

Whisking Mollusks



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THE FIGHTING FAGS IN FULL FORCE!

(A Dramatic Incident in the Splendid Long Complete School Tale in this Number.)



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers.
Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House,
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"SKIMPOLE'S REST CURE"
is the title of next week's splendid story, by Mr. Martin Clifford. It describes the remarkable events which occurred when Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, was compelled to take a rest from his arduous studies of the works of Professor Balmyn-crumpet. With dramatic suddenness his everlight fails him, and he is obliged to cease work.

SKIMPOLE'S REST CURE
is brought about by a remarkable cause, which is revealed towards the end of the story. Order your copy of next week's GEM at once, and read this fine yarn.

THE POPULAR STORY.

Scores of letters I get deal with the kind of yarn the writers prefer, but do you know that it all comes to the same thing in the end? A boy or a girl, or a man, or a woman—I must be exact to make my point—likes the real story. There is passing interest for a bit of extravagance, for something in the farce line, or for a tale about magical happenings, but the general reader always comes back to the human story. Why? Because he is there himself. That's all! The writers who succeed in their craft are those who have found, accidentally or otherwise, the key to the heart of the world. The story may be of the simplest texture, no plot to speak of—the less really the better—but there is the right note in it; there is some little tender scene, or somebody says something which finds an immediate response in the mind of the reader. The tale without this motive must go to the wall.

Perhaps I may be boring you by this glimpse into the veritable hinterland of story-writing. If so, many apologies, but it is interesting. I was reminded of the truth of what I say only the other night when glancing through a tale which was published many years since, and which lives yet. It will go on living because it has human feeling in it. And what was it all about? That is hard to say—just a blind man who kept the news of the disaster from his brother, and lived alone.

The brother was really responsible for the tragedy. And there were children in the tale as well—real children who lived and thought, and fancied things, as kids will. It is more than possible the story would be scoffed at by some as being minus plot. But it had life in it—the life you and I and everybody live, and if you do not care to read about life, well, you must be very curious-minded indeed.

Now, in the case of weekly tales in the Companion Papers, I receive myriads of letters discussing them, and it is cheery enough to see how the readers talk over the doings of some character who has done something, rather splendid and tender. Doris Levison displays the right kind of fortitude, and this is what I get the week after: "Can't we have another story bringing in Doris?" Or Ralph Reckness Cardew shows the deeper chord in his nature, and everybody wants to hear more. There is not a day passes but what something like this comes in. The jolly families of boys and girls far away in sunny Queensland write to me in this strain: "They want the same thing, the same note of homeliness and tender, just as their sisters and brothers at home or in the North-west."

Yes, it is life all the time. But I take exception to objections regarding details in the stories, such as a statement that Tom Merry could not have got the better of a footpad. It is right enough that tales should describe exceptional cases. A story which appeared in one of my papers a long time since is often referred to now. I doubt if it will ever be forgotten. It showed the last sacrifice of a brave fellow, who proved the worth of the soul within him by laying down his life for his friend.

Now, one does not want sad stories very often in this series. But the highest motive can be shown without hurting anybody's feelings. Where there is reality in a tale the reader sees all the details, turns back to read again, is so immersed in the yarn that for a time the outside world is forgotten entirely, but the said world is only lost sight of because of something which is real—like the world.

FROM HULL.

Many thanks to a girl friend in Hull for her kind note of thanks. She tells me that the reply to her last communication made her forget that she was tired but with work.

"It is kept in a wallet to keep it clean, because when I am old I shall read it over to myself, and realise that when I was young I was a supporter of the Companion Papers."

What my correspondent really wants is a G.H.F.C., initials which stand for "Greyfriars Herald" Friendship Club. Of course, as things are, I feel that we have such a club, though there is no register of members. It would take a lot of paper.

As to growing old, I half fancy Miss G. M., of Hull, will never do that. New interests, vivid impressions, a sense of duty, all the crisp sensations of a glad and grateful life prevent folks growing old. And then, naturally, it is rather interesting this growing old so long as you keep young—which will be the style in many instances which come under my notice. Of course, we all know that heaps of people never really get the best out of life because they try to imitate the cat who is said to have died of care.

As to that matter, I have my own private opinions. Most likely that cat never died at all, but merely went and took lodgings at some comfortable fish-shop, to mitigate the boredom, fish-shops being the Mecca of cats. What is important is to keep up his keen interest in life. Then you win through no matter what happens, for you will be rushed on and on to even more interesting things. For there is far more in life than anybody has yet discovered

Your Editor

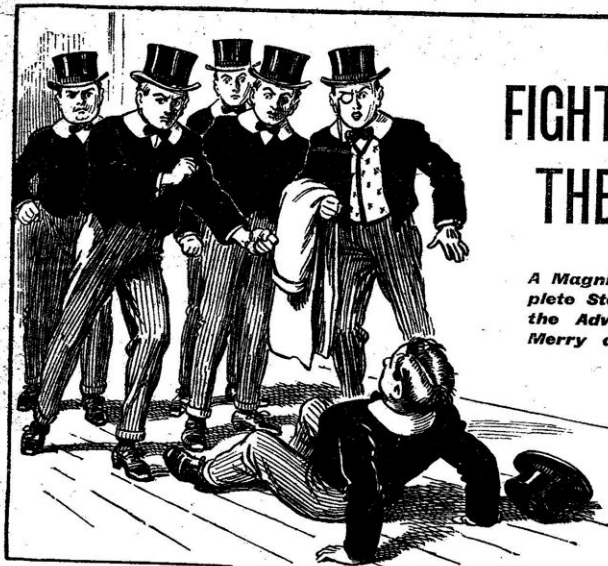
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FIGHTING FOR THE FAGS!

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

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

UNION

CHAPTER 1. Pander Arrives.

"**S**TILL another!" This Jack Blake, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, as he entered Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage of the School House.

D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby, his study-mates and chums, looked up.

"Another what?" asked Herries. "Impot?"

Blake shook his head. "No; another new chap," he answered. "I've got to meet him at Rycombe in half an hour's time."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "There's an epidemic of new chaps lately, deah boys!"

"Rather!" said Herries, with a snort. "Blessed if I can see why every pater wants to send his son here!"

"Why shouldn't they?" asked Blake, in surprise.

"How do I know?" retorted Herries. George Harries was not in a good temper. Towser, his bulldog, had broken loose that morning, and had taken a piece out of Mr. Ratcliff's trousers.

Mr. Ratcliff was the New House-master—a sour-tempered individual, who had few friends and many enemies. He had blamed Herries for the dog having broken loose, and awarded him a few hundred lines.

"Theah was Twimble minah," said D'Arcy. "Then that chap Malcolm came along—"

"He was a bootboy," Jack Blake reminded his aristocratic chum. "And now theah's another fellah comin'!"

"What's his name, Blake?" asked Digby.

"Gander—Pander—something like that," answered Blake. "Any of you chaps coming down to the station with me? Old Railton collared me in the passage just now, and said I was to go."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus quickly. "I'll come, with pleaseah!"

"Of course, we're all coming, fathhead!" growled Herries.

At any other time Jack Blake would have taken exception to his chum alluding to him as a fathhead. But Blake knew that Herries was not in the best of tempers that day, and let him off, so to speak.

"We'd better be getting along," said Blake. "Come on, you chaps!"

He led the way out of Study No. 6, and almost ran into Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the chums of the Shell, who were about to knock at the door of the Fourth-Former's study.

"Hallo, Tommy!" said Blake. "Sorry can't stop, old thing, but we're going down to Rycombe to meet a new chap."

"My hat! It's raining new chaps lately!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy approvingly. "That's just what I said, deah boy."

"Great minds think alike, you know, Gussy," said Monty Lowther seriously.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah, I see no cause for laughiah!"

"I do!" said Lowther, with a chuckle. But he did not explain what he saw in his own remark to make him laugh. D'Arcy surveyed him coldly through his monocle, and allowed the subject to drop.

"Well, we'll come along with you, Blake," said Tom Merry. "We were only wanting a jaw."

"Meet us down at the gates; then," said Blake.

Tom Merry & Co. hurried away to their own study to get their hats and coats.

Blake & Co. were waiting for them at

the gates, and the party proceeded towards Rycombe Station.

The train from London was already in when they arrived.

There was no mistaking the new boy. He was the only passenger who had alighted from the train who was dressed in Etons, a well-polished topper set neatly on his head.

There was one thing about the junior that Blake & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. noticed at once. He had red hair. It was not a brown; it was red—glaring red.

"Good old Ginger!" chuckled Blake softly. "I can see this kid having a warm time!"

"And I see chaps having a warm time, if they get near him," added Monty Lowther. "He's almost red-hot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The new junior looked round as he heard the laughter of the juniors from St. Jim's. He flushed, and advanced nervously towards the two Co's.

"Are you—are you from St. Jim's?" he asked nervously.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" said D'Arcy warmly. "Allow me to welcome you to Wylcombe!"

"Th-thanks!" said the new boy.

"What's your name, old top?" asked Tom Merry.

"Percy Pander—and I'm for the Fourth."

"Bai Jove! That's my Form, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark as if he owned the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

"I see," said Pander. "You're captain of the Form?"

"Well, yaas, in a way!" answered D'Arcy loftily. "At least, I direct the weal captain, who always follows my example and advice!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 623.

"My hat!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "You cheeky ass! You dummy!"

"Weally, Blake, you must admit——"

"I admit you're a dummy!" snapped Blake. "Captain of the Fourth! I should like to see the kind of captain you'd make, Gussy!"

"He'd insist upon the chaps wearing red, white, and blue waistcoats, and all manner of different ties during the day!" said Lowther, with a chuckle. "A fancy-dress parade every morning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! Pandah, deah boy——"

"Look here, Gussy!" said Jack Blake. "Did I come to meet this red-headed fellow, or did you?"

"Wcally, Blake——"

"Shurrup!" growled Blake. "Come on, Ginger!"

Pander seemed to gulp something down in his throat. He turned to the leader of the Fourth with a flushed and red face.

"I may as well tell you right now," he said nervously. "I object to being called 'Ginger'!"

"That's all right, Ginger," said Blake. "You'll object to a lot of things, Ginger, before you're been at St. Jim's very long. Ratcliff, for instance, 'Ginger'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pander became still more confused as the juniors laughed at Jack Blake's remarks.

"Look he-here," he said indignantly. "I'll have to show you how much I object, if you persist. I shall really, you know!"

Blake stared at the new boy in surprise.

"Not asking for thick ears the day you arrive at St. Jim's, are you?" he asked warmly.

"I'm not asking for anything," said Pander calmly. "Only that you refrain from calling me Ginger. I don't like it."

"You're quite wright, deah boy," said D'Arcy, and, turning to Blake, added severely: "You ought to know bettah than to make fun of Gingham—I mean, Pandah! He can't help having wed hair——"

"Any more than you can help being an ass!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, Lowthah! I should be sorry to have to administrah a fearful thwackin' in public place, deah boy, but I'm afraid I shall have to!"

Tom Merry took Pander by the arm and marched him towards the exit.

"Come on, old chap!" he said. "We'll leave those two asses to argue. Gussy can't keep off arguing; and Monty Lowther—that's the chap with the funny face—can't help trying to be funny."

"I see," said Pander, with a smile. "Here, Ginger! You wait for me! I came to fetch you," said Blake indignantly. "Where's——"

Pander took his arm from Tom Merry's, and turned to Blake. His face was flushed and red, and Blake chuckled.

Blake had no wish to offend the new junior. Blake was not that sort. But he could not resist poking fun at the red-headed junior.

"Look here, Blake!" said Pander. "I'll jolly well punch your head if you call me 'Ginger' again!"

"My hat, Ginger——"

That was as far as Jack Blake got. Pander advanced towards him, evidently very nervous and confused. But his hands were steady as he put them in a fighting attitude before the astonished Fourth Form leader.

"My hat!" exclaimed Manners. THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 628.

"That chap knows something about boxing, or I'll eat my hat!"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "I can see Blake receiving a surprise in a minute!"

Pander's attitude towards Blake astonished that worthy. Blake was a fighting-man of no mean prowess, and for a new junior to threaten to punch his head was almost unheard of.

"Look here, Ginger——" he began warningly.

The next moment he had to use all his skill to ward off a blow that came straight for his nose. He deftly turned the blow aside, only to receive a lightning left in his chest.

Blake sat down on the station platform with a bump.

"Yow!" he yelled. "My hat! I'll spifficate you, Ginger——"

"Get up!" snapped Pander, still very flushed of face. "I'll teach you to call me Ginger, you freak!"

"M-m-my stars!" gasped Digby. "Old Blake'll pulverise him!"

Blake certainly did his best to pulverise Pander. But the red-headed junior simply refused to be pulverised.

Blake jumped to his feet and went for Pander as if he had owed him a grudge all his life. But the Fourth-Former's blows were all turned aside with the ease and grace of the accomplished boxer.

Try as he would, Blake could not reach an spot on Pander's face or body. The other juniors stood by, staring in amazement at the red-headed new boy.

They could not understand how he could appear so confused and nervous, yet face Blake so coolly.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pandah can punch!"

Pander could punch, and he showed that he could the very moment the words left D'Arcy's lips. Feinting with his right, he took Blake off his guard, and landed a hard left on the Fourth-Former's chest.

Blake went to the platform with another bump.

"Ow! Yow!" he gasped. "My hat, Pander——"

Tom Merry grinned as he stepped forward, as Blake rose to his feet with the evident intention of continuing the fight.

"Look here, Blake!" he said remonstratively. "You don't want to fight this chap as if he were Mellish, or a worm of that kind. Wait until you get to St. Jim's, and have the gloves on."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy approvingly. "You're quite wright, Tom Mewwy!"

Pander turned quickly, and looked in surprise at the junior captain. Then he looked again at D'Arcy.

"He's not white!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter, and it was Arthur Augustus who blushed comfildly.

"He means 'wright'—it's his lovely accent," explained Lowther, with a chuckle. "St. Jim's would not be St. Jim's if we didn't have Gussy and his lovely accent!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, Lowthah——"

"Oh dear!" sighed Tom Merry. "Here's two more arguing now! Shut up, you fatheads, and let Pander get to St. Jim's!"

