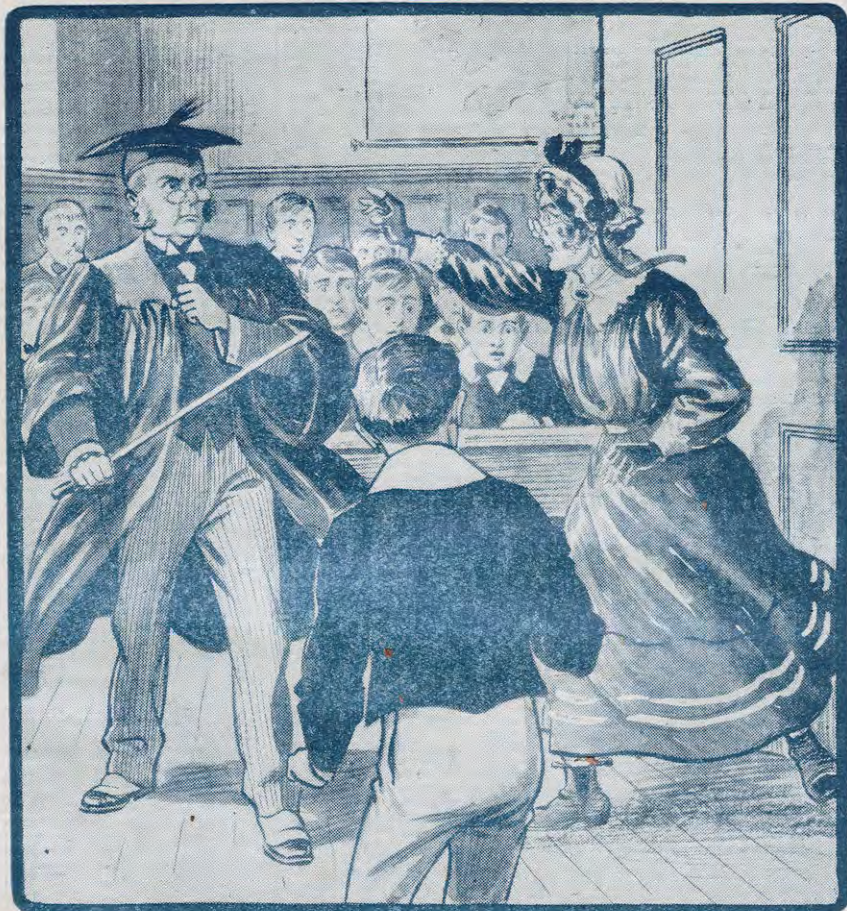


IN THIS NUMBER

GRAND LONG COMPLETE STORY OF ST. JIM'S, AND THE
FIRST OF A SPLENDID NEW SERIES OF SCHOOL STORIES

The GEM **1** ¹⁰/₂

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MISS PRISCILLA SEVERELY REPRIMANDS THE MASTER OF THE THIRD!

(An Exciting Scene in the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale in this Number.)



The Editor's Chat.



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

For Next Wednesday.

"THE REFUGEE OF ST. JIM'S." By Martin Clifford.

Next week's grand, long story of the chums of St. Jim's is a thrilling one about a man who had been a scholar at the school in his boyhood, and has got into difficulties through a scheming swindler. He is able to elude the detective who is on his track, with the assistance of Tom Merry & Co., and Jack Blake & Co.

"THE REFUGEE OF ST. JIM'S" is a most exciting yarn, and one that all my readers will thoroughly enjoy. Order your copy of next Wednesday's GEM at once.

THE MAPLE-LEAF CORRESPONDENCE CLUB.

S. D. Rooke, 933, McMillan Avenue, Winnipeg, Canada, is running a postcard, stamp, and antique exchange, and a monthly magazine. He sends me a plan of his operations, and I admire his methods thoroughly. He has drawn up a programme, which includes bicycle-spins for the members, picnics, etc., and his scheme will make for good comradeship and a lot of pleasure all round.

THE HUMPH.

There is no need to make any apology for dealing with this subject. It was the chief topic in a letter just received. The camelion hump is very general, and the patient, chuntering ship of the desert has no monopoly at all. How to get rid of it? People have been seeking for a way for centuries. I take it the best cure is to get busy and dismiss all thought of personal grievances.

But the hump has its advantages. The fellow who is weighed down this way is at least natural; he is not swanking round puffed up in his own conceits. Then, as stated, everybody is having it now. There are troubles. If there are no big ones folks find small ones and worry about them. Fact! The world is never really happy unless it has some little affair to annoy it.

Some individuals will complain of the next chap's big boot, in a railway carriage, which is impeding them. We all know that boot!

Then there is the sharp retort at the post-office when you want a penny stamp and have no time to wait, or the rain comes down when you are sporting your best clothes and have forgotten your gamp. Oh, there is any amount of scope for the hump! But here and there in the crowd you see a fellow who never gets humpy, nor ruffled. How he does this nobody knows. The newsagent may forget his paper. It is all the same. He says he will come back next day. The weather is just what he does not like, for he means to go and see a cricket match, but he remains calm. He is a champion. No doubt of it. He ought to have a medal.

STRANGE QUESTIONS.

How to cycle to Southend from London

and avoid Barking? It wants doing. A correspondent asked me what he was to do about it. He wanted the nearest route—and he did not want Barking. Nothing against Barking, of course, though it is not precisely a health resort where the band plays all day long to drown dull care and make the job of Father Thames nice and easy as the river slips on to the sea.

Of course, my chum will have to go round. I should advise him to start out to see Epping Forest—he will enjoy that part—then drop down south after London has become a thing of the past. If he does, after all, find himself pedalling through Barking he must make the best of it and study life and the busy bustle of the township in question. Getting out of London is by way of being one of the most difficult tasks for the traveller on the road.

I remember once going south and thinking that I would miss Croydon. Well, I only thought this. I took short cuts by the score, and after some hours fancied that the next turn would bring me into the open country where the sheep were nibbling the dew-laden herbage. Would you believe it? Nothing of this sort happened. Things you expect do not happen. Not their way.

I found myself back in Croydon—the Elizabethan borough, as the happy-hearted journalists call it. It is like this with some towns and cities. You cannot escape from them. They are magnetic. Birmingham is one of those centres which draw the wayfarer back. You think you have got clear and well on the way to Shottery to see the cottage where Shakespeare lived, and you end up in dear old Smethwick. But there, life is full of disappointments—and the hump—and the only way is to endure what you can't cure.

ONE WHO KNOWS.

There is a slight complaint here: "I have only one grumble to offer, and that is the way boys are caned at the schools. I thought caning on the hand was stopped now at all schools, and that another part of the body was always used. Anyhow, that is so at my school, as I have found out twice already this term."

My correspondent adds that for the cane to rise and fall for the space of three minutes must mean about a hundred and fifty strokes, which is unlikely.

I can tell the writer that the code varies, and I trust he will have no further experience of its application.

MANY THANKS.

A demobbed soldier tells me that in France, Italy, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, and Egypt the supporters of the "Magnet" and GEM number thousands. "I can assure you," he writes, "that there is nothing more enjoyed by a British soldier than a good read at the Companion Papers."

He hopes that Mr. Frank Richards will live long to continue the good work. And so say all of us!

UNANSWERED LETTERS.

There are more of these than the kind that do get answered. Miss Marjorie Wells, of Belvedere Road, Burton-on-Trent, asks me to thank her correspondents in India, Egypt, France, Newfoundland, South Africa, Australia, Germany, and elsewhere. She has received so many communications that she found it was impossible to reply to them all. But maybe yet she will take her trusty pen in hand and send her best wishes.

Then "Dorothy," of Bexhill, tells me she is afraid her letter was boring, and she ought to have told me that at the start, but as she says

"Better late than never
Is a comforting refrain,
Excepting when you reach the station
Just too late to catch the train."

Quite so; but there was nothing boring in this correspondent's note. She takes life with mighty seriousness and yet possesses a sense of humour. It is a fine partnership of qualities. She likes Cardew, "despite of his taint of blackguardism." This is going rather far; it seems to me. Cardew has his defects, but he has a real sense of right and wrong.

SUMMER HOLIDAYS.

Easter is behind us, and people are all talking about summer trips. That is, most folks are. Some individuals say they never take holidays and don't want them. This need not be believed. Anyhow, holidays ought to be taken, even if they are only half-day ones. The average holidaymaker is not in the least original. He is not crammed full of ideas like Skizpole, who would tuck a big book under his arm and take a holiday in the remotest parts of the earth just by means of his powerful imagination.

Ordinary people get too much burdened up with luggage to have a perfect holiday. It's really the luggage that goes for the holiday and takes them with it to look after the railway porters. The tramp has a truer notion of what a holiday is, and he takes one which lasts all the year round. Then there was Borrow. He is worth reading—the accounts of his life with the gypsies, and how he walked through Spain with just a pack.

ICI ON PARLE FRANCAISE.

R. Cunningham, Jun., 58, Rosebank Street, Dundee, Scotland, is "wearying for a French correspondent." I hope one of my supporters across the Silver Streak, or here at home, will meet this reader's wish and write to him in the language of France. There are many French readers of the Companion Papers.

Your Editor



MISS PRISCILLA-- FORM - MASTER!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Miss Priscilla Arrives.

"LITTLE boy!"
Grundy went on chatting to his chums, Wilkins and Gunn. The trio were sitting on the School House steps, discussing the last football match.

"School House should never have lost," said Grundy. "If I have been in the team the score wouldn't have been five goals to four, I can tell you that!"

Wilkins and Gunn grinned. Grundy thought great things of himself as a footballer, but he was absolutely hopeless at the game.

"No! It would have been more like twenty-five to four," grinned Wilkins.

"What! Do you mean to say, Wilkins, that I should have allowed the New House to score twenty-five goals?"

And the great George Alfred Grundy clenched his fists threateningly.

"Ahem! I meant in favour of the School House, of course," hedged Wilkins.

Wilkins had no intention of risking the wrath of his mighty leader. Grundy might be a duffer at most games, but he was certainly no duffer with his fists.

"Little boy!"

There could be no mistake this time. The elderly lady approaching the School House was addressing George Alfred Grundy.

"He, ha, ha!" laughed Wilkins and Gunn. They simply could not resist that laugh. The expression of surprise and disgust on Grundy's face was really too funny.

"What are you idiots cackling at?" growled Grundy. "It's that mad old governess of Merry's. She's in her second childhood, I believe."

"Well, she seems to think that you're still in your first," sniggered Gunn.

"Little boy!"

Miss Priscilla Fawcett waved her umbrella wildly as she came up to Grundy & Co. She was evidently very excited.

"Are you addressing us, madam?"

asked Grundy, in his most stately manner.

He could not very well be rude to the old lady. But he resented strongly being called little boy by her, as if he were a mere fag.

"I think I have seen you before, my child," said Miss Priscilla benevolently.

"You are a friend of my Tommy's, are you not?"

"I belong to the same Form as Tom Merry," said Grundy brusquely. "I don't know that I'm a particular friend of his."

Wilkins and Gunn admired Grundy for the way he was controlling himself. They knew that he was boiling with indignation at the way the old lady was talking to him.

"Not a friend of my Tommy's? Then you must be a very bad boy! All nice children are friends of my Tommy's," pursued Miss Priscilla.

Grundy could stand no more. He turned on his heels and walked away. Wilkins and Gunn followed him, restraining their laughter with difficulty. They had never seen their leader so humiliated before.

"Gracious! What strange children! I wonder why they ran away like that?" murmured Miss Priscilla, as she entered the School House.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Pwiscilla! What evah are you doin' heah?"

The speaker was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, who had encountered the old lady on his way to the playing-fields.

"Oh, is that you, Arthur, my dear boy?" asked Miss Priscilla affectionately. "Are you quite well, my lad?"

D'Arcy had once paid a visit to Miss Priscilla's cottage at Huckleberry Heath, and the old lady had taken a great fancy to him.

"Yes, wathah! Tom Mewwy will be surprised to see you!"

"I suppose he will, Arthur. Tell me, does he take regularly the cod-liver oil I send him?"

That was a poser for D'Arcy. He knew that Tom Merry simply threw the

stuff down the sink, but he could hardly tell Miss Priscilla that.

"He—er—generally manages to empty the bottle in a vewy short time, madam! I can assuah you of that!"

"I am so glad of that, Arthur! I am certain it was the cod-liver oil that saved his life at the time of that horribble Spanish influenza. And does he put a hot-water bottle in his bed every night? Tommy is very careless, and I fear that he may neglect to do what I have told him!"

"I am not in the same dormitoway as Tom Mewwy, madam. Pewwaps Man-nahs or Lowthah will tell you about that."

"Oh, yes! Manners and Lowther are his dearest friends, are they not? I am so glad Tommy has so many nice friends at the school! Do you know where he is now, Arthur?"

"I should imagine—"

"Gussy!"

It was a shout from the playing-fields. D'Arcy's chums, impatient at his delay, were calling for him.

"What a horrible shout, Arthur!"

Dear me!"

"Gussy!"

"Gussy!"

"Guss-us-us-y!"

"I am afraid I shall have to be goin', madam. Blake an' Hewvies an' Dig are calling foah me!"

"Are you going to play some horrid game on the grass, Arthur? Please take care and don't hurt yourself, my child!"

"Yaas, wathah, Miss Pwiscilla!" said D'Arcy.

And he hurried off to the playing-fields.

Miss Priscilla wended her way towards Tom Merry's study. It was quite a long time since she had last been at St. Jim's, but she remembered where her Tommy's study was situated. Everything connected with Tom Merry was of the greatest importance to his old governess.

"Little boy!"

It was not Grundy whom Miss Priscilla was addressing this time. She

called any junior little boy if she did not know his name.

"Little boy!"

"Oh, come on!" said Crooke impatiently. "We don't want to waste our time talking to this old frump!"

Crooke, and his two chums, Racke and Mellish, were coming down the stairs as Miss Priscilla accosted them.

"Little boy, can you tell me where my Tommy is now?"

Racke winked at the other two. He saw an opportunity for an ill-natured jape at the expense of the innocent old lady.

"Certainly, madam!" said Racke, raising his cap politely. "Do let me show you the way!"

"What's the game?" whispered Crooke, in surprise, to Mellish.

"Dunno!" said Mellish. "But old Racke isn't doing it for love of the old frump, you bet!"

And Mellish was right. Racke was hardly the sort of fellow to do a disinterested act of kindness.

"That is very kind of you, my lad! I am so anxious to see my Tommy again!"

It was not so very long since Tom Merry had been home for the vacation, but every minute of his absence was painful to his affectionate governess.

