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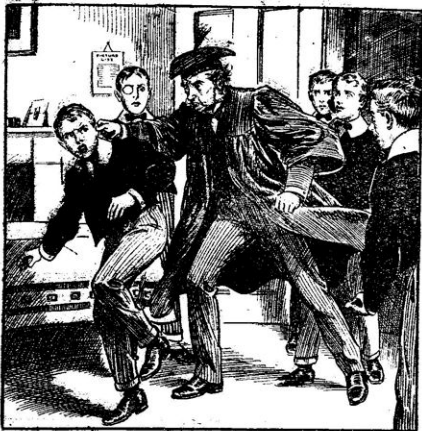
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REVOLUTION AT ST. JIM'S!

A Dramatic Incident in the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale in this Number. 15-11-19



THE TYRANT OF THE FOURTH

A Magnificent Long Complete Story dealing with the Adventures of Tom Merry and Co., of St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

Bad News.

"**M**R. RAILTON wants you, Tom Merry."

Wally D'Arcy, of the Third Form at St. Jim's, poked his untidy head in at Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, and delivered that message.

Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners were at home, partaking of tea, and discussing the forthcoming footer match between St. Jim's junior eleven and Rylcombe Grammar School. It was an all-important subject, and the Terrible Three were quite absorbed.

The captain of the Lower School looked up as D'Arcy's minor spoke.

"Wants me?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What's in the wind, I wonder?"

"Ask me another," grinned the cheerful young hero of the Third. "If it's detention for Saturday afternoon, Merry, you might hand over the captaincy of the junior eleven to me. I reckon I'll show you Shell jossers how to play footer!"

The Terrible Three looked wrathful. "Why, the cheeky young scallywag!" snorted Monty Lowther. "Boot him out, Tommy!"

"What ho!" chuckled Tom Merry. "He made a grab at Wally, but that cheeky youth promptly dodged, and scudded down the Shell passage with great expedition."

Tom Merry followed, laughing, and made his way to Mr. Railton's study.

The housemaster gave Tom Merry a kindly nod as he entered, but Tom noticed, nevertheless, that Mr. Railton's face was more than usually grave, and he seemed worried.

"Ah, Merry," began Mr. Railton, in a voice which was, perhaps, a trifle strained. "I have called you here to—give you some rather surprising news. I am afraid that, for a couple of weeks, at any rate, I shall be compelled to leave St. Jim's!"

"Oh, sir!"

"It cannot be helped," said the housemaster. "The War Office requires my services in London in regard to several reconstruction problems dealing with

Flanders, many details of which I gleaned whilst I held a commission in the army during the war. It is imperative that I should leave St. Jim's for a short time, and, meanwhile, certain alterations in the school staff will have to be made."

Mr. Railton paused, and drummed on the edge of his desk with his fingers.

Tom Merry waited for the next words wondering.

"I have talked the matter over at length with Doctor Holmes," proceeded Mr. Railton, "and it has been decided that a temporary master to take my place will not be engaged, in view of the fact that my absence will probably not extend over more than a comparatively short period. However, the Head has arranged that Mr. Ratcliff shall act as Housemaster in the School House, and, incidentally, become Form-master to the Fourth, whilst Mr. Linton, your own Form-master, takes Mr. Ratcliff's place as Housemaster in the New House."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry, in a fruitless effort to disguise his dismay.

Mr. Railton looked anxiously at the captain of the Shell.

"The alteration will, of course, be only temporary," said Mr. Railton. "Mr. Lathom, who is now master of the Fourth, will take on Mr. Linton's duties as master of the Shell, and—"

"And we shall have Mr. Ratcliff as our Housemaster!" blurted out Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton nodded, and glanced at Tom's face, which plainly evinced consternation.

Tom Merry was wondering what the other fellows would say when they knew that Mr. Ratcliff, the tyrannical Housemaster of the New House, and the most unpopular master at St. Jim's, was coming to assume command in the School House.

Mr. Railton bit his lip, and resumed.

"I am aware, Merry," he said, "that Mr. Ratcliff's methods and my own differ in some respects, and our ideas as to discipline are somewhat at variance. However, I shall rely upon you, as captain of the Lower School, to make things run as smoothly as possible during my absence, and to do all you can to help Mr. Ratcliff in his newly-assumed duties."

"Ye-es, sir," muttered Tom Merry slowly.

Mr. Railton looked quickly at Tom.

"I trust that you have no prejudice against this change, Merry," he queried.

"I shall be glad to hear of any objections you may think proper to raise."

"I—I have no objections, sir," replied Tom Merry hesitatingly. "It is not for me to object to the Head's arrangements. I shall, of course, back Mr. Ratcliff up as Housemaster, the same as I do you, sir."

"Thank you, Merry!" said Mr. Railton, with a smile. "I was afraid that—or—the change would—ahem!—not be popularly received. I have got to know, and to understand, the boys under my charge in the School House, and I think that perhaps Mr. Ratcliff will have some difficulty at first in maintaining discipline. I may rely upon you, then, Merry, to assist Mr. Ratcliff, and if any disorder occurs, to do your best to prevent it."

"Rely on me, Mr. Railton," said Tom Merry with a great effort to appear cheerful. "I'll tell the fellows of the change, and—explain things!"

Mr. Railton held out his hand to the Captain of the Shell. Tom Merry grasped it, and the Housemaster gave him a warm, hearty handshake.

"I am much obliged to you, Merry," said Mr. Railton, kindly. "You are the most reliable boy in the House, and I lay implicit trust in you. I am ready now to leave St. Jim's, and my train goes in half an hour. Good-bye, Merry, and I hope it will not be long before I return."

"I—I hope so, too, sir," said Tom Merry with genuine feeling. "Good-bye, sir."

Tom Merry's usually sunny face was clouded as he left the Housemaster's study.

Monty Lowther and Manners met him at the end of the passage, and they noted their chum's clouded face with inward misgivings.

"Licked!" inquired Monty Lowther. Tom Merry shook his head.

"Gated?" demanded Manners in a fearful voice.

"No," replied Tom. "Come to the study, chaps. I've got some news for you!"

Greatly wondering, Lowther and Manners followed their chum to Study No. 10. Arriving there, Monty Lowther addressed his leader anxiously.

"What is it, Tommy?" he asked. "Get it off your chest, old son."

"Ahem!" coughed Tom Merry. "Railton's leaving St. Jim's, and Ratcliff is coming over here to take his place!"

"Eh?"

"Wha-a-at?"

Monty Lowther and Manners gaped in dumfounded amazement at their chum.

Tom Merry laughed a little uneasily.

"It's a fact," he said. "Mr. Railton has been called away by the War Office, and old Ratty is coming over here to run the School House in his absence. Mr. Latham will take command of the New House, Mr. Latham will be master of the Shell, and Ratcliff himself will also become Fourth Form master in Latham's place."

Lowther and Manners gazed blankly at Tom.

"Gug good lor!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "It—it can't be true!"

"Impossible!" gasped Manners.

Tom Merry laughed ruefully.

"It's true enough," he said. "Old Ratty's going to be our Housemaster, and—and I've promised Railton to back him up!"

Monty Lowther groaned.

"Well, that's about put the tin-hat on everything!" he said dolefully. "We're going to have Ratty over here to boss us—oh, my hat!"

"What on earth will the other chaps say?" muttered Manners.

"Goodness knows!" said Tom Merry with a worried look. "But I reckon Figgins & Co. will simply jump for joy when they hear the news!"

"Ratcliff!"

The Terrible Three exchanged glum looks.

"Well," said Tom Merry, with an effort to appear cheerful. "We've got to make the best of a bad job—that's all. Let's hope that Mr. Railton won't be away long, and that the chaps will knuckle under to Ratty a bit, for Railton's sake."

"There'll be ructions!" remarked Monty Lowther gloomily.

"Ye-es," replied Tom Merry. "We shall have to put up with Ratty, though, for a little while. After all, Figgins & Co., of the New House, have had to stand hip all this time!"

Monty Lowther snorted.

"What does that matter?" he demanded. "What's good for those New House wasters is not good enough for us, I'm jolly sure! And I'm certain I'm not going to put up with Ratty's tantrums, for one!"

"Neither am I!" said Manners flatly. Tom Merry groaned.

"Look here, chaps, Railton is relying on me, and we don't want to kick over the traces, if we can help it. Try to stand Ratty for a little!"

"Well, we'll try," said Monty Lowther. "B—but I reckon it will be a job!"

"Anyhow," said Tom Merry, "we shall have to wait and see, as Asquith said. Let's come along and break the happy news to Jack Blake & Co."

Monty Lowther grinned.

"It will be interesting to watch their pretty little dials when we do," he said. "Come on, then!"

And the Terrible Three left their study, and made their way to Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage, the headquarters of Jack Blake & Co.

CHAPTER 2.

Ratty Begins.

"MY only sainted Aunt Maria!" Jack Blake uttered that remark, and groaned hollowly.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby, Blake's chums and study-mates, groaned likewise, with much depth of feeling.

The Terrible Three were there in Study No. 6, and they had just broken the news to the heroes of the Fourth.

Jack Blake & Co. had gone quite limp when they heard it.

"We're going to have Ratcliff as Housemaster and Form-master as well!" moaned Blake. "That's adding insult to injury!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wogard it as decidedly wotten!"

"It's beastly!" groaned Digby.

"Life won't be worth living!" growled Herries.

Tom Merry & Co. looked sympathetic.

"Cheer up!" said Merry breezily.

"You're not the only ones to suffer. We're all in the same boat, you know."

"Not much!" retorted Blake.

"You've got Latham for a Form-master, and he's a mild old stick. Look what we've got—Ratcliff, the most unspeakable rotter that ever used a cane!"

"Watchcliff is a beast of the first

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wathah!" said D'Arcy, glowering at the assembly of juniors through his famous monocle. "I propose a deputation to the Head, to protest—"

"You hold your row, Gussy!" snapped Blake. "You'll only put your blessed foot in it, as you always do. The Head will cluck you out on your neck; Ratcliff would get to hear of it, and he'd be a bigger beast to us than ever, then!"

"Hear, hear!" said Herries and Digby.

"Weally, you know—"

"Oh, dry up, Gussy, do!" groaned Blake. "I wonder when Ratcliff assumes command?"

"Mr. Railton left just now," said Tom Merry. "I expect Ratcliff will take up his new job to-night."

"Oh crumbs!"

There was an awkward silence in Study No. 6.

It was quite evident that the chums of the School House were not exactly pleased at the innovation of masters caused by Mr. Railton's enforced absence.

The silence was at length broken by a knock at the door.

"Oh, run away and play marbles!" bawled Blake. "Sheer off, whoever you are!"

"What!" There came a gasp from the other side of the door.

"Buzz off!" howled Blake. "Go and eat coke! Go and chop chips! Don't bother! We're busy!"

The gasp from the other side of the door was repeated, and the door-handle was turned.

Jack Blake was in a very unreasonably and far from amiable mood.

His mouth set grimly as he saw the door-handle turn, and he grasped a cushion.

"Hold on, Blake!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You don't know—"

Whiz!

Tom Merry's intervention came too late. The door of Study No. 6 opened, and somebody walked in. Simultaneously Blake hurled the cushion with unerring aim straight for the doorway. It smote the intruder well and truly in the mouth, and that person sat down with a howl and a bump.

"Yaroooh!" shrieked the luckless new-comer.

"That will teach you not to interfere when we are discussing a most unpleasant subject!" snapped Blake. "Go and—Gug-good heavens!"

Blake broke off with a jerk, and he gazed with horror-stricken, gaping eyes in the direction of the doorway.

A chorus of dismayed gasps arose from the others.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Ratty!"

The juniors of the School House fell back in horror as the new School House-master struggled to his feet.

"Wow! Yah! Oh!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff, spluttering with wrath. "Who—who threw that?"

Silence.

Mr. Horace Ratcliff set his mortar-board straight, and glared balefully round upon the awe-struck juniors.

Only too well did they know the depth of the fury that glinted from his eye.

"You young rascals!" howled Mr. Ratcliff, almost dancing with rage. "Is this how I am to be treated when I have been installed in this House but barely half an hour? I have been grossly insulted! I'll flog the culprit within an inch of his life!"

The chums of the Lower School looked nervously at each other, and shifted uneasily.

Mr. Ratcliff's baleful eyes sought out Tom Merry, and they seemed to snap.

"Merry," thundered the infuriated master, "was it you who was deliberately impertinent to me when I knocked? Did you hurl that—that cushion at me?"

Tom Merry bit his lip, and remained silent.

Mr. Ratcliff's face went pink, and he almost foamed at the mouth, so out of temper was he.

He made a dart at Tom Merry, and, grasping him by the ear, shook him wildly.

Tom was so thunderstruck that for the moment he could neither struggle nor articulate.

"Answer me, boy!" yelled Mr. Ratcliff. "I'll find the culprit! I'll—"

"Here, hold on, sir!" cried Jack Blake, springing forward, and grasping Mr. Ratcliff's arm. "You can't! You—"

"Wha-a-at?"

Mr. Ratcliff let go of Tom Merry's ear, and turned with a savage snarl to Blake.

The leader of the Fourth Form eyed the incensed master fearlessly.

"It was I who answered you when you tapped at the door," said Blake coolly.

"And it was also I who threw the cushion at you. I didn't know it was you, sir."

For a moment the ex-master of the

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New House stood gaping at Blake, too enraged to speak.

