

"COCK OF THE WALK!" GRAND TALE OF TOM MERRY & CO. By MARTIN CLIFFORD

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

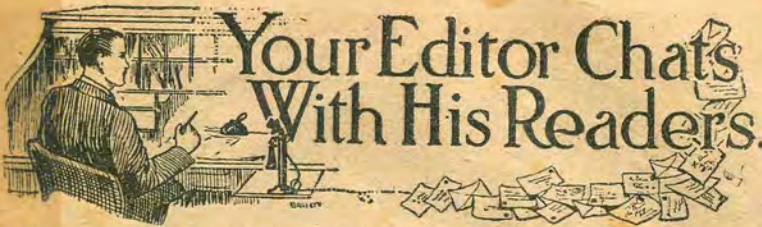
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No. 841.
Vol. XXV.
March 22nd 1924.



TWO VICTIMS FALL TO HERRIES' HEFTY DRIVE!

An Amusing Incident from the Grand Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, in this issue.



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every Monday
 "THE MAGNET" Every Monday
 "THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
 "JUNGLE JINKS" Every Thursday
 "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly

My Dear Chums,—A rousing yarn of St. Jim's is what you can always look for in the GEM, and never be disappointed by not finding the goods. The GEM school story is a feature for which the whole world waits with eagerness, and no wonder! Next week's issue of the great Wednesday weekly will contain as brilliant an example of the art of Martin Clifford as we have ever met.

"THE OTHER GRUNDY!" By Martin Clifford.

That is the tale! It shows George Alfred Grundy in the limelight, and we find the big, somewhat stupid, self-omninated fellow acting in a very strange way. He acts under impulse, as Wilkins and Gunn have good reason to know. On this occasion Grundy has special reasons for wanting a day off, and he is faced with a large-sized difficulty as to how he is to obtain his bout of freedom from the cares of the classroom. How does he bring the business off? That you will see next week. There is a touch of invigorating mystery here, but in brief, Grundy has a brother of whom next to nothing has as yet been heard. The omission is made good in the new yarn. This brother deputises for the hefty fellow with the big be/s. St. Jim's is not minus its Grundy, although George Alfred has gone off on his own affairs. The facial likeness is amazing, but there the resemblance ends, and much is the puzzlement caused by the conduct of the entirely new Grundy who has stepped into the breach.

GOOD OLD COUNTY DOWN!

Just a passing reference to a compliment to the GEM which reaches me from County Down. The writer of this eulogistic letter, says: "As I have read the GEM for almost four years I thought I would write and let you know what I think of it. It is indeed the best weekly any fellow could buy, for the school stories are of the right type, and the serial is exceedingly good. I will always recommend the GEM to all my chums." A jolly letter of this sort is downright—County Down-right—welcome!

A "MARIE RIVERS" NUMBER!

The "St. Jim's News" is booming! With each issue of the fetching little supplement the popularity of the feature increases, and this fact is bound to be more marked than ever when the next edition is in the hands of Gemites. Of course, there never was any doubt as to how St. Jim's regarded Marie. In all those splendid Talbot yarns, she has played her part with wonderful success. Monty Lowther, in his poetic moments, may call her the princess of the sanny, but Miss Rivers is worth far more than picturesque compliments. Over and over again she has shown herself to be a true-hearted pal, and her plain common sense has ere now been the saving of plenty of complicated situations. Everybody will welcome this new issue of the "St. Jim's News" with Marie in the place of honour. It is really good, and it gives honour where honour is due. Trust the editor, Tom Merry, for that!

THE TUCK HAMPER!

This popular feature of the GEM hums along in topping style. Every week I get tributes to the magnificent Hamper, and with each number of the old paper there are hearty laughs for all who read the Tuck Hamper page—and nobody is likely to miss such a good budget of rib-tickers. Send your entries on post-cards, and address them to Gough

House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. I would add this bit of advice—Don't mix up your storyettes with ordinary correspondence. Let me have your opinions on the stories, and your queries under separate cover from the storyettes. This prevents any delay in answering questions, and why should GEM readers wait?

"THE BEAD NECKLACE!" By Reginald Wray.

Dick Derwent and his brother, Hugh, are chiefly concerned in this splendid mystery yarn. It is just Reginald Wray at his best. Perhaps you will say the faithful dog, who figures also prominently, does not deserve most of the honour. Somehow, one always likes a tale with a dog attached, and the dog in this case is a real, good old, knowing sort of canine, who makes his presence felt. The plot is a close-packed affair, with plenty of thrills, and a real, top-hole mystery surrounding a priceless necklace, the possession of which is coveted by a brace of foreign rogues. They stop at nothing, but they meet their match, and just precisely where the dog comes in you will discover in good time.

"TOM OF THE AJAX!"

Our serial is nearing the end, but the final instalments go far ahead in excitement of anything as yet given, so do not miss them.

THE INVENTOR OF ST. JIM'S.

It is intensely interesting to me to note the way in which readers watch for the appearance of certain popular characters in the St. Jim's yarns. Just now there is a really big demand for more stories dealing with Bernard Glyn, the champion inventor of St. Jim's. For some reason or another, which I am not going into at the moment, Glyn has been somewhat silent of late. He may have designs on Mr. Ratcliff, and he may not, but we can be sure that he will step forward ere long with a bright and giddy surprise.

"RIVALS OF THE RACECOURSE!"

That is the title of the supremely fine racing serial which will start in a few weeks' time. I shall give some details about this peculiarly fascinating story of the sport of kings, and the king of sports next Wednesday. I have also several other matters of urgent interest to dwell on in my next Chat.

Your Editor.



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JUNO

Clarence York Tompkins is not quite so simple as he looks—as will be seen from this rollicking yarn, which tells how Arthur Augustus D'Arcy takes him in hand in an endeavour to teach him the noble art of self-defence.

COCK OF THE WALK!



CHAPTER 1.

Arthur Augustus Chips In!

"OOOOOOOOOOH!"

It was a loud and prolonged yell from Study No. 4 in the Fourth.