"This way, madam!"

And Racke, accompanied by his two cronies, led the way along the main passage of the building to the servants' hall.

"But this is not where I found my Tommy the last time I was here!" said Miss Priscilla, in surprise, as she followed the cad of the Shell.

"He, he, he!" laughed Mellish; but a quick look from Racke silenced him.

"He's been promoted," said Racke. "Just enter by that door, madam." And he pointed to the door leading into the servants' hall.

"Thank you, my boys!" said Miss Priscilla.

And she followed Racke's directions.

Racke, accompanied by his two cronies, hurried back to the Shell passage.

"What's the idea, Racke?" asked Crooke. "Tom Merry will be awfully wiled."

"Well, she's only a kind of servant herself, so I don't see why she shouldn't be taken to the servants' hall. Tom Merry shouldn't leave his old governesses lying about if he doesn't want anything to happen to them."

And the cads of the School House sniggered in great amusement over the joke they had played on Miss Priscilla.

Meanwhile, Miss Priscilla went on her way in all innocence. She had no idea that she was in the servants' quarters.

"Well, ma'am, what may you be wanting?"

The speaker was Mrs. Towle, the cook. Her wide expanse of aproned person blocked Miss Priscilla's path as the governess attempted to advance.

"Can you tell me where my Tommy is?" asked Miss Priscilla.

Miss Priscilla thought that everyone must know when she meant. To her, there was only one Tommy in all the world.

"Your Tommy, ma'am? Will that be Tommy Lynn, the boot-boy?"

"No! My Tommy!" said the governess.

One of your children, ma'am? And what may your name be?"

"No, no, no! My dear pupil, Tom Merry! Where is he?"

"My goodness gracious!" gasped Mrs. Towle. "And sure to goodness you don't expect to find your Tommy in

the kitchen? Why don't you look for 'im in his study?"

"Kitchen!" ejaculated Miss Priscilla, in surprise. "Has that bad boy shown me the way to the kitchen instead of Tommy's study? Oh dear!"

"A joke of one of the young gent's, is it?" said Mrs. Towle. "Dear, dear! Well, you'd better sit down now and have a rest, ma'am!"

"No, no! I must find my Tommy!"

And the old lady rose to return to the Shell passage. But she was wearied by her long walk from the station and along the passages of St. Jim's, and sank down helplessly on the chair which Mrs. Towle pushed forward for her.

"I'll send Toby, the page, for Master Merry, ma'am," she said. "You just make yourself comfortable like here."

And Miss Priscilla sat down and listened to the chatter of the voluble Mrs. Towle, till Tom Merry should arrive.

Little did Racke know what would come of his thoughtless jape! But a great adventure was to spring from it before Miss Priscilla left St. Jim's.

Meanwhile, Racke was relating his practical joke on Tom Merry's old governess to a crowd of juniors in the Common-room.

"And the way she took it all in," he said, "was wonderful!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Mellish and Crooke and Scrope all together.

"All I can say," growled Grundy, "is that it's a mean, dirty sort of trick to play on a poor old lady! If she was my old governess, I'd give you a jolly good hiding, Racke!"

"Bah!" said Racke.

But he looked uncomfortable. He began to realise that he might have a bad time of it if Tom Merry discovered his jape.

"Are you saying 'bah' to me, Racke?" asked Grundy truculently.

"N-no!" stammered Racke.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Wilkins. "He's only saying 'bah' because he's a black sheep, isn't that so, Racke?"

"Oh, hang you and your jokes!" growled Racke huffily, as he walked away.

He had no objection to playing tricks at other people's expense, but he did not like any jokes levelled at him.

"Racke seems quite put out!" said Wilkins. "Did I say anything to put him out, Crooke?"

But Crooke did not reply. He followed Racke out of the room, and Mellish and Scrope followed him.

"All the black sheep going out in a flock!" remarked Gunn. "Aren't you going to join them, Baggy?"

Baggy Trimble looked offended.

"Oh, really, Gunn!" protested the fat Fourth-Former. "I'm not a black sheep, you know!"

"No; you're a pasty-faced ass!" said the plain-spoken Grundy. "All the same, you'd hang on to Racke & Co. if they only stood you enough feeds!"

"Look here, Grundy," said Baggy, getting cross, "you needn't talk! You felt rather small when the old girl called you 'little boy,' didn't you?"

How the fat sneek had learned of this Grundy did not know. He had not noticed Baggy at the bottom of the stairs whilst he was talking to Miss Priscilla.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the juniors.

And 'child' she called him, and—

But Baggy had no time to proceed.

With a roar of rage Grundy was about to fling himself at the fat Fourth-Former, but Baggy was too quick, and fled from the room. After him dashed Grundy in full pursuit, leaving the rest of the juniors convulsed with laughter.

The idea of Grundy's being treated like a little child was really too great!

CHAPTER 2.

A Surprise for Tom Merry.

HAVE been thinkin', dear boys, that—

"What!" gasped Blake, in horror. "You'll be getting brain-fever, Gussy!"

"Don't wot, dear boy—I mean, you wotah! My ideal is that we should help Tom Mewwy to entahtain Miss Priscilla—"

"Miss Priscilla! Is she here?"

"Yana, wathah! I saw her when she awwixed."

"Where is she now then?" asked Blake, in surprise.

"In Tom Mewwy's study, I pwe-sume."

"Why didn't you say so before, ass? It's our duty to welcome her to St. Jim's in return for the fine time she gave us at Huckleberry Heath."

"Weally, dear boys—"

"Oh, don't talk, Gussy!" said Blake. "Study No. 6 isn't going to be left out of any celebration in honour of Miss Priscilla!"

"Hear, hear!" said Herries and Digby together.

"Nor the New House Co.," said Figgins. "You can bet on that!"

"Rather!" said Fatty Wynn.

And Kerr nodded his head silently.

Blake & Co. were to have played a footer eleven that afternoon captained by Figgins of the New House; but the latter had appeared on the field with the news that half his team was in the samny with flu. Therefore, the match was cancelled for the time being.

The juniors were apparently unanimous in their desire to participate in any welcome given to Miss Priscilla. Fawcett.

It was no merely the idea of having a free feed that attracted them, but they were really fond of Tom Merry's old governess, in spite of her peculiar ways.

"Weally, dear boys, then the soonah we join Tom Mewwy the bettah."

"Lead on, Macduff!" said Blake.

And the seven juniors marched off towards Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Monty Lowther, as the procession filed into the study, where he was playing chess with Manners, whilst Tom Merry was an interested onlooker. "What's this? An invasion?"

"Invasion?" queried Manners blankly.

"I'm defending, not attacking, Monty."

"I'm not talking about the chess now, idiot! If you'd raise your head you'd see that seven of the most particular shining lights of that fag Form known as the Fourth have done themselves the honour—"

There was a sudden interruption, as the door opened violently and Baggy Trimble entered, pursued by the enraged George Alfred Grundy.

"Save me, Merry!" panted the porpoise of the School House. "Grundy is trying to murder me!"

And indeed the great George Alfred looked ferocious enough for anything.

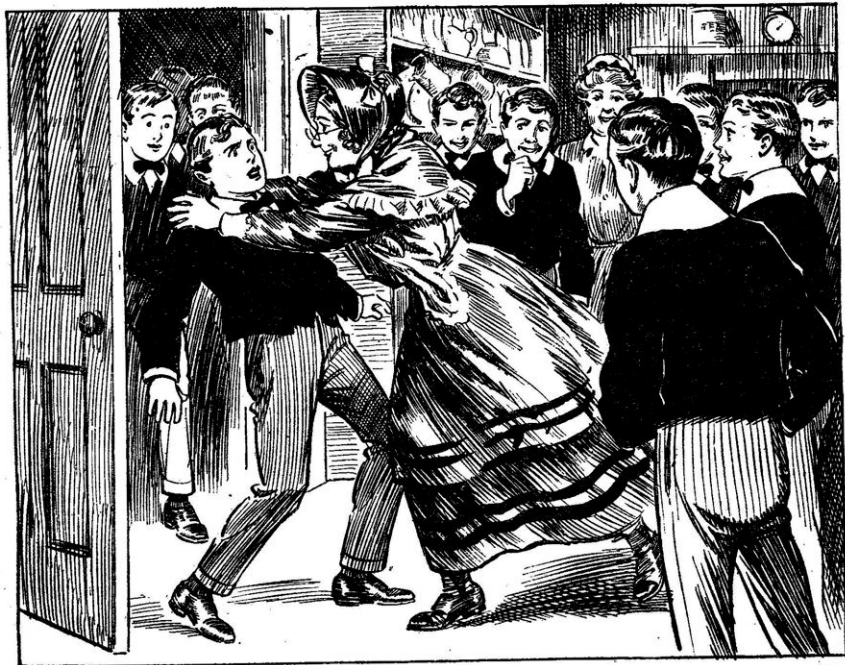
"You fat worm!" shrieked Grundy.

"Look here, Grundy," interjected Tom Merry, "whatever Baggy may have done, I object to having this study turned into a slaughter-house!"

"The sneaking rotter!" ejaculated Grundy.

And Grundy advanced towards the trembling Baggy.

"Oh, really, Grundy!" protested Baggy, as he got behind the crowd of juniors in the study. "I haven't done nothing!"



Before Tom Merry could resist, Miss Priscilla had taken him to her arms and was fondling him as if he were a little child. The other juniors could hardly restrain their laughter. "Is she going to do the same to all of us, I wonder?" whispered Figgins. (See Chapter 3.)

"Evidently means he hasn't done anything," murmured Monty Lowther. "Baggy's English is weird and peculiar."

"Done nothing!" howled George Alfred. "Haven't you made me the laughing-stock of the whole Common-room?"

"Oh, if that's all," said Tom Merry, "it isn't much! You've been that long ago!"

"Look here, Tom Merry——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tell us what you really did, Baggy!" grinned Kerr.

"Oh, nothing! I didn't even say that Miss Priscilla called Grundy a 'child' and a 'little boy.' How should I know anything about it?"

Baggy's lies were generally so clumsy that he let out the truth unintentionally.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the juniors.

"Is my governess here?" asked Tom Merry, in surprise. "Where is she, then?"

"That's what we came to tell you about, dear boy!" said Gussy. "We thought she was in your study, and we wanted to share in the welcome to her."

"He, he, he!" laughed Baggy. "Then Racke's story was true! He, he, he!"

"Shut up, Baggy, unless you want to go out on your neck!" said Tom Merry. "What are you burbling about?"

"Oh, really, Merry, how can I shut up and tell you at the same time——"

"It's like this, Merry," interjected

Grundy. "Racke found Miss Priscilla, that mad old——"

"Take care, Grundy!" said Tom Merry warningly. "I don't stand such expressions about my governess!"

"Oh, all right!" said Grundy. "No offence meant. But it's true, all the same! She called me a 'child' and a 'little boy.' Me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. The expression on Grundy's face was really too comical.

"Go on, Grundy!" said Tom Merry. "What was that you were saying about Racke?"

"He showed her to the scullery, because he thought she was a servant!" chuckled Baggy. "He, he, he!"

Tom Merry grasped the fat Fourth-Former and threw him bodily across to Grundy.

"Take him and do with him what you like!" he said.

Grundy caught Trimble in his arms, and tucked him away under his armpit as if he were carrying a parcel.

"Wow! Yaroooh!" howled Trimble. "What are you doing, Grundy, you rotter?"

"What are you going to do with the fat tulip?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Take him away to be spanked!" said Grundy, as he walked away with Baggy still under his arm.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the juniors.

But Tom Merry was looking grave.

"Let's get along and find Miss Priscilla!" he said sharply.

"Right-ho!" chorused the assembled juniors. "Lead the way!"

CHAPTER 3.

Miss Priscilla's Resolution.

"IS that you, Miss Fawcett? Well, I never!"

Such was the remark made by the School House dame, Mrs. Mimms, as she caught sight of Tom Merry's old governess sitting in the kitchen, chatting to Mrs. Towle.

Miss Priscilla Fawcett rose hastily.

"My dear Mrs. Mimms, I don't want to intrude. I've come here quite by accident."

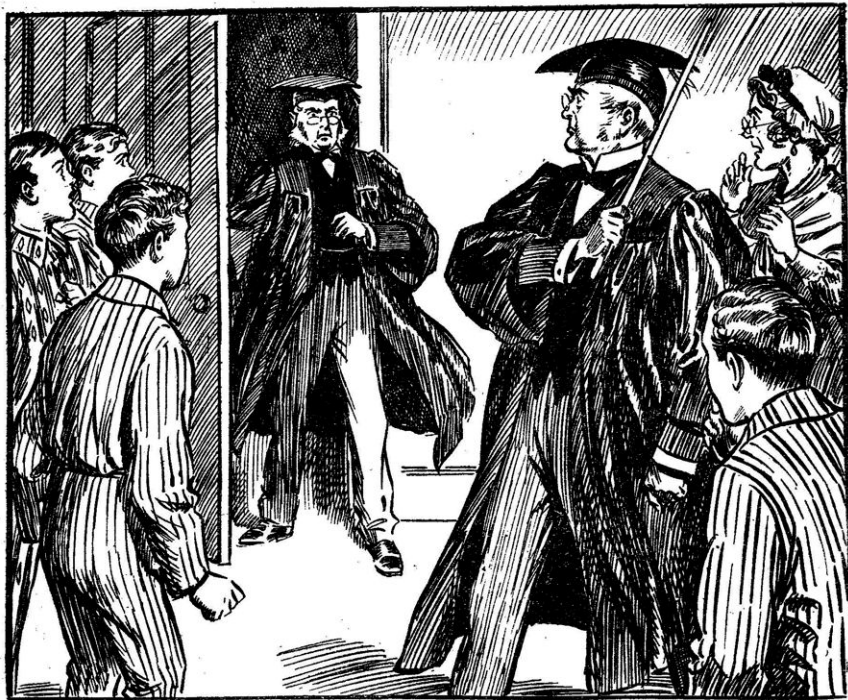
And she related briefly the trick that Racke had played on her.

"Naughty boys!" said Mrs. Mimms severely. "I'll speak to the 'Ead about it!"

"Oh no! You really mustn't do that, Mrs. Mimms! I have already forgiven them. Mrs. Towle here has been telling me about all her troubles, and it has been very interesting."

"Troubles!" said Mrs. Mimms contemptuously. "Talk about troubles! If you had my worries, Mrs. Towle, you wouldn't talk!"

