

PASSING IT ON!

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



THE TERRIBLE THREE IN THE TOILS!

(A Dramatic Scene in the Grand Long Complete Story in this issue.)



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to — — — — —
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 — LIBRARY — — POPULAR — — — 1/2° — —
 EVERY MONDAY EVERY FRIDAY EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday :

"THE INTRUDER!"

By Martin Clifford.

When two or three chums have shared a study for a long time, and have kept it to themselves, they are apt to resent very strongly having another fellow shoved in upon them. The Terrible Three are badly put out when told by Mr. Railton that a new boy, one Parker, is to share No. 10 with them. To add to the grievance, they are asked to meet Parker at the station; and such a request, coming from their Housemaster is, of course, the equivalent of a command. Nevertheless, Manners does not go. Of all the three he is the most badly disgruntled. By failing to go with Tom Merry and Lowther, however, he does not miss a very lively scrap with the Grammarians, for he follows his chums to Rylcombe, and sees the new fellow put through it by Gordon Gay & Co. There are features of mystery about this fellow Parker, and before long the Terrible Three come to find out this. But Mellish finds out something first, and, for purposes of his own, taxes the new-comer with being at St. Jim's under false pretences. What happened after that the story will tell; but it may be said here that, in spite of the mystery surrounding him, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther decide that, after all, there are many worse fellows than

"THE INTRUDER!"

TO MY READERS.

Many thanks to all those who sent me kindly Christmas and New Year greetings. Christmas-cards were not so much in evidence generally in 1916 as in the years before it; but piles of them reached me, and, in spite of war-time economy, they were welcome.

I have been giving the grumblers a fair show lately—rather more than a fair show, say some of my loyal readers, whose opinion is that the only proper place for most of these epistles is the w.p.b. I agree. That, in point of fact, is where most of them have gone. But in future more will go there. Some of them have amused me, some have annoyed me; none, perhaps, were really worth printing.

Each such letter printed brings me scores of indignant replies from loyal readers, whose dearest wish it seems to be to come across the writers and do unto them as the law does not allow. All this good indignation is largely wasted on such people as the writers of anonymous screeds. I cannot always be sure what will make my readers angry, but I think a safe rule will be to refrain from giving the publicity of print to anything that gets my wool off. What say you, the vast majority of loyal and contented readers?

I do not in the least mean that I want criticism stopped. That is often useful, and, when civil in tone, always welcome.

Your Editor

OUR NOTICE COLUMN.

PAY HEED TO THESE RULES.

1. In future, the only notices which will be accepted free of charge are those from soldier, sailor, and Colonial readers.
- 2.—All notices must be written—one word in each space—on the form below, and if more than 24 words are needed, another form must be obtained. But we will accept one form from the GEM and one from the MAGNET, or the forms from back numbers may be used.
- 3.—The charge is 3d. for any notice not exceeding 24 words. If exceeding 24 words, 6d. The fee must be paid by penny stamps pinned—not stuck—in the space provided.
- 4.—The Editor reserves to himself the right to refuse any notice sent in, and he will not accept in any case notices of articles to be

5. Insertion at any specific date will not be guaranteed, and no notice can be expected to appear in less than five weeks from its receipt, while it may have to be held back much longer. Nor will the Editor undertake to insert any notice in the exact form received. Space is precious, and readers should do their utmost to keep notices as short as possible. The argument that more than 3d. has been paid will not be heeded.
- 6.—Grunbling letters will go into the wastepaper-basket without being replied to.
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PASSING IT ON!

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



The School House fellows were down, and Figgins & Co. kept them down. (See Chapter 12.)

CHAPTER 1. War Economy.

TEA ready?" Jack Blake asked the question as he came into Study No. 6. He came in ruddy and hungry from footer practice; and Herries and Digby, who followed him, were equally ruddy and equally hungry.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, their noble study-mate, was in No. 6; and, as D'Arcy had not been down to practice, the

three juniors naturally expected that he would have tea ready when they came in.

But there was no sign of tea in the study.

Arthur Augustus was busy, but he was not getting tea. He was leaning over the table, with a brush in his hand, and a sheet of cardboard before him—with ink-stains on his slim fingers, and a spot on his nose. He was painting large letters upon the cardboard—somewhat irregularly, as Arthur Augustus did not happen to possess any natural gifts as a sign-painter.

Blake & Co. regarded him with astonishment.

Next Wednesday:

"THE INTRUDER!" AND "FOES OF FORTUNE!"

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"What about tea?" demanded Herries.

D'Arcy looked round.

"Vewy nearly finished, Hewwies! Wait a few minutes. This is wathah important."

"We're hungry."

"Wats!"

"What the dickens are you up to?" exclaimed Blake, mystified.

"Look at it, deah boy! I have only to give it the finishin' touches now."

Blake and Herries and Digby looked at the work of art. The cardboard was about two feet long, and upon it was daubed in big capitals the legend:

"ECONOMISE FOOD IN WAR-TIME!"

The chums of the Fourth looked at the card, then looked at Arthur Augustus. The latter surveyed his handiwork with considerable satisfaction.

"I wathah think that is wathah stwikin', deah boys!" he remarked.

"What does it mean?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I should think you could see the meanin' by weadin' it! I am goin' to hang it up in the studay as a warnin'."

"Don't we economise food?" demanded Herries.

"Pewwaps so, deah boy; but it is bettah to beah in mind the fact that we are at war, you know. I am goin' to give Tom Mewwy one of these to put up in his studay, and Julian one. I have done them—they are dwyin' by the fire."

"And what do you mean by wasting cardboard in war-time?" asked Blake, with great severity. "I suppose you know that if the war lasts seventy-seven years, the finish may depend on the last sheet of cardboard?"

"Wats!"

"Well, we want that table," remarked Digby. "We're going to have tea. But I'll tell you what, Gussy. We're awfully sharp set, and if you like to economise food by missing your tea we'll do your whack in."

"Good idea!" said Blake heartily. "As a matter of fact, supplies are rather limited."

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus.

He took his cardboard to the study fire, and proceeded to dry it. Two more sheets with similar inscriptions were already drying there. Blake and Herries and Digby grinned, and proceeded to prepare tea. Economy in food was an excellent idea, and they admitted it; but they were sharp set at present after footer practice in frosty weather, and they wanted their tea.

"I suppose I can use these to make the kettle boil?" said Blake, picking up one of the amateur signs.

There was a yell from Arthur Augustus.

"You uttah ass! That wepwesents an hough's hard lahah!" he exclaimed. "Pway don't be a silly ass, Blake!"

"The swell of St. Jim's jerked his precious card away."

"Well, I was thinking of saving the firewood," said Blake. "Don't you know there'll be a shortage of wood, unless the Opposition in the House of Commons put their heads together?"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus extracted a hammer and several nails from Blake's tool-chest, and fastened his card upon the study wall.

"Now I will take these two along," he remarked. "You fellahs can get tea while I am gone. I am wathah hungwy, now I come to think of it."

"Oh, we'll get tea!" said Blake. "We sha'n't wait for you."

"That's all wight."

With a card in either hand, the swell of St. Jim's quitted Study No. 6. He made his way along to the Shell passage, and tapped at Tom Merry's door.

"Come in!" sang out the captain of the Shell cheerily.

The Terrible Three were already at tea. Tom Merry and Manners and Monty Lowther stared at the swell of the Fourth as he came in. The sight of a huge sheet of cardboard in each of D'Arcy's hands surprised them.

"I have brougth one of these for you, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus graciously.

"Thanks awfully!" said Tom. "What on earth is it?"

"Look at it, deah boy! It's to hang up in the studay."

"My hat!"

The Terrible Three looked at one another, and grinned.

"It's not a laughing mattah," explained Arthur Augustus. "I feah that a considerable amount of waste goes on in this school, and I wegard this as a weally wippin' means for puttin' a stop to it. This little sign will we remind you all the time to be careful with food, and to save the pieces, you know, and use up the weemants."

"Jolly good idea!" said Monty Lowther heartily. "You should do a lot of those, Gussy. I could suggest a lot of

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mottoes for war-time—such as 'Always lick your fingers after eating jam!'—"

"You howwid ass, Lowthah! I should uttally wefuse to lick my fingahs!"

"It saves the jam!" explained Lowther. "If all the jam that's wasted on kids' fingers were saved, it would make a very considerable difference to the national supply."

"Wats! Shall I hang this up for you, Tom Mewwy?"

"Certainly!" said Tom, laughing.

The Terrible Three went on with their tea, while Arthur Augustus sought hammer and tacks, and tacked the card on the wall. He left the chums of the Shell grinning when he departed.

But Arthur Augustus did not mind that. He was prepared to be grinned at by unthinking youths.

His next visit was paid to No. 5 Study. Julian and Kerruish, Hammond and Reilly, were at tea there, and the table was well supplied.

"Just in time for tea, D'Arcy," said Hammond. "Trot in!"

"Do!" said Julian hospitably.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Thank you, deah boys, I have not come to tea. With your permish, I will hang this card up in your studay. I have w'itten it 'specially for you."

"Oh, cramps!"

"Wathah a good ideah—what?" said Arthur Augustus, beaming upon the astonished four.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not see anythin' to cackle at, Julian," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"Well, of all the cheek!" said Reilly. "Do ye think we're likely to waste food in war-time, ye gossoon?"

"Weally, Weilly, it is not meant personally at all. I am goin' to do a lot more of these signs for all the Fourth."

"You silly gossoon—"

"I wefuse to be called a gossoon, Weilly, whatevah that may be—"

Reilly jumped up. The Belfast junior seemed to take Arthur Augustus' kind gift as a reflection upon the well-supplied study tea-table.

"Pway do not be watty, Weilly. I assuah you that my intention was simply to do you fellahs a service—"

"Faith, and I'll do ye a service, too!" said Reilly. "What do you mean by wasting money on monocles in war-time?"

"An eyeglass is an article of stwict necessity, Weilly. Bai Jove, leave my eyeglass alone, you uttah ass!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

But Reilly had captured the eyeglass.

"Lend a hand here, bhoys!" he exclaimed. "Fancy waistcoats are waste in war-time. We'll have his waistcoat off—"

"Ha, ha! Good egg!" exclaimed Kerruish, jumping up.

"Gwreat Scott!"

"Sure we'll send it to a fund—"

"Leggo!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to have my waistcoat sent to a fund, you uttah ass! Yawwooh!"

"Preaching without practice is no good," grinned Julian.

"Off with your waistcoat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus struggled wildly. He was not prepared to to carry economy to this reckless extent. But Julian and Kerruish and Reilly had collared him, and he had no choice in the matter. His elegant Eton jacket came off, and the handsome waistcoat followed it. Reilly tossed the waistcoat across the study.

"That goes to a fund," he said. "What about the jacket, you chaps?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus, breathless and wrathful, grabbed the jacket and fled. A yell of laughter from No. 5 followed him. Reilly's opinion was that war economy, like charity, should begin at home—a point that had not occurred yet to the mighty brain of Arthur Augustus, who was not solitary in that respect.

The swell of St. Jim's came back into No. 6, breathing hard, with his jacket in his hand. Blake and Herries and Digby were finishing tea, and they grinned at him.

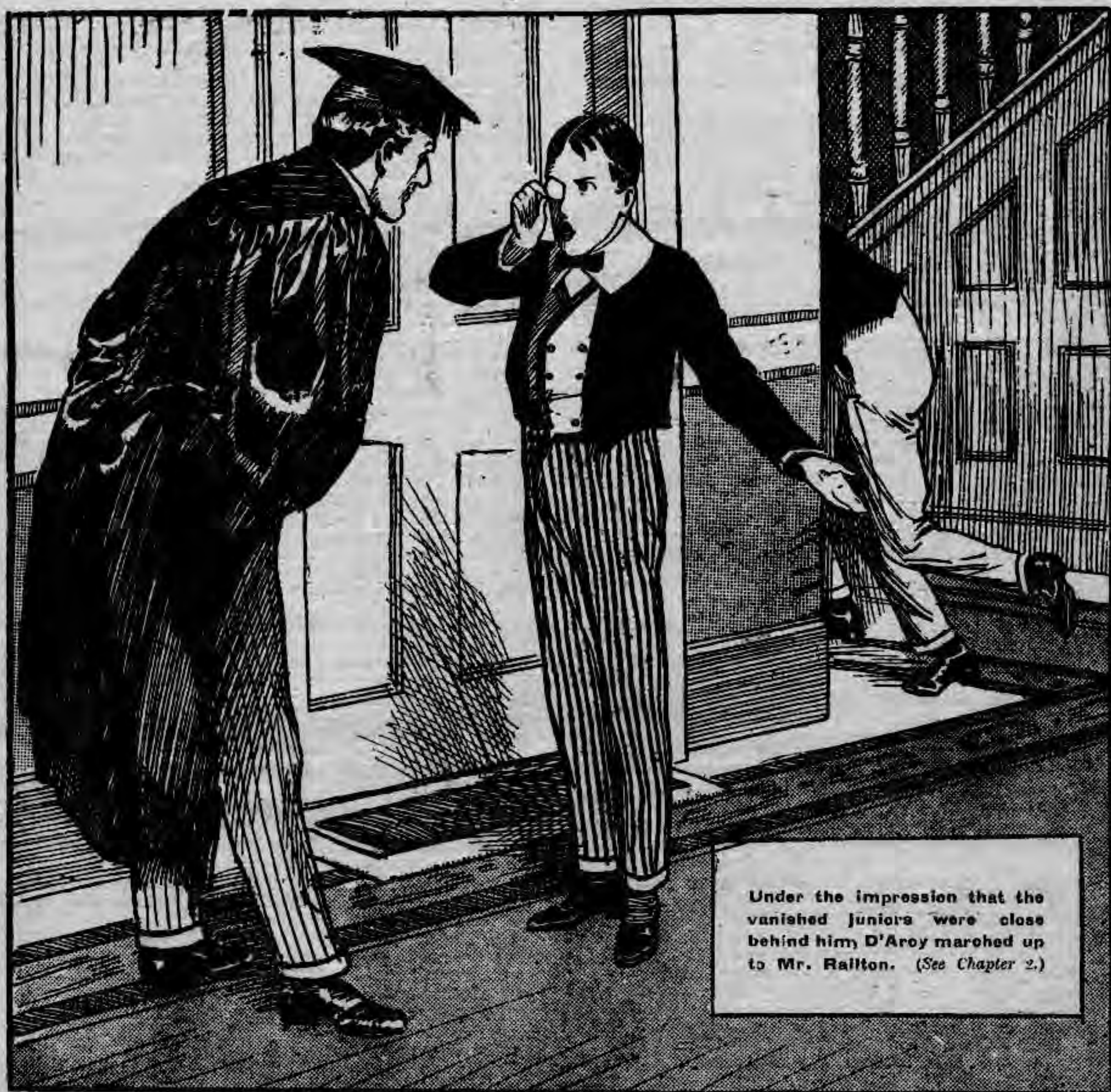
"Hallo! Been finding trouble, as well as looking for it?" asked Blake.

D'Arcy slipped on his jacket.

"Tom Mewwy weceived me in a pwopah spiwit," he said. "But for some weason, Weilly and those wottahs cut up wusty. They have actually collared my waistcoat and eyeglass, you know, to send to a fund."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not see anything to cackle at. Bai Jove! Where is that card gone?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. The nails were still sticking in the wall of Study No. 6, but the card, with its striking inscription, had vanished.



Under the impression that the vanished Juniors were close behind him, D'Arcy marched up to Mr. Ralton. (See Chapter 2.)

Blake pointed to the fire.

"You have burned it!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Of course," said Blake, in a tone of surprise. "We did it, of course, to save the coal. Don't you know it's a national duty to economise coal in war-time?"

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Blake!"

"Go hon!"

"I will have tea now," said Arthur Augustus, sinking into a chair. "I am wathah hungwy! Have you cooked the eggs?"

"Certainly, and eaten them, too."

"Oh! The ham——"

"All gone!"

"Bai Jove! I will have the sardines, then."

"You won't," said Blake, calmly. "The sardines are done in, too!"

"I twust you have left somethin' for my tea, Blake?"

"Nothing at all, old chap," said Blake affectionately. "We're giving you a chance of living up to your own motto, you know. Economise food in war-time. You can't economise food better than by missing your tea."

"You uttah ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "What am I goin' to have for my tea?"

"Well, there's one crust of the loaf left. If you feel you can't live up to your principles, you'd better have it! But remember, old fellow, that you ought to economise food in war-time," said Blake seriously.

Arthur Augustus gave his humorous chums one stern look, and stalked out of the study. The door of No. 6 closed with a slam. Blake & Co. chuckled. And Arthur Augustus proceeded along the passage, not to urge economy in food this time, but to find somebody who would be extravagant enough to stand him a tea—in spite of the fact that it was war-time.

CHAPTER 2.

A One Man Business.

"**H**OW'S the war economy getting on?"

Dick Julian, of the Fourth Form, asked that question as he met Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the following day. The juniors had come out after morning lessons, and the passage was buzzing with voices and footsteps. Julian, Kerruish, and Reilly came up to Arthur Augustus with a very friendly air, and did not appear to notice the frigid stare the swell of St. Jim's fixed upon them.