"Boy," he managed to say at last, "how dare you? How dare you, sir? I—"

Blake's calm, fearless eyes met those of the enraged master.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Blake. "I did not know it was you at the door. I admit I was hasty, but—"

"Your conduct was outrageous—infernal," boy," snarled Mr. Ratcliff. "I've never been treated with such insolence and violence in all my life! If Mr. Ratcliff did not know how to keep his pupils under better control, I will see to it that you do not take advantage of me. I'll keep you under my control, I will see to it that you do not take advantage of me. I'll show Mr. Ratcliff a difference! I—"

"Barden me!" Mr. Watcliff," broke in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, fixing his monocle in his eye, and regarding the master frigidly. "I regard your remarks as decidedly bad form. Mr. Watcliff is a sport, but Jove, and we all respect him."

"Hear, hear!" murmured the others.

"D'Arcy, I—"

"Well, sir, your present frame of mind is utterly without reason," continued the noble swell of St. Jim's, ignoring the warning look that Tom Merry gave him. "Anythin' you say against our respected Housemaster is unjust and prejudiced, and we repudiate it utterly!"

If a bomb had exploded Mr. Ratcliff could not have been more amazed.

As for Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co., they stood dumb with consternation and dismay, looking at the indignant swell of St. Jim's.

Mr. Ratcliff's teeth clenched hard; his thin lips set in a straight, hard line, and sparks of fury seemed to dart from his eyes.

"D'Arcy!" he thundered. "You young scoundrel! You impudent young scamp! You—"

"Pwaw moderate your language, Mr. Watcliff," said D'Arcy, regarding the master in high disfavour. "I consider—"

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "I'll break every bone in your body, you—"

"Weally—"

"Not another word!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff, literally dancing with rage.

"D'Arcy and Blake, follow me to my study at once!"

Blake stood irresolute, whilst Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained motionless.

Mr. Ratcliff fumed.

"Do you hear me, rats?" he bellowed. "If you do not follow me, once I shall drag you there with my own hands!"

"Bai Jove! I— Oh! Yawoogh!" D'Arcy broke off, as Mr. Ratcliff darted at him, and grasping him by the scruff of his elegant jacket, whirled him round.

"Gwooh! Yahl! Leggo!" cried the swell of St. Jim's, gasping. "Welcome me, Mr. Watcliff! It is infwa dig to struggle with a mastah—gwoogh!—so, on second thoughts, I will consent to come quietly."

"Ull come, too, sir," put in Jack Blake.

Mr. Ratcliff breathed hard through his nose, and finally released his hold on Gussy's collar.

"Follow me!" he muttered, striding from the room.

And, with useful grimaces at their chums, Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed their new Housemaster down the Fourth-Form passage.

Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, Digby, and Herries looked meaningly at each other as the hapless two departed.

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"My hat!" breathed Manners. "Ratcliff's made a good start, I must say! I didn't expect him so soon!"

Tom Merry looked grim.

"He's going the right way to make trouble from the outset," said the captain of the Shell. "I'm afraid poor old Gussy and Blake are in for it."

"I'd like to see that unspeakable cad, Ratcliff!" said Herries savagely.

"We won't stand much of him in our Fern, I can tell you!"

"No fear!" said Digby.

Tom Merry & Co. looked uneasy.

"It's no good kicking, you know," said Tom slowly. "I've promised Ratcliff—"

"Blow your promises!" snorted Herries. "Ratcliff hasn't been over here more than half an hour, and look at the trouble he's caused! I—I wonder what he's going to do with Blake and Gussy?"

"They're in for a whopping!" muttered Digby restlessly. "I hope Blake sets about him, if he starts his caddish tricks!"

"Ye-es!" said Herries.

And Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther coughed uneasily.

If this was the beginning of the trouble, they wondered what the end would be.

CHAPTER 3.

More Trouble.

"OW!" groaned Blake.

"Gwoogh!" moaned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The two Fourth-Formers staggered away from the Housemaster's study, and both seemed trying to fold himself up like the blade of a penknife.

Mr. Ratcliff had "laid it on thick," and the unlucky pair were feeling that life was simply not worth living at that moment.

"Yahl! Ow!" gasped Gussy, turning a hollow eye upon Blake and regarding him earnestly. "I have half a mind to return and administrah a fearful twashin' upon that unspeakable boundah—"

"Yow! Don't be an ass, Gussy!" replied Blake, blinking at his chum dolefully. "We'll get our own back on him, don't you worry!"

"He is a bawty!" exclaimed the suffering swell of St. Jim's, his eye gleaming wrathfully behind his monocle. "I absolutely refuse to submit to his tyrannies! Gwoogh! I wegard Watty as an outsidah!"

Blake and Gussy made their way back along the Fourth-Form passage.

Many glances of sympathy were directed upon them by their schoolfellows as they passed.

Arriving at Study No. 6, they found Tom Merry & Co. there waiting for them. Herries and Digby were looking particularly glum.

They sprang forward as Blake and D'Arcy entered the room.

"How many?" inquired Digby.

"Four—on each hand!" groaned Blake.

"Phew!"

"And five hundred lines, bai Jove!" gasped Gussy.

The other juniors whistled.

"My word, that's a bit too thick!" observed Monty Lowther. "Ratcliff ought to be shown up!"

"Yaa, watah!" exclaimed D'Arcy, sucking his fingers tenderly. "I propose a wound wobin!"

"A round robin!" said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "I'm afraid it's no good, Gussy. You were a bit cheeky, you know, and you must expect him to be ratty when Blake sanded him and bowled him over with a cushion!"

"I wish it had been the coal-scuttle instead of a cushion!" growled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll have to grin and bear it, old sons," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "It Ratty oversteps the mark, we'll be down on him like a hundred of bricks! Mean-while—"

"What's that?" asked Mr. Mellish of the Fourth looked into the study at that moment.

There was wild excitement in his eye.

"Heard the news?" he cried. "Ratcliff's our Housemaster!"

"Runaway!" howled Blake. "We know it only too well!"

Mellish saw the evidences of pain and suffering, and grunted.

"Licked?" he inquired pleasantly.

"My word, Ratty is going it! I say, don't look at me like that, Blake! Come along to the Common-room. They're holding a meeting of protest against Ratty!"

"My hat!"

"All the chaps are there!" cried Mellish. "Come on! It's fun!"

And Mellish dashed away, to glean more members for the meeting.

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. looked at each other.

"So they're holding a meeting!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We might as well go, Blake. It might be interesting."

"Come on, then!" said Blake.

The heroes of the Lower School made their way to the Common-room.

Pandemonium seemed to have been let loose in that room when they arrived.

The Common-room was crowded with School House juniors, from Wally D'Arcy & Co. of the Third to the fellows of the Shell.

George Alfred Grundy was mounted on a chair, and was roaring at the top of his voice in a bold endeavour to make himself heard.

As everybody else was either laughing or talking or gibing at Grundy, the noise in the School House junior Common-room was truly terrific.

"Chaps!" howled Grundy, red in the face from his oratorical exertions, "Ratcliff has been shunted on to us, and it means that we're going to be tyrannised over! For me, I'm jolly well not going to stand it!"

"Then sit down, Grundy, old chap!" grinned Cardew.

And he gave the chair a jerk that sent Grundy lurching on top of Wilkins and Gunn.

"Yarooogh!" roared Grundy.

And Wilkins and Gunn echoed his complaint.

Grundy and his faithful henchmen collapsed upon the floor, amidst a howl of merriment.

Clive set the chair aright, and Ralph Reckless Cardew mounted.

Cardew waved his hand for silence.

"Gentlemen of the School House," he drawled, not seeming to exert himself, yet making his cynical voice carry over the whole room—"gentlemen, a most distressin' change has been made amongst the powers that be, and our equilibrium is rather upset, and our composure has been ruffled!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here, Cardew," bawled Blake.

"What the thump—"

"Don't get excited, Blake, I prithee!" said Cardew chidingly. "You'll have quite enough excitement when our respected new Housemaster commences operations! As I was sayin' when you interrupted my peroration, we have been considerably disturbed in mind and spirit, by gad, and we, of the School House think it to protest! I move—"

"Yes, you do move!" grinned Monty Lowther, flinging himself upon the chair



"Don't be such silly duffers," cried Tom Merry. "I tell you Ooooh! Yaroooooh!" A book, propelled by somebody at the back of the crowd, smote Tom full on the mouth, and caused him to stagger back. He lost his balance on the chair, and fell backwards upon a crowd of fellows behind. (See Chapter 3.)

and bringing Cardew down with a crash. "Get up, Tommy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry at once sprang upon the seat of trouble.

"Look here—" yelled Cardew furiously.

"Shut up, Cardew!" yelled Monty Lowther. "On the ball, Tommy!"

"Hurrah!"

"Chaps," cried the captain of the Lover School, addressing the assembly in loud, ringing accents, "what has happened can't be helped. And, anyhow, Ratty hasn't been here a couple of hours yet. I know he's a rotter—"

"Yah! We don't want New House tyrants!"

"Down with Ratty!"

"Anybody got any rat-poison?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd in the Common-room was wildly excited, and Tom Merry, like the honourable Brutus, as he looked round upon the multitude, thought that it was hopeless to attempt to calm their excited blood.

"Gentlemen—" he roared.

"Yah! Go and tell the Head we don't want Ratchiff over here!" howled Gore of the Shell. "You're supposed to be

captain. Merry, so show your pluck! We can carry on quite well without a House-master while Raitton is away!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's up to you, Merry!"

"I tell you, it's no use!" shrieked Tom Merry. "You all know the Head hasn't been well these last two days, and that's probably why he made the change."

If Ratty starts any of his tricks—

"He's started them!" howled Grundy. "He boxed my ears on the stairs about half an hour ago, because I whistled 'Britons Never Shall Be Slaves'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be such silly duffers!" cried Tom Merry. "I tell you— Ooooh! Yaroooooh!"

A book, propelled by somebody at the back of the crowd, smote Tom full in the mouth, and caused him to stagger back. In doing so, Tom Merry lost his balance on the chair, and he fell backwards upon a crowd of fellows behind.

"Yarooooh!"

"Geroff my neck!"

"Yah! Mind my nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy, seizing this opportunity, dragged the chair upright and jumped upon it again.

"We're not going to stand Ratchiff!" he howled, waving his arms so that he looked like a miniature windmill. "Down with Ratchiff! If Tom Merry won't lead you, I will!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Grundy!"

"Have the gloves on with Ratty, man!"

A determined rush was made upon the chair, and once more Grundy disappeared in a whirl of arms and legs and struggling juniors.

Skimpole made an attempt to board the chair, but Aubrey Racke jerked him off so suddenly that the genius of the Shell foundered downwards, and smote Baggy Trimble in the waistcoat with his boot.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" wailed Trimble, collapsing like a winded balloon.

Tom Merry rallied his forces, and, followed by Lowther, Manners, Talbot and Levison, he made a determined raid upon the speaker's chair.

In two minutes that meeting of protest against Mr. Ratchiff's installation as housemaster developed into a wild and whirling scrimmage, with no other end

and object but to stop anybody mounting the chair.

Loud were the yells, and fierce was the conflict, until the common-room was a perfect babel of noise.

Then, like a thunderbolt, came the command:

"Boys!"

The St. Jim's juniors ceased their warfare, and blinked at the figure standing erect and menacing in the doorway.

It was Mr. Horace Ratcliff, his sour face sadder than ever, and his eyes glaring spitefully. He held a formidable-looking asphalt in his hand.

"Boys," he hissed. "What is the meaning of this?"

Nobly answered. A feeling of uneasiness crept over the assembled juniors.

"I heard," said Mr. Ratcliff bitingly—"I heard one or two of the remarks that were made concerning myself, on my way here. I perceive that law and order is unknown in the School House."

"Weally, sir—" began D'Arcy.

"Silence, sir!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"A more unruly, depraved gang of young scoundrels I have never met in all my life! It is a source of some satisfaction to me, however, to know that I have you under my charge, and I shall spare no pains in bending you to my will."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Silence!" shouted the enraged master, his face contorted with fury. "I will not have rebellion in the School House while I am Housemaster! If Mr. Ratcliff was lacking in his duty, I shall not be. Every boy in this room shall be caned!"

A buzz of indignation arose at once.

"I—I say, sir!" wailed Baggy Trimble. "Don't cane me! I wasn't in it!"

"Hold your tongue, Trimble!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "Merry, you shall be first. Hold out your hand!"

Tom Merry set his teeth, but did not budge.

Mr. Ratcliff's face went purple.

"Do you hear me, Merry?" he grated.

"Hold out your hand!"

"I heard you, sir," replied Tom Merry quietly. "But I refuse!"

An oppressive silence fell upon the common-room, whilst Mr. Ratcliff seemed on the verge of tearing his hair.

Just as it seemed likely that he would have hurled himself upon Tom Merry,

Kildare, the captain of the school, strode in.

"I heard a commotion downstairs," were Kildare's first words, then he stopped short as he saw Mr. Ratcliff.

Mr. Ratcliff turned his sour face towards the captain.

"Ah, yes, Kildare!" he said tensely. "There was a commotion. These young scoundrels, it appears, are antagonistic to my becoming their Housemaster."

They have had a far too easy time under Mr. Ratcliff, and, I have no doubt, they do not relish the change. I have just broken up a meeting of protest, and am about to protest in my own manner.

Now, Merry, will you hold out your hand?"

Tom Merry bit his lip, and looked at Kildare.

Kildare's rugged face was clouded with annoyance, and he turned to Mr. Ratcliff.

"Do you intend punishing every boy here, sir?" he asked abruptly.

"That is my intention, Kildare," said Mr. Ratcliff icily.