"Ooooooooh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, leaning elegantly in the doorway of Study No. 6, shook his noble head seriously as he heard that yell. Arthur Augustus had been addressing Blake and Herries and Dig, laying down the law on the subject of football. But he ceased as he heard the voice of Tompkins of the Fourth raised in anguish and protest.

"Weally, it's too bad!" he said.

"That's Tompkins!" said Blake casually. "Young Mulvaney ragging him again!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ooooooooh!" came from Study No. 4.

"Buzz along, Gussy, and tell him to shut up," suggested Blake. "Tompkins can't kick up that row along the passage."

"I think I will go and wemonstwater with Mulvaney!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "It is weally too bad to wag that duffah."

"Rot!" said Herries. "Why doesn't he punch Mulvaney and stop him?"

"I weally do not know, Hewwies. Pwobably the poor chap is wathah lackin' in pluck," said Arthur Augustus mildly.

Herries snorted. He hadn't much sympathy to waste upon fellows who allowed themselves to be ragged because they were rather lacking in pluck.

"Yooooooop!" came in a wild yell along the passage.

Arthur Augustus hesitated no longer.

With a frown on his noble brow he strode along the Fourth Form passage, and hurled open the door of Study No. 4.

Quite an interesting scene met his gaze.

Clarence York Tompkins, the mildest and meekest youth in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was standing on a chair in the corner of the study. Mulvaney minor, his study-mate, was sitting on a corner of the table. Beside Mulvaney, on the table, were stacked a number of missiles—boots and cushions and books and other articles. Mick Mulvaney was amusing himself by "buzzing" these articles at Tompkins, one after another.

Whenever a missile smote Tompkins he roared. And most

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BY FAMOUS

Martin Clifford.

of them smote him, for the range was short, and Mulvaney was a good shot. He had had considerable practice—on Tompkins.

Mulvaney was taking aim with a Latin dictionary when Arthur Augustus threw open the door and strode in.

The stride of Arthur Augustus carried him into the line of fire. As he interposed between the ragger and the ragged the dictionary flew.

Crash!

"Yarooooop!" roared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's sat down suddenly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mulvaney minor, and even Tompkins grinned. The sudden downfall of Arthur Augustus had its comic side.

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You feahful wuffian! Oh deah! Bai Jove!"

"Arrah, and what did you get in the way for?" demanded Mick Mulvaney. "Spoiling an illigant shot with yer thick head intirely!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, rubbing his noble head. The impact of the dictionary had raised a little lump there. It was painful, and it was very annoying.

"You young wuffian!" he gasped.

"Your own fault," said Mulvaney. "Wasn't it his own fault, Tompkins?"

"Ye-es!" faltered the hapless Tompkins. Clarence York dared not say nay to his truculent study-mate.

"Bai Jove, you are bullyin' Tompkins, Mulvaney!"

"Bullyin, is it?" exclaimed Mulvaney indignantly. "Don't you call me names, D'Arcy. It's a game, isn't it, Tompkins?"

"Ye-es."

"You like it, don't you?"

"Ye-es."

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Tompkins. "If you like it, Tompkins, you are makin' a feahful wow ovah it! You can be heard at the end of the passage, deah boy!"

"I—I—" gasped Tompkins.

"I feah, Tompkins, that you are wathah a weak-kneed funk," said Arthur Augustus sternly. "You are allowin' yourself to be wagged."

"You—you see—" stammered Tompkins. "I—I—I don't really mind, you know! It's only Mulvaney's fun."

"Wats!"

"And sure it doesn't matter whether you mind or not, does it, Tompkins dear?" grinned Mick Mulvaney.

"N-n-no."

"You see, D'Arcy," Mulvaney minor condescended to explain, "that ass Tompkins has been getting his ears up. When that fellow Pomfret was here he stood up for

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Tompkins—and sure he licked me to the wide. Thank goodness he's gone now. But Tompkins wanted to keep his ears up after Pomfret was gone, didn't you, Tompkins?"

"Oh dear!" murmured Tompkins.

"So I'm teaching him a lesson," resumed Mulvaney. "He's forgotten who's cock of the walk in this study—owing to Pomfret butting in when he was here. I'm helping him to remember. Why, you'd hardly believe it, but he's refused to wash up the tea-cups unless I lend him a hand."

"I—I—" stammered Tompkins.

"I weared that as quite weasonable, Mulvaney."

"Do ye intirely?" grinned Mulvaney. "Well, I don't. Tompkins fags in this study, you know."

"Why should Tompkins fag in this studay, Mulvaney?"

"Sure, because I can lick him with one hand, and he couldn't lick me if he had as many hands as jolly old Briareus!" grinned Mulvaney.

"Bai Jove!"

"Now, if you'll get out of the way, D'Arcy, I'll buzz this boot at him," said Mulvaney. "Bet you two to one in doughnuts that I catch him under the chin. If it lands on his nose it doesn't count."

"Weally, Mulvaney—"

Whiz!

The boot flew, and the hapless Tompkins, who did not venture even to dodge, received it with his chin.

"Ooooooooooh!"

There was a yell in Study No. 4.

"Bejabers, and I've won the doughnuts, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove! I wegvet vewy much buttin' into anothah fellow's studay," said Arthur Augustus, "but I feel bound to chip in. I am goin' to thrash you, Mulvaney."

And the swell of St. Jim's rushed at Mulvaney minor, grasped him, and brought him off the table with a crash.

"Arrah," roared Mulvaney, "I'll punch you for that, D'Arcy!"

"Put up your hands, you howwid bully!"

And Arthur Augustus sailed in, and there was a terrific combat in Study No. 4.

CHAPTER 2.

Not Nice for Tompkins!

TOM MERRY and Manners and Lowther, of the Shell, came along from the stairs, and paused as they heard a tremendous din from Study No. 4 in the Fourth.

Half a dozen other fellows were gathered round the doorway of that study, and most of them were grinning.

"What on earth's the row?" asked Tom.

"Only Gussy!" said Blake. "He's trying to bark Mulvaney's knuckles with his nose, and succeeding pretty well."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Take that, you wottah!" came Gussy's gasping voice from inside Study No. 4.