"Wats!" was Arthur Augustus' reply.

"We were awfully obliged to you, you know," murmured Julian.

"You did not seen vevy obliged, Julian, when I bwrought you the war-economy card."

"Ahem! - We've been thinking since then," said Julian, coughing. "We think it's a really nobby idea!"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE INTRUDER!"

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

"Top-hole, bedad!" said Reilly.

"First chop!" said Kerruish solemnly.

Arthur Augustus thawed considerably. No. 5 Study seemed to be in a repentant mood, and Gussy was not the fellow to refuse the olive-branch.

"In that case, deah boys, I ovahlook your wathah wotten conduct yestahday," he remarked. "And I twust you will weturn my waistcoat."

"Sure, it's at yere service," said Reilly at once. "And as good as new, barring that I used it to scrub up some milk Hammond spilled in the fender."

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Weilly, you uttah wuffian—"

"Dry up, you ass!" said Julian, with a warning look at his Irish chum. "Never mind the waistcoat now, Gus. There are more important things to be thought of than waistcoats in war-time! We look on you—ahem!—as a leader—"

"You are vewy flattewin', deah boy!"

"Not at all. But a leader's business is to lead, you know," said Julian. "When are you going to tackle the Housemaster on the subject?"

"The—the Housemaster?"

"Yes. Old Railton, you know! What price a deputation?" said Julian, with a face of immovable gravity. "He will be along here soon, and then will be the time to tackle him. You see, it's up to a Housemaster to enter into a thing like this like—like billy-oh!"

"Yaas, but—"

"I'm sure," went on Julian, "that all of us would be willing to go without lessons in war-time. It would save the ink."

"Weally, Julian—"

"And the salaries of the masters," said Julian calmly. "They could go on war-work, and their salaries could be handed over for wounded Tommies."

"But—but we are supposed to have lessons at school, you know?" said Arthur Augustus, somewhat taken aback by this proposal of drastic war-economy.

"We would give them up for the sake of patriotism," said Julian heroically. "In order to serve our country, we should be willing to play football instead of going into class."

"Hear, hear!" said Kerruish and Reilly.

"Yaas, wathah—but I feah that Wailton would not see it," said Arthur Augustus, unsuspiciously, but dubiously.

"Then it's your duty to point it out to him," said Julian firmly. "No good starting on the juniors—go to the fountain-head, you know. Put it plain to Railton—at the head of a deputation. Lots of fellows would like to see you do it—ahem!"

"Jolly good idea," chimed in Figgins, of the New House. Figgins & Co. had paused as they heard Julian's remarks, and exchanged winks. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were quite ready to join in the pleasant amusement of pulling Arthur Augustus' noble leg. "A deputation of both Houses, of course."

"A numerous deputation," said Julian.

"A distinguished deputation," remarked Kerr.

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Wynn cordially. "Go it, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass—a new eyeglass—into his noble eye, and reflected. All these juniors evidently looked upon him as a leader, and expected things of him. Surely a D'Arcy's place was to lead! Arthur Augustus had no doubt whatever upon that point.

"Bai Jove! It's wathah a good ideah," he said, beginning to grow enthusiastic. "Of course, it's evewybody's duty to back up wah-economy."

"Hear, hear!"

"Still going it?" grinned Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three joined the group in the Form-room passage.

"Yaas, Tom Mewwy, I am still gain' it," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "War economy is a vewy important thing. It is recommended by gweat statesmen, and all the more cwed it is due to them because they do not need to be economical themselves, as they have such whackin' salawies. It is vewy supwisin' that they thought of it at all. I am quite pwepared to head a deputation to Mr. Wailton—"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Tom Merry.

"You fellahs can back me up, and I will address him," said Arthur Augustus. "You can leave all the talkin' to me."

"What-ho!" said all the juniors together. They certainly did not intend to do any of the talking to Mr. Railton.

"I shall point out to Wailton that the mastahs in this school would be much bettah employed upon wah work—"

"Great pip!"

"And that their salawies are weally wequired for the Tommies. I wegard that as vewy weasonable."

"Oh, my hat!"

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In this Week's "BUNTER'S BIG BROTHER!" A Fine Story of Greyfriars.

"Faith, here comes Railton," said Reilly.

"Go it, Gussy!" said Kerr encouragingly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle a little more firmly in his eye, and marched directly toward the Housemaster. Naturally he did not look behind him as he led the deputation onwards, and, having no eyes in the back of his head, he could not see that the deputation promptly disappeared round the nearest corner.

Under the impression that the vanished juniors were close behind him, following his lead, Arthur Augustus marched up to Mr. Railton, who surveyed him with some astonishment.

"Excuse me, sir," began Arthur Augustus, respectfully but firmly.

The Housemaster stopped.

"You wish to speak to me, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir. We desiah to point out—"

"What?"

"We wish to wemark—"

"What do you mean, D'Arcy?" exclaimed the Housemaster testily. Naturally, Mr. Railton was astounded to hear the Fourth-Former use the plural when he was alone in his glory.

"I wepeat, sir, we—"

"Are you out of your senses, boy?"

"Eh! I twust not, sir!"

"Then why do you say 'we'?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, frowning. He had an impression that Arthur Augustus was somehow bent upon pulling his leg.

"I wepresent this deputation as speakah, sir—"

"What?"

"This deputation of the Lower School, sir—"

"Boy!"

"I wepeat, sir, that we have come—we, sir, a deputation of both Houses at St. Jim's—"

"A—a—a deputation!" ejaculated Mr. Railton. "D'Arcy, I fear that you are not in your right mind. To what deputation are you alluding?"

"These fellahs with me, backin' me up—"

"Are you not aware that you are alone?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, beginning to understand. He had observed Tom Merry & Co. disappearing round a corner.

"Wha-a-at!"

Arthur Augustus spun round in amazement.

His eyeglass dropped out, and in his astonishment his eyes really seemed about to follow it, as he observed that he had the Form-room passage to himself.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Where are those fellahs? I—I thought they were followin' me. Where has that deputation got to, I wondah?"

Mr. Railton smiled.

"I am afraid your schoolfellows have been making fun of you, D'Arcy," he said. "You must not be led into bothering your Housemaster. Kindly remember that."

Mr. Railton passed on, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rooted to the floor.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured.

It dawned upon D'Arcy's noble brain at last that the deputation was Julian's little joke, and that the other fellows had entered into it with humorous intentions for the fun of watching Arthur Augustus march up to the Housemaster and begin.

"The uttah wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "That fearful beast, Julian, was pullin' my leg! Bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus marched away in great wrath. A dozen grinning faces met him as he came out into the quadrangle—and Arthur Augustus walked on with his noble nose high in the air—followed by many chuckles.

CHAPTER 3

A War Tea.

"P" WAY do not address me, Lowthah!"

"Gussy, old chap—"

"Wats!"

D'Arcy's tone was firm. Monty Lowther had run him down soon after afternoon lessons were over; but Arthur Augustus was not taking any. The mere mention of war economy was sufficient to put him on his guard.

Monty Lowther regarded him more in sorrow than in anger. The humorist of the Shell had thought out a little scheme, and he did not mean to be baffled. But it was necessary to be diplomatic with the swell of St. Jim's now. He had not yet forgotten the deputation to Mr. Railton.

"Then you won't come?" said Lowther sadly.

"I wegard you as a pwactical jokin' duffah, Lowthah, and I wegard all the west as pwactical jokin' duffahs!"

"Ahem! Suppose we let bygones be bygones," suggested Lowther. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath; you know—and it gets dark jolly early now!"

"Wats!"

"The fact is, we're living up to the motto you tacked up in our study," said Monty Lowther earnestly. "We're putting it in force to-day."

"Bai Jove! I am vewy glad to heah that, Lowthah!"

"Having talked it over, and considered it very carefully, and regarded it from the north, south, east, and west, we have decided to live up to that motto," explained Lowther.

"Vewy good, deah boy!"

"We are having our first war tea to-day. Won't you come?"

"Weally, Lowthah, if you put it like that——"

"I do!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "I do put it like that, Gussy! We want you to back us up with your presence. Of course, the fare will be rather frugal. If you object to that——"

"My ideah is for all the fellahs to have fwugal fare in war-time, Lowthah. I quite approve of the fare being fwugal, and I shall be vewy pleased to back you up by comin' to the war tea."

"I thought we could rely on you, Gussy," said Lowther affectionately. "Come on!"

Quite restored to good humour now, Arthur Augustus accompanied Lowther to the Shell passage and to Tom Merry's study.

Tom Merry and Manners were there, and they greeted the swell of the Fourth very cordially. Their faces were grave and serious, and it was certainly not to be guessed from their looks that they were bent upon pulling the leg of the noble Gussy.

"So good of you to come, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "I suppose Lowther's told you it's a war tea?"

"Yaas, wathah! I quite approve."

"Good!" said Manners heartily. "You see we've got your patriotic sign still hanging up. We're going to try to live up to it."

"Bwavo!" said D'Arcy encouragingly.

"Here's your chair, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus sat down. He was quite beaming by this time. If the Terrible Three backed up his new idea in this whole-hearted way, he flattered himself that the rest of the juniors would follow the example in time. War economy would catch on. From the School House it would spread to the New House, from the juniors to the seniors, from the seniors to the masters—till all at St. Jim's was one frugal camp of war economy.

Then the example of St. Jim's would be like a great, shining light to all Sussex; in fact, to all the kingdom. In his mind's eye, Arthur Augustus could see the great movement spreading far and wide—till there was no longer a crumb or a bone wasted in the three kingdoms, till even Government Departments ceased to be wasteful, till even Ministers of State gave up their salaries for the public good. Arthur Augustus saw this with his mind's eye. Probably he never would see it with any other eye.

Tom Merry had spread the table with a newspaper. Arthur Augustus glanced at it.

"Saves the tablecloth," explained Tom. "Washing tablecloths in war-time is rather a waste, don't you think?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, Tom Mewwy, but you are quite wight!"

"You see, a newspaper does the trick equally well," said Lowther blandly. "It's making it serve two turns. First of all, it guides public opinion as a newspaper; then it comes in as a tablecloth; after that we can use it for lighting the fire—if we ever have a fire again!"

Arthur Augustus shivered a little. It was a cold, frosty day, and there was no sign of fire in the study.

"You have chucked fiah?" he asked.

Lowther gave him a pained look of surprise.

"Fires in war-time!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, Gussy!" murmured Manners.

"Quite wight," said Arthur Augustus. "I will speak to Blake about it. You fellahs seem to be goin' into the thing wathah thowoughly."

"That's being efficient," said Tom Merry. "Efficiency is the order of the day, you know! If you make yourself, and somebody else, uncomfortable, that's being efficient."

"Weally, Tom Merry——"

"Are you cold, Gussy?" asked Lowther.

"Nunno—not vewy," said Arthur Augustus bravely. "But how are you fellahs goin' to cook things without a fiah?"

"Cook things in war-time?" exclaimed Lowther.

"Are you goin' to use a spiwit-stove?"

"Certainly not! Spirit is required for national purposes, and also for motor-cars for people who go to the races, now they're cutting down railway travelling. We should decline to use a spirit-stove in war-time."

"But how are you goin' to cook things?"

"We're not going to cook them."

"Bai Jove! But you can't eat waw eggs and washahs!"

"Eggs and rashers!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy seems to think that we are at the end of the war, instead of only in the third year. I'm sorry, Gussy, if you've come to tea thinking you'll find peace-time extravagance here."

"Certainly not!" said D'Arcy hastily. "I shall be quite content with sardines, or ham, or, in fact, anythin'."

"I warned you the fare would be frugal," remarked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! That's all wight. But how are you goin' to make the tea without boilin' the kettle?"

"What's the matter with water to drink?"

"Cold water?"

"Certainly! Clear water from the crystal spring," said Lowther—"at least, from the passage tap. I dare say it came from a crystal spring a bit before that."

"It's wathah cold weathah for dwinkin' cold watah!"

"That makes it all the more to a chap's credit to do it."

"Ya-a-as, wathah! I nevah thought of that."

Arthur Augustus was enthusiastic on war economy, but his noble face was very grave as Tom Merry placed a jug of cold water on the table, and Manners took half a very stale loaf from the cupboard. The Terrible Three sat down round the table, and Arthur Augustus realised that the eatables and drinkables were all on view. He gave the chums of the Shell a quick glance, but their faces were immovably grave. Evidently they were taking war economy seriously; and as it was Gussy's own idea, he could not very well find fault. It was up to Arthur Augustus to play up, and he played up.

"Pile in!" said Tom Merry hospitably.

And Arthur Augustus, with a somewhat wry face, piled in.

CHAPTER 4.

Very Frugal.

TOM MERRY & CO. munched dry bread with an appearance of great heartiness. They washed it down with cups of cold water.

With that frugal example before his eyes, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could scarcely fail to do likewise.

Arthur Augustus had brought in a healthy appetite, and hunger is a good sauce. He travelled through a slice of dry bread, though somewhat slowly.

"You're not drinking," said Lowther.

"I—I'm not vewy thirsty, Lowthah, thank you."

"Perhaps you'd like some sugar in your water?" suggested Lowther. "We shouldn't think of it ourselves, but as you're a guest——"

"Not at all, Lowthah! Pway don't get me any sugah!"

"A little salt would give it a flavour!" suggested Manners. D'Arcy shook his head hastily.

"Not at all, Mannahs!"

And the swell of St. Jim's lifted his cup and drank the cold water, to prove that he was quite capable of getting on with that frugal beverage.

"More bread?" asked Lowther.

"A—a little, please."

Lowther passed the bread. Arthur Augustus munched the second slice much more slowly than the first.

"Fill Gussy's cup, Monty," said Tom Merry.

Lowther splashed water from the jug into the guest's tea-cup. Arthur Augustus did not touch it, however. He had had enough cold water.

In spite of himself, Arthur Augustus was thinking of tea in Study No. 6. He knew that Blake & Co. had sausages and chips for tea. Arthur Augustus was not a glutton by any means, but the thought of those sausages and chips seemed to linger in his mind like a beautiful vision. He had a feeling that war-economy might be overdone, but nothing would have induced him to say so. If these followers of his own scheme were content with bread and water, it was up to Gussy to be equally content, if not more so.

"You haven't finished your bread," said Tom anxiously.

"I—I have had enough, deah boy!"

"You must eat enough, you know," remarked Lowther. "It isn't efficient to go short of food—that leads to physical deterioration. Better have another bit."

"Thank you, Lowthah, I am quite satisfied."

"Then we'll get on to the next course, if you chaps have had enough bread," said Lowther, looking round.

"Oh, quite!" said Tom Merry and Manners.

Arthur Augustus brightened up a little. There was to be another course, then. He realised that by the time he

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escaped from Tom Merry's study tea would be over in No. 6; and it was too late for tea in Hall.

Monty Lowther crossed to the cupboard, and took out a plate, upon which reposed a single, solitary sardine. He set the plate upon the table with rather a flourish, as if feeling a pardonable pride in being able to provide a second course in war-time.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle a little more firmly into his eye, and fixed his gaze upon the sardine.

"Will you carve, Gussy?" asked Lowther.

Arthur Augustus started.

"Kik-kik-carve!" he stuttered.

"Yes."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You seem rather surprised at us having sardines in war-time," said Lowther; "but it's because we've got a guest to tea, you know."

"Bai Jove!"

"Even in war-time, a chap likes to provide a little extra treat for a guest," said Tom Merry.

"Oh!"

"Besides, we got that sardine cheap!" said Lowther, with owl-like gravity. "Gore was going to throw it away, as it had been overlooked in his cupboard for some time. Wasteful chap, Gore—doesn't seem to know we're at war at all. We rescued it in time, as you were coming to tea, D'Arcy."

"Oh, deah!"

"You like sardines?" asked Manners anxiously.

"Yaas. You are vewy good."

"I'll carve, if you like," said Tom Merry. "Have you any preference, Gussy—under-cut, or anything of that sort?"

"N-n-n-no!"

"Give Gussy a little of the breast," said Lowther.

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry proceeded to carve the sardine, Arthur Augustus watching him with almost a frozen gaze. The captain of the Shell divided the diminutive fish into four equal portions, which were passed round the table. Arthur Augustus eyed his portion with considerable disfavour. Certainly it was very small; but what worried D'Arcy was Lowther's statement that the sardine had been thrown away by Gore because it had been overlooked in his study cupboard for some time. ~~Small~~ as the fish course was, it had quite a powerful aroma.

"You're not eating, Gussy," said Manners.

"I—I'm just goin' to," stammered Arthur Augustus.

"It's all right, you know," said Lowther reassuringly.

"You can't judge a sardine wholly by the whiff; it's like judging cigars by the picture on the box. This sardine is a little gamey, perhaps."

"All the better for that, really," said Manners.

Arthur Augustus picked at the fragment with his fork in a very gingerly manner. It was quite good to eat, though not savoury. George Gore had really been in a reckless hurry to throw away that sardine.

As the Terrible Three were eating, Arthur Augustus could not decline to do so. The sardine vanished—rather slowly.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet.

"Thank you vewy much, deah boys—"

"But you're not finished yet," said Lowther. "There's more to come."

"Oh, pway excuse me!" Arthur Augustus sat down again, wondering what was to come next, and fervently hoping it was not another "gamey" fish course.