Kildare looked grim.

"I think you had better refer the matter to Dr. Holmes, Mr. Ratcliff," he said. "Such a proceeding is—"

"Thank you for your advice, Kildare," interrupted Mr. Ratcliff, with biting sarcasm. "As it happens, the Head is unwell, and has retired to his room, leaving me in entire charge. I shall, therefore, proceed as I think fit, and I trust you will not dispute my authority."

Now, Merry, will you hold out your hand, or shall I put you down for a public flogging?"

Kildare looked sympathetically at Tom.

"You had better submit to Mr. Ratcliff's authority, Merry," he said kindly. "It is most unfortunate that the Head is unwell."

Mr. Ratcliff darted a venomous look at the captain, and set his teeth.

Tom Merry raised his hand, and the cane came down with cruel, lashing force.

Tom Merry did not move a muscle, and submitted to having his other hand caned.

There was nothing for it now but for the rest of the juniors to submit likewise. Kildare stood by, watching with gleaming eyes and stern set jaw, whilst the School House juniors took their

gruel from the sub-Housemaster of the New House.

It was like gall and wormwood to the captain of St. Jim's, himself a School House fellow, to see juniors of his own House tyrannised over by this spiteful usurper. But Kildare held his peace, though inwardly he was boiling.

One by one the juniors filed past, each receiving a spiteful cut on each hand, laid on with all the force that Mr. Ratcliff could muster.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy demurred at first, when his turn came to be caned, but at a look from Kildare, he bled out his hand, and received a cruel blow on each of his still aching palms.

By the time the castigation was over, the common-room resounded with groans and moans of pain.

Mr. Ratcliff was panting from his exertions with the asphalt.

"There!" he said, glaring round. "Perhaps that will be a lesson to you young rascals not to dispute my authority again! Every boy here will take a hundred lines, and place them on my table in the morning! Kildare, I hope you are satisfied?"

Kildare looked the tyrannical Housemaster fairly and squarely in the face, and before his steady, fearless gaze, Mr. Ratcliff had to drop his eyes.

Then, without a word, the captain of St. Jim's turned on his heel, and strode out of the room.

Mr. Ratcliff, after having made a list of every boy in the grand assembly, swept out of the common-room.

He left the juniors in a perfect foment of rage and indignation.

"The—the unspeakable cad!" exclaimed Clive, his lips twitching from the agony of his palms. "He ought to be boiled in oil!"

Grundy, despite his aching palms, commenced slogging away furiously at the desert air, at an imaginary image of Mr. Horace Ratcliff.

"What shall I like to do to him?" he panted. "I—I'd pulverise the toad!"

"Ratcliff is coming it too much!" said Talbot seriously. "The Head is ill, and he's playing on that. We shan't stand much more of it, though!"

"No, wathah not!" said D'Arcy, furtively polishing his monocle, in an endeavour to hide his distress. "I consider that my punishment has already been too severe, and I haven't the slightest intention of doing those hundred lines!"

Blake looked wearily at his noble chum.

"Don't be a frabjous chump, Gussy!" he said. "Ratcliff's got us in a cleft stick this time, and we can't buck against it!"

"I refuse to be called a frabjous chump," said D'Arcy loudly. "Any-I refuse to listen to your wot, Jack Blake! I have stated my intention of not doing that imposition, and I utterly refuse to do it! I don't care a penny for Watcliff! Wats on Watty!"

"Oh, Jemima!" groaned Blake. "Gussy's on the high horse now, and there'll be ructions in the morning. I say, Gus, old fellow—"

"Wats!" said Gussy, and he walked away with his nose high in the air.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was on his dignity, and wild horses would not drag him from it, until he chose of his own free will to relax.

And the meeting of protest broke up amidst a general chorus of groans, the juniors leaving the common-room to repair to their own studies, where they were busy until bed-time writing out the imposition bestowed upon them by their new and unpopular Housemaster.

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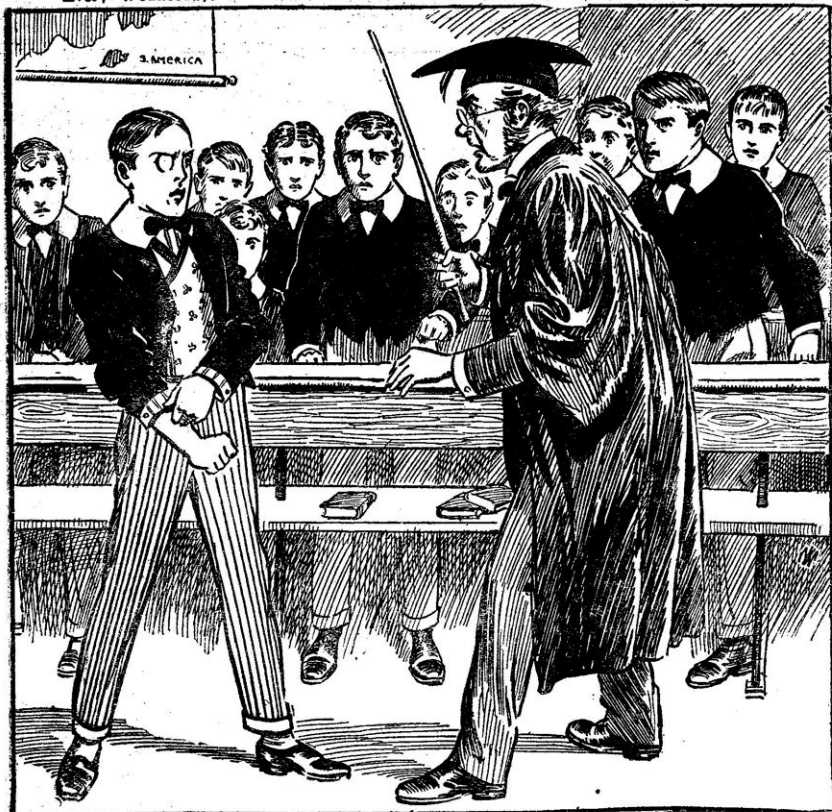
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The swell of St. Jim's pushed his cuffs back, and stood in a warlike attitude before Mr. Ratcliff who was trembling like a leaf. "Come on sir!" cried D'Arcy, his eyes gleaming. "Stwike me again if you dare!" (See chapter 4.)

CHAPTER 4.

On the high Horse.

MR. HORACE RATCLIFF strode into the Fourth Form-room next morning, and the Fourth, which had assembled, noted with inward qualms that his nose had a decided ruby tint.

The redness of Mr. Ratcliff's nasal organ was a sign of dyspepsia—and, incidentally, a danger-signal to those unfortunate youths who were under his command.

Upon the master's desk was a whole pile of manuscripts. They were the impositions the squirming juniors had written the night before.

Mr. Ratcliff took them one by one, and, comparing the names with his list, checked them off.

When he reached the last one, he laid it down and looked up.

His steely eye sought out Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Jack Blake trembled for his chum. He guessed rightly that the storm was about to break.

"D'Arcy!" grated Mr. Ratcliff. "Xaas, sir?" said the swell of St.

Jim's, sitting upright and dignified in his seat.

"Where is your imposition, boy?"

"I haven't done it, sir!" replied Gussy.

"Wha-at!" stuttered Mr. Ratcliff.

"I haven't done it, sir!" repeated Arthur Augustus calmly.

A thunder-cloud settled on Mr. Ratcliff's brow, and his red nose went redder than ever.

When he spoke his voice was pent with fury.

"D'Arcy! Boy!" he rumbled. "Am I to understand that you deliberately disobeyed me, and had no intention of doing the imposition?"

"I considah that, under the cires, I have been punished enough, sir," replied D'Arcy, glowering at the master through his moustache. "Therefoah, I did not do the imposition!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Blake, in an undertone. "Look at Ratty's face!"

Mr. Ratcliff's sour face went almost green.

"You insolent young scoundrel, sir!" he bellowed, clutching at a cane. "Come out here!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not move.

Mr. Ratcliff brandished his cane aloft. "Do you hear me, D'Arcy?"

"Xaas, wathah!"

"Then come out here at once!" shouted the incensed master. "I'll thrash you within an inch of your life!"

"Weally, sir, I should most emphatically refuse to be thwashed!" replied D'Arcy haughtily. "Your nughah shows a most unweasonable spiwit, Mr. Watcliff, and I refuse to submit to your spite!"

"Wha-a-at!" ejaculated Mr. Ratcliff, hardly daring to believe the evidence of his own ears.

"I refuse to be thwashed!" said the swell of St. Jim's, his aristocratic face set resolutely, and his eyes gleaming.

"Go and eat coke!"

A buzz of horror arose from the astounded Fourth Form.

"Gussy!" whispered Blake urgently.

"Draw it mild, old chap, for goodness' sake!"

"I refuse to dwave it mild, Blake!" said D'Arcy, his eyes glimmering with anger. "Mr. Watchiff can go and eat coke!"

The blood of all the D'Arcys was up.

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and the elegant swell of St. Jim's was quite pale with indignation.

Mr. Horace Ratcliff grasped his asphalt firmly to him, and strode up the gangway towards D'Arcy.

"You impertinent young scoundrel!" he rasped. "Take that! And that—and that!"

Whack, whack, whack!

The cane fell with stinging cuts across D'Arcy's shoulders, and the swell of St. Jim's sprang to his feet with a yelp of pain.

"Yavooogh! Oh! Chuck it!" gasped D'Arcy. "You fearful wuffian, I'll thrash you—"

"My hat!" gasped Jack Blake, blinking at his chum in wonder. "Gussy's going to wallop him!"

Indeed, the swell of St. Jim's had pushed his cuffs back, and stood, in a warlike attitude, before Mr. Ratcliff, who was trembling like a leaf.

"Come on, sir!" cried D'Arcy, his eyes gleaming. "Strike me again, if you dare!"

Mr. Ratcliff fell back, his face livid. By this time, every member of the Fourth was on his feet, gazing upon the scene in awe.

Mr. Ratcliff found his voice at last.

"You—dare—threaten—me, D'Arcy!" he spluttered.

"Yaas!" replied Arthur Augustus. "If you swiike me again with that cane I shall swiike back!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Baggy Trimble, immensely tickled.

Mr. Ratcliff gulped something down in his throat.

"Very well, D'Arcy!" he said harshly. "I shall not lower myself to engage in fisticuffs with a junior under my charge! The imposition you refuse to do will be doubled, and you shall stay in this afternoon to do it!"

This acted like a charm upon Jack Blake, who was grinning.

That afternoon was the one booked for the Grammar School match, and Gussy was one of the team.

"Oh crickey!" groaned Blake. "That's done it, Gussy, you aas!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy breathed hard through his nose.

"Do you hear me, D'Arcy?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yaas; I heah you perfectly well, sir," replied D'Arcy.

"Remember, you are detained for this afternoon!" rasped the furious master. "I shall see if I can't have some sort of discipline in this Form!"

And Mr. Ratcliff walked back to his desk, his nose the colour of a beetroot.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pulled his cuffs down, and resumed his seat.

The majority of the Fourth were chuckling over the manner in which Mr. Ratcliff had climbed down, on Gussy's show of belligerency.

The members of the Junior Eleven thought, however, looked glum.

Jack Blake grimaced at Gussy, as he sat down, and that dignified youth smiled.

"Don't worry, Blake!" he whispered, sotto voce. "It's all right!"

And the lesson proceeded on the uneven tenor of its way, lines and petty "lickings" being distributed ad liberandum by the choleric Mr. Ratcliff all the morning.

CHAPTER 5.

D'Arcy's Daring.

"IT'S all right!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cheerfully.

"Chump!" snapped Blake.

"It's all wrong!"

It was after dinner that day, and Jack Blake & Co. were congregated in Study

No. 6, discussing the events of the morning.

"You've put your foot in it this time, Gussy!" growled Herries. "What will Tom Merry say? He— Why, here he is!"

The door opened, and the Terrible Three strode in.

The faces of each wore an extremely anxious expression.

"Gussy," exclaimed Tom Merry, "is it true you've been gated for this afternoon?"

"Yaas, wathah!" replied D'Arcy calmly. "More twouble with Watty, you know!"

Tom Merry & Co. groaned.

"That's done it," said Tom remorsefully. "We wanted you for the Grammar School match this afternoon, Gussy. You've been shaping pretty well lately, and—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, theah is nothin' at all to worry about," said Arthur Augustus. "I fully intend to take my place in the Juniah Eleven this afternoon!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared.

"Impos!" said Monty Lowther.

"You're gated, aas!"

"Yaas; but I'm not goin' to stay

WAIT AND SEE!

Mr. Asquith made those three little words famous, as everyone knows, and "wait and see" is very good advice in regard to many things.

There is one thing, however, about which you must not use that little sentence. Don't "wait and see" some other boy's TUCK HAMPER before going in for one yourself, because the one he wins might be the very one you would win if you went in for the competition.

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indooah!" replied Gussy calmly. "I'm going to break bounds, deah boys!"

"Whew!" whistled Tom Merry.

"You wouldn't dare, Gussy!"

The noble Fourth-Former jammed his monocle into his eye and surveyed his chums loftily.

"I am goin' to dare, Tom Mewwy!" he said firmly. "My detention is quite unjustified, and I am perfectly determined to play in the Gwammah School match this afternoon! I tell you, it will be all right! I have got an ideah!"

The others drew deep breaths, and looked uneasily at Gussy.

"Gussy—" began Blake.

D'Arcy waved his hand loftily.

"Wely on me," he said. "Blow Watty, and confusion to all his works! Tom Mewwy, kindly take my footah clobber with you, and I shall probably join you just before the match!"

