanically watching the table, listening to the low-voiced remarks of the players, seeing the pile of gold and paper that had been in front of his father when he entered the room grow less and less.

At last came a diversion. His father was speaking. A hand had just concluded.

"Gentlemen"—and to the tired voice all gave attention—"gentlemen, I fear I can oblige you no further. Nature is going against me. One deal more, and I must cease. But I will close worthily. I believe I have still five thousand pounds in my possession. Will someone cut against me for that sum?"

There was silence. Then Sir Patrick looked at his host.

"Sir Vincent, will you oblige me?"

"With much pleasure," came the smiling answer. "We will have a new pack. The proposal is worthy of it."

(Another long instalment of this splendid serial
Next Wednesday.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 286.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"PLAYING TO WIN!"

- - The - - Cheer-Oh Chums.

"I was at the back of you on the stairs," whispered Jimmy, "and directly I twigged the old boy's game I crept down without his seeing me and out through the window. I didn't mean to quit, but thought I might be more use outside than in. Found this ladder in a shed. Lucky it just reached."

They almost embraced him in their joy, and Mr. Muffin gripped his hand with real gratitude. Then they crept out of the garden and into the road beyond, just as Mr. Biggles returned with two stalwart constables.

"Phew!" gasped Dick, mopping his brow. "What a shave! I say, though, they'll be after us in a minute! We shall have to hide up for a bit. I vote we do a sprint."

They acted upon this suggestion, and when they were tired, crept behind a hedge to hide. They were discussing the best thing to do when a man in tweeds, smoking a briar pipe, approached them from the rear, and took them by surprise.

"Party of scouts?" he inquired.

"No, sir," said Mr. Muffin. "We throw ourselves on your protection. We are fugitives from justice."

"Indeed?" said the stranger, smiling. "Have a cigarette?"

Mr. Muffin accepted one, and lit it cautiously, and, as the flame of the match illumined his face, the stranger uttered a little cry.

"I know you!" he exclaimed. "I've seen photographs of you in the papers. You're Lord Merlin, the biggest practical joker the world has ever seen."

"Lord Merlin!" chorussed the Cheer-ohs in one voice.

They had all heard of the exploits of that eccentric young peer. He had dressed up as a Chinese prince, and he and his retinue had been received in state by the mayor and corporation of a famous city. He had kidnapped a famous actor, made up like him, and played his part in a London theatre. In the guise of a lady of the German royal family he had opened a bazaar, and when the real princess turned up she had been ejected as an impostor. There was hardly an end to his daring exploits.

"At present," the practical joker said gravely, "I am incog. I am plain Mr. Muffin, without butter."

The other chuckled.

"What's the present little game?"—he wanted to know.

It was Dick who told him, and the man in tweeds roared with laughter as he heard the story.

"Biggles!" he yelled. "Biggles is the most unpopular man in the county. A regular old curmudgeon! It's just great to think that someone's taken it out of him at last!"

"I only wish we knew how we are going to get back to school!" sighed Polly.

"I'll tell you!" cried the man in tweeds. "There's room for you all in my Daimler, and if you're not there in under the hour I'll swallow my pipe!"

The huge touring car which the man in tweeds possessed did its duty nobly, and both sections of the Cheer-ohs were back before bed-time.

Both had stopped out later than they were supposed to; but Miss Primmer was unwell when the girls returned, and an under-mistress who was in charge said nothing, supposing them to have had leave. Jimmy, Dick and Billy, got off with two hundred lines apiece and a warning.

On the way down in the car the Cheer-ohs unanimously decided to make Lord Merlin an honorary member of their society, and that gentleman graciously consented on condition that he was to be known always as Mr. Muffin.

"We shall run up against each other again soon," he said to them, as they shook hands all round.

In the dormitory that night something occurred to Jimmy.

"Do you know if old Muffin really believed his Aunt Selina lived in that house?" he inquired.

"I asked him that," said Dick, "coming home in the car. But the old rotter only looked at me and grinned. I believe the whole thing was only one of his larks."