Manners went to the cupboard.

"We finish with dessert," said Lowther. "Perhaps it's a bit extravagant in war-time; but you have to do these things by degrees, you know. When we get a bit more used to war economy, we shall have much shorter commons."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus wondered how the Terrible Three could get to much shorter commons than upon this occasion, and he mentally resolved to give Tom Merry's study a wide berth at tea-time when they did.

Manners brought out the dessert. He placed a single Brazil nut on the table. Tom Merry cracked it.

Lowther carved on this occasion, and the Brazil nut was fairly divided. Arthur Augustus prided himself upon the repose that stamps—or should stamp—the caste of Vera de Vere. But his face was a study now.

The Terrible Three disposed of their portions of the dessert with great gusto, and the swell of the Fourth did likewise.

"A little water with it?" asked Manners.

"Nunno, thank you, Mannahs!"

"Perhaps a little bread?" suggested Lowther.

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"Well, that's what I call a good war-time tea," said Tom Merry, with an air of great satisfaction. "What do you think, Gussy?"

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"Wippin', deah boy!" faltered Arthur Augustus.

"Not going yet, Gussy?"

"I—I think—I—I mean I want to speak to Blake, Tom Mewwy, if you will excuse me."

"Feeling a bit cold?"

"I am quite pwepared to feel cold in war-time, Tom Mewwy."

"Good! If you find Blake and Herries and Dig guzzling in No. 6, tell 'em what we've had for tea, and advise them to follow our example," said Monty Lowther. "I hope you'll come to tea again to-morrow, Gussy."

"Thank you vewy much, Lowthah."

"I hope you've had plenty," said Tom anxiously. "There's some more bread, you know."

"And plenty of water," said Manners.

"Thank you, deah boys. I am quite satisfied."

And Arthur Augustus, urbane to the last, retreated from the study. The Terrible Three smiled at one another as his footsteps died away down the passage.

"Isn't it pleasant to be able to please a chap like that?" remarked Lowther. "Gussy looked quite happy, didn't he?"

"Ha, ha! Quite!"

"And now we'd better have tea. Get the fire going, Tommy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the merry trio were quickly busy getting tea—a tea not closely resembling the war tea of which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had partaken.

CHAPTER 5.

The Spoolers!

"HALLO! Didn't you want any tea?"

Jack Blake asked the question as D'Arcy came into Study No. 6, with a somewhat grave countenance.

There was a pleasant scent of sausages and chips in Study No. 6; but, unfortunately, the scent alone was left.

"I've had my tea, thanks!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Been feeding out?" asked Blake.

"Yaas. I had tea with Tom Mewwy."

"Lots of jam left," said Dig, "and we haven't started on the cake yet."

Arthur Augustus glanced longingly at the cake. But he had had tea—a war tea. He felt that it would not be the thing to have another tea after his war tea. That could not be called playing the game.

Blake poised a knife over the cake.

"Cake, Gussy?"

"No, thanks, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus heroically.

"Shove it this way," said Herries.

"Ahem!" said Arthur Augustus.

Blake looked at him.

"Caught a cold?" he asked.

"Nunno!"

"You're coughing."

"Ahem!"

"There you go again!" said Blake, in surprise. "If you're catching a cold, you'd better sniff some eucalyptus. It will stop it in time."

"I am not catching a cold, Blake. I was thinking—"

"Oh! That's the second time this term."

"Wats! I was thinkin' Blake, that I am sowwy to see cake and jam in this studay."

"It's a jolly good cake."

"It is war-time, Blake—"

"My hat! So it is!" agreed Blake. "I've seen something about it in the papers. Thanks for the tip."

"Pway don't wot, Blake! This is wathah a serious mattah. I have had a war tea with Tom Mewwy."

"A which?" ejaculated Blake.

"A war tea, deah boy."

"My hat!"

"A vewy fwugal wepast, you know."

"Blessed if I think it's frugal, the way they were laying in supplies," said Blake. "I saw Lowther doing the shopping an hour ago. I don't call sausages and rashers and ham particularly frugal."

"You are labahin' undah a misappwehension, Blake. We have not had sausages and washahs and ham. We had bwead and watah—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Bwead and watah—cold watah."

"And nothing elee?" shrieked Herries.

"Yaas, wathah—one sardine—"

"One sardine each?" ejaculated Digby.



The Terrible Three were at tea. The sight of a huge sheet of cardboard in each of D'Arcy's hands surprised them. (See Chapter 1.)

"No! One divided among four."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And one Brazil nut!" said Arthur Augustus.

Blake and Herries and Digby stared at their noble chum.

"And that's all you had for tea?" demanded Blake.

"Yaaa, wathah!"

"And that's a war tea?"

"Yaaa."

"Then what was Lowther laying in supplies for?"

"I weally do not know. Pewwaps you were mistaken."

"You've been to tea on a nut and a sardine!" said Blake.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries and Dig.

Arthur Augustus surveyed them with icy surprise.

"I fail to see any weason for this mewwiment," he remarked. "I quite approve of Tom Mewwy institutin' a war tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the three Fourth-Formers.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"You frabjous ass!" yelled Blake. "Can't you see that they were only pulling your silly leg?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"A sardine and a nut!" gasped Herries. "Oh, Gussy! I suppose you were sent into the world specially to have your leg pulled!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Hewwies! I have been to a war tea—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus rose in wrath.

"I wefuse to listen to this wibald laughtah!" he exclaimed with some heat. "I wegard it as bein' in the worst of taste. I should be vewy glad to see this studay followin' Tom Mewwy's fwugal example."

"So we will—when he sets it!" said Blake, chuckling. "Oh, you born ass! Blessed if you oughtn't to have been in the late Cabinet, with your brains, Gussy. I suppose they're having their tea now."

"They had their tea with me, Blake—a war tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass—"

"Let's go along and see!" chuckled Herries.

"Good egg! Come on!"

"Wats! They have had their tea. However, I will come, to show you that your wotten suspicion is entirely without gwounds, you cacklin' asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus walked along the passage with his nose high in the air, and Blake & Co. followed him, grinning. They were quite assured that the Terrible Three's tea was not confined to a nut and a sardine. War economy was not likely to be carried to that length in Tom Merry's study, excepting for the especial purpose of pulling Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's leg.

There was a cheery voice audible as they came up to the study—the voice of Monty Lowther.

"These sosses are prime!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, quite taken aback.

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NEXT
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"THE INTRUDER!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled his comrades.

"Oh, pway stop cacklin'!"

D'Arcy tapped at the door, with a heightened colour. It was dawning even upon his aristocratic brain that he had been spoofed.

"Come in!" sang out Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus opened the door.

The study looked very cheery. A bright fire blazed and glowed in the grate, and the festive board was spread. There were "sosses," and there were rashers, there were eggs, and there was toast, and there was coffee. And there was a cake, and there were two kinds of jam. And three smiling faces looked very cheery and contented over the festive board.

Arthur Augustus gazed at the scene of plenty, spellbound. Blake and Herries and Dig chuckled.

"Come in!" said Tom Merry. "Just in time for supper, you chaps. We've got rather a spread. We're in funds to-day."

"Suppah!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes. We had a war tea, you know. And, upon the whole, we think it best to have supper early."

"You uttah wottah—"

"Eh?"

"I wegard you as a spoofin' beast, Tom Mewwy! You have taken me in!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Yes. We took you in to tea—a war tea!" said Monty Lowther. "It was quite a pleasure to entertain you to a war tea, Gussy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not wegard this as a joke, and I fail to see why you are yellin' like a hyenah, Blake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll be pleased to hear that Gussy's noble manners didn't fail him once," said Monty Lowther blandly. "He ate the dry bread as if he loved it—"

"And he didn't ask for a second helping of sardine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a wottin' beast, Lowthah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard it as uttably wotten, to pwetend to have a war tea—"

"But we didn't pretend!" said Tom Merry, in surprise. "We had the war tea, right enough; you helped us. We're following it with a peace supper."

"You see, a war tea requires a peace supper after it," explained Lowther. "We hope to be able to put up with war teas for three years, or the duration of the war, so long as we can have a peace supper immediately afterwards."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus strode out of the study, with crimson cheeks. Blake & Co. followed him, almost in hysterics.

In Study No. 6 Arthur Augustus frowned darkly, and Blake & Co. chuckled loud and long.

"I wegard that as a wotten joke!" said Arthur Augustus at last. "I suppose the whole House will be cacklin' ovah it soon!"

"Depend on it they will!" grinned Blake. "It's too good to keep!"

"Never mind, Gussy. You can keep on with the war economy!" chuckled Dig. "Watch me eating this cake, and think how nice it would be if the war were over, and you could have some cake, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! Upon reflection, Blake, I think I will have some of that cake," said Arthur Augustus.

And he did.

CHAPTER 6.

Many Invitations!

SMILING faces greeted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy everywhere the following day.

The story of the war tea had spread.

Monty Lowther had given quite an entertaining description of it in the junior Common-room.

The story of Arthur Augustus going through a meal composed of dry bread, a fourth portion of a sardine, and a fraction of a Brazil nut, in all seriousness and with undiminished politeness, made the School House fellows yell.

It made the New House fellows yell, too, when Figgins & Co. heard the story, and took it over to their House.

Arthur Augustus was unmercifully chipped.

Invitations to a war tea showered upon him from all sides. Figgins came over from the New House specially to ask him, assuring him that he would find cold water in plentiful supply, and several stale crusts which he—Figgins—had rescued from the dustbin. Needless to say, Arthur Augustus did not accept that invitation.

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Julian of the Fourth asked him to a war supper, informing him that he had laid in a monkey-nut for the purpose. Arthur Augustus stalked away, without even replying.

Other invitations followed from all quarters, all of which were refused with lofty scorn.

Arthur Augustus was very soon fed-up on the subject of war teas and suppers, and even began to wish that he had not thought of instituting war economy at St. Jim's at all. After lessons that day he withdrew to his study to escape the torrent of chaff.

But even there he was not safe. A note was slipped under the locked door, and when Arthur Augustus opened it he found:

"The pleasure of A. A. D'Arcy's company is requested to tea in Levison's study. N.B.—War tea; one shrimp for four."

Arthur Augustus, with a very red face and a gleam in his eyes, tossed that polite invitation into the fire.

There was a knock at the door a little later, and the voice of D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third—hailed him from the passage:

"Let me in, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus opened the door.

Wally was there, with Levison minor and Reggie Manners of the Third. They were all smiling.

"Not had your tea, Gus?" asked Wally.

"Not yet, deah boy!"

"Good! We want you to come to tea in the Third Form-room," explained D'Arcy minor. "You'll come?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"It's a war tea, you know," said Reggie Manners.

Arthur Augustus' eyes gleamed.

"A frugal repast," said Levison minor cheerily. "We've got a biscuit—"

"A—a—a what?"

"A biscuit," said Frank Levison blandly. "Of course, it's a bit short commons for a whole tea-party, but we're sure you won't mind in war-time."

"It's quite a large biscuit," said Manners minor.

"You cheekay young wottahs!"

"Are you always as polite as that to chaps who ask you to tea, Gussy?" inquired Wally.

"Cleah off, you young boundahs!"

"But aren't you coming to tea—a war tea?"

Slam!

Wally & Co. retired, chortling. They had not really expected Arthur Augustus to come to that war tea in the Third Form-room.

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus, "I suppose I shall nevah heah the end of Lowthah's wotten joke! I wegard him as a beast! Oh, deah! Who is that?"

The door opened, and Levison of the Fourth looked in.

"You got my note?" he asked.

"Yaas, you uttah ass!"

"Coming?" asked Levison.

"No, you wottah!"

"Not coming to tea?" asked Levison.

"I wefuse to discuss the mattah with you, Levison!"

"But we've got the shrimp," said Levison.

"Pway wetiah fwom this studay!"

"I'll keep an eye on Baggy Trimble, and see that he doesn't scoff more than his whack," said Levison reassuringly. "As for Mellish and Lumley-Lumley, you can depend on them."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy breathed hard through his nose.

"I am fed-up with these wotten jokes, Levison!" he said. "I wepeat that I desiah you to wetire fwom this studay, othahwise I shall etwike you!"

"But it's quite a big shrimp—for a shrimp, you know—"

Levison did not finish; he skipped out of the study and fled as Arthur Augustus rushed at him. Levison vanished, with a yell of laughter, and D'Arcy slammed the study door.

But he was not to repose in peace. There was a knock, and the door was opened, and Racke and Crooke of the Shell presented themselves, grinning.

"Not engaged for tea, Gussy?" asked Racke.

"I am Gussy to my fwiends, Wacke!"

"All friends in war-time," grinned Racke—"in fact, we've come to ask you to tea, D'Arcy."

"A war tea!" chortled Crooke.

"We've got a dog-biscuit for you—"

Arthur Augustus came at the Shell fellows with a rush, and they dodged out, laughing, and ran for it.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus was feeling quite heated. "I wondah when this is goin' to end? I am fed-up, bai Jove!"

Kangaroo of the Shell opened the door and looked in. The swell of St. Jim's gave him a glare like a basilisk.

"Coming to tea, Gussy?" asked the Cornstalk junior.

"You uttah ass!"

"I don't mean a study spread," Harry Noble hastened to explain. "I know you wouldn't come to a study spread in war-time. Nothing of the sort. You can depend on it that it won't be a lavish tea."

"Weally, you ass—"

"A plain, frugal war tea," said Kangaroo. "I've asked Glyn and Dane, and they're quite agreeable. We're going to have a bit of kipper—not a whole kipper, of course, in war-time. We've agreed that you shall have the tail—Oh, my hat!"

Kangaroo dodged a whizzing cushion, and fled.

"Bai Jove"—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pushed back his cuffs in a very businesslike way—"the next wottah who comes in to ask me to tea will get a feahful thwashin'! I am goin' to stop this wot somehow!"

The swell of St. Jim's waited, in a grim mood. About ten minutes later there were footsteps in the passage, and D'Arcy's eyes gleamed. Then came a knock at the door.

"Come in!" said Arthur Augustus, drawing a deep breath.

It was Contarini, the Italian junior, who came in. He gave Arthur Augustus a very affable smile. Arthur Augustus was on the best of terms with the Italian Fourth-Former, but he was prepared to "thwash" his very best pal at that moment if he asked him to tea.

"You have not had your tea, caro amico?" asked Contarini.

"I have not, Contawini."

"That is well. I have come to ask you to tea—Dio mio! What is the matter?" yelled Contarini, as Arthur Augustus rushed upon him, hitting out furiously.

Crash!

The Italian junior went bumping on the floor, and Arthur Augustus danced round him with brandished fists.

"Get up and have some more, you wottah!" he roared.

"Help—he is mad!" gasped Contarini.

Blake and Herries and Digby came up the passage. They were coming in to tea. They blinked in amazement at the scene in the study.

"Hallo! Fighting Jackeymo!" exclaimed Blake. "What on earth are you going for poor old Jackeymo for?"

"I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin', Blake! Get up, you wottah!"

"Oh, he is insane!" gasped Contarini.

"What has he done?" demanded Herries.

"The uttah wottah asked me to tea—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah, you duffahs! I am goin' to thwash him—"

"It is madness," said Contarini, in amazement. "I came here to ask him to tea, as I have done many times. He attacked me—"

"Ha, ha!" shrieked Blake. "Were you going to ask him to a war tea, Jackeymo?"

"A war tea? No! We have a spread in the study—"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus' face was a study. He had been a little too hasty. The unfortunate Contarini had come along with a genuine invitation, and Arthur Augustus' reception of it could not be called polite or grateful.

Blake and Herries and Digby yelled.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I am feahfully sowwy, Contawini. I—I—I thought you were pullin' my leg about that wotten war tea—"

Contarini rubbed his nose ruefully, but he grinned.

"Oh, if it was a mistake, that is all serene," he said. "I comprehend. But my nose—he is painful."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at, Blake, in this vewy unfortunate misappwehension. I am feahfully sowwy—"

"It is all right," grinned Contarini. "Come along, then."

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy! I shall be vewy pleased."

Arthur Augustus followed Contarini from the study, leaving Blake & Co. yelling. Arthur Augustus had tea in Contarini's study; and, in spite of his keenness for war economy, he was glad that it was not a war tea.

CHAPTER 7.

Levison Is Called In!

"LEVISON, deah boy!"

Levison looked up with a grin. It was the following day, and Levison was in his study with his minor.

He was helping Frank through the mysteries of Kutropius. The fag often brought his books to his major's study for assistance. Frank grinned, too, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in. The war tea in Tom Merry's study had by no means been forgotten.

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NEXT
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"THE INTRUDER!"

"Hallo!" said Levison. "Looking for a war tea?"

"Wats!"

"We've still got that biscuit in the Third Form-room," remarked Levison minor.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard for a moment.

"I wanted to speak to you, Levison," he said. "If you are busay just now, I will wetire."

"All serene," said Levison. "I've just finished with Frank."

The fag took his books and left the study. Arthur Augustus came in, and seemed to hesitate. Levison regarded him rather curiously. Since his reform the black sheep of the School House had been on much better terms with Arthur Augustus and his friends, but this visit from the swell of the Fourth surprised him a little.