"B-b-but—"

"Shuvvup, deah boys! Heah's Watty!"

Mr. Ratcliff strode into Study No. 6, and his spiteful eyes sought out Arthur Augustus.

"D'Arcy," snapped the New House-master, "your nose is in the Form-room! Come there with me at once!"

"Vewwy well!" said the swell of St. Jim's calmly. "Au weovor, deah boys! Don't forget what I told you, Tom Mewwy!"

And, as meek and mild as a lamb, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed Mr. Ratcliff from the room.

Tom Merry & Co. and the heroes of the

Fourth exchanged glances as the door closed.

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "Gussy's got his back up properly this time! The obstinate aas! I wonder what his little game is!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I give it up!" he said. "Anyhow, we'll take Gussy's clobber with us, in case the aas turns up. Digby, you'll play outside-left if he doesn't."

"That's if Gussy is left outside, of course," grinned Lowther. "I reckon, though, he will turn the place inside-out to get away!"

Lowther laughed heartily at his little joke, but he was alone in his mirth. Then Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House, came in.

"Ready!" inquired the leader of the New House juniors. "What are you looking like boiled oafs for, you chaps?"

Tom Merry explained.

"Whew!" whistled Figgins. "Old Ratty is making the fur fly, and no mistake. We're glad to be rid of him for a time, at any rate!"

"What ho!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

"So you're a man short!" said Figgins. "Perhaps you'll give another New House fellow a look in, Merry? There's young Lawrence—"

"Digby's our first reserve," said Tom Merry. "But I've an idea that Gussy will turn up for the match, somehow. I seem to feel it in my bones!"

"He'll have a job to hoodwink Ratty," grinned Figgins. "Come on, then, if you chaps are ready. Gordon Gay & Co. will be waiting."

And the mighty men of the St. Jim's junior eleven descended the quadrangle, and went over to the bicycle-shed, where the rest of the team was waiting.

Five minutes later they were pedalling away down Rylcombe Lane, towards the Grammar School. They were wondering how Gussy was going to escape from detention.

At that moment, however, Arthur Augustus was in the Fourth Form-room, and Mr. Horace Ratcliff was standing in front of him.

"You will stay in here till five o'clock, D'Arcy," said Mr. Ratcliff. "And, to make sure that you do not attempt to escape, I shall stay in here with you. I have some papers to correct, and can just as easily work in here, as in my study. You will commence writing your imposition, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir," replied Arthur Augustus, his eyes gleaming as he took up his pen.

It was now half-past two, and the Grammar School match was to begin at three.

With Mr. Ratcliff keeping watch and ward over him, it seemed impossible that the swell of St. Jim's, determined as he was, could manage to escape from the master's clutches.

He went on calmly with his work, however, with the eagle eye of Mr. Ratcliff ever upon him.

Silence reigned supreme in the Form-room, except for the scratching of D'Arcy's pen.

Suddenly there was a shout from the passage outside, and a wild turmoil of noise arose, in which the loud barking of a dog, and the yelling of an angry voice played the most important part.

Mr. Ratcliff looked up testily from his work.

"Bow-wow-wow!" came from outside the door.

Bump!

The door and windows of the Form-room rattled.

Mr. Ratcliff sprang to his feet in anger, and strode for the door.

He opened it, and instantly a shaggy form sprang between his legs.

"Bow-wow-wow! Grr-r-r-r!"
 "Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.
 "A dog!"

He then became aware of Knox, the bullying prefect of the Sixth, sprawling at arm's length on the linoleum.

"Knox!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff.
 "What?"

"After him, sir!" roared Knox, scrambling to his feet. "It's that young scoundrel D'Arcy minor, with that mongrel of his!"

"Ah!" grated Mr. Ratcliff. "One moment, Knox!"

The Housemaster returned to the Form-room, where Arthur Augustus was still working.

"I shall only be gone for a few moments, D'Arcy," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I shall lock the door while I am away!"

And he left the Form-room, carefully locking the door behind him.

As soon as the door was shut, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chuckled softly, and left his desk.

"Bai Jove, it worked like a charm!" he murmured. "Wally worked the trick a treat with that mongrel Pongo. I expect he'll get a lickin' for bringin' the dog inside, but the pound note I gave him will make that all right. Now for the disappearin' trick, bai Jove!"

Gussy went over to the fireplace, and, reaching up into the chimney, he withdrew a small parcel. He opened it, and drew forth a suit of pyjamas, a pair of gloves, and an old cap.

"These will keep the soot off my clobber!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's, as he drew the flimsy trousers over his own elegant nether garments. "Bai Jove! I shall have to buck up, else Watty will be back!"

He buttoned up the pyjama coat over his immaculate Eton jacket, placed the old cap upon his head, and drew the gloves upon his hands.

In that attire the noble swell of St. Jim's looked very peculiar!

Then Gussy did a surprising thing. He stepped into the fireplace, bent down beneath the chimney, and, raising his hands, drew himself up. He then raised his legs for a foothold, and next moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was climbing up the Form-room chimney.

The School House at St. Jim's was the original building which, in centuries gone by, comprised the old monastery of St. James. In those old times chimneys were built wide and spacious, with footholds all the way up, to admit the chimney sweep, who did his work personally inside the chimney.

These chimneys were almost like passages or tunnels through the building. Many of them had been cemented up, but the chimney in the Fourth Form-room was still used.

The swell of St. Jim's grasped the sooty walls of the chimney, and climbed steadily up.

"Gwoogh! Ah-ti-shoo!" he spluttered, as the soot got into his mouth and nose and eyes. "How very forcible the flah has been let out in the Form-room this afternoon. Gwoogh! Gug! Gug! This is wathah wotten!"

Determination was one of D'Arcy's great traits, and he stuck gamely to his task. Many a time he slipped on the crumbling brickwork, but he always held on with his hands.

The soot nearly choked him, but Gussy thought of the sour Housemaster and the St. Jim's footer team that was awaiting him, and he set his teeth and climbed higher.

A glimmer of daylight showed above, and Gussy's climb was nearly over. Gasping and choking, sneezing and spluttering, he at last reached the top, and he climbed out upon the roof.

"Gwoogh!" gasped the Honourable Arthur Augustus. "Done it, bai Jove! Now for the west of the job!"

It was well that the swell of St. Jim's had thoughtfully provided himself with the pyjamas, for they were covered all over in soot.

Gussy's face was as black as night, but he did not think of that.

He presented a comical appearance as he scrambled carefully over the leads on the roof, leaving a long, long trail of soot in his wake.

Crouching low behind the coping, Gussy made his way across the School House roof towards the lower roof of the chemistry laboratory.

He dropped lightly upon this, and crawled behind the skylight.

From this part of the roof it was a drop of about forty feet to the quadrangle. D'Arcy, however, was prepared for this emergency.

He withdrew a length of rope from beneath his waistcoat, affixed one end to the iron frame of the skylight, and swung the other end over.

It was then an easy climb to the ground.

This was a deserted part of the quadrangle, especially so this afternoon, when most of the boys were on the playing-fields or outside the school gates.

Hastily doffing the pyjamas, and leav-

FREE!

I have told you on the opposite page how you can get a Buck Hammer for nothing. - Here is news of something else, that is being given free!

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ing the rope where it was, Gussy sprinted over to the cycle-shed.

He took his cycle, mounted, and whizzed away to the gates.

He passed a crowd of fags at full speed as he pedalled through the gates, and the fags sent up a howl of merriment at his appearance.

Gussy had forgotten, in his hurry, that he had soot on his face, and that the cap was still upon his head.

The noble swell had no thoughts, for once, of his personal appearance. He dug away at his pedals, and simply tore along Rylcombe Lane. It was now seven minutes to three, and the kick-off was at three. Rylcombe Grammar School, however, was not far away, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a splendid cyclist.

Gussy did not consider what the consequences of this daring escapade might be. Sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof, and D'Arcy was quite prepared to meet the vials of Mr. Ratcliff's wrath-when the Grammar School match was over!

CHAPTER 6.

Well Played.

GORDON GAY & Co. were chatting with Tom Merry & Co., when a queer figure sped into the school gates upon a bicycle, and came tearing across to the playing-fields.

"Here's Gussy!"

"Ye gods! Look at him!"

The football-field at Rylcombe Grammar School was crowded.

The teams were outside the dressing-room, ready to take their places on the field.

Digby was in his footer garments, ready to take the absent Gussy's place.

The crowd parted to make room for him, and a howl of laughter arose as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, was recognised.

"Heah I am, deah boys!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's, jumping off his cycle, and addressing the staring footballers with a grin. "I've wangled old Watty, you see."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Gordon Gay, the juniors' captain of the Grammar School. "Goin' to play like that, Gustavus?"

"Bai Jove! Wathah not?" exclaimed Gussy. "Wheah's my clobber, Tom Merry?"

"In the dressing-room. Buck up!" replied Tom. "Whistle's nearly going."

"All sewene, deah boys! Sha'n't be a minute!"

And Gussy disappeared into the dressing-room, leaving a crowd of chuckling fellows outside.

Robert Arthur Digby grinned ruefully at Tom Merry.

"I sha'n't have a game, after all," he said. "Never mind. It's Gussy's place, and he deserves it, anyhow."

"Sorry, old chap!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy's an ass, but he's a good ass."

Arthur Augustus soon reappeared, attired in footer garment. He had discovered the soot on his face, and had had a hasty wash. All the soot was not removed, however, and the "tide marks" were plainly noticeable.

The rival teams lined up, and the captains tossed for ends. Tom Merry won, and elected to play against the wind, thus preserving an easier time for the second half.

The match between St. Jim's and Rylcombe Grammar School started with vigour, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the forward line, determined to do or die, having braved danger so far.

"Play up, St. Jim's!"

"On the ball, Grammarians!"

Gordon Gay and Jack Wootton took the ball up the field with a rush; but Talbot tricked the Constables neatly, and booted it down to Jack Blake. Blake passed to Clifton Dane, the inside-right, and an attack on the Grammar School goal resulted.

Their goalie, however, was a mighty man of valour, and, meeting the ball hot from the foot of Figgins, he gave it to Monk, who took it out of danger.

Gordon Gay & Co. were of first-class footballers-indeed, there was not much to choose between them and Tom Merry & Co. Each was a fellow worthy of their steel, and the fight provided endless excitement for the crowd round the ropes.

Patty Wynn, the plump St. Jim's goalie, was kept pretty busy. But the sturdy Welsh junior was "all there," and as fast as the ball came in, he booted it, or fisted it, or headed it out again in a manner that made the Grammarians gasp, and Tom Merry & Co. chortle.

Tom Merry excelled that afternoon. He took a "throw in" from Monty Lowther, and dribbled the ball up mid-field to the utter confusion of the Grammar half-backs. Harry Wootton, Gordon Gay's best friend, had made a rush at Tom, but Tom avoided him with a twist and a wriggle that was almost snake-like. He had the ball before him as the backs and half-backs pounded up. Tom steadied himself, and raised his right boot to kick. The goalie, on the alert,

was beautifully deceived, for, with a lightning movement, Tom kicked in the opposite direction with his left foot, and there was a roar as the ball sped into the net.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, St. Jim's!"

Gordon Gay grinned at Tom Merry as the teams lined up again, and shook his fist good-humouredly. Once more the ball was set in motion, and this time the Grammarians pressed hard.

Fast and furious the battle raged, and Gussy showed in the limelight on more than one occasion.

Fatty Wynn performed prodigious feats of valour that afternoon, but once he was caught napping. He ran out to meet the ball to the left of the goal-mouth, but Gordon Gay slithered it neatly past him, and the leather rolled gracefully between the posts.

"Goal!"

Honours were now even, and the game recommenced with high hope on either side. There were no more scores before half-time, however, and the teams repaired to the pavilion for fifteen minutes amidst the enthusiastic cheers of their partisans.

"Bai Jove! You boundahs are hot stuff!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to Gordon Gay. "You'll have the wind befoah you next half, however."

The leader of the Grammar School heroes grinned.

"Don't worry, Gustavus!" he said. "We're all there!"

"You played up like a Trojan, Gussy!" said Tom Merry heartily. "Keep that up next half, and we'll knock these Grammar School bounders all over the field!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The whistle went, the teams repaired to the field, and the spectators held their breath, whilst they were treated to a magnificent display of football.

Figgins, on the left wing, seemed a wizard on his feet. His long, lanky legs went like clockwork, and once he got the ball he rushed it down the wing at a pace that set his opponents gasping.

Figgy had bad luck with a magnificent shot for goal, for the ball deflected from the post, and was snapped up directly by the defenders.

D'Arcy fought a Spartan fight that afternoon, and his name was included many times in the cheering.

Gordon Gay & Co. were decidedly "hot stuff," and, even though Tom Merry & Co. kept them from scoring—thanks mainly to Fatty Wynn, who reigned supreme at his citadel—they pressed their opponents very hard. Tom Merry's men worked in perfect harmony, and their play, and especially their passing, was truly wonderful to behold.

It was a second half of thrills, and it seemed likely that the match would end in a draw.

The sun sank gradually in the west, and still there was no more scoring. Tom Merry rallied his men for a final swoop on goal, for it wanted but five minutes to the whistle.

Like a whirlwind, the St. Jim's attackers swept all before them, Tom Merry with the ball at his feet.

Gordon Gay & Co. met them, and pounded the leather back. Then, in a breakaway, Gussy got the ball. He beat Jacy, and sped with all the speed he could muster towards the Grammarian goal-mouth. A frenzied shout to the goalie came from the touchline.