"And take that intirely!"

"Ow!"

Bump!

Mulvaney went down heavily. Arthur Augustus, his noble nose streaming red, stood over him with flashing eyes.

Arthur Augustus, with all his dandified ways, was a mighty man of his hands. And there was absolutely no limit to his pluck. But he was a slim youth, and Mulvaney was a burly, heavily-built fellow, and had all the advantage in weight and size. Nevertheless, Gussy was getting the better of the combat.

He was beating Mulvaney; but he was paying dearly for success. His nose was streaming with red, and one of his eyes was half-closed, and his elegant clothes were very rumpled and dusty and dishevelled.

"Go it, Gussy, old bean!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"One more round will do it."

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Mulvaney sat up.

"Sure, I'll lick him!" he gasped. "I won't have that tailor's dummy butting into my study and kicking up a shindy!"

"I was stoppin' you fwom bullyin' Tompkins, you wottah, as you know vewy well!"

"Why couldn't Tompkins stop him, himself?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Why didn't you, Tompkins?" asked Manners.

"You—you see—" stammered Tompkins.

"Tompkins is a funk!" explained Blake.

"I'm not!" howled Tompkins. "Only—only—"

"Rats!"

"Are you comin' on again, Mulvaney?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"What-ho!" said Mulvaney.

He scrambled up and came on again. Hammer and tongs the combat went on. Tompkins watched dismally. Perhaps he was grateful to Arthur Augustus for intervening on his behalf. But perhaps he anticipated that that interference

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would make matters worse for him in the long run. Gussy could not always be on the spot—and Mulvaney minor was a fixture in Study No. 4.

Bump!

Mulvaney went down again.

"Man out!" said Lowther.

"Oh dear!" groaned Mulvaney. "I'm done, blow you! But sure if you come into my study again I'll bate you black and blue!"

"Wats!"

"Good old Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "Better go and bathe your eye, old chap. It needs it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The crowd of juniors broke up, grinning. Arthur Augustus was feeling much the worse for wear, as he retired to bathe his injuries. Indeed, as he surveyed his noble features in the glass in the bath-room, Gussy wondered whether Clarence York Tompkins was worth it. He felt very kindly towards that mild-mannered youth; but a swollen nose and a blue eye were, in fact, a swollen nose and a blue eye. It was more than an hour before Arthur Augustus had finished attending to his damages—and when he returned to Study No. 6 he was conscious that his face was not a thing of beauty.

Blake and Herries and Digby grinned as he came in.

"What a boko!" was Blake's remark.

"You'll have an eye!" commented Herries.

"Any teeth missing?" asked Dig.

"Weally, you fellows, I felt bound to intahfeah," said Arthur Augustus. "I feel wathah wotten, but pwobably Mulvaney feels wathah worse."

Crash!

"Yow-ow-woop!"

It was a sudden uproar along the passage, and it came from Study No. 4. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started, and Blake & Co. grinned.

"Bai Jove! What's that?" ejaculated Gussy.

"Mulvaney ragging Tompkins!" grinned Blake.

"Going in again?" chuckled Herries.

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

He rubbed his swollen nose, and felt tenderly over his darkening eye.

"Weally," he said after a pause, "weally, I see no weason why Tompkins cannot punch Mulvaney himself. If he cannot lick the boundah, he can take the pokah to him, I suppose. I weally see no weason why I should thrash Mulvaney again, because Tompkins is a w'etched funk!"

And Arthur Augustus closed the door of Study No. 6 and sat down to prep.

In Study No. 4 Clarence York Tompkins was realising how much benefit he had derived from Gussy's generous aid. Mulvaney minor, with a damaged face, a discoloured eye, and a bruised mouth, was in an extremely bad temper. He wanted very much to "take it out" of somebody; and Tompkins came in handy for the purpose.

Mulvaney had a folded exercise book in his hand. Tompkins was bending over a chair.

Whack!

"You'll get your ears up, will you?" said Mulvaney.

"Ow!"

Whack! Whack!

"You'll call in D'Arcy to punch me, will you, bedad?"

"But I didn't!" wailed Tompkins. "The silly ass butted in of his own accord! You know he did!"

Whack!

"Whether he did or not, there's a lesson for you!" said Mulvaney. "Will you wash the tea-cups when I tell yez?"

"Yes! Oh, yes!"

Whack!

"And will ye get yere ears up again?"

"Ow! No!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yow-ow-woop!" roared Tompkins.

"Who's cock of the walk in this study?" roared Mulvaney.

"Oh! You are! Ow!"

"Faith, and I'm glad you see it!" said Mulvaney, throwing down the exercise book. "You have to remember that Pomfret isn't here now, Tompkins dear, and if you don't toe the line you'll be kilt intirely! Will ye remember that?"

"Oh dear! Yes!" groaned Tompkins.

"Good! Now shut up!"

And the hapless Tompkins suppressed his mumbling, and there was silence in Study No. 4.

CHAPTER 3.

Nipped in the Bud!

TOM MERRY!

It was the following day, and the Terrible Three of the Shell were going down to games practice in the afternoon, when Tompkins joined them.

Tom gave Clarence York a smile and a nod. He was always kind to Tompkins, when they happened to come into contact. Tompkins was nobody, or less than nobody, in the School House at St. Jim's; but it was Tom Merry's way to



Mulvaney minor was taking aim at Tompkins with a Latin dictionary when D'Arcy threw open the door and strode into the study. The stride of Arthur Augustus carried him into the line of fire. As he interposed between the ragger and the ragged the dictionary flew. Crash! "Yaroooo!" roared the swell of the Fourth as the flying missile smote him. (See page 3.)

have a kind word for any fellow, whether somebody or nobody.

"Coming down to the footer?" asked Tom cheerily. "That's right, Tompkins!"

"I—I wasn't thinking of footer just now!" faltered Tompkins. "I wanted to speak to you, you know."

"Walk along to Little Side with us, then, and speak as you go," said Tom with a smile.