"Go ahead!" he remarked.

"The—the fact is, Levison—"

"Yes."

"Ahem!"

"Hard up?" asked Levison in wonder. "I'm sorry, if it's a loan you want. I'm nearly stony."

"I am not hard up, Levison."

"Oh, good! I've got a bob at your service if you want it, but then I should have to have a war tea myself."

"Pway let that wotten subject dwop!"

"Certainly," said Levison, with a grin. "I fancy it will be some time before the fellows let it drop, though."

"The—the fact is—"

"Go ahead."

"The fact is—"

"Well, what is the fact?" asked Levison. "Get it off your chest!"

"The—the fact is, I want to—to speak to you about that wotten joke of Lowthah's, and—and ask your advice, Levison."

"My hat!"

"You see, you are wathah a deep beast, Levison—"

"Thanks!"

"I do not mean that wemark in a dispawagin' sense, Levison," said Arthur Augustus hastily. "The fact is, I am fed up with wotten jokes about Lowthah's sillay twick, and I have an ideah. I have been spoofed—"

"You have!" grinned Levison.

"Fellows wegard it as wathah essay to spoof me—"

"Well, it isn't so hard as Euclid."

"Wats! The fact is, Levison, I am goin' to pay those wotten pwactical jokahs back in their own coin."

"Good for you," said Levison. "I fancy you wouldn't find it very easy to spoof Lowther. He wouldn't come to a war tea."

"That's why I'm goin' to consult you, deah boy. You will wemembah that I wathah backed you up in turnin' oval a new leaf. I said to you sevewal times that I was glad to see you becomin' wathah less of a wottah—you wemembah?"

"You silly ass!"

"Weally, Levison—"

Levison burst into a laugh.

"Well, go ahead," he said. "You've been very decent to my minor, and I'd do anything I could."

"You are vewy good, Levison. I have been welflectin', you know, and I wathah think it would be a good ideah to give the fellows somethin' else to cackle about. I wathah think it's up to me to make Lowthah wealise that pwactical jokes come home to woost, you know. I am goin' to take those boundahs in an' spoof them, you know, and make the studay look widiculous."

Levison suppressed a grin. Arthur Augustus' ambition was natural enough under the circumstances; but Levison did not think the swell of the school had much chance of carrying it out—unaided, at any rate.

"And what are you going to do?" asked Levison.

"Take them in, you know, and spoof them."

"But how?"

"I haven't thought out that bit yet," confessed Arthur Augustus. "That is the only detail I haven't decided on."

Levison chuckled.

"The fact is, that's wheah I am goin' to ask your assistance, deah boy. You bein' such a deep beast, you know—"



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"Exactly!" grinned Levison. "Well, I'm your man! It's an honour to be called in to aid a member of the nobility."

"Yaas, that's so," assented Arthur Augustus unsuspiciously. "I am glad you look at it in that light, Levison."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Levison.

"Bai Jove! What are you cacklin' at?"

"Ahem! Now, let's put our heads together," said Levison. "We're going to spoof Tom Merry's study—"

"Yaas, wathah."

"And make them sing small and hide their diminished heads—"

"Exactly!"

"And turn the cackle against them, so that you won't hear anything more about war teas and things."

"Pwecisely!"

"It will want some thinking out. They're up to snuff, you know."

"Yaas, but as a fellah of wathah exceptional tact and judgment, I think I am weally equal to the job, you know."

It seemed to Levison that it was he who had to be equal to the job, but he forbore to say so. He wrinkled his brows in deep thought. Arthur Augustus watched him anxiously. Ernest Levison was, as Gussy had remarked, a "deep beast," and he was as full of tricks as a monkey. His tricks were not always good-natured—but on that point Arthur Augustus would have to decide. Arthur Augustus was resolved to dish Tom Merry's study in some stunning manner that would make the whole House cackle at them, but at the same time there was to be nothing of a questionable nature in the scheme.

A grin broke over Levison's thoughtful face.

"Got it, deah boy?"

"I think so."

"Go ahead!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly.

"They spoofed you with a war tea," remarked Levison.

"No good trying to spoof them the same way. But what about a spoof invitation to something a bit out of the common—say, an afternoon's entertainment at some grand place that doesn't exist?"

"Bai Jove!"

Suppose Tom Merry got a letter from, say, Colonel Somebody, asking him to come with a couple of friends to the colonel's place," grinned Levison. "The colonel explains that he's getting up an entertainment or something; and there's going to be a footer-match, and three players are wanted. He's heard of Tom Merry somehow, so thought of writing to him. We could word the letter so as to keep within the straight line of veracity—that's very important—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And at the same time spoof them into starting out with their footer clobber, to play a match at some place not marked on the map."

"Ha, ha!"

"They'll be in awfully high feather at being picked out for such a thing, and they're bound to swank a bit about it. And when they've spent an afternoon hunting for the colonel's place—"

"Gweat Scott!"

"They'll come home fagged out and rather ratty, and they'll find the whole school ready to cackle at them."

"Bai Jove! I knew you were a deep beast, Levison," said Arthur Augustus, in great admiration. "I don't think I should have thought of that!"

"I don't think you would," agreed Levison. "We shall have to think over the details, but there's the wheeze. They get a letter from Colonel Montmorency—"

"But Colonel Montmorency would not write a lettah to please us, Levison."

"Fathead! There isn't any Colonel Montmorency."

"Oh!"

"The letter invites them to Montmorency Lodge, near Abbotsford."

"Is it near Abbotsford, deah boy?"

"Of course it isn't, as there isn't such a place."

"Oh! But who will write the lettah?"

"I will. I can disguise my hand easily enough."

"Yaas, that's an old twick of yours, Levison. I nevah quite approved of twicks of that kind."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Levison—"

"I don't mean to imitate anybody's hand, you ass!" said Levison impatiently. "There is no harm in writing in the name of a man who doesn't exist."

"Yaas, I suppose that is so. But do you think they would be taken in, deah boy?"

"I'm pretty certain of it."

"Bai Jove! What uttah asses they will look, when they come dwaggin' home to find out they've been spoofed!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Montay Lowthah may welfect that pwactical jokes work both ways, aftah this. Ha, ha!"

And, in great good-humour, Arthur Augustus sat down to concoct, with Levison of the Fourth, the details of that great scheme, which, if successful, was to make Tom Merry & Co. sing small and hide their diminished heads.

CHAPTER 8.

A Very Flattering Invitation.

"A NY lettahs, deah boys"

It was Friday evening, and the post had come in at St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bore down upon the Terrible Three, who had just interviewed Mr. Boggs from Rylcombe. Tom

Merry had a letter in his hand, which he was turning over with rather a puzzled expression.

"One for Tommy," said Manners. "Is it from your uncle, Tom?"

"No; it's not his fist."

"Well, let's see whether it's a remittance," said Lowther. "If we don't get a remittance soon, we shall have to fall back on a war tea in the study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus, and he walked away. But there was a smile on the noble visage of Arthur Augustus as he went.

"Blessed if I know this fist!" said Tom, looking at his letter. "The postmark's Abbotsford."

"One of the Abbotsford School chaps, about the match," said Lowther.

"Looks like a man's fist."

"Well, open it, fathead!"

Tom Merry slit the envelope, and drew out the letter inside. He unfolded the letter, and stared.

"My hat!"

"Well, what's the merry news?" asked Manners.

"It's a bit of a surprise," said Tom. "You fellows ever heard of Colonel Montmorency?"

"Never!"

"It's from him, whoever he is," said Tom. "Look at it. Rather complimentary, I think. We've never heard of him, but he seems to have heard of us."

"More people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows," quoted Lowther sapiently.

The Terrible Three examined the letter together.

It was a sheet of notepaper of a very good quality, and upon it was engraved neatly the address:

"Montmorency Lodge,
Abbotsford."

The engraved address was of a very tasteful and expensive kind, and seemed to indicate that Montmorency Lodge was a place of some standing.

The letter ran:

"Dear Master Merry,—You will probably be surprised to receive a letter from one who is doubtless quite a stranger to you. I have, however, heard a good deal about the St. Jim's junior football team, of which I understand you are captain.

"I am about to ask a favour of you. Could you come to my place on Saturday afternoon, with a couple of your friends, to take part in a football match, for a very worthy purpose? I have arranged an entertainment for Saturday afternoon, and I have its success very much at heart. You could assist me very materially by acceding to my request.

"If you are able to oblige me, will you kindly reply by return of post, as the time is so short?

"Thanking you in anticipation, I remain,

"Yours sincerely,

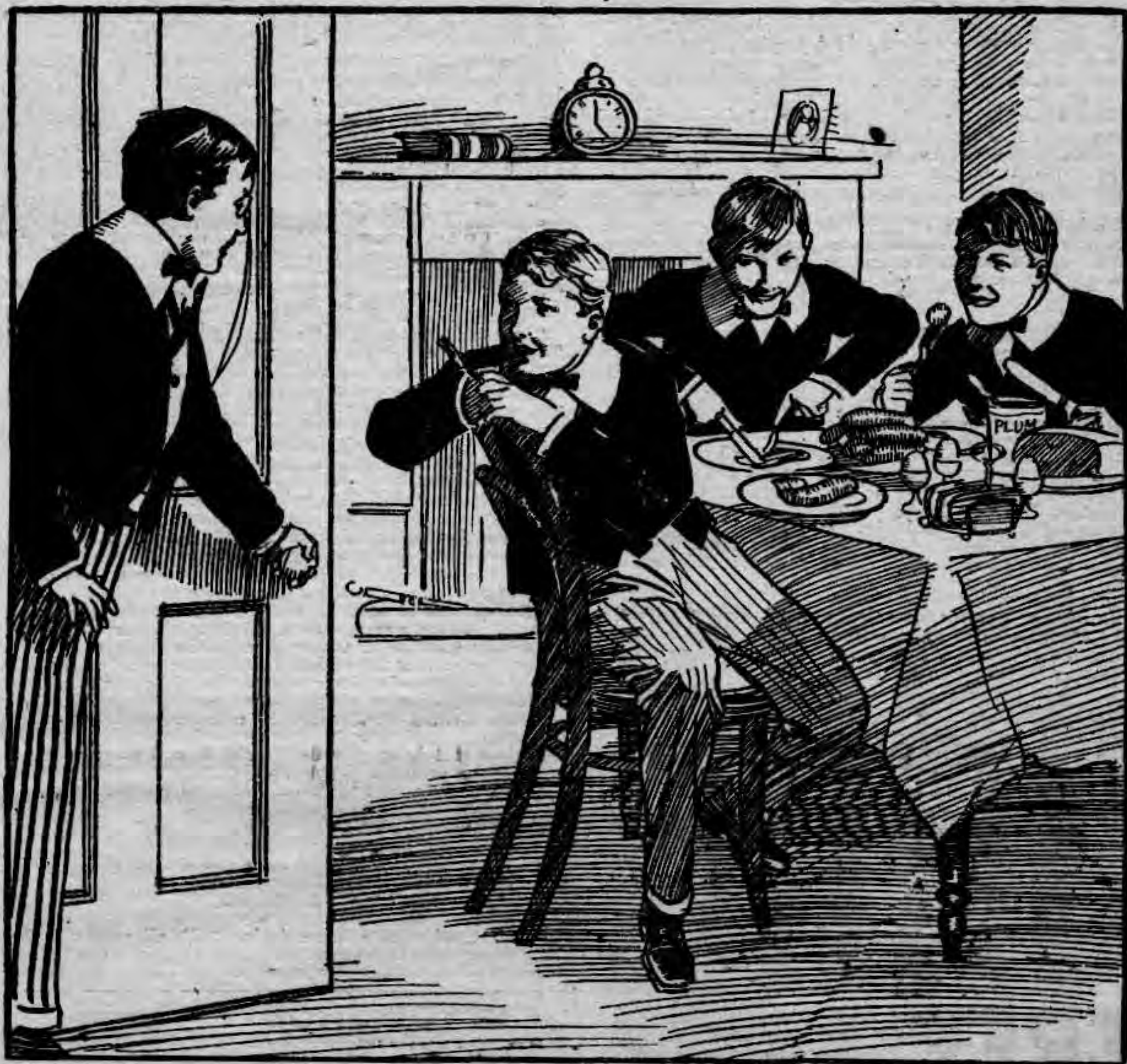
"J. MONTMORENCY (Colonel)."

"N.B.—It would be best to arrive in time for lunch, if you could arrange to do so."

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Arthur Augustus opened the door. The study looked very cheery. The festive board was spread. (See Chapter 5.)

The Terrible Three read the letter through twice, and regarded one another with looks of satisfaction.

"Jolly decent letter!" said Lowther heartily. "Some sort of an entertainment for wounded soldiers, very likely, as the old chap's a colonel."

"Or perhaps Red Cross bizney," remarked Manners. "He says it's for a very worthy purpose."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Something of that sort, I expect," he said. "Of course, a chap couldn't refuse. It's all right. I dare say the old boy has heard about our matches at Abbotsford School—may have a son there."

"Very likely."

"Queer he doesn't ask Abbotsford chaps, in that case, though," remarked Manners.

"He may have done so; he may have an Abbotsford team there," said Tom. "He only wants three chaps from here; so if it's to be a football match, there must be at least nineteen chaps from somewhere else."

"Yes, that's so."

"Might have asked the whole team while he was about it," said Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, if he's got a crowd of Abbotsford chaps, he don't need a whole team. Anyway, we can't refuse."

"Oh, no!"

"Who's going?" asked Lowther. "He says three; and we're three. He wants footballers; and we're about the pick of the bunch—ahem!"

"We three certainly," said Tom at once. "Of course, if it were only a question of footer, I might take Talbot or Figgins instead of you, Manners, old chap—"

"Br-r-r!" said Manners.

"But it isn't exactly that," said Tom. "I don't suppose the footer will be first-class, if you come to that. We shall be playing with a lot of chaps we don't know. It's a sort of treat, and we're going to have it together."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther heartily.

"I suppose it wouldn't do to take more than three, as he says three," added Tom. "Don't want to look like crowding a man. Linton will give us leave to get off before dinner, so as to get there before lunch."

"Oh, yes, rather!"

"I hope it won't be a war lunch," grinned Lowther.

"Well, Montmorency Lodge sounds like a good lunch," said Tom, laughing. "It's jolly decent to ask us, as he can't have seen us. But, of course, he knows that St. Jim's fellows are the real goods."

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll jolly well answer this letter, and catch the next post," said Tom. "He'll get it in the morning. Lucky there isn't a match on here to-morrow. It really couldn't

have happened better. If we'd been playing Greyfriars or Rookwood we should have had to decline respectfully."

The Terrible Three, in very cheery spirits, proceeded to their study to write the letter.

The letter was soon written.

"Dear Sir,—Thank you for your letter. I shall be pleased to come over to-morrow afternoon—Saturday—with a couple of friends, good footballers, and we shall be entirely at your service. We thank you heartily for the invitation.—Yours sincerely,
TOM MERRY."

The letter was duly addressed to Colonel Montmorency, Montmorency Lodge, Abbotsford, and the chums of the Shell bore it down to the school letter-box, and dropped it in, with great satisfaction.

CHAPTER 9.

Blake Gives Up a Good Idea!

"**B**AI JOVE! You fellows look vewy cheewy!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark when the Terrible Three came into the Common-room in the School House.

"Anybody left you a fortune?" asked Blake.

"Or asked you to a war tea?" queried Dick Julian.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Julian—"

"Just looking for you, Blake," said Tom Merry cheery.

"There's a fag match on to-morrow afternoon. I hadn't decided whether I should play, anyway; but, as it happens, I shall be out. You care to captain the side?"

"Any old thing," said Blake.

The St. Jim's junior team had a match booked with the Third Form for Saturday afternoon; but they did not regard it as much of a match, and anything in the way of a team was good enough. Tom Merry had intended to fill most of the places with second-rate players, who did not have a chance in the big matches. It was no sacrifice for the Terrible Three to give that match a miss.

"So you're goin' out, deah boys?"

"Yes; playing footer, too, as it happens."

"Bai Jove! Are you weally?"

"Hallo! Going down playing with my pal Grimes in Rylcombe?" asked Levison of the Fourth.

"Oh, no; we're going to Montmorency Lodge."

"Eh! Where?"

"Never heard of it," said Gore.

"Well, I've never heard of it before to-day," said Tom, with a smile. "I've had a letter from a Colonel Montmorency—rather a nice letter, and he wants three chaps to help in a footer-match—part of an entertainment he's getting up at the Lodge, in connection with some war charity, I expect. So we're going."

"Some fellows have all the luck," said Herries. "How the dickens does Colonel Montmorency know any thing about you?"

"He doesn't," said Tom. "He's heard of the St. Jim's junior team, and he's heard that I'm skipper, that's all."

"If he wants footballers, he ought to have come to our study," said Blake, with a shake of the head. "These old military johnnies are rather duffers."

"Or our study, bedad!" said Reilly. "Sure, you'd better take some of us along, Tommy darling—say, meself and Julian!"

"Good idea!" said Dick Julian. "You couldn't do better."

"He might like a really first-class footballer, though," remarked Kangaroo. "Perhaps I'd better go, Tommy. Leave Manners at home to take photographs—he really can take photographs."