Pander grinned, and held out his hand to Jack Blake. Blake took it and shook it warmly.

"You're all right, Pander," he said heartily. "And I won't call you Ginger if you promise me one thing."

"What is it?" asked Pander cautiously.

"You give me the first option when we get to St. Jim's to have a go at you with the gloves!" said Blake.

"Granted!" said Pander, and grinned again.

Pander was evidently one of the most curious of new boys. As he talked to the juniors on the way to St. Jim's, his face continually flushed confusedly. But that he was really quite calm and collected had been demonstrated to the juniors on the platform.

No junior who was excited or confused could have treated Jack Blake's blows as if they were flakes of snow—to be brushed away.

Monty Lowther was quite right when he said he thought these was a warm time in store for some of the fellows at St. Jim's. That Pander would be called "Ginger" was certain. Lowther had humorously suggested the warm time on account of the red hair of the new boy.

But the two Co.'s knew that the warm time would come from Pander's fists. He could punch, and would doubtless make the best use of that punch.

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. felt that they were going to like this flushed, confused new boy.

CHAPTER 2.

Trimble Gets "Ginger."

"H ALLO!"

Baggy Trimble hailed Pander as soon as the new boy came from Mr. Ralton's study. Jack Blake had escorted him there on arriving at St. Jim's.

Pander turned and stopped.

Baggy Trimble was not of prepossessing appearance. He was fat, and Pander did not take to him as he had the two Co.'s who had met him at the station.

"I expect you're hungry?" suggested Baggy Trimble. "You come along with me, Ginger, old chap——"

Pander flushed.

"Don't call me Ginger!" he said quietly.

"Oh, really, Ginger, old chap——"

"Don't call me Ginger!" said Pander again.

A fat smile overspread Baggy Trimble's face.

"That's all right," he said easily. "We're going to be chums. We can soon get used to each other—I'll look after you."

Baggy Trimble was thus the first to make a mistake. He took the confused blush of the new junior to mean nervousness. He had yet to learn that Pander was quite capable of looking after himself.

"Thanks!" said Pander. "Will you show me the way to Blake's study—er——"

"Trimble!" said that worthy. "That's my name—everybody at St. Jim's knows my name. You'd have soon heard it."

Baggy was quite correct in that statement. But Pander would not have heard very favourable information concerning him.

"You don't want to go to Study No. 6," went on Baggy easily. "They'll give you a rotten feed there. Come with me to the tuckshop!"

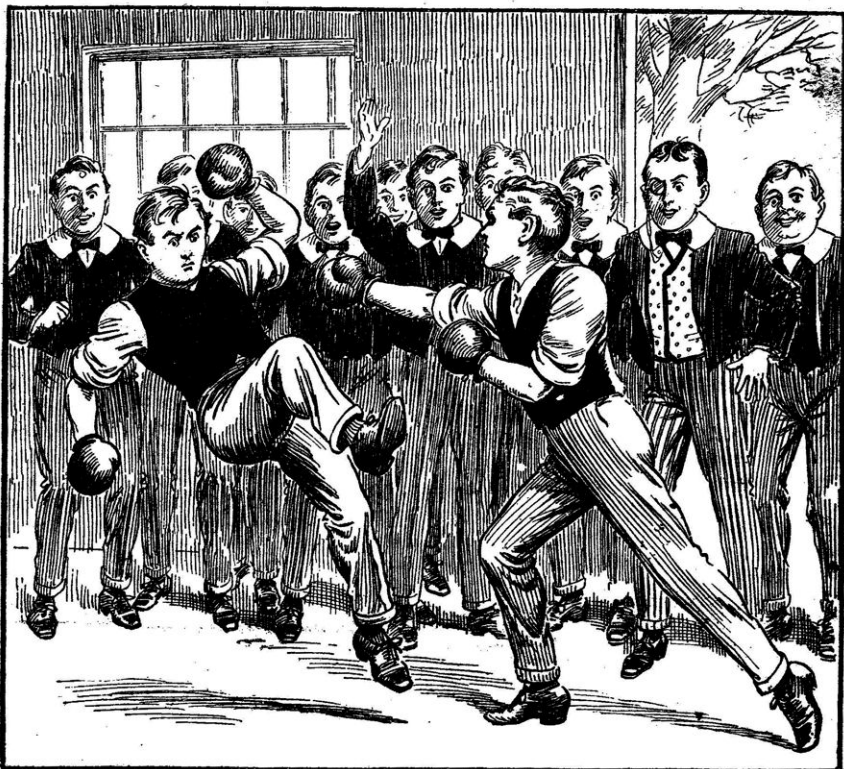
"But——"

"That's all right, Gin—old son," said Baggy, and, thrusting his arm through one of Pander's, hurried him down the stairs towards the tuckshop.

"Look here, Tremble——"

"Trimble, please!"

"Ah, yes—Trimble, of course! I promised to meet Blake & Co. in their study as soon as I had finished with the



Tom Merry shot out his right—hard and true for his opponent. Full in the middle of Pander's chest the blow stopped, and Pander was knocked clean off his feet, and fell on his back to the floor. (See chapter 3.)

Housemaster. I will come with you another time, if you don't mind."

Baggy Trimble looked annoyed. He made a practice of collaring new boys at the first opportunity and escorting them to the tuckshop. There Baggy Trimble would consume a large quantity of tuck. When it came to paying for the tuck, Baggy had always mislaid his purse—and the new boy paid under the impression that Baggy would pay him back later on. That impression, needless to say, lasted but a few days.

It now appeared as if Pander was going to slip through his fingers.

"Oh, leave Blake & Co. out of it!" he said. "They're only after getting a feed out of you—"

"Really!" said Pander, in surprise. "I didn't think they were chaps of that kind."

Baggy grew confidential as they paced at the foot of the stairs.

"Yes; they're not much good, you see," he said softly. "They're always collaring new boys to get a feed out of them before they know the ropes. But I sometimes manage to collar them first and I give them a feed myself. That's

the way new chaps should be looked after in my opinion!"

"Y-y-yes!" said Pander. "But I—" "That chap D'Arcy, frinstance!" went on Trimble. "He's a son of the Earl of Eastwood—a poverty-stricken family with just a title to live on! Now, my pater, you know—"

"Excuse me," said Pander confusedly, "but I'd rather not—"

"That's all right, Ginger!" said Trimble importantly.

Pander's eyes gleamed.

"Don't call me Ginger!" he said quietly. "I object to it! If you persist, I shall have to biff you—I shall really, you know!"

Baggy Trimble stared. He looked at the confused, flushed face of the new fighting-man, but it appeared to him that Pander was easy to overcome.

"Don't make me cross," he said severely. "I don't like licking new boys—as I said, I would rather give them a feed."

"Yes," murmured Pander, and looked up the stairs. "I must—"

"But I shall consider it an insult if you refuse to accept my hospitality!"

interrupted Baggy threateningly. "Ginger, my son—"

Pander had reached the end of his patience. He shot out his right arm, and Baggy Trimble collapsed to the ground.

"Yow-ow-ow!" he roared. "What did you do that for, Ginger?"

He blinked indignantly at the red-haired junior, and took his courage in both hands as he noted the nervous expression on Pander's face.

He was on his feet in a moment, and went for Pander like a bull at a gate.

"I'll spifficate you!" he roared. "Just lemme get at you!"

But that was just what Baggy Trimble could not do. And if Blake could not do so, then Baggy Trimble would fail in a thousand years.

Trimble found that his blows were swept aside, although his weight called for greater strength from Pander. Then Baggy received two sharp blows under his fat chin, and down he went.

"Ow! Groogh! Gin—nunno, I didn't mean to offend you, old chap!" he groaned. "Why didn't you tell me you didn't like it?"

"I told you—" began Pander. But he was interrupted. Three juniors

came through the doorway, and stopped as they saw the recumbent form of the sneak of the Fourth.

"Hallo! What's all the giddy trouble?"

It was George Figgins, leader of the New House juniors at St. Jim's who made that remark, and Baggy Trimble jumped. He had no wish to meet any of the juniors at that moment.

"My pal Pander," he said, hastily jumping to his feet. "We—we were—ahem—just going to the tuckshop! Nunnno—I mean, we were just having a little spar—"

"Rats!" snapped Figgins shortly. "You're jolly well sponging again, you fat worm!"

"I wasn't—Ginger—Ow!" Baggy Trimble did not wait to complete his sentence, Pander just tapped him under the chin as the barred name slipped out, and Baggy Trimble ran up the stairs as fast as his legs would carry him.

Figgins & Co. grinned.

"New chap, eh?" said Figgins. "Which House?"

"Oh—Se-school!" said Pander confusedly.

"A rotten place!" said Figgins. "You ought to have come over to the New House. That's where all the real life is."

"Oh!"

But still, I suppose you'll jog along all right, Ginger!" went on Figgins. "We'll tickle you up sometimes, Ginger—won't we, you chaps?"

Kerr and Wynn nodded solemnly.

"We will, Figg," they assented.

Pander did not seem to understand exactly what was meant. He had yet to learn of the rivalry of the two Houses. But Pander had heard the hated name applied to him, and he flushed still more.

"Don't call me Ginger," he said quietly.

"We call the School House chumps anything we like," said Kerr loftily. "We're cock-house at St. Jim's, you know!"

"That's all right, so long as you don't call me Ginger!" said Pander. "Perhaps you'd show me the way to Blake's study, you fellows?"

"Certainly!" said Figgins & Co.

And they led the new junior to Jack Blake's study, where Tom Merry & Co. were also waiting.

"All right, Pander?" asked Blake, at

once. "You've been a jolly long time gone!"

"We met him giving Baggy Trimble ginger!" chuckled Figgins. "Baggy was after a feed—"

"No, he wanted to stand me one—" began Pander.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Baggy wouldn't stand his young minor a feed!" said Blake, with a tuckshop, my son, he would suddenly find that he'd left his purse on the grand piano in the study, and you would have paid!"

"He's not a decent chap?" asked Pander nervously.

"He's a worm!" said the juniors.

And Baggy Trimble's hopes of ever persuading Pander to enter the tuckshop with him disappeared from that moment.

"Where do you come from, Ginger?" asked Fatty Wynn.

Pander flushed.

"Don't call me Ginger!" he said quietly. "If you chaps persist, I shall have to biff you—I shall, really, you know!"

Figgins & Co. stared, and the School House juniors chuckled. They anticipated some fun.

They were not disappointed. The three New House juniors stared at the flushed face of the new boy.

"If there was not such a crowd of you chaps, I'd jolly well punch this kid's head!" said Figgins warmly. "Cheeky young ass!"

"We shan't interfere!" said Jack Blake coolly. "That is, of course, unless Pander wants any help!"

"He'll want an ambulance!" growled Fatty Wynn. "Look here, Ginger—"

Fatty Wynn suddenly found it necessary to put up his fists. Pander, apparently confused and nervous, made a dart for the fat junior from the New House, brandishing his fists in a warlike manner.

Figgins and Kerr looked on, expecting to see the new School House junior swept off his feet and bumped on the floor.

But it was Fatty Wynn who went to the ground—hurriedly. Pander moved his fists like streaks of lightning, and, catching Fatty Wynn a hefty blow in the chest, sent him sprawling.

"Yow!"

"I'm sorry, but I won't be called Ginger!"

"My hat!"

"The cheeky bounder!"

"Go it, Pandah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly.

Figgins gave vent to a roar like an enraged bull, and charged at the flushed, red-haired junior.

But he was served in much the same way as Fatty Wynn. The only difference was that Figgins managed to land a blow on Pander's shoulder. A moment later Figgins was on his back, wondering what had hit him.

Kerr made as if to attack the red-haired junior, but Tom Merry and Jack Blake intervened.

"Pax, you chaps—" began Tom Merry.

"It'll be pieces!" hooted Figgins, springing to his feet. "I'll jolly well strew the study with the dummy!"

Pander stood by, looking on with the same flush of embarrassment on his cheeks.

"Half a jiff, Figg," said Tom Merry hastily. "Pander is all right—he objects to being called Ginger—that's all. He biffed Blake on the platform at Rycombe for the same thing—"

"To give him Ginger!" roared Kerr.

"You couldn't in a month of Sundays!" said Jack Blake coolly. "I couldn't get at him, so I'm jolly sure you New House duffers can't!"

"My hat! I'm jolly well show—"

"Shurrup!" yelled Tom Merry. "He can box, can Pander, and punch! If he objects to being called 'Ginger' he should be left alone. The gym is the place to settle differences."

"Come on, then, young Pander!" said Figgins eagerly, and turned to the door.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Blake.

"You can't to-day, Figg!"

"Eh?"

"I've got first biff at him!" said Blake.

"Line up in a queue!" chuckled Lowther. "I'm going to have a shot at Pandy myself!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I shall ask Pandy to accept a perfectly friendly challenge myself, deah boys!"

Pander grinned. There was something about him that the juniors liked, although they could not understand the peculiar manner in which he flushed every time he spoke to them.

"I'll take the whole giddy school on one at a time!" he said, with a chuckle. "But all I ask you chaps is this, don't call me 'Ginger'! I can't help having red hair!"

"No, rather not!"

"I might call that chap 'Lanky'—"

Figgins flushed.

"You'd better not!" he said darkly.

"Or that other fellow, 'Tubby-tub-

tub'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You do!" said Fatty Wynn indignantly.

"And that Scotch chap, 'Jock, the Shocker'—"

"My hat! I'll—" began Kerr heatedly.

"But I won't!" said Pander, with a smile. "I fully expected that I should be ragged, but I can ladle out the ginger, I can really, you know."

Figgins and Wynn rubbed their chests, and ruefully agreed that he could.

And, although Figgins & Co.'s visit to the School House had once looked like leading to a general scramble, matters turned out well, and they left the House discussing the new junior, with whom they had come in such violent compact.