"So do I," said Jimmy.

THE END.

(Be sure and tell your chums about our grand new serial, **THE CORINTHIAN!** There is bound to be a rush for "The Gem" Library next week, so take your Editor's advice and order **YOUR** copy in advance.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 286.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY: **"PLAYING TO WIN!"**

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl; English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. *Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.*

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

W. Jellis, 12, Derrick Street, Kew, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in England.

R. Anderson, Neerim Road, Coulfield, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in England.

Miss V. S. Jones, 7, Broadway Terrace, Wellington, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers about 25 years of age.

Miss K. S. Smith, care of Zercho's Business College, Collins Street, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with a British girl or boy reader, age 17.

T. H. Nevins, St. Patrick's College, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 15.

L. A. Wilson, 52, Church Street, Kingston, Jamaica, B.W.I., wishes to correspond with a Roman Catholic boy or girl.

E. M. Beatty, Nancy Villa, Montpellier Street, Parkside, South Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl living in Melbourne, age 17—21.

R. M. Gillies, Barrington Avenue, Kew, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with a reader who understands French.

Miss Annie Beatty, Montpellier Street, Parkside, South Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

H. Taylor, Kelvin Brae, Ewell Street, Bondi, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 15—16.

Miss E. Cameron, William Street, Forest Hill, Canterbury, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

E. R. Grainger, 12, Cecil Street, Christchurch, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 17.

Miss Nina Clark, Hone Karaha, York Street, Parnell, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers interested in postcards, age 16.

F. H. B. Frost, Forest Range, via Adelaide, South Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in London, age 16—18.

W. F. Peterson, of the same address, would also like to correspond with a girl reader, age 16—17, living in London.

Pte. J. Doe, "A" Company, 2nd Hants Regiment, Vacoas, Mauritius, wishes to correspond with a girl reader interested in postcards, age 20.