"Can't I play footer?" demanded Manners, with some heat.

"Yes; but the colonel may want a really good man—"

"In that case, you'd better have me," suggested Blake.

"Figgins can captain the side that play the fags to-morrow."

"Any more offers?" asked Tom Merry, laughing.

"I congratulate you, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with a beaming smile. "You are weally vewy lucky. Aren't they, Levison?"

"Some fellows have all the luck," said Levison, with a nod.

"I suppose you wouldn't like to leave Lowther out, and take me, Tom Merry?"

"Thanks, no!" said Tom, with a smile.

There was a good deal of curiosity among the School House juniors on the subject of the letter. Tom Merry produced it, and it was read by about fifty fellows.

It was agreed that the colonel's request was a great compliment to St. Jim's, and that it was up to the Terrible Three to do their best to make the old gentleman's entertainment a success. There was a difference of opinion on only one point—the question of which three fellows ought to go. It was admitted that Tom himself had better go; but at least half a hundred substitutes offered themselves for Manners and Lowther.

Lunch at Montmorency Lodge, a footer-match, an entertainment, and meeting all sorts of people at a big establishment, was rather an attractive prospect, and would make a very agreeable half-holiday. But the captain of the Shell was not looking for substitutes. He was going to take his chums, as was really only to be expected.

Jack Blake wore a very thoughtful look as he went up to Study No. 6 for prep. Arthur Augustus was smiling.

In the study Jack Blake closed the door very carefully, somewhat to the surprise of his comrades.

"We're on this!" Blake announced.

"On what?" asked Dig.

"This!" said Blake impressively. "It's all very well for Tom Merry to take his own pals along to-morrow; but it's a question of upholding the credit of St. Jim's, you know."

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First-class footballers ought to go. - What are you grinning at, Gussy, you ass?"

"Was I gwinnin', deah boy?"

"Yee, ass! Look here, you chaps, this colonel fellow doesn't seem to know anything about Tom Merry, excepting that he's heard of him as being junior skipper here. Merry's never met him; they don't know one another by sight."

"I suppose they don't," said Dig, mystified. "What are you getting at?"

"I'm getting at this—what price us going instead?"

"What?"

"They don't know those chaps," argued Blake, "and we're up against those Shell bounders, anyway. They took Gussy in the other day—spoofed, and set the whole House cackling at this study. It's up to us to give a Roland for an Oliver. Suppose we follow them to-morrow—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And collar the bounders, and shut them up in the old tower, or somewhere—"

"Great Scott!"

"And go instead!" said Blake triumphantly.

"My hat! What a wheeze!" ejaculated Herries. "All's fair in war, and they did spoof Gussy! One good turn deserves another!"

"Hear, hear!" said Digby heartily. "We're on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"So you think it is a good idea, Gussy?" asked Blake, looking at him.

He thought rather highly of the scheme himself, but he had not expected that tribute of uncontrollable merriment from his aristocratic chum.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're on!" said Herries decidedly. "Colonel Montmorency won't know we're not the genuine article, and it's up to us to dish those Shell bounders for dishing Gussy as they did."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Ha, ha!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Oh, bai Jove! Oh, cwumps! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you burbling about?" roared Blake.

Arthur Augustus wiped his eyes. He was weeping with mirth. Blake and Herries and Dig regarded him somewhat wrathfully.

"Don't you think it's a good idea?" demanded Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha! No, deah boy!"

"And why not?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy can stay and keep watch on those bounders, when we've fastened them up somewhere," suggested Herries.

"Only three chaps can go to the Lodge."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

Jack Blake made a rush at his noble chum, grasped him forcibly, and jammed his head against the study wall. Then Arthur Augustus roared in quite a different manner.

"Yow-ow! Yawooh! You uttah ass! Gwooooh!"

"Now explain what you're cackling at, you image!" said Blake wrathfully. "Isn't it the wheeze of the season, you fathead? We can dish those Shell bounders all along the line, as easy as falling off a form."

"Gwooooh!" Arthur Augustus rubbed his head. "I have a great mind to give you a fearful thwashin', Blake! However, I will explain. It is quite impos for you to cawwy out that idea."

"Impossible for you, perhaps!" snorted Blake. "Easy enough for me! I can tell you I'm going to turn up at the Lodge to-morrow, anyway!"

"I am afraid you would find some difficulty in findin' your way to the Lodge, Blake."

"What rot! I suppose anybody in Abbotsford could direct us? They'd know at the post-office, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You chortling image—"

"I wefuse to be called a chortlin' image, Blake! I did not intend to tell you fellahs anythin' till to-morrow, as I do not believe in welyin' too much on the disewetion of youngstahs!"

"What!"

"However, I think I had bettah explain now."

"Explain what, you ass?"

Arthur Augustus grinned, and proceeded to explain. His chums listened to him in blank amazement at first, and they simply gasped. Then there was a yell of merriment in Study No. 6.

Jack Blake did not seek to carry out his great scheme of replacing the Terrible Three in the visit to Montmorency Lodge.

After Arthur Augustus had explained, he agreed that there would undoubtedly be considerable difficulty in finding the

way to the colonel's residence, and Study No. 6 agreed heartily that that difficult task should be left to Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 10.

Julian's Little Game.

DICK JULIAN, of the Fourth, was wearing a very thoughtful look on Saturday. Dick Julian had been doing some thinking.

Great minds, it is said, run in grooves. Certain it was that the wonderful scheme that had flashed into Jack Blake's active brain had also come into Dick Julian's.

Blake had abandoned the scheme for good reasons, and it was not mentioned outside Study No. 6. Dick Julian did not know anything about those reasons, and naturally did not even know that the same wheeze had occurred to Blake. Julian thought over the idea on Saturday morning so earnestly that Mr. Lathom gave him fifty lines for inattention in class. But Julian did not mind the lines.

When the Fourth Form came out after morning lessons, Hammond and Reilly and Kerruish followed Julian into the quadrangle.

They could see that Julian had something on his mind, and they were interested. It had long been the ambition of No. 5 Study to prove to all whom it might concern that No. 5 was quite on a par with No. 6, or any other study, and that even the Terrible Three were quite small beer in comparison.

"Well, what is it?" asked Hammond. "Thinkin' out a wheeze for Figgy's benefit? It's time we downed those New House bounders!"

"Sure, ye're right!" said Reilly. "And it's up to us, if we're going to make the fellows believe we're top study in the School House!"

"Go it, Julian!" said Kerruish encouragingly.

Julian shook his head.

"Never mind Figgins & Co.," he said. "They will keep. It's up against the Shell!"

"More power to yere elbow!"

"They diddled poor old Gussy the other day with a war tea!"

"And, faith, we diddled him with a deputation to the Housemaster!" grinned Reilly.

Julian chuckled.

"Yes; but it's up against the Fourth for those Shell bounders to diddle Gussy. What price diddling them?"

"Hear, hear!"

"You've seen that letter of Tom Merry's. They're going to a place they've never been to before, to see a man who don't know them by sight. Suppose a chap borrowed Tom Merry's name, and went instead? If we could shove those duffers somewhere, we could do the trick, and have the merry treat instead of them. As far as footer's concerned, too, we could play their heads off!"

"Oh, begorra!"

"Good egg!" said Hammond heartily. "It's a go! They diddled-Gussy, and it's up to us to give them as good as they handed-out!"

And the four chums retired to a quiet spot under the elms to discuss the scheme and elaborate it. Not a word was whispered outside their own select circle. The scheme was schemed, and the plot was plotted, and Julian & Co. went in to dinner with smiling faces, keeping their own counsel.

Little dreaming of the scheme schemed by No. 5 Study, the Terrible Three were making their preparations for the excursion. They came down from the dormitory with their bags as the juniors were coming in to dinner.

Tom Merry had asked his Form-master's permission to cut dinner in Hall, as lunch was to be provided at Montmorency Lodge.

"Bai Jove! You fellahs off!" smiled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Just off," said Tom cheerily.

"Have a good time," said Blake. "You'll be rather late for lunch, perhaps."

"Yes; but the colonel must know that we couldn't leave till after lessons," said Tom. "He won't mind that."

"I don't suppose he will say anythin' about it," smiled Arthur Augustus; and Study No. 6 went into the dining-hall smiling.

Julian & Co. stopped in the doorway. They had not counted on the Terrible Three missing dinner. Tom Merry & Co. went out, and walked down to the gates.

"Sure, dinner's ready!" remarked Reilly.

"No dinner for us," said Julian promptly. "They'll be in the train for Abbotsford before we can get after them. Come on!"

"But, I say——"

"Rats! Come on!"

Julian led the way, and his comrades followed him. Some excuse could be made later to Mr. Lathom for not turning up to dinner. The present business was to carry out the scheme that had been so carefully planned.

The four juniors ran out of the gates. Tom Merry & Co. were striding cheerily away from the winding lane to Rylcombe, where they were to take the train. The Fourth-Formers passed through a gap in the hedge, and ran along the fields to get ahead of the Shell trio.

Julian's comrades followed his lead without question. They left the Terrible Three, who were following the lane, well behind. They stopped at last in the hedge bordering the lane, breathing hard.

"They're in sight," said Julian, peering out into the road. "Don't show yourselves till they're right up. We've got to down them with one rush, or they'll put up a fight, and they're hot stuff in a scrap!"

"Bedad, and you're right!"

"I've got a cord in my pocket," went on Julian. "We'll tie them together by their wrists——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And lead them away into the wood. One of us will stay and look after them; only three can go to the Lodge. We'll toss up for odd man out!"

"Right you are!"

The Terrible Three came on, quite unsuspecting of the ambush ahead. They came abreast of the gap in the hedge.

"Now!" muttered Julian.

Like wolves from their lair, the four ambushed juniors rushed forth.

They were upon the Shell fellows in a twinkling.

The attack was so utterly unlooked-for that the Terrible Three were taken completely off their guard.

They were fairly bowled over by the sudden rush, and Tom Merry's bag went whirling into the road.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther went down in a heap, yelling, and the Fourth-Formers scrambled on them and pinned them down.

"What's the game?" roared Tom Merry, struggling.

"Julian, you are——"

"Gerroff!" gasped Lowther.

"Hold 'em!" panted Kerruish.

"Hurroo! It's downed ye are!" roared Reilly gleefully.

"Hurroo for ould Ireland!"

"What the merry thunder!" exclaimed Manners. "I'll pulverise you for this, Hammond! Lemme gerrup!"

"What are you up to, you mad duffers?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Snuff!" said Julian cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let go!" yelled Tom, as Julian dragged his wrists together.

As Reilly was sitting on his chest, the captain of the Shell had little chance to resist. Dick Julian grinned, and tied the cord tightly round the Shell fellow's wrists.

"Yank Lowther here!" said Julian.

"Bedad, here ho is!"

"Lemme gerrup!" yelled Lowther. "I'll—I'll——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three were at too great a disadvantage. In spite of their strenuous resistance, their wrists were tied together on the cord, and they were helpless. Then they were allowed to rise to their feet, with sulphurous looks.

"Now, what does this mean?" growled Tom Merry.

"We've got to catch a train, you chumps. You know we're going to Montmorency Lodge!"

"You're not!" said Julian, with a chuckle. "We're going to save you the trouble!"

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"You!" yelled Lowther.

"Little us!" grinned Julian. "I dare say the colonel will take us for the genuine article; but if he doesn't, we'll explain that you couldn't come, and we've come instead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth-Formers.

"Why, you cheeky ass——" shouted Tom Merry wrathfully.

"Bring 'em along!"

"You rotter! We won't stir a step!" yelled Manners.

"Like me to help with my boot?" grinned Julian.

The Terrible Three decided to walk without the help of Julian's boot. With Hunnish looks, they allowed themselves to be marched into the wood. Their feelings were almost too deep for words. It was just such a wheeze as they might have played themselves upon their old rivals, Figgins & Co. of the New House; but they had never dreamed of such a trick being played upon them by rivals in their own House. But Study No 5 was on the war-path, and fortune had favoured them.

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"BUNTER'S BIG BROTHER!" A Fine Story of Greyfriars.

"We'll leave 'em here," said Julian, fastening the end of the cord to a branch. "Now, one chap's got to stay with them. Toss up for it, you three."

Kerruish and Reilly and Hammond proceeded to do so, and Kerruish was odd man out.

"You stay, Kerruish."

"Right-ho!" said the Manx junior. "Good luck to you! I'm missing my dinner for nothing."

"We'll think of you at lunch with the colonel."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, are you rotters really going to Montmorency Lodge?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You bet!"

"You cheeky ass!"

"It's up to us!" explained Julian. "You spoofed Gussy with a war tea, and Gussy's in our Form. We're spoofing you out of an afternoon with the merry colonel. All's fair in war, you know. Come, you chaps, we'll cut across the fields to Wayland."

And Julian, Hammond, and Reilly walked off chortling. Kerruish sat on a log and ate toffee.

"Kerruish, old chap, let us loose," said Manners persuasively.

"Catch me!" said Kerruish.

"I say, old chap——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Look here, you rotter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three gave it up. There was evidently nothing to be got from the Manx junior. Julian & Co. had disappeared. Julian, carrying Tom Merry's bag with the Terrible Three's football "clobber" in it. The three young rascals were taking the short cut to Wayland Junction, it being too late to catch the train Tom Merry & Co. had intended to catch at Rylcombe.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Monty Lowther dismally. "What a day out!"

"What a sell!" mumbled Manners.

Tom Merry knitted his brows. There seemed no way of escape. The juniors could not get their hands loose. Suddenly through the wood came the sound of a shrill whistle. The Shell fellows knew that whistle. It belonged to Figgins of the Fourth. Nobody else at St. Jim's whistled so much out of tune as George Figgins. And with one voice the Terrible Three yelled:

"Rescue, St. Jim's!"

CHAPTER 11.

Figgins and Co. Takes a Hand.

F IGGINS & CO. of the New House, were sauntering along the footpath through the wood, proceeding in a leisurely way to Wayland. Figgins & Co. were great footballers, but they had not been tempted to stay within gates for the fog match that afternoon.

Without much self-sacrifice, they gave up their places to three lesser lights of the football club, and walked out to go to the Wayland cinema instead. And as they strolled along the footpath, they heard that sudden yell through the misty trees:

"Rescue, St. Jim's!"

"Hallo! That sounds like Tom Merry's toot," said Figgins, halting.

"They're gone to Abbotsford, I understood," remarked Kerr.

"Dropped on the Grammarians, perhaps," grinned Fatty Wynn. "Come on!"

Figgins & Co. were on terms of the keenest rivalry with all the School House. But outside the walls of the School, St. Jim's fellows stood shoulder to shoulder, against Grammarians and everybody in general. So Figgins & Co. rushed through the trees in the direction of the shout, quite prepared to back up their old rivals if they had fallen among foes.

"Rescue! This way!"

"Here we are!" panted Figgins.

"Great Scott!"

"What the dickens——"

The New House chums stared in amazement at the strange scene, as they burst upon the spot. The sight of Tom Merry and Lowther, with their hands tied in a row upon a cord attached to a tree, and Kerruish of the Fourth keeping guard over them, took them quite by surprise.

"What's the name of this game?" ejaculated Figgins.

"Let us loose, Figgy, old chap!" pleaded Tom Merry.

"You sheer off!" exclaimed Kerruish. "This is a School House bizney, and New House bounders can keep clear!"

"Come on, Figgins!"

"Keep off, Figgins!"

Figgins & Co. chuckled.

"We must see into this," said Figgins gravely. "Little boys shouldn't fall out like this. What's the game?"

"We've been collared," growled Lowther. "Let us loose!"

"I can see you've been collared," agreed Figgins; "but before we chip in, we've got to know the rights of the matter. We'll hear both sides before we take a hand in the internal politics of the School House."

"That's only fair," grinned Kerr.

"I thought you were gone to play footer at the merry old colonel's entertainment," said Fatty Wynn. "You'll miss lunch at this rate."

"It's a rotten joke of Julian's," explained Tom Merry. "Julian and Hammond and Reilly have gone to the lodge in our place."

"My only summer bonnet!" ejaculated Figgins, in astonishment. "What a wheeze!"

"A regular corker!" said Kerr, in admiration.

"You see, the colonel doesn't know us by sight, and they're going as us," said Tom. "They've lost our train, and cut across the fields towards Wayland. We can run them down in time, if you let us loose, and give them a licking, and catch a train at Wayland for Abbotsford."

"Buck up!" urged Monty Lowther.

"Well, what have you got to say, Kerruish?"

"Never mind what Kerruish says," growled Manners. "Let us loose, and don't waste time!"

Figgins shook his head.

"Must hear both sides," he said.

"Certainly," grinned the Co.

"It's our study up against these Shell bounders," explained Kerruish. "Don't you interfere. It's nothing to do with the New House. And it would be spoiling the jape of the season."

"Something in that," agreed Figgins.

"Look here—" began Tom Merry.

"Shush! We'll think it out," said Figgins.

The three New House juniors retired a few paces. Figgins with a wide grin upon his rugged countenance. They consulted together in low voices, their remarks being punctuated by many chuckles.

