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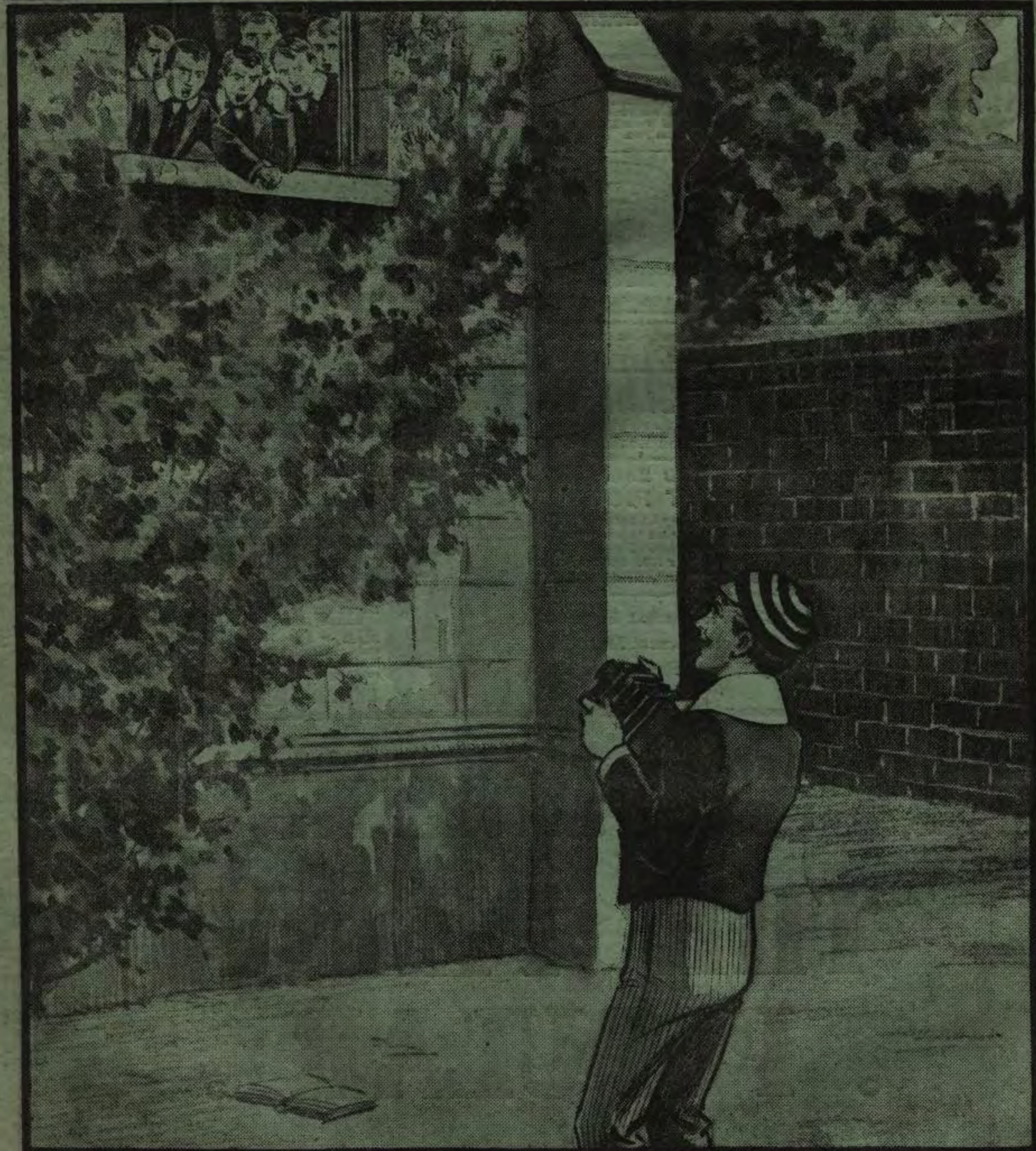
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The black sheep, frantic with rage, leaned out of the window and shook their fists at Monty Lowther. Lowther calmly levelled the camera and snapped them again. "Get back!" howled Mellish. "He's taking us!"

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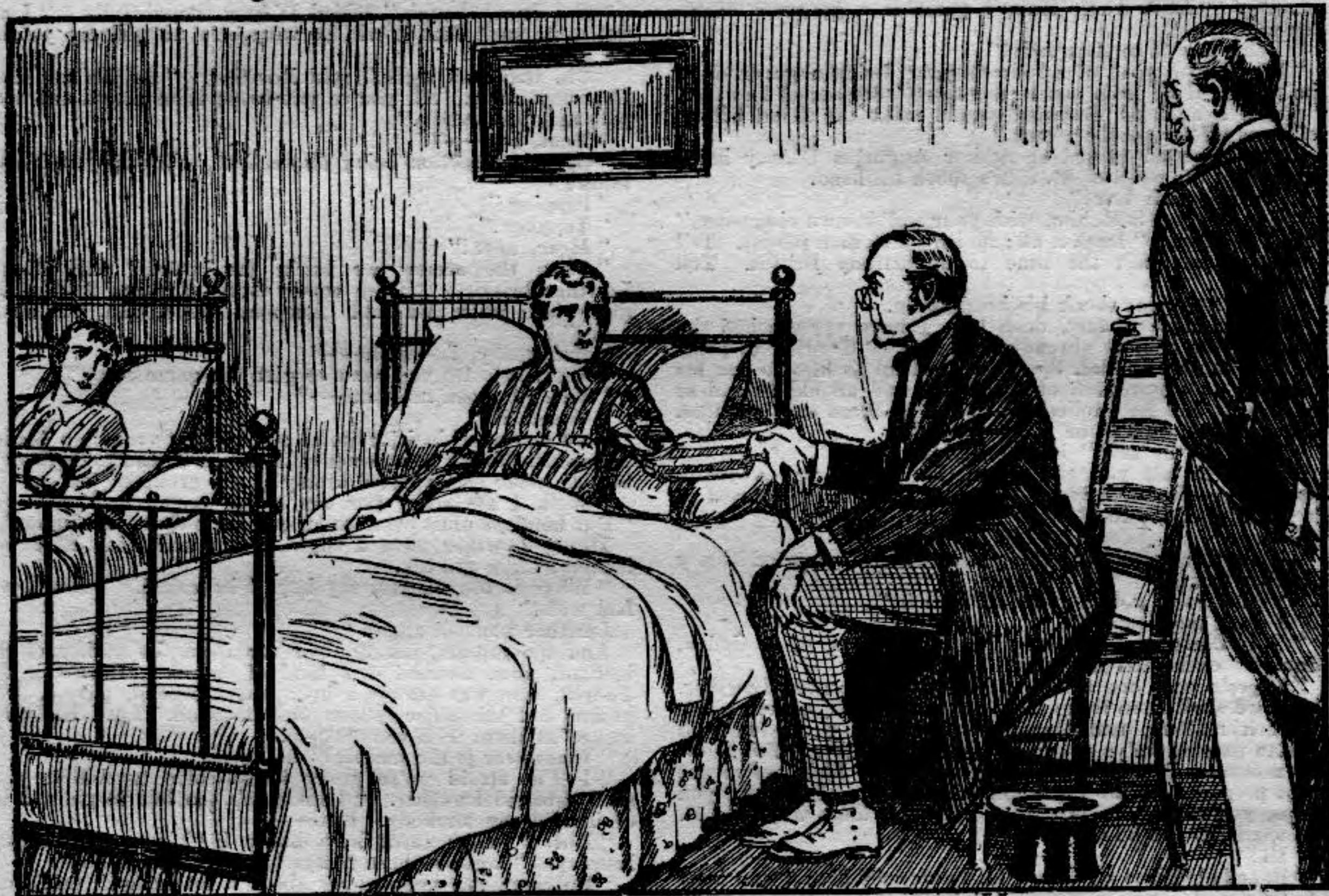


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By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



The doctor felt Monty Lowther's pulse, and shook his head gravely. Lowther started a little; he had not supposed there was anything wrong with his pulse. "Isn't— isn't my pulse all right, sir?" he exclaimed. "Certainly not as it should be in a case of influenza," said the doctor gravely. "Now explain your symptoms." (See Chapter 2.)

CHAPTER 1

Monty Lowther's Great Scheme.

"SCHOOL to-morrow, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark in a lugubrious tone.

Tom Merry & Co., with equal lugubriousness, answered:

"Oh, rotten!"

"Beastly!" added Lowther.

The juniors of St. Jim's were all agreed that it was rotten and beastly. Not that there was anything rotten or beastly about St. Jim's itself. They were very fond of the old school, and they generally contrived to have a good time there. But—from a schoolboy point of view—there was no doubt that holidays were better than term time. The little party of St. Jim's juniors at Eastwood House had enjoyed the vacation immensely. They would have been willing to prolong it, as Lowther said, for months and months and months. But the end of the vac had come all too soon; and on the morrow they were to return to St. Jim's—to grind Latin in the Form-rooms instead of roaming about the pleasant countryside—to play cricket only on half-holidays instead of all day long as they pleased—to fall once more under the authority of masters and prefects, after the long freedom they had enjoyed.

So, though St. Jim's was a ripping place, and most of the fellows there were ripping too, they could not help regarding the beginning of the new term as both rotten and beastly.

"I don't want to go!" groaned Jack Blake. "It's all your fault, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his celebrated monocle into his eye, and regarded his chum inquiringly.

"Weally, Blake, I fail to see that at all. I am not wespensible for the fact that we have widiculously short holidays!"

"It's because we've had such a good time here!" growled Blake. "If we weren't so jolly comfy here, I shouldn't mind going back!"

Arthur Augustus smiled benignantly.

"Yaas, that is a vewy nice way of puttin' it, Blake, deah boy. I am vewy glad you have been comfy undah my patah's woof. But I suppose ewewythin' must come to an end some time. We've got to go back to-morrow."

And the Co. groaned in chorus. They were sitting on the terrace of Eastwood House, looking out over the park. Now that the holidays were over, it seemed that they had been there but a very short time. Monty Lowther's brow wore a very thoughtful wrinkle. Tom Merry glanced at him mournfully.

"It's no good, Monty," he remarked.

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Lowther looked up.

"What's no good?" he asked.

"I know what you're thinking of. But it's no good! I've thought it over, and looked at it every possible way—but I can't think of a single excuse for putting it off. There's no reason at all why we shouldn't go back to school to-morrow—excepting that we don't want to."

Lowther grinned.

"That's a good enough reason," he remarked.

"Good enough for us—but it wouldn't do for the Head!"

"The Head would never see weason, on that point," said Arthur Augustus sadly. "These head-mastahs are a wowwy at times."

"They are!"

"They is!" groaned Blake.

"Well, I've been thinking," said Monty Lowther determinedly. "Look here, Gussy's pater is a governor of St. Jim's."

"Yaas, that is so, Lowthah!"

"What's the good of a fellow's pater being a governor of the school, if he isn't put to any use?" demanded Lowther. "A line from Lord Eastwood would make the Head willing to let us off for another week."

The juniors all looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hopefully. But the swell of St. Jim's shook his head.

"Imposs, deah boy!"

"You can put it to him, with your well-known eloquence," urged Lowther. "Dash it all; he isn't a Roman parent. Tell him that this isn't the time to understudy Brutus. Tell him—"

Arthur Augustus shook his head again.

"As a mattah of fact, deah boy, I have appwoached the patah on the subject alweady," he said. "I twied to point out to him that, undah the ciras, it is up to him to use his influence as a governah of St. Jim's, and an old fwiend of the Head. But he weplied in a way that I can only considah diswespectful, though he is my patah."

"What did he say?" inquired Digby.

"Well, to tell you the twuth, he said I was a young donkey," confessed Arthur Augustus. "And he wefused to do anythin' of the sort."

Groan!

"Then there's only one thing to be done!" repeated Monty Lowther firmly.

"Yaas; we've got to gwin and bear it."

"I don't mean that!"

"You don't mean to say you've thought of a dodge, Monty?" exclaimed Manners.

"There's only one thing to be done," repeated Lowther, "and we shall have to do it. The Head, being unreasonable on such matters, and Gussy's pater being a hard-hearted Roman parent, we've got to depend on ourselves. You know our motto as Boy Scouts: 'Be prepared!' Well, we've got to be prepared for the beginning of the term. Lucky for you chaps, you've got a fellow with you with ideas in his head. We shall have to be ill."

"Ill!"

"Exactly! When a fellow's ill, he doesn't have to go back till he's well. You remember Levison of the Fourth came back a week late last term. He had influenza. As a matter of fact, I don't believe he had influenza at all—that fellow Levison is such a spoofer. But he stayed away a week."

"Bai Jove! I almost wish I had influenza," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, a holiday with influenza wouldn't weally be much of a holiday!"

"But you're going to have it!" said Lowther.

"What!"

"And so am I!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You and I and all of us!" continued Lowther. "It's the only way, as they say in the play. They can't send back to school a crowd of sickly invalids. We've left it rather late, I know, but there's still time. We've got to fall ill this evening."

"My hat!"

"They'll bring in the local medical johnnie," said Lowther, his eyes sparkling with enthusiasm over his new idea. "But we can pull his leg all right. He will look for the symptoms. Well, we can have lots of symptoms."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He will order us to remain here till we're well. We can get convalescent pretty quick—well enough to go out, you know, but not well enough to go back to school. I think it ought to be worth at least an extra week to us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard that as a weally bwiliant ideah, Lowthah, and I am surprised I nevah thought of it. As the matah and Cousin Ethel are both away, it won't make them anxious. Lowthah, deah boy, you are a genius!"

"Bravo, Monty!"

"Bai Jove, though," added D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I am not quite suah that it will be wespectful to pull the patah's leg like that."

"Oh, that's all right," said Lowther. "As it's my idea, I'm responsible. All you've got to do is to cough and look pale and interesting."

"Yaas, but—"

"Gussy's objection being disposed of, what do you fellows think?"

"Ripping!"

"Topping!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Then the sooner we begin the better," said Monty Lowther briskly. "Here comes Gussy's pater. Strike the giddy iron while it's hot! Keep an eye on me, and do as I do!"

"But weally, Lowthah—"

"Shurrup! Do you want to give the game away?"

"Yaas—I mean no—but—"

"Cheese it!"

Lord Eastwood had just come out on the terrace; so Arthur Augustus, though he was not quite satisfied, had to "cheese" it. The noble earl glanced kindly at the group of juniors.

"Well, I am sorry you are going to-morrow," he said. "But holidays must come to an end some time, you know."

Monty Lowther gave a slight moan, and Lord Eastwood looked at him quickly.

"What is the matter, my boy?" he asked. "Don't you feel well?"

Lowther moaned again.

And the juniors, taking their cue from the author of the brilliant idea, moaned in a kind of chorus. Herries of the Fourth, who was always a little heavy-handed, gave a deep groan; but the other fellows only moaned. Lord Eastwood looked at them with some alarm.

"What ever is the matter?" he asked.

"I—I'm afraid we're going to be some trouble to you, sir," groaned Lowther. "I know it's too bad to plant a lot of invalids on anybody. But—"

"But a fellow can't help being ill!" groaned Lumley-Lumley. "I guess these things kind of happen, sir."

"Influenza has been going about a lot lately," said Tom Merry dismally. "I suppose it isn't a fellow's fault if he catches it?"

"Oh, it's howwid!"

Groan!

"What worries me most," murmured Lowther, "is that it will prevent us from going back to school to-morrow. We're so keen to see the—the Head again, and—the Housemaster, and to get back to our lessons. I've been thinking for days of Julius Caesar and Eutropius, and things. Now we sha'n't be able to go."

"And to think of missing the German lesson!" groaned Digby. "Herr Schneider is always so nice when he comes back from Germany!"

"And the mathematics!" murmured Blake. "The only thing I can think of is to send for our books, and—and try to do some lessons by ourselves while we're ill."

"Ow! Ow!"

"Dear me!" said Lord Eastwood. "This is very sudden! I really hope that you boys have not caught influenza. It is extraordinary that you should all have caught it at once. You look quite in your normal state of health, too."

"Appearances are awfully deceptive, sir," said Lowther—"awfully! I couldn't describe to you how my head's aching!"

Which was strictly true, as Lowther's head was not aching at all.

"And you can't imagine the frightful pain in my—my neck!" said Herries.

"It may be something worse than influenza, for, all we know," said Blake. "Would you mind letting somebody telephone for a doctor, sir? I know it's too bad to give you a lot of trouble, but in case of severe illness—"

"Go to bed at once," said Lord Eastwood. "I will tele—"

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Towser snapped at the cover—and tore a corner from it, very nearly dragging it off the table and Levison with it. There was a shriek from Levison. "Call him off!" he yelled. "Call him off!" "He won't come away for us," said Tom Merry. "Nothing doing, Levison!" (See Chapter 10.)

phone for Dr. Sharpe immediately. Do not lose a moment! Off to bed with you!"

"Bai Jove! We haven't had dinnah!"

"Then you have not lost your appetite, Arthur?" asked Lord Eastwood; and at that moment a twinkle appeared in his eye.

"No—yaas—I—I mean——"

"Never mind dinner," said his lordship briskly. "We must consult Dr. Sharpe before you eat anything more. Off to bed at once, and I will telephone for the doctor. He will be here very soon."

And Tom Merry & Co.—who were hungry, and quite ready for dinner—rose rather reluctantly, not quite knowing whether to be pleased or not at the success of their scheme.

CHAPTER 2.

The Invalids.

"LOWTHAH, deah boy, I wegard you as an ass!"

The St. Jim's juniors occupied four communicating rooms in Eastwood House. They had gone up together to bed; but bed at half-past six was not inviting. Dinner was at seven at Eastwood House, and the juniors would have preferred dinner to bed. But there was no help for it. If they were ill—too ill to go back to St. Jim's on the morrow—the proper place for them was bed. They undressed reluctantly.

Lowther grunted at D'Arcy's remark. He was not wholly satisfied himself.

"It was a weally bwiliant ideah, I admit; but you ought to have left it till aftah dinnah."

"I should jolly well say so!" growled Blake. "I'm hungry."

"Nearly famished!" groaned Herries.

"And suppose the doctor orders us gruel and sloppy things?" said Digby, with a shudder.

"I guess we shall have to stand it," said Lumley-Lumley. "Lowther has landed us this time, and no mistake!"

"Oh, rats!" said Monty Lowther crossly. "It was necessary to strike the iron while it was hot. But I must say your pater is quick in jumping on a fellow, Gussy. I don't quite regard it as playing the game."

"Wats! If we are ill, we are ill!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps, aftah all, it is worth missin' dinnah to keep away from school anothah week."

"Especially if we have gruel and beef-tea all the time!" growled Herries. "I don't think it's much of an idea, after all."

"You don't think at all," growled Lowther. "You haven't the necessary apparatus in that thick head."

"Look here, Lowther——"

"Oh, bow-wow!"

"If you want a thick ear, you Shell boulder——" began Herries warmly.

"Shush!" said Tom Merry. "If the medical johnnie hears us ragging one another when he arrives, he won't believe we're giddy invalids. Besides, we can work it. We'll tell him we feel a craving for food—plenty of food. Invalids have to be humoured."

"Of course," said Lowther, brightening up, "that—ahem!—that was my idea all along. We have all the symptoms of illness—a general disinclination to work, and all that kind of thing—and at the same time a strange craving for food."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush! Invalids don't laugh."

The juniors turned into bed. They were beginning to have doubts now as to the excellence of Monty Lowther's wonderful scheme; but there was nothing to do but to carry it through now that it had been started. After all, if it panned out, as Lumley-Lumley expressed it, in an extra week's holiday, it was worth while missing a meal.

There was a step in the passage outside, and all the invalids moaned in chorus. But it was not the doctor yet. It was D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third Form—who came in, followed by Joe Frayne. The two fags were spending their vacation at Eastwood House, and they were equally dismal

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE,

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"CHUCKLES," 1/4

at the prospect of returning to school on the morrow. Wally was looking suspicious.

"I hear you chaps are ill," he said, looking round the room occupied by the Terrible Three.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther moaned.

"Too ill to go to school to-morrow," added Wally.

Moan!

"Well," said Wally, with emphasis, "if it works I'm going to be ill, too. So is Frayne—ain't you, Frayne?"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Joe Frayne.

"Get out, you young ass!" muttered Lowther. "If the medical man should hear you—"

There was a knock at the door, and a gentleman in a black coat stepped in. It was the doctor from Easthorpe.

"Well, and how are we?" he asked cheerily. "Influenza? What? You youngsters should not be here. Influenza is infectious!"

Wally and Joe Frayne slipped out.

Monty Lowther gave an agonised moan. Dr. Sharpe paused by his bedside, and gave him a very keen look. Lord Eastwood came into the room, looking very grave, but there was still a twinkle in his eyes.

"Now, what is the matter with you?" asked Dr. Sharpe.

"I—I can hardly describe it," said Lowther faintly.

The doctor felt his pulse, and shook his head gravely. Lowther started a little; he had not supposed there was anything wrong with his pulse.

"Is— isn't my pulse all right?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly not as it should be in a case of influenza," said the doctor gravely. "Now, tell me your symptoms."

"A—a tired feeling," murmured Lowther. "A—a general feeling of—"

"Disinclination to work?"

"Yes, exactly."

"You feel it would be impossible to take a journey by railway, or anything of that sort?"

"Yes, yes!"

"You have a sensation of horror and repugnance at the idea of being confined within a class-room?"

"Exactly," said Lowther, feeling as if he was getting on nicely.

"Is there any loss of appetite? Probably not?"

"Not at all," said Lowther eagerly. "In fact, I—I feel a kind of craving for food."

"Same here, sir!" murmured Manners.

"And you?" asked the doctor, turning to Tom Merry's bed.

"Just the same, sir."

The doctor shook his head, with deep gravity.

"Very serious—very serious. What sort of craving is this? I suppose you feel that you could eat a large dinner?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And perhaps pastry—plenty of pastry—say, jam-tarts, and cakes, and fruit, and ginger-beer, and so on?"