E. Lye, jun., 74, Caine Road, Hong Kong, China, wishes to correspond with a girl reader.

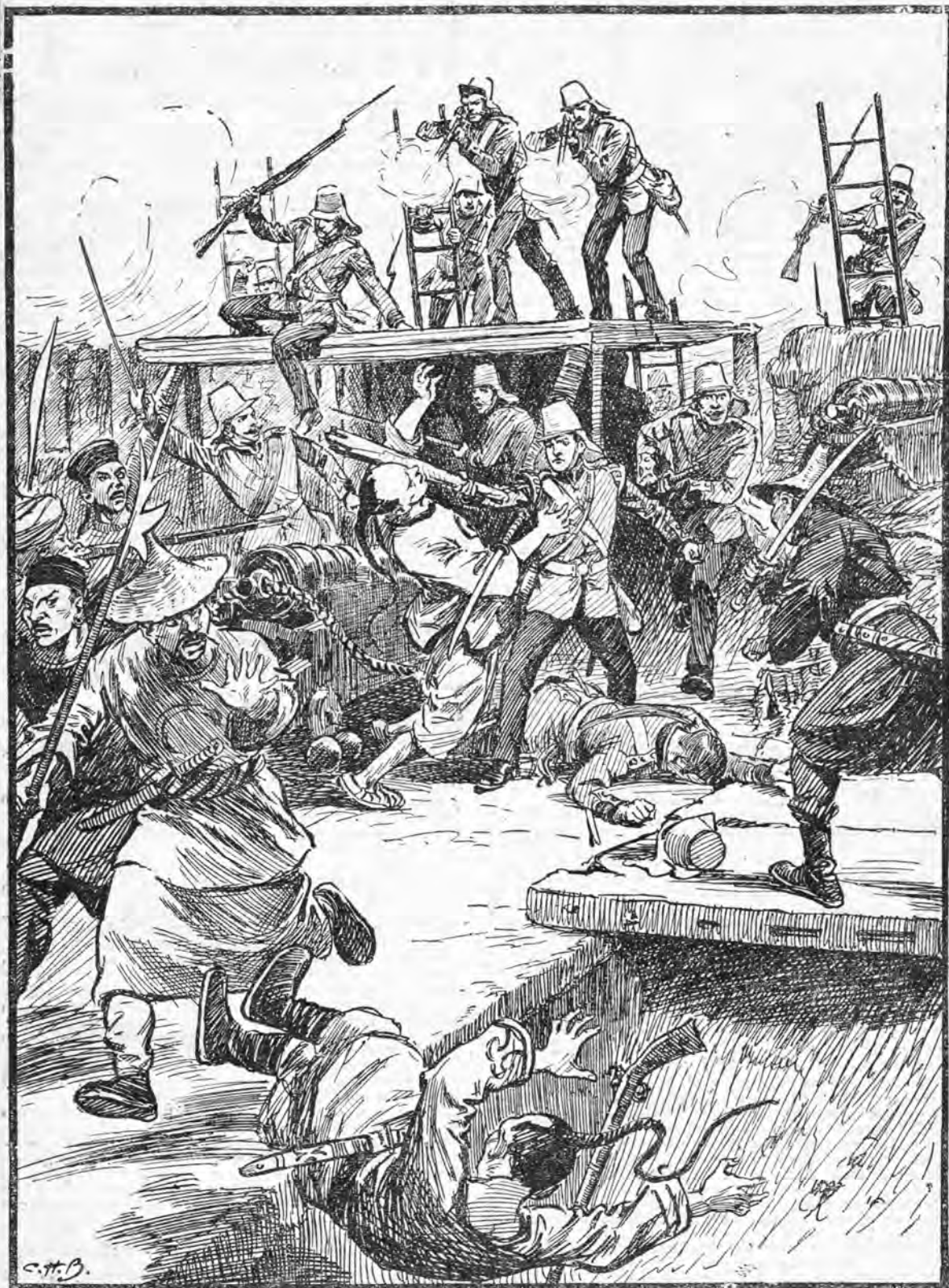
J. W. Germein, Kandelka, Darton Street, Sandwell, South Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in the British Isles.

F. Harding, Check Branch, G.P.O., Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl living in England, age 16.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

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

FAMOUS FIGHTS FOR THE FLAG. No. 13



Specially drawn for "THE GEM" Library by C. H. Blake.

One of the most desperate engagements of the China War of 1860 was the storming of the Taku Forts on August 21st. In the heat of the battle, Drummer Phillips, of the 61st Regiment of Infantry, distinguished himself by an act of the greatest gallantry. Armed only with a splinter of wood, he stood over the prostrate body of a sorely-wounded officer and held the Chinamen at bay until his comrades came to his support.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Wednesday.

"PLAYING TO WIN!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

In next week's grand, complete tale of school and the cricket-field, entitled as above, the principal role is played by Fatty Wynn, the plump Welsh junior of the New House, who is such a universal favourite at St. Jim's.

Fatty discovers a dastardly plot designed to prevent the Saints from winning their great match with the famous Wallaby team, but his warnings are unheeded, and it is left to him to save the match for St. Jim's by his own prowess as a cricketer.

"PLAYING TO WIN!"

is a fine story told in Martin Clifford's best style, and all "Gemites" will hail it next Wednesday with enthusiasm.

"GREYFRIARS LYRICS."

The current issue of our bright companion paper, "The Magnet" Library, contains a special new feature which is bound to appeal to every reader. This is the first of a new series of clever little poems dealing with the most prominent characters in Frank Richards' famous stories of the chums of Greyfriars.