"Buck up, Grammarians!"

Wootton major met him with a determined attack.

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"Wats!" gasped Gussy, as he whisked the leather away.

Again Wootton came on, and he looked dangerous, so Gussy passed quickly to Kerr. Kerr saw the dodge, and a moment later returned it to Gussy. Gussy, with a clear opening before him, and with only the goalie to beat, took aim.

"Shoot, Gussy!"

Gussy shot. It was a hurricane shot, and beat the goalkeeper hands down. The ball flew into the net, and a tumultuous roar arose, which drowned the final whistle when it went.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Well played, man!"

Tom Merry rushed up, and grasped D'Arcy's hand. The swell of St. Jim's jammed his moustache into his eye and grinned.

"Bai Jove, deah boys!" he exclaimed.

"We've won!"

"Of course, we've won!" chorled Blake. "It was your goal, Gussy, you spiff!"

"Hurrah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strolled away to the dressing-room, bearing, with great calmness, the honours showered thick upon him.

It was a great moment for the swell of St. Jim's, and he would have braved a thousand Ratcliffs then.

"Well, the best men won!" said Gordon Gay ruefully. "Of course, you'll stop to tea, you chaps!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at Gussy.

"Bai Jove, I forgot Watty!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I wondah if he's wild?"

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"Tearing his hair most likely," grinned Blake. "You'll have to go through the mill when you do get back, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"Watcliff can go an' eat coke!" he said. "Gay, deah boy, as you are so kind as to extend us the invitation to tea, we shall be pleased to accept."

"Good egg!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"Buck up into your clobber, you fellows. Tadpole will have everything ready in the old study by now. You can tell us about Gussy's great adventure over the festive board, you know."

"Hear, hear!"

The St. Jim's team were soon dressed, and they repaired to Gordon Gay's quarters for tea.

The Grammarians took their defeat like the sportsmen they were, and they "did" Tom Merry & Co. exceedingly well at tea. The St. Jim's juniors explained the circumstances of Mr. Ratcliff's tyrannies, and Arthur Augustus himself gave a true and faithful account of how he escaped from the Form-room. The schoolboys chuckled hugely over Gussy's ruse, in which his cheerful young minor had played no small part. As for Gussy, he felt that the escapade had been worth while, and, forgetting the sour Housemaster for the time being, he vied ably with the others in disposing of the good things Gordon Gay & Co. had provided.

CHAPTER 7.

The Storm Breaks.

"LOOK out for squalls, Gussy!" said Blake.

"Wubbish!" replied Arthur Augustus. "I am not afraid of Watty!"

"But we are," said Blake seriously. "I can't just imagine the temper he'll be in. Can't you, Tommy?"

Tom Merry nodded.

The St. Jim's Junior Eleven were on their way back to their school, after having taken a cordial farewell of Gordon Gay & Co.

Gussy, in his hurry to get away from St. Jim's and Mr. Ratcliff, had forgotten his lamp, and, as it was lighting-up time, he had to wheel his bike. Monty Lowther's bike had sustained a puncture, so the whole party was walking back along Friarland Lane.

Now that Gussy had to face the music, they were feeling uneasy on their noble chum's behalf.

Mr. Ratcliff was sure to be in a raging temper.

"Howevah, it is no use eywiv' o'vah what can't be helped," said D'Arcy philosophically. "Let us wait and see, as that political Johnnie remarked."

And, with great apprehension, the St. Jim's party returned to the school.

Taggles, the school porter, gave D'Arcy a grim look as they entered.

"Which you are to go to Mr. Ratcliff, had once, Master D'Arcy," he said. "As soon has you come in—they was his instructions."

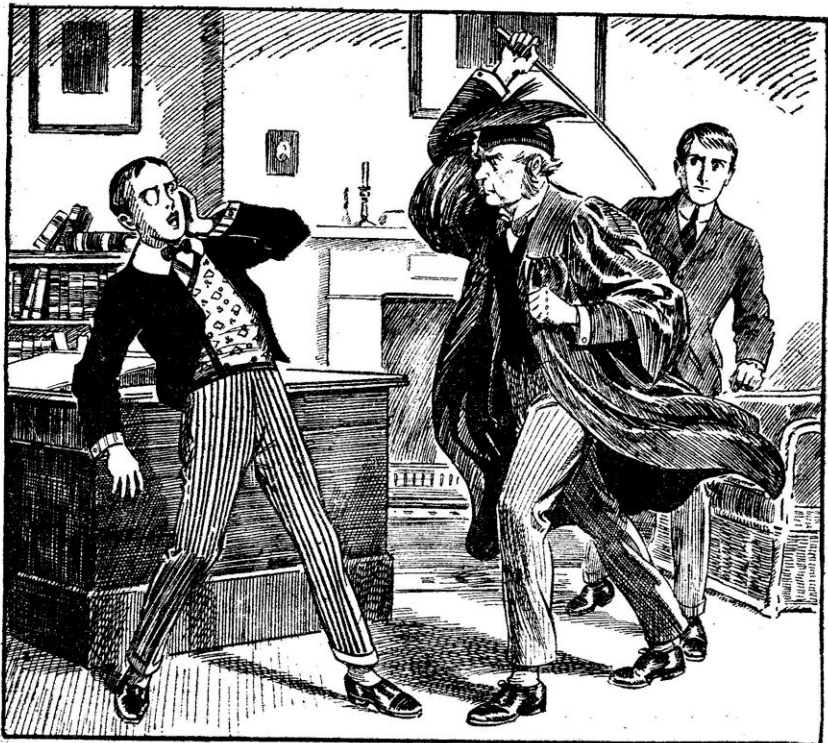
"Veery well, Taggay, deah boy," said D'Arcy graciously. "I will go at once. Look afah my jiggah, Blake, deah boy." Clouded looks from his chums followed Gussy as he made his way towards the School House and mounted the steps.

He went direct to Mr. Ratcliff's study—the one which Mr. Raiton had temporarily vacated—and tapped at the door. "Come in!" came Mr. Ratcliff's sour accents.

D'Arcy entered, and stood before the new Housemaster.

Mr. Ratcliff started to his feet when he saw who his visitor was.

"D'Arcy!" he spluttered. "You have come back!"



"You wuffians! Leave me alone, or Yawwoogh!" D'Arcy broke off with a cry of agony. Mr. Ratcliff had seized a cane from his desk, and brought it slashing across D'Arcy's face. A livid red mark showed down the junior's cheek, and he staggered back, his eyes streaming with involuntary tears. (See Page 7.)

"It looks vewy much like it, sir," replied Gussy calmly.

Mr. Ratcliff seemed to choke in his throat.

"You have flaunted my authority—defied me almost before my own nose!" shrieked the outraged master, rubbing his nasal organ, which was developing an art shade in scarlet. "How dare you, sir! How dare you! I—I—I—"

"Pwaw keep calm, Mistah Watchliff," said D'Arcy. "I protested against my punishment, which I considared unjust, and, instead of takin' a sane and lenient view of the mattah, you deprived me—or intended to deprive me—of my half-holiday."

"You—you—you—"
"I submitted to your authority, which I considah tywanical and entiblah without weason," went on the swell of St. Jim's coolly. "But at the first opportunity I escaped."

"You—you escaped!" stuttered Mr. Ratcliff. "How did you escape, D'Arcy? Answer me, boy!"

Gussy smiled.
"I am afraid I must withhold my information, sir," he replied. "I escaped—that is suffish, I think."

Mr. Ratcliff's face was purple, and he seemed to find great difficulty in speaking.

"Boy!" he thundered, fixing a venomous look upon D'Arcy. "I'll have you expelled for this—this flagrant breach of discipline! You shall be publicly flogged and expelled. You—"

"Weally, sir, that is a mattah for the Head to decide," put in Gussy.

"The Head will not decide!" sneered Mr. Ratcliff. "I might inform you, D'Arcy, that Dr. Holmes left St. Jim's this afternoon for a consultation with his specialist in London. He does not expect to be back until the middle of next week."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated the swell of St. Jim's, his eyes gleaming.

"I have complete authority in the Head's absence!" granted Mr. Ratcliff. "And, D'Arcy, you shall be punished with the utmost severity. You shall be publicly flogged and expelled—"

"Gwest Scott! You dare not!" gasped D'Arcy. "I—"

"I dare!" rasped Mr. Ratcliff, with triumphant spite. "I will show you whether I am to be defied, D'Arcy! You shall go into the detention-room to-night, and on Monday—"

"I refuse to leave St. Jim's until Dr. Holmes returns," exclaimed Arthur Augustus heatedly. "You are a tywanical brute, Mistah Watchliff! I vegard

you as a despicable wottah, bai Jove, and I refuse to submit to your venom!"

"We shall see!" sneered the House-master. He touched a bell, and a few moments later Toby, the page, appeared. "Call Knox and Montieth here at once!" he ordered.

As Toby disappeared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his monocle and surveyed the master with glimmering eyes. "You intend to have me wemmoved to the detention-woom, Mistah Watchliff," he demanded.

"That is my intention," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"You will not call Kildare or Daw-well—"

"Knox and Montieth will suit my purp-pose!" snapped the furious master.

D'Arcy's look of scorn went right through him, and he stood with his eyes averted until the two prefects arrived.

"You sent for me, sir," inquired Knox, darting a triumphant look at Gussy.

"Yes," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I require you and Montieth to remove this young scoundrel to the detention-room."

Montieth, the New House prefect, looked blank. Knox, however, grinned gleefully, and advanced upon Gussy.

"What are you hesitating for, Mon-

"Hurrah! We're with you, Blake!"

"Down with Ratty!"

The crowd surged forward threateningly, and Mr. Ratcliff skipped back.

"Darrel, Rushden, North!" he shrieked appealingly. "Protect me! Do not let them revolt!"

George Darrel, the most popular prefect at St. Jun's, next to Kildare, set his teeth.

"Boys," he cried appealingly, "keep cool, and—"

"Does Ratty give in to us?" howled Blake. "Am I and Gussey still expelled?"

"Yes!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "I'll have you locked up for your violence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Darrel, seeing that law and order was now a thing of the past, motioned to his comrades, and turned to the juniors.

"Back, youngsters!" he cried. "Get back to your rooms at once!"

"No fear!" cried Blake. "Ratty would come along with a couple of his cronies afterwards, and nab us then! We're not having any!"

The prefects, standing shoulder to shoulder, advanced upon the excited Fourth-formers. Jack Blake & Co. rallied.

"Knock 'em over, chaps!" roared Blake. "Up to the dormitory, and we'll barricade ourselves in there! Charge!"

As one man, the Fourth formers swept down upon the prefects, who, although they did not savour the job, had to maintain a degree of loyalty to Mr. Ratcliff.

As prefects.

But against the excited juniors they were as grass before the wind. They were swept down, fighting gamely, and Jack Blake, at the head of his followers, marched upstairs to the Fourth form dormitory. Arriving there, they all

went in, and Jack Blake gave orders that the door should be barricaded.

Beds were dragged from their positions and piled up against the door.

"We shall have to sleep on the floor to-night," grinned Blake. "But it's all in the day's work, I reckon!"

"Yas, wuhah!" chimed in Gussey. "Anythin' wathah than bend to Watty's will, deal boys!"

"Hear, hear!"

Barely had they got the door barricaded, than there came a pounding of feet outside, and Darrel's voice exclaimed:

"Blake, you young idiot, open this door!"

"Sorry, Darrel, old man!" replied Blake cheerfully, "but it can't be done, unless Ratty gives in to us."

"You—you mad-brained young fool!" gasped the prefect. "You are only making things worse by this step you are taking, Blake. Mr. Ratcliff will have an excuse for expelling you when the Head returns."

"Rats, Darrel, old top!" shouted Blake. "If Ratty likes to let by-gones be by-gones, and skip off back to the New House, we'll come out and be good little boys. Otherwise—we'll stay out in strike!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Darrel and the others turned away, and went downstairs to Mr. Ratcliff, leaving the victorious Fourth to themselves.

Jack Blake looked around upon his men.

"Lemme see," he said, "Are we all here? All except Brooke and Trimble. I think. Brooke's a day-boy, so we can't trouble about him. We'll rake in old Baggy later."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking round upon the "strikers." "I nevah hold in with swivaks as a wale, but it's jolly fun to be a swivak yourself, don'tcher know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll have some fun before we're finished," said Blake grimly. "In for a penny, in for a pound, and we'll carry this thing through to the bitter end now! We'll beat Ratty to a frazzle, and show our independence. If the New House are softies enough to stick him, we're not—what!"

"Ha, ha! No fear!"

"Let's get things ready for to-night," said Blake. "Those beds that are against the door must stop there, and the owners must sleep on the floor, in the clothes appertaining thereto."

"All serene, Blake," said Levison. "My bed's there."

"So's mine," said Kernish with a grin.

"And mine," said Heeries. "I don't mind roughing it for the good of the cause!"

"Good egg! That's the way to talk!" said Blake. "Never say dis, chaps, and never give in!"

And the members of the Fourth form on strike gave their answer with a whole-hearted cheerfulness.

"No, never!"

Things boded ill for the Tyrant of the Fourth!

THE END.

(NEXT WEEK: An exciting story of the School House Strike, entitled *THE DISOBEDIENT FOURTH*. This tale, with Jack Blake's barrages out, but it is a barring-out on new and novel lines.)

STORYETTES.

DISTINCTION.

Ned was usually a good-tempered man, but when he met his friend Bill, from whom he had recently bought some fish, he was decidedly angry.