"Quite right."

"Yes, rather."

"And, besides this, you feel a need for complete rest—complete freedom from the worries of school work?"

"You've hit it exactly!" said Tom Merry joyfully.

"H'm, h'm!" said Dr. Sharpe slowly and gravely.

"I—I think the other fellows feel the same, sir," said Monty Lowther, as the medical gentleman appeared lost in thought. "Won't you see them?"

"Not necessary. I am sure your symptoms are all the same. General disinclination for work—especially school work—and a craving for food. I fear that it is a serious case, and serious measures must be taken. In the first place, you must overcome this craving for food—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"That is the first step. For this evening I shall order you a little weak milk-and-water, and a small portion of dry bread."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, really—"

"But—"

"Nothing more than that," said the doctor firmly. "You must remain in bed, with such nourishment as I have described. And it will be necessary for you to take some medicine."

"I—I don't feel exactly like taking medicine, doctor," faltered Tom Merry.

"Precisely—precisely. But that must be overcome. I will send a large bottle for each patient, and it must be taken regularly. Plenty of medicine, and a little bread and weak milk-and-water, will work wonders. You will, I think, find yourselves marvellously restored in the morning—perhaps quite well enough to return to school."

"Oh!"

"If not," resumed the medical gentleman, with more emphasis, "the treatment will be continued. No breakfast in the morning."

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE, is the principal character in one of "CHUCKLES," 1d.

"Eh?"

"For lunch, a small piece of dry bread, with cold water."

"What!"

"For dinner the same. No supper. If it should be necessary to continue the treatment over a whole day, the effect will be very beneficial. In a day, at the most, I promise a complete recovery."

The doctor rose.

"I—I say!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "But we—we shall starve to death, you know!"

Dr. Sharpe smiled.

"Not at all. We shall starve out the disease that has taken hold of you, that is all. In the course of a day, at the most, I am convinced that it will be completely starved out. I will call and see you again to-morrow morning."

And the doctor took his leave. As he went out with the earl, and the door closed, the juniors thought they heard the sound of a subdued laugh. The Terrible Three sat up in bed, and looked at one another.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Lowther.

"Oh, you ass!" said Tom Merry and Manners.

All that the doctor had said had been heard from the adjoining rooms. The rest of the juniors came in, in their pyjamas, and all were looking dismayed.

"Bai Jove, this is a pwetty pwospect!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you as a howlin' ass, Lowthah! What's the good of an extwah holiday if we are goin' to be kept in bed and fed on milk-and-watah?"

"How could I foresee it?" grunted Lowther. "That doctor is a beast—a horrid beast! And I believe Gussey's pater sees through the whole game, and he has put up the medical johnnie to spoof us like this as a punishment for pulling his leg."

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm jolly certain of it!" groaned Tom Merry.

"Look here, I'm going to get well!" exclaimed Herries. "I'd rather be at school than rotting in bed on milk-and-water!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Same here!"

"We can't own up now," said Tom Merry dismally. "We've got to see it through for this evening, at least. Oh, crumbs, I'm hungry!"

"I'm famished!"

"I'm perishing!"

"Oh, you uttah ass, Lowthah!"

The door opened, and Wally's grinning face looked in.

"Well, how did it work?" inquired the scamp of the Third. "The pater and old Sharpe were grinning as they went down. Looks to me as if they smell a rat. Are you going to stay away from school? If so, I'm going to develop influenza too. I caught it from you chaps."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Blake crossly. "We're put on milk-and-water till we get well."

"What!"

"And a little dry bread!" groaned Herries.

Wally burst into a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm jolly well not going to be ill, then," chuckled Wally. "I'd rather go to St. Jim's, and have something to eat. Hope you'll enjoy the bread and water. Ha, ha, ha! Yah!"

A pillow whizzed through the air, and caught Wally under the chin, and he went through the doorway like a stone from a catapult. He landed in the passage with a bump and a roar. Blake slammed the door.

"We're in for it!" he growled. "No dinner—nothing to eat to-night! My hat! Lowther, you villain, you've landed us into this! This is what comes of your beautiful ideas. Bump him!"

"Here, I say—"

But the exasperated juniors did not listen to what Monty Lowther had to say. They yanked him out of bed, and bumped him heartily, and Monty's yells rang through the room.

"There!" gasped Blake. "That'll teach you not to spring your wonderful ideas on us, you fathead!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, ow, ow!"

"And now for the bread and milk!" groaned Herries.

Monty Lowther crawled back into bed. And the unhappy juniors waited for the dinner prescribed by the doctor. And while they waited for the dry bread and the weak milk-and-water, they told Monty Lowther what they thought of him and his ideas at great length, and with great emphasis!

ANSWERS

CHAPTER 3.

Holding Out.

EIGHT dolorous-looking juniors sat up in bed to partake of a frugal and decidedly unappetising meal. Tom Merry & Co. had spent the afternoon out of doors, and they had a really first-class hunger, as Blake called it, all ready for dinner. They had been anticipating the generous feed at the hospitable table of Lord Eastwood. Instead of which, they sat up in bed to eat a little dry bread, and to drink weak milk-and-water.

When that meal was finished they felt almost as hungry as when they had started. The stately butler of Eastwood House, the frigid Chillingham, presided at the meal, under the instructions of the medical gentleman, who had impressed him to be very careful indeed that no other nourishment was offered to the invalids. It was in vain that Arthur Augustus begged of Chillingham, almost with tears in his eyes, to send up something a little more substantial. Mr. Chillingham shook his solemn head.

"Doctor's orders, Master Arthur," he replied.

"But the doctor is an ass, Chilly," remonstrated Arthur Augustus.

"His lordship has instructed me to see that the doctor's orders are carried out, Master Arthur!" said Chillingham inflexibly.

"But, weally, Chilly just a cold fowl——"

"Or anything eatable," said Blake.

"Make it a cake, Chilly," pleaded Tom Merry.

"Impossible, young gentlemen. I must obey his lordship's orders."

"Bow-wow!"

The immovable Chillingham saw the plates carried away, and departed, leaving Tom Merry & Co. in the deepest of deep despondency.

"Well, this takes the cake," said Blake miserably. "We can't own up now, and let that medical beast have the grin of us."

"Imposs, deah boy."

"I sha'n't be able to sleep if I don't have anything to eat," said Herries dismally.

"Must stick it out till to-morrow morning," said Manners, "then we can all suddenly recover. I hate letting that medical villain do us in the eye like this, though."

"He's jolly well not going to do me in the eye!" growled Monty Lowther ferociously. "We've set out to prolong our holiday, if only by a single day, and we're going to do it. It's up to us to see it through."

"But we can't live without food!" howled Herries.

"I don't care. I'm not going to give in."

"I guess you'll be ready to give in in the morning," grinned Lumley-Lumley. "If we're hungry now, what shall we be then?"

"There's Wally!"

"Blow Wally! What has Wally to do with it, fathead?" grunted Blake, whose temper was beginning to suffer.

"I mean, Wally can help us," said Lowther. "The young boulder will be looking in on us soon. We've got lots of tin. We'll get Wally to cycle down to Easthorpe and get some tuck. He can smuggle it in to us, and we can hold out. The doctor beast will be surprised to find us still ill in the morning."

"Bai Jove, that's a wipin' ideah!"

The juniors brightened up considerably. They were very sore over their defeat. To leave Eastwood, all the same, on the following morning, after having passed a night of discomfort, was not at all a pleasant prospect. It was indeed up to the heroes of St. Jim's to defeat the wily medical man if they could. And by means of Wally it might be done.

They waited eagerly for the expected visit from the scamp of the Third. About an hour later Wally's grinning face looked into Tom Merry's room. The fag was very much tickled by the predicament of the juniors.

"Well, how are you getting on?" he inquired. "What are you invalids doing out of bed? Aren't you afraid of a relapse?"

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

"Come in, Wally!" said Monty Lowther cordially. "Shut the door. Look here, we're going to trust you."

"That sounds like the beginning of a confidence trick," said D'Arcy minor doubtfully. "What's the little game?"

"That beastly sawbones is japing us! He thinks we're not really ill, and he's put us on bread-and-water till we recover!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We want you to take a quid, and go down to Easthorpe and get us some grub," said Lowther. "Now, be a good pal and oblige us!"

Wally whistled.

"You can sneak a bundle in here, you know," said Tom Merry.

"Can't be did," said Wally. "The pater is up to that. Old Chilly is keeping an eye on these rooms. If I came in with a bundle I should be spotted. As it is, I'm only allowed to stay here five minutes now, as invalids mustn't be disturbed!"

"It's no go!" growled Herries. "That ass Lowther ought to be boiled in oil! I——"

"Shut up!" said Lowther. "Take the quid, Wally. We'll let down a cord from the window, and pull up the bundle. All you've got to do is to get it here, and tie it on the end of the string."

"Bai Jove! That's all wight!"

"Well, I could do that!" admitted Wally. "But where do I come in? I suppose it's up to me to help you silly kids out of a scrape; but where do I come in?"

"You came in on your feet, and you'll go out on your neck if you're not jolly careful!" grunted Herries.

"If there's going to be a feed, Frayne and I are going to be on in the scene," said Wally, unheeding; "that's only cricket!"

"You can't come here and feed, you young ass. They'd smell a rat!"

"That's all serene; we'll have the feed in our own room," said Wally. "Joe and I are both stony, and we don't get our new term's tip till to-morrow morning. Make it another half-quid, and I'm your man!"

"Weally, Wally——"

"Isn't the giddy labourer worthy of his hire?" demanded Wally indignantly. "It's jolly decent of me, I consider, to look after you kids at all!"

At any other time the juniors would have fallen upon, and smitten hip and thigh, the cheeky fag who called them kids. But at the present moment Wally's services were indispensable. Wally had to be allowed to say what he liked, and the scamp of the Third fully availed himself of the privilege.

Arthur Augustus silently passed a half-sovereign over to his cheerful minor.

"Good enough!" said Wally. "I think you're a set of silly asses, but I'll try to help you out. When you hear a jackal howl under the window, the bundle will be there. I suppose you remember the signal of the Jackal Patrol of St. Jim's—my patrol?"

"Better make it some other signal," said Lowther. "That may be noticed. Jackals don't howl round an English house as a rule!"

"Make it the curlew call," said Tom Merry.

Wally sniffed.

"Jackal or nothing," he replied. "I'm a jackal, and I'm not going to give the signal of any other patrol."

"Look here, Wally——"

"Weally, you young ass——"

"Oh, let the young duffer howl like a jackal, or like a giddy hyena if he likes!" exclaimed Blake. "Anything so long as we get some grub. I'm famished!"

"Well, I'm off!" said Wally. "Cheer up! I'll be back with the grub in an hour, and then you'll hear the giddy jackal!"

"Buck up!"

D'Arcy minor departed, leaving the juniors with their spirits considerably raised. In their present state of famine an hour was a long time to wait; but it was worth that to defeat the humorous medical gentleman who had cornered them.

Lowther prepared the cord for lowering from the window, and when the hour had elapsed the light was put out in Tom Merry's room. At the dark window the juniors clustered, waiting eagerly for the signal from Wally in the darkness of the garden below.

"Hark!" muttered Tom Merry, after a long silence.

A weird howl rang out in the darkness.

Tom Merry answered it with the curlew call, the signal of his scout patrol at St. Jim's. Monty Lowther lowered the cord.

In a couple of minutes the howl was repeated, as a signal to haul up, and Monty Lowther drew up the cord.

A large bundle came rustling through the ivy.

Three or four hands grasped it, and dragged it into the room. The window was shut, and the blind pulled down, and then the light was turned on again. The hungry juniors eagerly opened the bundle. Their eyes danced as they saw sandwiches and pies and tins of corned beef and cakes and tarts.

"Good old Wally!" chuckled Blake. "This is where we do the doctor johnnie in the eye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on!" muttered Lowther. "Somebody's coming!"

He whisked the bundle under his bed only just in time. Lord Eastwood came in. The crowd of juniors in pyjamas

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"THE ST. JIM'S CARAVANNERS!"

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looked a little flustered. Lord Eastwood gazed at them with a humorous eye.

"Come, come!" he exclaimed. "You should not be out of bed in your dangerous state of health! This will never do!"

"Weally, patah——"

"I have looked in to see how you are," said Lord Eastwood genially. "Have not the symptoms vanished yet?"

Monty Lowther moaned artistically, and the other juniors followed suit. There was a chorus of moaning. Lord Eastwood smiled.

"If you had recovered sufficiently, I was going to ask you to come down to supper," he said. "If you felt well enough to return to school to-morrow, I am assured by Dr. Sharpe that it will do you no harm to have supper."

Had that offer come an hour earlier, the juniors would probably have jumped at it. But, strong in the possession of supplies, they shook their heads and groaned.

"Thank you very much, sir," said Monty Lowther feebly, "but I don't feel up to coming down to supper!"

"Couldn't think of it!" groaned Manners.

"I don't want any supper, thanks," mumbled Herries.

Lord Eastwood looked surprised.

"Come, come!" he said. "Are you quite sure you are not sufficiently recovered to go to school to-morrow?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Ahem! Very well; perhaps you will feel quite differently at breakfast-time to-morrow morning," said his lordship significantly. "Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

And Lord Eastwood departed. The juniors exchanged a grin.

"The noble pater is beginning to have his doubts!" grinned Lowther. "My hat! We'll get a whole week away from school if we work it well!"

"I wathah feel, Lowthah, that we are not quite justified in pullin' the patah's leg in this way," said Arthur Augustus.

"Right-ho! Don't you have any of the grub, then," said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, that is wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus.

And, the coast now being clear, the bundle was dragged out from under the bed, and the invalids feasted at a rate that would have turned them into real invalids if they had not had the strongest and soundest constitutions. And when the feast was over there remained sufficient of the surplus for another feed in the morning; and the juniors, as they went to bed, chuckled at the anticipated surprise of Dr. Sharpe when he found in the morning that they were still holding out.

CHAPTER 4.

A Sudden Recovery.

"WELL, and how do we feel this morning?"

Dr. Sharpe asked the question genially as he stood by Tom Merry's bed.

Tom moaned.

"Thank you, sir, just about the same," he replied, in a feeble voice.

"Not recovered—eh?"

"Just the same as yesterday, sir."

"And you others—you feel just the same?"

"Just the same, sir."

"If you had felt well enough to return to school to-day, I was going to order you a breakfast of eggs and bacon and kidneys and buttered toast," said the medical gentleman.

"Thank you very much, sir, but we don't want it."

"Eh?"

"Don't mention eggs and bacon to me," murmured Lowther. "The craving for food has entirely gone, doctor. Perhaps a little weak milk and water—nothing else, thank you!"

"Water without the milk for me," said Manners. "Milk is rather too—too vigorous in my weak state."

The doctor looked utterly puzzled. Convinced that the juniors were "spoofing," and were as well as he was himself, he had fully expected them to be reduced to reason by the morning. At all events, they ought to have been clamouring for food. He was extremely puzzled, and doubted for a moment his diagnosis of the case.

"Well, I must say, you are holding out well," he remarked. "Perhaps you will have recovered by lunch-time. Have you taken your medicine?"

"Nunno!"

"Then you must take it now, in my presence," said the doctor firmly. "I will measure it out for you and administer it."

"Groo!"

Unheeding the disgusted expressions of the juniors, the

doctor measured out the medicine in generous doses, and administered it. There was no help for it; the medicine had to be taken under the doctor's eye. The juniors gulped it down with very wry faces.

The taste was horrible, and they could not help suspecting that Dr. Sharpe had made it as nasty as possible as a part of their punishment.

They could not grin, but they bore it. And then the medical gentleman, still looking a little puzzled, took his leave. Tom Merry & Co. smiled in rather a sickly manner at one another, when he was gone.

"Grooch!" murmured Blake. "I shall taste that beastly stuff for hours! I wonder what the beast put in?"

"Bai Jove! It was howwid!"

"Never mind—we're keeping it up," said Tom Merry heroically. "It's up to us not to give in, for the honour of the School-house."

"But I say, are we going to stay in bed all the morning?" exclaimed Herries. "I'd rather be at St. Jim's than slacking in bed."

"We can get out when we're convalescent, of course. But we can't get convalescent all of a sudden. It's rather rotten to stick indoors on a morning like this, I know; but we've got to play the game. We can have a pillow fight, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A pillow fight was not exactly in keeping with their character of invalids; but the juniors felt that they had to do something. A wild and whirling combat was in progress when Wally and Joe Frayne came in to say good-bye. The two fags were starting for school.

"Hallo! You look like invalids, I must say!" Wally remarked. "The pater would believe you were ill, if he looked in now—I don't think! Well, I'm off. Good-bye, you slackers!"

"If you wefer to me as a slackah, Wally——"

"Well, what are you?" demanded Wally derisively. "Blessed slackers, sneaking out of work! That's what you are! Slackers!"

The juniors looked grimly at Wally. In their keen desire to prolong their holiday, it had not occurred to them that their conduct might be looked upon in that light. Now they came to think of it, it was really very much like slacking—and Tom Merry & Co. had always prided themselves upon being nothing at all like slackers.

"You cheeky fag!" growled Monty Lowther. "Be off with you."

"Shall I tell the fellows at St. Jim's you're ill, or that you're slacking?" asked Wally, with a grin.

"Rats! Clear off!" Monty Lowther made a threatening motion with his pillow, and the scamp of the Third dodged out of the door chuckling.

A few minutes later the juniors, from the windows, saw Wally and Frayne starting for the station in the car. Outside, the morning was fresh and sunny, and it seemed to call to the imprisoned juniors to come out into the open. But it was impossible for invalids to go out. Invalids had to remain in their rooms. Pillow-fighting palled after a time; and the juniors began to look very glum.

At lunch-time, the stately Chillingham brought them their lunch of bread, and weak milk-and-water. The juniors disposed of it in heavy silence, and they detected a ghost of a grin on Chillingham's stolid face as he retired.

Then the remains of the provisions in the bundle were disposed of, and the pangs of hunger, at least, were assuaged.

But the pangs of boredom were not so easily dealt with.

Their confinement in the rooms was getting on the nerves of the juniors, accustomed as they were to activity. Their tempers began to show signs of the strain. Arthur Augustus's conscience misgave him more than even upon the point whether it was justifiable or not to "spoo" Lord Eastwood in that manner. The juniors yawned though the afternoon with terrific yawns. Manners and Lowther played chess, till they were tired of it—some of the juniors read, till they were weary of the sight of a book. And just before dinner-time the doctor came again.

But the juniors, irritated and exasperated as they were growing, were obstinate now. They knew that the medical gentleman fully expected them to give way by this time, and they were determined that he should not be gratified. At any cost, they were not going to give Dr. Sharpe that satisfaction.

The doctor was evidently puzzled. He described in tempting terms the dinner he would have ordered for them if they had been sufficiently recovered. But the juniors only moaned in chorus in reply. Dr. Sharpe might have been made a little uneasy by their long abstention from food, had not his keen eye observed an empty sardine tin in the grate. It was only one small tin—but it was a very big clue, and the medical man smiled.

"So you are not recovered yet, Merry?"

Moan!

"Perhaps you will get better now that Master Wally is gone," suggested Dr. Sharpe humorously. "Sardines are very bad for invalids in your state, and I don't suppose that the sardines were taken without other harmful things at the same time. I daresay there will be quite a change to-morrow morning—now that Wally is gone."

And the medical gentleman chuckled and departed.

"What silly idiot left that sardine tin in sight?" groaned Blake. "The beast knows all about it now, and he guesses that Wally smuggled the stuff in."

"Bai Jove! The game's up now Wally's gone, just as he says, deah boys. There's nobody else to smuggle in any gwub."

"I told you all that it was a rotten idea," said Herries, with a snort. "I told you so plainly. It was utterly rotten."

"Simply fatheaded!" agreed Digby.

"Just like Lowther!" added Lumley-Lumley.

All the fellows agreed that it was just like Lowther. And the humorist of the Shell, the author of that brilliant wheeze which had turned out so unfortunately, glared at his chums, and turned out of bed.

"Where are you goin' deah boy?" asked D'Arcy, as Monty Lowther began to dress.

"I'm going down to dinner!" growled Lowther.

"But you're ill, you ass!"

"I've recovered!" said Lowther coolly. "It's too late for us to return to St. Jim's to-night, anyway—and we can't get any grub to be ill to-morrow. I've recovered, and I'm frightfully hungry. I'm going down to dinner!"

"I've jolly well recovered too!" exclaimed Herries.

"Anyway, we've beaten them by a day!" said Tom Merry.

"We've had an extra day on the holiday!"

"But what a day!" groaned Blake.

"Yaas, bai Jove! What a howwid day!"

Lord Eastwood smiled when eight suddenly recovered juniors came down to dinner. But he asked no questions. The cure had been as sudden as the illness, and his lordship understood both. Tom Merry & Co. did full justice to the dinner, in spite of their recent illness, and the next day they were still in a state of sufficient recovery to start for St. Jim's. Dr. Sharpe came to see them in the morning, and he expressed his pleasure at their complete recovery in such sarcastic tones that the juniors longed to pile on him and bump him.

CHAPTER 5.

A Moving Job!

"Bai Jove! We're goin' to have company down!"

Arthur Augustus made that remark as the Co. entered the little railway-station at Easthorpe.

They were in good time for the train, and their baggage was piled on the platform to wait for the incoming express.

There was another pile near at hand, and three fellows were standing near it, talking—St. Jim's fellows.

They were Cutts and Gilmore of the Fifth, and Knox of the Sixth.

The three seniors of St. Jim's had been spending their vacation at a place near Eastwood House, and as they were on the worst of terms with Tom Merry & Co., the two parties had several times come into hostile contact. Cutts & Co., like the juniors, were evidently a day late in returning to school.

"Cutts, by Jupiter!" said Blake.

The seniors gave the group of juniors disdainful glances. They had come down in the same train for the vacation, when the school broke up, and there had been trouble on the journey. If the two parties travelled together back to St. Jim's, there was likely to be more trouble.