Mrs. Towle wisely made no reply. It wouldn't pay her to bandy words with



Just as the Head lifted up his cane to administer the first cut, the door of the dormitory flew open, and a figure entered. "Stop!" the newcomer shouted. "Stop!" The Head turned quickly and gave a gasp of surprise. For there in front of him stood a figure exactly like his own. (See Chapter 6.)

The Head thought that Miss Fawcett would not feel like that when she had been at the school some time, but he did not say so.

"Very well, then, Miss Priscilla," he said. "I only give my consent because I feel I cannot keep Mrs. Mimms from her mother any longer. I shall ask her to make her visit as speedy as possible."

Mrs. Mimms departed on the following afternoon, and Miss Priscilla immediately took up her new position.

It was Baggy Trimble's cackle that echoed in the Common-room.

"Got the whooping-cough?" asked Gunn, in feigned concern. "I'd go to sanny, if I were you, Baggy!"

"Really, Gunn! I've got some most important information!"

"Out with it!" said Racke.

"Right-ho!" said Wilkins and Gunn; and the two juniors began shoving Baggy out of the Common-room.

"Whatcher doing?" gasped the fat junior.

"Don't blame us," said Wilkins innocently. "Racke told us to do it."

"Me?" said Racke, in surprise.

"Yes. Didn't you say 'out with it,' Racke?"

"Rats! I was referring to Baggy's information."

"We don't want to hear his lies!" said Grundy contemptuously.

"Oh, really, Grundy—"

"Don't talk to me, Baggy, or I'll give you another spanking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I know what he wants to say," said Tom Merry contemptuously. "My old governess, Miss Fawcett, is acting as temporary dame, and Baggy thinks it funny!"

The news created quite a sensation.

"Well, that's the limit!" said Racke.

"What I say is—"

"I don't care what you say," said Tom Merry quietly. "I've got something to say as well, and it is this. If anyone tries to take advantage of my governess's inexperience by playing japes on her, he'll have me to reckon with."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "And we reckon on all the decent chaps in the school to back up Tom Merry."

"Oh, of course!" sneered Crooke.

"It's all in the family!"

"I want to say this quite openly to Racke and Crooke," went on Tom Merry. "I'll keep my eyes specially open for any tricks on their part, and if there is anything like that there will be ructions."

"Here, leave me out of it," said Crooke. "I haven't done anything."

"You'd better not," said Tom Merry. "I've warned you."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying the juniors in the Common-room through his highly-polished monocle. "If any fellah

twices to jape Miss Pwiscilla, I shall give him a fearful thwashin'!"

"Look here, Merry," said Grundy, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself! Why don't you get a pension for your governess, instead of letting her work for her living at her time of life?"

Tom Merry was too proud to explain, but Blake speedily made the situation clear.

"Miss Fawcett is just doing it to get our dame a few days' leave," he concluded.

"Oh, that's different!" said Grundy. "Still, I'm not going to stand any patent medicines, or other fancy tricks, that Miss Fawcett may want to try on me!"

"Nor I!" said Gore determinedly.

"Nor I, faith!" said Mulvaney minor.

"Sure, an' if the old dame tries to coddle me, there'll be the dickens to pay!"

And the sentiment was echoed on all sides.

Tom Merry hoped that all would go smoothly, but trouble began that very afternoon.

Passing the Third Form class-room, Miss Priscilla heard shrieks proceeding from within.

She quickly threw open the door and entered.

A very commonplace sight met her eyes. Mr. Selby, the Third Form master, was detaining his pupils after school hours for some breach of discipline, and

he was in the act of caning Manners minor as Miss Fawcett entered.

"You cruel man!" exclaimed Miss Priscilla, as she hastily advanced towards Mr. Selby and snatched the cane out of his hand.

Mr. Selby was thunderstruck, but his pupils cheered loudly.

"Murah!" howled D'Arcy minor. "Go for him, ma'am!"

"Slog him!" yelled Jameson.

In the excitement of the moment the boys were forgetting their customary awe of their Form-master.

But their yells only excited Mr. Selby more.

"Woman!" he shrieked. "How dare you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall dare to speak my mind!" said Miss Priscilla boldly. "Has the cruel man hurt you, my poor boy?"

Manners minor winked at the rest.

"So sore, ma'am!" he said, in a whining voice. "He hit me right here!"

And he pointed to a spot on the palm of his right hand.

"My poor boy!" said Miss Priscilla, as she rubbed the place that Manners had indicated very tenderly. "Never mind! It will be over soon!"

"Boo-hoo-hoo!" wept Manners minor, still winking at his Form mates.

"What a nasty, cruel man!" said Miss Priscilla.

"Woman, when will this nonsense, this madness, this lunacy cease?" yelled Mr. Selby, almost dancing with rage.

"You are not fit to have boys in your care, sir!" said Miss Priscilla severely. "You are a monster!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Selby is gettin' it!" said Joe Fraigne, in great delight.

"Rather!" said Wally D'Arcy. "Serve the old bounder right!"

Mr. Selby could hardly speak for rage.

"Go!" he stuttered at last, pointing to the door.

But Miss Priscilla stood quite firm.

"I cannot leave the poor boys in your care, sir," she said. "You—"

But that was enough for Mr. Selby. He laid his hands on Miss Priscilla's shoulders, and began pushing her towards the door.

"Here! Stop that!" yelled D'Arcy minor, rushing forward. "She's a lady, sir!"

Mr. Selby turned furiously, and gave Wally D'Arcy a staggering blow.

That was the signal for a Third Form rebellion.

All together, with the single exception of Piggett, the fags threw themselves on their Form-master.

At that Miss Priscilla turned.

"My boys," she said, "think what you are doing, I beg you! Do not assault this man!"

"All right, ma'am!" said Wally cheerfully. "In for a penny, in for a pound!"

And the struggle went on.

The noise attracted Mr. Railton, the Housemaster.

He stared at the scene in amazement.

"What does this mean?" he asked drily.

At the sound of his voice the fags immediately released Mr. Selby.

"This woman," stuttered Mr. Selby, "this female—"

"I suppose you mean Miss Fawcett?" said Mr. Railton quietly.

"Are you backing her up against me?" asked the Third Form-master furiously.

Mr. Railton turned impatiently from him.

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"Will you please tell me what has occurred, Miss Fawcett?" he said.

"I—I—"

Miss Priscilla was evidently too excited to speak.

"Please, sir—" volunteered D'Arcy minor.

"Well?" said Mr. Railton, sharply.

"Miss Priscilla stopped Mr. Selby when he was caning Manners minor, and then he tried to shove her out of the door, and we all tried to help Miss Priscilla, sir."

"What?" gasped Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir," snapped Mr. Selby. "This—lady had the audacity to hinder me in the execution of my duty!"

"I don't consider it a teacher's duty to cane a poor little boy," said Miss Fawcett.

"Really, Miss Fawcett," said Mr. Railton, "corporal punishment is permitted by the school regulations provided it is administered in moderation."

"That is a shame!" said Miss Priscilla. "There should be no such thing."

"That is a matter of opinion, Miss Fawcett. I may agree with you personally, but that would not justify any interference with Mr. Selby in his own Form-room."

"I should think not!" snapped the Third Form-master. "The woman ought to be sacked!"

"I am afraid you have made a grave mistake, madam," said Mr. Railton, without paying any attention to Mr. Selby. "But I shall ask the Head to overlook it in view of your ignorance of school management."

"What!" gasped Mr. Selby. "Really, Mr. Railton!"

"I have no doubt, sir," said the Housemaster drily, "that matters would not have come to a crisis if you had shown any self-control."

"Sir!"

"As for the attack on you, that is indeed a grave offence. I shall administer the punishment for it personally."

"What kind of punishment, sir?" asked Miss Priscilla in concern. "You are not going to hurt the dear boys, are you?"

"That is no affair of yours, madam," said Mr. Railton. "I must ask you to depart."

"But, sir—"

"It's all right, ma'am!" sang out Wally D'Arcy. "Mr. Railton's a sport!"

"Very well, sir," said Miss Priscilla, "the boys seem to trust you!" And she took her departure.

"You silly ass!" howled Manners minor in Wally's ear. "What the dickens did you tell her to go for? Now we'll get a horrible laming!"

"Didn't want the old thing to get herself into trouble with the Head," explained D'Arcy minor.

"Silly ass!" said Manners minor. But Wally's chums understood.

Miss Priscilla never knew what punishment the Third Form received at the hands of Mr. Railton, but it was a severe one. Even Mr. Selby was satisfied.

CHAPTER 5.

Miss Priscilla's Protege.

"G" IRL to see you, ma'am!" said Toby, the page, coming into Miss Priscilla's little parlour.

Miss Priscilla was, of course, occupying Mrs. Mimms' old rooms for the time being. She was now sitting at the fireside knitting. Before her lay a

heap of socks and other garments which she intended to repair during her stay

at St. Jim's. Her Tommy and his friends would have the benefit of her help as long as she was anywhere near.

"What sort of a girl, my lad?" asked Miss Priscilla.

Toby sniffed.

"Looks like a tramp, ma'am!" he said confidentially. "You should just see 'er clothes an' 'er boots!"

Miss Priscilla shook her head at the disdainful page.

"My dear boy, it is probably not the poor girl's fault that she is not able to dress herself well. You should try not to be a snob!"

Toby's sniff increased.

"Have you got a cold, my boy?" asked the old lady in alarm. "If so, I shall make you up a nice hot dose of med—"

Toby did not wait to hear what Miss Priscilla wanted to dose him with. He dropped his snuff very suddenly.

"Shall I ask the girl to come in, ma'am?" he said quickly.

"Please do, my boy, and treat her as though she were a lady. We must not make distinctions just because she happens to be poor!"

Toby shook his head as he departed. Miss Priscilla was apparently a mad old thing.

Miss Priscilla went on with her sewing steadily. Her eyes began to ache with the strain, but she felt that she must do her duty.

"Please, ma'am!"

Miss Priscilla looked up, to find a queer little creature before her. It was a girl of about eighteen or nineteen, with an old face and a tired, weary expression. She wore clothes which were very old and shabby, and patched up in places. On her feet wore a pair of men's boots stitched up with coarse thread where they had split. On her head was a crumpled sun-bonnet.

"Do you want to see me, my girl?" asked the old lady kindly.

"Yes, ma'am, I—"

The girl stopped. She was too shy to go on.

"Sit down, my girl. Tell me, what is your name?"

Instead of answering, the girl sank down in the chair and began crying.

Miss Priscilla's heart went out to the girl. She passed her hand through the girl's hair comfortingly.

"Pull yourself together, my child! Who are you, and what do you want?"

The girl hurriedly wiped away her tears.

"I'm Sairy Bond, ma'am!" she said abruptly.

"Ah! Sarah Bond! Your parents live in Ryecolme, I suppose?"

"Ain't got no parents, ma'am." And she again burst out crying.

"An orphan, are you, my child?"

"Yes, ma'am! Both my parents died with the 'flu, they did! I've been living on what they left behind 'em, and mighty little it was. Now it's all gone, ma'am, and I can't get no work."

"Poor child!"

A sudden idea struck Miss Fawcett.

"Would you like to work for me, my girl?"

Sairy's eyes seemed to dance with pleasure.

"Wouldn't I jist, ma'am!" she managed to exclaim.

It was at that moment that a knock came at the door.

"Come in!" said Miss Priscilla.

The Head entered.

"Oh, Dr. Holmes. How nice of you to look me up!" said Miss Priscilla, as if she were welcoming him to Huckleberry Heath.

"I have come to see how you are getting on, Miss Fawcett!" said the Head.

"Very nicely, indeed, sir!" said Miss Priscilla. It was true that things had not gone altogether smoothly, but she had no desire to tell Dr. Holmes of her troubles.

"Ah! I am very glad of that! Very glad, indeed!" said the Head. And then he noticed Sarah Bond for the first time. "But who is this person?"

Sarah quickly rose as the Head noticed her.

"Won't you sit down, sir?" suggested Miss Priscilla.

"H'h, yes!" said the Head, seating himself. "But who is this girl, Miss Fawcett?"

The old lady quickly explained.

"And I am thinking of taking her on as a seamstress, to mend the children's clothes," she concluded. "Do you think you would like the work, my dear?"

"Oh, thank you so much!" said Sarah.

"Oh, ma'am, I'll work so hard—"

"Ahem!" interrupted the Head. "It seems to me we are going a bit too fast. Have you any recommendations, my girl?"

"N-no, sir. I've never worked afore. But I've done lots of stitching an' mending for my poor, dear ma afore she died."

"Indeed!" said the Head. "Then I am afraid—"

"Oh, please sir! Think of what it will mean to me—"

Then Miss Priscilla spoke up.

"I shall pay the girl out of my own salary, if you prefer it, sir!" she said.

"Madam," said the Head indignantly,

"it is not a question of expense. But I do not think we can introduce an unknown person into the school without a recommendation."

It was then that Miss Priscilla told her first lie.

"I forgot to mention, sir," she said, "that I knew this girl's parents personally. They were very respectable people."

Sarah gasped and looked gratefully at Miss Priscilla.

"Oh, that alters the case, of course!" said the Head. "Engage her by all means!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Miss Priscilla.

Sarah Bond was too overcome to say anything.

Soon after the Head departed.

As soon as he was gone Miss Priscilla rang for Toby.

"Yes, ma'am!" said the School House page, glancing contemptuously at Sarah Bond.

"Take Sarah to Nancy, the upper-housemaid," said Miss Priscilla, "and ask Nancy to lend Sarah some of her own clothes an' shoes till we can fit her out properly."

"Oh, ma'am, how kind you are!" said Sarah Bond.

But Toby developed an aggravated sniff as he led the new seamstress away. What was St. Jim's coming to?

"Dear me!" said Miss Priscilla to herself. "I must really see if there is anything seriously the matter with that boy. He seems to be suffering from a severe cold."

Meanwhile, in another part of the school, namely, in the New House, Baggy Trimble ran into Fatty Wynn on the stairs.

"Oop!"

"Whoop!"

"Yarrah!"

"You fat freak!" shouted Fatty Wynn.

"Look out where you are going!"

"Well, I like that, you Falstaff!"

growled Baggy Trimble. "You ran into

me and nearly busted me! Ow, my spine!"

"Well, what are you doing in the New House, anyway? Why don't you keep to your own dog-kennel?"

"Oh, really, I've got some important information for you, Wynn—"

"Oh, I know all about it, Baggy! I saw the tarts myself!"

"T-t-tarts! What tarts?"

"Aren't you talking about the new tarts that Dame Taggles has just got in from Wayland?"

"You never think of anything but eat-

NO. 57—MISS PRISCILLA FAWCETT.