"Bill," he said, "I ain't the kind of chap to round on a pal for no reason at all, but I can honestly assure you your fish is bad."

"Ned," said Bill, "I've got to sell my fish, good or no good. If it ain't good I always sell it. But, as I knows yer, I'll tell yer the secret. When you 'ears me shout 'fresh fish,' yer can bet as 'ow it's all right; but when I yells 'fish or,' it's fish oh—not arf!"

Black: "I was just going to ask you to come and have some lunch with me."

White: "Well, I won't interrupt you."

BREAKING IT GENTLY.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the author angrily. "There's no need for you whatever to gag. The play is quite funny enough in itself. All you have to do is to speak my lines quietly, and then wait for the house to laugh."

"Oh!" said the comedian, in his own imitable manner. "That's all very well from your point of view. You live in town, and so can afford to wait. But what am I to do? I have to catch the midnight train for my little place down in the country."

WELL ARMED.

"Yes," remarked Jenkins. "I gave it to him straight. I can tell you; told him exactly what I thought of him—and a bit more perhaps. Bigger than me?" he continued, noting the look of interrogation on Robson's face. "Yes, I should think he was; and he's got a temper like a—"

"I know he has," said Robson. "That's what puzzles me. D'you mean to say he didn't try to go for you and hurt you?"

Jenkins shrugged his shoulders.

"Really, I can't tell you," he sighed. "You see, when I'd finished all I had to say, I just hung up the telephone-receiver and walked away."

WITH THE TIDE.

It had been raining steadily for the past twenty hours, and in consequence the field was more like a lake than a football-ground. Still, the sun was shining now, and a big crowd had assembled to see the game, so the referee decided that the match could not be postponed.

"What!" gasped the captain of the visiting team. "Surely you're not going to make us play in this?"

"Certainly," replied the knight of the whistle. Then, seeing an angry retort forming on the captain's lip, he added:

"Now don't hang about. You've won the toss. Which side are you taking?"

"Well, if we've got to play," came the answer, "I guess we'll kick off with the tide!"

AND HAD HE?

Old Joe Johnson, after his short holiday in London, returned to the farm full of conceit and self-importance, and, by the way, wearing a scarf pin which contained a "diamond" of magnificent proportions.

His farm hands one and all gazed at him with amazement. Then Tom Timkins, shading his eyes from the glare of the glittering bauble, ventured timidly to ask:

"I say, guv'nor, be that a real diamond?"

Joe Johnson looked at his questioner with scorn.

"Real diamond, indeed? Of course it is! Anyway," he added, discretion at last getting the better of his anger, "if it ain't I don't mind saying I've been done out of three-and-sixpence."

Judge: "You said the defendant turned and whistled to the dog. What followed?"

Witness: "The dog!"

Mother: "You disobedient boy! I've a good mind to whip you."

Willie: "Well, ma, there's nothing so easy to change as a woman's mind, you know."

Johnny: "And does the gas-meter measure the quantity of gas you use?"

Papa: "No, my son; the quantity you pay for."

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THE TREASURE SEEKERS

A TALE OF ADVENTURE
IN
THE SOUTHERN SEAS
by

REGINALD WRAY



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Dick Danby, a stalwart lad of sixteen, obtains the promise of partnership from Captain Morgan Kidd, skipper of the auxiliary schooner Foam, and his daughter Stella, in a treasure cruise to the wrecked Pathan. Dick is the sole survivor of the Pathan, which was torpedoed, and is lying, half-submerged, off an island in the South Seas. In the strong-room of the ill-fated ship is two million sterling in bar-gold and money; also the Dragon's Eye—a wonderful diamond.

Otto Schwab, posing as a Dutchman—though in reality the commander of the I-boat which sank the Pathan—and Sulah Mendoza, a villainous Malay, are their unscrupulous rivals for the treasure.

Harry Fielding and Joe Maddox join the expedition, also Wang Su, a Chinese boy.

During the voyage they have several victorious encounters with the Red Rover. When they arrive at the Pathan Rock, Dick and Stella set off for an afternoon swim, while the Foam is to cruise round.

Suddenly, Dick dives beneath the clear water, and a moment later Stella sees him at the surface gazing at half a dozen seavergins in his hand.

Now Read on.

Stella Disappears!

IN a flash the truth burst upon her. What they had taken for a rock was the stern of the Pathan, which had been carried bodily over the reef by the force of the recent typhoon.

"Yes, that is the after part of the specie ship, Stella!" cried Dick, guessing what was passing in her mind. "She must have been battered about a lot before the wind got her over the reef, for the floor of the strong-room has been burst in, and this is some of the gold!"

"Splendid, Dick! And to think that if it hadn't been for grandfather lobster we might never have noticed it!" cried the girl. "Let us swim to the rock and hold a council of war."

With the few pieces of precious gold, which seemed an earnest of the vast fortune that might yet be theirs, spread on the rock between them they discussed their next movements.

But nothing could be done until the Foam returned; and some ten minutes later Dick decided to climb to the top of the rock and, if the schooner was in sight, signal for a boat to be sent at once.

The rock was not very tall, but it made up in steepness what it lacked in height, and Dick made more than one weary face ere he gained the top as his naked arms, calves, and feet came in contact with sharp pieces of rock.

But he stuck to it, and at last raised himself to his feet on the narrow summit.

To his disappointment—for he was impatient to relate the news of his discovery to Captain Kidd and his chums—the Foam was about a mile to his left,

but, favoured by a three-quarter wind, was rapidly approaching under a full press of canvas.

Dick was mildly surprised that the skipper should have gone to the trouble of setting every sail when his intention had been to anchor close to the reef, but thought that he was probably anxious to have his daughter safely on board once more.

He looked down to where he had left Stella, then drew in his breath with a quick gasp of alarm.

His girl chum had disappeared!

A New Danger!

ANXIOUS, though not greatly alarmed as yet, Dick Danby clambered down the rock, and, standing on the seat, gazed wildly about him, expecting every moment to see Stella's golden-crowned head and beautiful, smiling face rise above the surface.

But as she did not appear, anxiety turned to uneasiness, and uneasiness into heart-breaking despair.

Fancy conjured up a hundred fearful scenes.

Could it be that the huge lobster they had seen near the Pathan's stern had crept unseen upon the resting girl and carried her off? Or had death in some even more fearful form been her unhappy lot?

The bed of the lagoon was rent by numerous forbidding chasms, at the bottom of which might well lurk strange and fearful submarine monsters, whose very presence was unsuspected by European explorers, though more than hinted at in the legends of the islanders.

Wondrous tales, too, were told by the traders whose business carried them amongst these little-known atolls, and Dick knew that even stranger yarns could be told by men who feared the certain incredulity and ignorant laughter that would greet the narration of their adventures.

For five age-long minutes he waited with dwindling hopes; then, almost beside himself with grief and dismay, plunged into the lagoon and swam frantically round and round the rock, calling his girl chum by name and begging her to answer him.

Now and again he would dive beneath the surface to peer into some dark cranny between the coral rocks or beneath some exquisitely traced arch or miniature cavern.

Once when he came to the surface he heard the deep, sullen boom of the Foam's quick-firer, but was too engrossed in his apparently hopeless search to heed it.

Then, just as the last flickering embers

of hope were dying out and he was beginning to dread his return to the Foam with the sad news of the lovely girl's fate, something flashed past him like a ray of golden sunshine, and Stella was by his side.

Her face was flushed with excitement, and her eyes, so similar to and yet so different from her father's, were dancing merrily.

"I have found a perfect paradise, Dick!" she cried enthusiastically.

"I thought you had gone to one for good!" cried Dick, with a short, almost hysterical laugh.

"Sorry, old chummy, I—!" began Stella, then ceased speaking abruptly, as two shots in quick succession echoed and re-echoed from the rocky coast.

"Dad's waxing impatient!" laughed Stella, throwing herself on her side and cleaving through the water towards the Chair Rock, which hid the sea from view.

"It's certainly later than I thought. It's getting dark already," returned Dick, as he swam by her side.

The next moment both boy and girl ceased swimming, to gaze in dismay at the schooner, which, her gallant sails furled, her rudder closely reefed, was leaving the island behind her, whilst the kanakas were hauling the boat, which had evidently been lowered to pick them up, over the side.

"Good heavens! The Red Rover must have returned!" ejaculated Dick.

The mate of the Foam laughed scornfully.

"It would take a fleet of Red Rovers to make dad run and leave us!" she declared emphatically, adding, as she indicated the southern horizon: "That's the only foe that would make Morgan Kidd turn his back on his daughter, or desert a friend."

Dick Danby looked in the direction of her outstretched hand. Then he understood the flight of the Foam.

Rushing towards the island was a mass of black, lightning-riven clouds, reddened by the beams of the setting sun, as they swept through the air in a mad witch's dance, and both moon and ones knew that a dread cyclone would soon be sweeping over the island with devastating fury.

Woe to the schooner if she should be unable to make an offing and draw clear of the coral-reefs before the impending danger overwhelmed her.

A paper boat in a millstream has a better chance of keeping afloat than a ship caught to windward of a coral reef by a Pacific cyclone.

"It's sheer hard luck not being on board the Foam! It is a treat to handle her in a storm. She answers to my

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much better than to anyone else's," said Stella regretfully.

Dick Danby did not reply, but looked anxiously around him.

The storm would sweep the rollers crashing over the coral reef, and soon even the Chair Rock would be washed by overwhelming seas.

Yet it seemed their only refuge, for the coast rose in precipitous cliffs before them, and there was no time to seek one of the many sheltered bays and sandy coves with which it was indented.

Calling Stella to follow he swam towards the rock.

With a merry laugh the girl swam after him.

"Miss Stella Kild precees her compliments to Mr. Richard Danby and requests the pleasure of his company at the Grotto, N. by N.E.!" she cried, and, without waiting for a reply, swept on ahead.

For a second or so Dick Danby hesitated then followed her as she lead the way straight towards the cliff that overshadowed the Chair Rock.

A swishing, rattling noise caused him to look round.

Coming swiftly up from the south, so close that it had already crossed the barrier reef, was a solid wall of rain which, sweeping down on to the water of the lagoon, lashed its hitherto calm surface into surf.

Just as the rain squall, the forerunner of the dread cyclone, struck him, he saw his fair guide dive, and only too glad to escape the downpour, followed suit.

A few seconds later he was swimming through a tunnel lighted by a soft, silvery glow, for it was open to the light of day at either end.

Presently he followed Stella to the surface, and a sigh of wonder and delight marked his appreciation of the wonderful sight presented to his astonished eyes.

It was as though they were at the bottom of an enormous cup. On every side towered smooth, black cliffs, veined with granite, with here and there broad stripes of red sandstone.

In the centre of this strange refuge was the limpid pool in which they floated. It was edged by a ring of the purest silver-sand Dick had ever seen, and, beyond that, a wild tangle of flowering shrubs.

"Wasn't I right, Dick, when I said I had found a perfect paradise?" laughed Stella, as she waded ashore.

"It's the nearest approach to it we'll find on this earth, at any rate!" returned Dick.

"So this is where you had wanted to while I was thinking of you as forming a particularly dainty meal for the giant lobster, or some other fearful monster?"

"Oh, this is only my front-garden!" cried Stella, springing lightly to her feet, and leading the way to the only break in the circle of flowers that hemmed them in.

Wonderingly, Dick Danby followed the excited girl.

She led him up a sloping, grass-grown path, then, pushing aside a natural trailing screen of vines, rich with luscious grapes, signed him to proceed her.

Dick stooped to pass beneath a low archway, then stooped, rooted to the ground with amazement.

The Mystery of the Cave.

IT seemed to Dick Danby as though he had stepped into the ante-room of some enchanted palace.

Miniature pillars, as white as marble, yet far more lustrous, reached from floor to ceiling, from which depended long sharp-pointed bars which resembled the Gen Library—No. 614.

mined him of icicles turned to stone. It was several seconds before he realised that he was in a cave filled with lovely stalactites.

"Pass along, please! Pass along! Don't block up the gangway!" laughed Stella, behind him.

Dick obeyed, and, squeezing between two mighty stalactites, found himself in a large, circular cavern, lighted by a round opening, some fifty feet above their heads.

A deep, continuous roaring sounded in his ears.

It came from overhead, and he knew it was the roar of the cyclone, as it swept, shrieking, over the island.

But for the storm clouds overhead, the place would have been fairly well lighted, but now all was so dim that the boy could scarcely distinguish the sloping walls, which gave the whole place the appearance of a huge inverted cone, surrounded some six feet from the floor by a circular platform, opening on to which were two carves, one to the right, the other to the left, of where he stood.

"Keep quite still; shut your eyes; and don't open them until I tell you!" commanded Stella.

"What! More surprises?" laughed Dick.

Stella made no reply, but he could hear her light footsteps growing fainter in the distance, until, at length, they ceased altogether.

Minute succeeded minute, and Dick Danby was getting rather tired of standing perfectly still, with his eyes closed, when he felt a hand laid gently on his shoulder.

His promise to keep his eyes closed forgotten, he turned quickly, round, to find a native girl standing by his side.

At least, a short bark petticoat, reaching to just below the knees, a closely-woven grass shirt or bodice, and a grass, poncho-like cloak with a hole in the middle for her head, was a native girl's attire.

But the long golden hair, the peach complexion, sun-kissed white face, the laughing eyes, and the white feet, could only have belonged to one person in the world.

"Stella! Where on earth did you get those things?" he demanded.

"Where should a lady keep her most fashionable attire but in her bed-room," laughed the girl, taking Dick's hand and leading him to where a fall of rock gave easy access to the ledge around the cavern.