The three prisoners and Kerruish watched them anxiously. The Terrible Three's excursion depended on Figgins & Co.'s decision. And Kerruish had equal reason for anxiety, as the success of Study No. 5's jape depended on it. Kerruish hadn't much chance single-handed against the New House trio.

Figgins & Co. came back towards them at last.

"Well?" said Tom. "What are you going to do, you duffers?"

"The School House!" said Figgins, with a chuckle.

"What?"

"Collar him!"

Three pairs of hands were laid upon Kerruish at once.

"Go it!" chorled Monty Lowther, in great glee.

"Hands off!" roared Kerruish.

"Sit on him!"

The Manxman put up quite a terrific fight, but the odds were much too great. Kerruish went down into the grass, and Fatty Wynn sat on him. With the fat Fourth Former's weight on his chest, Kerruish had to give in.

"Good old Figg!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Now let us loose, old chap! We've got lots of time yet to catch a train at Wayland."

"Lots!" agreed Figgins. "More than you think, perhaps. Yank that School House bouncer here."

"Leggo!" gurgled Kerruish.

"What on earth are you up to?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

Figgins & Co. did not explain; but their actions spoke for themselves. They yanked Kerruish to the Terrible Three, and Figg produced a whipcord from his pocket, and the Manx junior's wrists were securely fastened to the cord. The guardian had become a prisoner like his captives.

"There, I think that will do!" smiled Figgins.

"You silly duffers!" howled Monty Lowther. "What are you up to?"

"Good-bye!" said Kerr.

"Let us loose!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Can't be did," said Figgins, with a shake of the head.

"You see, you'd be in the way."

"What do you mean, you fathead?"

"You say Julian & Co. have cut across the fields to Wayland?"

"Yes, ass!"

"And there's still time to run them down?"

"Yes. They haven't been gone ten minutes. Let us loose!"

"Then we'll run them down for you."

"Blow them! Never mind about running them down. We want to catch the train for Abbotsford!"

"Sorry! We're catching that train!"

"You!" yelled the Terrible Three together.

Figgins nodded cheerfully.

"Little us!" he said. "Julian's wheeze is too good to be spoiled. We're going to carry it out for him. Ta-ta!"

And Figgins & Co. walked away chuckling, leaving the Terrible Three and Kerruish staring at one another blankly.

CHAPTER 12.

A Surprise for Jack Blake!

"THIS is where we smile," remarked Julian.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Julian & Co. were sauntering cheerfully towards the Wayland road. There were plenty of trains for Abbotsford from the junction, and they were in no hurry. The colonel would expect his guests late to lunch.

They smiled loudly.

The Terrible Three, accustomed to being monarchs of all they surveyed in the School House, had been dished completely. The insult to the Fourth, in the spoofing of Arthur Augustus, had been wiped out by No. 5 Study. It was a feather in their cap, and they were extremely pleased with themselves.

"Hallo, here's somebody in a hurry!" said Julian, glancing back, as there was a sound of rapid footsteps on the footpath behind.

"New House bounders!" said Hammond.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were coming on at top speed, as if they were on the cinder-path. The three School House juniors walked on, but they stopped as the Co. came panting up.

"Looking for you!" said Figgins.

"Anything up?" asked Julian.

"Yes, you're wanted."

"Oh, rats! Lathom can jaw us later for missing dinner," said Reilly. "We're not goin' back now."

"Hallo! Keep off, you dotty duffers!" shouted Julian, as the New House trio rushed at them.

But Figgins & Co. did not keep off.

Their sudden charge bowled the three over, and they went into the grass, struggling furiously with the New House Co.

There was a terrible struggle.

But Figgins & Co. had the best of it. The School House fellows were down, and Figgins & Co. kept them down.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE INTRUDER!"

With a New House fellow sitting on each School House junior's chest, the tussle was over, and Figgins & Co. were victorious!

"Got 'em!" said Figgins.

"What's the game, you long-legged chump!" gasped Julian. "Look here, we don't want any House rows now."

"We're on to your little game," said Figgins severely.

"We can't allow you to diddle poor old Tommy like that."

"Mind your own bizney, hang you!" growled Hammond.

"This is our business," explained Figgins. "Dishing Tom Merry is our game. You are really trespassing. We're going to see the cheery colonel."

"Why, you rotter—"

"Ye thafo of the worruld!" roared Reilly. "Bedad, I'll make shavings of ye! Lemme gerrup, Wynn, ye fat baste!"

Fatty Wynn grinned, and settled himself a little more comfortably on the Irish junior's chest.

"You've tied up those Shell bounders," continued Figgins.

"We'll tie you up if you like. Or you can give us your word, honest Injun, to go straight back to St. Jim's; anyway, to keep clear of us, and not chip in. It's our game, and you bounders are outside. Savvy?"

"Never!"

"Righto! We'll tie you. Yank off their neckties!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Julian.

"No time to waste," said Kerr.

Julian & Co. gave their captors Hunnish looks. This was too utterly exasperating.

"Look here, you can't go to Montmorency Lodge, if that's your game—"

"Can't we?" grinned Figgins. "We rather think we can. If you can replace poor old Tommy, so can we. And the merry old Colonel will be pleased. He'll get some first-rate footballers instead of rank duffers, you know! If he'd known a bit more about St. Jim's, he would have asked for New House chaps in the first place."

"Yes, rather!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"You silly ass!" roared Hammond.

"No time for jaw," said Figgins. "Pile in!"

Julian & Co. resisted desperately, but in vain. As it happened to the Terrible Three, it happened to No. 5 Study. They were at a disadvantage, and they had to give in. They were held firmly down while their own neckties and handkerchiefs were tied round their wrists and knotted.

"Now up with them!" chuckled Figgins. "We'll take them back to the others. They can keep each other company while we're gone to Abbotsford."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Co. roared at the idea. Julian and his comrades did not join in the merriment. They had no desire to see the Terrible Three again in these exasperating circumstances.

But they had no choice about that. Figgins & Co. took them by the arms, and walked them away. Their hands being secured, they had to go. The New House trio carefully chose the loneliest path to the wood. They did not want to meet anyone as they led their rivals away, captives to their bow and spear, so to speak.

They entered the wood, and reached the glade where they had left the Terrible Three and Kerruish.

They found those exasperated juniors slanging one another at a great rate, tempers being somewhat on edge by this time.

"Hallo, here are those rotters again!" growled Manners.

"We've brought you some company," grinned Figgins.

"We don't want you to be lonely while we're luncthing with the colonel."

"Figgins, you rotter—"

"Shush!" said Figgins chidingly. "Fasten them up, dear boys! My hat! What a collection."

"This serves you right, Julian, you fathead!" grunted Lowther.

Julian grinned faintly.

"Can't be helped," he said. "If we'd guessed what these New House bounders were after us for, we'd have knocked them into the middle of next week. They took us by surprise."

"Look here, Figgins—"

"No time for jaw. Tie them up!"

Julian and Hammond and Reilly found their hands attached to the strong cord which already secured the Terrible Three and Kerruish to the tree. The sight was a curious one—seven juniors with their wrists tied on one rope, in a frowning and furlous row. Figgins & Co. seemed to see something comic in the sight, for they chuckled incessantly.

"You can't leave us like this, Figgy!" said Julian, as the New House trio turned to go. "Look here—"

"Weren't you going to leave Tommy like that?" chortled Figgins.

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"BUNTER'S BIG BROTHER!" A Fine Story of Greyfriars.

"Ye-es—but—"

"Serve you jolly well right!" grunted Tom Merry.

"But Kerruish was going to let them loose later on," said Julian. "Look here, Figgins—"

"I'll tell you what," said Figgins. "I'll telephone St. Jim's from Wayland, and tell Blake to come and fetch you. That'll be too late for any of you to get to Abbotsford and spoil our game."

"Oh, my hat!"

The thought of a grinning crowd of St. Jim's fellows coming and finding them in that ridiculous position was dismaying to the prisoners. Captivity seemed preferable.

"Don't!" exclaimed Lowther. "We'll take our chance."

"No, you won't!" said Figgins, grinning. "I'll 'phone, you bet! I'll leave it till we get to Abbotsford, to make sure. Ta-ta!"

"Look here, you New House rotter—"

Figgins & Co. walked away. The rivals of the School House were left to contemplate one another, with what satisfaction they could find under the circumstances.

The New House trio arrived at Wayland, and jumped into a train for Abbotsford. They chortled in great glee as the train ran out of the station. It was a great triumph for the New House, and Figgins & Co. rejoiced in it.

As soon as they alighted from the train at Abbotsford Station, Figgins hurried to a telephone-box to ring up St. Jim's. He gave the number of the telephone in the prefect's room in the School House, and Kildare's voice answered him over the wires.

"Can I speak to Master Blake of the Fourth Form?" asked Figgins. "I have a very important message." Figgins was very careful to disguise his voice.

"Well, I suppose you can," came Kildare's voice. "Hang on, and I'll send for him."

"Thanks!"

Figgins held on. A few minutes later the voice of Blake of the Fourth came through.

"Hallo! Are you there?"

"Is that you, Blake?"

"Yes. I know that toot! Is that Figgins?"

"Yes, my pippin! Have the Third beaten you?"

"No, ass! We've beaten them five goals to nil. Where are you speaking from, you New House chump?"

"Abbotsford."

"What the merry thunder are you doing at Abbotsford?"

"Just going to call on Colonel Montmorency."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"If you'd like a little walk, Blake, you can trot along to Rylcombe Wood, and you'll find a gang of School House dummbies tied to a tree. Tom Merry will be glad to see you."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"We've left 'em there, and we're calling on the colonel instead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes. Funny, isn't it?" chuckled Figgins.

"Funny—ha, ha!—jolly funny! Funniest thing I've ever heard of!" came Blake's voice, in gasping tones. "A regular corker, Figgy!"

"You'll find them in the glade some distance from the footpath, towards the moor," said Figgins. "You might trot along and let them loose. The dear little fellows might catch cold, you know. Ta-ta!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins rang off, and left the telephone-box. He rejoined Kerr and Wynn with a beaming countenance.

"Blake seemed awfully tickled," he remarked. "I thought he'd be rather wild at us dishing the School House like this, but he only seemed tickled. Come on. We've got to inquire our way to Montmorency Lodge."

And Figgins & Co. left the station in great spirits, to inquire their way to Montmorency Lodge, and to learn, in the course of their somewhat protracted inquiry, the reason why Blake had been so exceedingly tickled by that telephone message.

CHAPTER 13.

A Very Happy Afternoon.

JACK BLAKE almost limped out of the prefects' room in the School House. That message from Figgins at Abbotsford had almost doubled him up. Since Arthur Augustus had explained the true inwardness of the colonel's invitation to the Terrible Three, Study No. 6 had wondered how Tom Merry would get on in his quest of a non-existent Montmorency Lodge. But this development was, as Blake said, a corker!

Blake was almost weeping as he came down the passage, where his chums were waiting for him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass inquiringly upon him.

"Anythin' on, deah boy?"

"Ha, ha! Yes. It was Figgins. Ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"They've diddled Tom Merry—fixed him up somewhere—and gone to see the colonel instead of him!" gasped Blake.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Same idea that I had, you know," gurgled Blake. "Only Figgins don't know there isn't any colonel and isn't any Montmorency Lodge."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers yelled. But Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Bai Jove! That ass Figgins has uttably wuined my jape!" he exclaimed indignantly. "The attah ass!"

"Oh, this is a giddy improvement!" chuckled Blake. "It's better than ever! I wonder whether Figgy has found the lodge yet?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even Arthur Augustus grinned at that.

The Fourth-Formers put on their coats and left the school. They were quite eager to see Tom Merry. Twenty minutes later they found the unhappy prisoners in the wood.

Tom Merry & Co. were struggling desperately with the cord, but in vain. They had been tied too securely to get loose.

They wrestled with the cord, and stamped their feet to keep them warm, and made remarks to one another that were perfectly Hunnish. And they did not look wholly pleased when Blake & Co. came in sight through the trees. The prospect of release was grateful and comforting, but the smiles of Study No. 6 were exasperating.

"My hat! A whole family of them!" ejaculated Blake. "Did you join the merry party for the lodge, Julian?"

Julian grinned sheepishly.

"The silly ass tied us up here!" snorted Tom Merry. "They were going to see the colonel instead of us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then Figgins & Co. dished them in the same way, and serve them right!"

Blake & Co. yelled.

So many competitors for the honour of visiting a colonel who did not exist struck them as very funny.

"Oh, cut the cackle!" growled Tom Merry. "I suppose that New House ass telephoned you?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Well, there's nothing to cackle at. Get us loose, for goodness' sake!"

"Yaas, wathah! Anythin' to oblige, deah boys!"

"We're jolly well going after them!" said Monty Lowther. "We shall be too late for visiting the colonel, I'm afraid—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But we'll make an example of those New House bounders! What are you grinning at, you silly images?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Arthur Augustus. "That's a wippin' ideah. Wait for the boundahs outside Montmowency Lodge, and mop them up, you know!"

"That's what we're going to do!" growled Tom Merry. "We won't make a scene at the colonel's place—oh, stop cackling!—but we'll meet them outside!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll come and lend a hand!" exclaimed Julian.

"Faith, and so we will!"

Blake & Co., almost suffocating with merriment, released the prisoners. Tom Merry & Co. did not waste a moment. Seven juniors started off at a trot for Wayland, leaving Blake & Co. shrieking.

"Bai Jove! This is weally too good!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Come on, deah boys! We'll tell all the fellahs, weedy to gweat those uttiah asses when they come home!"

Study No. 6 walked home to St. Jim's in great spirits. Arthur Augustus' wonderful jape had worked out on more extensive lines than he had anticipated. Figgins & Co., and Julian and his comrades were seeking the mythical colonel as well as the Terrible Three, and it was quite entertaining to think of ten eager juniors engaged upon that extraordinary quest.

Tom Merry and his comrades caught a train for Abbotsford in a grim humour. The hatchet had been buried between the School House rivals. Both parties were very anxious to find Figgins & Co. The seven juniors arrived at Abbotsford as the early winter dusk was falling.

Tom Merry inquired at the station for directions to Montmorency Lodge. The porter he questioned looked at him curiously.

"Ain't never heard of such a place," he said. "You're the second young gent what's asked me this arternoon. Never heard of it!"

"Try the post-office," suggested Julian.

The School House juniors tried the post-office, with the same result. Colonel Montmorency and Montmorency Lodge had never been heard of at the post-office. They came out in a puzzled mood.

"There's Figgins!" shouted Reilly.

Figgins & Co. were coming towards the post-office, looking somewhat tired and cross. The School House party bore down on them.

"You've been to the lodge?" demanded Tom Merry.

Figgins snorted.

"Can't find the place!" he snapped. "It's a sell! We've been inquiring up and down and round about for two hours, and nobody at Abbotsford has ever heard of Montmorency Lodge. We've been all over the dashed town!"

"And I'm fearfully hungry," said Fatty Wynn plaintively. There was a general chuckle from Tom Merry & Co. Figgins & Co. had not enjoyed their triumph, after all.

"We were jolly well going to skin you—" began Tom.

"Oh, don't start ragging now!" said Figgins crossly. "I wish I'd never thought of the idea. We've had an awful afternoon—tramping all the time, and asking people about the dashed place! Blessed if we can find it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There must be some mistake about that letter!" growled Kerr. "I don't believe there's such a place at all!"

"But there must be!" said Tom. All Tom Merry's warlike feelings vanished at the sight of the tired and dispirited New House trio. "They don't know about it at the station or the post-office, but—"

"We were going to try the post-office," said Figgins.

"We've just tried it. They've never heard of the place."

"It's dashed queer!"

"Faith, it's omadhauns ye are!" said Reilly. "Sure, the colonel will have been expecting us—somebody, at least—and he'll have been disappointed. The footer match must be over now."

"Well, we ought to call on the colonel and explain," said Tom Merry. "The place can't be far away. We must find it."

"Oh, we'll have another try," said Figgins. "I'm beginning to believe that there isn't any Montmorency Lodge at all."

"But here's the address—on the colonel's letter."

"Well, it's jolly queer!"

The rival juniors joined forces for the quest of Montmorency Lodge. For a long hour they tramped about Abbotsford, asking in shops and post-offices and of pedestrians for directions to Montmorency Lodge. But nobody in Abbotsford had ever heard of such a place. Colonel Montmorency's name was quite unknown. The juniors were already late for calling-over at the school, and the dusk by this time had deepened into dark.

They gave it up at last.

Tired and cross, they returned to the railway station, and took the train for Wayland, giving up Montmorency Lodge as a bad job.

They were not in cheerful spirits as they tramped home to St. Jim's, after the local train had borne them to Rylcombe.

Taggles, the porter, grunted as he opened the school gates for them.

"Which you're to report yourselves to the Head," he grunted.

And the tired and dispirited juniors tramped on to the School House and presented themselves in the Head's study. Grinning faces watched them come in, and a crowd gathered to meet them when they came out of the Head's presence. Dr. Holmes frowned at the sight of the delinquents, but Tom Merry showed him the colonel's letter, and explained the circumstances, and the unfortunate party were excused for missing call-over. They came out of the study, and found about fifty fellows crowded at the end of the passage, all chuckling.

"Had a good time, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Enjoyed yourselves?" chuckled Levison.