"Hallo, you kids!" called out the Sixth-Former. "What are you doing here? You ought to have been back at St. Jim's yesterday."

"Same to you," said Tom Merry politely. "What are you doing here, Knoxy?"

Knox frowned.

"We had leave for an extra day, of course," he said.

"Well, and we took leave—French leave," said Tom Merry.

"Jolly glad of it now, as it gives us the pleasure of your company on the way down, Knoxy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, don't talk to those fags," said Cutts, with a curl of the lip.

"Weally, Cutts—"

The three seniors walked loftily away up the platform. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon them indignantly.

"Bai Jove! I feel gweatly inclined to give Cutts a feahful thwashin'," he remarked. "You wemembah how I thwashed him before we left St. Jim's—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to cackle at. Bai Jove," ejaculated

Arthur Augustus, whose eye had followed the three seniors into the station buffet, "the uttah wottahs are dwinkin' whiskey and sodah!"

"Rotters!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I weally think I ought to point out to Cutts—"

"Oh, rats! Here comes the express."

The train stopped in the station. The juniors entered two adjoining carriages. Cutts and Gilmore came out of the buffet, and mounted into the train, but Knox was stopping to finish his drink. The guard was waving his flag when the Sixth-Former came hurriedly out and ran to the train. In his hurry he jumped into the nearest carriage, which happened to be the one occupied by Tom Merry & Co. There were six juniors in the carriage, so all the seats were taken. It was not a corridor train, so Knox had to stay in the carriage till the next station, which was a good distance. The guard slammed the door after him, and the train moved off. It was too late for Knox to change when he discovered that he was in the wrong carriage.

He scowled at the juniors, and they gave him far from welcoming looks. Knox was not desirable as a travelling companion.

"Well, you're in the wrong box!" growled Monty Lowther.

"Make room for me."

"Eh?"

"I want to sit down!" said Knox angrily. "Do you think I'm going to stand up for twenty miles?"

"Sorry—no room!"

The train was out of the station now, and rushing along at a great speed through green meadows and woods. Knox stood by the door, scowling at the juniors. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, Blake and D'Arcy and Herries, were in the carriage, Lumley-Lumley and Digby being in the next. The six juniors sat tight in their places. Nobody had the slightest inclination to give his seat up to Knox. And as Knox hadn't the slightest inclination to stand until the next station was reached, there was trouble brewing.

"Now, I don't want any cheek from you young beggars!" began Knox.

"Just the same with us!" remarked Monty Lowther cheerfully. "We don't want any cheek from you, Knox."

"Wathah not."

"I want a seat."

"Looks to me as if you will go on wanting," remarked Lowther. "What do you fellows think?"

"Looks like it to me," agreed Manners.

"Yaas, wathah! I must wemark that appeawances seem wathah that way. But powwaps you would like to sit on the floor, Knox? I could use you as a foot-west."

Knox clenched his hands. For a lofty Sixth-Former to stand, while fags of the Fourth and the Shell were sitting down, was not to be thought of. And the whisky in the buffet had made Knox more than usually quarrelsome and "ugly."

"Now, which of you young rotters is getting up?" he demanded.

"Echo answers which?" said Lowther sweetly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, shove up and make room," said Knox. "Four of you kids can sit on one side."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort, Knox. If you wequest us civilly, we will twy to make woom for you; but, othahwise I shall wegard you with contempt."

"Hear, hear!"

It was not Knox's way to request anything civilly. That was not at all his way of dealing with juniors. At St. Jim's he was a prefect, with great authority over the juniors. Outside St. Jim's he was simply a schoolboy like the rest, though a very big one. And outside St. Jim's the juniors had no intention whatever of recognising his authority.

"I order you to give me a seat!" he exclaimed fiercely.

"If you refuse to obey a prefect—"

"No prefects here," said Tom Merry. "Wait till you get back to school before you put on airs, Knoxy. Besides, you're not really the genuine article. The Head stopped you being a prefect last term because you were a naughty boy. If he had taken my advice, Knox, he would never have made you a prefect again."

"Yaas, wathah. I should have stwongly advised the Head against anythin' of the sort, if he had listened to me," said Arthur Augustus, with a serious shake of the head. "I do not wegard a fellow who dwinks whiskey-and-sodah as a pwopah person to be a pwefect, Knox."

Knox ground his teeth.

"Will you give me a seat?" he roared.

"Wathah not!"

"Rats!"

"Go and eat coke!"

There was no doubt about the intentions of the juniors

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Knox wasted no more time in words; he collared the junior nearest to him, who happened to be Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and yanked him out of the corner seat by the shoulders. There was a roar from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Let go, you wottah! You are wumplin' my jacket! Let go!"

"Hands off, Knox!"

Knox hurled D'Arcy across the carriage, and he collapsed upon the knees of the Terrible Three. Then Knox sat down, scowling, in the corner seat.

But he did not occupy his conquest in peace. The juniors were all on their feet now, and they looked warlike.

Arthur Augustus smoothed out his crumpled jacket, and breathed fury. He put his eyeglass carefully into his pocket, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Give me my seat, you wottah!" he shouted.

"Hold your tongue!" growled Knox. "If you give me any of your cheek I'll give you a caning the first thing at St. Jim's!"

"We're not at St. Jim's yet," said Tom Merry. "Knox, old man, you're going to get out of that seat. Now, are you moving?"

"No!" roared Knox.

"Then there is going to be a moving job," said Tom Merry, setting his teeth. "All hands on deck!"

"All hands on Knox, you mean!" chuckled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors piled on Knox as one man—or, rather, one boy. Strong hands grasped him on all sides. Knox hit out savagely, and there was a roar from Herries as he rolled on the floor of the carriage, and another roar from Lowther as he rolled on Herries. But the juniors were in deadly earnest. Knox was wrenched out of the seat, and he struggled furiously in the midst of the clinging juniors. He trampled to and fro in the narrow limits of the carriage, with the juniors hanging on to him. Lowther and Herries clasped his legs and brought him down with a bump, and the panting juniors sprawled over him. Knox of the Sixth lay in the bottom of the carriage, with six breathless juniors piling on him and keeping him down.

"Ow!" gasped Knox. "Gerroff! I'll smash you! I'll—I'll—Gerroogh!"

"Bai Jove! Keep the wottah down!"

"Pile on him!"

"Stand on him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox struggled furiously, dishevelled and dusty, on the floor of the carriage. The six juniors stood upon him, and their boots were heavy—with the weight of the sturdy juniors above them. Knox struggled in vain. Herries' big boots were on his chest, D'Arcy and Lowther stood on his arms, and the other fellows on his legs. Knox was as secure as if he had been held in a vice.

He wriggled and yelled and raved under the juniors, but he wriggled and yelled and raved in vain.

"Sit down!" said Tom Merry calmly. "Knox will come in handy as a footstool. We'll keep him like that to the next station."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give me your cane, Gussy! I'll touch him up every time he wriggles. We can't have our footstool wriggling about in this way."

"I—I—I'll smash you!" panted Knox.

"Looks to me as if you'll get all the smashing that's going," said Tom calmly, as he took D'Arcy's cane. "Now, keep still, or I shall have to touch you up, Knox."

Knox did not keep still. He made a frantic effort to rise. But six pairs of boots jammed upon various parts of his person kept him pinned down, and Tom Merry cheerfully brought the cane into play. Knox roared as the cane cut across his shoulders.

"Yaroooh! Leave off, you young villain! Yow-ow!"

"Are you going to keep quiet?"

"No. I'll—I'll—Yaroooh!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Are you going to keep quiet, Knox?"

"Ow! Yow! Yah! Yes."

"That's better," said Tom Merry cheerily. "It's only another ten minutes to the next station, Knox, and if you're a good boy we'll let you change there."

Knox lay gasping and glaring on the floor of the carriage. There was no help for it. The juniors were too many for him. After a few minutes he made another furious effort, and the cane came into play again. Then Knox gave in, scowling ferociously, and grinding his teeth. The juniors chatted cheerfully as the train rushed on, their feet still firmly planted upon the infuriated prefect.

"Hallo, here's Leckford!" said Tom Merry, as a station came in sight. "The train stops here a couple of minutes. Would you like to change carriages, Knox, or are you quite comfy where you are?"

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE, is the principal character in one of "CHUCKLES," 1st.

"Groogh! I'll change, you young demon!"

"Good! Say you're sorry for having been a hooligan, and you can get out! We can't let you go without an apology, can we, Gussy?"

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus emphatically. "Knox has acted in a wuffianly mannah, and an apology is due to us."

"You hear the decision of the arbiter of elegance, Knoxy. It's up to you to apologise. There isn't much time. We're slowing down."

"Hang you! I'll—I'll—"

"Are you going to apologise?"

"No!" yelled Knox.

"Right-ho! Then you'll stay where you are!"

"All the way to Wayland," chuckled Lowther. "You will get a little dusty, Knox. But it will be a valuable lesson in manners."

"Yaas, wathah."

The train had stopped. Cutts and Gilmore were looking out for Knox; but it was not quite in the prefect's power to join them. He wriggled under the juniors' boots, but the boots were firmly planted, and Tom Merry held the cane ready.

"Let me go!" shrieked Knox. "The train's stopped!"

"And you're stopping, too, Knoxy. Where's that apology?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox simply writhed with rage. But the prospect of remaining as he was for another hour was too much for him. He gave in.

"I—I—I—" he stammered.

"Are you sorry?"

"Ye-e-e-es," stuttered Knox, choking with rage.

"Are you awfully sorry?"

"Ye-es."

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Yes," yelled Knox.

"Then you can get out," said Tom Merry calmly. "Open the door, Gussy! Out you go, Knox. Now then, all together!"

Knox was ejected from the carriage. He staggered on the platform, a torn and dishevelled and dusty object. Cutts and Gilmore, looking from their window, burst into a yell of laughter. That was all the sympathy Knox received from his chums. He shook a furious fist at the grinning juniors, and hopped along the train, and plunged into Cutts's carriage. The express moved off again, and Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

"Bai Jove, you know, there will be twouble with Knox at St. Jim's about this!" Arthur Augustus remarked.

"Sufficient for the railway journey is the jape thereof," said Monty Lowther. "We've done him in the eye, anyway! This is where we chortle."

And they chortled accordingly.

CHAPTER 6.

The First Jape of the Term!

"WAYLAND!"

Tom Merry & Co. alighted from the train in Wayland Junction. The local train for Rylcombe was waiting, and the juniors crossed the platform and entered it. Knox and Cutts and Gilmore did the same. Knox had got rid of some of the dust, but he was still looking very torn and ruffled, and the juniors grinned at the sight of him. He scowled furiously at Tom Merry & Co., mentally promising them many things when they were once more at St. Jim's. And St. Jim's was not far away now.

At Rylcombe the journey ended. Tom Merry & Co. left the station, giving directions for their baggage to be sent on to the school. Tom looked at his watch as they came out of the station.

"The fellows will still be at morning lessons when we get in," he remarked. "Lessons for us, too, this afternoon. Ow!"

"Wotten!"

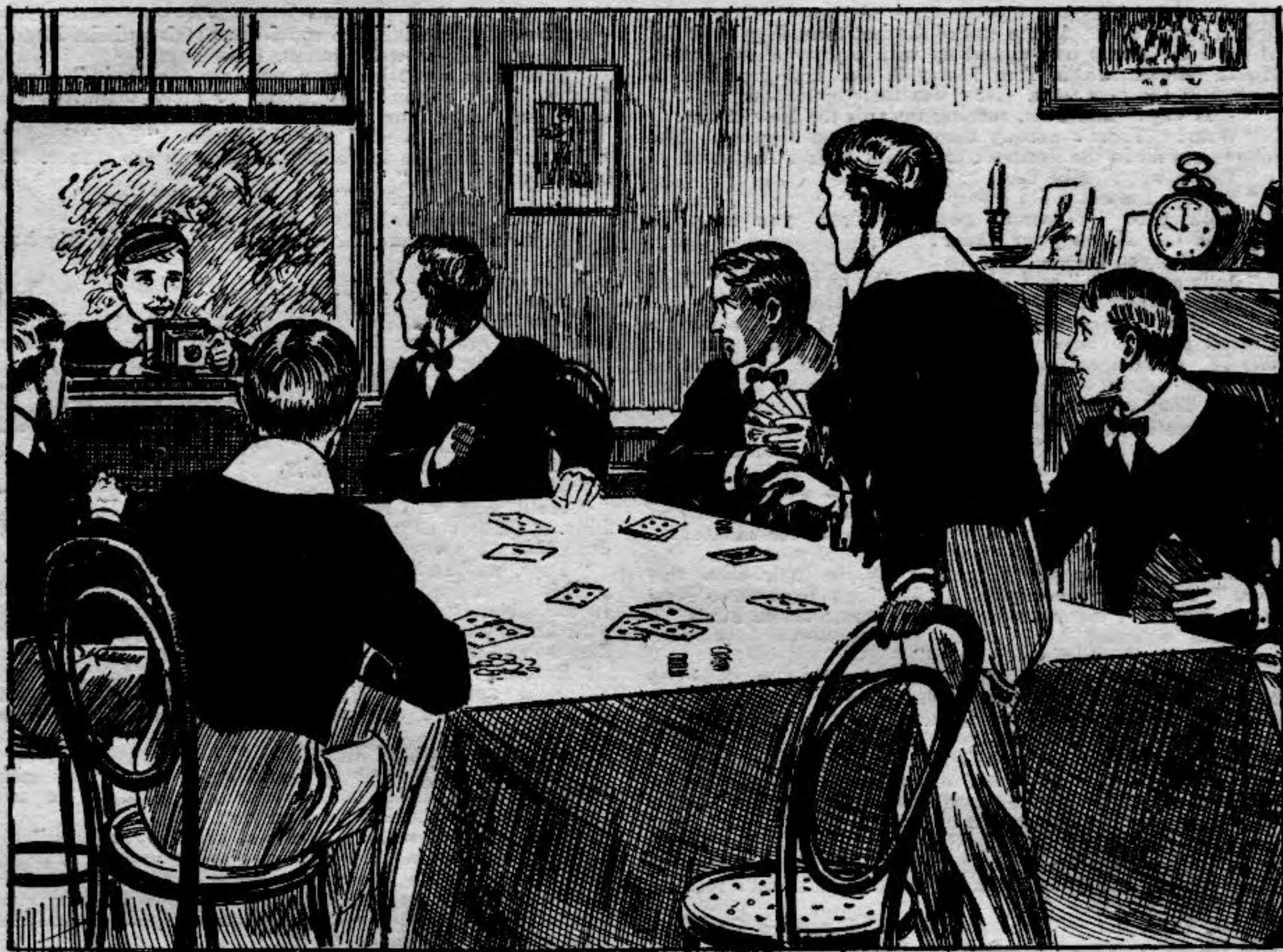
"I'm rather anxious to see how Towser is," Herries remarked. "I arranged with Taggles to look after him, but I'm anxious to see him. We'll have him in Study No. 6 for a day or two. They won't say anything at the beginning of the term."

"I shall jolly well say something, though, if you bring that beastly bulldog into the study," growled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I have wemarked to you befoah, Hewwies, that that wotten bulldog has no wespect whatevah for a fellah's twousahs."

"If Herries brings in a bulldog I shall bring in a chopper!" said Digby darkly.

Herries snorted. That was the one rift in the lute in Study



Click! Levison started, and stared round at the window. Monty Lowther was there, supported by the thick old ivy, and his elbows resting on the broad window-sill. And the camera in his hands bore upon the interior of Study No. 6. "Lowther!" gasped Levison. "You hound!" (See Chapter 15.)

No. 6—that the three juniors who shared the study with Herries were blind to the uncommon merits of Herries' famous bulldog.

"I shall be rather glad to see our study again," Manners remarked, as they walked down the lane towards the school. "There's one thing you forgot, Monty, when you schemed that wonderful scheme of yours."

"And what's that?" snapped Lowther.

"About the study. If a fellow isn't on the scene the first day of the term his study's liable to be snapped up by somebody else," said Manners thoughtfully. "We've always managed to keep No. 1 in the Shell passage, and it would be a bit rotten to find it packed with new boys, or to find Gore or somebody installed there. It's one of the best in the passage, and a lot of the fellows would like it."

"If we find anybody there we'll jolly soon shift 'em out!" growled Lowther.

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake. "I never thought of that, either. Why, do you know, it's quite possible that Study No. 6 has been snapped up. It's far and away the best study in the Fourth Form passage. Suppose some rotter—"

"Bai Jove! Or course, we should wefuse to allow anythin' of the sort."

Blake grunted.

"Lot of good us refusing to allow it if the Housemaster allows it, ass! There are bound to be new boys this term, of course. And Levison has always had an eye on our study. The rotter would get it away from us if he could. We were silly asses not to come back on the first day of the term."

"Yaas, wathah! Lowthah is an awful ass!"

"And a howling idiot," said Herries. "But if anybody's got our study there will be trouble, I can tell 'em that to start with."

It was a new and disturbing thought to the juniors. Fellows generally kept the same studies, but there was no rule on the subject, and in case of a rush of new boys, it was only too probable that there would be some change. And if the juniors should find their old quarters occupied by strangers they would certainly be paying very dearly for that extra day of holiday.

With that new idea in their minds they were glad when they reached St. Jim's. Cutts and Gilmore and Knox were staying behind, not in a hurry to get into school. Tom Merry & Co. walked in at the school gates, and Taggles, the old porter, touched his hat to them, and grinned.

"Glad to see you back, young gentlemen," said Taggles. "I 'eard as 'ow you was ill!"

"We had a sudden and complete recovery," said Tom Merry. "Glad to see you, Taggy. We're going to give you a high old time this term."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How's Towser, Taggles?" asked Herries anxiously.

"Which he seems a bit off his feed, Master Herries," said the school porter, "and his temper ain't good. He tried to bite Master Levison yesterday—"

"I hope he didn't!" exclaimed Herries, in alarm.

"No, no; it's all right. Master Levison got out of reach, and he ain't 'urt," said Taggles soothingly. "Don't you be afear'd of that."

"Rats! I don't care whether Levison was hurt or not," said Herries crossly. "I was thinking of Towser. I remember he was seedy the last time he bit Levison, that's all. Levison doesn't agree with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" growled Herries. "I'll go and have a look at Towser now. If he's seedy I shall have him in the study and look after him, and you fellows can go and eat coke!"

"Weally Hewwies—"

But Herries was tramping away towards the stables with a frowning brow. That extremely unhandsome bulldog was the apple of Herries' eye, and the one drawback to Herries' happy holiday had been the fact that he couldn't have Towser with him. He mentally resolved never to accept another invitation for a vacation unless Towser was included in it.

The Co. walked on to the School House. The school was still at morning lessons, and the quadrangle was deserted. So was the New House, the Form-rooms being attached to the School House, and the other House being simply a boarding-house. A glimmer of fun came into Tom Merry's eyes as he

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looked round him. At the end of the last term Figgins & Co. of the New House had wound up with a jape on the School House fellows, which Tom Merry & Co. had promised to avenge in the new term. Now was their opportunity.

"This way!" said Tom, turning towards the New House.

"Wats! There's nobody there now, Tom Mewwy. The fellows are all in the Form-rooms," said Arthur Augustus.

"That's why!" said Tom.

"Weally, I don't quite gwasp—"

"With your infellectual powers, Gussy, you can't be expected to. Follow your leader!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"Jolly good idea," said Blake, catching on at once. "We'll let Figgins know that we've come back! Good egg!"

The New House was silent and deserted as the juniors entered it. The boys were all in the class-rooms, and Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster, was with the Fifth, of whom he was Form-master. The late-comers had the house all to themselves. They ascended the stairs to George Figgins's study.

Although it was only the second day of the term, Figgins's study showed that the New House Co. had fully entered into occupation. Figgins's bat lay on the table and a half-unpacked hamper stood in the corner. There were books and papers and parcels about the study, and a cricket cap lay in the armchair, and a pair of muddy boots on the hearthrug. The juniors grinned as they looked round the room.

"We're going to put Figgins & Co. in their place this term," Tom Merry remarked. "It's high time those New House bounders learned which is cock-house at St. Jim's."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Anod now's the time to start!"

And the School House juniors started. They emptied the hamper in the middle of the study, and overturned the table, and piled the chairs and the fender and the fireirons upon it. The study curtains were quite new, and were evidently a new pair brought home by Figgins & Co. to decorate their apartment. They were jerked down, and added to the pile on the floor. Then the bookcase was emptied, and the books stacked among the overturned chairs and table and curtains. Then the juniors spread along the deserted passage, and with great activity bore chairs and tables out of the other Fourth-Form studies, and added them to the pile, which soon reached the ceiling.

"Bai Jove, this will wathah surpwise Figgins & Co. when they see it," chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Well, it ought to," said Blake, with a grin. "The study's getting pretty full, but there's room for a few more chairs. This is the first jape of the term, and we may as well be thorough about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled, and departed from the New House, still without meeting a soul. Morning lessons were not over yet. With a feeling that they had deserved well of their country, the Co. turned their steps in the direction of the School House, and made their way to their old quarters.

CHAPTER 7.

Held by the Enemy.

TOM MERRY and Manners and Lowther went on to the Shell passage, where their study was situated. Blake & Co. stopped in the Fourth-Form passage at Study No. 6, the famous apartment of which they had held possession so long that they had come to regard it as their own.

Jack Blake threw open the door and strode in. Arthur Augustus and Digby followed him in. Herries was still busy in the stables looking after Towser. Lumley-Lumley had gone on to his own study, which he had shared the previous term with Levison and Mellish and Blenkinsop, of the Fourth.

Blake looked round Study No. 6.

During the vacation the juniors' studies were thoroughly cleaned out, and polished up almost to the brightness of a new pin, under the careful eye of Mrs. Mimms, the house dame. But Study No. 6 did not present the spick-and-span brightness that was to be expected at the beginning of the term. It showed signs of occupation. There were the ashes of a dead fire in the grate, and there was a sooty kettle in the fender. There were books on the table, and a bag in the corner.