Tompkins fell into line with the Terrible Three. His face was worried and flushed.

"It's Mulvaney!" he said abruptly.

"More ragging in your study—what?"

"Yes. Look here, you're junior captain," said Tompkins. "You ought to put down bullying, Tom Merry! It's your duty."

Tom frowned.

"That's so!" he said.

"Well, Mulvaney bullies me in my study," said Tompkins. "He gave me a licking yesterday because D'Arcy butted in. I'm not going to stand it. I've a right to speak to the Housemaster."

"To sneak to the Housemaster, you mean!" grunted Manners.

"Tom Merry ought to interfere, as junior captain," said Tompkins sulkily.

"Now, look here, Tompkins," said Tom Merry quietly, "I'll speak to Mulvaney if you like; and if he really bullies you or anybody, he'll get a House-licking. I know a junior captain's duties quite as well as you can teach me. But you can't expect to be molly-coddled. You're as big as Mulvaney, and if you choose to go in for games and boxing you can make yourself fit enough to tackle him and lick him. Mulvaney rags you because you let him do it."

"I can't lick him!" mumbled Tompkins.

"You could jolly well try!" said Tom warmly. "There's a dozen fellows in the Fourth that couldn't lick Mulvaney. But does he bully Durrance, or Digby, or Kerruish, or Lumsley-Lumsley? They couldn't lick him, but they'd jolly well stand up to him if he tried bullying them, and make it worth his while to let them alone. That's what a fellow ought to do. But if you're afraid of a chap, and he's a mean sort, he will bully you, and there's no help for it."

Tompkins mumbled.

"Mulvaney isn't a bully, either," went on Tom. "He's

just a domineering sort of ass, and he rags you because you let him. If he had a fight on his hands every time, how long do you think he would keep it up?"

"That's good advice," said Manners. "You want a little pluck, Tompkins. Why, most fellows are in the same boat. Grundy of the Shell could lick me, for instance—and he's a domineering ass! But I'd like to see him trying to rag me!"

"Well, I suppose you'd put up a fight," said Tompkins. "Of course I should—and so ought you, when Mulvaney goes on your track. A fellow who's afraid of a licking will get a thumping lot more lickings than a fellow who isn't afraid."

"Ye-e-es. But—"

"You see," said Tom Merry kindly, "you're quite able to look after yourself if you choose, Tompkins. If it were some weedy chap like Skimpole, in specs, it would be different. But in your case you only need a little pluck. Get some pluck from somewhere, and stand up to Mulvaney next time he rags you and it will be all right."

Tompkins looked lugubriously thoughtful.

"Let me catch Mulvaney bullying a little chap in the Third, and I'll make an example of him fast enough," said Tom Merry. "But I can't be always nosing along the passage to see whether he is buzzing boots at you because you let him do it. Dash it all, he'd buzz boots at me if I'd let him! Punch his nose next time."

"Then he'd lick me."

"Very likely," assented Tom. "But you could give him enough to make him think twice before he started again."

"I—I suppose so."

The Terrible Three joined the footballers. Clarence York Tompkins stood looking at them, as they joined in the practice, thoughtfully and distantly. He realised that Tom Merry's advice was good, but he doubted very much whether he could carry it out. Tompkins was a mild and diffident youth; but deep down in his heart he was conscious that he was not really a funk, it was self-reliance and confidence that he lacked.

He thought it over as he stood watching the footballers. Figgins of the New House came along at a terrific burst, and Tom Merry was in his way. Evidently Tom did not even think of eluding the charge, he stood up to it cheerfully; and George Figgins of the New House crashed into

him. That sight had an inspiring effect on Tompkins. Why shouldn't he follow Tom Merry's example and stand up to whatever came along, instead of feebly knuckling under to it? In a new and determined mood Tompkins of the Fourth walked back to the School House.

It was tea-time, and he knew that Mulvaney would expect tea to be ready in Study No. 4. By sheer force of character Mulvaney had turned his study-mate into a fag.

Tompkins went up to Study No. 4.

Mulvaney was there, fresh and ruddy from games practice. He had just come in, and he was hungry.

"You cheeky spalpeen!" exclaimed Mulvaney indignantly. "Fire's out, no kettle boilin', no tay ready! What do you mean by it?"

"Do you want your tea?" asked Tompkins.

"Of course I do, and I am as hungry as a hunter!"

"Then get it!"

"What?"

"I'm going down to tea in Hall!" said Tompkins. "You can do the same if you don't like getting your tea, Mulvaney!"

"Is it jestin' you are?"

"Go and eat coke!"

Mulvaney stared at him.

"My hat! Have you forgotten that Pomfret's not in the study now?" he asked. "Are you getting your ears up again, Tompkins?"

"Rats!"

"Did ye say 'rats' to me?" roared Mulvaney.

"Yah!"

Mulvaney came across the study at Tompkins. For the moment the heart of Clarence York misgave him. But he remembered Tom Merry's advice, and how Tom had stood up to Figgy's charge, and he pulled himself together and put up his hands.

"Come on, you bully!" he said resolutely.

"Why, it's daft you are intirely!" exclaimed the amazed Mulvaney. "Do you want me to mop up the study with you?"

"Yah!"

Mulvaney came at him with a rush. He roared as Clarence York met him with a set of bony knuckles on his nose. But the next moment Tompkins was overborne, and his head was in chancery, and Mulvaney was punching his hapless nose with vigour and rapidity.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Tompkins.

The heart of Clarence York Tompkins failed him. Instead of resisting manfully, he wriggled and struggled to escape.

"Are you going to get the tay intirely?" roared Mulvaney.

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"Are ye sorry ye were cheeky?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

Mulvaney chuckled quite good-humouredly.

"Then sure I'll let ye off! Get a move on, you omad-haun!"

And Clarence York Tompkins, with a dismal face—no longer rebellious—proceeded to prepare tea in Study No. 4. Never had an incipient rebellion been so promptly crushed.

CHAPTER 4.