Tom Merry's old governess. Little need be said about her here, for this week's story deals with one of her remarkable visits to St. Jim's. She has some unusual ways and some old-fashioned ideas, but she is admired and respected by all the decent fellows in the school.

ing, Fatty," said Baggy Trimble in great disgust.

"Well, I like that, you idiot! At least, I pay my own bills, which is more than you do—"

"I have no time to discuss such questions," said Baggy laughingly. "If you're willing to stand treat for the news I've got—"

"Rats! I thought that's what you wanted, you cadging rotter!" said Fatty Wynn. "You're not getting any free feeds out of me, I can tell you that!"

"Very well, then! I shan't tell you anything about Racke!"

"Who wants to know about Racke?" asked Fatty Wynn contemptuously.

"Oh, it's all right! Only when it turns out that Mellish—"

"Oh, it's Mellish now, is it? I thought it was Racke!"

"They're both in it, of course. But I don't mean to say anything about it if you ain't decent enough to—"

"So Racke and Mellish are both in it, are they?" said Fatty. "What is it they are in?"

"Rats! Think I'm going to tell you about their dressing up as the Head to frighten Miss Priscilla—oh, I say!"

Baggy interrupted himself, as he realised that he was saying too much. "It's jolly

mean of you to try and trick my in-

formation out of me like this!" And he walked off.

Round the corner Baggy met Racke with a furious expression on his face.

"You spying hound!" hissed the cad of the Shell. "If you say a word to anybody about what's going to happen to-night, I'll give you the thrashing of your life! I'll murder you!"

"Really, Racke!" protested Baggy.

"Remember!" said Racke, and walked away towards the study of his chum Clampe.

"Oh, really! Racke is a beast!" murmured Baggy. "P'raps I'd better not say anything."

But he had already said too much. Fatty Wynn, bursting with information, told Figgins and Kerr.

And Kerr chuckled hugely.

He knew a fine way of outwitting the cads of the School.

CHAPTER 6.

The Head Intervenes.

"MY darling Tommy!" It was past ten o'clock, and the fellows in the Shell dormitory were supposed to be fast asleep.

As a matter of fact, most of them were chatting and laughing. They were all surprised when Miss Priscilla suddenly entered, holding a candle.

"My dearest boy—"

"What are you doing here, auntie?" called out Tom Merry in surprise.

"I have come to see if you have taken your cod-liver oil, Tommy."

"Ha, ha, ha," yelled the Shell fellows.

Even Manners and Lowther joined in the laugh.

"Really, auntie," said Tom Merry, reddening. "I wish you would leave me alone! All that horrid stuff isn't good for a fellow!"

"Tommy!" gasped Miss Priscilla, in a shocked tone of voice. "How can you say such a thing?"

"I mean it, auntie!" said Tom Merry firmly. "I wish you wouldn't treat me like a baby!"

Miss Priscilla looked so hurt that Tom Merry was sorry for what he had said. "I—I— You know I'm fond of you, auntie," he said, "but I really don't see the use of filling myself up with all sorts of patent medicines when I'm perfectly fit and strong!"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther, and half a dozen others.

"Why, see here, ma'am!" interjected Grundy. "I never take any medicine, patent or otherwise, and I can knock you Tommy into a frazzle at boxing!"

"Oh, can you?" said Tom Merry warmly. "I'd like to see you do it!"

"Look here, Merry—" said Manners and Lowther pacifically. "You'll be frightening Miss Priscilla."

And, indeed, the old lady was looking rather disturbed.

"Oh, you bad boy!" she said, turning to Grundy. "Do you dare to confess that you assault my poor Tommy with your fists?"

"Ha, ha, ha," said Tom Merry.

"Really, auntie," said Tom Merry. "I'm quite able to look after myself! If there is any assaulting, it's all the other way."

"Oh, rather, Miss Priscilla!" said Manners. "You should see Tom Merry going for Grundy hammer and tongs!"

Miss Priscilla looked shocked.

"Are you learning to be a bad, naughty boy, Tommy?" she said.

"Only bad, naughty boys—"

At that moment there was an interruption. Without any warning, the Head of St. Jim entered.

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"Really, Miss Priscilla," he said in icy tones, "I think it is very thoughtless and reprehensible of you to disturb these boys with your ridiculous foibles at this time of night!"

"Sir, I—"

"Don't bandy words with me, madam! You do not seem to realise the fact that I am the supreme Head of St. Jim's, and you are only a menial, a servant, here!"

So surprised was Miss Priscilla at the tone which the Head adopted towards her, that she stood speechless.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Racke and Crooke and Scrope.

"I guess Miss Priscilla is getting what for!" murmured Buck Finn.

"Madam," continued the Head, "your conduct deserves the severest censure!"

"I did not mean any harm, sir!" ventured Miss Priscilla at last. "I only—"

"What you may have meant has nothing to do with the case!" said the Head sharply. "To dismiss you to-morrow is an easy matter, and a fit punishment for your colossal stupidity and—"

But that was enough, and more than enough, for Tom Merry.

"You have no right to talk to Miss Fawcett like that, sir!" he said.

Racke winked at Crooke.

"I thought the ass would interfere!" he said with a grin.

And Crooke and Scrope chuckled lungily.

"Merry!" said the Head sharply. "You are impertinent—monstrously impertinent! Get out of bed and take your punishment, boy!"

Tom Merry got out of bed and held out his hand. It was no use rebelling against the Head.

But Miss Priscilla intervened.

"No, sir!" she said. "Punish me, if you like, but do not hurt my Tommy!"

"Woman!" thundered the Head. "Get out of my way, or I shall not be responsible for my actions!"

"I refuse to—!" began Miss Priscilla.

"Very well, madam!" said the Head. "Then to-morrow I shall send a telegram recalling Mrs. Mimms, and if her mother dies in consequence of the shock of the sudden separation, the guilt will be on your head, madam!"

Miss Priscilla turned white. That was a dreadful possibility.

"I—I—" she stuttered, not knowing what to say.

At that moment Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy came into the Shell dormitory.

"But Jove, dear boys, now we've done it!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as he saw the Head.

Blake & Co. attempted hastily to withdraw. But it was too late. The Head had already noticed them.

"Boys," he thundered, "how dare you leave your dormitory at this time of the night?"

"P-p-please, sir—" stuttered Blake.

But there he stopped. He could hardly explain to Dr. Holmes that he had missed Mellish out of the Fourth Form dormitory, and come to the Shell dormitory to see whether Mellish was plotting a visit to the Black Dog or the Green Man with Racke & Co.

"Weally, sir—" "

"Well, D'Arcy?" asked the Head icily. "Have you any explanation to give?"

"I can only assuage you, sir, that our intentions were perfectly honourable. I affirm, sir, as one gentleman to another—"

"That will do, D'Arcy! You are no

gentleman. You are merely a foolish, ill-bred, conceited pop!"

"Sir—" "

"You shall all be severely punished for this lack of discipline! Merry, hold out your hand!"

"Tommy!" ventured Miss Priscilla.

"It's all right, auntie!" said Tom Merry cheerily, as he held out his hand again. "A cut or two won't hurt me!"

Just as the Head lifted up his cane to administer the first cut, the door of the dormitory flew open, and a figure entered.

"Stop!" the newcomer shouted.

"Stop!"

The Head turned quickly, and gave a gasp of surprise. For there, in front of him, stood a figure exactly like his own!

"My hat!" he murmured. "The Head!"

Racke, Crooke, and Scrope gave a scream of horror, and the other fellows broke in wonder. Two Heads of St. Jim's were facing each other.

"M-my hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "One of them's an impostor!"

"Yes. But which?" asked Manners.

That question was soon settled. The impostor had not sufficient daring to carry on his imposture in the presence of the real Head.

"What does this masquerade mean, boy?" asked the newcomer sternly, advancing towards the impostor.

The impostor attempted to flee. But the Head caught his arm and prevented him from leaving the dormitory.

Miss Priscilla was looking on in surprise and relief. So the man who had spoken and acted towards her in such a brutal manner was not the Head at all!

But who was he?

"Remove your disguise, wretched boy!" thundered the Head.

"Y-yes, sir!" stammered the impostor; and he took off his wig and moustaches, revealing Mellish of the Fourth!

"Mellish!" yelled Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther all together.

"Mellish!" rapped out the Head. "Is it you?"

"Y-yes, sir!" stammered the outwitted sneak of the Fourth.

"Dear me!" said Miss Priscilla. "How strange!"

And she was very nearly sobbing with relief.

"So that is what the boundah was doin'?" muttered Gussy. "The wotah!"

"I'll make it hot for him when I get him back in the Fourth Form dormitory!" hissed Herries.

"Looks to me as if the Head's going to make it hot enough for him!" said Blake. "Jolly lucky the old fellow turned up in the nick of time like this!"

"Yaas, watah!"

"I shall deal with you presently, wretched boy!" said the Head. "Meanwhile, madam, I must ask you to return to your own quarters."

"Certainly, sir!" said Miss Priscilla meekly.

And she left the dormitory as hastily as she could.

But before she reached her own quarters she was to meet with further and stranger adventures.

The adventures of that night were by no means at an end.

In the Shell dormitory the fellows were waiting to see what action the Head was going to take.

Mellish was pale and trembling.

Racke, Crooke, and Scrope were only less afraid than Mellish. They had all had a share in the plot, and they could not depend on Mellish not to give them away.

Nor were Blake & Co. quite easy in

their minds. The Head would want to know what had brought them there so late at night.

CHAPTER 7.

Two Heads are Better Than One.

"BOYS!" said the Head, turning to the chums of Study No. 6.

"What are you doing here?"

"You see, sir—" explained Blake cautiously.

"Weally, sir—" ventured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"It's this way, sir—" began Digby. But Herries was always straight and to the point.

"We came along to see whether Mellish was here," he said.

"Ah, I see! Quite a good reason! In fact, an excellent reason, Blake! I presume you thought it your duty to look after this wretched boy, Mellish!—and the Head gave the speak of the Fourth a withering look—"because you are the leader of his dormitory. Very good indeed!"

Blake reddened with pride. To be praised by the Head of St. Jim's was praise indeed!

"I have only admired your conduct as leader of the Fourth Form in this House, Blake," continued the Head; "and, in fact, there is only one other—er—lad, at any rate in the junior Forms, whom I might regard as definitely superior to you."

"He means you, Tommy!" whispered Monty Lowther.

"Bet you he doesn't!" said Tom Merry modestly.

And the Head's next words proved that Tom Merry was right.

"Needless to say, I am referring to George Figgins. He is a model Form-captain, in my estimation!"

"Oh!" gasped half a score of School House juniors.

That a New House fellow should be praised so highly to their disadvantage was indeed a bitter pill to swallow.

Still, Figgs was a good fellow, and very few there grudged him the Head's admiration.

"Told you so!" whispered Tom Merry.

"Silly ask!" remarked Monty Lowther contemptuously.

"Weally, sir," protested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "in my judgment Tom—" "

"I have no time to discuss the matter with you, D'Arcy! I wish now to turn to this serious conspiracy against my personality which has been perpetrated to-night."

Mellish trembled.

"Have you anything to say in your self-defence, wretched boy?" pursued the Head.

"It was only a j-j-joke, sir," stammered the sneak of the Fourth.

"Only a joke indeed!" echoed the Head. "To caricature me! Boy!"

"P-please, sir, I—I—" "

"Will you kindly stop stammering and come to the point?" asked the Head, with mock politeness.

"Y-y-yes, sir! I—I—" "

The Head said that he must give Mellish some assistance if he was to get anything out of the trembling junior.

"You are too utterly stupid to have thought out such a scheme by yourself, boy!" he said. "Who are your confederates?"

Racke, Crooke, and Scrope clenched their fists in fear.

"He's sure to sneak!" murmured Racke.

"This is how all your precious schemes end, Racke!" said Crooke viciously.



"I propose the toast of Bagley Trimble—that's me!" concluded the fat junior amid general laughter. Nevertheless, his toast was drunk. Baggy had certainly rendered valuable services, though he had done so quite unintentionally. (See Chapter 10.)

"I was a fool to let you lead me on," said Scrope.

"Bah!" replied Racke contemptuously. "You're just as much in this as me!"

"Look here, Racke—" "Shut up, fathead! If the Head hears us, it is all up!"

But the Head was still busy with Percy Mellish.

"Dear me, Mellish! Surely you are not going to refuse to give me the names of your associates?"

"N-no, sir; but—" "Should he sneak? Or should he bear the punishment for the failure of the plot himself?"

"Well, Mellish!" snapped the Head sharply.

Then Tom Merry spoke up.

"I don't think it's fair, sir, to ask Mellish to sneak on his pals. I think Mellish has behaved like a cad, sir, but—"

"Ah, Merry, you are apparently judging Mellish by yourself! I know enough about the boy to be certain that revealing the names of his friends will lie very easily on his conscience."

That remark, however, made Mellish determined not to be a sneak for once.

"I won't tell you anything, sir," he said.

The Head looked rather surprised. "In that case, Mellish, I must reveal the fact that I know who your confederates are. But your action in not

revealing their names has pleased me so much that in spite of the fact that you have taken the leading role in this plot, you shall only be punished as much as the rest. Racke, Crooke, Scrope, step forward!"

The three cads of the Shell came forward very unwillingly. But it was impossible to disobey the Head.

"Wretched boys!" said the Head. "Not only have you plotted to impersonate me, but you have been extremely rude and brutal to a lady who has unselfishly undertaken heavy duties for the sake of another."

"That was Mellish, sir!" said Crooke rebelliously.

"Do not dare bandy words with me, boy! Mellish may have been the mouthpiece of your scheme, but you are all equally responsible, and I sentence you—"

The cads waited breathlessly, and the other juniors were also extremely anxious to know what punishment the plotters were to suffer. Would the Head sentence the boys to expulsion?

Suddenly the Head changed his tone, and spoke in a voice strangely familiar to the juniors—a voice that was certainly not that of Dr. Holmes.

"I vote that we give these chaps a run of the gauntlet!" he said.

Then the Head took off his wig and moustachios, and stood revealed as Kerr of the New House.

"Kerr, you bounder!"

"Kerr, you spoofer!"

"Kerr, you gilt-edged impostor!"

Such were the remarks with which Tom Merry & Co. greeted the grinning New House fellow.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr. "Did I take you chaps in?"

"You did!" said Blake.

"You did!" said Grundy.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" chimed in Arthur Augustus. "You took us in completely!"

Even Racke and Co. looked relieved. It was better to face the Scottish New House junior than the Head.

All the same, Racke and Co. were not to get off lightly.