Blake and Digby and D'Arcy exchanged glances.

Their worst fears were suddenly realised.

They had come back a day too late. Study No. 6 had been taken possession of.

"Well, my hat!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove! We're payin' now for Lowthah's wotten wheeze!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "I said all along it

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wasn't weally justifiable to spoof the patah and the Head in that way. This is wetwibution, deah boys!"

"Some new beast has been put into the study," growled Digby. "It's rotten! We never go more than four to a study, and we're four already."

"Tain't a new beast," growled Blake. "Look there!"

He pointed to the initials on the bag in the corner. The initials were "E. L."

"E. L.," said Dig. "Ernest Levison, by gum!"

"Levison, bai Jove! That awful cad!"

"E. L. might stand for something else," said Dig hopefully.

Blake grunted.

"There's his name in a book," he said.

There was no possible doubt about it. On the title-page of a Latin grammar on the table was written, in Levison's neat small hand, the name of the cad of the Fourth, "Ernest Levison." Levison, the cad of the Fourth, the sneak of the House, and the old enemy of Blake & Co., had taken advantage of the delay in their return to instal himself in their old quarters.

"Sickening!" groaned Digby.

"Oh, wotten!"

"We'll jolly well shift him out!" growled Blake wrathfully. "Tain't only because he wants the study that he's done this. It's one up against us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Mellish is here too," said Blake, looking over the books on the table. "He was bound to bring the other cad along with him. And Hooker, too. Three of them. That means that we're turned out of the study altogether."

"Rotten!"

"We'll appeal to Wailton, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "We can wely on our Housemaster to see justice done."

Blake shook his head dismally.

"Fathead! It must be the Housemaster who's given Levison and Mellish and Hooker this study," he said.

"They couldn't collar it on their own."

"I wegard it as wathah wotten of Wailton, anyway."

"Can't understand old Railton playing us such a trick," said Blake. "He knows this study belongs to us. No reason to change us out, excepting that it's the best study in the passage, and the other fellows may have said they want a turn. But that's all rot."

"Uttah wubbish, of course."

"Tain't fair!" said Digby. "And if they've turned us out of here, where are we going? Which is our study now?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Why, we shall have to be separated!" exclaimed Digby, aghast. "That's it! They're going to separate us, and distribute us along the passage."

"Bai Jove!"

It was a horrid thought. The chums of Study No. 6 had always been inseparable ever since they had come together under the roof of the old school. Study No. 6 had always belonged to them, and they had always chummed together. To be separated now was too utterly rotten. It was evidently not to be stood. Yet if Levison and Mellish and Hooker had taken possession of the study with the Housemaster's sanction, it was pretty certain that it would have to be stood.

And the new occupants could not have taken the study without permission from the Housemaster. How Levison had worked it was unguessable; but Levison was cunning enough for anything. That unlucky extra day of the chums on vacation had given him his opportunity, and Levison had not lost it. The cad of the Fourth Form, whom they had always despised, had scored over them this time with a vengeance.

"We're jolly well not going to stand it!" Blake exclaimed at last hotly. "We'll go and speak to Railton about it as soon as lessons are over. Perhaps he didn't know we were coming back to St. Jim's to-day. Gussy's pater must have written about us, you know, and we may have been expected to stay away longer."

"Oh, that silly ass, Lowther—"

Blake breathed hard through his nose.

"The chump ought to be boiled in oil! This is what comes of slacking instead of getting back to school on the right day," said the chief of Study No. 6, forgetting, in the heat of the moment, that he had backed up Monty Lowther's scheme most heartily. "The next time that Shell fathead gets an idea I'll take him into a quiet corner and— and suffocate him."

"Hallo, they're coming out!" said Digby.

Footsteps and voices below announced that morning lessons were over, and that the fellows were free from the Form-rooms.

There were steps in the Fourth Form passage, and three juniors came along to Study No. 6 with grinning faces. They were Levison and Mellish and Hooker. Their expressions showed that they knew already of the return of Blake & Co.

The three juniors came into the study and stared at the grim faces of Blake & Co.

"Hallo! What are you fellows doing in our study?" asked Levison.

"Weally, Levison—"

"Our study!" said Blake savagely.

"Your study last term, ours now," said Levison, grinning. "I don't mind showing you to your new quarters if you like."

"You needn't trouble. We're staying here."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Blake and Herries go into my old study, along with Lumley-Lumley and Blenkinsop," said Levison, unheeding;

"Digby goes into No. 5, along with Kerruish and Reilly; D'Arcy goes into No. 4."

"They grew in beauty side by side, and now they're scattered far and wide!" chortled Mellish.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Hooker.

Blake brought his fist down on the study table with a resounding bang.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "You know jolly well that this isn't playing the game! You've no right to bag our study because we were—ahem!—delayed!"

"Ill!" chuckled Levison. "We heard you were ill. You had quite a sudden recovery, didn't you, you set of spoofers?"

"If you chawactewise me as a spoofah, Levison—"

"Well, what are you?" demanded Levison. "Do you mean to say that you were really ill, and that you've recovered all of a sudden?"

"Ahem!"

"And this is our study now, anyway," said Mellish insolently, "and we'll trouble you fellows to get out of it. We're rather particular about the fellows we ask into our study."

"You uttah wottah—"

"Come on!" said Blake savagely. "We'll go direct to the Housemaster and ask him to let us have our old study. Railton is a brick, and I know he won't refuse."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Levison & Co. in chorus.

Blake stared at them a little uneasily. The laughter of the interlopers made him feel that there was something more to come. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, had always looked upon Blake & Co. with a kindly eye, and he had always been more or less down on Levison and Mellish, who had the reputation of being slackers of the first water, and as untruthful as they were idle. That they had been given the study at all was a surprise; and that Mr. Railton would refuse to let its original owners have it if they asked for it Blake & Co. did not believe. But Levison's evidently genuine merriment made them uneasy.

"Well, where does the cackle come in?" snorted Blake.

"I'm jolly certain that Railton will let us have our study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling duffers—"

"Railton might if he were here," grinned Levison.

"Only, you see, he isn't here. Railton hasn't come back yet."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Railton's abroad, and won't be back for a week at least," said Levison coolly. "Of course, you fellows don't know any of the news, as you've been slacking in the country instead of coming back to school. But it's the fact, all the same."

Blake & Co. exchanged dismayed glances.

"Then—then there isn't a Housemaster here?" exclaimed Digby.

"Yes—Linton."

"Linton of the Shell?"

"Exactly!" said Levison, with a cool nod. "Mr. Linton is acting as Housemaster until Railton comes. And if you think old Linton likely to do you any favours you're welcome to go and ask him. Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Mellish and Hooker together.

"Bai Jove, we're done in the eye, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus dismally.

There was no doubt about it. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was quite a different kind of man from the hearty and genial Mr. Railton. He was a just man; but he was cold and severe, and the very last man to whom the juniors would have gone to ask for a favour. His sense of justice might have made him restore them to their study if he had looked at the matter as they did. But the chances were that he wouldn't. As No. 6 was the best study in the passage, Mr. Linton was more likely to think justice would

be done by letting someone else have a term in it. It was not only because it was the best study that Blake & Co. wanted it; old associations had a great deal to do with their affection for that famous apartment. But that was a matter that the cold and formal master of the Shell would never have comprehended, or taken the trouble to comprehend.

Levison's look showed how very sure he felt of his ground. He chuckled gleefully, thoroughly enjoying the dismay and perplexity of the chums of Study No. 6.

Blake & Co. stood almost dumbfounded. They knew instinctively that any appeal to Mr. Linton on the subject would be in vain. They had only themselves to depend upon.

"Well, when are you going?" asked Levison, with a sneering grin. "This is our study, you know, and we don't allow all sorts of bounders in it."

Blake looked at his comrades with a gleaming eye.

"We're not going to be turned out of our study, you chaps," he remarked. "That's understood, of course."

"Of course!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't quite see how you're going to help it," said Levison, grinning.

"I'll explain, then," said Blake, breathing hard. "You've sneaked into our study and collared it. We're not going to let you keep it. This is our study, and you cads are going out of it. I give you one minute to go and take your belongings."

"And what if we don't go?" sneered Levison.

"Then you'll be put!"

"Rats!"

Blake pushed back his cuffs. He was so exasperated that he was ready at that moment to fight, not only Levison & Co., but all St. Jim's if necessary.

"Are you going?" he shouted.

"No!"

Mellish and Hooker looked somewhat nervous. Blake was a celebrated fighting-man in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, and when he was angry he was not to be trifled with. And he was certainly angry now.

But Levison knew what he was about. He had the study by the permission of the Housemaster pro tem., and if the former occupant used violence they placed themselves in the wrong at once. Blake was, as a matter of fact, playing into the hands of the cad of the Fourth, but he was too angry to think about that. He threw the study door wide open.

"Outside!" he said briefly.

"Rats!"

"Kick them out!" shouted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Huwway!"

The three juniors rushed to the attack. Levison, seized in Blake's powerful grasp, and whirled off his feet, was slung head foremost through the doorway. He landed in the passage with a terrific bump and a wild roar.

Hooker followed him out, helped by Dig's boot. Mellish dodged round the table as Arthur Augustus charged at him and dodged out of the doorway and stumbled over Levison and Hooker and added himself to the sprawling heap.

"Yow! Ow! Oh! Yah! Oh!"

"Now chuck their rubbish out after them!" roared Blake.

Books and bags and other articles rained into the passage, descending in a shower upon the unfortunate trio. Then Blake slammed the door. Study No. 6, which had been held by the enemy, was cleared. Blake & Co. remained in possession. But for how long? Even in the moment of victory they could not help asking themselves that question.

CHAPTER 8.

Levison's Triumph.

"B AI Jove! We've got wid of those wottahs, anyway!"

"Ye-es!" said Blake.

Levison & Co. had limped away down the passage, breathing fury. Their books and other belongings remained scattered where they had fallen. What they were going to do was a question—and a worrying question. Other fellows might have been depended upon to play the game, but not so Levison and his set. And if Levison complained to Mr. Linton there was little doubt that the master of the Shell would come down heavily. He would probably regard Levison's ejection from the study as a defiance of his own authority—and, indeed, it was something like that, as Jack Blake realised rather late.

There was a tap at the door, and Tom Merry looked in. His expression was surprised.

"Anything wrong, or has it been raining books and things?" he asked.

"Railton's away, and your rotten Form-master's stepped into his shoes," said Blake.

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"Yes, Kangaroo's just told me. But what——"

"And he's given our study to Levison and Mellish and Hooker."

"Too bad!" said Tom Merry sympathetically.

"And we've chucked them out."

"Phew!"

"Well, what else were we to do?" growled Blake. "I suppose we weren't called upon to let those cads have our study?"

Tom Merry looked grave.

"I don't know what Linton will say," he remarked.

"Levison's sure to complain. He's that sort."

"If I had a Form-master like that," said Blake bitterly, "I'd boil him! Why don't you bring up your Form-master better, you Shell bounders?"

"Cave!" said Monty Lowther from the passage. "Here comes Linton, and he looks as if he's in a giddy wax!"

"Now for it!" groaned Blake.

Mr. Linton, master of the Shell, and temporary House-master of the School House, did indeed look "waxy" as he swept along the Fourth Form passage, with frowning brow and rustling gown. He had thoughtfully brought a cane with him—a piece of thoughtfulness which Jack Blake did not admire in the least. He strode into the study with a brow like thunder, and the three dispossessed owners of Study No. 6 followed at his heels. Levison & Co. were looking dusty and rumpled; they had evidently gone to Mr. Linton immediately, to let him see how they had been handled by the lately returned juniors.

"Now, what is all this?" exclaimed Mr. Linton angrily. "Blake, Digby, D'Arcy, I am informed by Levison that you have ejected him violently from this study."

"Our study, sir," murmured Blake.

"It is not your study now, Blake. Did not Levison tell you that he had been assigned to this study for the term?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Then how can you say that it is your study?"

"It has always been ours, sir. It's only fair that we should keep it," ventured Digby.

"That is not my opinion, Digby!" snapped Mr. Linton. "If you had been here—as you should have been—when the term opened you would probably have taken possession of your old room as a matter of course. As it was Levison represented to me, very reasonably, that it is the most spacious and best-lighted study in the passage, and that he would like to have it. There is no reason whatever why you should have it again this term. As a matter of fact, I am not ignorant that you four have always been more or less in mischief, and my opinion is that it will be a good thing for the House for you to be separated."

"Oh!" murmured the juniors.

Mr. Railton would not have taken that view at all; but it was just like Mr. Linton.

"Therefore, I have assigned the study to Levison," said Mr. Linton. "If Mr. Railton chooses to alter my arrangements on his return I shall have nothing to say. For the present you will respect the arrangement. Levison has told you that I gave him the study, and you have directly defied my authority by turning him out. I shall cane you. In the first place, pick up those articles you have thrown out and restore them."

Blake & Co. ground their teeth. But there was nothing to do but to obey. They could not disobey the Form-master.

Levison & Co.'s property was collected up from the passage and brought back into the study. Levison and Mellish and Hooker looked on, grinning. They were getting their own back now with a vengeance.

Under Mr. Linton's gleaming eye the juniors finished the restoration of the belongings of Levison & Co. They were almost choking with rage, and they spoke no word. But if looks could have slain, Mr. Linton's career as a just and severe Form-master would probably have come to a sudden termination then on the floor of the disputed study.

"Now hold out your hand, Blake." Swish! "You are a most unruly boy, and I shall try to teach you respect for authority!" Swish, swish, swish! "Now, Digby!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

"Now, D'Arcy——"

"Weally, Mr. Linton, I wegard this——"

"Silence!" thundered the Form-master. "Hold out your hand!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

"Ow! Bai Jove! Ow, ow!"

"And now leave this study!" said Mr. Linton sternly. "And if you make any attempt to enter it again without the permission of the owners, I shall punish you get more severely. I shall instruct the House prefects to see that you are not guilty of any ragging here. Take care!"

And Mr. Linton rustled away.

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Blake and Digby and D'Arcy clasped their aching hands, and looked daggers at Levison & Co., as they stood defeated and furious in the passage. The three cads of the Fourth were in possession of the study again, and they were grinning with triumph.

"Hard cheese, kids!" said Tom Merry, with great sympathy.

Blake groaned.

"Ow, ow! The beast laid it on jolly hard! Ow, ow!"

"Yaas, wathah! I feel as if I had been flayed, you know!" said Arthur Augustus dolefully. "It has thwown me into quite a fluttah! Lowthah, you uttah ass——"

"Hallo! What have I done?" demanded Lowther, in surprise.

"You dangerous chump!" groaned Digby. "This is what comes of your rotten wheezes. If we'd come back to school yesterday this wouldn't have happened!"

"Serve you right for slacking!" grinned Levison.

"Bai Jove! I won't have that wotten cad gwinnin' at me! Hold my eyeglass, Tom Mewwy, deah boy, while I give Levison a feahful thwashin'."

"Hold on!" growled Blake. "Let the cad alone! We don't want Linton on our necks again. I've had enough for one day!"

"But weally——"

"Oh, don't jaw—let's clear off!"

"Yes, you'd better clear off," said Mellish loftily, "and none of your wedging into this study again, you know. You'll catch it if you do!"

The taunt of the cad of the Fourth passed unnoticed. Blake and his comrades walked down the passage, squeezing their hands. The caning had been very severe, and it was likely to be some time before they got over it. Study No. 6 was left in the hands of the enemy, and Levison & Co. chortled with triumph.

Blake looked disconsolately into Lumley-Lumley's study.

"I'm shoved in here!" he announced.

Lumley-Lumley nodded agreeably.

"Jolly glad to have you instead of Levison," he said. "I've heard it all, and it's a rotten trick. But it's better for me, if that's any comfort."

It wasn't much comfort for the chief of Study No. 6, as a matter of fact. He had often sympathised with Lumley-Lumley for having Levison and Mellish as study-mates; but not to the extent of wishing to give up his own study to them. But there was no help for it now. Study No. 6 had been defeated by their old enemies; and that famous apartment was held by the enemy, and it did not seem clear how Blake was to get it back.

But in spite of the licking, and the great authority of Mr. Linton, Blake had by no means given up the idea.

Somehow or other he was going to regain possession of his study, and the four chums were to be united again—he was determined upon that. It had to be done somehow; but, unfortunately, how was not yet clear. Such comfort as was afforded by the School House fellows, Blake had, but that was not much. All the School House agreed that Levison had played a dirty trick, and that he couldn't have done it if old Railton had been there. And the juniors were not slow to tell Levison their opinion of him.

But the cad of the Fourth only shrugged his shoulders. Hard words break no bones, was Ernest Levison's motto. So long as he could not be "chucked" out of Study No. 6 he was quite willing to brave the opinion of the House, and it was unluckily only too certain that he could not be chucked out.

CHAPTER 9.

Towser Finds His Enemy.

HERRIES was very busy.

Of what had happened in Study No. 6, and of the change that had been made there, Herries knew nothing as yet. Blake and Digby and D'Arcy were getting their things into their new quarters. Herries was very busy with Towser.

Towser had welcomed his master back with any amount of doggy affection. But there was no doubt that Towser was off colour. Herries was afraid that he might have bitten Levison after all, and that Levison disagreed with him. When anything was wrong with Towser, Towser filled up the whole horizon for Herries. Herries remained with his ugly but faithful favourite till close on dinner-time. He held a deep and earnest consultation with the stableman on the subject of Towser. There was no other subject in the wide world for Herries just then.

Herries' final decision was to take the bulldog into the study. True, there was a rule about pets not being kept in the House—especially dogs. But at the beginning of the

term it was possible that it might escape notice, as the school had not yet shaken down.

Herries resolved to risk it. He wanted to have Towser under his eye. As for the objections of his study-mates, Herries brushed that consideration aside as of no account whatever. How any reasonable human being could possibly object to a dog like old Towser passed Herries' comprehension. And when Towser was seedy it was no time to think of silly objections. That was how Herries looked at it. Towser was going to be taken care of under his master's eye, that was settled.

The dinner-bell began to ring, but Herries did not heed it. In fact, he was glad that the fellows would be gone in to dinner, as it gave him a chance of getting Towser up to the study unnoticed. He led Towser away to the School House, whisked him up the stairs, and whisked him into Study No. 6. Nobody was there—both the former and the present owners of the study were at dinner. Herries left Towser in the study while he fetched an old box from the box-room, and in that box he made up a bed for Towser. Towser allowed himself to be put to bed, and Herries slid the box under the table.

There was a large table-cover over the table, which reached nearly to the floor. It was a new one, as Herries noted, but it did not occur to him that it belonged to anyone but one of his chums. All he thought about it was, that it came in very handy for concealing Towser from sight. For it was very necessary to keep the bulldog out of sight. If Towser's presence in the House became known to the prefects or the Housemaster, it meant prompt ejection for Towser, and lines for his master.

Having disposed Towser quite comfortably in the box under the table, and hidden him from sight, Herries left the study, carefully closing the door behind him. Towser would sleep there quietly till his master came back. Towser could do with a very great deal of sleep. Unless he was disturbed there would be no trouble.

Towser had a very special objection to Levison of the Fourth, who had sometimes amused himself by tormenting the bulldog while he was safe on the chain. That kind of amusement appealed to a nature like Levison. But there was no danger of Levison finding the bulldog there, Herries thought. If Towser had seen him, Towser would have gone for him at once, but it was not likely to happen! As a matter of fact Herries would have known that it was extremely likely to happen if he had known about the study's change of ownership. But he did not know that yet.

Herries was a quarter of an hour late to dinner, and his Form-master, Mr. Lathom, frowned at him as he took his place at the Fourth-Form table. However, he made no remark, as Herries had only returned to school that day. But as dinner could not be continued to suit the convenience of a late-comer, Herries had a very short meal—and when dinner was over he repaired to the school shop to make up for it.

Meanwhile, Levison & Co. went up to their study.

They were decidedly pleased with their new quarters, which were a great improvement upon their old ones. And it was a great pleasure to them to take the place of Blake & Co. The three young rascals grinned gleefully as they came into the study, and Levison produced a packet of cigarettes and handed them round—that being one of the little indulgences of Levison and his set.

"Thanks," said Mellish, as he lighted his cigarette. "Well, we're here, anyway! Blessed if I really thought you'd be able to bring it off, Levison, when you suggested the idea yesterday!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Easy enough to work round old Linton!" he said. "It wouldn't have done if Railton had been here. He'd have given me one look, and said 'No,' as sharp as a knife. But Linton doesn't like those rotters."

"Bit of luck for us!" grinned Hooker. "The fellows seem down on us, though, for collaring the study."

"They'll get used to it," said Levison carelessly. "Why should Blake bag the best study and keep it?"

"Echo answers why?" chuckled Mellish. "But what about when Railton comes back?"

"Well, I don't think he'll have the cheek to shift us. It would be up against Linton if he did, and the masters are always careful not to let one another down before the fellows," said Levison shrewdly. "I've thought about that."

"Blessed if you don't think of everything," said Mellish admiringly. "Anyway, we've got the study for the present. Not that I care so much about the study, as about giving those rotters a fall! Hallo!"

"What's up?"

"There's somebody under the table," whispered Mellish cautiously. "I heard somebody move—some cad spying on us!"

Levison's eyes gleamed. He was sitting on the table; and

as he bent his head to listen, he heard a slight movement, too. He threw his cigarette into the grate, and made a sign to his companions to do the same. The cigarettes vanished from sight.

Levison & Co. themselves were far from being above such meanness as eavesdropping, and the movement under the table naturally brought the suspicion of an eavesdropper into their minds.

"Not a word!" whispered Levison, below his breath. "I'll make him sorry for spying on us, whoever he is. Go on talking."

Levison slipped from the table. Hooker and Mellish went on talking in loud voices, to reassure the supposed eavesdropper. Levison cautiously picked up the tongs from the grate and came back to the table. He bent down, with an evil grin on his face, and made a sudden thrust under the table with the tongs. If an eavesdropper had been there, he would certainly have been hurt—and Levison fully meant that he should be.