Immediately before them was a cave which contained a dust-covered native bed and a long, grass basket, and a few roughly-carved bowls and dishes.

"Looks as if this place was inhabited! If so we'll be nicely in for it when the owners come along!" commented Dick.

Stella pointed to the dust that lay thick on the floor, which only showed the impression of their own feet.

"There has been nobody here for months, if not years," she declared.

"Anyhow, I am sure the Polynesian girl to whom these clothes belong would not object to my wearing them. A bathing costume is splendid for the water, but it is rather out of place on land!"

Dick nodded.

"Anything there that will do for me?" he asked, for he was clad only in thin white ducks and a singlet.

Stella plunged her arms into the basket and threw out many articles of finery dear to the simple natives' hearts, but could only find another bark cloth shirt, into which Dick managed to squeeze.

"We will just look into the other cavern, and see if there is anything there, then return to the grotto, and make as

good a meal as we can on fruit and roots," suggested Stella.

Dick agreeing, as he did with practically everything his girl chum proposed, they walked round the ledge and entered the second cave.

It was smaller than the one they had just left, but darker, as the only light that entered was from what Stella called the main hall.

Suddenly Stella caught her boy chum by the wrist, and pointed to something that glistened against the wall opposite them.

"What is that, Dick?" she asked, in hushed tones, which told how well she knew what the answer would be.

Without a word, Dick Danby pressed past her, and bent over a human skeleton, which was propped in a sitting position against the rocky wall.

It was evidently that of a girl, for the bones were slender and fragile, whilst from the grinning skull descended a wealth of raven-black hair, which, mingling with the white bones, gave the whole a peculiarly ghastly and weird appearance.

An exclamation, of astonishment escaped Dick Danby's lips as he grasped something that lay near the dead girl's feet.

Too late, he found that the thing which had attracted his attention had been fastened round the skeleton's ankle, with the result that, all unwittingly, he brought the whole bony structure rattling to the ground.

Startled by the fall of the dry bones, Dick Danby rushed swiftly to the entrance, holding in his hand a leather band attached to which was the battered silver case of a wrist-watch.

"Oh, Dick, why did you disturb the poor thing in her last, long sleep?" cried Stella reproachfully.

"I did not intend to, Stella. Let us get out of this into the open. I have made a most astounding discovery," replied Dick hastily, as he lead the way along the ledge.

Neither spoke until they stood, in the fast declining light, by the side of the silvery pool which was now gilded by the waters rushing over the coral reef into the lagoon.

Dick Danby handed the wristlet to Stella, pointing to some writing inside it.

"Richard Danby, ss. Pathan!" read Stella aloud.

"Yes; that was mine once!" Dick explained, in answer to the question in his girl chum's eyes. "It was taken from me when I was captured, and the chief gave it to his daughter, who, knowing nothing of wrist-watches, used it as an anklet."

Two days later she disappeared, and things looked ugly for me, for the silvery chain connected the wrist-watch with her disappearance, and thought I had spirited her away with its magic aid. Fortunately a young warrior, who had won the girl's love, but whose family had a blood feud with the chief, was missing, also, and a woman having seen the two creeping away towards the lagoon, I was given the benefit of the doubt.

"And you think it was the body of the poor girl we found?" asked Stella breathlessly. "But what of the lover?"

"A little over a fortnight later he was found in the Temple of the Snake God, which it is death for any but the priests to enter, and was cut down without mercy," explained Dick.

Stella's beautiful eyes filled with tears. "Poor girl! Poor little island lover! I can see her waiting there, thinking every sound was her lover's returning footsteps, until, at last, despair broke her



An angry order from the High Priest brought two islanders from out the crowd, carrying long, grass ropes with which they bound Stella hand and foot.

heart," she murmured, in low, sympathetic tones.

A Perilous Swim.

THAT night Stella slept upon the native bed, whilst Dick made a couch of the island girl's clothes amongst the stalactites.

The bracelet he had found, conjured up thoughts of his sufferings whilst a prisoner to the islanders, and that, combined with the roaring of the gale, and the thunder of the waves on the rocks without, kept him from sleep until shortly before daybreak.

Thus it happened that when he awoke it was broad daylight, and he found that Stella had been up long enough, not only to catch some fish in the pool by means of fishing-tackle found in her bedroom—or rather, cave, but had also managed to kindle a fire with the help of her knife and a piece of flint, at which to cook them.

"Sorry, Stella; I had a wretched night and overslept myself!" he cried remorsefully.

His girl chuck laughed.

"Don't apologize, Dick! It's only right that the woman should work whilst the lord sleeps," she replied gaily. "Leave those fish alone, they're for dinner!" she added, as Dick, anxious to be of use, took up a good-sized cat-fish, and began to wash it in a silvery stream that trickled out of the undergrowth. "If you must do something, swim out and have a look round. From the rise and fall of the pool it seems as if the sea had gone down a bit!"

Dick Danby looked up at the clouds scurrying by the narrow opening above his head, then down at the disturbed waters of the pool, which were swelling and sinking, as the waves dashed into the narrow opening through which they had access to the grotto.

"All right! If the sea isn't too rough I'll swim to a spot I noticed yesterday, where I may be able to climb up the cliff a little way and get a wider view from the Chair Rock, so don't be alarmed if I am gone longer than you expect," he replied.

Without giving Stella time to reply, he took advantage of the sinking of the pool to dive into a receding wave.

Caught by the outgoing water, Dick Danby was drawn swiftly into the lagoon.

Rising to the surface, he looked anxiously around him.

A wild scene met his eyes.

The lagoon, which had been as still and placid as an inland lake the previous day, was now a mass of foam-capped billows, whilst the distant reef, showed as a huge wall of white spume, twenty feet in height, as the resistless Pacific rollers crashed on to it.

Overhead the storm still raged, though it was evident that the worst was over.

A glance at the Chair Rock showed the hopelessness of attempting a landing on it, as the waves had formed a whirlpool around its jagged base; but the water was a trifle smoother a few hundred yards to his right, so, bracing himself for the battle, he struck out in that direction.

Hitherto, he had enjoyed the comparative shelter of the Chair Rock, but a few

minutes later, he found himself in a perfect splutter of broken water, which taxed his skill and strength to the utmost.

Dick Danby was far above the average as a swimmer, and, undaunted by the buffeting he received, felt a stern joy in this battle with the elements.

But, strong swimmer though he was, it took him some half-hour to reach his goal, and by the time he had floated on the top of a wave to the shelving rock for which he had started, he was as nearly done up as he cared to think about.

However, a few minutes' rest in a huge crevice, restored his flagging energies, and, though now and again, it seemed as though the wind would tear him from his hold, he at last reached a narrow ledge which commanded a view of the reef, the adjoining atolls, and the wide-stretching southern horizon.

Dropping on one knee, he grasped a protruding rock with one hand, to keep his body steady against the fierce gusts that roared and thundered against the cliff, as, shading his eyes with his other hand, he gazed anxiously over the tumultuous seas.

At first he could see nothing; then his heart seemed to cease beating, as he caught a momentary glimpse of a dismantled schooner, running before the gale. She was headed straight towards where a mountain of white foam proclaimed the presence of one of the smaller atolls.

The next moment the ship had vanished, swallowed in the trough of a mighty sea.

Anxiously Dick Danby waited her reappearance.

Minutes flew by, until, just as he began to fear she had foundered, he saw her on the top of another huge billow, but so close to the atoll that he knew no human power could save her.

A few minutes later she reached the fountain of spray that showed where the waves were breaking on the coral reef.

For a moment she seemed to be standing on end, like a rearing horse, and the next had disappeared in a smother of foam.

A deep groan burst from Dick Danby's lips.

"Heaven grant it was not the Foam!" he prayed, half-unconsciously. And yet what other vessel could it be?

Schooners are plentiful in the Southern Seas, but Treasure Island was beyond the usual trade routes, and very few traders were hardy enough to face the treacherous natives who inhabited that out-of-the-way archipelago.

The ill-fated vessel had been too far away for him to make certain of her identity, and as he crouched on that bare rock, sweeping the heaving waters in search of some other sail, he determined to say nothing to Stella of what he had seen.

Time enough to tell her when the Foam failed to return, and they found themselves hopelessly marooned on that ill-fated island.

Dreading to meet his girl chum, and to hear her merry laughter, knowing what he did, Dick Danby remained on the ledge longer than he intended; then, fearing that the girl would be growing anxious, sprang from the cliff into the sea.

He found it no easy task to re-enter the tunnel through the cliff. More than once he was compelled to turn his back to it, and swim with all his might into the storm-tossed lagoon to save himself from being hauled against the rocks.

But at last he succeeded, though not before he had almost made up his mind to seek the shelving shore from which he had climbed to recover strength and breath.

Worn out, hungry, and breathless, he at last found himself floating in the centre of the pool, and struggling ashore, flung himself down, thoroughly exhausted.

He was somewhat surprised not to see Stella, but thought nothing of it, especially when, on sitting up and looking around the gorge, he saw a large catfish wrapped in a green leaf, and laid in the hot ashes to keep warm, whilst close against it was a heap of newly-gathered breadfruit.

The sight of the vials reminded him how hungry he was, and the next minute he was making a hearty breakfast.

His meal over, he rose, and calling

Stella, made his way through the grotto to the main cavern.

But there was no reply, and, with growing anxiety gnawing at his heart, he threw some pieces of rock into her bed-room cave to announce his coming, then peeped inside.

His fears began to take active shape when he found she was not in there, and, though the sight of her bathing-dress spread out on a flat rock near the entrance told that, alarmed by his absence, she had not swum through the tunnel in search of him, as he had at first feared.

Standing on the extreme edge of the ledge, he shouted her name again and again.

A hundred echoes replied. Seriously alarmed, he searched every nook and cranny of both the main cave and the grotto.

But in vain; his girl chum had disappeared as completely as though the grotto had opened and swallowed her.

Stella at Bay.

A HEALTHY girl has always a healthy appetite, and though Stella had intended to wait for

Dick Danby's return ere commencing breakfast, the broiled fish looked so tempting, the fruit so delicious, that she began to nibble at a custard apple.

This only served to wet her appetite, and it was not long before she was doing full justice to the tempting viands for fortune and her own skill as a fisherwoman, had thrown in her way.

Now, as the reader has probably realised by this time, the lovely Mate of the Foam was one of those energetic young ladies who simply cannot sit still.

Finding Dick did not return, she tidied up the cave in which she had slept, then commenced to explore her underground domain.

At first it seemed as though this would take but very little time. So far as she could see from the floor, her cave, and the one in which lay the bones of the unfortunate native girl, were the only openings exclusive of the grotto.

It was whilst she was passing from cave to cave along the ledge we have before mentioned that she noticed a small crevice in the rock.

She was nearly passing it by without troubling to examine it, when a decided draught fanned her cheeks.

Realising that wind could not come out of the solid rock, she thrust her way into the crevice, coming to an abrupt halt with a slight cry of pain, as something caught her long, flowing hair, as though to pull her back.

Turning, she found that a strand had caught against a projecting piece of

rock, and having released it, she groped her way slowly forward, for within three yards of the entrance she was in complete darkness.

It was a rough, up-hill road, and so narrow that at times she had to squeeze sideways, whilst at others it was so low that she was obliged to walk with her body bent almost double.

Presently she was brought to a complete halt by the sound of voices that came from the narrow, tunnel-like path.

As she moved forward with increased caution, the voices became a low, monotonous chant, above which rose a solemn booming of wooden drums.

Presently a dim ray of daylight shone before her.

At that moment, her feet slipped from under her, and with a barely-suppressed cry of alarm, she found herself sliding feet foremost, down an inclined plane.

Faster and faster she flew, the light growing stronger each moment. Suddenly, she found herself shooting through the air, past the swaying head of an enormous serpent, right into the midst of a score or more half-naked savages, who turned and fled, fighting madly in a terror-stricken attempt to pass through a doorway guarded on either side by pillars carved from out the living rock.

Barely had Stella struck the ground ere she was up again, and despite the peril of her position, a ringing laugh burst from her lips as she saw the frantic struggles of the savages to escape from the unexpected apparition that had appeared so suddenly in their midst.

Then she glanced behind her, and the laugh was frozen on her lips.

Towering above her head, was the head of a fearful serpent, with huge, staring eyes, and a red, open mouth, armed with formidable fangs.

But, even as she gazed with bulging eyes at the awful monster, the terror faded from her face, as she noted the anything but lifelike way it swayed from side to side, and that, though its huge eyes shone with a baleful glare, it was but the reflected light from the outside, whilst its terrible teeth were badly-made pegs of wood.

In fact, she realised that the serpent which had given her such a fright was nothing more alarming than a most unskilfully designed head and neck, made of feathers.

As she recalled the savages' terror at her sudden appearance, and her own alarm at the sight of the snake, the humour of the situation was too much for her, and, seating herself on the steps of the altar, she again burst into peal after peal of musical laughter.

It was the old-world myth that proved her unding.

"Little Polly Flinders."



A THRILLING NEW
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It caused the islanders to halt in their panic-stricken flight, and to turn towards the temple, listening, with incredulous ears, to the ripples of almost hysterical laughter.

Now, the South Sea Islanders who have not been converted to Christianity, are confirmed devil worshippers.

Not that they are naturally more wicked than other savages, but simply because they argue that, as their gods are all givers of good gifts, and never do evil, whilst the devils are always on the look-out to harm them, it is their policy to propitiate the latter by prayers and sacrifices.