All three agreed on one point, that it would be necessary for them to have the gloves on with Pander at the earliest

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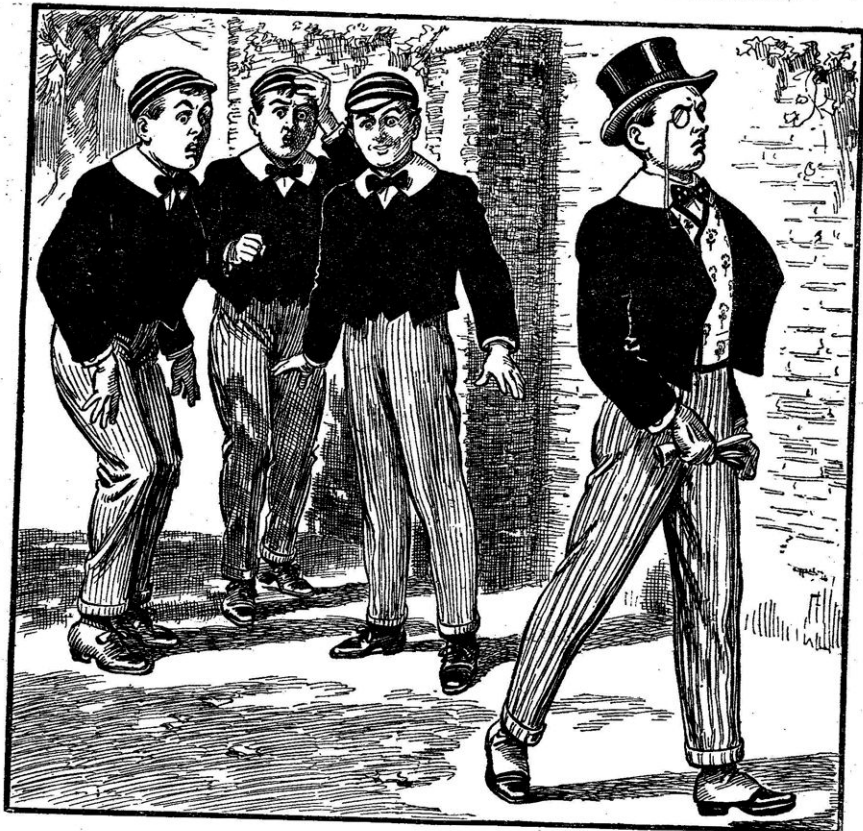
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Gussy passed Tom Merry & Co. twenty minutes later, and the Shelf fellows were still laughing. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked neither to right nor to left. Tom Merry & Co. were no longer on his list of acquaintances. (See Chapter 5.)

possible moment. Even Fatty Wynn, who did not exactly care for the exertion of boxing, agreed to that.

But, although neither would admit it, they felt a little doubtful as to how the contests would end up. Pander could punch, they knew already.

CHAPTER 3. Several Fights.

"READY?"

"Y-y-yes."
Jack Blake asked the question, and Pander replied in his confused and nervous manner.

Pander had been at St. Jim's for several days, and had been subjected to a continual shower of inquiries as to "how was Ginger?"

He had stood it for some time, and had then proved that Ginger was in the pink of condition by lading out what he called "ginger" in the shape of good, hefty punches.

In those few days Pander had come to be respected, and not only for his punching powers. He was a likeable fellow in many respects.

Blake & Co. had nicknamed him "Punching Pander," an appellation which Pander did not object to. But he was still very confused and nervous at the least provocation.

Blake was eager to test his strength against Pander, with the gloves on, in the gymnasium. He persuaded Pander to accompany him at last, and Tom Merry & Co., with Figgins & Co., accompanied Blake's chums to form a ring.

Tom Merry accepted the position of referee.

"Right-ho, Tommy!" said Blake.

"Time!" called Tom Merry.

Blake led off with a straight right, and got it home on the side of the new boy's head. It was a hard blow, and half the juniors present expected Pander to go to the floor with a bump.

But Pander shook his head like a terrier coming out of a pond, and darted a left at Blake which nearly took that worthy's breath away.

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"He's like a streak of lightning!"

The fight continued, but it was obvious that Pander was not doing his best. Blake dropped his hands at the call of time, and glared at his opponent.

"You're not trying, you fathead!" he said indignantly. "Do you think I'm like Baggy Trimble, and can't take a few taps?"

"S-sorry!" murmured Pander.

"I'll jolly well call you Ginger all the rest of the term if you don't buck up!" said Blake. "I'm spoiling for a scrap, you chump!"

The interval between rounds went by, and Tom Merry called for time again.

This time Pander, although still flushed, did not treat Jack Blake so

lightly. He went in with a rush, and hammered blows upon the Fourth Form leader.

But Pander kept away from his opponent's face. He would not hit above Blake's shoulders. But blow after blow landed on his chest, although Blake did his level best to keep Pander off.

Pander's hands moved like lightning. The watching juniors could scarcely see them as they shot swiftly towards Blake's chest.

Blake was puffing for breath at the call of time, and Pander looked anything but comfortable. It was obvious that he was not enjoying the contest.

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "He's a terror! You can't see him coming along!"

"He's ginger, you know!" murmured Monty Lowther, with a chuckle.

"He's jolly good, deah boys!" whispered D'Arcy. "I don't believe I could give him a thwackin' myself!"

"I don't believe you could, Gussy!" said Jack Blake, with a snort.

Tom Merry called "Time!" and the third round commenced.

It did not go the full course. A dozen blows landed on Blake's chest, and he was panting for breath before half-way through the round.

Scarcely a blow landed upon Pander. Blake could not get through his opponent's guard.

Pander dropped his hands suddenly and shrugged his shoulders.

"I can knock you out any time I like, Blake!" he said coolly. "What's the good of carrying on?"

Blake grinned sheepishly.

"I admit I'm beaten!" he said.

"But—but—My hat! You can scrap, Pander!"

Pander smiled, and flushed more than ever.

"Let me have a go!" said Figgins eagerly.

He took the gloves from Blake's hands, and Blake put them on Figgins' hands.

"Perhaps Pandah doesn't want to swap any more?" suggested Arthur Augustus quietly.

Pander flushed again.

"Ju-just as you-like!" he said carelessly.

"Right!" said Figgins quickly.

Blake and Figgins were a good match, neither was better than the other. But Pander was too good for Figgins, and Figgins admitted as much after two rounds.

"I weally think I'd bettah have a shot, deah boys!" said D'Arcy slowly.

"I shouldn't, Gussy!" said Lowther seriously.

"And why not, Lowthah?"

"Because it is unfair to your father," D'Arcy stared.

"Weally, Lowthah!" he said, in surprise.

"I fail to see what my patah has to do with my ewappin'!"

"It wouldn't be the scrapping he'd have anything to do with, Gussy," said Lowther. "It would be your funeral, and I ask you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowthah, I wegard you as a jokin' dummy!" said Gussy witheringly.

"Howevah, since that is your natuval state—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One for you, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus smiled, and Lowther flushed. He was used to playing jokes, not having them played against him.

But Tom Merry interrupted.

"Look here, Pander," he said quietly, "if you are not tired—"

"Not at all," said Pander instantly. "Put the mitts on, Tommy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave up the idea of boxing with the redoubtable Pander as Tom Merry put on the gloves. The Shell leader was the finest boxer in the Lower School, and better than many fellows in the seniors. Pander would have his work cut out to beat Tom Merry.

"How many rounds?" asked Figgins, who was referee.

"Three only!" answered Tom Merry.

"More would be unfair to Pander, as he has already had two fights!"

NO. 41.—PERCY MELLISH.



The worst fellow in the Fourth Form. A sneak and a toady. Will associate with Racke & Co. in any low-down scheme, but is equally ready to turn on them if it suits his purpose. Shares Study No. 2 with Baggy Trimble, whom he has often succeeded in drawing into shady exploits. Has made himself despised by all the decent fellows in the school.

Pander did not reply.

"Time!" called Figgins.

Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming, waited for the rush he knew would come. He met the blows that came like lightning for his chest, and swept them aside with no little difficulty.

There was an immense force behind the blows, and Tom Merry had never encountered such lightning-like moves. Pander seemed to be worked by electricity, for no sooner was one arm swept aside than it was back again.

But Pander did not have things all his own way. Tom Merry was probably the stronger of the two, for once, when he landed a terrific right on his opponent's chest, Pander staggered back.

Instantly his hand went up to cover his face; but the next moment he saw that Tom Merry was standing back, a smile on his lips.

"Time!" called Figgins.

"Why didn't you hit?" asked Pander at once.

"Your face?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes!"

"How many times could you have hit my face?" asked Tom Merry.

Pander did not reply, but stood waiting for Figgins to call time for the second round to begin. His face was nearly the colour of his hair.

The second round saw blows taken and given lavishly. Both were puffing slightly towards the end, but not one blow had touched either face.

With the third round came the end. And it was an end that the juniors had not looked for, or considered likely.

Pander landed two terrific blows on Tom Merry's chest, and the Shell junior staggered back. Pander was on him like a streak of lightning, and Tom Merry almost lost his balance under the onslaught.

But, with a suddenness that surprised all present, Tom Merry recovered. With a quickness that equalled Pander's, Tom Merry shot out his right—hard and true for his opponent.

Full in the middle of Pander's chest the blow stopped, and Pander was knocked clean off his feet, and fell on his back to the floor.

His face was whiter than the juniors had ever seen it as Tom Merry jumped forward to pick him up. The fight was over; Pander could not possibly go on after that blow.

"It was too much!" said Tom Merry repentantly. "I shouldn't have taken you on after you'd fought Blake and Figgys, too!"

"It's all right, Merry!" said Pander, sitting up and rubbing his chest. "That was a clean knock-out."

He peered almost wonderingly at the leader of the Shell as he spoke. As Blake afterwards remarked, anybody would think he had never been knocked out before.

The juniors escorted Pander over to the School House and up to the dormitory for a refreshing wash. Figgins & Co. returned to the New House.

Both Blake and Figgins were satisfied. They had met a better man with the gloves than themselves, and, being sportsmen, admitted as much.

Despite his defeat by Tom Merry, Pander's reputation as a boxer was not damaged. The fellows who had called him Ginger to his face did not immediately take it for granted that because Pander had been licked that they could once more hurl the hated appellation at the new junior.

Pander's punches were to be respected—even with the gloves on. But everybody noticed that from that moment Pander's manner changed.

He became more reserved than ever. He hardly spoke to Blake & Co. He passed them often enough, and went on with a smile and a nod.

Nobody knew where he spent the greater part of his spare time. Digby and Herries thought he was sulky because Tom Merry had beaten him.

But Blake and D'Arcy refused to believe that that was the case. Whatever was wrong with Pander, he was not sulking.

"P'waps he's homesick, deah boys," said D'Arcy after they had passed Pander in the Fourth Form passage one morning.

"Rats!" said Blake. "I don't believe he's well!"

"His clobber has gone astaway, p'waps?" went on Gussy thoughtfully.

"I weally think I had bettah speak to him, deah boys."

"And you'll get your head punched!" said Herries. "Let the chap alone; we can't take every new junior under our giddy wing, now we?"

"Wathah! not! But—"

D'Arcy did not finish his sentence. He

was frowning thoughtfully as they entered the study, and he was still thoughtful when they went up to the dormitory.

Pander was there, already in bed. And half the Fourth Form found themselves asking a question.

What was wrong with Pander?

CHAPTER 4.

A Surprise for Three.

'ARCY!'

Wally D'Arcy, the undisputed leader of the fags of St. Jim's, turned as he heard his name called.

He was with Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne, his inseparable chums.

"Hallo?" he said cheekily. He did not know the speaker. It was the new boy of the Fourth who had hailed him.

"Your name is D'Arcy, I believe!" asked Pander.

Wally D'Arcy nodded. He was staring with eyes that twitched with meriment at the red hair that had called forth so much humour in the Fourth—for a time.

"Yes, that's me!" said Wally, with another cheeky grin.

Pander hesitated. He did not know what to make of the younger brother of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was inky—no other word would describe him.

There was ink on his collar, and a great blot of ink smudged the backs of his hands. His forehead showed traces of another blot which had been half wiped off.

Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne were in much the same state.

After the wonderful cleanliness of Arthur Augustus, Pander found it difficult to believe that this was the young brother of the elegant junior of the Fourth.

"I wanted to speak to you, Wally," said Pander, flushing confusedly. "I thought I heard your brother speak of you as Wally. Don't mind my calling you 'Wally,' I suppose?"

"Not at all, old son!" said Wally.

He began to wonder what Pander was getting at.

"Would you three chaps care to come with me to the woods?" asked Pander, as if he had just thought of what he had meant to say.

Wally D'Arcy and his chums stared.

"To the woods?" repeated Gibson.

"Off your dot?" asked Wally quickly.

"Barney!" murmured Joe Frayne.

Pander became more confused than ever.

"H'm!" he murmured. "I—I know it's rather unusual to ask fags to go out with Fourth-Formers, but—but this is special."

Wally stared at the Fourth-Former in amazement.

"Look here, Ginger," he said truculently, "say what the game is, and perhaps we'll come!"

Pander bit his lip as the hated name came from Wally's lips. But he did not, for once, offer any objection, or warn D'Arcy minor of the danger of repeating it.

"It's just a little idea of mine," he said lamely. "Of course, there'll be a little feed afterwards!"

Wally & Co. pricked up their ears.

"Now you're talking!" said Wally promptly.

"What-ho?" said Joe Frayne emphatically.

Curly Gibson did not speak. He was looking curiously at the Fourth-Former.

"Will you come?" asked Pander.

Wally hesitated. He was surprised at the peculiar request.

"Shall us?" he asked, turning to his chums.

"Let's!" said Frayne and Gibson together.

Pander smiled, and led the way across the quadrangle to the roadway.

He chatted sport all the way to the woods, and, although their thoughts were chiefly occupied with trying to think for what reason Pander had asked them to the woods, the three fags could not help feeling that Pander was a decent chap.

Wally simply ached to make fun of the new junior's hair. It was on the tip of his tongue to call him "Ginger!" at every opportunity, but he refrained.