"Line up, chaps!" said Tom Merry sharply.

"Look here, Merry—" began Racke. "Don't talk to me, Racke. You're to be the silent victim in this act!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors lined up in two rows, with knotted towels. Each St. Jim's fellow was supposed to have a towel of his own, and it came in very useful on such occasions as these.

"Really, Merry—" objected Skimpole, the brainy man of the Shell. "I do not wish—"

"Can't help what you wish!" said Tom Merry briskly. "Take your places!"

And Skimpole meekly obeyed.

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Twenty-two Shell fellows were present, including Racke, Crooke, and Scrope. That left nineteen to administer the punishment, in addition to Blake and Co. and Kerr. The fellows lined up in two rows, with twelve in each row. Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, and Talbot stood at the head of the right-hand row, whilst Grundy, Wilkins, Gunn and Gore stood at the bottom. At the head of the left-hand row were Blake, Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, whilst Kerr, Noble, Dane and Glyn stood at the foot.

Against such an array it would be hopeless for the cads of the School House to struggle.

Four times were Racke, Crooke Scrope and Mellish made to run the gauntlet! And the blows dealt at them were by no means soft. At last Tom Merry felt that the cads had been sufficiently punished.

"Ow! Wow!" yelled Mellish.

"Shut up, ass!" hissed Racke, setting his teeth. "You'll bring the Masters on the scene!"

After that Mellish took his punishment in silence. He preferred a Form-ragging to expulsion.

"Now then, chaps!" said Tom Merry.

"I think these fellows have had enough!"

"Keep it up, Merry!" said Grundy.

"I'm just getting into the swing of it!"

"Oh, rather!" said Gore. "They haven't had nearly enough!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Let them go now!" he said.

"Quite right!" said Kerr. "Enough's as good as a feast!"

"Taas, wathah, deah boy!"

And Racke and Co. went back to their beds.

"You come along now, you cad!" said Blake to Mellish, as he piloted the cad of the Fourth out of the room.

Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were about to follow him, when a sudden shriek pierced the silence of the night.

What did it mean?

"Help! Help!"

"Bai Jove, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, who was standing near the door. "It's Miss Priscilla's voice!"

"What?" gasped Tom Merry.

And he hastily ran towards the direction from which the cry had proceeded, followed by the other juniors.

What was happening?

CHAPTER 8.

Sarah's Treachery.

A SHORT while before the events related in the last chapter a figure might have been seen stealing down the stairs and towards the large door leading into the School House. It was that of Miss Priscilla's protegee, Sarah Bond!

Sarah Bond was now dressed in the clothes which Nancy, the housemaid, had lent her. And she made little or no sound as she moved down the stairs and along the main hall with stocking feet.

When she reached the door she listened intently to hear if there was anyone near. As she heard no sound, she turned the key in the lock.

"Are you there, Bill?" she asked, in a frightened tone of voice.

"In course I am, Sairez!" said a gruff voice.

Sarah Bond drew aside to let the figure of a man with a muffer round his throat enter.

"I don't like doing it, Bill!" said Sarah. "They've been so kind to me here."

"More fools they!" laughed Bill. "You'll git used to this sort o' thing, old gal!"

And he pushed Sarah Bond roughly. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 635.

aside as he advanced towards the stairs. "Now which way is that there library of the Head's, where he keeps all his spondulicks?" he asked.

Sarah described the way to the library. In the short time that she had been at St. Jim's she had made herself thoroughly acquainted with the place.

"That's where all the gold cups and all those sort of things are," she concluded.

"All right, Sairez! Keep your pecker up!" said the man, as he made his way in the direction Sarah Bond had pointed out.

No. 58.—LESLIE OWEN.



A scholarship boy of the New House Fourth Form. A thoroughly decent and straightforward fellow, and the staunch chum of Redfern and Lawrence, with whom he shares Study No. 5. A strong supporter of Figgins, the leader of the New House. A good runner and a first-rate swimmer.

"Tick-tack! Tick-tack! Tick-tack!"

Someone was coming near them on tip-toe.

"Drat it!" murmured Bill. "That chap'll see me if I don't stow myself somewhere!"

"Git in here!" advised Sarah, pointing to Miss Priscilla's parlour, which they were passing.

"O.K., my gal!" said Bill. And he got into the room, just in time to avoid being seen by Kerr, as the Scottish junior passed in the Head's disguise on his way to the Shell dormitory.

"Who's that bloke?" whispered Bill, staring after Kerr.

"He's the boss here—the Head! It's him that all the cups an' things belong to!"

Sarah, of course, was mistaken in thinking that the cups and other treasures of St. Jim's belonged to the Head. He was merely the custodian, and they were the property of the school.

As we know, Kerr sent Miss Priscilla back to her quarters as soon as he reached the Shell dormitory.

"Jist git out! my gal," said Bill. "an' see that all's clear! I'll wait in here for you. It seems a nice, snug sort of a hole!"

"All right, Bill!" said Sarah obediently.

So it happened, that Miss Priscilla, on her way back to her rooms, met Sarah Bond.

"Dear me, child!" said the old lady. "What are you walking about for at this time of night?"

"P—please, m'm," said Sarah, "I'm so excited about gettin' work, I couldn't sleep!"

"Is that so, Sarah? Well, dear, come along to my parlour, now, and have a little chat with me!"

"Y—yes, m'm! Certainly, m'm!"

To lead Miss Priscilla back to her own parlour, straight into the clutches of Bill Parry, suited her schemes excellently. But, somehow, Sarah did not like to do it. She was by no means a hardened criminal yet, and Miss Priscilla had treated her with great kindness.

However, there was no help for it. Unless she betrayed Bill she could give Miss Priscilla no reason for not going back to her rooms.

"Dear me, Sarah!" said Miss Priscilla, as she took the girl's hand. "How cold you are! And how you tremble! Is there anything the matter with you?"

"No, m'm!" said Sarah Bond, as she followed Miss Priscilla back to the parlour.

"M'm!" she said suddenly, pointing to the stairs. "Can you see anything up there?"

"Where?" asked Miss Priscilla, looking in the direction Sarah was pointing out. "I cannot!"

But it had been merely a trick on Sarah's part to make Miss Priscilla turn her back on the parlour. The next moment Bill was holding a gag to the old lady's mouth.

Though she was completely taken by surprise, Miss Priscilla tried to resist. But it was useless.

"Don't be rough on her, Bill!" pleaded Sarah. "She's a good old thing!"

"All right, my gal!" said Bill, as he deposited Miss Priscilla in the corner of the room, bound and gagged. "I ain't doin' nothin' to her."

"Show me the way now, Sairez!" he continued.

Sarah continued her march towards the library. Bill followed her as silently as a mouse. But suddenly there was another interruption.

"Xaroooh!"

Bill started.

"What's that noise?" he asked. "Somethin' goin' on in the boys' bedroom," said Sarah.

And she was right. It was Mellish shrieking, as Grundy dealt him a particularly hearty smack with his knotted towel.

"Draught youngsters!" growled Bill. "I hope, I ain't comin' across any of 'em to-night!"

And he followed Sarah further on the way to the library. This time no interruption occurred.

"Crikey, Sairez!" said Bill, as he gathered the treasures together. "But this is a fine haul, an' no mistake!"

"Look here, Bill," said Sarah, "you promised me as you would never crack another crib arter this."

"An' I'll keep my word, too, Sairez!" said Bill. "We'll go to Australia, an' settle down on what we get for this little lot, eh, me girl?"

And nothing else was spoken between the pair as they gathered up the valuables. Sarah was promising herself to lead an honest life in future, and Bill was wondering how much he would get for his booty.

Meanwhile, Miss Priscilla was doing her best to get rid of the gag.

Unpleasant thoughts chased each other through the old lady's head. It was she who had insisted on taking Sarah Bond into the school, and if anything happened to the school property it would be her fault.

Miss Priscilla had overheard enough to be certain that the man who had gagged her was a burglar.

For a time she tried in vain to loosen either her gag or her bounds. Bill was no novice, and he had tied the old lady up securely.

At last she managed to get one hand free. That was enough. She removed the gag.

"Help!" she shrieked. "Help!"

We know that Tom Merry & Co. heard the shout in the Shell dormitory. The rest of the School House heard it, too, and hurried to the scene.

Bill, in the library, also heard it, and trembled. Sarah turned paler even than she naturally was.

"Hang it!" murmured Bill. "The game's up!"

"No, Bill!" said Sarah quickly. "That's the fire-escape."

And she pointed to the ladder leading up to the library window.

Without a word Bill took the sack full of valuables on his shoulders, and threw open the window. Fortunately for him, it was a dark night.

Quickly he descended the ladder, followed by Sarah. Across the quadrangle he fled, in the direction of the school wall.

Meanwhile, the juniors and seniors and masters of St. Jim's were thronging the passages towards Miss Priscilla's parlour. "Yes, Wally, D'Arcy, and his chums were there. They might be young, but they were as brave as the bravest."

Only Racke & Co. remained shivering in bed.

But when the crowd reached Miss Priscilla's parlour they found that the old lady had fainted.

Bill and Sarah, speeding across the dark and silent quadrangle, thought that they were perfectly safe.

But they were ignorant of one very important circumstance.

They did not know that Figgins and Fatty Wynn were coming across the quadrangle, on their way from the New House to the School House to discover how Kerr's little plan had worked.

The New House had not heard Miss Priscilla's shrieks; but when Figgins and Fatty bumped into Bill they suspected that something had gone wrong.

"Drat it!" hissed Bill. "Get out of my way, or I'll smash you, you young rips!"

"Go for him!" shouted Figgins, as he hurled himself at the burglar.

And Fatty Wynn helped to hold on to Bill till help should arrive.

Sarah, meanwhile, jumped over the school wall and took to her heels.

She had decided to escape whilst she could.

Help was not long in coming.

Tom Merry & Co. were searching the quadrangle for signs of the people who had tied up Miss Priscilla.

"Here!" shouted Figgins. "Here he is!"

"Coming, Figgys!" yelled Tom Merry, as he hurried to the spot.

After that, Bill saw that resistance was useless. He had to own himself captured.

CHAPTER 9.

The Day After.

"HOW are you feeling, auntie?"

"Much better, thank you, Tommy dear! I am so glad to hear that horrid man has been captured."

Tom Merry smiled. It was not often

that Miss Priscilla showed herself revengeful.

Tom Merry and his chums were visiting Miss Priscilla in her parlour after morning lessons on the day following the burglary.

"What puzzles me," said Kerr, "is how the burglar got in."

Miss Priscilla looked away. She had omitted Sarah's name from her account of the night's adventures. She did not know why she had done so, but some instinct prompted her.

"Yas, wathah, madam!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's vewy funny!"

Miss Priscilla hastily changed the subject.

"So you were pretending to be the Head last night!" she said, turning to Kerr. "You naughty boy!"

Kerr grinned.

"Well, it all turned out to be for the best, Miss Priscilla," he said. "And the best of it is that the Head has given us a half-holiday this afternoon!"

"Oh, good!" said Tom Merry. "Then we shall be able to play a House match."

"Afraid we can't have you in the team this afternoon, Tommy!" grinned Blake.

Tom Merry looked warlike.

"Why not, Blake?" he asked.

"This match is going to be Fourth Form versus Fourth Form," said Blake obstinately.

"And we don't want you old Shell-fish in the team at all," said Herries.

"We've got enough good men without!"

"Modesty, thy name is Herries!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"You'll see!" said Herries.

"Yas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Whom are you playing?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

The match might be one between Fourth-Formers only, but Tom Merry was anxious for the honour of the House.

"The best men I've got, of course," said Blake. "Levison, Clive, Roynance, Broke, Julian, Lumley-Lumley, Cardew, and us four."

"And whom are you playing, Figgys?"

"The usual New House team, with Thompson of the Shell left out."

"Phew! Your tail will wag very feebly, Figgys!" grinned Blake.

"Rats! I bet you're beaten to a frazzle!"

"Dear me!" said Miss Priscilla. "I hope you boys are not going to beat each other!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Tom Merry. "That's only a way of speaking, auntie!"

"Yas, wathah, Miss Priscilla!"

"Very well, Tommy! Then you must take me to the playing-fields and explain to me what the game means."

"All right, auntie! I'll do that with pleasure."

"And we'll come along, too, Miss Priscilla!" said Manners. "We'll be pleased to explain to you!"

"Oh, rather!" grinned Monty Lowther, who thought of all the funny ideas about the game that he could put into Miss Priscilla's head.

At that moment Toby appeared.

"Here, madam," he said, "that Sarah girl is here, an' wants to speak to you!"

Miss Priscilla started. She had not expected this.

But she quickly recovered herself.

"Tell her to come in here," she said. Tom Merry rose hastily as Toby departed.

"Well, we'll see you later auntie!" he said. "We mustn't interfere with your work."

"Wathah not, Miss Priscilla!"

"Yes, Tommy dear! Remember that you have promised to take me to the playing-fields!"

"Right-ho, auntie!"

"Good-afternoon, Miss Priscilla!"

And the juniors departed.

Miss Priscilla waited for Sarah Bond to appear. What would the girl say to her?

Presently the girl appeared. She was dressed in the clothes that Nancy had lent her, but she looked paler and more weary than on the previous day.

She had had a sleepless night.

"I've come to give meself up, m'm!" she said bluntly.

Miss Priscilla was surprised. She had hoped that there was good in the girl, but she had not expected such a sacrifice.

"Sit down, my girl," she said, "and tell me all about it."

Sarah sank into a chair. But she did not weep. She was feeling her troubles too deeply to express them in tears.

"It's all true what I told you yesterday 'bout me an' my parents, m'm!" she said.

"Ah! Then your mother and father died in the time of the terrible Spanish influenza, and you have been starving?"

"Yes, m'm! An' then I met Bill. A painter he was then, jus' like his name. An' we got engaged an' walked out together."

"Yes, I see."

"Well, m'm," continued the girl, "he got the sack through taking to drink, and then the trouble started. First he wouldn't tell me nothing 'bont it, but afterwards he let me into it."

"And so you helped him in his burglaries?"

"No, m'm. This was the first time he ever asked me to help him."

"I see. Well, my poor girl, what do you want me to do for you now?"

"Nothing, m'm. I've just come to beg pardon for treating you the bad way I did after you was so kind to me, an' then I'll give meself up to the p'leece."

The girl's desire to make good touched Miss Priscilla. If Sarah had come to her whining and begging even, the kind-hearted old lady would have felt pity for her. But Sarah's desire to make up for the past touched Miss Priscilla's heart.