A Lesson in Boxing!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY frowned slightly. It was a few days after the rebellion in Study No. 4, which had been crushed so promptly. D'Arcy was seated in Study No. 6, writing a letter to the junior who had lately left St. Jim's, when Tompkins looked in. Arthur Augustus was not pleased to see Tompkins. He was sorry for that hapless youth, and he was kind to him; but he really did not want to hear any more about the rough-and-tumble proceedings of Mick Mulvaney.

"Busy?" asked Tompkins, in his timid way.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, all right!" said Tompkins, and he was turning away, when Gussy's kind heart smote him, and he called out:

"Twot in, deah boy! Only w'ithin' a lettah to a chap at Wodehouse."

Tompkins came in.

"Writing to Pomfret, who left here?" he asked.

"Yaas!"

"Things were different when Pomfret was here," said Tompkins, with a sigh. "He was a good chap! He kept Mulvaney in order in the study."

"Oh deah! What's Mulvaney been doin' now?" asked Arthur Augustus, feeling inclined to sigh himself.

"Oh, nothing!" said Tompkins hastily. "It was decent of you to stand up for me the other day, D'Arcy! I can't expect you to be always doing it."

"Of course not, deah boy!" assented Gussy—a ready assent at which poor Tompkins' face fell.

"The beast has sold my Latin dictionary," said Tompkins. "It was a new one, you know, and he's sold it along the passage because he was hard up. A fellow can't stand it."

"Wathah not! I should make him buy a new one!"

"How?" asked Tompkins hopelessly.

Arthur Augustus laid down his pen and rose. He adjusted his eyeglass in his eye, and looked over Tompkins carefully and scrutinizingly, as if Clarence York were a horse that he intended to buy. Tompkins submitted meekly to the inspection.

"You're wathah a weeday sort of chap!" commented Arthur Augustus. "You don't go in enough for games. You don't weally keep yourself fit, Tompkins. That's why you're a funk!"

Tompkins crimsoned.

"I'm not really a funk," he stammered. "Not really, you know."

"I twust not," agreed Arthur Augustus. "It's a vewy howwid thing to be cowardly. It is unworthy of the British wace. What you need, old man, is to pull yourself together and learn to stand up to punishment. Aftah all, a fellow ought to learn to beah a little pain. There's lots of things to be stood duwin' life, and if you don't get weady for them while you are young they will knock you wight ovah. Would you like me to give you some advice, Tompkins?"

"I'd be glad," faltered Tompkins, rather apprehensively.

"Go and see Mulvaney, and hit him on the nose," said Arthur Augustus. "He will pitch into you, of course. Keep on doin' it, evvey day weagularly."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Aftah a week or tvo you will have learned to stand up to punishment," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "All you need is some gwit, you know—and that's the way to get gwit. If you get tired of Mulvaney, go and have a wov with Gwunday of the Shell. Tell him he can't play football. That will be enough for Gwunday—he will knock you into a cocked hat at once. That's what you want."

"Is—is—is it?" stammered Tompkins.

Arthur Augustus spoke with confidence, but Tompkins himself seemed to entertain some doubts upon the subject.

"Yaas, wathah! Evvey thwashin' you weceive will do you good," said D'Arcy. "It will toughen you, you know."

"I—I'm not sure that I want to be toughened!" gasped Tompkins.

"Wubbish! It's just what you need! If you like," added Arthur Augustus generously, "I will give you a thwashin' now."

"Eh?"

"By way of a beginnin'!" Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs, and the startled Tompkins dodged towards the door.

"I—I say—"

"Stand up to it, deah boy! You can take my word for it, that's what you want!"

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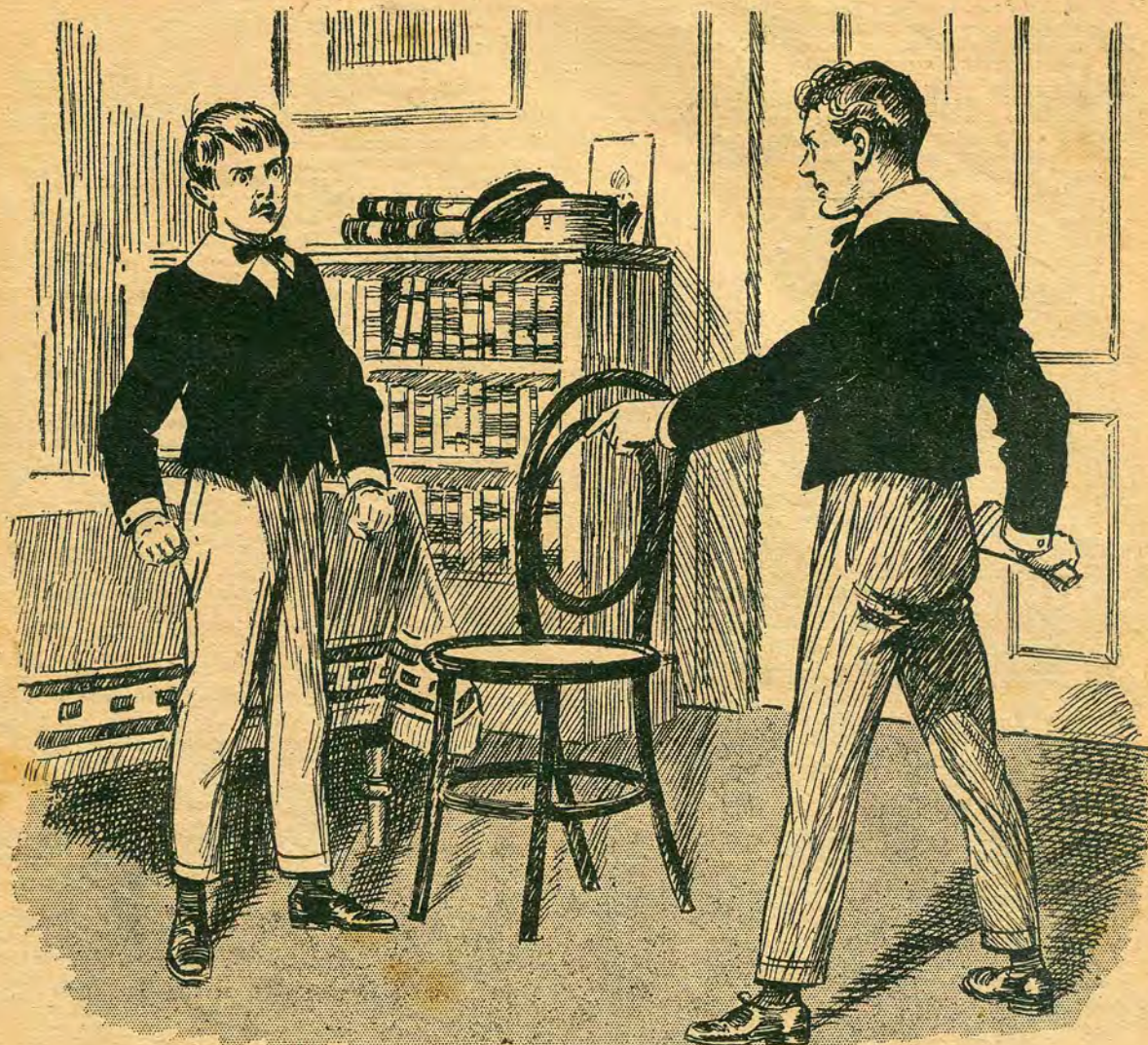
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MYSTERY NOW ON SALE! ADVENTURE