Gibson and Frayne took the cue from their leader, and behaved in their very best.

No. 42.—GEORGE WILKINS.



A faithful henchman of the great George Alfred Grundy of the Shell. A thoroughly decent fellow, with no enemies, except the cads of the Form. A steady worker and a good scholar, and a very fair sportsman. Shares Study No. 3 with Grundy and Gunn, the other member of the trio of chums. The names of Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn invariably occur together.

When they reached Rylcombe Woods, Pander turned sharply and halted just inside.

"Know of a decent clearing?" he asked.

Wally stared.

"My hat! You've got me beat!" he said, in surprise. "What on earth do we want a clearing for?"

Pander flushed.

"Show me to a clearing, and I'll tell you!" he said.

Wally turned to his chums, and touched his forehead significantly.

"Off his dot!" he murmured.

He led the way to the nearest clearing, and turned again to the Fourth-Former.

"Now, if you don't explain, me and my pals will have to bump it out of you!" said Wally firmly, without troubling to be grammatical. "Got it?"

Pander flushed again.

"As a matter of fact," he said un-

easily, "I've always been used to the company of younger boys than I meet in the Fourth Form. That's the real reason why I asked you to come here."

"My hat!"

"You see, your brother is older than I am—at least, I think he is. He behaves as if he were—"

"Gus always tries to make out he's old enough to be another chap's grand-father!" chuckled Wally. "But, still, Gus is O.K."

"Well, I thought I would ask you chaps if you'd be pals—"

"My only topper!—Pal up with a Fourth-Former!" gasped Wally.

Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne were too surprised to speak. They had never heard of a Fourth-Former wanting to be chums with fags!

The Fourth Form juniors usually looked upon the fags as mere infants—sent to St. Jim's for the sole purpose of saving them the trouble of looking after the prefect's wants.

Pander flushed at the surprise on the fags' faces, and became more confused.

"You see—you see, to a chap who has been used to the association—"

"Crikey!" murmured Frayne. "That's a good 'un!"

"To the association of younger chaps, it is difficult to get used to older fellows. They seem out of place, you know. Besides, I want to teach you chaps how to box."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" gasped Wally. "That was another surprise."

"We can already box!" said Gibson.

"And you'll jolly well know it if you pull our legs much longer!"

Pander laughed.

"I mean—the right way to box," he said slowly. "You see, I have done a good bit of it—"

"With your younger pals?" said Wally.

"No. With fellows older than myself. But—but I can't explain to you exactly what I mean. I just ask you chaps to trust me. I'll teach you all the best tricks at the game, and stand you feeds after every lesson, if you'll be pals with me!"

Wally & Co. looked at one another. They were surprised, more than they had ever been in their lives. They were flabbergasted.

"My hat!" said Wally, in amazement.

"Are you serious, Ginger?"

Pander flushed again.

"Pander is my name," he said, a trifle coldly. "Please don't call me that other name. It sounds unpleasant to me."

Wally chuckled.

"I'll bet they've called it out a few times since you came to St. Jim's!" he said lightly.

"Yes; and I've laddled out some ginger for it, too," said Pander shortly. "I licked Blake—I licked Figgins—and Tom Merry licked me!"

"My hat! Didn't Gus want to fight you?" asked Wally.

"Yes; but decided not, I think!" laughed Pander.

Wally hesitated.

"I suppose you're not chumming up to us because Tom Merry licked you, are you?" he asked suspiciously.

"No; not at all!" said Pander hastily.

"I—I—I wish I could explain to you, Wally. But I can't!"

Curly Gibson shrugged his shoulders.

"If there's a feed at the end of every lesson," he said, "I, for one, don't mind learning a few things with the gloves."

After all, Wally, it'll come in useful!"

"What-ho!" said Joe Frayne.

"But—but we haven't got any gloves here!" said Wally.

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"You don't want them for the first lesson," said Pander quickly. "I want to teach you the right and the wrong way to guard blows. That's really the first thing to learn—to save yourself first."

Wally D'Arcy offered himself for the purpose of demonstrating the right and wrong way to guard blows. Pander was to punch at him, and explain how he should have guarded the blow when once he got through.

There was considerable mystification in the fags' eyes as they watched their Fourth-Form teacher. Pander was flushed and confused as he lunged out at Wally, and stammered slightly as he stopped every blow short of the fag's body, and explained how he had got through his guard.

Wally was convinced of one thing before the lesson had proceeded many minutes. Whatever the real reason for Pander's strange behaviour, he could box. There was not the slightest doubt about that, and the fags found themselves feeling glad that Pander was not allowing the punches to get home.

He was like a feather in the wind; he was in one spot one second, and in another the next. Wally was almost dazed as he swung round and round to keep face to face with the new Fourth-Former.

He dropped his hands at last, and gazed searchingly at his teacher.

"Are you potty, Pander?" he asked sharply.

Pander stared.

"No. Why?" he demanded.

"I'm blessed if I think you're quite right!" growled Wally. "You're in one giddy place one moment, and the next you've disappeared! How the dickens do you think a chap is going to biff you if you don't stand still!"

Pander chuckled. He was evidently becoming more at ease with the fags.

"That's the art of boxing, Wally!" he said. "Get where you can hit your man, but can't get hit yourself!"

Wally snorted.

"I like to stand up to a fellow!" he growled. "But still, I suppose there's sense in what you say!"

"Come on, then!" said Pander, with another chuckle.

He kept the three fags at it, turn and turn about, until the darkness began to set in. Then he suggested returning to St. Jim's.

The fags found themselves staring at the red-headed junior as they walked quickly back to the school. They liked him, and he was evidently most desirous of keeping on friendly terms with them.

But for what reason they could not guess. Pander was a good companion—he could chat on any subject, even the little things that appealed to the fags more than anything else.

"Straight to the tuckshop!" said Pander, as they entered the gates of St. Jim's. "I can do with something to eat!"

"What-ho!" said Joe Frayne eagerly.

Pander led the way into the little shop, and Mrs. Mimbble served them with cakes by the score, biscuits, chocolate, dates in boxes, and nuts—at Pander's request and with Pander's money already on the counter to pay for them.

The fags opened their eyes wider and wider as the Fourth-Former ordered article after article.

"He's clean off his dot!" murmured Curly Gibson. "As mad as a March hare!"

"He's the kind of madman I like to meet!" chuckled Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pander smiled as he heard the subdued THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 628.

laughter of the fags. But when Mrs. Mimbble had put the last article before him, he gathered them all up in his arms, and made for the shop door.

"Here! Where are you going?" asked Wally hastily.

"To your room, of course!" said Pander.

"M-m-my room!" stammered Wally. "D-d-dy mean you're going to share that feed with us in our room?"

"Certainly!" said Pander. "We're pals, ain't we?"

"What-ho?" said Joe Frayne, and gave his leader a dig in the ribs. "Don't be an ass, Wally!"

Wally almost staggered out of the tuckshop. He could not for the life of him see why a Fourth-Former should go to all the trouble that Pander was going to for the sake of three fags!

He showed the way to the fags' Common-room, and there Pander deposited his purchases on the table. He helped to get the fire ready, and then to lay the table.

There seemed no more obliging fellow in the world than Pander. He insisted on helping wash-up when the feed was consumed. He would not take a date with him when he left "in case they felt hungry during the night."

He went at last, and Wally D'Arcy stared at his chums in a manner that was almost comical in its bewilderment.

"He's clean daft!" he said.

"Must be!" said Curly Gibson, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Daft or not," said Joe Frayne with emphasis. "He's a jolly decent sort!"

"Because he stands us a good feed?" demanded Wally, clenching his fists pugnaciously.

"No—nunno!" said Joe Frayne hastily. "Just because—just because he is—that's all!"

And with that lucid explanation as to what constituted Pander's good qualities, Joe Frayne suggested they should get to their prep.

But it was to be feared their thoughts were more upon the subject of Pander and his peculiar behaviour than upon their lessons, and Mr. Selby, their Form-master, could doubtless notice that something was amiss when he came in to inspect their books on the morrow!

CHAPTER 5.

Gussy Is Troubled.

"PANDAH!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, called to the new junior as they were leaving the Form-room after lessons the following morning.

Pander, if he heard, heeded not, but walked straight on.

"Pandah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway stop a minute!"

Without being deliberately rude, Pander could not continue to walk away from D'Arcy. He stopped and turned.

"Pway come to the study, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "I want to speak to you!"

"Thanks, but I'd rather not!" said Pander, flushing. "I have an appointment."

"Bai Jove! I do not want to detain you," said D'Arcy hastily. "But, as a matter of fact, Tom Mewby has asked me if you are any good at football, and—"

Pander's eyes gleamed for a moment. "My hat! I should—but—but I can't!"

He finished up his sentence lamely, and flushed furiously under the curious gaze of the swell of St. Jim's.

"You're wathah mystewious, deah

boy," said D'Arcy, with a frown. "Pway don't think—"

"That's all right," said Pander hastily. "The fact is—"

"Yaas, deah boy?" said D'Arcy as Pander hesitated.

"The fact is—I don't want to play!"

"Bai Jove! You don't want to play football!" ejaculated D'Arcy, fixing his eyeglass in his eye, and staring in surprise at the red-haired junior.

"Bai Jove! A fellow who can box like you is generally an all-round athlete. Surely—surely, Pandah—you are not a slacker!"

Pander flushed.

"Not me!" he said with emphasis.

"—could—I could—but, I've told you already, D'Arcy, I can't play!"

"Excuse me, deah boy," said D'Arcy firmly. "But you're makin' a mistake. You did not take you couldn't play—you said you didn't want to!"

"Same thing!" replied Pander shortly. "Excuse me, but I must be going!"

If it were not bad form, Arthur Augustus would have asked Pander where he was going. But D'Arcy could not bring himself to ask the new junior such a question, and Pander, with a nod, passed on.

Gussy would have been more than surprised if he could have seen Pander a few minutes after they parted. With Pander was Wally D'Arcy, Curly Gibson, and Joe Frayne.

The quartette was in the tuckshop talking boxing, and masticating pastries.

But Arthur Augustus was in Study No. 6 of the Fourth-Form passage, a worried frown on his aristocratic brow.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured thoughtfully. "Bai Jove!"

Blake looked up from a book he was reading.

"What's the matter with you now, dummy?" he asked shortly.

Arthur Augustus fixed his monocle more firmly in his eye, and surveyed the leader of the Fourth coldly.

"I wufese to be alluded to as a dummy, Blake!" he said loftily. "If you cannot wefain—"

"What are you 'By Joving' about?" demanded Blake again. "That's the point!"

"I'm wathah wowwied, deah boy," said D'Arcy with a frown.

Blake was all sympathy in a moment.

"Tailor, Gussy?" he asked quickly.

"Bai Jove! Wathah not, deah boy!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "But I'm not sure it is not worse than bein' disappointed about one's clobber!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby stared.

"My hat!" ejaculated Herries.

"Something radically wrong then. You're not worrying because Towser's off his feed, are you, Gussy? Because

"Hewwies, I vegrard you as an aes of the first wath!" said D'Arcy wiferingly. "If Towser went off his feed—altogether it would be a good thing—he'd peg out, deah boy!"

"You silly ass!" roared Herries. "Don't you talk about my Towsey pegging out—"

"No such luck!" growled Blake.

"Shut up, Herries, and let our prize chump talk for once. He hasn't spoken for quite two minutes, and he must be getting tongue-tied!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally Blake—"

"That's all right, Gussy!" said Blake cheerfully. "Tell your Uncle Jack all about your troubles. But if you're in love again—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



"B-b-bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. It was Pander who gripped him—Pander, the red-haired, new junior of the Fourth Form! The next moment D'Arcy was whirled towards the door, to be flung head first into the passage. (See chapter 6.)

The juniors roared with laughter. They had not forgotten Arthur Augustus' experiences when last he fell in love—with the girl in the bun-shop.

"Weally, Blake, I wegard your fwivoly as bein' quite out of place when a chap is in a sewious posish!" said D'Arcy coldly. "You see—"

"My hat! You're not really in trouble, are you?" demanded Blake. "Pater forgotten the fiver?" asked Herries.

"Can't be that!" said Digby. "He had one yesterday!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head. "It's not that, deah boys!" he said slowly. "You see, I pwomised Tom Mewwy— Bai Jove! Heah he is!"

The study door was flung open, and Tom Merry, with Manners and Lowther appeared.

"Cheer-o!" said Tom Merry brightly. "Excuse us! We've come to see Gussy!"

D'Arcy flushed. "Bai Jove! I'm sowwy, Tom Mewwy, but I wogwet I cannot keep my pwomise!" he said miserably. "You see—"

Tom Merry & Co. stared at the swell of the Fourth in amazement. Tom Merry would have spoken the next moment, but he felt Monty Lowther pinch his arm for silence.

The humorist of the Shell looked solemnly at Arthur Augustus.

"Are you going to tell us, Gussy, that you've broken your promise?" he said slowly and with emphasis.

"Bai Jove! I'm sowwy—" began D'Arcy nervously.

"Sorrow killed the cat—I mean, sorrow cannot help you, Gussy," went on Lowther solemnly, and winking at Blake & Co., to stop any remark they might be thinking of making. "I'm surprised at you! How could you?"

"Bai Jove, Lowthah!" said D'Arcy distressfully. "I—"

"It would have been different had your name been Meliah," interrupted Lowther solemnly. "We should have expected him to break his promise. But a D'Arcy—nevah—I mean never!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah, Blake!" said D'Arcy severely.

"You solemnly gave us your promise," went on Lowther, "and you have broken

it! Henceforth, we cannot be friends—friends. You are cut out of wills without a shilling—I mean, off the list of our acquaintances—and none can say but that you deserve it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake & Co., with Tom Merry and Manners, could restrain their laughter no longer.

The expression on D'Arcy's face, as Monty Lowther afterwards remarked, was enough to make a cat laugh. It was as miserable as if the elegant junior had committed the worst crime in the annals of St. Jim's.

To what promise Lowther was referring to, Blake & Co. had not the slightest idea. That D'Arcy knew was obvious.