"Did you find the colonel?"

"How did you like the lodge?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see where the joke comes in," snapped Tom Merry. "We couldn't find the place after all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've had a rotten time!" said Julian.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't believe there is any Montmorency Lodge!" growled Kerr.

"Wight on the wicket, deah boy!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"What do you know about it, ass?" snapped Monty Lowther.

"Lots, Lowthah! You see, I happen to know you have been spoofed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 469.

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

OUR GREAT ADVENTURE SERIAL. START TO-DAY!



THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

CARTON ROSS, a lonely and friendless youth, sole heir to a great fortune, though unaware of it, is hunted by a party of outlaws led by DIRK RALWIN. He is befriended by HARVEY MILBURNE and his daughter LORNA, who lose their home and are separated in an attempt to defend him from his pursuers.

Ross is captured by the brigands, but, with Lorna's help, recovers his wallet—containing papers which prove his identity—and escapes. Later they fall in with RODDY GARRIN, an Englishman, and his companion AH CHING, a Chinaman. The outlaws continue the chase, together with HUXTON FENNER, a Yankee, who had previously been a companion of Garrin and Ah Ching, but had deserted them.

They are captured and taken aboard a Mexican cruiser, from which they escape, the cruiser afterwards being blown up during a mutiny aboard her. Eventually Lorna is captured, and taken to Dirk Ralwin, at Quito, a settlement on the banks of the Amazon, where she sees her father. Ross, who is outside the room, hears Dirk Ralwin offer a reward of ten thousand dollars to the man who captures him, and returns to his friends Garrin and Ah Ching, who are hidden in a hollow covered by foliage close to the river. Later, CAPTAIN ESHMAN, of the cruiser which had been blown up, is captured by them. Ah Ching, by a clever plan, obtains the ten thousand dollars' reward, and returns with it to the hollow. While they are talking, Harvey Milburne, who has been released by Ralwin, appears, weak and ill. Ross and his friends go with him to San Ramo, where he dies.

Lorna escapes from her prison, and falls in with a race of pigmies. Later, she is rescued by Carton Ross and his friends.

They lie down to rest at night in a glade carpeted with white flowers, which Ah Ching afterwards discovers are poisonous.

He carries Lorna and Ross—who are asleep—to a place of safety, and returns for Roddy Garrin. While he is gone Ross and Lorna are carried away. Not until a long search has been made do Garrin and Ah Ching discover a trail.

(Now read on.)

Following the Trail—Huxton Fenner Again.

Ah Ching grinned maliciously.

"Mista Garrin," he said, "we have great settling with Dirk Ralwin by-and-by."

Roddy Garrin, his face pale and drawn, looked at Ah Ching.

"Let us hope we can reach Lorna and Ross before any harm befalls them," he said. "They have foiled Ralwin's plans so many times in the past that I am afraid they will have little mercy shown to them now they are once more in his power!"

Quickening their footsteps, they hurried on, but soon found that the trail was getting faint, for they were now on a sandy stretch of land which lay for a great distance in front of them. Soon no trail at all could be seen, and the two comrades looked at each other in despair.

"What ever shall we do now?" exclaimed Roddy Garrin, looking at Ah Ching in bewilderment. "The trail is lost, and it is unlikely we can pick it up again. It may mean a long delay, and who knows what may be happening to our comrades?"

Ah Ching looked thoughtful. Then he raised his head, and nodded in the direction of the sandy plain in front of them.

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In this Week's "MAGNET."

"BUNTER'S BIG BROTHER!" A Fine Story of Greyfriars.

"See," he said, "there are trees rising in the distance, so I guess we go straight on, and perhaps we may pick up the trail again on the other side. The horsemen would make for the trees ahead of us, so we do same. We must keep on now, for delay may mean death to Missie Lorna and Mista Ross!"

Garrin nodded assent, and the two comrades set off across the plain. Both were faint from the hard walking they had done, but each bore up and hurried on, hoping to find their friends before darkness came on once more.

While Roddy Garrin and Ah Ching, footsore and weary from their long tramp, were beginning to despair of ever finding their missing comrades, Lorna and Carton Ross were being taken away to an unknown destination by a hostile band of Indians, under the command of Huxton Fenner, the renegade American in Dirk Ralwin's service.

It was a stroke of sheer luck that had fallen to Fenner, who had never anticipated that his journey into the forest would be attended with such an important result as the capture of Carton Ross, the grandson of the great financier whose tragic end had so profoundly stirred the imagination of the whole world.

Sent on a foraging expedition with his Indian followers, he was returning from his lawless enterprise, when he himself caught sight of a young man and a girl, apparently lifeless, stretched out on the ground close to the path he and his men were following.

It did not take Fenner many moments to discover the identity of the two wayworn travellers. Surprise and delight filled his heart. To have Carton Ross entirely in his power had long been his ambition, although it had seemed to be an entirely unrealisable one.

Over him stood Dirk Ralwin, powerful, cruel, and suspicious, a man who never forgot nor forgave an injury. Brave, as most men of his desperate and unscrupulous character are brave, Fenner had never dared to put himself into open opposition to his dreaded chief.

Nor did he intend to do so now. He was much too clever and calculating to risk bringing swift detection and ruin upon himself by arousing Dirk Ralwin's alarm and enmity.

But now that Carton Ross was in his hands, he had no intention of letting him go again. It was too fine and promising a chance of realising all that he had ever hoped for and dreamed of to be missed. The heir to the largest fortune in the world was at his mercy, and he meant to make such use of the young Britisher as would place him at a single bound in a position where the gratification of his every desire would be a simple matter.

Unlike Dirk Ralwin, the leader of the insurrectionary movement, Fenner desired money, not for the attainment of power and influence alone, but more ardently for enjoying the worldly delights that riches can place in the possession of men.

A born gambler, he longed for some bottomless purse that he could draw from, and never experience the vain and bitter regret of the ruined worshipper in the temple of chance.

It had been a dream, seemingly unattainable, and now the dream looked like speedily becoming a dazzling reality. Thoughts of the future that lay ahead intoxicated his imagination as he rode along at the head of his Indian followers.

Close behind him came Carton Ross and Lorna, each borne on a litter roughly made with branches torn from the trees, and carried by four stalwart natives, who strode along with an ease and quickness born of lifelong experience in traveling through the jungle wilds of the Amazonian forests and deserts.

The two captives, though only separated by a few paces from each other, were unable to converse, owing to the vigilant attitude of their guards. Nor were they successful in obtaining more than an occasional fleeting glimpse of one another, and neither knew whether or not Roddy Garrin and Ah Ching were companions with them in misfortune.

Awakening from the heavy sleep into which the strong scent of the poison flowers had plunged them, they found themselves surrounded by Huxton Fenner and his men. Escape was impossible. Scarcely had they opened their eyes when they were seized and made prisoners.

To the indignant remonstrances made by Carton Ross against the seizure of himself and his companion, Fenner gave no response beyond an amused smile. So Ross, realising that further protest would be useless, resigned himself to his fate.

About his own immediate future he cared very little. Fortune had favoured him so often before that he was confident it would not fail to do so again. For the sake of Lorna, however, he fervently hoped that the plight they were both in would soon be at an end.

His mind was filled with anxious thoughts concerning the girl. She had undergone trial and hardship of the severest kind, that might well have shattered the health of the strongest member of her sex. Then the death of her father had come as a great shock to her, although she had made but slight reference to it.

Regarding himself as responsible for her safety and welfare, Carton Ross thought of Lorna with alarmed solicitude and misgiving. The knowledge that, in his present unenviable position, he was utterly powerless to do anything for her vexed and irritated him beyond measure.

Something that was in his mind must have shown itself in the expression of his face, for Huxton Fenner, riding close alongside the litter, bent down in his saddle with a peculiarly crafty and ingratiating smile on his lips.

"Have no fear for the girl," said the white renegade. "So long as she is docile and obedient she will come to no harm. You can take my word for it."

Looking up into the dark yet fallow face lowering above him, Ross was instantly conscious of a feeling of intense distrust and aversion. Instinct warned him that this man with the designing smile was an enemy as much to be feared as Dirk Ralwin himself.

"You are silent," said Huxton Fenner. "Do you doubt the truth of what I tell you? If so, you will have cause to regret it when you find that the young lady is as safe with me as she would be under her own father's care."

A look of sincere grief showed in Carton Ross' bright, fearless eyes.

"Alas!" he exclaimed impulsively. "Harvey Milburne is dead. He died from the effects of the cruel treatment he received while a prisoner in the hands of your master."

"Ah," said Huxton Fenner, his eyes lighting up with a sudden gleam of mingled curiosity and surprise, "then your companion is the girl Lorna Milburne? I thought so at first, but was not quite sure, as I have only a faint remembrance of her when she was Dirk Ralwin's unwilling guest. And her father is dead? Well, he had lived his life, and as he was a ruined man, death could not have been altogether unwelcome to him."

"Someone will have to answer for it one day," Ross replied sternly. "His countrymen will see to that when they hear of the brutal way in which he was treated."

Huxton Fenner's lips parted in a crafty smile.

"Yes," he said, "you English pull together better than any other race under the sun. An injury done to one by a foreigner is an injury done to all, and you always see to it that justice is exacted in the end. The Union Jack is the greatest flag in the world, and I'm a Yankee who says it."

"Then don't you think so much of the Stars and Stripes?" Fenner's eyes flashed angrily.

"No," he answered. "I don't, and for an excellent reason. If I went back to New York or any other city in the Eastern States, I should be arrested by the police. You see, I am perfectly frank with you," he added, with a characteristic smile that was meant to veil his inmost thoughts, "and I naturally expect you to be equally frank with me."

For the moment Ross was puzzled by the show of honesty and straightforwardness on the other's part.

"Well, then," he said, "I should like to know just why you have taken me and my friend there prisoners? Do you intend to hand us over to Dirk Ralwin?"

Fenner shook his head.

"No," he replied. "Why should I?"

Ross gave a start of mingled doubt and amazement.

"You surprise me," he said. "Ralwin is your chief. You carry out his orders, and I am perfectly sure that if he knew I was in your hands he would expect you to give me over to him."

"Perhaps so," said Fenner, drawing out the words in an amused tone of voice. "But there is no reason why he should know anything about it until it is too late for him to interfere in the matter."

"Too late!" exclaimed Ross, a look of glad surprise dawning in his eyes. "Surely you can't mean to set us free again?"

"Yes," said Huxton Fenner, "that is what I do mean—but with a rather important stipulation. Listen carefully to what I have to say!" he continued. "You, Carton Ross, are the heir to a vast, an incredibly great fortune, as the papers that your father left to you would prove at once to the satisfaction of any lawyer in the world."

Quick as lightning an instinctive suspicion flashed across the mind of Carton Ross. His hand went swiftly to the pocket of the belt in which he had placed the identical papers that proved his title of heritage to his grandfather's illimitable riches.

The pocket was empty! It had been rifled of its contents. Honest rage and fiery indignation possessed the lad in a moment. No need for him to wonder who the thief might be. He knew that it was Fenner, the renegade white, the man who was even now posing as his friend and benefactor.

"Stop!" he exclaimed, before the other could speak again. "Where are those papers? But I need not ask you, for you have taken them."

Huxton Fenner twisted his lips in a slow, sardonic smile.

"Certainly!" he answered. "Of course I have the papers. Do you imagine that I was going to allow them to remain where they were while you were at the mercy of those Indian fellows? Out of pure mischief and curiosity they would have taken possession of them, and then neither you nor I would ever have been able to find them again. You really ought to thank me for doing you a priceless service."

Again Carton Ross was puzzled and uncertain as to the real character of the man before him. He realised that Fenner was speaking the truth. Curious and inquisitive as children, the Indians would have done precisely what the American declared they would had they been given the opportunity to.

"In that case," he said, after a slight hesitation, "you will not object to letting me have the papers again. I am quite able to look after them now."

"No doubt," answered Fenner, the sardonic smile deepening on his face. "But what if I do not choose to part with them so easily? You appear to have overlooked that side of the question."

"Ah," said Carton Ross, "I was not mistaken, then, when I came to the conclusion that you were a dishonest person! You have stolen those papers from me in the belief that you can use them for your own advantage. Well, you will never do that, however long you wait, let me tell you."

Huxton Fenner smiled mockingly and shrugged his shoulders.

"You seem to be in an exceedingly unreasonable mood," he said, "and so I won't waste my breath in discussing the matter now. We'll talk about it at some future time, when you realise the true nature of the position you are placed in."

Having uttered these words, he rode on a little in advance, leaving Carton Ross a prey to many conflicting emotions.

The young prisoner was convinced now beyond the shadow of a doubt that the first opinion he had formed in his own mind respecting Huxton Fenner was the right one. In the renegade American he had to deal with an unscrupulous and designing foe who would hesitate at nothing to achieve his purpose.

The uncountable riches left by Cyrus Ross to his grandson were what Fenner craved to possess with the fierce, insatiable hunger of some wild animal hunting for food.

"Ralwin's at least frank and open in declaring what his object is," said Ross to himself, a thoughtful look in his handsome face. "He plays a fairly straight game every time. But this fellow is a cheat and a rogue, and I shall have all my work cut out to hold my own against him. But hold it I will, in spite of Huxton Fenner or anybody else in the world!"

The light of an inflexible resolve flashed in his bright, fearless eyes as he uttered the words. So far Fortune had leaned towards him through every fiery trial and cruel hardship, and he believed that it would not desert him in the days to come.

The Indian Runner—The Race—A Mission of Vengeance.

Along a narrow, winding trail ran a dark-skinned native of tall, athletic build. He moved with the easy, lissom grace of the born hunter, the long, yet quick-swinging tread of his bare feet covering the ground with uniform rapidity of motion.

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

On and on he ran, tireless, unrelenting, his gaze never leaving the track that pierced the forest undergrowth and passed between the great trees towering majestically to the sky in the splendour of their growth that it had taken centuries to attain.

Two travellers, weary, wayworn, and with soiled, tattered clothes, looked up from the spot where they were resting as the Indian flashed by in the chastened light of the forest. They were Roddy Garrin and Ah Ching, comrades true and tried, and the surprising spectacle of a man running swiftly past them without so much as throwing a single glance in their direction stirred them out of the apathetic mood into which they had apparently fallen.

"The dickens!" Garrin exclaimed, leaping to his feet. "There goes the first human being we've seen for days, Ah Ching! It does my eyes good to see him. Hi, there!" he added, raising his voice to a shout. "Not so fast, my friend. Come here a minute!"

Ah Ching showed his teeth in a grimly humorous smile, and shook his head.

"No good you makee shoutee," he said. "That chap no hear you now. He long way off. More better you leave him alone."

"I'm hanged if I do!" cried Garrin, dashing off along the track in hot pursuit of the fleet-footed stranger. "He might be able to tell us news of Lorna and Carton Ross. There's just a chance, anyway, and we mustn't lose it. So come along, old pal, and we'll see who is the first to catch up with him."

Thus urged forward to the chase, Ah Ching, with the expression of a martyr condemned to the stake gathering in his little, brown eyes, followed his comrade at top speed, his long queue floating behind him in the breeze like a black paper pennant.

Both he and Roddy Garrin were fleet of foot and long in the wind, and they quickly settled down to the race in real earnest. Gone now was their mutual feeling of fatigue and despair of ever again meeting with their lost friends. Excitement sent the warm blood coursing swiftly through their veins, and buoyant hope and settled resolve came to disperse gloomy thought and foreboding.

Neither uttered a word. The pace was too fast for them to waste their breath on a single utterance. Away in front, fifty yards off, the Indian runner moved onward without the slightest variation in his speed.

To the comrades it seemed as if it would be an easy matter for them to overtake him. The intervening distance gradually lessened before their bounding rush, which took them so close to the Indian that they could plainly see the splendid muscular formation of the man.

"By George," murmured Garrin to himself, "he's an athlete, and no mistake about it; a regular Dorando! Only hope he's been doing the quick march for the last hour or two, else we shall be badly puffed by the time we overtake him."

There was excellent reason for this feeling of apprehension, as the comrades speedily discovered, for, unable to keep up the rapid pace with which they had commenced the chase, they were slowly but surely left farther and farther in the rear.

"No can go on," panted Ah Ching at last. "This too much likee velly hard work for me. My legs no can stand it."

"Keep at it!" urged Garrin valiantly. "You'll be all serene when you get your second wind."

Ah Ching gave vent to a dismal groan.

"My second wind!" he gasped. "That fellow no come my way. He give me plenty miss. Allee same, me run till I drop. Suppose you do so, too?"

The strain of dogged stubbornness that was in both the comrades showed itself now as they raced onward through the silent forest in a brave but vain pursuit. Unwilling to admit even to themselves that they were beaten, they put to the test every ounce of strength and endurance they possessed, and not until the Indian had vanished completely from their sight did they abandon their unavailing venture.

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Garrin. "It's no good. We shall never see him again now."

Ah Ching wiped his hot, perspiring face with the ragged sleeve of his jacket, and then sank wearily to the ground.

"We have no more luck this trip," he said. "My think those little people we made our escape from have put a curse on us. The best thing we can do is to lie down and go to sleep."