Mellish and Hooker giggled gleefully. But their giggle died away the next moment in a gasp.

The tongs had come into contact with a body under the table, but it was not an eavesdropper. That there might be a quadruped in the study the cads of the Fourth had not suspected, but they discovered it now.

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

It was a loud and angry yell, rather than a growl.

Levison dropped the tongs, and jumped back in alarm. Mellish and Hooker leaped to their feet.

"It—it's a dog!" gasped Levison.

"Oh, my hat!"

The table-cover was whisked aside, and out from beneath the table leaped Towser, with flaming eyes and open jaws.

Towser was hurt—and Towser was angry. And Towser recognised his old enemy who had tormented him when he was chained up and had no chance of retaliating. The chance of retaliation had come. Towser took no notice of Mellish or Hooker, who darted towards the door with yells of terror. He made directly for Levison.

Gr-r-r-r-rh!

"Ow! Help!"

Levison leaped wildly on the table. Mellish and Hooker fled from the study, and bolted down the passage. Towser did not follow. Towser had a business-like eye on Levison. He pranced round the table with snapping jaws, striving to get at his enemy, and Levison yelled for help.

CHAPTER 10.

Dogged!

"HELP!"

Gr-r-r-r-r!

"Help! Ow! Help, somebody!"

Levison knelt, crouching, on the study table, his eyes wide open with terror, and fixed upon the bulldog.

Towser whisked round and round the table, making clumsy jumps at Levison, but he could not reach the Fourth-Former. His growling was simply horrifying. If he had got at the cad of the Fourth, Levison would certainly have suffered severely, and at every instant he dreaded that the bulldog might reach him. He crouched in the middle of the table, turning round incessantly to keep his eyes on the bulldog.

The mingled voices of Towser and Levison brought a crowd along the passage. Blake was the first to reach the study, and he stared in, and burst into a yell of laughter at the sight of Levison crouched on the table, white as chalk, and stuttering with fear.

"Hallo!" roared Blake. "What game are you playing, Levison? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Call him off!" shrieked Levison.

"What have you got Herries's bulldog here for?" exclaimed Tom Merry, arriving on the scene. "Herries will be talking to you about that."

"Yaas, wathah! You have no wight to bwing Hewwies's bulldog into your beastly studay, Levison," chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I didn't bring him!" yelled Levison. "He was under the table. You rotters have planted him on me because I won't let you have the study! I'll complain to Mr. Linton! Call him off! Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear," said Blake, grinning. "Not much good my calling him off. He won't obey anybody but Herries, and not always Herries."

Grr-rhr-rhr! came from Towser, as he made another vain attempt to get at his enemy.

The table rocked as Levison cowered back. Towser snapped at the cover, and tore a corner from it, and very nearly dragged it off the table, and Levison along with it. There was another shriek of terror from Levison.

"Call him off—call him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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The crowd in the passage outside the study doorway was thickening, and the juniors were all roaring with laughter. Nobody felt any sympathy for Levison. Nobody but Levison was afraid of Towser. The bulldog was a sleepy and good-natured animal, as a rule; and though he had a playful way of nipping at trousers, he would not have bitten anyone—anyone but Levison. But he had a deadly eye for the junior who had tormented him while he was on his chain. The juniors in the passage enjoyed the scene.

"Help!" yelled Levison. "Will you call him off?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He won't come away for us!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Nothing doing, Levison."

"Drag him away, then!"

"Thanks—he doesn't look as if he'd like to be dragged."

"Wathah not! I have too much respect for my twousahs to twy anythin' of the sort. Besides, this serves you wight, Levison. Towsah would not go for you unless you had ill-tweeted him. I twust, Levison, that this will teach you the wottenness of cwelty to animals."

"Call him off! Help! He'll have me down in a minute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Towser was rending all the table-cover that was within his reach. Most of it lay now in fragments on the floor. And he was snapping savagely round the table, and each moment the terrified junior dreaded that the snapping jaws would reach him. Seldom had Towser been seen in such a state of excitement.

"Help!" roared Levison. "Help—help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Somebody had better find Herries," grinned Blake.

"We shall have all the school here soon, if Levison keeps on."

"Anybody know where Hewwies is?"

"I guess I saw him in the tuckshop," said Lumley-Lumley.

"I will go and look for Hewwies, Levison. I wecommend you to keep out of Towsah's weach until Hewwies awwives."

Levison did not need that recommendation. He was doing his best. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy departed, smiling.

"Blessed if I knew Levison was such a giddy acrobat before!" said Blake, as the cad of the Fourth whirled round to keep his eyes on the whisking bulldog.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" shrieked Levison.

"Hallo! What's this row here?" Knox of the Sixth came striding angrily along the passage. "More trouble with you young rascals, as usual?"

Knox pushed his way through the juniors, and looked into the study. He jumped back at the sight of Towser. Knox did not like bulldogs at close quarters, and Towser was looking very dangerous.

"Blake! You have been told about keeping animals in your study! I shall report this to the Housemaster!" exclaimed Knox, only too glad of a chance to repay the kindly attentions he had received from the juniors in the train.

"'Tain't my study!" grinned Blake.

"What! This is your study?"

"Mr. Lynton has handed it over to Levison," explained Blake. "If Levison uses his study to give acrobatic performances, 'tain't my bizney."

"They've planted this beast here because they can't have the study!" shrieked Levison. "I shall be bitten! Call that dog off, Blake!"

"'Tain't my dog!" said Blake stolidly.

Towser made another wild leap, and bumped on the table. The table rocked dangerously as Levison crouched wildly back. For a moment it looked as if the junior would roll off on the floor. But he managed to stick to the table, white with terror.

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"Drive him away, Knox!" yelled Levison. "You're a prefect—you're responsible! You ought to drive him away! Ow!"

"Knox doesn't like bulldogs," chuckled Digby. "Knox isn't taking any."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox set his teeth. He was certainly afraid of tackling Towser, but he did not like to show the white feather before a crowd of juniors. He had a cane in his hand, and he screwed up his courage, and entered the study, and flourished the cane at Towser.

"Shoo—shoo!" exclaimed Knox. "Get out, you brute! Shoo!"

Towser turned upon the prefect, with all his teeth showing, and a bloodthirsty gleam in his eyes. Knox made one jump back into the passage, pushing the juniors right and left in his hurry to escape. There was a yell of laughter.

"Go for him, Knox!"

"Don't mind his teeth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I— That brute shall be shot!" panted Knox. "He—he sha'n't be kept in the school at all, Herries!" Arthur Augustus was returning with Towser's master at last. "Herries, take your dog away!"

Herries came up, frowning darkly. He glared into the study.

"Who's been disturbing my dog?" he demanded angrily. "I won't have my dog disturbed! What is that cad doing in my study?"

"It's my study!" howled Levison. "Call that brute off!"

"What?"

"It's Levison's study, Herries," said Blake. "He's sneaked it this term. It's been given to him."

Herries snorted.

"Well, if it's his study, he can look after himself in it," he said. "I'm not looking after him. Watch him, Towser!"

Gr-r-rhr!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Herries, I order you to call that dog off!" shouted Knox.

"Go and eat coke!" growled Herries. "Towser wouldn't go for him if he hadn't been a brute. Towser doesn't go for other chaps. 'Tain't my business to look after Levison. If he sneaks my study, he can take the consequences."

"If you do not call that dog off at once I will fetch Mr. Linton."

"Fetch you grandmother!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox strode away furiously. Blake caught his incensed chum by the arm.

"Take Towser away, Herries, old man. Railton isn't back, and Linton's Housemaster pro tem. Take him away, quick!"

"Well, he ought to have his bite," said Herries reluctantly. "This is poor old Towser's first chance of getting at Levison. It's a rotten shame to disappoint him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get him away before Linton comes," urged Tom Merry.

"Oh, all right! Towser! Come on, Towsy, old man!"

Towsy old man declined to come on. He was still making wild efforts to get at Levison, and he was deaf to his master's voice. Herries made a dive at him, and gripped him by the collar, and jerked him to the door.

"Take him away!" panted Levison. "I—I'll smash him some time! I'll poison him! I'll—"

"Will you?" roared Herries, turning round on him. "You'll poison my bulldog, you cad? Come here, Towser!"

Herries strode back to the table, caught it with his left hand, and tilted it up. Levison shot off it, and landed in a heap on the floor. There was a blood-curdling growl

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The tablecover was whisked aside, and from beneath the table leaped Towser, with flaming eyes and open jaws. Towser was hurt—and Towser was angry, and he made straight for Levison. "Ow! Help!" shrieked the junior.
(See Chapter 9.)

from Towser as he strove to get loose and hurl himself upon his enemy. Levison picked himself up with a terrified shriek, and backed into the corner of the study. It was all Herries could do to hold the bulldog back from him. Levison was quaking from head to foot.

"Take him away!" he moaned. "Yow! Drag him off! Go away! Help! Ow!"

Towser's snapping jaws were within a foot of the shrieking junior. Levison was almost collapsing with terror. Herries eyed him grimly.

"Now you'll beg Towser's pardon before I take him away!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I won't, you idiot!" screamed Levison.

"I give you one second, before I let go his collar."

"Ow! I—I beg your pardon, Towser!" howled Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buck up, Herries!" gasped Blake, almost weeping with laughter. "Linton's coming upstairs."

Herries growled, and led his bulldog out of the study. He disappeared with Towser at the opposite end of the passage as Mr. Linton rustled up to the study, with Knox, the prefect, at his heels. The master of the Shell looked very angry.

He glanced at the quaking and chalky Levison with contempt.

"Where is that dog? Have you been bitten, Levison?"

"N-no, sir."

"Then what is all this disturbance about?"

"I—I— He was going to bite me, sir."

"You should not show this unmanly fear of an animal, Levison. It is cowardly. The dog appears to be gone," said Mr. Linton, looking round. "Herries will take a hundred lines for introducing his dog into the house against the rules."

You will tell him so, Blake. Knox, there was no need for you to trouble me in this matter. You should have dealt with it yourself. A prefect should be able to perform his duties, Knox, without troubling a master over a trifling matter."

And Mr. Linton rustled angrily away again, leaving Knox biting his lips with chagrin. The juniors grinned after him as he strode away.

"I—I'll have that beastly dog killed, somehow," panted Levison.

"You should not show this unmanly fear of an animal, Levison," grinned Blake, imitating Mr. Linton's tart voice. "It is cowardly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison slammed the study door.

CHAPTER 11.

Figgins on the Warpath!

"MY hat! Who's been here?"

Figgins of the Fourth uttered that exclamation in excited tones.

After morning lessons the New House juniors had gone to their House to dinner as usual, and after dinner Figgins went up to his study. Then he made the discovery that somebody had been there before him.

Figgins stared in amazement at the stack of furniture that filled the study from floor to ceiling.

"My word!" said Kerr. "What silly ass—"

"Those School House bounders!" growled Fatty Wynn, the third member of the famous Co. of the New House. "While we were at classes, of course"

"But the School House rotters were at classes, too!"

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"Not Tom Merry and Blake and the rest. They came back this morning," said Fatty Wynn, "and they've given us an early call!"

George Figgins breathed hard through his nose.

"And they've started the term with a jape on the New House," grinned Kerr. "It's one up to them, Figgy! My hat! It will take some trouble clearing the study out!"

"We'll jolly well give them tit for tat!" growled Figgins. "Like their beastly cheek japing us the first day they get back!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Redfern, as he came along the passage. "Somebody's been taking away my study furniture. Hallo! You fellows turned burglars in your old age?"

"It's a rotten School House jape!" snapped Figgins. "Take your rubbish away! We can't get into the study."

Redfern grinned.

"They've started well," he remarked. "It was quite a peaceful day yesterday with those bounders away! Now they're beginning."

"And now we're going to begin," said Figgins grimly.

There were wrathful exclamations from all the New House members of the Fourth Form when they discovered their studies denuded of furniture, and the same stacked up in Figgins & Co.'s quarters. For a considerable time the New House juniors were busy with an extensive moving job. And Figgins & Co. frowned darkly as they set their study to rights. The nice new curtains had been somewhat damaged by having chairs and tables and bags and boxes piled on them. A good deal of damage had been done, in fact; and it was time for afternoon classes when Figgins & Co. had finished putting their house in order.

Figgins & Co. gave the School House chums grim looks as they met, going into the Form-room for afternoon lessons. Blake & Co. were looking somewhat grim, too. They were thinking about the change of ownership of Study No. 6. But they smiled at the sight of the New House trio.

"Haven't had a chance of speaking to you yet, Figgy," said Blake affably. "Looked in to see you this morning, but you weren't there."

"Yaas, and we quite missed you, Figgay."

"We left you a little reminder of our call!" remarked Digby.

And the School House juniors chuckled in chorus.

"We'll give you a little reminder, too, that we're cock-house of St. Jim's, and that we're not going to stand any rot from the School House this term," said Figgins, breathing hard.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was time for lessons then, and there was no opportunity for Figgins & Co. to take vengeance. But in the Form-room Figgins did some hard thinking. While Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was meandering on, as the juniors described it among themselves, as usual, Figgy was not thinking of Mr. Lathom or the valuable instruction he was imparting. He was thinking of his bounden duty, as leader of the New House juniors, to give Study No. 6 the "kybosh."

Blake looked at him several times, and grinned. The mighty brain of the great Figgins was evidently hard at work, and Blake wondered what would be the outcome. Later in the afternoon, some time before the end of lessons, Figgins missed a book which was imperatively required, and Mr. Lathom told him to go and fetch it. Figgins left the Form-room with an innocent expression upon his face, and Blake chuckled softly. Arthur Augustus, who was next to him, gave him an inquiring glance.

"What's the joke, deah boy?" he asked.

"Figgy!" grinned Blake.

"Nothin' funnay in forgettin' a book, is there?" asked D'Arcy, in surprise.

"Not at all. Only Figgy's book is in Figgy's desk, I fancy. Figgy is pulling Mr. Lathom's never-sufficiently-to-be-respected leg."

"But why?"

"Because he wants to get out of the Form-room. I rather fancy he's thinking of paying a visit to our study, to rag it the same as we did his," murmured Blake joyfully.

"But we haven't a studay now. We're sepawated, deah boy."

"Exactly. But we haven't told Figgy yet."

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! If he goes to Studay No. 6——"

"That's the little game, unless I'm mistaken, and your Uncle Blake never makes mistakes," said Blake loftily.

The idea of Figgins ragging Levison's study, under the belief that he was ragging Blake & Co., struck Arthur Augustus as so very funny that he burst into a sudden cackle, which drew Mr. Lathom's eyes upon him at once. The master of the Fourth blinked at D'Arcy over his spectacles.

"D'Arcy! Keep silence in class, please!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir. I mean, yaas, sir. Sowwy, sir."

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"And take fifty lines."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

A good many of the fellows glanced at Arthur Augustus, wondering what was the cause of his peculiar outburst of merriment, Levison among the others. But Levison did not guess. Ten minutes later George Figgins came back with a cheery smile upon his face, and resumed his place in the class. Mr. Lathom eyed him somewhat severely.

"You have been a long time, Figgins."

"Yes, sir; the book wasn't there. I think it must be here in my desk, after all," said Figgins calmly.

"You will take fifty lines for carelessness, Figgins!"

"Yes, sir," said Figgins meekly.

He didn't mind the fifty lines. In spite of that imposition, he was looking particularly cheerful during the remainder of afternoon lessons. And when the Fourth Form were dismissed Figgins & Co. came out smiling into the passage. Blake and his chums joined them at once, smiling too.

"You look awfully chippy, Figgy," Blake remarked. "Anything specially pleasant in getting fifty lines?"

Figgins laughed.

"Not exactly. But I don't mind—considering." And he grinned at the Co., and the Co. chuckled.

"Cheap—considering!" remarked Kerr.

"Nothing to speak of—considering," chuckled Fatty Wynn.

"Considering what?" asked Blake innocently.

"Oh, nothing," said Figgins airily. "Perhaps you fellows will be surprised when you go to your study. Perhaps you won't. Come on, kids! No time to talk to these School House bounders. We've got to get in some practice at the nets."

"Our study!" said Blake calmly. "We haven't a study now, Figgy."

Figgins stopped short.

"What!" he ejaculated. "You haven't a study! What do you mean?"

"They've distributed us along the passage," explained Blake. "The powers that be feel that our shining example ought not to be hid under a bushel. They've put us into three different studies along the passage, in order that the Fourth Form may have the full benefit of us. We're not in Study No. 6 any more."

Figgins's jaw dropped.

"Not in Study No. 6 any more?" he repeated faintly.

"No."

"Wathah not, deah boy," chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Figgins.

"What's the matter?" asked Blake cheerfully.

"N-n-not in Study No. 6 any more! Then—oh, my hat!"

"Awfully good of you to sympathise with us in this way, Figgy. It's hard cheese on us, being turned out of our study; but we really didn't expect New House chaps to feel it like this on our account. We're awfully grateful, Figgy."

"Awf'ly gwateful, deah boy! Ha ha, ha!"

"Figgy looks quite distressed," said Blake. "I must say, Figgy, that this shows that you've got a kind heart as well as a fat head——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins crossly, and he strode away, followed by the Co., all three of them looking decidedly dismayed.

Blake looked at his chums with a sweet smile.

"I rather fancy," he remarked, "that there's some sort of a surprise waiting for Levison in his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 12.

Something Like a Rag!

LEVISON & CO. came up to Study No. 6 at teatime looking quite cheerful. The possession of that coveted apartment afforded them undying satisfaction. In other studies, which they had shared with other fellows, Levison & Co. had been under considerable restraint. Their favourite amusements, which they copied from Cutts of the Fifth, such as smoking cigarettes, and playing nap for penny points, and so on, were not easily indulged in in studies shared by other fellows. Levison and Mellish had both been licked by Lumley-Lumley for smoking in his study. Hooker had been pitched out of his former quarters "on his neck" for the same offence. More than once their "smokes" had been thrown into the fire, their sporting papers had been burnt, and their packs of cards torn up by indignant juniors who did not approve of their little ways. But in a study of their own they had no interference of that kind to fear. They could smoke till they made themselves sick; they could gamble till the losers felt their breasts full of envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness; they could look over the sporting papers and wisely calculate ways and means of transferring their

spare cash to the pockets of bookmakers—and all this without danger of interruption or ragging. And the fact that they were keeping Blake & Co. out of their old quarters gave their pleasure an added zest. So Levison & Co. had plenty of reason for feeling cheerful, to say nothing of the fact that they were in funds at the beginning of the term, and had arranged an extra special feed for tea that afternoon.

Blake & Co. were on the cricket ground now with Tom Merry and the rest. But cricket did not appeal to the black sheep of the Fourth. They played as much as they had to, cricket practice being compulsory at St. Jim's, and beyond that they let bat and ball severely alone.

Levison threw open the door of Study No. 6 and strode in. The next moment there was a loud yell as the cad of the Fourth went sprawling at full length on the floor.

"Yah! Oh!"

"What on earth—" began Hooker. "Hallo! There's a cord there! Ha, ha, ha!"

Hooker and Mellish stopped just in time. Levison sat up on the carpet, and gritted his teeth. He had caught his foot in a cord stretched across the floor a few inches above the carpet and invisible to him as he strode in. He had come down heavily, and he was feeling hurt. And the chuckles of his comrades did not improve his temper.

"Ow! You silly chumps, what are you cackling at?" he growled. "Did one of you put that cord there? I'll jolly well—"

"No fear!" said Mellish hastily. "Blake, I suppose—"

"Blake hasn't been here!" snarled Levison, as he picked himself up. "He went straight down to the cricket after lessons, and so did the other rotters. It was some other rotter."

"Tom Merry, perhaps," suggested Hooker.

"He went down to the cricket, too. It was some other rotter—they're all up against our having this study!" growled Levison, rubbing his knees. "Well, we're jolly well going to stick to it, all the same."

"You bet!" said Hooker.

Levison jerked the cord away savagely. Mellish stooped before the fire to light it. The fire had been laid earlier, to be ready for tea. Mellish struck a match, and applied it, and there was a sudden fizz.

Fizz, fizz! Bang, bang!

Mellish leaped to his feet as if he had been shot.

"Yaroooh! Oh, my hat! What—"

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

"Great Scott! Oh!"

"What the—how the—who the—"

Bang, bang!

Fireworks were banging away merrily in the grate, and a strong smell pervaded the study. The three juniors exchanged savage looks as the explosions finished. The firewood had been scattered over the grate.

"Oh!" muttered Levison between his teeth. "Some villain has been here shoving crackers into the grate, and you lighted them, like a silly fool!"

"How was I to know?" demanded Mellish, with equal irritation. "How could I tell there were fireworks in the grate, you silly ass?"

"Look here, you fathead—"

"Oh, rats!"

"By George, you did look scared, Mellish!" chuckled Hooker. "Never mind, no harm done. Get the firewood together again, and let's have tea."

But the cheerful looks of the new owners of Study No. 6 had departed. Levison and Mellish were in extremely bad tempers by this time.

Levison jerked open the cupboard door savagely. There was a sudden crash, and a roar of wrath from Levison.

A string had been attached to the cupboard door and attached to a tray in the cupboard. On the tray had been piled all the study crockeryware, and a pot of jam, and a pie, and several other articles. Levison had noticed that the cupboard door was ajar, but he had not noticed the string. The savage jerk he had given to the door had dragged the tray bodily out, and its contents shot to the floor in a shower round him.

Crash, crash! Smash!

"My hat!"

The juniors stared at the ruins in dismay.

There lay their feed at their feet. The piedish was broken, and the pie in pieces, the gravy running over the carpet. The jam-pot was in half a dozen pieces. The crockeryware was in pieces innumerable.

Levison panted with rage.

"Look at that!" he almost stuttered. "Look at it! There's the feed! Oh, I'll make somebody suffer for this! It must have been those rotters after all! They've sneaked in somehow when we didn't see them and done this!"