"My dear child," she said, "we are all liable to commit errors. You are not a hardened sinner, and prison-life would only spoil you. I should certainly not advise you to give yourself up, unless you think that Bill Painter will give you away in any case."

"No, he won't do that, m'm! But I want—"

"Yes, yes, my dear. But take my advice, and work out your salvation without resort to prison. I am willing to keep you on in my service if you wish."

Sarah Bond rose in surprise.

"M'm," she said, "you are an angel!"

"Sit down, Sarah. I am nothing like an angel. I am only a human being, and I understand the hearts of my fellow-creatures."

"Then I can stay on, m'm here at the school?"

"No. If you stayed on at the school, I should feel it my duty to tell Dr. Holmes everything, and perhaps it is better that I should not do that. I shall take you back with me to Huckleberry Heath. Hannah, my housekeeper, is getting very weak and aged, and you will be splendid help for her!"

"M'm, I can't say how I thank you and—"

"Don't try to tell me, Sarah. I don't want words. I want actions. Prove to me by your future life that you are worth the confidence which I have placed in you."

Then Miss Priscilla went out of the room to attend to her duties.

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Sarah Bond remained in Miss Priscilla's parlour sewing busily.

She was thinking hard, and she made up her mind to lead an honest life in future, and try to be as good and kind as Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

And as long as she belonged to the household of Tom Merry's old governess there was every possibility that she would succeed.

CHAPTER 10.

Miss Priscilla Departs.

THE match between School House Fourth and New House Fourth was an exciting one.

In the first half the advantage was all with the New House. Fatty Wynn was the shining light of his side, and helped the team out of difficulties continually.

In the second half of the game the advantage was with the School House owing to the remarkably fine play of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn held their own fairly well, with the result that the contest ended in a draw.

"Now for the victory feed that Fatty wanted to celebrate three days ago!" grinned Kerr.

"Oh, rather!" said Fatty. "Hand out the cash, Figgins!"

"Can't be did!" grinned the New House leader.

"Why not?" asked Fatty Wynn, in great surprise.

"Because there hasn't been any victory, duffer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"N't been any victory? Oh, really, Figgins?"

"Well, has there?"

"And he winked at the post."

"Of course not!" said Blake solemnly.

"Victory feeds are off!"

Fatty Wynn looked so disappointed that the juniors burst out laughing.

"Never mind, Fatty!" said Figgins.

"We'll make it a celebration of the visit of Miss Priscilla!"

"Oh, rather!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly.

"That is very good of you, my boys!" said Miss Priscilla. "I shall be delighted!"

"B-but we've already given Miss Priscilla a treat," ventured Manners.

"That's all right!" said Blake. "You Shell-fish stood it that time. Now we Fourth-Formers are going to stand it!"

"Rather!" said Figgins.

"Besides," said Kerr, "the feed will be in honour of Miss Priscilla's gallant behaviour on the night of the burglary!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!"

And the idea of celebrating the capture of the burglar was cheered to the echo.

"Now, auntie," said Tom Merry, "what do you propose to do while these chaps are getting the feed ready?"

Miss Priscilla hesitated. At last she made up her mind.

"I should like to make some inquiries about that burglar," she said.

"You had better use the Head's telephone, auntie! Shall I come with you?"

"No, my dearest boy!" And Miss Priscilla made her way towards the Head's study.

The Head readily gave Miss Priscilla permission to use his telephone, and Miss Priscilla rang up the police-station at Rylecombe.

"How is the burglar?" she asked nervously.

"Good gracious!" said a voice at the other end. "My dear Fanny—"

"I am not Fanny!" said Miss Priscilla, in surprise.

"Then there has been some mistake,"

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said the voice at the other end, and rang off.

The old lady tried again.

This time Miss Priscilla really managed to get on to the police-station.

"Has the burg—has Bill Painter confessed?" she asked nervously.

"Of course he has!" said the constable at the other end of the phone.

"And—and what does he say?"

"Told us that he got into the school to steal the cups an' things in the library, ma'am!"

"B-but how did he get in?"

"Said he had a key to the door, ma'am."

"Cute ole rascal, he is!"

Miss Priscilla rang off and felt relieved.

Then Sarah Bond had judged rightly. The burglar did not intend to give his accomplice away.

Miss Priscilla respected the man for his silence with regard to Sarah Bond, and determined to give him a helping hand when he came out of gaol.

He might still become a worthy and honest citizen.

"Hallo, auntie!" said Tom Merry, as she returned to the juniors. "I've got some news for you!"

"News, Tommy?"

"Yes. Mrs. Mimms has come back, and says her mother is quite well again! I shall have to part from you again my darling!"

"Never mind, auntie!" said Tom Merry cheerily. "We'll all come to Huckleberry Heath one of these fine days."

"Yaas, wathah, madam!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It will be a great pleasurh, I assuah you!"

The feed was the success of the season. Tom Merry & Co., Blake & Co., Figgins & Co., and Baggy Trimble all attended it, and Miss Priscilla Fawcett was the guest of honour.

When the juniors had taken the edge off their appetites the speech-making began.

"My toast," said Tom Merry, rising, with a glass of lemon-squash in his hand, is to the guest of the evening, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, my worthy old governess, but for whose bravery the burglar would have got away scot-free."

"Hurrah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"For the last few days she has been filling the position of dame of the School House in a most satisfactory manner and—"

"Rather!"

"And I think all you fellows will agree with me in wishing her a bon voyage and a happy future!"

The toast was drunk very enthusiastically.

"Would you like to reply, Miss Priscilla?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Later on, Arthur dear," said the old lady. "I must collect my thoughts."

"Then I call on our noble friend, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!" said Blake, who was acting as Master of Ceremonies.

D'Arcy rose, with a glass of soda-water bubbling over in his hand.

"I have great pleasurh," he said, "in proposing the toast of our friends, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House."

"Hear, hear!"

"I am specially proud to do so, because they have played most prominent parts in the proceedings of last night. Kerr disguised himself as the Head, an'—"

"We know all that, old chap," said Blake. "Get on to something fresh."

"Weally Blake—"

"Go it, Gussy!" yelled the juniors.

"Figgins an' Fatty Wynn actually captured the burglar, an' secured him at their personal risk—"

"Good old Figgys!"

"Three cheers for Fatty!"

"An' have proved themselves heroes. We have just dawns with them in a House match—"

"Form match," corrected Tom Merry. "Weally, Mewwy! An' I hope that next time we shall beat them—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I am proud to call them friends an' members of the Fourth Form of this school."

"Rather!"

"So say all of us!"

"If there are no more toasts to be proposed," said Blake, "shall—"

"Hold on," said Baggy Trimble, who had hitherto been too busy eating to take any notice of the speech-making. "You have for forgotten a very important toast."

"Have I, Baggy? Well, go ahead, then!"

Baggy Trimble rose, with ginger-pop streaming over in the cup.

"I am a very modest fellow—," he began.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I really think it is due to my dignity to mention the important service which I rendered to Miss Priscilla by discovering Racke's scheme—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!"

"Isn't he shy?"

"I think I have often been overlooked in footer and so on—"

"Get on with the washing, Baggy!" said Blake sharply.

"He never does any," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Really, Blake—"

"Finish up, or sit down, Baggy."

"All right, Blake. Don't hustle me!"

"Br!"

"So I propose the toast of Baggy Trimble—that's me!" concluded the fat junior, amid general laughter.

Nevertheless, his toast was drunk. Baggy had certainly rendered valuable services, though he had done so quite unintentionally.

"Now, auntie," said Tom Merry, "it's your turn!"

Miss Priscilla Fawcett rose, beaming.

"My dear children—" she began.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Herries and Digby simultaneously; but a look from Jack Blake checked them.

"I am not going to propose any toasts, but I wish, first of all, to thank you all for this nice entertainment—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And also to express my gratitude for the way you have supported me against naughtiness and mischievous boys during my residence."

"Ba Jore!" whispered Arthur Augustus.

"I also wish to say a word of advice to all of you," continued the old lady.

"Phew!" whistled Figgins softly.

"Now we're going to get it!"

"And it is this. Never judge people harshly; and if they make a mistake, give them another chance."

The juniors wondered what Miss Priscilla was referring to. But she was thinking of Sarah Bond.

The feed concluded as merrily as it had started, and then Miss Priscilla took farewell of the juniors.

When she departed, Sarah Bond went with her.

Miss Priscilla Fawcett was no longer School House dame. Her new position had come to an end.

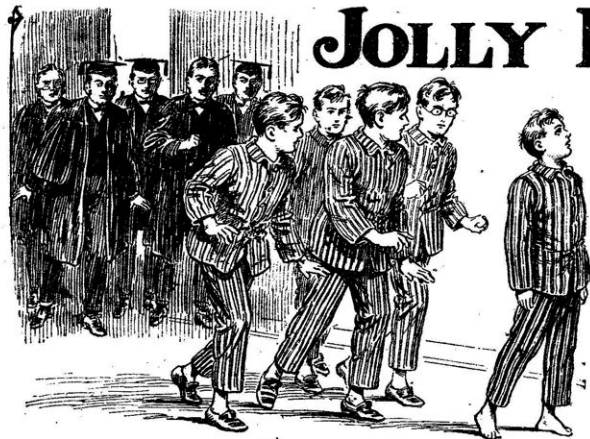
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By Michael Poole.

CHAPTER 1.

Introducing Mr. Blunt.

"IT'S—it's too rich altogether!" said Dobbin.

"It's carrying the game a bit too far!" agreed Bill Strong dolefully.

"Too rich! A bit too far!" Dicky Dexter echoed derisively. "Oh, yay giddy aunt! The man behaves like a combination of an ancient Egyptian slave-driver, a Chinese torturer, a Bolshevik gaoler, and a Prussian drill-sergeant! He robs us of our health and leisure, grinds us down, insults and threatens us, treats us like dirt, as brainless inanimate objects made solely for his amusement! It's a blazing scandal and an outrageous injustice that sooner or later—"

"We'd better be going!" Bill Strong interrupted the fierce flow and rose. "All that you say is right, kid. But what about it? Come on, Dobbie!"

It was four minutes to two, and the afternoon was as bright and joyous as a spring afternoon can be. As the trio rose they could see from their study window the football field in the distance, and odd groups gathering for play.

The afternoons at St. Katherine's were free and unfettered; a fellow could do just what he liked between two and five o'clock.

But not the Form known as the Transits! Mr. Roger Blunt, the new master of the Dump, as the Trans was generally known, had other ideas.

It was only a short week since the school had re-assembled. St. Katie's is rather different in some ways from the average school.

The parents of most of Katie's boys are overseas. Dexter, Strong, and Dobbin had been of Mr. Samuel Steed's party on a holiday-trip through Scotland for nearly two months, and Sammy was a real sportsman, especially away from the school.

They came back full of hope for the new term, but Sammy was no longer master of the Transits. He was taking the Fifth, and in his place had come a new man—Mr. Roger Blunt. On the very first day he had made his position and his ambitions quite clear. He had

come to reform the Transits—and the members of the Dump had smiled!

The Transits, you understand, was a special Form, a sort of stepping-stone between the Fourth and the Fifth. But not everyone passed through it on their way up the school.

It gathered in the oddments. The bright youth who showed a tendency to avoid work and was too young for the Fifth, but could slack in the Fourth; the big fellow who ought to be in the Fifth, but wasn't good enough; or the boy who was brilliant in some subjects and weak in others; all found their way to the Dump.

For the past term or so the Transits, under Sammy Steed, a very clever but very trusting master, had been the happiest Form in the school. In one short week of this term it had become a hard, cruel prison-house for slaves and swots.

All of which was due to Jolly Roger. This morning, for instance, he had been disappointed with their performance in geography and French grammar. As a result he had broken all traditions and all decent bounds by ordaining that the whole Form should gather for two hours work this afternoon.

At one minute to two every Dumper was in the corridor outside the Form-room. It was no use showing their feelings by coming late. Roger had already broken them of that habit.

At two o'clock precisely Mr. Blunt appeared and opened the door. He looked the happiest man on earth.

But then he always did. He had the figure and carriage of a guardsman, and his face looked as though it had just been scrubbed. A short, close-cut, reddish moustache, very neatly-trimmed hair, perfectly-fitting clothes, which his gown did not hide, all combined to make Mr. Roger Blunt a fine specimen of a man.

He walked and talked and smiled in a way which suggested that he was full of vim and energy and bubbling over with joy and good-nature.

"Now, gentlemen!" Roger always began in that way, and banged the desk with a pointer. He seemed to enjoy the shock of the noise. "We have two solid hours before us, and in that time we shall

accomplish much useful work. Some of you don't seem to understand how geography should be studied. Your knowledge is lamentable. I will explain the system you must use. Dexter, are you listening, sir?"

He snapped the last question out with sudden ferocity.

"Yes, sir! Please, sir, I was only just bending down to get—"

"Thank you, Dexter! Thank you! I asked you a question which required a simple answer. You reply truthfully. 'Yes, sir!' and that was sufficient. The truth never requires explanation, Dexter. To proceed! Let us take the list of chief exports from Italy as an example. Give that list, will you, Dobbin?"

Dobbin had been sitting back and staring at the floor. He was a very tall, slim fellow, and wore big glasses. Outwardly he looked a studious boy, just as Dicky Dexter seemed a very quiet, innocent little fellow, instead of a compact, concentrated explosive apparatus, packed with ingenuity and the spirit of adventure.

Dobbin awakened with a start from his day-dream as he heard his name called. "Stand up, Dobbin, and give us the list!" Roger rapped out.

Dobbin stood up and tried to catch Strong's whisper, but failed.

"I don't quite understand, sir," he began slowly, hoping that Mr. Blunt would repeat his question.

"You didn't hear it?" Roger suggested. "Repeat my question, Dobbin!"

"I didn't quite understand, sir," Dobbin began afresh.

"I see!" The smile on Mr. Blunt's face had become hard and set. "Very well, Dobbin, I will take you separately from four to four-thirty this afternoon. I had an engagement of my own, but I shall cancel it for your benefit. You will learn more in that half-hour, Dobbin, than you have ever learnt in any thirty minutes before!"

That's how the afternoon began. By four o'clock all but a very few had been called upon to stay for another half-hour.

By four-thirty Dexter, Strong, Dobbin, and two or three other fellows had been definitely invited to spend the whole

of the following afternoon with Mr. Blunt.

"Don't look pained about it, Dexter," Jolly Roger said cheerfully. "Why should I waste my time upon you? Only because I wish to make this Form efficient, Dexter. It is the laziest, slackest, most backward and undisciplined Form I have ever taught. By the end of this term you will have reformed. Discipline, my boy, discipline! You may spend every afternoon in school, but in the end you will gain a genuine desire for work! You may go!"