"You're not sponging on me any longer, Mulvaney," said Tompkins, his heart beating fast. "But it's tay-time," said Mulvaney. "Are you standing me a tay or shall I take yere head into chancery? Which is it? Quick!" Tompkins drew a deep, deep breath, and his fists clenched. "Come on, then!" he gasped. (See page 10.)

"I—I—I think I'd—I'd like to—to do some boxing first!" gasped Tompkins. "You're a good boxer, D'Arcy! How would you like to give me some tips?"

Arthur Augustus nodded at once.

"Just the thing!" he said. "Get some gloves out of that box, deah boy! I'll put you thwough it!"

Tompkins sorted out the boxing-gloves. The two juniors removed their jackets, and D'Arcy pulled the study table aside. His noble face was beaming with kind good-nature. Helping Tompkins was a difficult task; but teaching him to help himself was, in Gussy's opinion, an excellent wheeze.

"Now, put up your hands, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Don't wowwy too much about defence—attack is the best form of defence, you know. And, besides, it will harden you to get a few knocks. You are wathah soft, you know. Now twy to punch me. Come on."

Tompkins came on.

"Oh ewumbs!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

Tompkins came on with a rush, determined to do his best. That sudden attack took Arthur Augustus rather by surprise. Tompkins' right came with a crash on his aristocratic nose, and Arthur Augustus sat down on the carpet in Study No. 6.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Ow! Wow!"

Tompkins beamed down on him.

"Was that right?" he asked.

"Bai Jove! What?"

"Did I do it properly?" asked Tompkins.

"Oh deah!"

Arthur Augustus eyed Tompkins in rather a peculiar way as he rose to his feet. There was a decided pain in his nose.

"All wight," he said. "See if you can do that again."

"Right-ho!" said Tompkins quite cheerily.

He came on with another rush. This time the swell of St Jim's was more on his guard, and Tompkins' attack was easily stopped. Then D'Arcy's gloves rattled on his nose and chin and chest, and Tompkins retreated across the study gasping and spluttering.

"Ow! Stop! Ow! Chuck it!" he gasped.

"My deah chap," said Arthur Augustus, still punching industriously, "this is just what you want!"

"Yow-wow!"

"That's for your nose——"

"Yooop!"

"That's for your eye——"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Twy to stop them, deah boy; but if you can't stop them, take them smilin'," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "That's for your chin——"

"Yurrrrrgggh!"

"And that—— Bai Jove, where are you goin', Tompkins?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in surprise.

Tompkins did not explain where he was going. He stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once. His heels fairly flashed in the doorway of Study No. 6 as he vanished.

Arthur Augustus stared after him in surprise.

"Bai Jove, what a vewy peculiar chap Tompkins is!" he murmured. "He has taken Blake's gloves away with him, too. I twust he will wemembah to weturn them! Tompkins! Tompkins!"

There was no answer from Clarence York. He was gone! "Extraordinary!" murmured Gussy. "The chap comes deah and asks me for instwuction in boxin', and vanishes all of a sudden while I am givin' it to him! I weally cannot andahstand Tompkins! I twust he is wight in his head!" And Arthur Augustus, much perplexed, returned to his letter writing. And Clarence York Tompkins bathed his nose in the dormitory, and wondered whether a ragging from Mulvaney minor was much worse than kind and friendly aid from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 5. Tompkins Tries It On!

"CHEEK!" growled George Alfred Grundy of the Shell.

Wilkins and Gunn, his study-mates, exchanged a grin. Grundy was talking about the matches, and the fact that Tom Merry, for reasons best known to himself, had left G. A. Grundy out of them.

"Check!" went on Grundy. "I've asked Merry, you fellows, and he says plainly that I'm not wanted in the Rookwood match!"

"I wonder why?" murmured Wilkins.

"Sheer cheek and crass stupidity!" said Grundy. "The fellow knows nothing about footer! It isn't only that he leaves good men out; he puts duds in. That's even worse."

"Oh, come," said Wilkins rather warmly, "Tom Merry never plays a man that isn't worth his salt!"

"What rot! He plays you!" said Grundy.

"Me!" ejaculated Wilkins.

"Yes! And you're no good at footer, are you?"

Wilkins did not reply to that question.

"He's even played Gunn in a Form match," said Grundy.

"Fancy Gunn! And I'm left out all the time!"

There was a tap at the door, and to the surprise of Grundy & Co. Clarence York Tompkins of the Fourth Form stepped in. The three Shell fellows stared at him. They hardly knew Tompkins, and certainly had not expected a visit from that least important member of a Form that was of very small importance in the eyes of Shell fellows.

"What is it—a message?" asked Grundy.