He looked at first one, then another of the juniors. But D'Arcy did not smile. His face was serious enough in all conscience.

"Bai Jove, I believe you are wottin', Lowthah, you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wottin'—I mean rotting! After you have made a solemn promise and broken it!" said Monty Lowther severely.

"D'Arcy, I believe your polished

manners are all spoof! I believe you are a heartless rogue! I believe—

"Bai Jove, Lowthah! I—"
 "You cannot expect that Blake, Herries, and Digby will allow you to remain in this study, surely?" went on Herries relentlessly. "You have broken all the rules of decency—"

"Bai Jove! I—"
 "There is nothing else for us to do but to return to our study. We cannot ask of you the favour we were—"
 "Favah!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Haven't—haven't you come about my promise?"

Monty Lowther stared at D'Arcy in surprise.

"Your promise?" he repeated. "We know nothing about your promise—only that you've broken it!"

Blake & Co. looked amazed.
 "Look here, Lowther—" began Blake warmly.

"We don't know what the dummy is talking about," said Lowther, with another wink at the leader of the Fourth. "We came in, and he told us he couldn't keep his promise. What the promise is—or was—or will be—we don't know, and don't jolly well care. But if a fellow can't keep a promise, he can't be a friend of ours!"

Arthur Augustus rose from his chair and stood before Monty Lowther, staring frigridly through his monocle at the humorist of the Shell.

"Lowthah, I woged you as a waggin' wotthah!" he said icily. "I promised Tom Mewwy that I would bring Pandah down to the football field—"

"Oh, my hat!" shrieked Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Pandah won't come!" went on D'Arcy coldly. "I wogwet circhs. have compelled me to break my promise—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "We—we came to borrow five bob!" gasped Manners. "Oh, Monty, you silly dummy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'd forgotten all about the footer!" exclaimed Tom Merry, between fits of laughter. "Gussy, you're forgiven! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared from Tom Merry & Co. to his hilarious chums. Then, after one withering stare at Monty Lowther, the swell of St. Jim's walked out of the study with his nose high in the air.

"Lowthah!" mimicked the Shell junior, after the door had closed behind D'Arcy. "Lowthah, I have no woresource but to cut you off the list of my friends! I wogwed you as a waggin' wotthah—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy heard that shriek of laughter, and flushed angrily. The swell of the Fourth was on his dignity—he was angry with Lowther for pulling his leg. He had promised Tom Merry to bring Pandah, the new junior, down to the football-field for a trial, but Pandah refused to go.

That amounted to a broken promise, in D'Arcy's opinion. It was not his fault that Pandah would not go with him, but he did not look at it in that light.

That was D'Arcy's trouble—a trouble which Monty Lowther had made the best use of—in his opinion.

He passed Tom Merry & Co. twenty minutes later, and the Shell fellows were still laughing.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked neither to right nor to left. Tom Merry & Co. were no longer on his list of acquaintances!

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CHAPTER 6.

Pander's Treachery.

"SOMETHING'S wrong!"
 Thus Jack Blake.

He was very emphatic in that remark, and the chums of Study No. 6 looked at their leader.

"What's up now?" demanded Herries, who was polishing Towser's collar.

"That chap Pander!" said Blake. "Have you chaps noticed what he does with himself?"

"No!"
 "Nor have I!" said Blake emphatically. "I wanted that chap to teach me a few things with the gloves. But he won't mix with any of the Fourth-Form chaps!"

"That's his look-out!" said Herries, with a snort. "I'm not going to run after a new chap and ask him to be pally!"

"Nor I!" said Digby.
 "Bai Jove, Blake!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Come to think, I've nevah seen Pandah with any of the Fourth!"

"That's why I say there's something wrong!" said Jack Blake. "A fellow who comes to St. Jim's generally tries to make pals with everybody until he sorts out the rotters from the decent chaps. But Pander hasn't cared about that!"

"Wathah not! I had to break a promise to Tom Mewwy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway cease that wibald laughter, you chaps! Lowthah is a waggin' wotthah!"

"He had you on small pieces of toast, Gussy!" chuckled Blake. "He didn't remember what you promised, and they wouldn't have said anything if you'd told them Pander wouldn't play. My hat! You were born to have your leg pulled!"

"Weally, Blake—Howevah, we will say no more about that mattah!" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "The fact is, I am not on friendly terms with Tom Mewwy & Co.—"

Arthur Augustus broke off, and froze. Tom Merry & Co. entered the study at that moment.

Although a night had passed since he had asked Pander to play football, D'Arcy had not forgotten what had followed. Monty Lowther grinned as he saw the frigid expression on the aristocratic junior's face.

"Got over it, Gussy?" he asked lightly.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not reply. Monty Lowther winked at the others.

"As one gentleman to another, Gussy," he said solemnly. "I trust you are not going to bear malice?"

Arthur Augustus thawed slightly.

"If you are weally sorry, Lowthah. I—" he began.

"I am," frightfully—terribly—most awfully!" said Lowther, without so much as a smile.

"Then, of course, I accept your apology," said D'Arcy magnanimously. "Pway considah the mattah at an end!"

"Thanks!" said Lowther fervently.

"H'm!" said Tom Merry hastily. "Ahem!"

"The juniors had as much as they could do to refrain from laughing."

"We came to see you chaps about your red-headed specimen," said Manners quickly. "What's he doing? He hasn't been down to footer; and, in our opinion, he ought to be a decent player."

"Because he can box?" asked Blake, with a smile.

"No: because he can move on his

pins. He should make a first-class forward!"

"As a matter of fact," said Blake slowly, "we were talking about Pander when you came in. Squat down before the fire, you chaps, and we'll talk the matter over."

Tom Merry & Co. squatted.
 "Pander carefully avoids the Fourth," went on Blake, with a frown. "We know nothing about the chap. We don't know what he is—who he is—where he is—or what his father does for a living."
 "Weally, Blake, that has nothin' to do with us!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "We don't want to pry."

"Rats!" snorted Blake. "Who said we did want to know?"

"Well, you said—"

"Chump!" growled Blake. "I was merely stating a fact. Pander keeps to himself, and it's not good for him. That's the long and short of it!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"You don't think he is wild because some of the chaps call him 'Ginger'?" he said thoughtfully.

Blake shook his head.

"No," he said emphatically. "He whacks into the chaps who call him that, after he's warned them that he doesn't like it. Hardly anybody rags him about his hair, now that they know he can use his fists."

"Then what's troubling him?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Blake. "The silly ass just disappears after lessons. I thought I saw him once with Gussy's young rip of a brother—"

"Mixing with the fags!" ejaculated Merry. "Impos!"

"That's what I thought!" said Blake. "So I never troubled to ask him if I had seen him."

There was silence for a few minutes. The juniors were perturbed. It was unusual for a Fourth-Former to keep so much to himself. Even Mellish and Baggy Trimble, sneaks though they were, chummed in with somebody.

But Pander had not been seen with any of the Fourth-Formers. Where, and with whom, did he spend his spare time?

That was a question to which the juniors could find no answer.

"Fetch him up here and ask him," said Digby suddenly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't do that," he said slowly. "If Pander wants to keep to himself, let him. But I must say I should like to see how he shapes at football."

The question was to be solved for the juniors without their troubling to send for anyone.

The door of the study was suddenly flung open, and a dozen or more fags appeared.

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake rose to their feet.

"What do you want, kids?" asked Blake severely. "Don't you know that infants should be in bed at this time of the evening?"

Wally D'Arcy, who was in front of the fags, with his faithful chums, Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne, grinned cheekily.

"And don't you kids know that now, and then you want tickling up!" he asked.

The Fourth-Formers gasped.

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "You cheeky ragunaffin! I'll jolly well punch your silly napper!"

"Wally, you young wascal—" began Arthur Augustus severely.

"Rats!" said Wally cheerfully. "Tom Merry, you ought not to be here!"

"You cheeky—" began Tom Merry hotly.

"As it is, this is a little to do with the Fourth-Form chumps!" went on Wally, in the same cheerful tones. "You can go, or you can be bumped!"

Tom Merry & Co. gasped in their turn.

"My hat! We'll scalp you!" roared Manners.

"Rats!"

"Piffle!"

"Boh!"

"Yah! Who's the real leaders of the School House?"

"The fags! Hurrah!"

Blake & Co. set their teeth. It was staggering.

Never before had the fags openly come to rag the Fourth-Formers. They had ragged the studies in the absence of the occupants on more than one occasion.

But when the Fourth-Formers were at home, Wally D'Arcy and his followers usually gave them a wide berth.

"Rush 'em!"

Wally D'Arcy led the rush that immediately followed.

Blake & Co. staggered under the weight of a score of fags, and Tom Merry & Co. were taken by surprise. But the surprise did not last long.

Using their open hands, the Fourth-Formers cuffed right and left. But the fags took not the slightest heed.

Blake found himself opposed to Wally D'Arcy, and Arthur Augustus and Manners were attacked by Carly Gibson and Joe Frayne respectively.

Blake did not often find much difficulty in cuffing Wally D'Arcy's head. But Wally seemed to have learned something in the course of the last few weeks.

He kept Blake at bay, until Blake began to get angry; then Wally had no chance.

He was collared, picked up, and carried bodily towards the door.

"Scrap!" howled Wally. "We're coming to scrap, you silly ass!"

"We'll scrap you!" panted Blake.

"Yow!"

"Groogh!"

Crash! Bang! Crash!

Tables and chairs were sent whirling in all directions as the juniors struggled with the fags. Collars began to litter the floor—ties had been there within three minutes of Wally D'Arcy's appearance.

"Chuck 'em out!" roared Tom Merry.

"Yah! D-d-d-do it!"

"Boost them!"

"Rats!"

The juniors were finding all their work out to keep their feet against so many fags. They might have done better had they used their fists, but fists were barred against fags.

There came the pattering of feet down the corridor, just as Blake reached the door with Wally D'Arcy in his arms.

It was Pander.

"Come on, Pander!" shouted Blake. "There's a rag!"

Wally D'Arcy turned his head.

"Pander," he roared, "back up your pants!"

Pander hesitated. His face, usually flushed, became quite white. He glanced inside the study at the whirling forms of the fags and juniors.

"Come on!" roared Blake.

"Biff 'em!" roared Wally, struggling desperately for freedom.

Still Pander hesitated. Instantly it flashed into Blake's mind that Pander was a coward. But Blake had seen him fight, and a coward does not usually go in for boxing.

"Go on, Pander!" shouted Blake in disgust. "There's swarms of fags inside!"

Wally struggled desperately, and with

an effort that surprised Blake, wriggled himself free.

Wally did not at once dart inside the study, as Blake anticipated.

He ran towards the hesitating Pander, and, with fists clenched, and fierce, blazing eyes, faced him.

"Back up your pals," he said fiercely—"or never come near us again!"

Pander whitened still more, and turned on his heel.

Blake gasped in surprise. Pander was deserting his Form—refusing to help them when they required all the assistance they could get to save their study from the swarming fags.

Pander was a coward!

"Pander!" roared Blake. "Come back, you cowardly rotter!"

Pander swung round, his face burning, not with confusion, but with anger. He glared for one second straight into Blake's eyes, then rushed for the study.

"Good!" shouted Blake.

Wally D'Arcy, as soon as he saw that Pander meant to take part in the fight—or scramble—rushed at Blake, and collared him round the waist.

"Yow!"

"Groogh!"

"Out with them!"

"We'll fag 'em!"

"Rats!"

Those, and many other gasping ejaculations, greeted Pander as he reached the study.

A moment later, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt himself gripped by the shoulder. It was a grip that was too powerful for a fag—and he turned round angrily.

He dropped his hands and stared at his assailant, unable to believe his eyes.

"B-b-bat Jove!" he gasped.

It was Pander who gripped him—Pander, the red-haired, new junior of the Fourth Form!

His face was white and tense, his hair appearing as if ablaze in contrast.

The next moment D'Arcy was whirled towards the door, to be flung head first into the passage.

CHAPTER 7. The Result.

"YOW-OW!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gasped as he met the floor with a bump. He was on his feet in an instant, but Pander was gone—inside the study.

A moment later, and Herries came out—very quickly. He collapsed against the wall, and slid to the floor with a gasp.

"M-m-m-my hat!"

"Gooch!"

Herries staggered to his feet.

"D-did you see who that was?" he panted.

"Yaas, wathah! Pandah!"

"Fighting on the side of the fags!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The noise of the fighting juniors and fags could not fail to attract attention. There was again the sound of running feet, and Kildare, captain of the school, appeared, with his cane in his hand.

He passed D'Arcy and Herries without a glance, and rushed into the study.

"Stop it!" he roared. "Shut up! Do you hear?"

Swish, swish, swish!

Kildare laid stress on his commands with the cane.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Wally D'Arcy yelled lustily as he felt the stinging cuts of Kildare's cane, and swung round angrily.

His jaw dropped as he saw the angry captain.

"Bunk!" he roared. "Kildare!"

The scrambling ceased as if by magic.

The fags forgot the fight—forgot everything else, save that they must "bunk."

In a surprisingly short time, the study was cleared of all save the juniors who usually occupied it, and Tom Merry & Co.

Kildare, for the moment, was chasing the fags to impart a few parting cuts with his cane.

The study was all but wrecked; not a chair or a table was on its legs. The bookcase was on its side, the books on the floor in all directions. Ink had stained the carpet, the inkpot crushed under somebody's heel.

Kildare came back to find the two Co.'s staring almost dully at the wreckage.

"You young asses!" he snapped angrily. "What the dickens is all the row about?"

"Ah—yes! You see, Kildare—"

"I've a jolly good mind to inform the Head!" interrupted Kildare angrily.

"Clear this mess up, and be sharp about it!"

And with that, he swung round on his heels, and left the study, banging the door behind him.

Blake grinned sheepishly.

"Good old Kildare!" he said. "He knew jolly well it was a rag!"

"And some rag!" said Tom Merry, trying to put a crushed and crumbled collar into something like its proper position.