"The rotters!" howled Mellish. "That's our feed gone! Oh, the beasts!"

"And look at this!" howled Hooker. "There's ink in the kettle!"

"Great Scott!"

"And—and the armchair's smothered with treacle?" gasped Hooker. "Lucky we didn't sit down in it! Look at it!"

Levison ground his teeth with fury. And further search revealed that still more damage had been done. The bag of tarts in the cupboard had been carefully inked, and were no longer eatable. The cake—a really handsome cake—had been treated with a dose of liquid glue, and could no longer be regarded as a welcome addition to any tea-table. Even the loaf was soaked through with purple marking-ink, and the butter had been mixed up with the pickles.

Whoever the raider was, he had done his business thoroughly in Study No. 6, and the joyous little feed planned by Levison & Co. was very much off.

The three cads of the Fourth regarded one another with looks of almost speechless fury.

"It must have been Blake!" gasped Levison at last. "Of course it was! He's dodged in here and done this! I—I'm going to Linton about it!"

"Hold on!" muttered Hooker uneasily. "We sha'n't do ourselves any good by sneaking all the time, Levison. The chaps are down on us already."

"I don't care!"

Levison was too furious to care for anything but vengeance just then. He rushed into the passage, and collided with Knox, the prefect, who was passing. The prefect gripped him by the ear, and Levison howled.

"Well, where are you running to?" growled Knox. "Did you do that on purpose, you cheeky young sweep?"

"Leggo!" panted Levison. "Look here, Knox—look what they've done to my study! Look at it!"

Knox glanced into the study and whistled.

"Who did this?" he asked.

"Blake, of course! Whom do you think?"

The prefect smiled. Mr. Linton had been already extremely irritated by the trouble over Study No. 6, and this renewal of the ragging was certain to have a most exasperating effect upon him. Knox thought he saw his way clear to repaying his experiences in the railway train with interest.

"Very well! It's my duty to report this to the House-master," he said. "You had better come with me, Levison!"

And Levison went.

CHAPTER 13.

Knox Does Not Score.

"WELL bowled, Blake!"

The School House juniors were at cricket practice, and Tom Merry's wicket had just gone down to Blake's fast bowling. Blake grinned serenely as he scattered the Shell fellow's sticks.

"How's that, umpire?"

"Out!" said Tom Merry good-humouredly. "You're improving, Blake! We'll have you the equal of Fatty Wynn this term if you keep on like this. See if you can do it again."

"My dear chap, I'll take your sticks as long as you care to set 'em up!" said Blake kindly.

"Blake! Here, Blake, you're wanted!" Wally of the Third had just arrived on Little Side, breathless. "Blake!"

"Rats!" said Blake. "I'm bowling!"

"Mr. Linton wants you!"

Jack Blake groaned.

"Oh, my hat! Why don't you Shell fellows drown your blessed Form-master? Blessed if he won't turn my hair grey! What does he want, Wally?"

"Looks to me as if he wants a giddy victim!" grinned Wally. "He looked as black as thunder when he told me to fetch you in. Herries and Dig and Gussy are to go, too."

"I weally do not see why Mr. Linton should wequire my pwesence," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is weally a boah!"

"If it's some more about Towser I shall jolly well tell him I'm fed up!" growled Herries.

"Well, you'd better go," said Tom Merry. "Linton doesn't like being kept waiting."

"Oh, come on!" said Blake resignedly. "Luckily, we haven't done anything this time. Nothing like having a clean conscience when you're going to see a Form-master—specially Linton! Go and tell him to keep his wool on, Wally. We're coming!"

Wally chuckled. He was not likely to carry that message to the irate master of the Shell.

The four chums of the Fourth walked away towards the School House wondering what was wanted, and feeling a little uneasy. They had remarkably clear consciences, as it

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wrenched himself away and fled. Then Knox caned Hooker and Mellish—not because they had done anything, but because he had an irresistible desire to cane somebody. Then he walked off, feeling somewhat solaced.

But in Study No. 6 he left weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Blake's study was still held by the enemy; but the enemy could not be said to be having a very good time there.

CHAPTER 14.

Unappreciated.

"THE question is, what's going to be done?" growled Blake.

It was a few days later, and the chums of Study No. 6—of Study No. 6 no longer—were at tea with the Terrible Three in the latter's study.

No. 6 was still in the possession of the enemy. Blake and his comrades had made things very unpleasant in several ways for the interlopers. Nearly all the School House fellows were down upon them. Even Figgins & Co. of the other House were down upon them, and sympathised greatly with the dispossessed juniors. But it seemed to make no difference to Levison & Co. Indeed, Levison seemed to enjoy the fact that he was able to defy public opinion in the Lower School.

He held on to his prize.

Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy were still distributed along the passage in separate studies. The other fellows they were quartered upon made them very welcome. But the four chums, who had always been called the inseparables, were separated now—and they chafed under the new order of things. The cosy little tea-party in No. 6 was a thing of the past—they had no room they could call their own. Blake, too, was accustomed to being head of his study, but he couldn't be head of Lumley-Lumley's study. Herries found certain difficulties in the way of practice with his cornet. His own chums had not really enjoyed that cornet, and other fellows wouldn't stand it at any price. But above all, the inseparables missed one another's company. By the separation of quarters, the old "Co." was broken up, and they did not like it. Something had to be done, but it was a perplexing question what was to be done.

When Mr. Railton came back he might be requested to make an alteration, but the juniors realised that Mr. Railton was not likely to reverse his predecessor's arrangement, unless very good reason could be shown. The mere fact that Blake & Co. wanted their old study was hardly sufficient to make the Housemaster put a slight upon Mr. Linton, for that was really what it would have amounted to.

The juniors had to depend upon themselves, and ragging Levison was the only expedient that suggested itself—and that was useless. The more Levison was ragged the more obstinate he became. And it was not easy to rag a fellow who wasn't above sneaking. When every rag led to trouble with Mr. Linton or a prefect, ragging began to pall.

So the question remained, what was going to be done? The Terrible Three were sympathetic. They condemned Levison's rotten conduct in bagging No. 6 as much as anybody. But they couldn't see quite clearly what was to be done. Indeed, Monty Lowther had remarked, in his humorous way, that so far as he could see, it was Blake who was going to be done. But Monty Lowther's humour was not appreciated by the Fourth-Formers. There was no comfort for them in Lowther's little jokes—rather the reverse.

"Yaas, what's goin' to be done?" said Arthur. "As a matter of fact, it's up to you fellows!"

"Up to us!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I don't quite see that!"

"Yaas, wathah! You landed us into this wotten posish—Lowthah did, at any wate. But for Lowthah's uttably wotten ideah of pwolongin' the vac, we should have been back here on the first day of the term, and this wouldn't have happened. Even Levison couldn't have had the wotten nerve to ask for our studay if we had been in it at the time."

"Exactly!" said Blake. "Lowther's done it!"

"The next time you catch me backing up a wheeze of Lowther's you can take me out and drown me," said Herries, in measured tones.

"The trouble is that Lowther can get us into a scrape and can't get us out!" growled Digby. "Not brains enough for that!"

Monty Lowther sniffed. It seemed as if he was never to hear the end of his unfortunate scheme for prolonging the holiday. The other fellows seemed to have quite forgotten by this time that they had welcomed the scheme when first it was schemed. The scheme had been a rotten failure, and it had led to unexpected and disastrous results so far as Blake & Co. were concerned, and all the fellows agreed that Lowther was an ass, and a fathead, and the cause of all the bother.

"It weally serves us wight in a way, for allowin' Lowthah

to spoof my patah and the Head," continued Arthur Augustus. "It is weally wetwibution. A fellow has no wight to spoof his patah undah any circs."

"Certainly not," said Blake; "and the outcome is, that with all Lowther's cleverness, we didn't get an extra holiday, and only spoofed ourselves out of our own study."

"Exactly!" said Dig.

"So it's up to you chaps," said Blake; "and if you can't manage it somehow, the only thing you can do decently, is to let us have your study!"

"Our study!" howled the Terrible Three.

"Yes. We could do in this study. 'Tain't quite so good as No. 6, but we'd manage to make it do!"

"Yaas, that is wathah a good ideah."

"You'll manage to get a thick ear!" said Tom Merry wrathfully. "Of course, Lowther was an ass. We all admit that—"

"Oh, do you?" said Lowther truculently.

"Oh, yes!" said Manners. "There's no denying that you are an ass, Monty. No good disputing well-established facts, you know. Why, we might have found our own study bagged!"

"I jolly well wish you had, instead of ours!" growled Blake. "If you ain't going to give up this study to us, what are you going to do? It's up to you. 'Tain't as if those cads were keeping up the traditions of No. 6. They're disgracing it. They smoke and play cards there!"

"Yaas, wathah! Levison is goin' to have a partay there to-morrow aftahnoon," said Arthur Augustus. "I heah that he has asked Goah and Cwooke of the Shell, and Pigott of the Third. All wottahs! You know what that means! They're goin' to play cards for money, the same as that wascal Cutts does in his study. Nice goin's on in our study, bai Jove!"

"Serve 'em right, if we brought a prefect down on 'em!" growled Herries.

"Imposs, deah boy. We can't sneak like Levison!"

"That's where we're at a disadvantage in dealing with such a rotter!" snorted Blake. "He sneaks, and we can't."

"It's wathah wuff on us; but a chap's own self-wespect comes first," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

Monty Lowther's brow wrinkled in deep thought. A new idea seemed to have come into his mind.

"So Levison's giving a little party, is he?" he asked. "Of course, we can guess the kind of party it will be—with Levison and Mellish and Gore and Crooke in it. They'll have the door locked, and cards and cigarettes going."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's the shining example of Cutts of the Fifth," snorted Blake. "If ever a chap ought to be sacked, it's Cutts!"

"Never mind Cutts now," said Lowther. "I've got an idea!"

There was a general sniff.

"Rats!" growled Blake.

"Go and boil it!" said Herries.

"Take it away and buwy it, deah boy!"

"For goodness' sake don't let's have any more of your ideas," implored Digby. "We don't thrive on your ideas."

"Yes; I must say we are rather fed up on your ideas, Monty," confessed Tom Merry. "Try to forget it as quick as you can."

"Best thing you can do," agreed Manners.

Monty Lowther glared at his unappreciative chums. It was not at all an encouraging reception.

"Silly asses!" growled Lowther. "I've got an idea for bringing Levison & Co. to book! If it works, you fellows can have your study back."

"If!" sniffed Blake.

"If it works," continued Lowther calmly, "Levison will come to you to-morrow, and ask you to take the study back."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"And then, perhaps, you'll admit that there's something in my ideas," said Lowther warmly.

"Yes; when Levison does that," yawned Blake, "I'll admit that you've got as much brains as a bunny rabbit! Not before."

And tea being over the Fourth-Formers departed, without evincing the slightest faith in Monty Lowther's idea, or the least curiosity to know what it was. Tom Merry and Manners, however, were more interested, and they looked inquiringly at their chum when the Fourth-Formers were gone.

"Well, what's the wheeze, Monty?" asked Tom Merry carelessly.

"My bizney," said Lowther coolly. "Leave me out of the cricket to-morrow afternoon, and I'll do what I can. I shall want your camera, Manners."

"My camera!" said Manners, staring.

"Yes; with a new roll of films in it."

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"THE ST. JIM'S CARAVANNERS!"

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

"What the dickens are you going to do with my camera and a new roll of films?" demanded the astonished Manners.

"Take photographs."

"But what's that got to do with Study No. 6?"

Lowther hesitated. But he felt that the idea was too good to keep.

"Keep it dark!" he said impressively. "I suppose you know that there's ivy on the house wall under the window in No. 6?"

"Ivy!" said Tom Merry wonderingly. "Yes, it's been there for some centuries, I think, so I've happened to notice it? Are you wandering in your mind?"

"We climbed up it once, to jape those bounders, when they had locked the study door," said Lowther calmly.

"I know we did. But what—"

"What's been done once can be done again! And a fellow with a camera stuck in the ivy outside the window, could take snapshots quite easily, a whole set of interiors—I think you call 'em interiors in your photographic language, Manners—in a few seconds."

"But what—"

"Don't you see?" said Lowther, in a tired voice. "That's my idea! With a printed proof of the little games those rotters carry on in No. 6, we have them in the hollow of our hand, as they say in the newspaper serials. Don't you see?"

"My hat!"

"Suppose they see you?"

"They won't see me."

"Suppose you fall?"

"I sha'n't fall."

"But—but it's risky."

"Blow the risk!"

"But—but, I say, Monty—"

"Rats!"

And with that ancient and classic rejoinder Monty Lowther closed the subject.

CHAPTER 15.

Monty Lowther Does the Trick.

SATURDAY afternoon was a busy time for most of the St. Jim's juniors. There was a House match to be played between the junior elevens of the School House and New House. Monty Lowther was a member of the School House junior eleven on most occasions. But on this particular occasion he cut cricket. There was also a senior match between Kildare's team and that of Montieth, the captain of the New House. So after dinner most of St. Jim's were on the playing-fields. Monty Lowther went there with his chums, but he was only a looker-on. He looked on at the beginning of the match, with Manners' camera slung over his shoulder in a leather case.

But there were some fellows in the School House to whom cricket, even on that bright and sunny summer's afternoon, made no appeal. Neither the senior nor the junior match drew them to the cricket-ground.

Levison of the Fourth was giving a little party in his study, on the lines of the little parties sometimes given in the quarters of Cutts of the Fifth, who was Levison's model. Cutts of the Fifth, certainly, was not an ideal model for anybody. But it was Levison's ambition to follow in his footsteps. Levison, when he was in funds, was sometimes admitted to Cutts's little parties, and it was his daring scheme to reproduce the same thing in a smaller scale in the Fourth. Cutts and his friends played bridge for a shilling or half-crown a hundred, Levison & Co. played nap for penny points. But that was the chief difference.

While the juniors who had no ambition to be known as "blades" or "dogs" were playing or watching the grand old game, Levison & Co. were preparing for an extremely "doggish" time.

Now that he had a study of his own, from which intruders could be kept out, Levison was able, for the first time, to carry out what had long been his desire.

And his friends willingly joined him. Levison was in funds, and he had laid in a supply of cigarettes for the occasion. Gore of the Shell was the first visitor to arrive, and he nodded genially to Levison and Mellish and Hooker as he came in.

"Squat down!" said Levison genially. "The others will be here in a minute. No good starting till we're all here! Better have the door locked, you know."

"Right-ho!" said Gore. "Here comes Crooke."

Crooke of the Shell came in, swaggering. Crooke was the son of a millionaire, and he had plenty of money, so he was especially welcome at Levison's hospitable board on that occasion. A weazened-looking fag followed him in. It was Pigott of the Third, who fagged for Cutts, and had learned many of the ways of that estimable youth.

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The party was now complete, and Levison turned the key in the lock.

"All serene now!" he remarked. "Of course, if anybody should come along, you know what to do. Shove the smokes into that box, I'll look after the cards, and we're a meeting of a debating society, and we locked the door because we thought that Blake & Co. were going to rag us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the six young rascals sat round the table in high good-humour. Outside, the sun was shining cheerily, and a soft breeze blew in at the open window. But it did not tempt the black sheep of the School House out of doors. They could hear the merry shouts from the cricket-field, but those shouts fell upon deaf ears. Levison handed round the box of cigarettes, and the party lighted up, and there was soon a blue haze of smoke in the study. Then Levison produced the cards.

"Nap or banker?" he asked.

"Oh, banker!" said Crooke. "I'll take the bank!"

"Cut for the bank!" said Levison.

Levison secured the bank. Then the young rascals began to play. They felt perfectly secure. On a half-holiday, with almost everybody out of doors, there was hardly a possibility that the study might be visited. Most of the prefects were on the playing-fields, and the masters were occupied with their own affairs. And the locked door prevented any sudden surprise. And as the window was more than twenty feet from the ground there was no danger of being overlooked. The security seemed perfect, and the young rascals prepared to enjoy themselves—in their peculiar way.

The game was going strong.

The players had little heaps of money at their elbows, all of them being flush at the beginning of the term. There were several gold pieces in Crooke's little heap, Crooke liking to display his wealth to the envious eyes of his associates.

"Well bowled, Fatty!"

"How's that, umpire?"

Crooke yawned, and lighted another cigarette.

"Lot of row they make over their silly cricket," he remarked.

"Silly asses!" said Levison. "Give me a light!" Levison was looking very cheerful. His little pile of money had doubled in size in half an hour.

Mellish was not looking so cheerful. He had lost, and he was very nearly stony. His face was growing sullen. Gambling was not conducive to feelings of good-fellowship.

A shadow crossed the open window for a moment, but in the excitement of the game the juniors did not notice it. But when a sudden click broke the silence they started and looked round.

Click!

Levison jumped up, and stared towards the window. The other fellows all stared round. Framed in the window appeared the head and shoulders of Lowther of the Shell!

Click!

Levison stared at him with starting eyes.

Lowther was evidently supported by the thick old ivy, and his elbows were resting on the broad window-sill. And the camera in his hands bore upon the interior of Study No. 6.

Click again!

Lowther had taken three snaps before the juniors in the study realised what he was doing. Then Levison sprang towards the window with a hoarse cry.

"Lowther! You hound!"

"He's—he's photographing us!" gasped Pigott.

"Take his camera away!"

"Cellar him!"

Lowther let go the camera. He had attached it to the strap, and it swung back from his shoulder, still open. He swung himself back on the ivy as Levison reached the window, panting with rage, and with his fists clenched.

Levison leaned out, and glared down at him. Lowther grinned up at the furious face of the cad of the Fourth.

"Got you!" he remarked cheerfully.

"You—you rotter! You beast!" shrieked Levison. "Give me that camera!"

Lowther laughed, and slid quickly down the ivy. Levison shook his fist after him furiously. He looked round savagely for some weapon to reach the Shell fellow, and caught up a heavy book, and hurled it down at him. It was a dangerous thing to do, for Lowther was still ten feet from the ground, and if he had lost his hold the results might have been serious. But Levison was in too great a fury to think what he was doing.

But Monty Lowther did not lose his hold. He grunted as the heavy book caught him on the shoulder, but he held on, and continued his way to the ground. He jumped clear of the ivy a few seconds later, and grinned up at the furious faces crammed in the study window.

The black sheep, frantic with rage, shook their fists down

at him. Lowther calmly levelled the camera, and snapped again.

"Get back!" howled Mellish. "He's taking us!"

The juniors crowded back from the window. They knew that Lowther had secured a picture of them—six infuriated faces and shaking fists at the open window! In the study, they regarded one another with dismayed looks. Levison jammed down the window. The young rascals gathered up the money from the table. Levison jammed the cards into a drawer. The "blades," doggish as they were, were in no humour for more gambling. They realised only too clearly that the snapshots Lowther had taken were more than enough to get them all flogged and expelled from the school, if Lowther chose to make them public. Their fate was held in the hollow of his hand!

"My only aunt!" murmured Gore at last. "What a rotten trick! I—I say, he can't intend to use those photographs against us. That trick was played on me once before, but that was out of doors. I thought we were safe here. Levison, you fool!"

"He—he can't use them; he's only trying to scare us!" muttered Levison hoarsely. "But—but if they should get about—"

"If anybody sees those photographs, we're done for!" said Hooker, with white lips. "You will have to get them from him somehow, Levison."

"I—I'll try."

Levison hurried from the study. The party broke up in utter dismay.

Lowther was looked for, but Lowther was not to be found. It was half an hour later when Levison encountered him. There was stains of pyro on his fingers. Levison guessed that he had been in the dark-room—developing.

The cad of the Fourth looked at him, with almost speechless rage and hatred in his face.

Lowther nodded cheerfully.

"Finished your little game?" he asked.

"You—you— Where are those photographs?"

"In a safe place, my son," chuckled Lowther. "You may be interested to hear that they have developed beautifully. Quite a successful lot. First picture—crew of gamblers playing round a study table—"

"Hush!"

"Second picture, same crew of gamblers looking round startled, like a gang of coiners surprised by the police!" pursued Monty Lowther cheerily. "Third picture—gamblers standing up, cards in some of their hands, or cigarettes. Fourth picture, set of angry face at window—best of the lot! Those pictures will want some explaining, Levison—don't you think?"

"You—you're not going to show them—"

"I'm going to have a set enlarged and printed and hung up in the common-room," said Monty Lowther mercilessly.

Levison gritted his teeth.

"You want something out of me," he said. "You haven't taken all this trouble for nothing. What is it you want?"

"Now you're talking," said Lowther genially. "I want you to let Blake have his study back."

"I—I won't!"

"When Blake has No. 6 again, I'll hand you the films," said Lowther. "Otherwise, I shall have them printed, and hung up in the common-room, as I said. You swindled Blake out of his study, and you've got to make restitution—otherwise, he'll get the study again when you've been kicked out of the school. You see, he'll get it anyway."

"I—I won't give in! I'll—I'll—" Levison clenched his hands with helpless rage. Even as he spoke he knew that he would have to give in.

"You can please yourself about that," said Lowther coolly. "But if Blake doesn't have his study back to-day, as soon as the match is over you know what to expect. You can say what you like to Linton—put it how you like—tell him you've acted like a mean cad, and are sorry for it; but if Blake doesn't have his study you can look out for the order of the boot!"

"Look here, Lowther. I—I—"

"'Nuff said!"

Monty Lowther walked away, leaving Levison of the Fourth clenching his hands with fury. He did not look back. He strolled away to the cricket-field, whistling cheerfully. And Levison, after a few minutes' thought, took his way slowly and reluctantly to Mr. Linton's study.

Jack Blake met with a surprise that afternoon when he came in after the House match.

Mr. Linton called to him.

"Blake, you and Digby and Herries and D'Arcy may take No. 6 again!" said the master of the Shell. "Levison has told me that, upon reflection, he is unwilling to deprive you of a study you have occupied a long time. As he wishes to change out, and Mellish and Hooker say the same, there is no reason why you should not have the study. I trust this will be the end of bickering on the subject."