"Nunno."

"Then what do you want?"

"I—I—"

"Oh, get out!" said Grundy.

Tompkins did not get out. There was quite a peculiar expression on his face. He was pale, and he was breathing hard and quick. He looked like a fellow who had taken a desperate resolution—as indeed he had!

Arthur Augustus' advice had sunk into Tompkins' mind. He had determined to act upon it. He was going to learn to stand up to punishment; but he had a misgiving that when the punishment came along the impulse to run would be too strong for him. So he had taken the desperate resolution of landing himself in a scrap from which there would be no escape—burning his boats behind him, as it were. Hence his visit to George Alfred Grundy's study. Instead of getting out when Grundy commanded him to do so, he turned the key in the lock of the door, jerked out the key, and threw it across the study—a proceeding that made Grundy & Co. stare.

Tompkins' unreliable courage faltered as Grundy glared at him. His heart thumped like a hammer. But he nerved himself.

"Grundy!" he gasped.

"Well, you silly owl!" said Grundy. "What game are you playing now, you potty ass?"

"You're a chump!" said Tompkins.

"Eh?"

"You can't play football!"

"What?"

"Marbles is your game!" said Tompkins recklessly. "You're a dud at everything, Grundy! Biggest fool in the Shell—"

Grundy gasped.

"Beggest ass at St. Jim's!" went on Tompkins.

"I'm dreaming this!" stuttered Grundy.

"I don't suppose you could really play marbles!" went on Tompkins. "Hop-sotch would be nearer the mark!"

"Is the chap mad?" said Wilkins, in amazement.

Grundy rose to his feet.

"Mad or not, he isn't going to talk to me like that!" he said. "Look out for squalls, Tompkins!"

"Rats!" gasped Tompkins.

Grundy came at him like a whirlwind. A more patient fellow than Grundy might have been annoyed by Tompkins' remarks. And Grundy never had been a patient fellow.

He grasped Tompkins, and punched him right and left. Tompkins tore himself away and bolted for the door, forgetting in his alarm that he had locked it. Grundy's grasp fastened on him again as he tore at the handle.

"Now, you cheeky cad!" roared Grundy.

"Oh dear! Leggo! Help!"

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Don't kill him, Grundy, old man," said Gunn. "He's asked for it; but don't make it a funeral."

"I'll smash him!" roared Grundy. "Can't play football, can't I?"

"No, you can't!" yelled Tompkins desperately.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Marbles is my game, is it?" roared George Alfred.

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

Thump! Thump! Thump!

If Clarence York Tompkins of the Fourth had been of the stuff of which heroes are made he would not have been of much use against the burly Grundy. As it was, he simply did not have a look in. It could not be called a fight—Tompkins' feeble blows had no effect whatever upon Grundy. It was a thrashing—and a terrific one.

Wilkins and Gunn looked on, grinning. Grundy was in a state of great wrath, and he made an example of Tompkins. Tompkins had, in fact, come there to be made an example of; but he found the process a painful one; his new training was hard.

But there was no escape for him—and in very desperation he turned on Grundy and did his best.

Every time he was knocked down he jumped up and came at Grundy; and every time he jumped up Grundy promptly knocked him down again.

That was a game that Grundy could keep up longer than Tompkins could. Tompkins lay on the floor at last, unable to get up. He lay and gasped and spluttered helplessly.

Grundy glared down at him.

"Now, can I play footer?" he roared.

"No!" gasped Tompkins.

"Well, my hat!" said the amazed Grundy. "He's mad, but he's got some pluck! Open the door, Wilkins, and I'll kick him out! If I punch him any more it will be a case for sanny."

Wilkins found the key and opened the door. Grundy picked up Tompkins by the collar and swung him through the doorway. The hapless Fourth-Former collapsed in the passage with a bump.

"Come back when you want some more!" said Grundy, and he slammed the study door.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Wow!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came along the passage. "Gwest Scott! Is that you, Tompkins! What's happened?"

"Ow! Wow! Yow!" moaned Tompkins. "Yow-ow-ow! I—I—"

"You've been fightin'?"

"I—I told Grundy he couldn't play football!" groaned Tompkins. "I—I say, help me to my study, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave Tompkins his arm and helped him to Study No. 4 in the Fourth. Tompkins sank into the armchair and gasped for breath.

The swell of St. Jim's surveyed him curiously.

"Well, you look wathah a w'eck, deah boy," he said. "In fact, you look a fwithtful w'eck!"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"But you've got pluck!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "You've got some pluck, deah boy! Keep it up! You're impwovin', Tompkins! I suppose you are feelin' wathah bad?"

"Ow! Yes! Wow!"

"That's all wight—"

"Is it?" groaned Tompkins. "It doesn't feel all right! Ow!"

"Wight as wain, deah boy! It will make you tough! I am vewy glad that you have acted on my advice. You can't do bettah than act on the advice of a fellow of tact and judgment, you know!"

"Ow! Grooogh!"

"As soon as you feel bettah, deah boy, go and have anothah wow with Gwunday!" said Arthur Augustus.

And with that advice the swell of St. Jim's left Clarence York Tompkins to groan.

It was quite a long time before Tompkins felt better. And when he felt better, he did not go and have another row with Grundy. Probably he felt that enough was as good as a feast.

ANSWERS

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CHAPTER 6. Tompkins the Bold!

"TOMPKINS!"

"Yes!"

"Not really!"

"Honest Injun!"

"Well, my hat!"

It was seldom that Tompkins of the Fourth was discussed in the Lower School. He was there; and everybody knew him by sight; but he was of little account—not of much more account than a study table or a Latin dictionary. Tompkins did not exactly like that position, but he accepted it without question, with his customary diffidence. Once or twice he had emerged from the obscurity that seemed natural to him, but he had soon sunk into it again. Now he had emerged once more—amazingly. Tompkins was the topic—and it was a strange and elating experience to him.