"Oh, dear! My trowsers are ruined!" groaned D'Arcy. "I'll thrash Wally to-morrow! The young ass!"

"And you'll get another pair of bags done in!" growled Blake. "That little beggar has been learning boxing! My hat!"

Blake, suddenly remembering Pander, looked quickly round the study. But Pander had disappeared.

The Fourth Form leader clenched his fists angrily.

"That Pander chap—the red-headed, ginger-looking dummy!" he said fiercely. "I'll scalp him!"

"Bai Jove! I'd forgotten the wotnah!"

"I haven't! Where is the toad?"

Tom Merry looked surprised. He had been engaged in the thick of the fray, and had not seen Pander.

"What's the matter with Pander?" he demanded.

"Matter!" snorted Blake. "Only that the rotter fought on the side of the fags!"

"My hat!"

"Gee whiz!"

"Are you sure, Blake?"

Blake snorted again.

"Sure! I'm jolly sure! The beast chucked Gussy and Herries out on their necks!"

"Yaas, wathah! I was taken by surprise, dear boys!"

"And me!" growled Herries. "I don't care if he's Carpenter's chief sparring-partner—I'm jolly well going to fight the rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at, Blake?"

"My dear chap, he'll knock spots off you!"

"Let him!" snapped Herries. "But I'll give the beast a wallop or two to go on with!"

Herries was wild—very wild. He had been defeated by a member of his own Form instead of helped.

Tom Merry looked grave.

"I say, it's a bit thick!" he said sharply. "A new chap, too!"

"New chap or not, he's going through the mill!" said Jack Blake angrily.

"He's going to get a Form ragging!"

Tom Merry hesitated.

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"I should be sure that he understands what he's done!" he said thoughtfully. "You don't know him—or what he's been doing with himself since he arrived."

"We'll try him!" growled Blake. "Come round to our dorm to-night, and see what happens!"

"Right you are!" said Tom Merry. "Meanwhile, I think I'll go and have a wash and brush up."

"Same here," said Manners and Lowther in unison.

And Tom Merry & Co. left the study; and Blake & Co. set to work to pick up the furniture and wipe all signs of the rag from the carpets and walls.

In the fags-room, Wally D'Arcy was frowning thoughtfully. Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne were, as usual, by his side.

The fags had not troubled to clean their clothes since the fight.

"That was some dust-up!" chuckled Wally.

"It was!" agreed his chums. "Pity Kildare came in!" went on Wally thoughtfully. "We might have wiped up the giddy study! My hat! Here's Pander! I'd forgotten all about him in the excitement!"

Pander, still very white of face, came towards the leader of the fags.

"Wally bit his lips.

"Sit down, Pander!" he said. "I want to speak to you!"

Pander sat down. Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne remained silent; they half-expected what was to follow, and they left it to their leader.

"Pander," said Wally fiercely, "you're a rotter!"

Pander started to his feet, and clenched his fists. A flush swept over his face, up to the roots of his hair, where it seemed to disappear, leaving his face whiter than ever.

He sat down.

"I am!" he said, in a low voice.

"Yet you're a jolly good pal!" said Wally, with the fiercest of glares. "You stood up for your pals—you deserted your Form! It was my fault; I forced you to fight on our side! Of the two, I'm blessed if I know which is the worse! What do you say, Joe?"

"Same as you!" said Joe Frayne promptly.

"And you, Curly?"

"Same as Joe!"

"There you are, Pander!" said Wally D'Arcy triumphantly. "There's pals for you! You'll get ragged to Pimlico and back to-night in the dorm; but we're going to be there!"

Pander started.

"Why?" he demanded. "I can stick what they'll give me!"

"We jolly well know you can!" growled Wally. "But we're going to be there, all the same. We're going to have something to say to Blake & Co.!"

Pander started to his feet again.

"No!" he said. "If you do, I'll chuck you up, Wally!"

"Rats!" said Wally cheerfully. "We're pals!"

Pander hesitated a moment. Then, after one glance at the three fags, he left the room without a word.

CHAPTER 8.

Setting Matters Right.

"GOOD-NIGHT!" No noise, mind!

With that warning, Kildare turned out the lights in the Fourth Form dormitory. A dozen voices bade him "Good-night!" for Kildare

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enjoyed immense popularity amongst the juniors.

Jack Blake sat up in his bed as soon as Kildare's footsteps had died away.

"Gussy!"

"Yass, deah boy!"

"Don't go to sleep!"

"Wathah not!"

There was a subdued murmur of voices in the dormitory. Everybody knew that Pander, the red-haired new boy, was going to be tried for his treachery to his Form-mates as soon as Tom Merry & Co. arrived.

And the Shell juniors were not long in putting in an appearance. Twenty minutes after Kildare had turned out the lights in the Fourth Form dormitory, the door opened again, and the three juniors came in.

"That you, Tommy?" asked Blake.

"It is!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Where's the giddy court?"

"Here!"

Blake jumped out of bed, and lit a candle. In a moment a dozen other candles were lighted.

They were taken to Jack Blake's bed, and stuck by their grease to the locker at his side.

"Now we're ready for the prisoner!" said Blake shortly.

"Hail, Oh Ginger!" called Monty Lowther, in his deepest voice. "Come hither, varlet, and be tried for your giddy life!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush!" said Blake warningly.

"Don't make a row!"

"Wish I'd brought Tower!" growled Herries. "He would bite anyone who kicked up a shindy!"

"And make one ten times worse himself!" snorted Manners. "Rats to Tower!"

"Shush here—"

"Shush, you ass!" said Blake.

"Yes!"

Pander answered in the softest of tones.

"Come here!" snapped Blake.

Without a word, Pander rose from his bed, and approached Blake's bed. Tom Merry & Co. seated themselves, and Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy squatted near by.

In the centre of the little group stood Jack Blake, his face set and determined.

Pander stopped opposite him, and folded his arms across his chest.

"You know why you're here?" asked Blake.

"Yes."

"Have you anything to say?"

"No!"

Jack Blake gritted his teeth angrily.

"I should have thought you'd have something to say for yourself!" he said sharply. "You joined with a crowd of giddy fags in a rag on your own Form—and your Form leader at that!—and our study was wrecked. You know jolly well that you should have boosted the fags out!"

"And if I did?"

Pander was calm and collected. Only his face, white as the sheets on Jack Blake's bed, showed he felt his position.

"And if you did?" snorted Blake.

"Then you jolly well ought to be ashamed of yourself! We don't know much about you; we know you can fight! This isn't a personal grievance, though, but an offence against the Form. You'll get ragged to-night, and I'll fight you with or without gloves, as you like."

Pander's eyes flashed for a moment. Blake got ready for a possible attack. But there was no need. The light of battle died from Pander's eyes the moment after it appeared.

"Go ahead!" he said curtly.

Tom Merry frowned. There was something about Pander that he liked, but for the life of him he could not think that Pander was a coward that deserted his side for the enemy, even though the enemy be a band of fags.

"Knotted towels—run the gauntlet!" said Jack Blake, between his teeth. "You jolly well ought to know what that means! It's the sign of disgrace with the Form. I don't believe Melish would do as you have done!"

"Bai Jore, Blake!" said D'Arcy, rising hastily to his feet. "Pway allow me to act as pwisoner's fwien!"

Pander shot him one grateful glance before he continued.

"As you 'like, ass!" said Blake shortly.

It was obvious that Blake, as judge, was unfitted for his self-appointed position. As leader of the Form, he felt keenly the desertion of Pander to the fags, and was biased on that account.

He had asked for Pander's story, it is true. But he had not encouraged Pander to speak. He was a new boy, and might not, for all he knew, know the ropes.

"In the first place, Pandah has not said why he went over to the side of the fags!" said D'Arcy firmly. "As the aggrieved chap—I should say, one of them, for Herries was also thrown out of the study by Pandah—I should like to ask Pandah if theah is any special reason why he should not help us—his Form—in a time of twouble and stweas?"

Pander opened his mouth, but shut it again without speaking.

"Pandah, deah boy," said D'Arcy seriously, "I am twyin' to be your fwien. You're not a coward—we all know that. Why did you fight with my bwothah Wally?"

"Because—because—oh, hang it all, you chaps, get into the slogging, and get it over!" said Pander bitterly. "I've nothing to say!"

Blake & Co. shrugged their shoulders, and took up their towels. D'Arcy made one last appeal.

"I shall uttaly refuse to take part in this dwastic punishment, unless you explain, or, wathah, answah my question!" he said firmly.

"There's enough to do it without you, D'Arcy!" said Pander bitterly. "Shut up, there's a good chap!"

"I refuse to shut up!" said Gussy obstinately. "I refuse to shut up. Gentlemen of the jury—I mean, gentlemen of the dorm, pwisonah has not yet answered my question."

"That's his own look-out!" said Blake shortly.

"Excuse me, but it is also mine!" said D'Arcy stoutly. "Tom Mewwy, as leedah of the School House juniors, I desiah that you exercise your authority, and compel Pandah to pwopound!"

Tom Merry laughed, albeit a trifle uneasily.

"I can't make the chap speak, Gussy," he said quietly. "If Pander prefers to take a licking from the Form that is his business."

"Vewy well," said D'Arcy resignedly. "But I should like you to undastand this, Pandah, I uttaly refuse to believe you acted caddishly—"

"Rats!" said Blake. "He deserted us!"

"He acted unwisely. I'm not convinced he knows the wopes!" retorted Arthur Augustus firmly. "He should have joined in with us, it is true. But I ask you to beah in mind, deah boys, that not one of those present can claim to

have been a chum of Pandah's. Therefoah, beyond the fact that it was his Form, he need not have fought for us."

Blake hesitated.
"Do you think you ought to have fought for your giddy Form-mates, Pandah?" he asked suddenly.

Pander's reply came instantly.
"Yes."

"Then why didn't you, deah boy?"
"I prefer not to say!"

Arthur Augustus shrugged his shoulders. He had done his best.

Pander looked at him, and moved as if to speak. But he shut his mouth tightly, and turned to Blake.

"I'm ready!"
Blake turned to the passage between the beds.

"Line up, you chaps!" he exclaimed.
There were sufficient of the Fourth willing to wield the knotted towels. But Tom Merry & Co. stood out.

Pander walked calmly to the far end of the dormitory. There was an ironical grin on his face as he stood waiting for Blake to give the word to run.

"Ready!" said Blake. "Then——"
"Half a jiff, young Blake!"

A gasp of amazement broke from the juniors who were lined up. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned swiftly as he recognised his brother's tones.

Blake frowned.
"What do you kids want?" he demanded.

"You—and Pander!" said Wally cheerfully. "Come in, you chaps!"

Fully thirty fags trooped silently into the room. Every one of them was armed

with a cricket-stump, a bat, a stick, or a heavy ruler.

"What do you want Pander for?" asked Blake.

"We want him so that you sha'n't lay into him!" said Wally, and his tones grew fierce as he went on. "We've come for business, armed to the giddy teeth. Pander is our pal!"

"Your pal!" ejaculated Tom Merry.
"Pwecisely, as Gussy would say!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Shush! Don't kick up a shindy. We'll get it in the neck if old Selby hears us!" said Wally warningly.

"Look here, you frosty old birds——"
"My hat! I'll——"

"You'll listen to me, Jack Blake!" said Wally cheerfully, swinging his cricket-stump carelessly.

"Pander came to us, and asked us to pal up with him. Says he——"

"Shut up, Wally!" said Pander wildly.

"Bats!" said Wally coolly. "He told us he was used to younger chapsassoc—— How much was that word, Joe Frayne?"

"Ask me another!" grinned Joe Frayne.

"Anyway, he was used to mixing with younger chaps than you old fossils, so he came to us. He taught us to box. Think I've improved, Blake?"

Blake grinned.

"Rather!"

"Then, when we dusted your studies for you—I mean, raised Study No. 6, he came up. I called to him to back up his pals. He did. What would you have done, Jack Blake?"

Blake did not hesitate. He turned to Pander.

"Why didn't you tell us that?" he demanded.

"It was a promise!" said Pander.

"Half a jiff, you chaps!" said Tom Merry. "Look here, Pander, I think you've slighted your Form-mates pretty rottenly. I would spin the yarn if I were you!"

Pander hesitated for a moment, and walked slowly towards the cluster of lighted candles on Blake's locker. His face was again flushed.

"I will tell you, then," he said, in a low voice. "I'm here at St. Jim's, paying my own fees. I made money boxing in a ring at a show——"

"My hat!"

"Then, when I met chaps like Blake & Co., Tom Merry & Co., not to mention D'Arcy, the son of an earl, I thought they would rather not have a boxing-chap for a pal. So I chummed up with young Wally. I guessed he wouldn't ask questions. In return for the friendship I taught them to box. When the row started to-night I had to do one of two things. I had to stick to my pals or fight for my Form."

"To one I owed little, to the other a lot. I chose the former, and, by gad, I'm jolly glad I did! There you are, you chaps, you can chip me how you like, but don't call me Ginger!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!"

Blake stared for a full thirty seconds

(Continued on page 20.)

MAGNIFICENT COLOURED PICTURE TO BE GIVEN FREE

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO TO SECURE A BEAUTIFUL ART PLATE :: :: ::

We reproduce here a small line drawing of a magnificent coloured plate which every reader of THE GEM has an equal chance of securing. All you have to do is to secure the names and addresses of SIX of your friends who are non-readers of THE GEM. When you have done this, write them down on a postcard and post them to the Editor of THE GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4. All postcards should be marked "Free Plate" in the top left-hand corner. Names and addresses of regular or occasional readers must on no account be sent, otherwise your application for a Plate may be rejected. Before sending in your list, make sure that the names are of non-readers.

Only one plate will be sent to any one reader.



This is a small line drawing of the Plate to be Given Free. Actual size of Plate with engraving is 7 1/2 inches by 10 inches. The title of the picture is "Boy, 1st Class, JOHN TRAVERS CORNWELL, V.C. The Battle of Jutland, May 31st—June 1st, 1916. From the Picture by F. O. Salisbury, painted for the Admiralty on board H.M.S. Chester." The closing date of this offer will be published in this paper in a week or so. No application will be accepted after that date.



THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Jim Quinton of the Sixth Form at Harwood's, Bigglesdale, by the will of John Quinton, his father, is to succeed to a great position at Karradon in Africa. A great deal of mystery is attached to the position which John Quinton really held; but he is supposed to have been almost as powerful as the king himself. Mr. Matlock, the late John Quinton's solicitor, makes known details of the will to Jim Quinton, who at once decides to carry out his father's wishes. He is then introduced to Tim Daly, Erik, and Nijellah, a negro, who are to be his servants.

In their presence the solicitor hands to Jim a sealed packet of papers, which John Quinton had left solely for his son's perusal.

Jim has enemies in Dillon Bracster, another Sixth-Former at Harwood's, Bracster senior, Cyrus Kerzon, and a fellow named Flaxman, who call themselves the Karradon Syndicate.

An attempt by Dillon Bracster to obtain Jim's private papers fails. Next day Bracster junior leaves the school on his father's orders.

Jim is kidnapped, but is rescued some days later by his friends and Dick Willoughby, a school chum, who has joined the party.

It is discovered that the Syndicate have stolen Jim's papers and have fled for Africa on the Artemus. Jim and his friends, with the exception of Mr. Matlock, follow immediately.

(NOW READ ON.)

On Board the Artemus.

"WE can't transfer our cabins till we've left Marseilles," Cyrus Kerzon told his friend, Henry Bracster, as they walked up and down the deck of the Artemus. "They've still got an idea that Mr. Daly's party will join the ship at Marseilles! All their baggage is aboard, of course. Quite amusing! What?"

They laughed together at the prospect. For the next six months at least Tim Daly and his friends would be hunting all over England, and possibly on the Continent as well, in the hope of finding young Jim Quinton. Adolph Flaxman could be trusted to give them any number of clues which would keep them busy!

It was quite certain that after Marseilles there would not be the slightest objection to the Bracster party transferring to the more pleasant cabins which Tim Daly had booked. Secure in this knowledge, Kerzon and Bracster, accompanied by Dillon, went ashore almost as soon as they touched the great French port, and did not even trouble to see if any telegrams had come for them. It was early days for Flaxman to begin sending them messages.

They did not return to the ship until a short time before she sailed again, and

only then did Kerzon discover that there was a cable waiting for him.

"Leave it to you now. All support. Cabling Mombasa agents fully."

"ARIKMAN."

"Arikman" was Flaxman's telegraphic name; but the message puzzled Kerzon, and he handed it over to Henry Bracster.

"Silly sort of message!" he grumbled. "It was only handed in the morning after we left. What do you make of it?"

"Just a word of cheer!" Henry Bracster laughed. "Nothing in it at all! Let's go on deck."

They reached the deck just in time to see an interesting spectacle. Dillon Bracster had remained on the deck, and as he walked along had suddenly come face to face with two fellows who, as he fondly imagined, had passed out of his life for ever.

Jim Quinton and Dick Willoughby had been on the Artemus some hours before they saw Bracster. On their journey through France Tim Daly had suggested that if and when they did meet the Bracsters, the best plan would be to assume surprise and even a certain amount of pleasure. Daly had already discussed the question of the papers with Erik, and the little man was still feeling bitter about his experience at Bigglesdale. Before the end of the present voyage he hoped to retrieve his reputation to some extent.

But Quinton and Willoughby had not become diplomats yet. They greeted Bracster as they would have done at Harwood's.

"Hallo, Bracster!" Quinton was the first to speak, and when Bracster turned to face him, and saw the two of them before him, he started back as though he had been shot.

"Don't run away, Bracster!" Willoughby begged, and put his hand on his arm. "We're going to be companions on this trip, I hear. We shall have quite a lot to talk about!"

"I—What do you mean?" Bracster was struggling to hide the unpleasant fears which were surging into his mind. "Let me go, Willoughby! You can't start your bullying here. We are not at Harwood's now!"

He jerked himself from Willoughby's grasp and turned to run. Both Willoughby and Quinton started forward instinctively to seize him again, and it was at that moment that Bracster senior and his friend Kerzon made their appearance.

"Don't be in such a hurry, Bracster!"

Quinton was saying. "I want to have a quiet talk—"

He stopped abruptly as his eyes fell on the astonished face of Cyrus Kerzon. For the moment both Henry Bracster and his friend were too utterly astounded to move. They simply stood stock-still, staring at Quinton in startled wonder.

"Ah—How d'you do?" Kerzon recovered himself at last, and made an attempt to pass off his surprise. "Met before, haven't we? See you again later. Come along, Dillon! Just looking for you."

He seized Dillon Bracster by the arm even more firmly than Willoughby had done, and swung him round. Henry Bracster had apparently not yet recovered his power of speech, and simply turned on his heels. A few moments later the three of them had disappeared down the companion-way.

"That's the crowd we're up against!" Quinton said quietly, when they had gone. "Three beauties, aren't they? Shouldn't be surprised if they cleared off the boat before we leave here. It gave them something of a shock when they saw me, quite fit and well!"

They went back to Tim Daly, and reported to him the news of their meeting. It did not surprise him greatly, as he knew they were on the boat, though he had been rather hoping to avoid them for the first day or two. Nor did he share Quinton's view that they might bolt now that they knew their plans had gone astray.

"Not likely, Jim!" Daly answered. "Kerzon knows too much now. But we'll have those papers from him before this trip is finished!"

Daly was right in his idea. The Bracsters and Cyrus Kerzon did not leave the boat, though as far as possible they avoided any meeting with Jim Quinton and his friends. On his side, Tim Daly appeared equally anxious to avoid them, and spent most of his time in his own cabin, or with the first mate, with whom he had struck up a friendship.

Nor did Quinton see very much of Erik or Nijellah for the first few days after leaving Marseilles. It is true that the little man came to Quinton each morning, but after that he simply disappeared until the following morning. But Jim guessed that Erik was not idle, from the few hints which Tim Daly had given him.

One fairly hot night Jim and Willoughby were taking a last stroll on deck before turning in, when Daly came to them.

"I'm wanting your help," he said quietly. "Erik has found out at last what we wanted to know, and there may be a little rough work." Come to my cabin for a few minutes."

Here he told them briefly of all that Erik had done during the past few days and nights. Kerzon had evidently expected that some attempt might be made to obtain possession of Quinton's papers again, and since Marseilles, at all events, they had been in his possession. He had gone to the trouble of making a kind of chest-protector which held the envelope, so Erik asserted, and this protector he wore night and day.

When he sloped his revolver was handy, and he had the elder Bracster in the same cabin. The two, indeed, were very rarely out of each other's company.

"But Erik has his own methods," Daly told them. "He's going to get the papers at two o'clock, he says. But it will be better for us to stand by in case of need. The first officer is on watch, and he knows something; but, of course, we don't want to drag him into it if we can possibly avoid it. I'll tell you what I want you to do."

He gave them careful instructions, and after that Quinton and Willoughby retired to their own cabin again. At ten minutes before two o'clock they went cautiously out.

Jim took up his position in a shallow recess not more than two yards from Kerzon's cabin. Willoughby was further away; and somewhere in the vicinity Tim Daly was on guard. It might be that none of them would be needed, but they were prepared for all emergencies.

Very little had been said concerning Erik's plans beyond the fact that he was going into the cabin. Jim watched carefully, but during the first fifteen minutes he saw no sign of Erik, nor was there the faintest sound from the cabin.

At first Jim felt a touch of excitement tingling in his veins, and he held himself tense and on the alert. But gradually, as the minutes went by, and there was neither any sign of Erik nor any sound, he began to feel a little disappointed. The gentle murmur of the calm sea and the rhythmic throb-throb of the engines seemed to stifle all the sense of adventure which he had felt for a brief space.

Suddenly he was galvanised into alertness again. There came a sharp cry of pain and fear. Once before Jim had heard exactly the same agonising call, but to-night its effect was different. He simply held himself ready.

Yet he jumped forward too late to intercept the little figure which flashed past him in the dim light. Perhaps it was as well, for he caught the gasping message Erik gave him.

"Right! Come away!" Jim caught the words quite plainly, but before he could act upon them a shot rang out, and instinctively he jumped back to his recess.

He stayed there for not more than two seconds. The tall figure of Cyrus Kerzon loomed up in front of him. Whether Kerzon actually saw him or not Jim was not very certain; but his arm, as he came near Jim, was half-raised, and he could see quite plainly the weapon tilted back in his hand.

In that position Jim had a chance, and he took it. He gripped Kerzon by the wrist with one hand, and with the other jerked the weapon out. It fell to the floor, for Jim had all his work cut out now to withstand the sudden onslaught his opponent made.

Another moment, and the two were grappling with each other fiercely, and for the time Quinton had no other

thought but the desire of the fighter to bring his man down.

Before he had time to accomplish it, however, both he and Kerzon were seized by other men who had come up. Jim staggered back, gasping for breath, but still watchful.

"What's this game?" The man who held Jim spoke first, and his uniform told that he was one of the ship's officers. "Fighting is not allowed on this boat, you know!"

"I've been attacked and robbed while asleep!" Kerzon gasped, and tried to shake himself from the grip which Tim Daly was keeping on him.

"And you accuse this man?" the first officer asked. "Very good, sir. We'll investigate the matter and settle it at once."

He still kept hold of Jim, and now spoke to him.

"I'm sorry to trouble you, sir," he

captain of an ocean liner has to play many parts at times, but there is nothing he dislikes more than being called upon to act as judge in a quarrel between his first-class passengers. On this occasion he began the inquiry with a series of questions, short and sharp, addressed to Kerzon.

In the interval Kerzon's temper had subsided, and he really wanted time to consider the problem of how to make the most of this opportunity. The captain's abrupt methods never gave him a chance, and the chief officer's very short and direct answers when questioned did not help Kerzon.

The captain asked Quinton one or two point-blank questions. Had he been in Kerzon's cabin? Had he taken the papers? To which Jim simply replied, without any added explanation, by a direct negative.

There was a good deal more question-



Tim Daly still continued to advance, waving his arms slowly. Suddenly he stumbled and fell forward. One of the arrows had at last found its mark. (See page 19.)

said in very stiff and formal tones. "But you heard the accusation made against you? I'll be glad if you will come with me—and you, gentlemen, too!"

A Night Attack.

THE whole party, including Tim Daly and Willoughby, whose task appeared to be to guard Kerzon, were led to the captain's cabin.

As it happened, he was not resting, and the chief officer came out in a moment or two and called them all in. The captain was quite ready to act as judge and jury at once.

Meantime, Tim Daly had managed to get a chance to whisper to Quinton a few words of advice before they entered.

"Say nothing!" he advised. "Know nothing about the papers or anything. You were just taking a stroll. That's all!"

Now, although the captain was willing and ready to listen to any number of arguments, he was not exactly in the best frame of mind when his chief officer led the little party into his cabin. The

ing, but Kerzon's case grew weaker, until it became obvious that he was not even anxious to support his own side of the question. Quinton insisted on the fact that it was Kerzon who made the attack, and that he was just as anxious as anyone to have the whole question cleared.

In the end there was no other course left for the captain but to refuse to go further with the matter. If Mr. Kerzon wished it, the whole business could be reported at the next port, and a proper legal inquiry made. Beyond that, it did not seem that anything more could be done at present.

Kerzon accepted the decision with even more readiness than Quinton. The captain was annoyed, the first mate was almost openly sarcastic, and Tim Daly allowed himself the privilege of making one or two audible remarks about people who made wild accusations against anybody and everybody.

They were leaving the captain's cabin then, and not until they were outside did

Kerzon attempt to make any reply to Daly. Just for a moment, as they turned to descend the stairs to the deck, the two men found themselves side by side.

"Satisfied?" Daly asked calmly, then stepped back quickly as Kerzon tried to grab him by the arm.

"I'll get even with you, Daly!" Kerzon snarled, as his temper once again got the better of his self-control. "I've got a long account up against you, and you'll pay it in full one day!"

"I'm ready," Daly retorted; and then, as the first officer came up, he went down the companion-way.

Kerzon followed him, but said nothing further. And Tim Daly went on to his own cabin, where, a few moments later, he was joined by Jim Quinton and Dick Willoughby.

"Quite a successful evening, boys!" he told them cheerily. "The march to the captain's cabin wasn't exactly in the programme, but it's all planned out well, and I don't think our friend Kerzon will want to take his case any further. Here are your papers, Jim!"

From underneath the pillow of his berth he produced the old linen envelope, and handed it over to Quinton.

"Do you think they'll be safe in my keeping—after what has happened?" Jim asked doubtfully.

"They're yours," Daly answered; "and I guess you won't let them go in a hurry again. I don't think Kerzon or the Bracsters will have the nerve to worry you any more on this voyage. Afterwards, we'll be ready for them!"

Tim Daly was right in his forecast. The incident of that particular night simply faded into the limbo of forgotten events, and Kerzon showed no inclination to raise the question again. He and the two Bracsters kept themselves out of the way most of the time, and only on very rare occasions did they come to the fore. Willoughby saw anything of them. Even at meal-times they contrived to enter and leave the dining-saloon without attracting the attention of Tim Daly or his two companions.

If by chance they met Dillon Bracster on deck, he would turn deliberately and retrace his steps in order to avoid speaking to them. It amused both Quinton and Willoughby, who were now thoroughly enjoying the voyage, and they spoke to Tim Daly of the obvious discomfiture of their enemies.

"I guess the three of them are wishing they'd never set out on this trip!" Willoughby laughed. "We've beaten them, and they haven't got an ounce of fight left in them! Don't you think so, Mr. Daly?"

"I hope so," Tim Daly answered. "But I'm not too sure about it yet. I don't think they're enjoying this passage at present, but I'm inclined to think they'll stick to their plans, whatever they may be. There are one or two fairly influential people backing them on this expedition, and they know too much now to throw it up. We'll talk about that later."

But if Tim Daly still kept his eyes open for the least sign of any new move on Kerzon's part, both Quinton and Willoughby took advantage of everything that went on aboard the Artemus. For them the voyage did not drag, and when, one beautiful morning, Daly informed them that he expected they would be going ashore that day, both the youngsters expressed surprise.