Jack Blake almost fell down with surprise. Mr. Linton went away before he had time to reply.

"Well, m-m-my hat!" gasped Blake. "This beats the band! What has Levison done that for?"

"Bai Jove! It's weally wathah handsome of Levison, aftah all."

"Rats! He's been dodged into it somehow. Is it possible that Lowther—"

Blake rushed away in search of Lowther.

"Do you know what Levison's done?" he demanded, as he burst into the study of the Terrible Three.

"Yes!"

"He's given us our study back!"

"Exactly."

"What has he done it for?"

"A roll of films," said Lowther, with a yawn. "As soon as you've got the study I'm to give him the roll of films. That's all."

Blake stared.

"But—but I don't understand!"

"Naturally you wouldn't," agreed Lowther, with a nod. "But there it is, all the same. I've worked the oracle. In case of difficulty, you kids should always to come to this study and ask for help—"

"Oh, rats!" was Blake's ungrateful reply.

But there was no doubt that the good news was true. Monty Lowther had worked the oracle, as he said. Blake & Co. took possession of their old study with great rejoicing. As Monty Lowther did not choose to explain, they were considerably mystified. But there it was—Study No. 6 was theirs again! They moved their belongings into that famous apartment in great spirits. And that evening a great housewarming, as Blake called it, was given in Study No. 6, at which the Terrible Three were honoured guests—and there was great joy in the study which had been recaptured by its owners, after having being held by the enemy.

THE END.

(Another Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled "THE ST. JIM'S CARAVANNERS!" By Martin Clifford. Order in advance. Price One Penny.)

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SWIMMING

What to Do and What Not to Do when Sea Bathing.

By **JABEZ WOLFFE.**

The Famous Channel Swimmer.

IN these enlightened days, when almost every town of any importance can boast its own swimming-bath, it is within the power of everyone to learn to swim; but there is one thing these municipal baths do not encourage, and that is the delightful pastime of open-air bathing. Many swimmers hesitate before plunging into the sea on a chilly morning, and decide that all the exercise they require can be obtained just as easily under cover, with the addition of warmed dressing-rooms, and as a result we do not find so many first-class open-air swimmers as we might reasonably expect when nearly every schoolboy is taught

the art of swimming

and the rudiments of life-saving.

In most of the English rivers and lakes there are places set aside for the benefit of swimmers, but to those who have tried both, the pleasures of fresh-water swimming do not approach the pleasure to be obtained in the sea. Therefore, during these months, when even the most tender can no longer make the weather an excuse for not swimming in the open, a word or two of advice may be of use.

The most enjoyable time for a plunge is undoubtedly before breakfast, and many swimmers who are fortunate enough to live in one of the coast towns would as soon think of missing their breakfast as their morning dip. The delightful reaction experienced after a plunge—the glow of health and the feeling of rejuvenation—is not soon forgotten, and in many cases imparts vigour which may be felt far into the day.

Warnings.

If after being in the water for some time no reaction is felt, it may be safely taken as proof positive that the bather has remained in long enough, or else that he is not in a healthy condition. If the morning be chilly the bather will find that by taking a warm drink and a slice of bread-and-butter before entering the water he will overcome that shivering which most early bathers feel after having entered the water on an empty stomach.

Those to whom an early morning swim offers no inducement will be wise to wait until two full hours after breakfast. Never enter the water with the body in a state of perspiration.

Many fatal results

have taken place by so doing. To overcome this difficulty, strip, wipe the body down; cool for a few minutes, and then enter.

I feel sure fifty per cent. of the drowning accidents could be prevented. Before starting from the shore always inquire which way the tide is running. In the event of the tide coming in, you are quite safe in going out against it until you feel you have had a good swim, or are tiring, as the return journey can be easily made, having the help of the tide under you.

On the other hand, should the tide be going out, here lies

the death-trap,

the reason for this same being a very simple one. The swimmer with the tide receding makes great progress, and in a very short space of time is a long way off the shore, with the result that on attempting the return journey he finds the task against the tide very hard. Progress is thus very slow. The swimmer who is fast tiring becomes excited and loses his nerve, with the result that next day one reads of another valuable life lost, although perhaps the victim may have been a powerful swimmer.

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE, is the principal character in one of the complete stories contained in **"CHUCKLES,"** 14.

Danger of the Tide.

The real cause of the disaster was the tide, which tempted the swimmer onward beyond his distance. However, should the reader ever find himself in such an unfortunate position, he should remember to keep cool, not to become flurried, to pull steadily towards the shore, and if possible to try to attract the attention of those on shore by waving the arm occasionally.

Do not shout out

unless you are sure of being heard, because by so doing you will decrease your remaining strength, which you can ill afford to lose.

Cramp is the dreaded bane of the swimmer, and often a cause of disaster to those most skilled in the art; but if the thought of it is always kept at the back of the mind, it is less likely to take one by surprise, and by keeping one's head at the critical moment disaster may almost invariably be averted. Should it overcome you,

try to lie on your back,

turn the toes inward towards front of leg, and move backward and forward from the ankle. Cramp is often caused by the cold water and the overdoing one's first swim in the sea, causing contractions of the muscles.

If you are desirous of attempting long-distance swimming, it is always advisable—absolutely necessary, in fact—to train systematically for it. Without going into details here, the first essentials are regular and healthy habits. Late hours and continuous use of stimulants and tobacco will only serve to accentuate any weak points in the constitution, and it is obvious that if such indulgences be avoided the opposite effect will be obtained.

Long-Distance Swims.

Two most important factors are very necessary to remember: "Go easy" and "Go steady." It is the pace that kills, and if we take the trouble to read up accounts of all who have excelled in long-distance swims, we will find they all employed slow, easy strokes, and took their time, husbanding their strength until towards the end, or for such time as it was needed. Before starting off on a long distance, it is always advisable

to be well rubbed

all over the body with porpoise-oil; this helps to retain the heat of the body and to prevent friction.

My favourite stroke is the left over-arm, which, for a moderate pace, cannot be beaten. The principal driving power is got from the under-leg drive, which is known as

the scissor kick.

In this the knee is bent and kicked forward slightly past scissor kick; the knee is bent and kicked forward slightly past the under-leg and back again. The under-arm is shot forward, palm upwards, until it is stretched full length forward, then it is reversed, until it is brought in line with the body with a downward drive. The over-arm should never reach further than in a line with the face.

In other words keep the body on an even keel by keeping the head well down, and by so doing bringing the legs well up to the surface of the water. I do not advise sprinters to go in for long-distance swimming. This has been the cause of extraordinary loss of form of several well-known English champions.

My final advice

to those who cannot swim is "Learn," and you will never regret it. Besides being a useful sport, it is a healthy one, and can be enjoyed up to quite an old age.

OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL.



READ THIS FIRST.

Jem Stanton, a clever criminal, is sentenced to a long term of imprisonment on the strength of the evidence given against him by Paul Satorys, formerly a nobleman in the State of Istan. Stanton is the exact double of Satorys, and, escaping from prison, meets and strikes down his enemy. He exchanges clothes, and leaves Satorys lying in convict's garb, to be found by the warders. Stanton is aware that Satorys is the rightful heir to the throne of Istan, and determines to impersonate him, and make a bid for the throne himself. So exact is his impersonation, that even Satorys' fiancée, Grace Lang, is deceived. She urges him to push his claim to the throne, which he decides to do. His plans prosper, and one evening he sets sail for Istan in the yacht Bella, in company with Duvigny, Satorys' most trusted adviser, and Grace. In the meantime Satorys has recovered and proved his real identity, and is in chase of the impostor. Grace Lang also discovers the deception, but is helpless. When Satorys lands in Istan he finds that Stanton has established himself firmly upon the throne, and that Grace is a prisoner within the palace. In company with a loyal old sailor named Peter Mardyke, Satorys creeps into the palace grounds one night with the intention of catching a glimpse of the girl he loves.

They are discovered and captured, however, and Stanton tells Grace that unless she promises to marry him he will kill Satorys and his companion. A friendly priest advises Grace to fall in with Stanton's demands, and gives her a powder to take immediately after the ceremony. She is married, and takes the powder, which brings on a state of coma, so that to all appearances she is dead. The priest, Lara, summons an escort, and takes Grace in a carriage to his temple. But on the way they are attacked by a tribe of natives, who, maddened at the tyrannical acts of the new Government, massacre the priests and carry off Grace. In their camp, however, she regains consciousness, and steps out of the carriage. The natives regard her as a goddess, bowing to the ground at her feet. Meanwhile, Satorys and his companions succeed in escaping, and without any definite idea as to where they are going, set out across country.

Suddenly, hearing groans, Paul darts into the bushes, to find that Lara, the priest, is fast dying. He is muttering incoherently, but Paul is able to understand that Grace is dead. Lara dies, and is buried, and the companions once more set out across the wilderness. They are attacked, and captured by natives, however, who take them before their queen, who goes by the name of Nada. Nada, who is none other than Grace Lang, tells her followers Satorys is a great man in a great country, and must live and be respected. Satorys is unaware of her identity, and is puzzled how she knows he is a king. He is at supper, when a messenger comes to conduct him before the queen.

(Now go on with the story.)

Brought Before Nada.

Satorys laid his unlit cigar on the table, and, with a sign to Duvigny that all was well, he accompanied the messenger, marvelling as he went at what he saw, the world in miniature which this wonderful temple-palace proved to be, long, echoing

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corridors with vaulted roofs, weird statues on every hand, lofty rooms right and left, glimpses of gardens where the night wind caressed the flowers and scattered their magic perfume.

"The queen will see you, sir, in the Secret Temple," said the counsellor, as he led Satorys through a maze of windings into a magnificent fane. There, standing a little apart from her women attendants, Satorys saw Nada. She looked even more like a fair and entrancing vision than before, and Satorys bowed humbly before her, not daring to approach the woman to whom he owed his life.

During the interval he had been able to exchange his rags for clothes, which, with the other attentions he had received, restored him to his former appearance.

Nada leaned her elbow on the edge of a marble basin, where a crystal fountain tinkled.

"I sent for you, sir," she said, in a low voice, "to hear from your own lips in what way I might be of service to you." She strove to give to her manner an air of haughty detachment. "My power is great," she went on. "I wish to help the right, and I know something of your story, for we who abide in the high places of the world learn much which is screened from others."

"Madam, how do you know this of me?"

The voice was very tender, and rather sad.

"Is it not enough that I do know. You told me yourself that you were a fugitive, that the place which was yours by right had been taken by another; and it seems to me that this other who has supplanted you is a worthless man."

Her voice was disguised, and it only called forth a faint echo in the heart of Satorys.

"Madam," he said, "it is the truth. I am here, a man who owes his very life to you. Maybe I have but little to live for, but I accept your offer, though I would rather it should be that you needed my services. They would be gladly given on my faith as a man."

Nada shook her head.

"I do not need your services, sir," she said, as she drew herself up, afraid lest even now she had gone too far, and she was the wife of another.

"We will speak of this again, sir. If it seems well to my counsellors, the injustice of which you are a victim shall be set right, for my armies are invincible, and armies are doubly that when they fight for the truth. Return to your friends, sir. You shall have a message from me at the dawn."

Again did Satorys bow low. He was carried outside himself; taken, as it were, into other worlds remote indeed from the stress of the passing day.

As he drew back he caught sight once more of the girl. She was gliding, away a wistful, shadowy figure, gracious as the spring, disappearing into the scented dusk, past flower-decked altars, to fade into the twilight beyond and be seen no more.

A Welcome Ally.

Satorys was roused from his reverie by a touch on the arm. "You would like to rejoin your friends, sir," said the man who had conducted him to the temple.

Satorys nodded, and followed the other back the way they had come, to find in his absence Peter and Anton Duvigny had been waiting in some anxiety. Satorys sat down, and

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stretched his legs. He was about to speak, principally to try and get rid of the feeling that what he had just seen was only a dream, but Peter was before him.

"I was just saying, sir, that we ought to come along and look after you, for there's many a man has lost his head—I mean really lost it, by a neck—but Mr. Anton here was against the plan, and then these black chaps were so amiable, and kept on filling up our glasses with ginger-beer, or whatever the stuff is, and I didn't want to offend them by any means."

"They are our friends, Peter," said Satorys.

"They may be all that, sir, and a bit over; but I wish they weren't so black that one wants to strike a light so as to see. But just tell us, sir, what the good lady in the white dress had to say to you?"

"Nada is going to help us, Peter!"

"Oh, that's her name, is it?" said the sailor contentedly. "Well, she seems a good sort, given me a nice new suit of clothes, and she spoke up well just now, and not a second too soon, for I thought we were going to be done in. How is she going to assist you, Mr. Satorys?"

Satorys began to explain, and Peter jumped up and executed a dance.

Anton Duvigny was leaning forward talking earnestly to his leader, and the old sailor did a double shuffle, and suddenly made a dash to the other end of the vast room where the musicians were playing.

"Hi, you lubber!" he cried. "Give us your fiddle, and I'll show you how we do it in Portsmouth town when there's good news!"

Before the astonished musician could prevent the act Peter had seized the violin from his hand, and had started playing, accompanying the music with words.

Satorys looked up. He was about to call his follower to order but refrained. The natives were gazing in wonderment at the strange figure cut by Peter. Now they began to applaud as Peter sang, indulged in a few curious steps, and drew his bow across the strings.

"'Twas Friday night when we set sail,
And our ship not far from land;
When lo, I espied a fair, pretty maid,
With a comb and a glass in her hand."

"He's mad!" said Satorys.

"No, I am not mad, sir!" said Peter promptly. "It's only my natural good temper asserting itself, and you can't be surprised, for here have we been expecting to be boiled or fried or something just as bad by these black chaps, and now we find them all nice and friendly like, and ready to play the game. I'm going to give them another dance and song. You see how they like it. If I was you, gentlemen, I would just see what you could do as well. It would show 'em how much obliged you are for their kindness. The dinner has been very good. I have had a nice shave, and now I feel comfortable and all ready for anything."

Satorys gave a laugh, and, rising, walked away with Anton discussing plans. Peter, for his part, seemed well satisfied to leave things as they were. The blacks crowded round him, clapping their hands while the sailor gave a hornpipe, his bronzed, good-tempered face wreathed in a broad smile, and his hat on the back of his head.

It was late before Peter turned up in the special and well-appointed quarters, where he found Satorys and Anton Duvigny engaged in deep colloquy with a man who was evidently one of the highest in the councils of Nada, the queen.

The sailor stood on the threshold of the apartment as if afraid to enter. He still carried the fiddle he had borrowed from the musician hours before. Satorys made him a sign to approach.

"It is all right, Peter," he said. "We have no secrets from you. This gentleman, Raya, the commander of the troops, want to make us all generals before we set out for Iston. What do you say?"

Before Peter could reply Raya advanced towards him, a smile on his face, the light from the hanging-lamps flashing on his splendid uniform.

"Yes," he said excitedly. "It is the will of Nada, the queen. You are the brave sailor. She spoke to me of you, and it is her wish that you are a general like your gallant friends!"

Peter shook his head as he stood facing the speaker, fiddle in one hand, the bow in the other.

"Now, that's very nice and kind of you, sir, but this child is no general, and never intends to be one, for he doesn't like caviare, and has always been quite ready to leave that sort of thing to Lord Kitchener, and the other gents who

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are in the line of business, as you might say. I may be a sailor, but I am not brave, and I am not going to have hard things said against me at my time of life, not for any one. If Mr. Satorys and Mr. Anton choose to be generals, that is their look-out, but as for me, I am not having any; for the newspapers are that hard if a general makes a mistake. Give me a hunk of bread, a pickled onion, and a glass of beer, and I wouldn't ask for any more, and as my old grandmother used to say to me—"

"Shut up, you fool!" said Satorys, with a laugh.

Peter turned upon him gravely, while Raya looked simply dumbfounded.

"She never said that to me, sir, I can tell you. My grandmother was a very remarkable woman, and knew more about most things than any Prime Minister. Not that that amounts to much, for a more hignorant set than them politicians one could not find; no, not if one looked for a month of Sundays, and chose Leap Year to do it in."

"He is amazing!" said Raya, in a courtly tone, as he twirled his long moustaches and gazed with interest at the sailor. "Nada told me that any wish you might express was to be granted, and that two main divisions of her army should advance on Istan to drive the hated tyrant to the sea; but, of course, it is for you to express your wish, and if this gentleman does not choose to take command—"

"Which he does not," said Peter. "I am very much obliged to the lady, and I am sure she will understand. I am going to stand by Mr. Satorys, and that will be enough for me. If we can do in that chap in the gold hat down at Istan, and make him see stars and anything else in the same department, I am quite satisfied, and sha'n't ask for anything more but to nip off home, and go to bed for a week, for I am as sleepy as they are made!"

Raya laughed till his sword rattled on the polished floor, and Peter surveyed him sourly.

"So would you be sleepy, old toff, if you had been through what we have. You try it, governor, that's all I can say!"

Raya threw his head back and laughed again, and Satorys and Anton followed suit. The native commander was beginning to appreciate the idiosyncrasies of the sailor.

"That's right," said Peter, "don't you gentlemen mind me. It will all come straight in the wash," he went on. "My old grandmother used to say that. Laugh and get fat, and you have got a bit of ombongpom as it is, not as I mind if a chap is a good sort, for you can't have too much of a decent thing. But as I say, you try what it's like to think that you are going to be roasted and served up as mince with brown sauce, and then discover everything is as pleasant as a fine Sunday down at Margate. It's the relaxation makes you sleepy, gentlemen, you may take it from me as one who knows—all in, run or not, and take care of the coupon, and I am going to bed!"

Peter swung round, marched up to a couch, threw himself down on it, cocking up his feet on the arm, and then began to hum another song. The violin gave forth a sound, and the words of "A Life on the Ocean Wave," floated through the room.

Raya touched his forehead significantly.

"He is sleepy, but he is also like that?" said the commander.

"Not a bit of it," said Satorys, in an amused way.

Raya saluted, and Satorys caught his hand and shook it warmly.

"Till the morning," said Raya.

He bowed low and withdrew, the guard at the entrance coming to the present as their chief marched away into the night.

Satorys went over to Peter.

"He's in the right of it—fast as a church," said Anton.

Peter snored, but as Satorys laid his hand on the sleeper's arm there was a convulsion. The sailor started up.

"I say, Peter," said Satorys, "that gentleman thinks you haven't got all your change. What about it?"

Peter sat up and rubbed his nose.

"He's a liar!" he said. "I have, down to the last farthing. And now I am going to sleep. You can call me what you like—call me Early, or any other hard name, but I tell you I am going to sleep, and the King of England and the Emperor of Russia, or even Mrs. Pankhurst, what one reads about, shouldn't stop me."

"It's the best thing you can do, Peter," said Satorys.

There was another snore. The sailor was deep in slumber, his fiddle still grasped in his hand.

Satorys and Anton talked till much later. To both the turn in affairs seemed too good to be true. Satorys drove away thoughts which saddened him. He saw possibilities of his coming triumph, he as the leader of myriads of brave fighting men, the followers of this mysterious Nada; and he felt that Fate was being kind at last.



There, standing a little apart from her servants, Satorys saw Nada. She looked even more like a fair and entrancing vision than before, and Satorys bowed humbly before her, not daring to approach the woman to whom he owed his life. (See page 23.)

Peter and the Plan of Campaign.

Peter was not a man who stickled about dignity. He woke first the following morning, and roused his two friends. Satorys received him good-humouredly, for he liked the cheery sailor, and Peter's sallies amused him. The sailor was perched on the back of a chair as servants hurried into the ante-chamber with breakfast.

"The gentlemen are having their baths," said Peter, "so you can put down the sausages and coffee."

Satorys emerged from the inner room, a cigarette between his lips, and he was joined a moment later by Anton. The servants set down the dishes and withdrew.

"Well, Peter, any fresh sallies this morning?" said Satorys.

The sailor looked hurt.

"I broke it off many years since, sir."

"Broke what off, Peter?"

"The little affair with Sally, sir; the lady you was asking me about. It was just as well. She never really appreciated the finer side of my character, and she deserved her fate. She married the grocer at the corner."

"Oh, sit down and have some breakfast, Peter!"

"Mean it, sir?"

"Mean it? Of course I mean it!"

"What, an old salt like me! Remember we aren't grubbing it in the wilds now, sir, with half a diseased thing what looks like a time-expired mangold wurzel same as old Lloyd George likes. You are getting back to what you used to be, sir; you and Mr. Anton over there."

Satorys shrugged his shoulders. Anton was cutting into a big fish which looked like a salmon. Peter eyed the delicacy.

"And I thought it was sausages, sir, though it should be close time for them now." The sailor slipped off his perch on the arm of his chair, set down his violin, and subsided into a seat facing Satorys. "My, but this is a bit of all right, and no mistake, gentlemen—if I may call you that?"

"Oh, you may!" said Satorys, with a laugh.

"Thank you kindly, sir. Yes, Mr. Anton, I don't mind if I do have a slice of the kipper, or whatever it is. Ah, but there has been some dirty work, gentlemen; enough to turn the milk and the worm, and us getting half starved. Wonder to me is that we didn't catch the catarrh same as old Gaily the Troubadour as he was marching home from the

war; and how he managed to sing all the way from Palestine always beats me, same as it would Banagher. But there, it's none of my business, as the old chap said when he saw a fellow drowning in the Serpentine. Yes, sir, another cup of coffee wouldn't kill me if I go careful. Always puzzles me, it does, how people who have plenty to eat and drink can grumble. Grouse they do, and yet they have grouse for dinner."

"So you won't be a general, Peter?" said Anton.

"Not me, sir! I've got a comfortable suit of clothes here, and I am not going to change them for a uniform. These may be hand-me-downs, but the chap who gave them to me last night was very nice about it, and let me take my pick. They are easy, and that's what I like—room for a revolver and a bit of 'bacca in the pockets, and nobody can want more. Talking of 'bacca, may I light my pipe, sir?"