"There's some sense in that suggestion, my son," answered Roddy Garrin, selecting a comfortable spot in which to repose his tired, aching limbs. "To go farther now would be madness. We should only break down. So rest we will for a time, and then make fresh plans for the immediate future."

In a few minutes the two comrades were in a deep and dreamless slumber. No sound came to disturb them, no savage foes discovered their peaceful retreat. Though lost in

the boundless forest, they were, for the time being, as free from danger as they had ever been in their lives before.

While Roddy Garrin and his Chinese chum were sleeping, the Indian whom they had unsuccessfully endeavoured to overtake sped onward towards his destination with tireless strength and energy. The track was a familiar path to him. He knew its every twist and turn and landmark.

At last it left the forest, and ended abruptly in the bare wastes of a sandy, sun-scorched plain that stretched away for miles to where a low, straggling mountain range showed darkly against the sky.

Pursuing never a moment the dusky messenger left the track where it ended and headed straight across the wild, silent plateau at the same swift, easy pace that had been his ever since he had started on his secret mission.

Presently a long, low-roofed log hut appeared in sight. Near to it was a stable, in whose open doorway stood a Mexican smoking a cigarette. Going up to this man the Indian runner halted and bent his head in greeting.

"I want a horse," he said gravely, in the tone of one who gives a command, while at the same time he is apparently making a request. "Let me have one at once. It is for Dirk Ralwin and the cause that I travel."

The Mexican accepted the statement without hesitation. Without uttering a word, he turned and went into the stable, returning a minute or two later leading a saddled mustang by the bridle-rein.

"The chief will reward you," said the Indian. "Now, I must press on. Time flies, and time is of more value than gold."

Springing lightly into the saddle, he struck the mustang with the flat of his hand, and rode away at the gallop.

For over an hour he rode on without once checking the speed of his fresh and fiery-spirited mount. It was only when he reached the entrance to a boulder-strewn, narrow defile that he drew rein and proceeded at a slower pace.

There was necessity for this, not only on account of the rough, uneven nature of the ground, but also because of another and more vital danger. Suddenly two men sprang out from behind the high rocks on either side of the defile, with loaded rifles in their hands, and called on the unknown horseman to halt.

The Indian stopped, and speedily satisfied the challenging sentries as to his identity and the reason for his presence there. They permitted him to proceed, but at short, regular intervals for some distance thereafter he was confronted by more sentinels, who peremptorily demanded to know all about him.

Evidently the defile was a jealously-guarded approach to some place. This was exactly what it was, for in the very heart of the range, where a large, open space stood in the midst of towering, unscalable walls of black rock, Dirk Ralwin was camping with a strong force of his followers.

It was one of the numerous resorts that the bandit chief had made his own and converted into a strongly-fortified position that could be easily defended against attack. To this place Ralwin had come two or three days earlier, and he was on the very point of making his departure when the Indian was brought before him.

He recognised the man instantly as a secret spy of his who had been of valuable service to him in the past. Only recently he had instructed the other to watch Huxton Fenner, of whom he had vague and disquieting suspicions, which, as he looked at the messenger, at once flashed vividly across his mind.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, the word coming almost involuntarily from his lips. "Then Fenner is playing me false? I guessed it!"

He looked down, a dark, angry frown overclouding his face, and then he glanced again at the man before him with a look of sharp, eager inquiry in his eyes.

"Speak on, Jaquny," he said. "I am not surprised to see you. I've been expecting to see you before now. What of Huxton Fenner?"

"The American is false and a traitor," answered the Indian. "He is working, not for you and the cause, but for himself alone. Since you sent me to be with him I have become his confidant. He has trusted me with much that he would never have dared to do had he not believed me to be his loyal friend."

"That is good for you," said Ralwin, "and I shall know how to bear it in mind. But what is it precisely that you have found out concerning him? It must be something important for you to be here."

"Yes," said Jaquny, "it is important, chief, for Huxton Fenner has taken prisoner Carton Ross, the English youth you are so anxious to secure, and is even at this moment planning to take him out of the country."

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

FOES OF FORTUNE!

(Continued from page 20.)

A cry of mingled rage and amazement escaped Ralwin's lips.

"Ross his prisoner!" he exclaimed loudly. "How long has that been so?"

The other explained everything with the stoical calm of his race. He told of the foraging expedition that Fenner had led, of the events leading up and relative to the capture in the forest of Carton Ross and Lorna, and of the conversation concerning the papers that he had purposely overheard between Fenner and his young prisoner.

"The cunning hound!" cried Dirk Ralwin, striding up and down, and clenching his fists in his alarm and fury. "The black-hearted traitor to me and to everything that he has sworn fealty to. But he shall not escape me. The prize that he already believes to be his own shall be wrested from him, and his own worthless life shall pay the penalty of his treachery and folly."

"You must lose no time, then," said the Indian, "for he has planned to leave San Ramo to-night by the fast river-steamer bound for the sea-coast. There he will take the train for San Francisco. Once across the border, and safe in the United States territory, he will have nothing to fear from you."

Consternation showed itself in the expression of Ralwin's dark face, and a feeling of positive fear that the great prize he set such boundless store by would, after all, fall to another, possessed him for a moment.

He knew by experience how crafty and resourceful a person Huxton Fenner was, and he realised that immediately the disappearance of Jaquny, the Indian, was reported to him the American would guess that the other had acted as a spy upon him, and strain every nerve to fly from the country before action could be taken to bring him to account.

"By heavens," he muttered hoarsely, "he will be at San Ramo long before us. The place is difficult to reach from here!"

"So it may be," answered Jaquny; "but the forest is like an open book to me. All my life I have lived in it and explored its every track and byway. Where another man would not reach San Ramo in three days, I can be there in seven or eight hours!"

Ralwin smashed his clenched right fist against the palm of his left hand with a violent gesture.

"Jaquny," he exclaimed, "you shall be our guide! Get us to San Ramo before that steamer leaves with Fenner on board and you shall be a rich man for the rest of your life!"

The Indian bent his head, and into his dark eyes there flashed a look of triumph and proud delight.

"You shall be there in time!" he answered. "If I fail you, chief, then spare me not, for I shall deserve no mercy at your hands!"

Not many minutes later an armed party of fifty or sixty picked men under Dirk Ralwin, with the Indian at their head, rode away from the camp, and through the defile to the plain beyond.

Once they were out on the great, rolling waste, the horse-men used whip and spur without mercy. At a thundering gallop they headed for the distant forest, clouds of dust marking their rapid progress, a fierce, reckless company, whose only law was that of loyalty and obedience to the masterful individual who ruled them with an iron hand.

Knowing the forest as he did, Jaquny, the Indian, had no difficulty in performing his task as guide. With an unerring instinct he picked up tracks that would have meant nothing to a less experienced person. Often the trail was so narrow that the horsemen following him were compelled to ride in single file at no more than a slow walking pace, owing to the thickness of bush and undergrowth, but never a barrier was met with sufficiently formidable to make the way an impassable one.

The sun set, and darkness came on to cloak the forest in a mantle of shadowy gloom, through which the outlaws pressed onward without a halt. Something of the fierce eagerness and revengeful purpose of their leader had entered into each and all of them.

They had heard of Fenner's treachery, and, disliking him as they did on personal grounds, they looked forward with a certain savage delight to his downfall and punishment. There was also the thought of Carton Ross to stimulate them.

His strange, romantic history was no secret to them now. They knew of the vast wealth that he was the rightful heir to, and which their chief coveted, and the hope of possessing even a tiny fraction of it fired their imagination as nothing else could have done.

Through the darkness there suddenly glimmered the lights of a riverside settlement.

"San Ramo at last!" muttered Dirk Ralwin. "Now, Huxton Fenner, your account with me shall soon be settled!"

Commandeered—Steamer versus Steam Launch.

The lights of San Ramo shone brightly in the velvety darkness, throwing dancing beams far over the rolling waters of the mighty Amazon, and illuminating the little settlement from end to end.

At the wharves were moored steam and sailing crafts of every kind, a smart gunboat of the Mexican Navy being an especially noticeable vessel, and the rattle of winch-cams mingled inharmoniously with the piercing shriek of the steam syren and the hoarse babel of the fishermen just returned from their netting of the deep.

Towards this spectacle of concentrated energy Dirk Ralwin cast scarcely a careless glance. In a moment he perceived that the steamer he was looking for was not in harbour.

A look of fierce delight flashed in his eyes. The Indian guide had proved his worth. He had brought the outlaws to San Ramo before the arrival of the downward-bound ship on which Huxton Fenner was intending to take a lasting departure.

"Once again the winning card will be played by me," muttered Ralwin to himself. "Bitterly shall Fenner rue the hour when he first decided to play me false! But, dearest thing of all, is the thought that Carton Ross will soon be in my hands again. He has escaped from me twice before, but never again shall he have the chance to do so."

Proud, ambitious hopes crowded thickly across the mind of the outlaw chief. In imagination he saw himself at the highest summit of his power and influence, rich beyond all counting, an unowned king amongst men.

In his heart there was also bitter rage and hate. He ground his teeth together as he thought of the cunningly treacherous part played by Huxton Fenner. A master in the art of duplicity himself, he resented the fact that the American had beaten him at his own game.

"This is his last night alive!" he declared grimly to himself. "He shall pay the extreme penalty for his daring."

A broad beam of white light suddenly swung across the river as a great steamer, her syren sounding loudly, appeared in sight round a bend in the waterway. Slowly she came on, a high, triple-decked ship of imposing dimensions.

Entering the harbour, she was brought alongside the wharf, and before she was made fast the outlaws swarmed on deck. Crowds of wondering, timid passengers stared in amazed curiosity at these fierce, brutal men, whose dubious reputation was known to most of them.

With curt directness, Ralwin informed the captain of the reason for his presence there. That alarmed and anxious official expressed complete ignorance of Huxton Fenner and everything concerning him.

"That may be so," said Ralwin, smiling coldly down at the glowing end of his long cheroot, "but I happen to know that he is taking a passage on your boat to-night, and I and my men will wait here for him."

The minutes, hours passed, but Fenner did not arrive. What had happened to delay him? That was the question which Dirk Ralwin kept on putting to himself with feverish impatience. He feared that the other might yet give him the slip. To and fro along the deck he paced, casting a quick, piercing glance at every person who came up the lowered gangway.

The time for the vessel to leave, announced by the shrill screaming of the syren, found Huxton Fenner still absent. With his brow black as a thundercloud, Ralwin, followed by his men, was already at the head of the gangway steps when something arrested his attention and caused him to halt with an abrupt movement indicative of suddenly aroused excitement.

It was a small but powerful steam-launch that, proceeding rapidly down stream, passed within a hundred yards of the ship. The moonlight shone brightly down upon the deck of the little craft. The figure of a man leaned against the tuff-rail. It was too far away for Ralwin to see anything of the features of the individual, but there was something so familiar in the attitude and general appearance of the other that the outlaw chief uttered a quick cry of emotion.

"Fenner!" he exclaimed, in so loud a tone of voice that all standing around heard him. "That's either Huxton Fenner or his double. I'm certain of it!"

Turning swiftly on his heel, he strode hurriedly down the deck to the bridge. Running up the steps, he went across to the captain, who was busy signalling down to the engine-room, and touched him on the shoulder.

"You see that launch yonder?" he exclaimed, at the same time pointing towards the little craft in question. "Well, you must overtake it. There will be no difficulty in you doing that, for your boat has the speed of a crack liner. You are also travelling in the same direction, so you will lose no time."

The captain, making a desperate effort to hide the nervous

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FOES OF FORTUNE!

(Continued from page iii. of cover.)

alarm he was suffering from, assumed an air of pompous dignity.

"Your request is an impossible one for me to grant," he replied, "and I must ask you to leave the bridge at once. No unauthorised person has any right to be on it."

Ralwin, giving vent to a short, contemptuous laugh, snatched a Browning revolver from his belt and pointed it at the other, who stepped hastily back and clutched the bridge rail with shaking hands.

"You mad fool!" said the redoubtable bandit. "Do as I tell you, or I will fire at all blow your brains out and then seize the ship and everything in it! Remember, my men are on the deck below."

Pale and trembling, the frightened skipper proceeded immediately to comply with the order. To resist it, he realised, would be mere folly, for it would mean his death and the loss to his employers of the finest vessel in their fleet.

Swinging round and away from the shore, the steamer headed down-stream at a speed that steadily increased with every turn of the screw. It soon became obvious to all on board that something quite out of the ordinary was taking place.

The passengers gathered in excited groups about the deck, eagerly speculating on the meaning of it all, and at last the rumour spread that the little launch steaming swiftly ahead in the distance was the object of the pursuit.

The dazzling beam of a searchlight picked up the launch and held it with unswerving tenacity. In the bright glow the figure of Huxton Fenner stood out with vivid distinctness. He was on deck, smoking and lounging carelessly against the rail, an apparently indifferent spectator of the great vessel that was so rapidly lessening the distance between it and his small boat.

Yet, for all his assumption of calm and lack of interest, the American had never been so alertly attentive and wide-awake in his life before. His limbs quivered with emotion. He knew who it was that had commandeered the liner for the purpose of hunting him down.

Like the chief whom he had betrayed, he had his own native spy service, and information had quickly come to him of the fact that Ralwin was aware of the plans he had made to leave the country and was intending to smash them.

Then it was that Fenner, bold and resourceful in an emergency, seized a steam-launch lying near a riverside village, filled her bunkers with looted coal, and was soon away with the two prisoners by whom he set such store.

They were below, locked in the tiny though comfortable saloon immediately under the deck, and guarded by a gigantic negro whose fierce, sullen gaze scarcely ever left them.

An oil-lamp, suspended from the ceiling by a copper chain, dimly illuminated the interior. The throbbing beat of the engines, the thudding whirl of the screw, and the prolonged swish of the water parted by the quick-driving bows were the only sounds audible to the ear.

Suddenly the saloon filled with a blinding, white light that startled the young captives out of the silent reverie into which both had fallen. They glanced inquiringly at each other, and then at the negro, whose ebony face wore an expression of terrified amazement.

"What can it be?" asked Lorna, putting her hand to her eyes for a moment. "It quite dazzles one's sight."

"It's a searchlight," Carton Ross answered. "Lorna!" he continued, a ring of hope in his voice. "If it should be from a vessel sent after us? In that case we cannot be prisoners much longer."

Lorna's cheeks flushed with excitement.

"Do you believe such a thing to be really possible?" she asked. "But, no, it cannot be! None of our friends know where we are, and even if they did they would not have had time to follow us. Besides, if it was a gunboat, a warning shot would have been fired by now."

Ross shook his head.

"They've only just spotted us accurately," he remarked. "And it mightn't be a gunboat, but an ordinary steamer, with someone on board with sufficient influence to persuade the captain to stop this launch and have a thorough search made of it, in the hope of finding us here."

"Yes," said Lorna thoughtfully. "Perhaps you are right in one sense, but wrong in another. Suppose the individual you refer to is no friend, but an enemy—Dirk Ralwin, for instance?"

(There will be another grand instalment of this exciting story in next Wednesday's issue of THE "GEM" LIBRARY. Order your copy in advance.)

PASSING IT ON!

(Continued from page 17.)

"Rats!"

"I happen to know who wrote that letter."

"Eh? Colonel Montmorency wrote it?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, Colonel Montmorency, alias Levison of the Fourth!" grinned Blake.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Undah my instructions," explained Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, beaming. "Levison helped me with the ideah, you know. We got the note-paper engwaved at the pwintah's in Wylcombe—"

"What!" yelled Tom Merry.

"And Levison wrote the letter!"

"Levison!"

"And I biked ovah to Abbotsford to post it, to get the wight postmark."

"You!" stuttered Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! And your weply to the Colonel, Tom Mewwy, will come back fwom the Dead Letter Office about next week. You see, the postal authowities won't be able to delivah it, as they don't know that Colonel Montmorency is in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a wild howl of laughter. Tom Merry & Co. blinked furiously at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You cheeky ass!" yelled Lowther. "You mean to say—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You—you—you spoofed us?"

"Yaas, deah boys! And next time you ask a chap to a war tea, pway wemembah that pwactical jokes work both ways," smiled Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Figgins.

Figgins & Co. retreated to their own House to hide their blushes. The Terrible Three looked at Arthur Augustus as if they would eat him. Julian burst into a chuckle.

"It's a fair catch!" he said. "If you'd told us, Gussy, we wouldn't have stopped these Shell bounders from going—"

"Sowwy, Julian, but it was vewy funny, you know—as funny as spoofin a fellah into goin' in a deputation to the Housemastah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three went up to their study. There they looked at one another.

"Well, you ass!" said Lowther.

"You fathead!" said Manners.

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Spoofed by Gussy!" he exclaimed. "That beats the band! You'd better think twice before you ask him to a war tea again, Monty. All your fault, you ass!"

The Terrible Three did not appear in the Common-room that evening. Arthur Augustus' war tea was quite put in the shade now. It was a long time before Tom Merry & Co. were allowed to forget Colonel Montmorency, and Study No. 6 never ceased to chuckle over the way in which the great jape originated by Ernest Levison's fertile mind had pursued its course like a snowball rolling down hill, gathering size on its way, as the victims all unconsciously passed it on!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"THE INTRUDER!" by MARTIN CLIFF (RD.)

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