As is fitting, the subject of the first lyric is Harry Wharton. All admirers of this splendid schoolboy character should make a point of getting this week's "Magnet," if only for the sake of reading No. 1 of

"GREYFRIARS LYRICS."**VEGETARIAN OR MEAT-EATER?**

"Dear Editor,—Just a line to say how much I and my chums appreciate your papers. 'The Gem' and 'Magnet' are simply ripping, while 'The Penny Popular' is the last word in fine story-papers. All the 'kids' in Sheffield seem to read it. We—my chums and I—are going in strong for 'Poplets.' We think it is a ripping competition, and hope to be amongst the prizewinners one of these weeks. There is a question I want to ask you, dear Editor, which is rather an important one to me. I have lately been advised to become a vegetarian, and have tried doing without meat, and it seems to agree with me all right. Do you advise me to become a vegetarian, or do you think it is not a good thing? Several of my chums are wondering what to do about it, too, and we should be glad to hear what you think. With best wishes to all of the good old Invincible Trio,

"A Loyal Sheffield Chum (P. G.)"

Thanks for your cordial letter, P. G., and the good wishes it contains. As for your question of the merits and demerits of vegetarianism, this is a very much-debated point, upon which I should prefer not to lay down a definite opinion. If you find a vegetarian diet agrees with you better than one which includes meat, by all means give it a good trial. Every man to his taste, of course. I admit I am not a vegetarian myself.

Whatever arguments may be brought forward against vegetarianism, the fact remains that Greek and Roman athletes affected a fleshless diet.

Nowadays, however, pure vegetarianism is condemned on all sides. It is vegetarianism in a modified form, which includes animal products such as milk, eggs, and cheese, that has so many followers.

That flesh-eating causes a nation to be blood-thirsty and

warlike is contradicted by the fact that the Eskimos, who live entirely on a flesh diet, are the most peaceful and simple men.

Writers, too, declare they cannot produce good work on a vegetable diet; while, on the other hand, some doctors declare that flesh-eating tends to make individuals liable to nervous diseases.

It is a matter of temperament, and you should adhere to that form of diet which suits you best.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

F. C. (Portsmouth).—The captain of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's is Jack Blake.

Will the following readers accept my best thanks for their letters, most of which contained valuable suggestions? R. McMillan (Maidstone); May Reader (Stoke Newington); W. Humphries (Poplar); "Two Loyal Readers" (Leeds); S. Shepherd (South Vancouver, B.C.); Bernard Mortimer (Canada).

G. E. M. (Hull) and other readers.—A cure for knock-knees: Rise on your toes, hands on hips, and slowly sink to the ground, allowing the knees to bend outwards. Do this regularly night-and morning.

HOW TO BECOME A MOTION PICTURE OPERATOR.—No. 2.

Relief, or junior operator, gets about 15s. to £1 per week, and first operator from 30s. to 35s., to which, of course, there are exceptions. As I said before, you must be up-to-date in all trade news, and I advise you to devour all technical works on cinematography. An intelligent operator is worth his weight in gold. An excellent book is "The Handbook of Kinematography," obtainable from T. Heron & Co., 9 and 11, Tottenham Street, Tottenham Court Road, W., 5s. net.

The operator's job is full of responsibility. He must be ready for any emergency; very often he holds the lives of all in the theatre in his hands. Should a fire break out caused by the film firing, he must shut down the steel trap door, letting out into the theatre, and confine the flames to the box. Fire extinguishers are kept handy, and there is really little danger provided he keeps perfectly cool.

As you will learn when you handle the projector for the first time, operating does not consist of turning a handle for an hour or two with mechanical regularity. It requires a considerable amount of judgment. Although the uniform rate of projection is about sixteen pictures per second, equivalent to about one foot of film, different styles of films require alteration in the speed. For instance, supposing you were screening a procession featuring his Majesty the King. When the Royal carriage came into view, you wouldn't flash it off the picture; you would go as slowly as possible, and leave it on the screen as long as consistent with the picture. But if you were showing a chase knockabout picture, probably you would turn the handle a little faster, because people like to see these funny pictures move quickly. There are two types of projectors—those driven by hand, and those driven by motor. Most operators, however, prefer the hand driven, for although they entail much more labour, yet the speed can be more easily controlled, and changed with a greater degree of smoothness than in the case of the motor-driven machine.