CHAPTER 2.

A Deputation to the Head.

BACK in their own study again, the trio sank wearily into chairs. Even the Kid was beyond the power of finding relief in words. The expression on his face was that of a baby robbed of its toy, but the thoughts in his mind were black and bitter and very deep.

"It's awful!" Bill Strong groaned at last. "What's going to happen, Kid? What about the footer team?"

Strong was captain of the Transitus Eleven, which last year had beaten the Sixth. More, he was the only member of Katie's First who was not in the Fifth or Sixth. As a footballer, oarsman, and allround athlete Bill Strong was a marvel.

"And what about my photographs? What's the good of trying to make a fortune this term?" Dobbin demanded, and blinked through his goggles. "Something ought to be done about it! What are we going to do, Kid?"

He looked appealingly at Dicky Dexter, and so did Strong. But the Kid was staring into space, his big blue eyes pathetically wide open, and his baby lips pursed into a solemn little line.

Just then the door opened, and in came Bunting, Barron, and Buckle, the three Bees, who were also in the Dump.

"What about it?" Bunting began. "Men to say this game, you chaps! Can't go on! What's the idea? Round-robin to Jolly Roger? No bally good! Go on strike? Could we? Deputation to the Beak? Old stunt, but sound! What about it?"

Bunting always jerked out his sentences, rather like a quick-firing gun.

"It's the limit!" Barron supported his friend.

"We've come to see you about it," added Buckle. "We ought to have a proper meeting, fix up the programme, and then go ahead, supported by the whole Form."

"Talking about Jolly Roger?" inquired Bill Strong.

"Of course! Got to act together this time! What's the Kid think?"

They turned to Dicky Dexter. Who was it tamed Sammy Steed when he tried the strict discipline act? Who was it arranged the great Sixth Spoof only last term? Who was it trespassed in Greitrex Park, and, being caught, succeeded in getting permission for anyone from the school to go there when they liked.

It was the Kid who had done these things, and many more. In the present crisis he would shine.

"What about it, Kid?" Bill Strong supported the appeal.

At normal times the Kid would have been flashing ahead by now. He would have been bubbling over with plots and plans.

To-day he was doleful and dull. Jolly Roger had crushed his youthful spirit. All that he could do was to shake his head.

"Buck up, Kid!" Strong begged him. "Something's got to be done, you know! The footer team will simply fade away if the Dump gets turned into a swot's home."

They discussed possibilities, and the more they talked about it the more they realized the injustice of it all. To appeal to Jolly Roger was useless, and the only idea which remained was to get up a deputation to the Head himself. They would point out to him that the Transitus was the football Form of the school, and that this new system of detention and overwork was undermining their reputation, their health, and their joy in life.

"We'd explain that we're really keen on working hard," Buckle said hopefully. "The Beak is a hard-hearted fellow, but he's keen on keeping fit and all that sort of thing. You and Bill Strong could do the spouting, Kid. We'd just say 'Hear, hear!' very softly. You've got the idea?"

"Wash me out," Dicky Dexter answered. "Leave me. You go ahead. Let the Beak know all about it, and see what he says! I'd be some use as a shug of that sort, wouldn't I? What did he say about me? Has intelligence above the average, but persistently refuses to exercise it wisely. No! You want old Skelton and Muford, and you'd be all right, Bill. So would Buntzy, but Dobbie oughtn't to go. Leave us out!"

They tried to argue with him, but it was useless. In the end they were impressed by his wisdom, and went ahead without him.

In accordance with the unwritten law at Katie's, the deputation went first to Mr. Blunt to explain their hopes. He smiled on them, and assured them that if they felt that way it would be best to see the Head. He had no objection, and would forward their request.

At six o'clock on the following day the deputation were outside Mr. Bird's study. At one minute past the hour he sent out word that he was ready to see them, and they filed in.

At a quarter-past six the deputation came out. Somehow, they didn't look a deputation now, but a collection of crushed oddments. One or two tried to smile feebly, but seemed incapable of speech. Big Bill Strong looked dazed, and could do no more than shake his head and wander weakly back to his own study, where Dexter and Dobbin awaited his coming.

"Well? What happened?" Dobbin demanded. "Any good, Bill?"

"Whew! Let me forget!" Strong sank into a chair and waved his hand helplessly. "What was going to happen? Was I going to make a speech, Dobbin? Did you agree that it would touch the Head on a soft spot?"

"We did," Dobbin agreed. "Jolly good stuff it was, Bill!"

"The Beak listened to me for ten seconds," Strong went on. "After that he talked. It was a wonderful speech! Never knew the Beak could talk like that! We're the most difficult, unmanageable and undisciplined Form in the school. Only his kind heart has made him endure us so long. We're a black blot on a fair white page, and Jolly Roger has been brought here to brighten us up. So far, Mr. Blunt has been overlenient with us, but he's determined to treat us kindly at first. Later on, things are going to happen, children! Horrible things!"

"But—the Beak really supports this slave-driving?" Dobbie gasped.

"Absolutely! Says it's nothing to what will happen if we don't yield

to this gentle treatment!" Bill Strong groaned. "It's all up, Dobbie! You've got to grow up into a good little swot. Me, too! And you, too, Kid!"

At that the Kid sat up and took notice. For the past hour he had been reading some extraordinary book about "Mind, Memory, and Mediums." A silly sort of book it was, but Dicky Dexter had queer tastes at times.

He pushed the book very carefully away now, and stared back at Strong. Bill realised then why a visitor on Foundation Day had called Dexter a dear, sweet little boy.

"So that's the idea, is it, Bill?" he asked. "They're going to crush us—make me into a miserable little swot? I should smile, Bill!"

CHAPTER 3.

Dicky Dexter's Plan.

IN the next few days most of the Transitus settled down to the hard facts of life.

The deputation to the Head had taken away the last vestige of hope. Jolly Roger even began to organise the football team. As a player he was great, and it turned out he was going to coach the First Eleven—when the Transitus allowed him time!

Perhaps the swiftest conversion was Dicky Dexter. He became a shining example of the Perfect Swot. The queer thing about it all was that the Kid really seemed to be afraid of Jolly Roger.

The moment he was called on in class he shot up with anxious eagerness. It puzzled Bill Strong and Dobbie, especially in an incident which occurred one free afternoon.

They were on their way to footer, and had just reached the House door when the Kid suddenly pulled Bill Strong back and began to struggle with him.

"No, I'm not coming, Strong!" he cried. "I can't! Let me go! We've got those lines to learn. I must go back! Please, Strong!"

"Don't be silly ass!" Bill Strong seized him playfully, thinking this was some new joke, and pulled the Kid down the steps.

Just at the bottom they tumbled into Mr. Blunt!

"Hullo! What's this?" Jolly Roger's first impression was of big Bill Strong bullying a little chap like Dexter. "What are you doing, Strong?"

"I'm only dragging him to footer, sir." It was the first idea that came into Bill's mind as he released his hold on Dexter.

The Kid stood against the wall, and though Strong had barely held him a moment, he was panting and gasping furiously.

"What's the matter, Dexter?" Jolly Roger was still smiling, but he was just a little puzzled.

"Please, sir, I don't want to go to football," Dexter gasped. "I haven't—learned my Shakespeare yet—Strong won't let me stay behind, sir."

Both Bill Strong and Dobbie stared in amazement at Dexter. The Kid sneaking—and almost crying about it, too!

"I think you'd better go to football, Dexter," Jolly Roger said. "You can learn the lines in preparation to-night. Still, you don't want to be too strenuous in your persuasions, Strong!"

Jolly Roger had passed on before Bill Strong really woke up. Vaguely he realised that he was being accused of bullying the Kid.

He felt that he wanted to run away and hide himself. Anyone could quite easily have pushed him over with a feather as he turned dazedly to Dicky Dexter.

The Kid was no longer gasping. He was grinning gleefully.

"You great, big bully, Strong!" he jeered. "Won't you let a little chap learn his Shakespeare! Rotten shame!"

"But—what's the idea, Kid?" Dobbie asked. Strong was still too dazed to speak.

"Come on, Bill!" Dexter linked his arm through the giant's and led him along unresisting. "You just listen to your little son talking. We're going to reform Jolly Roger! That was the first little episode, just to prepare his mind. Listen unto me, Bill, because both you and Dobbie have got to take part in this act!"

They went on towards the football field, but for once Bill Strong did not shine brilliantly. His mind would wander to Dicky Dexter's amazing scheme for reforming Jolly Roger!

To-night was the night fixed for the second episode. Dicky Dexter was quite sure that at eleven o'clock Jolly Roger would be with half-a-dozen other masters in their common-room at St. Katie's.

He was right. In a comfortable arm-chair Mr. Roger Blunt was having a pleasant chat with Mr. Samuel Steed. It was a pleasant room, and at this hour a calm and peaceful quiet hung over St. Katie's.

"You really are breaking your brain in, Blunt!" asked Mr. Steed. He still took a deep interest in the Transitus, though he himself had frankly admitted that they needed a sterner hand than his. "They'll be a very good lot presently." Mr. Blunt assured him. "I really like them very much, but they want very careful handling. The influence of some of the bigger boys—"

He broke off abruptly, and every master in the room sat suddenly upright and listened.

From somewhere just outside came a low moan. It was repeated, and every master jumped to his feet.

Mr. Blunt was the first to step to the door. The others immediately followed, and they all stepped out into the well-lighted corridor.

For an instant, each one of them was aware; the next they were doubtful. Then they became too interested to do more than watch and wait.

In the background were three or four boys in pyjamas, keeping pace slowly and sedately with the small boy just ahead of them.

There was Bunting and Strong, and Ruckle and Dobbie. But the chief character was young Dexter.

He was walking very stiffly, with arms rigid by his side. His eyes were very wide open and staring, and his mouth was also slightly open, as though in fear. As he walked he was half-moaning, half-sobbing to himself.

He came nearer and nearer the puzzled masters, and as he did so the moan changed.

"I can't—I can't remember!" he said, very slowly, and in a strange, unnatural sort of voice. "Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness. This is the state of man—this is the state of man—I can't remember! Oh!—oh! Oh!"

He was level with Mr. Blunt, but took not the slightest notice of him. He still stared fixedly ahead and began to moan again.

Mr. Blunt caught hold of Bunting, but kept his eyes on Dexter.

"What's this, Bunting? What are you doing here?" he asked, in a stern whisper.

"Please sir—Dexter!" Bunting gasped. "Walking about, reciting verbs, moaning, sir. Frightfully, awkward, sir!"

Strong says we mustn't waken him. Dangerous! We're watching him, sir!"

"Yes, yes!" Mr. Blunt spoke very quietly and released his hold on Bunting.

Dexter had stopped in his walking and had begun to recite at a terrifically rapid rate, and rather indistinctly.

"Tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms, blushing honours, comes a frost, he thinks, good, easy man—good, easy man, deasy man, deasy man—oh, I can't! What will Mr. Blunt say? What will he say?"

He put his hands to his head and turned round, so that he faced the master and his friends. Apparently he was quite unaware of their presence, and walked slowly past them, wild-eyed and staring, and still moaning and sobbing.

By now the interest in this performance had risen so high that both masters and boys followed slowly after him. Along the corridors the Kid slowly ambled, now moaning, now reciting, now rattling out lists of verbs and masses of places, or wailing that he couldn't remember, and that Mr. Blunt would be angry with him.

He reached C Dormitory at last. Almost before the crowd reached the door Dexter was in bed!

Mr. Blunt and Mr. Steed went up and bent over him, but Dexter was sound asleep, and looked a picture of sweet childhood.

"We'd better leave him," suggested Mr. Steed, and Mr. Blunt nodded.

"Get back into bed!" Jolly Roger told the others. "Keep a light on, Strong."

Within two minutes the masters had left the room, after brief whispered instructions to Strong. Not for ten minutes after they had gone did the Kid make any sign of movement. Then he sat up.

"I chortle! I jeer!" he said pleasantly. "You'd better keep awake, Bill, in case I start off again! Good-night, you chaps! We'll hear more about this in the morning!"

CHAPTER 4.

Rubbing it in.

STRANGELY enough, Mr. Blunt made no reference to the sleep-walking adventure the following morning. Everything went just as strenuously and energetically as usual.

But as the Form were leaving at the end of morning school, Jolly Roger called to Strong to remain behind.

"About last night," Roger began, as soon as they were alone. "I don't want you to talk about it, Strong!"

"No, sir," Bill managed to reply, but began to feel nervous.

"It may be that we shall have no repetition," went on Jolly Roger. "On the other hand, Strong, if young Dexter really is upset, we shall have it again. Very probably to-night, and at the same time. I know all about these cases, of course, and if it happens again it will show that Dexter has perhaps been overworking. Just watch over him, Strong, as you did last night. I shall be in the Common-room if you require me."

"Yes, sir," said Strong. "Of course, don't tell Dexter too much. He may forget all about it. But if he really has been working too hard—if the Form has been overworked—But you will watch over Dexter?"

"Yes, sir," Strong answered, and on a nod from Jolly Roger he went from the room.

Ten minutes later both the Kid and Dobbie knew all about it. They rejoiced together. Jolly Roger was frightened. And to-night—

"Just as last night," the Kid said. "You leave it to me! I've got one or

two fresh ideas. We'll have Jolly Roger crawling!"

A few minutes before eleven that night C Dormitory made ready. Five of their passed out of the room together. In a little group they crept slowly to the stairs, Dexter whispering his last instructions.

"I won't start moaning till I get near the Common-room," he told them. "Then you dash ahead, Bill, and drag Jolly Roger out. You'll be horribly frightened. But you know the game!"

They went down the stairs, but failed to observe the figure which had quietly stolen from the little room opposite C Dormitory.

Jolly Roger was still smiling as he watched them descend the stairs, and caught the faint whispers of Dexter's voice.

They went slowly along the corridors. It was the supreme confidence of the Kid which kept the courage of the others up to concert pitch.

Just before they reached the Common-room the Kid went ahead. A moment later he was moaning. The performance had begun!

But Bill Strong did not dash forward. Jolly Roger had stopped that. But, all unconscious of this interruption, Dicky Dexter had begun to recite:

"The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;

And when he thinks, good, easy man,

Full surely

His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,

And then he falls, as I do—"

A sudden chuckle on the back jerked Dexter forward; a firm grip about the neck held him quite still a moment later.

"Exactly, Dexter! Most appropriate lines!" The Kid was really gasping now. The grip simply paralysed all his artistic efforts. He made a sudden violent effort; then realised with a sense of hopelessness that it was Jolly Roger behind him.