Consequently when realising the seriousness of her position, Stella hesitated between retreating whence she had come, or acting the part of the supernatural being she was evidently taken for.

She chose the bolder course, and it was to find herself surrounded by a ring of strangely-garbed and ferocious priests, who, whilst not a tally offering violence, plainly intimated that she was a prisoner.

As Dick Danby had said, it was certain death for anyone but a priest to enter the temple of the Snake God. Probably Stella was the first human being, certainly the first woman, who had ever committed that act of audacity without being immediately cut down.

But the priests were in a quandary. That she was a goddess her red and black face, her long hair, and her word and her golden belt, all seemed to say so. And they did not know the words of the priests, and they did not know the words of the priests.

On the other hand, these women, such as it was, thought that the gods and devils were to put it mildly, not of speaking terms, and to tell her so might bring down the wrath of the gods upon their devoted heads.

With a smiling face, and the growing anxiety which was on her heart, Stella looked calmly and upon the human face that looked at her.

Never, she thought, had she seen such repulsive hideous things. Low-browed, high-nosed, dark-skinned, they were more like ogres than South Sea Islanders.

Nor did their dress make in personal adornment add to their ugliness.

Each man wore a disgusting feather cap, with a spine, or crest, of shark's teeth running from the crown of the forehead to the base of the neck.

A necklace of human bones hung from their broad, toothed jaws, and a girdle of human skulls, that clashed together with an indescribably horrid noise every time they moved, wound their waists.

Every man was armed with a long spear studded with shark's teeth, or a horrible shark's teeth sword, all save one, who was evidently their chief, and he carried an elaborate, carved, double-headed battle-axe, which Stella knew must have come from India. Though how it had come into the possession of the chief priest of the Snake God she could not imagine.

Beyond the priests, she could see a crowd of brown-skinned islanders, and why, she could not say, but, savages though they were, and as they filed from teeth proclaimed, cannibals, did not seem comforted for, for they were evidently of a different race to the new-old priests.

For some time the skull-bedecked savages talked excitedly together, now and again turning to the high priest as though asking him to decide some knotty point.

Instinctively Stella Kidd guessed that on his decision rested her fate, so watched his face closely.

Presently she saw an expression of intense cunning flash from his eyes, and

realised that she was about to be put to some unknown test.

She was not surprised, therefore, when, at a sign from their Chief, the savages formed a wide circle, with their hideous leader and the mysterious white woman in its centre.

Striding up to the fair captive, the High Priest grinned villainously as he ran his thumb along the battle-axe's keen edge, then, slapping his brawny chest, pointed significantly from the axe to the girl's golden-crowned head.

So suddenly, that it was only by the exercise of the greatest self-control that Stella suppressed the shriek that rose to her lips, he uttered a piercing yell and sprang a good three feet from the ground, whirling the heavy axe round his head as though it had been but a child's toy.

The contemptuous smile she assumed when he alighted on the ground before her, almost turned into a hearty laugh, as she noted the look of disappointment on his face, when he saw that she had not even flinched.

But he had not done with her yet. With a blood-curdling shout, he raised the axe in the air once more, and stood motionless with it poised above the girl's head.

Although she expected each moment that the keen blade would descend upon her head Stella felt that the slightest sign of fear would be the signal for it to fall, and she gazed unflinchingly into the savage's face for a moment, then, with contemptuous deliberation, snapped her fingers in his face.

The High Priest allowed the heavy weapon to fall to his side, then, backing away from the fearless white girl's presence, spoke rapidly to his followers.

What he said, Stella could not understand, but she guessed, from the increasing respect with which the savages regarded her, that her calm indifference to death had made a favourable impression on them.

But, despite her defiant bearing, the strain was getting more than she could stand.

Feeling as though she would surely shriek, or else burst into a fit of uncontrollable, hysterical laughter, she decided to take advantage of the priest's indisposition to return to the temple, hoping that an opportunity to slip back into the grove from which she had fallen would present itself.

But as she turned to put her resolve into execution, the High Priest barked out a sharp order, and a crowd of priests, posting to the entrance to the temple, barred her way with a hedge of spears and shark-teeth swords.

Still she walked steadily on, hoping against hope that the living barrier would give way before her.

But though their eyes rolled until little was seen of them, but the whites, and their frames trembled with superstitious terror, the priests did not move an inch, and it was not until she felt a slight prick from the point of one of the spears, that she halted with an uncontrollable cry of pain on her lips.

As though the cry reassured her captors that she was a human being, after all, a tremendous shout burst from the priests, and they drew back their weapons, with the evident intention of plunging them into her tender flesh.

With a warning shout the High Priest sprang forward, and, seizing her by the hair, dragged her back with cruel force. An angry order brought two islanders from the crowd, carrying long grass ropes, with which they bound their captive hand and foot, and then, in obedience to the High Priest's commands, tied her to the trunk of a solitary

cocconut-palm, immediately in front of the Snake God's temple.

Realising the futility of resistance, Stella allowed her captors to secure her without a struggle.

And now, unable to move hand or foot, her body chafed by the swaying of the trunk, for, although the valley was sheltered from the full fury of the gale, the summit of the palm was now and again rocked by gusts of wind, the courage which had sustained her so long, gave place to hopeless despair.

For a little while the whole scene swam before her eyes, as a deadly faintness swept over her.

But she conquered the weakness, determined that, if her time had come, to die as became the Mate of the Foam. Uttering weird cries of triumph, the High Priest approached the tree to which she was bound in a series of grotesque bounds, until within six feet of the prisoner he broke out into a shrill, monotonous chant, which Stella judged, from his calculations, was mainly in praise of his own prowess.

Suddenly his song ceased, and, turning to Stella, he informed her in grim, though unmistakable pantomime, that when the sun, which was shining dimly through the storm-clouds, cast the shadow of the palm on to the entrance to the temple, his axe should drink her blood.

Dick Danby to the Rescue.

DISTRACTED by the loss of his girl chum, Dick Danby rushed from the cave to the grotto, from the grotto to the flower-filled gorge, and back again, covering every inch of ground not once, but a hundred times, in his vain search.

Several times he stopped by the side of the agitated pool and gazed into its liquid depths; yet each time he turned away from it with a half-contemptuous shrug at his own folly.

Stella's bathing-dress, lying on the rock, told him that she had not plunged into the water intentionally, whilst that so strong a swimmer as his girl chum should have fallen in and have been unable to get out again, was too absurd to be worth a moment's consideration.

At last, he avoided the pool, and continued his now hopeless search in the grotto and the larger cave, until, at length, a few tiny threads of gold, entangled round some jutting pieces of rock, disclosed the narrow crevice which Stella had entered on her last night.

His heart beating high with new-found hope, Dick Danby rushed along the narrow path.

Presently he came to an abrupt halt and listened, as a strange, grating noise, mingled with a weird chanting, which sent a shiver, as though an icy wind had blown upon him, through his heated frame.

Often, when a prisoner, had he heard that awful chant, and knew that it was only sung by the priests when some luckless human victim was about to be sacrificed to the Snake God.

Moving cautiously forward, he came to the precipitous slope down which Stella had fallen.

He would possibly have shared her fate had not the sun at that moment burst through the low-lying clouds that had been flooding the temple with its brilliant light, and disclosing the perilous nature of his path.

(Another long instalment of this magnificent adventure story will appear in next Wednesday's GEM. Be sure to order your copy in advance, and thus avoid disappointment.)



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers.
Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

"THE DISAPPEARING FOURTH!" By Mr. Martin Clifford.

I have persuaded your favourite author to write an extra-long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co. for our next issue.

This story, I am sure, will cause endless amusement to all. It is one long scream from beginning to end, and I have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Martin Clifford is really giving of his best in

"THE DISAPPEARING FOURTH!"

I should strongly advise all my readers to avoid disappointment by ordering their copies early, as there is sure to be a great rush for this long, complete story.

AN ASTOUNDING DISAPPEARANCE.

It could not be helped, of course. These little things will happen, as you may have noticed, but there it is, as the man said when he slung the frying-pan into the pond during a fit of annoyance; or, rather, there the Chat was not. It had gone missing!

The Printer telephoned through to say he had not seen it. I dragged out all the forty-six drawers of my desk, but the thing was not there. The office-boy had not described it, and suspicion fell on the cat, but that was no good.

Besides, Melchisedec (the name of the office cat), had had a good lunch off mackerel, and was not likely to go in for further miscellaneous feeding. I remember I had said a rare lot of things in that Chat which was not there. All the best jokes, in fact.

What became of it may never be known. Possibly some passing aviator thrust his hand in at the office window and grabbed the priceless piece of work. Possibly not. You never know! Let it go at that!

PLEASE TAKE NOTE.

So if there is anything amiss in the Chat this week, please don't blame me. An Editor is not Argus-eyed. He does not carry optics in the back of his respected cranium.

I have had to hurry a few well-chosen words together, somehow.

And that reminds me of one thing I did say in the other article, namely, that the Annual was doing well—not remarkably well. Wait a minute, and you will see what I am driving at, as the chauffeur said when a brick wall got in his path. For it is not at all remarkable, all said and done, that the Annual is surpassing all expectations.

It is going like a Cesarewitch winner, or like the man went when a frisky bull did not care about the look of him, and leaped a fence to investigate matters.

As for the "Greyfriars Herald," it is proving worthy of its great reputation, won in the tumultuous days of 1915. Nothing more need be said.

TEN DAYS AGO.

The Fifth of November was not forgotten. I believe I said something about that interesting old worthy, Guido Fawkes, in the last Chat.

You know this last Fifth was the happiest we have had for six years. There were quite a lot of celebrations, and one was glad to see it.

The late Mr. Fawkes did a kindly thing when he planned his funny little plot. Did he mean it? Was it all just a quaint joke on his part? Of course, I know Guy Fawkes had his serious moments, but there is no occasion to enter into an argument.

Anyhow, the Fifth of November celebrity has left a pleasing legacy. If he did not invent Roman Candles, at any rate, he provided a reason for their use.

The Romans have left us some really good things. Their candles are splendid—better than farthing dips, any day. And some folks consider that that witch-hunting, porridge-eating old party, who is said never to have washed properly, but to have contented himself with a moist towel (it is in the history-book), the gentleman known as James the First, really deserved an occasional blowing-up from somebody.

Gunpowder was an extreme method. You can blow up folks without the aid of that risky explosive—it is often done in our time—and such treatment is most salutary!

SORRY I'M SURE.

Some people, when they dash to their writing desks and put down a few rare comments on the stories, quite forget to add their names. Are they ashamed of the said names? It cannot be! I decline to believe it. If anybody is ashamed of his cognomen, he should do something to clear up the misunderstanding, and make the world proud of it.

But that is by the way. I was thinking of a caustic note I received about a picture showing the Greyfriars fellows at swinning practice. I see that their costume was deemed altogether too slight—and if they were bathing in the sea in the cold, nippy spell we are passing through now, it was all that.

But, seriously, does my correspondent want the lads to go for their dip in top-hats and tail-coats with ulsters. That is not done. I fancy the letter referred to was sent in as a joke. Anyway, it was highly humorous.

THE ANCESTRY OF BAGGY.

This is very interesting and informative. Please read this paragraph, even if you miss the others.

It appears that Baggy Trimble comes of a most illustrious race. His forbear, Courcy de Trimble—so Baggy informs me—came over with the Conqueror. He was known as the Stoutest Trimble, and his fame was so great that the term has lingered to this very day.

Baggy is, perfectly naturally, just a bit proud of his family. I understand that at this very moment, Baggy is engaged in writing up the family tree. Of course, Baggy is very little good at tree-climbing, but this case is different, and I wish him well in his learned investigations into the remote past.

ON THE FILM.

When are the stories going to be filmed? I hope it will be done before long. Baggy, among others, would figure well on the cinema-stage. But there is no hurrying these matters.

A great many of my readers understand a lot about film work, and they will realise the vast amount of hard work and difficult preparation involved.

I was looking the other day at a performance which seemed simple enough, but, easy as it appeared, the business of arranging it must have been tremendous. It was one of the familiar knock-about order, and there were suggestions of Charlie Chaplin in the business of the gentleman who got in everybody's way and upset a hard-working company of house decorators in their wall-papering operations.

'Why is it so funny to see everything put out of order? It is a curious question, but the fact remains that it is screamingly humorous to look at a peaceful thoroughfare being set by the ears. A clumsy individual swings a ladder the wrong way, and knocks down a personage who is passing with a pail of white-wash. The white-wash flies everywhere.

Others trip over the first victim, then more, and there follows an exciting chase after the original disturber of the peace. He sees what is coming if he is caught, and foots it nimbly, but, somehow, he never knows which way to turn. He dives into the saloon of a barber in a big way of business, upsets all the clients, leaving them strewn picturesquely in their aprons on the floor, swallowing the barber, and after that—well, after that, anything happens.

The pursued party escapes, and by that time the police and the fire brigade are on the scene. A restaurant door has been left open. Into the place the hunted man plunges. He falls into the arms of a waiter, who just happens to be walking by, carrying a tureen filled with multi-gatavny soup. You have a fleeting glimpse of the garcon removing sections of stewed chicken from his whiskers, and then the action passes on. Most likely it ends on the roofs.

How is it all done? The best part of the reel is taken out in the street. Wonderful it is, anyway.

Not long since I saw a furious drama of the Chinese secret societies. These societies are so very secret that everybody seems to know all about them. The underground business, and the going and coming of the pig-tailed Chinamen looked realistic enough, but the scenes were actually laid in Twickenham, one of the most harmless districts I know.

Your Editor