(Next Week: "How to Become a Photo-Play Actor.")

The Editor

MORE CASH FOR MY CHUMS!



AN EXAMPLE.

A sailor was often puzzled by the word "anthem." One day he asked a fellow-sailor the meaning of it.

"If I was to say 'Fetch me that bucket, Bill,'" replied the friend, "that wouldn't be an anthem. But if I was to say, 'O, fetch me, fetch me, fetch me, O Bill—fetch me that bucket—that bucket, O Bill,' that would be an anthem."—Sent in by V. Balby, Thornaby-on-Tees.

HE KNEW BY EXPERIENCE.

Grandpa: "Wait a minute, Tommy. I want to speak to you."

Tommy: "Can't! Ma wants me."

Grandpa: "What does she want you for?"

Tommy: "To give me a thrashing."

Grandpa: "But what ever are you in such a hurry to get a thrashing for?"

Tommy (wisely): "'Cos if pa comes home he will give it me; and he spansk harder than ma!"—Sent in by S. Harte, Cork.

SETTLED THEM BOTH.

"If that window is opened I shall freeze to death!" snapped the old lady in the train.

"If that window is not opened I shall surely suffocate!" returned another passenger.

The poor guard stood absolutely puzzled.

"Say, sir," he said to a commercial traveller, "what would you do?"

"Do?" echoed the traveller. "Why, man, that is a very simple matter. Open the window and freeze one lady, then close it and suffocate the other!"—Sent in by H. Hadley, Portsmouth.

PUZZLE—FIND THE PIG!

The City magnate was dining out with a friend. At 10.30, when his carriage came round, it was discovered that the coachman was hopelessly intoxicated, having spent the interval in the village public-house.

As there was nothing to be done, the great man got on the box himself and drove home. When he arrived, the butler threw open the door, and looked into the carriage. Finding it empty, he remarked, in great surprise, to the driver:

"Hallo! Where's the old pig got to?"

There is a vacancy for a butler, and another for a driver, in that City magnate's establishment.—Sent in by S. C. Gordon, Aberdeen.

THE NEW FINANCE.

Jones (meeting a friend who owes him some money): "By the way, old man, what about that 6s. 8d. you owe me still?"

Bones: "Quite right. Here you are."

Jones: "But this is only threepence."

Bones: "That's right, isn't it? 6 and 8 are 14, 14 pence are 1 and 2, and 1 and 2 are 3; so here's your 3d."—Sent in by C. Engel, Limehouse.

BABY WON.

It was time for the baby to go to bed, and father offered to stay on the bed with her until she dropped off to sleep. Off she went, and the tired mother leaned back in her chair. Ten minutes—twenty minutes—half an hour passed, when there was a soft treading on the stairs. But it was the little baby girl who appeared, not father.

"Hush, muvver!" she lisped, "I've got daddy to sleep!"—Sent in by Miss G. Crispin, Bristol.

HIS PRESCRIPTION.

The telephone bell in the consulting-room of a doctor—who was an enthusiastic cyclist—rang. In his absence, his assistant answered it, and said the doctor was out.

"Will you please give him a message?" the voice said. "Tell him that Mrs. Thompson has a gymkhana coming on, and wants to know if he can do anything for it."

"I will tell him immediately he comes in," said the assistant. "In the meantime, put a bread poultice on it, and renew it every two hours."—Sent in by L. Alexander, Godalming.

STRICTLY TRUE.

It was washing-day. But Mary was a thoroughly reliable girl, and could be trusted. So Mrs. Jones reasoned with herself that she could visit Mrs. Walker, and leave Mary to do the washing. As soon as she was gone, however, Mary let her pet policeman in at the back door. She placed before him pie and beef, with plenty of beer to wash it down. Suddenly Mrs. Jones came back, having forgotten to take her gloves.

"How are you getting on with the washing, Mary?" she called from the top of the stairs.