Yet he made one last struggle, and began to moan.

"No! Stop that, Dexter! Your performance has gone quite far enough!"

There was a nasty, commanding note that chilled Dexter. When he was suddenly twisted round violently he had very little strength left in him.

A swift command had sent Strong and the others back to their room. Dicky Dexter was alone in the world!

"You can go to bed, Dexter!" said Jolly Roger at last. "I will attend to you to-morrow."

He was still full of vim, still smiling, and still the same old Jolly Roger!

Somewhere Dicky Dexter got upstairs to C Dormitory. They tried to discuss the situation, but it was hopeless. What was going to happen now? The Kid, of course, was the worst, but they were all in it.

In the morning they went to the Form-room depressed and fearful. So far as Jolly Roger was concerned, nothing might have happened last night. They went through morning school as vigorously and evenly as ever.

"I want you to stay behind, Dexter!" Jolly Roger said when the Form was dismissed. Everyone felt chilled by the horrible coldness in Jolly Roger's voice.

When the last fellow had gone, Mr. Roger Blunt looked up and smiled at Dicky Dexter standing before his desk.

"Ah, Dexter!" he began. "Just tell me all about your sleep-walking joke, will you? Who helped you?"

(Continued on page 20.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 636.

QUINTON'S HERITAGE.

Our Grand Adventure Story.

By ANTHONY THOMAS.



As Quinton approached the Karradons with his prisoner, they began to yell out and gesticulate. (See page 19.)

A White Prisoner.

JIM QUINTON admitted afterwards that the pain of that kick roused him to sudden fury. He made a desperate effort to knock all the fighting spirit out of Braester.

And suddenly he realised that he had succeeded. Braester no longer struggled, but lay still and inert.

The reaction came to Quinton then. He felt dazed and faint with the violence of the fight, and for a time could do nothing more than lie helplessly over Dillon Braester.

It was only for a brief space that this faintness held Jim Quinton in its grip. He roused himself at last, and sought for the water-bottle which should be hanging over his shoulder.

It was not there, but he found it a moment later lying quite near him. Evidently it had been torn from his shoulder during the fight.

He drank the slightly warm water gratefully, then turned to examine Braester. But the latter showed no sign of movement, and in the end Jim decided that his only course was to carry his enemy back to the village.

Slowly Jim rose to his feet and looked about him. There was no sign of Daly, or of Dick Willoughby, but some distance away he could see a great crowd of natives. Just what they were doing it was difficult to make out, but the fighting had apparently died down.

He stepped forward a little way, and almost stumbled over a body lying in the grass. The moment he looked down he recognised it, and a horrible fear came into his mind. It was his chum, Dick Willoughby!

He lay face downwards, and Jim was

READ THIS FIRST.

Jim Quinton, by the will of John Lator, his father, is to succeed to a mysterious position at Karradon, in Africa.

Jim is accompanied by Tim Daly, Erik, and Nijellah, who have come to escort him to Karradon; also his school chum, Dick Willoughby.

Eventually the party reaches Africa, also a rival party known as the Karradon Syndicate, which includes Dillon Braester, a cad of the Sixth Form at Harwood's School, Braester senior, and Cyrus Kerzon. A fellow named Flazman, head of the Syndicate, remains in England. Erik, Nijellah and Jim are captured by the rival party, and Jim, Erik, and Dick Willoughby continue on to Karradon.

An attempt to install Dillon Braester in Jim's place is frustrated by Daly, who has escaped captivity.

One day, whilst Jim and Dick are being shown round the country, the party put up at a hut in the forest. That night Kerzon and his followers appear, but they are forced to retreat.

Shortly afterwards a great battle begins between the forces of Mankura, the King, to which our friends are joined, and the Manzi warriors, during which Braester kills Jim.

by his side in a moment, and raised the body slightly. As he did so the first ghastly feeling which had come to his mind died down, and a sudden sense of relief throbbled through his veins.

Willoughby opened his eyes, dully and stupidly, but he was alive! For the moment that was enough for Quinton!

He ran back and brought his water-bottle along. The liquid had a revivifying effect on Dick, and he sat upright by himself.

"I'm sorry, Jim!" he began apologetically, as soon as his mind had begun to grasp realities again. "What's happened exactly? Where's Erik? He went off after Kerzon, I think, but I hope he's had better luck than I had! The brute caught me one over the head in the opening round, and I suppose they counted me out. My hat! But I'm feeling pretty sick about everything just now!"

He closed his eyes for a moment or two, and Jim realised that he had two of them to get back to the village now. Rising again, he looked about him in the hope of finding some help.

It appeared even quicker than he expected. Apparently from nowhere, there rose before him Erik, but he was also looking about as sorry for himself as Dick Willoughby was.

"I am sorry, Bazar!" he said, as soon as he reached Quinton. "But it was of no use. He has gone!"

"Who's gone?" Jim asked.

"Kerzon!" Erik explained. "I had to be careful—and he escaped me. But later on he may come back."

"I hope not!" Jim asserted. "I've seen quite enough of him. Anyhow, we've got one prisoner, Erik! Come and look here!"

He led him to where Dillon Braester still lay, but by now he was beginning to move.

"The fighting is finished," Erik told Jim quietly. "Some of the Manzi have escaped, but not very many. They have made many captives—but this one is the best of all now that Kerzon has gone!"

He pointed to young Braester, who was now struggling to sit up.

"We'll take him back with us," Jim said, and Erik nodded, whereupon Jim turned to Braester. "You'd better come quietly with us, Braester! I guess we're going to hang on to you as a sort of hostage in case your friends try any more of their wonderful games!"

All the spirit had gone from Dillon Braester now. He appeared too dazed to do more than carry out the instructions they gave him. Now was Dick Willoughby very much better, and his sole desire at present was to get back to some place where he could lie down for a time.

The four of them made rather a queer picture as they began to journey through the grass towards the roadway, which led directly to the village. It was indeed a queer journey altogether, for as they drew nearer the Karradon warriors they realised more fully the fierce nature of the battle which had taken place.

At every step almost they came across slain warriors, or those who had been wounded, and were now making valiant efforts to crawl back. Here and there were some of the Karradon warriors still unharmed, searching for friends, or assisting a brother warrior.

The remainder, however, were apparently forming into small companies again, and Erik pointed out that each group was guarding a smaller number of Manzi men.

Some of the Karradons recognised

Jim, and apparently also recognised his solitary prisoner. Thereupon they began to yell out and gesticulate, which, at the time, filled Jim with a certain amount of pride. He had the same sort of feeling as when he led his four from the boats after the race had been won!

Before they reached the village Tim Daly overtook them. He had been among the Karradons as the little party passed, and had been worried for a time when he found that Jim was not with them.

They explained just what happened, even to the escape of Kerzon. It seemed as though the only white prisoner who had fallen into their hands was Jim's solitary captive.

"I don't think they'll all get away!" Daly said meaningly. "And we'll attend to this fellow ourselves!"

Bracster took no notice whatever of anything that was said. He appeared utterly and completely crushed. The only time he spoke was when Daly called on two of the Karradon guards who had remained in the village to take Bracster and put him in a certain hut.

As soon as the two Karradons laid hands on him Bracster made a quick appeal to Jim.

"Quinton! Don't let these fellows take me! I'll promise faithfully. What can I do? Don't leave me with these blacks!"

Jim would doubtless have acceded to his request, but Daly insisted that his orders were to be carried out. Bracster was prisoner; he would be properly treated, but there would be no risks taken with him.

Still protesting, Bracster was taken away by his guardians to a hut quite near the king's house. Neither Quinton nor Willoughby quite cared for the scene, but they had scarcely forgotten the long account which they had against Dillon Bracster.

"Don't you worry about it, Jim!" Daly said, as they went to their own hut. "You'll have to get over as a feeling of soft-heartedness so far as that fellow is concerned! Pity we didn't get the rest of 'em, too! It would make Flaxman's blood curdle when he heard how his scheme had ended!"

Jim looked at Daly curiously. It was not often that Tim gave vent to any show of temper, but there was an unpleasant suggestion underlying his words now. Quinton had beaten Bracster, and he was quite normal enough to want his old enemy to appreciate the fact very thoroughly. After that—well, Jim expected that it would be possible to land Bracster into safety somehow! But Tim Daly's words held out a different idea.

"You don't suggest we shall make young Bracster pay for all Kerzon's wrong-doing?" Jim asked quietly. "I mean, young Bracster was only the tool of Kerzon and Bracster senior."

"We'll talk about it later, Jim," Daly said hastily, as though anxious not to discuss the question at present. "Meantime, our best plan is to get cleaned up, have a meal and a short rest, and then pay a visit to the Bazaar Malkura to congratulate him on the victory. We are very formal people out here at times. It was your father's idea, and I agree. It impresses 'em. They'll probably fix up some sort of celebration for to-night, and, anyhow, it's time you and the Bazaar had a real public ceremony together. You haven't made blood brotherhood with Malkura yet."

Jim had heard and read of blood brotherhood, but of the actual ceremony which always accompanied it he had little knowledge. The mention of it served to change the subject from the question of Dillon Bracster, though possibly if Jim had known what was in

Tim Daly's mind, he would have been less interested.

Actually, however, no celebration took place that night. The warriors themselves were tired, and there was a certain amount of work to be done. Victory had gone to the Karradons, but the aftermath of victory was not all gladness. There were a number of Karradon warriors who had paid the price for the victory, and by the light of the moon, parties of searchers went over the battlefield finding those whom they knew.

Tim Daly and Jim paid their visit to Malkura, however, and the Bazaar welcomed them. He was most anxious that the ceremony of making blood brotherhood with Bazar Quinton's son should not be delayed longer than possible.

The name of Dillon Bracster was mentioned, and Jim gathered that a proper trial was to be held of certain prisoners. Among those who had been captured was Mendijah, the great medicine-man of the Karradons, who had left them and aided the Manzi. Mendijah had not been among the fighting-men, but he and several others had been discovered before the battle ended, and had been made prisoners.

"They'll get a proper trial, Jim," Tim Daly told Quinton after they had left the king. "You have to remember what might have happened to you and to most of the Karradon tribe if Dillon Bracster and Mendijah had had their way. That's all. It will be quite fair. But we'll talk now about the big ceremony we've fixed for to-morrow night."

During the whole of the following day Jim was vaguely troubled in his mind about Dillon Bracster. He began to wish he had not let his feelings run away with him, and that he had simply let Bracster get away. Somehow, at the back of his mind there was a feeling

that this problem was going to be the most trying of all that he had yet faced.

He saw nothing of Bracster. Tim Daly told him that he was being properly looked after, but that he was being given no chance of escaping.

Dick Willoughby was practically as fit as ever again after a night's rest, and he was tremendously interested in what Tim told him about making blood brotherhood. It had been arranged that Dick himself should be one of those admitted to the tribal rites, a fact which cheered Willoughby immensely.

Jim mentioned to him about his worry over the question of Dillon Bracster, but Dick was not particularly concerned with what happened to him.

"It will give him a fright, old son," Dick laughed. "And that will do Bracster good! I suppose he'll get back to England one bright day, but I hope I don't meet him there."

Beyond that Dick refused to talk about Bracster. There were more important affairs than that. There was the big celebration of the victory, for instance.

All day both men and women were busy in the big square making preparations for the feast. Bonfires were arranged, and special seats were made for the king and his most important guests. Long before sundown the crowd had begun to gather. It was amazing where they all came from, and still more amazing how all the food had been brought here and properly apportioned.

The fires had been blazing some time when Daly, Jim Quinton and Dick Willoughby came to the great gathering. Willoughby frankly showed his excitement, and even Jim Quinton felt strangely elated.

(There will be another grand instalment of this magnificent adventure serial next week. Order your copy EARLY.)

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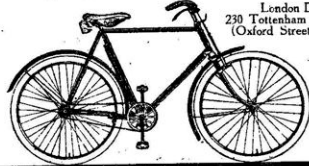


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JOLLY ROGER on the WAR-PATH!

(Continued from page 17.)

"No one, sir!" the Kid faced him quite fairly.

"Strong, Bunting, Dobbin—they urged and helped you?"

"No, sir. It was my own idea. They didn't want. It was my fault, sir. I made them help me!"

"Made them? You mean you bullied them into it?"

"Yes, sir!" If only Jolly Roger wouldn't drag in the other fellows, it wouldn't be so bad!

"You know what punishment to expect, Dexter?"

The Kid did not answer. He was afraid that if the Head were told of this "joke," it would be the end of everything.

"But you admit that you alone are to blame?"

"Yes, sir!"

"What result did you expect to achieve, Dexter?" Jolly Roger went on.

"I thought it would frighten you, sir."

You would think we were being over-worked!"

"Frighten me!" Jolly Roger stared at him fixedly. "You bully Strong and the others; you try to frighten me! I am amazed! I am positively astounded, Dexter!"

The smile had gone from Jolly Roger's face now, and he really looked amazed.

"I suppose it's no use talking to you, Dexter!" he asked suddenly, and Dexter guessed that they were getting to business now.

"No, sir!" he admitted, because it seemed the correct thing to say.

"Isn't it?" Jolly Roger snapped. "However, I'm going to talk to you, Dexter. But not very much. You know just as well as I do why the Transitus are having such a stiff time just at present. You know the one way in which they can have things much easier. You are quite old enough to appreciate the fact that your recent performances in the sleep-walking business were very clever, but they weren't quite playing the game. Think about it, Dexter! And in future I hope you will play the game!"

He nodded, and somehow the Kid managed to mutter: "Thank you, sir!" But he felt horribly small as he went out.

He wanted to go away and think it all over. He wished, somehow, that Roger had, at least, talked more about punishment. How on earth could he tell the other fellows?

They were waiting for him anxiously in the upper corridor.

"What's happened, Kid?" Everybody wanted to know the full story. Was it going to the Head?

"Nothing! Just nothing! It's a wash-out!" the Kid managed to tell them at last.

"But what about us?" Bill Strong asked. "Are we going to get it hot?"

The Kid shook his head.

"It's finished!" he said helplessly and unheroically. "There's nothing to brag about. I mean to say—Jolly Roger—makes you feel rather small, you know. About playing the game with him."

Somehow he explained. They gathered round and listened, but were puzzled and perplexed at first.

"And he isn't going to rub it in at all?" asked Dobbie. "Just going to drop it and give us a chance to play up to him?"

"That's all!" the Kid agreed. "He's a decent sort, really, is Jolly Roger." (Another of this grand new series next week.)

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