"They're putting us ashore at Mombasa," Daly explained. "That's our

best point. We shan't stay there very long, but you'll have a little railway journey of nearly six hundred miles up to Port Florence before the real travelling begins."

He laughed as though some jest lay behind his words, but almost immediately his face straightened again.

"It will be interesting to see what course the Bracsters and Kerzon take now. Keep your eyes open. I rather fancy they'll come off with us."

During the afternoon the Artemus gradually drew inshore, until from the deck they could see the cluster of white buildings which marked the European quarter of the town, with the greater collection of curious huts and odd erections of the big native town, and the old fort, still standing as a memento of the days when Portugal's sailors were among the pioneers of exploration.

The excitement of seeing all their baggage safely dragged forth, and the farewells to friends they had made on board, kept them all fairly busy until the moment came to climb into the boat which was to take them ashore. As it happened, they were the only passengers who were disembarking here, and Quinton stood up in the bows of the boat to wave again to friends still watching them from the deck. For the time he had completely forgotten Dillon Bracster, but he distinguished him now among those leaning over the taff-rail. Near him stood Bracster senior and his friend Cyrus Kerzon.

"The Bracster crowd aren't keeping us company, after all, Tim!" Quinton called to Daly. "They're on the deck now, having a farewell glimpse of us. We'll be quite happy without them!"

"They are they?" Tim Daly agreed. "Where are they going, I wonder? The first officer was pretty certain they were bound for Mombasa. Evidently changed their minds after our last little argument with Kerzon. Let's hope we're seen the last of them!"

But in his own mind, Daly was puzzled. He knew something of Kerzon and his reputation, and would actually have felt more comfortable if he had come ashore. His game would at least have been fairly plain in that case, and it was uncertainty, especially when dealing with white men, which perplexed Tim Daly and made him uneasy.

Of this, however, he said nothing to his companions, and if anyone guessed what was in his mind, it could only have been Erik. But at present the little man was more discreetly silent than ever, and during the next two or three days he became a sort of minor shadow to Jim Quinton. At the least sign of trouble, Erik appeared.

By the end of three days, their stay in the town which is the gateway of British East Africa, came to a close. It had been full of interest to both Quinton and Willoughby. The train journey which followed, was occupied chiefly in listening to Tim Daly's explanations of what had first been accomplished in this country since he had seen it, and prophecies of what would be accomplished in the fulness of time.

After the train journey, there followed several strenuous days at the railhead. Daly had planned everything many months before, and had timed his arrival to within a week. All the porters and the donkeys which were to be used on their journey to the Karradon country were encamped within a mile or two of the railhead.

Jim was Daly's constant companion in everything that was done now, and full explanations were made to him. The porters were a mixed crowd, and only a very few of them were Karradons, who acted as askaris, or military police. The Karradons considered themselves altogether too important to act as porters.

There were one or two quite important people among them, so Daly told Quinton, and they greeted Nijellah with enthusiasm. Some of them, too, were formally presented to Quinton, who was now beginning to learn more and more of the customs of the people amongst whom he was going to live.

The quantity of baggage and packages which Tim Daly had collected, amazed Jim; but there came a day when everything was in order, the donkeys were laden, the little light carts had been packed, and the porters had been assigned to their proper duties. Late in the afternoon, the queer procession moved off on the first stage of its journey to the country of the Karradons.

Dick Willoughby, who was conscientiously keeping a diary of his experiences, had quite a busy time in recording his impressions during the next few days. To him, and to Jim Quinton, everything was wonderful from the steady marching through the long, hot days, the periodical excitement when some of the donkeys upset the regular routine of their work, to the strange, calm nights, when they took their chief meal round the camp-fire, and listened to Tim Daly's stories.

They had been on their journey some five or six days, and, apart from the inevitable little complexities which were bound to arise, everything had gone without a hitch. During the day they entered a vast forest-land, and at night had encamped in a clear clearing which was one of the recognised halts on the way up to Karradon.

A circle of fires had been made around the camp, and inside the ring different parties had their own particular fire. The major of the carriers were in one corner making weird sounds which was apparently their idea of evening song. Nijellah, and some of his friends, were gathered together some distance away, while Daly, Quinton, and Willoughby, with Erik knocking about in the background, made a little party of their own.

They had been indulging in reminiscences to-night, and for the first time during this trek Dillon Bracster's name had dropped up.

"We seem to have shaken them off pretty thoroughly!" Quinton laughed. "What port would they be likely to touch after Mombasa? I suppose they'd get off there?"

"I don't know," Daly answered slowly. "As a matter of fact, I was told, after we'd landed, that the Bracsters and their friend Kerzon were coming ashore at Mombasa, but had made arrangements to keep clear of us. I didn't tell you at the time, as I thought we were bound to see more of them. However, they don't seem to have kept up the chase, so I fancy they must have abandoned their idea. I had the feeling, somehow—Hello!"

He jumped to his feet quickly, and Quinton noticed the startled look in his eyes as he stared out into the blackness beyond the circle of fires.

A queer, shrill whistling sound attracted Quinton's attention. Something fell into the fire as he stood up, and he fancied it was a short arrow.

Tang! Tang! Quinton was quite

and now, and it seemed as though dozens and dozens of arrows were flying through the air. From the group of porters in the far corner came a cry of pain, and their low, monotonous chanting had changed to a wild jabbering.

The donkeys were beginning to make a noise, and Nijellah and his friends were calling out instructions apparently to the porters. In a few moments the scene had changed from one of calm peace to a general pandemonium.

"What's wrong, Tim?" Quinton cried. Daly by the arm as he asked the question, then instinctively drew aside sharply as an arrow whizzed past his face. Daly swung round quickly.

"Get down, Jim! Lie down, Willoughby!" he shouted.

"But what are you going—?" Quinton began, as he saw Daly pick up his rifle, which had been lying near.

"Don't argue now, Jim!" Daly said quickly. "Get down—I'll tell you what to do later!"

His tone was imperative, and Jim and Dick Willoughby realised that their present job was to obey. They lay flat on the ground, and Jim, raising his head, saw that Tim Daly had slung his rifle over his shoulder, and was walking forward. His arms were upraised, and he was moving them about in the manner of one who is making signals.

The row of porters and the donkeys had increased, but Quinton scarcely noticed it for the moment. He was fascinated by Tim Daly, who still continued to advance, waving his arms slowly, while in the light from the fires Jim caught the gleam of the arrows as they flashed about him.

Suddenly he stumbled and fell forward. One of the arrows had at last found its mark.

Instantly Quinton rose, but before he could get on his feet, he felt himself pulled back again. Turning swiftly, he found Erik just behind him, and it was he who had dragged Jim down again.

"Not yet, Bazar!" he whispered. "Wait! I will go to him!"

Quinton Takes Command.

Erik would have crawled away there and then, but Quinton held him back.

"What's happened, Erik?" he asked quickly. "Who's causing this trouble?"

Erik half-rose, peering forward as though to see into the darkness beyond the fires. As he did so, Quinton caught sight of Tim Daly making an effort to turn round, and to beckon for someone to come to him. The next moment he had dropped to the ground again, and his rifle spoke. Whether he could see anything or not was doubtful, but he evidently intended to let his enemies know that he was armed.

After that Erik did not trouble to explain further, but began to crawl forward. Jim decided to follow his example, and Dick Willoughby came only a little way behind.

By now the noise from the porters had died down to some extent, and, although an occasional arrow winged over them, the first fierce attack had quietened. Tim Daly, however, still kept up his shooting. Erik stopped for a time when Erik crawled to his side, and began to talk to him. Quinton and Willoughby crept up on the other side, and lay down near him. Almost about the same time Nijellah and two or three of his friends had also come near to Daly.

"Hallo, Jim! So you've got here, after all!" Tim Daly turned at last to Quinton. "I've been telling Erik what to do. Don't understand this trouble yet, but the brutes have given me a little catch. It's nothing! I wanted to get hold of them and explain we were

friends, but they don't seem to understand. We've never had any real trouble with the Manzi-tribe before. You and Erik, and as many more as you can gather, have got to get away from here at once!"

"What about you?" Jim asked quickly. "I'm staying!" Daly retorted.

"There's one of our hidden dumps not so very far from here—Quinton Dump. Erik knows where it is. Get along there as quickly as you can with as many animals and boys as you can get hold of. Where's Nijellah?"

The big native crept forward, and lay by Daly's side for a time. Just what arrangements were made Jim could not gather, but Tim Daly turned to him presently and explained.

"I don't think there is anything to worry about, Jim," he told him. "But I want you to carry on just as I tell you. I'll hope to join you at the dump later, but if I'm not there within twenty-four hours or if you can come and have a look for me. I might be needing you then."

It was useless for Quinton to argue that he and Willoughby would prefer to stick with Tim Daly. The latter had planned everything out, and it was up to Jim to see through the part which had been given to him.

"I've undertaken to land you safely in Karradon," Tim Daly said. "Nijellah and one or two of the others will stay with me here. We'll have a chance of parleying with this crowd who are attacking us if there aren't too many white men hanging round. Erik knows the way to the dump. Get along there as quickly and as quietly as you can! I expect most of the boys have bolted." Good-bye, Jim! See you presently at the dump."

Quinton whispered to Willoughby, and a few moments later the two of them, with Erik, were crawling back. As Daly had expected, most of their porters had taken to their heels at the first sign of trouble, preferring the unknown dangers of the forest to the risk of a poisoned arrow. There were, however, some eight or ten natives still waiting, and most of these were Karradons.

Under Erik's directions the donkeys were quickly laden again. Some of them, unfortunately, had managed to break loose, and had followed the deserting porters. It was not possible to take all their packs, nor could the light carts be taken, and these were dragged together and left.

It was difficult work, and the light from the fires had grown low owing to lack of attention. This helped them in one way, however, as they were not troubled at all by the mysterious enemy who had made so sudden an attack, and were apparently still content to lie in wait.

The last that Jim saw of the camp was a circle of slowly-dying fires, and in the centre the dark form of Tim Daly and Nijellah, with two others who had been selected to stay with them. Tim still kept up his firing, but was not using too much ammunition. Nor was the hidden foe very busy just now. An occasional arrow, followed by a solitary crack of a rifle, merely served to remind the men in the centre of the fire circle that their enemy was waiting and watching.

Jim felt very doubtful about their prospects of getting away from the place without bringing upon themselves more definite attack. The donkeys were moved in one direction a little way, and so Erik explained to Jim, they were to stay there for a time in charge of a certain number of boys.

Erik, with two of the Karradon boys, and Quinton and Willoughby, were to go

ahead first. Tim Daly had ordered it, and Jim did not argue against it.

"He's probably got some scheme in his mind," Jim told Willoughby. "I don't quite see it yet, and I certainly don't like pushing on without him. But he knows more of this game than we do."

Despite Jim's fears about getting away unobserved they managed to accomplish it without interference of any kind. But now they no longer followed a well-marked track, but plunged into what seemed at first to be a hopeless jungle. Erik led the way, and after a little time he made full use of the small torch he carried.

It was a journey which Quinton remembered long afterwards. Now and again the flash of Erik's light revealed a dense mass of clinging tendrils, forming a thick curtain between the huge trees, through which it seemed utterly impossible to make a way. And Erik would pause and stare at the trees, as though seeking for some sign, then slowly move on again, while Quinton and the three behind him struggled carefully after him.

At times the silence was oppressive and deathly, at others strange sounds, unpleasant and threatening, would boom forth, or of a sudden the quietness would be broken by screeches and weird cries.

Quinton's admiration for his faithful servant, Erik, increased steadily that night. Had it not been for the little man's quiet calm plodding and the continual encouragement of his light, the fear of the forest would have gripped both Quinton and Willoughby. It was overpowering and terrifying, and even Jim, Quinton, big, strong, and courageous, felt conscious of his own weakness and helplessness.

"Not long now, Bazar!" Erik turned to him at last, and Jim was glad to hear the sound of his voice.

"That's all right, Erik!" Jim tried to laugh, but it seemed weak and puny.

For another half-hour or so they struggled on before Erik stopped again. The forest, so far as Jim could tell in the circle of light from Erik's torch, was not quite so dense here. As the light swept the ground about them he fancied he could see a clearly-cut narrow pathway which descended fairly steeply.

They went down the pathway carefully for perhaps five minutes or so. Suddenly Erik turned at an abrupt angle, and when the light was next flashed on, Quinton found he was standing in what appeared to be a cavern, the roof of which was twenty to thirty feet high.

Before he had time to express any wonder Erik had switched on an electric-light which stood on the rough table. Quinton had caught sight of it in his first glimpse of the place.

"Great Scott!" Dick Willoughby was laughing, but there was just a hint of tremor in his voice, a testimony to the tension at which he had kept his nerves during those past few hours. "Darkest Africa, and the Electric Light Company's been here already! It's great! What's all this stuff here?"

All down one side of the cavern were tusks of ivory, carefully piled and arranged, and its effect, before their eyes had grown quite accustomed to the light, was strangely impressive.

Actually there was not quite so much ivory as their first impression led them to suppose, but there was quite enough to provide a fairly respectable fortune for the man who sold it. How it had come to be accumulated here Quinton was to learn later.

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FIGHTING FOR THE FAGS!

(Continued from page 15.)

at Pander, then he moved forward with outstretched hand.

"Pander," he said, almost angrily, "you are as big an ass as Gussy, but

you're a decent one! Here at St. Jim's we're not snobs. Give us your fist!"

Pander, blushing furiously, shook hands with Blake.

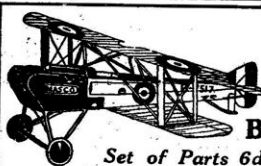
"So-long, Pander, old pal!" said Wally D'Arcy cheerily. "We'll bring you with Blake & Co. next time we come!"

"Fine pals!" said Pander. Pander became the friend of many a

Fourth-Former, but he was not likely to forget the night when he was tried for fighting for his pals.

THE END.

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