"Oh, all right, mum, thank you!" replied Mary. "I'm just filling the copper!"—Sent in by Sam Bolsta, Manchester.

QUITE SO!

Anxious Old Lady: "Conductor, how long will the next car for the Park be?"

Conductor: "Oh, the same length as this one!"—Sent in by E. H. Britton, Cardiff.

EXPERIENCE ENOUGH.

"Your mistress tells me, John, that you are desirous of applying for the vacancy as an attendant at the Lunatic Asylum. But what experience have you had?"

"Well, sir, I have been here for five years."—Sent in by P. Bond, Manchester.

HIS MISTAKE.

"'Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast,'" quoth Uncle Cuthbert to his nephew.

"I thought it was 'Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast,'" said the nephew. "And that was why they always put a brass band round a bulldog's neck."—Sent in by T. Harrison, Ashton-under-Lyne.

STUMPED HIM.

A school inspector had been questioning the class, and afterwards he told the pupils they could ask him any question they liked, and he would answer it.

The class looked dubious, but at last one little boy got up. "Please, sir, if you were standing up to your chin in mud, and I threw a brick at you, would you duck?" he asked solemnly.—Sent in by Miss N. Barton, Wavertree.

NOT A SADDLE.

A cookery teacher was giving a lesson to a class of children, and the topic was the various parts of mutton. The neck, shoulder, leg, and loin had been mentioned.

"Now," said the teacher, "there is another joint no one has mentioned. Come, Mary, your father is a groom, so you must know what he often puts on a horse!"

"A shilling each way, miss!" blurted out that young lady.—Sent in by Miss D. McIntosh, Kinlochleven.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED The Editor, "The Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this Competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.

Our Companion Paper. Now on Sale.

The

NO. 42 VOL. 2

EVERY
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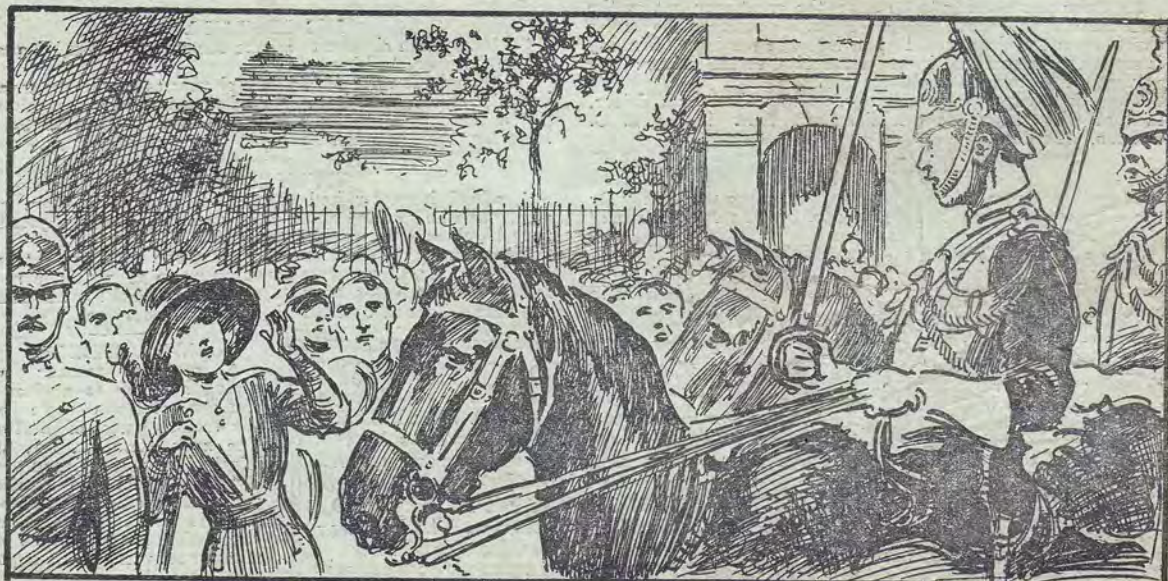
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