"Do," said Satorys.

"And now, sir," the sailor went on, as he blew out a cloud of smoke, "this brings me to what I want, as the man said when the cab stopped at the inn. Why not leave well alone, sir?"

"Leave well alone? What do you mean?"

"Well, here we are, sir, all safe and sound, come to a nice anchorage, plenty of grub, and all found, and a bath this morning I had in which you could swim. What more could anybody want?"

Satorys lit a cigarette and glanced at the door. He was expecting a message from Raya at any moment. The morning sun flooded the apartment, and through the open window could be seen a marvellous panorama of forest-land.

"I want a good bit more, Peter."

The sailor placed his elbows on the table, and the cutty pipe he had managed to keep through all the many vicissitudes the trio had gone through was twisted into the corner of his mouth.

"That's where you are wrong, sir; you take it from me. I am old. I have lived a lot more years, eaten mouldy biscuits, as is considered good enough for sailors, before you was born, sir, asking your pardon for naming the circumstance, which may have dodged your notice. And what I do say is this: If you have got what you want, why trouble? It's worrying what kills folk. Here we are as safe as houses, and no bill to pay, and a very kind landlady, as you might call her. Leave it at that, and don't talk about

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cramping off into the wilds any more. You are bound to get sore feet. You say you want to out that scoundrel down at Istan. What's the good? Live and let live. Don't go and do a thing in cold mud, sir, as you will be sorry for afterwards."

"I am not going to be sorry for it," said Satorys quietly.

"That's just what you can't tell, sir."

"You think we had better hold our hands?"

"I don't want to hold anybody's hand, sir. Your mistake. I beg my pardon. I only want you to see how well off we are."

Satorys was amused by the sailor's chatter, but nothing more. He rose to welcome Raya, who entered the room, accompanied by several members of his staff, and it amazed Satorys to see how well-equipped the army was—the army which was to be placed at his disposal by the mysterious queen of whom till then he had never heard.

There were many arrangements to be made, and Raya, the tall and dignified commander, respectfully deferred to Satorys, whom he looked upon now as his chief.

Satorys saw nothing more of Nada that day. At the hour of twelve he stood with Anton Duvigny to review the troops, which swung past him, a well-armed force of thousands, their marching perfect, their accoutrements flashing in the brilliant sunlight, the officers, with their swords lowered to the salute, as they swung by the grassy hillock where Satorys stood.

Satorys knew now from Raya of how the natives far in the interior, weary of the tyranny of the Government, which had presumed to dictate to them, had formed themselves into a separate State until such time as the rightful king should come back to his own, and the heart of the man who was acknowledged leader beat high as he looked at the cohorts sweeping proudly past him, rendering him obeisance as they advanced.

Peter did not show. The sailor seemed to have turned sulky. But Satorys was ready to give his faithful follower every latitude, and he set down the sailor's absence to his tactful sense of what was right and proper.

Not till the evening, when dinner was served, did Peter turn up. Then he was moody and silent. Satorys was thinking of the splendid sight he had witnessed during the day—the regiments of picked warriors deploying past him, a force which looked invincible in its might.

"Sit down and have some food, Peter," said Satorys.

"No, sir. That sort of thing may have been all very well when we were all on our lonesome, but it won't do now. You are very kind to suggest it, but these gentlemen would not understand it. I had my bit of victuals before you got back. Oh, I saw what was up from the windows, and I know that to-morrow you are going on with your preparations."

The sailor leaned over his master and filled his glass. Satorys did not resist. Since they had returned to something resembling civilisation he had come to appreciate the worth of the sailor more and more, and he had discovered that it was always best to let Peter have his way.

It was much later that same night, and Satorys was discussing plans with the captains of the host which was to sweep down upon Istan. Peter was standing near the man he served.

Satorys turned to the sailor.

"Let's hear your views, Peter," he said.

"I haven't got any," said Peter. "All I say is, if you must go to Istan City and upset things, don't break any more of the furniture than you can help, and get it over as quick as you can."

"Excellent advice, friend Peter," said Satorys with a laugh.

The sailor moved to the terrace.

"He is one of the best," Satorys went on as he turned to Raya, who was laughing at the sailor's words.

"He is as a child," said the commander, showing his white teeth. "He is simple; he talks like someone who is very young."

"Humph! Yes, maybe," said Satorys. "But I can assure you, Raya, that he does not fight like a child. He pretends to dislike tight corners; but just put him in one, and you will see the sight of your life. He can fight like a champion."

Satorys went back to the study of the map which was on the table in front of him. He was learning more and more of the country every hour.

Peter glanced back at the group seated round the table with bent heads, their minds intent now on the route which was to be taken when, on the morrow, the troops moved away from the mountain city and started for the long and toilsome march for the plains and the coast.

"Ah, it's all very well," muttered the sailor, with a grim shake of the head, "but you won't find it all so easy as you seem to think."

Peter had had already some experience of the valour of

the natives, but there lingered still in his brain, none the less, a sort of pitying contempt for colour, and he was wishing that Satorys had not to rely on black aid to recover his place in the world. He had occasion in the days which were to dawn to find that there are plenty of black men who are "white men," just as the reverse holds good.

Peter moved out on to the wide terrace, and walked thoughtfully on, wrapped in his own reflections, which did not seem any too bright, to judge from the serious look on his face. He was suddenly brought to a stand by hearing a voice speaking to him, and it was some time ere he could locate the spot whence it came.

Then, as he gazed upwards, it was to see a white figure at a window high above his head.

"You are Peter the sailor, are you not?" came the question.

"I am Peter Mardyke, lady, for you are a lady with a beautiful voice like that; but it isn't fair to call me Peter the sailor, just as though there were only one of us. I have done my bit at sea, but Bill Collins was a better sailor than I ever was, and then we had Sam, and Tom Blake, who worked his passage and then got so fond of the life that nothing would ever induce him to do anything else. We mustn't forget about them."

There came a sad little laugh from the window.

Peter gazed upwards, his face working.

"If you are laughing at me, lady," he said, "I might tell you—"

"I am not," came in reply. "I know you are devoted to Paul Satorys, and I want you to promise me that you will do your utmost to protect him, and that you will say nothing to him as to this request."

Peter stood in the moonlight, and, removing his hat, began to scratch his head.

"Look after Mister Satorys and not say nothing to nobody—that's it, ma'am, if I take you?"

"Yes, that's it. May I rely on you?"

Peter replaced his hat.

"This 'ere's a rum go," he muttered; "but of course 'tain't none of my business, after all, and I mustn't say anything." He looked up at the window, and then glanced up and down the deserted terrace. "I am ready and willing to do any little thing like that, lady," he said in a louder voice; "but it may not be so easy as you seem to think, because Mister Satorys likes to have his own way, same as you or I do, and if anyone starts protecting him when he is busy, there is sure to be big trouble, and most likely a thick ear. But still, I am ready to do my best, and as for talking, well, I can assure you, lady, that I am not one to say much. Just 'Yes,' or 'No,' at dinner-time when I am asked whether I'll have another slice of beef or a second glass, and it is enough for me, and—"

Peter stopped suddenly—not because he was run down, or for the reason that there had been an interruption. He was simply conscious of the fact that his interlocutor had vanished, and that he was talking to the air.

He turned and walked back towards the room he had left.

"This 'ere's a rum go!" he mused. "And I am not to say anything! Well, if I am not, there's an end of it, and perhaps it is all a mistake."

He presented a curious figure as he drew up short in the moonlight and scratched his head once more.

There was tremendous enthusiasm on the following morning as the troops formed up in the big quadrangle opposite the Temple Palace. This vast city away in the interior of Istan was a mystery to Satorys, as also it was to Anton.

Mounted messengers were riding up to the gates of the building, and Satorys, standing by the side of Raya and other commanders of the army, looked every inch a king in his simple uniform and the short, workmanlike sword at his side.

A servant approached him and handed him a letter. Satorys opened it and read the few lines it contained:

"To the King.—This is to wish you good speed and happy fortune from
NADA, THE QUEEN."

Satorys slipped the letter into his pocket and gazed back at the pile of buildings behind him, the minarets of which flashed in the sun's rays. The next moment he was speaking to those who surrounded him.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this, if I mistake not, is to be a fight to the death. It is I who am the rightful king, and I purpose sending promises of peace if the usurper will yield; but we are prepared for all things, and we will carry our banner into Istan City and prove we are masters of the land."

There was a burst of cheering at the inspiring words.

(Another splendid, long instalment of this grand serial next Wednesday. Order in advance.)

NEXT WEDNESDAY—**"THE ST. JIM'S CARAVANNERS!"** A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

ST. JIM'S JINGLES.**No. 10.—PERCY MELLISH.**

A creature whom we all abhor
 With stealthy step comes creeping,
 And through the keyhole of the door
 His crafty eyes are peeping—
 Until a prefect passes by,
 And kicks him forth with relish;
 Subduing thus the sneak and spy
 Whose name, of course, is Mellish.

He slouches with an evil leer,
 And all his recreation
 Is spent in mean attempts to hear
 His schoolmates' conversation.
 To him the splendid summer sports
 Have neither charm nor moral;
 He shines in spreading false reports
 And causing chums to quarrel.

The ruthless Levison and he
 Are rascals of a feather—
 Ensconced in strictest privacy,
 They plot and plan together.
 And very few would ever guess
 With what vindictive keenness
 They hate the fellows who express
 Contempt for all their meanness.

At times, when many a precious plot
 Appears to be succeeding,
 The wretched schemers catch it hot,
 For mercy vainly pleading.
 But each Fourth-Former fain would smite,
 So both the cads are battered.
 And slink discreetly out of sight
 With features gore-bespattered.

Though Levison contrives to face
 The blows upon him showered,
 His crony proves, like all his race,
 A whining, cringing coward.
 And by the babel which arose
 From such a squirming victim,
 One would imagine that his foes
 Had boiled instead of licked him!

Within the Green Man's private-room
 This mighty man of valour
 Sits smoking; and his cheeks assume
 A strange and ghastly pallor.
 He struggles with his cigarettes,
 And scans a sporting paper,
 But, inwardly, he much regrets
 Each wretched midnight caper.

Three groans for Mellish, through whose ways
 Such scandals have arisen.
 No doubt the cad will end his days
 Within some friendly prison:
 Where he may muse on former times,
 Replete with so-called pleasure,
 And, pondering o'er his countless crimes,
 Repent of them at leisure.

Next Week:
ERIC KILDARE.

**"THE GEM" LIBRARY 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."

P. Duncan, Demerara, Woronora Road, Oatley, Illawarra Line, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in Scotland, age 14.

Miss D. McArthur, Swan Street, Semaphore, South Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in the British Isles, age 14-15.

Sidney Dent, 63, Peel Avenue, West Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

J. J. Khajurina, 34, Chogha Street, Fort, Bombay, India, wishes to correspond with English girl readers, age 16-20.

Miss Sadie Miller, Firebrace Street, South Horsham, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with boy readers living in the British Isles interested in football, age 18-21.

Arthur Brown, Fairmount, Carrington Street, Bexley, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with boy readers living in Cape of Good Hope, Borneo, Straits Settlement, Egypt, China, or Fiji, age 16-17.

R. H. Williamson, Piper off Lawton Streets, South Broken Hill, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in England or Australia, age 15-18.

Miss Myrtle Tucker, City Baths, Armstrong Street, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 15.

Miss Irene Knight, King Street, Solomontown, South Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, age 15-16.

Cyril A. Pigott, 30, Stuart Street, Malvern, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps.

J. Beal, c/o Burns, Phelp & Co., Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, wishes to correspond with English and Scotch girl readers, age 15-16.

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Miss M. Budge, 138, Nicholson Street, E. Brunswick, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in postcards.

H. F. Frost, Ryneham Road, Ryneham, Adelaide, South Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Birmingham, age 19-20.

Douglas Jarrold, c/o Messrs. Davies, Doery, & Co., 100, Flinders Lane, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 16.

Halim Helmy, Irrigation Service, Dessouk, Egypt, wishes to correspond with readers.

Miss M. Clayton, Bowden Street, Camp Hill, Castlemain, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in Canada or India, interested in postcards, age 17-18.

R. H. Judd, Queen's Road, Lower Hutt, Wellington, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 15-17.

F. McKay, 135, Heal Street, New Farm, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, age 18-19.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

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NEXT WEDNESDAY—"THE ST. JIM'S CARAVANNERS!" A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE

THIS WEEK'S CHAT



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 By Martin Clifford.

In our next splendid complete story of the chums of St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co. discover quite a new "wheeze" in the way of junior excursions. Great efforts are made to keep their plans secret, especially from their rivals of the New House, Figgins & Co. But the great Figgins is on the war-path, and is equally determined to unearth the secret. How he proceeds to achieve his object, and the stirring events that follow, makes the story of the adventures of

"THE ST. JIM'S CARAVANNERS!"

the most amusing and entertaining reading.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"Kitty" (New Cross).—Many thanks for your letter. Best of luck to your League!

"Tall Boy."—I should advise you to take plenty of exercise, especially walking. If this does not increase your height, nothing will!

"Val."—More will be heard of Cousin Ethel in due course.

Harry Todd.—I am afraid were I to do as you suggest a good many of my readers would be offended.

John Looner (Sydney).—St. Jim's is situated in Sussex. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is about 14½ years of age.

GREAT NEWS.

A Tom Merry 3d. Book at Last.

I have a bit of real good news for my readers this week—a "Tom Merry" 3d. book is actually coming at last! I promised recently in these columns to use all my influence with Mr. Martin Clifford to persuade him to write another complete 3d. book dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co., on one condition only. This was that my chums could give me a definite assurance that the immense extra efforts which would be required on the part of this brilliant and already overworked author to produce such a book, would be suitably rewarded by a record reception. Well, I am glad to say that I was quickly convinced on this point. From every part of England came a perfect deluge of letters containing such promises and protestations that only one course of action was open to me. Mr. Clifford was quickly communicated with, and, to cut a long story short, my earnest and cogent appeals were ultimately successful in persuading him to forgo his holiday and set to work on his big task right away. So the thing is done, and you are to have the Tom Merry 3d. book you have all wished for so long. But I must utter one warning: you have proved to me that the sale of this book, which will be published at the very earliest possible moment—in fact, in a week or two—will beat all records. I am afraid that one result of this will be that the demand will be greater than the supply. Owing to the great pressure of work which our printing machines are subjected to just now, I am informed that only a limited number of this book can be printed for me. This number will amount to a great many thousand copies, of course, but I am very much afraid that it will be some thousands short of the number that will be ordered. This means, of course, that there is only one course open to my chums who want to be absolutely certain of getting their copies of this eagerly-awaited book, and that is to order their copies in advance. This is a really important warning, and

I think that those who neglect it have a very good chance of getting left. It is, after all, quite a simple matter to tell your newsagent, directly you see the title of the book announced, to order you a copy at the earliest possible moment. He will be very pleased to oblige you.

JACK ASHORE AND AFLOAT.

Sidelights on the Life of our Merchant Seamen.

THE "SLOP CHEST."

Unless Jack has been thrifty ashore, he will need to replenish his wardrobe, especially if the ship is running into cold latitudes south of the Cape or round by Magellan Straits. It is then that he must seek the steward, and tell him that he is compelled to draw upon the skipper's "slop-chest." This, in reality, is a stock of clothing which the captain keeps for the benefit of himself and his crew—for his own advantage, in that it is often his own speculation, and he is therefore able to command his own prices; for his crew's advantage, because there is no other source whence they can obtain woollen clothing to keep off the cold, or oilskins to shield them from the stinging lash of the rain or the hail. Thus the few pounds which Jack may have accumulated by the time he is home again are depleted on this head, let alone what he may have drawn in foreign ports for his pleasure.

There is the matter of tobacco, too; but in regard to this the sailor in the "deep-water" ship—and, of course, in all classes of craft—is at an advantage, for he gets all his duty free, and it will very likely not cost him more than 1s. 8d. a pound. Still, in a long voyage, Jack contrives to draw a good many plugs of "hard" from the skipper, and the steward does not fail to tally it off against his pay-day.

During the hundred or more days which may pass on the trip there is little to amuse the fo'c's'le, so that it is not to be wondered at that at cribbage or poker the men get into the way of wagering plugs of tobacco upon their own or their friends' skill. In fact, I have known a man amass as much as forty pounds' weight of tobacco in the course of a voyage out and home. Sometimes the gambling is in boxes of matches.

HARDSHIPS OF THE DEEP.

The British Board of Trade has striven to improve the food of the ordinary seaman of late years, and one has only to point to the daily ration of lime-juice in the tropics as one of the measures taken to keep Jack afloat in good health. But the man who sails in deep-sea ships is far less fortunate in respect of diet than the men who serve on cross-Atlantic passages or in the boats plying across the North Sea. It happens not so very seldom that the men in the fo'c's'le, battling aloft in the icy gales Far South, or tired after fruitless "dry pulls," may come down to find the galley washed out by a heavy sea, and nothing but cold tack to be had.

The name given to New Brunswick seamen is not quite extinct yet; they are still known as "Herringbacks," because they are popularly supposed to feed on those fish till the bones stick out of their spines.

Still, it is curious to think that in these days, when Government authorities legislate to improve the dietary of sailors, those old sea-dogs of the 16th and 17th centuries won their way round the world on indifferent food, and suffering hardships which would daunt the mariner of to-day.

(Another Splendid Article

Next Wednesday.)

The Editor

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE

INDIGNANTLY DENIED.

Good Man (sadly): "Ah, my son, you have been to the circus! It pains me greatly to think that one so young should have crossed the threshold of iniquity."

Bad Bobby: "But, father, I didn't cross no threshold. I crawled in under the tent!"—Sent in by D. I. Hirst, Yorks.

DIDN'T TAKE THE HINT.

Robbie met a neighbour, who was smoking some fine, fragrant tobacco sent by his son in America. He took out his pipe ostentatiously.

"Ha'e ye a match, Sandy?" he queried.

The match was forthcoming, but nothing more.

"A do believe," said Robbie, "A ha'e left ma tobacco at hame!"

"Then," said Sandy, after a silence, "ye might gi'e me back ma match."—Sent in by Joe Francey, Ireland.

FATHER'S CONTRIBUTION.

There had been a missionary sermon and collection at a certain church, and a little girl, who had accompanied her father to the service, seemed perplexed and meditative. When she reached home she asked her mother whether the natives of Africa of whom they had heard wore any clothes.

"No," replied her mother, "they don't."

"Then," said the observant child, "what was the use of the button that father put in the plate?"—Sent in by A. B. Hodges, Surrey.

DOT-ING.

It was a very hot day, and the master was vainly endeavouring to inculcate his attentive boys with the rudiments of geometry.

"With the one point as centre," he began, placing one leg of the compasses on that point. Then he turned to the boys to make some remark, inadvertently letting the compasses slip.

Immediately the black sheep of the flock raised his hand and waved it wildly.

"Yes, Johnson?" asked the master.

"Please, sir," came the prompt reply, "you're off your dot!"—Sent in by Laurence Pollard, Yorkshire.

HE HURRIED.

A shy young man had been calling on the sweetest girl in the world for many moons, but, being bashful, his suit progressed slowly. Finally she decided it was up to her to start something, so the next time he called she said:

"I'll give you a kiss for that rose."

He blushed, and the exchange was made. Then, taking his hat, he started to leave.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"To the florist for more roses," he replied.—Sent in by S. Sietta, London, E.

EDUCATION.

Mother: "Well, Freddie, did you learn anything new at school to-day?"

Freddie: "Yes, ma."

Mother: "What was it, my boy?"

Freddie: "I got on to a sure way of getting out for an hour by snuffing red ink up my nose."—Sent in by S. J. Blackburn, Liverpool.

DIPLOMATIC MOTHER.

The little lad sat at the end of the table. For some considerable time his gaze was fixed on his father's face.

"Papa," he at last broke out, "what makes your nose so dreadfully red?"

"The east wind, of course," said his father. "Pass me that jug of beer, and don't talk so much!"

Then from the other end of the table the boy's mother said sweetly:

"Yes, Tommy, pass your father the east wind, and be careful not to spill any on the tablecloth."—Sent in by H. Alvin, Hull.

AN AMUSING INCIDENT.

A diverting incident happened during one of the matches played by the Australians in 1890. Bannerman was batting, and all the English fielders, headed by W. G. Grace, drew in painfully close to the Australian, to, if at all possible, catch him "on the hop."

The game was in a very critical condition, and the spectators watched its progress in remarkable silence. Suddenly a small voice piped from the crowd to Bannerman:

"Look out yer don't got yer pocket picked, Alec!"

The spectators roared.—Sent in by Victor Cansfield, Bradford.

GUILTY!

Mrs. Clarke came running into her husband's office.

"Oh, Harry," she cried, as she gasped for breath, "I've dropped my diamond ring off my finger, and I can't find it anywhere!"

"It's all right, my dear!" replied the husband. "I came across it in my trousers-pocket this morning."—Sent in by E. Winstanley, Liverpool.

PLENTY OF TIME.

A long-haired man, walking along the street, met a little boy, who asked him the time.

"Ten minutes to nine," said the man.

"Well," said the boy, "at nine o'clock get your hair cut." And he took to his heels and run, the aggrieved one after him.

Turning the corner, the man ran into a policeman, nearly knocking him over.

"What's up?" asked the man in blue.

"You see that young urchin running along there?" the man, very much out of breath, said. "He asked me the time, and I told him 'Ten minutes to nine,' and he said, 'At nine o'clock get your hair cut.'"

"Well," said the policeman, glancing at his watch, "what are you running for? You've got eight minutes yet!"—Sent in by F. Dennis, Canning Town, E.

NOT QUITE SURE.

Teacher: "Now, Jinks, how many sexes are there, and what are they called?"

Jinks (much puzzled at the word sex): "Three, sir, I think—Sussex, Essex, and insects. But perhaps Smith could think of some more."—Sent in by F. Weaver, Worcestershire.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED.

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the sender will receive a Money Prize.

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