His scrap with Grundy was the cause. There were plenty of quite hefty fellows in the House who did not want to scrap with Grundy if they could help it. Tompkins, certainly, could have helped it—and he had recklessly bearded the lion in his den, the Douglas in his hall, so to speak. Blake remarked that Tompkins was coming out; several fellows observed that Tompkins had pluck—one or two wondered whether he was "off his rocker." Anyhow, they talked of Tompkins; and to be talked of was something, for a fellow whose existence was generally ignored, good-naturedly, but completely.

There was no doubt about the facts. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had picked up the hapless hero after his disastrous scrap with Grundy, and taken home what was left of him. And the matter was quite blazoned forth in the Form-room the following morning. For Grundy's hefty fists had left marks all over Clarence York Tompkins, and Mr. Lathom, though a short-sighted gentleman, could not help observing

"Yes, sir."

"Bless my soul! I did not know that you were a quarrelsome boy, Tompkins. I have always believed you to be—ahem!—quite the reverse. Are you telling me the truth, Tompkins?"

"Yes, sir. I went to his study and rowed with him," said Tompkins.

"Well, upon my word!" said Mr. Lathom, amazed. "Tompkins, you appear to be a young ruffian, from your own statement."

Tompkins almost purred with delight, under the amazed looks of the Fourth. A young ruffian! He, Clarence York Tompkins, the diffident and inoffensive, the chap whose cap fags would pull off in the quad with impunity, was characterised as a young ruffian by his Form master, in the presence of the whole Form. Tompkins' cup of pride was full.

"You will take two hundred lines, Tompkins!" said Mr. Lathom very severely.

"Yes, sir," said the delighted Tompkins. It was the first time he had ever received lines for fighting.

Tompkins sat down with his ears burning, his blushing honours thick upon him. He had made a sensation in the Fourth. He did not feel the aching reminders of Grundy's fists. He did not care for the lines. All was well with C. Y. Tompkins.

After class he strolled into the quad with his chin up, and his cap at a rakish angle. Undoubtedly Tompkins was "coming out." Hobbs of the Third, disastrously ignorant of the fact that Tompkins was "coming out," knocked his cap off and giggled. Ordinarily, Tompkins would have picked up his cap, blushing, and walked away without a word. But he was a new Tompkins now. The chap who had been "lined" for fighting was not to have his cap knocked off in quad by a Third Form fag. Much to the surprise of Hobbs,

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some of the damages. In class in the morning Mr. Lathom blinked at Tompkins over his glasses.

"Have you been fighting, Tompkins?" inquired Mr. Lathom.

"Yes, sir."

Far was it from Tompkins to deny it, even if denial had been possible. Having had the hard knocks, he felt that he was entitled to the glory. A hundred lines mattered little to Tompkins in comparison. It was the first time he had figured as a fellow "called over the coals" for fighting, and the distinction gave him a thrill of pride.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "Your face is in a shocking state, Tompkins—shocking! I must inquire into this. With whom have you been fighting, Tompkins?"

"Grundy of the Shell, sir," said Tompkins, with a tremble of pride in his voice.

He felt, rather than saw, glances turn on him from all sides in the Form-room. His ears burned, but he was elated.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Lathom, in amazement. "You— you have been fighting with Grundy, Tompkins?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I shall speak to Mr. Linton about this," said the Fourth Form master. "I shall not allow an inoffensive boy in my Form to be bullied by a much bigger boy in the Shell. I shall certainly speak to Mr. Linton."

Tompkins gasped. His glory was in danger of vanishing. He was very anxious to let it be understood that this was not a case of bullying.

"If you please, sir—" he gasped.

"That will do, Tompkins! Grundy shall be called to account for having treated you in this way."

"Not at all, sir. I—I started it!" panted Tompkins.

"Tompkins, am I to understand that you started a quarrel with a boy so much bigger than yourself?"

Tompkins rushed him down and captured him by the back of the neck.

"Now, then, what's this game, young Hobbs?" demanded Tompkins.

"Yow! Leggo!" howled the fag.

"Pick up that cap!"

"Sha'n't!"

"Won't you?" said Tompkins.

"No, I won't!" roared Hobbs. "Yah!"

Whereupon Tompkins shook Hobbs and shook him again, and continued to shake him, till the astonished and dismayed Hobbs picked up the cap and handed it to him.

"Now clear, before I kick you!" said Tompkins magnificently.

And Hobbs promptly cleared, making a mental resolve to let Tompkins' cap alone in future.

Having vindicated himself in this way, Tompkins sauntered in the quad, feeling quite a new man. At dinner many of the Fourth glanced at him, and there were whispers. After dinner more than a dozen fellows asked him whether he really had scrapped with Grundy, or whether it was only "swank."

"You can ask D'Arcy," said Tompkins loftily.

And Arthur Augustus bore out with his testimony the fact that Tompkins really had gone to look for trouble in Grundy's study, and found it there.

"Tompkins has been scrapping with Grundy," Monty Lowther informed Tom Merry and Manners before class that afternoon.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom.

"When's the funeral?" grinned Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coming into the Fourth Form room that afternoon, Percy

Mellish shoved Tompkins out of his way. Tompkins was the only fellow in the Fourth, excepting Trimble, whom Mellish ever ventured to shove. For that reason, no doubt, he shoved him often. But on this occasion Mellish woke up the wrong passenger.

Tompkins turned on him and gave Mellish a shove that sent him sprawling headlong into the Form-room.

"Ow!" roared Mellish, as he sprawled.

He jumped up, and jumped at Tompkins. Clarence York faced him coolly. The fellow who had faced Grundy of the Shell saw no reason for faltering before the funk of the Fourth. As Tompkins saw no reason for faltering, Mellish saw a good many, and, instead of avenging the insult, he went quietly to his place.

Tompkins sat down in his place complacently. He was beginning to look forward to a change in the state of affairs in Study No. 4 now.

CHAPTER 7.

Squashed!

MICK MULVANEY eyed Tompkins very oddly in Study No. 4 at tea-time that day. Mulvaney, of course, had heard all about Tompkins' new reputation as a reckless fighting-man, and he had been as surprised as the rest of the juniors. But he was quite resolved that it should make no difference in Study No. 4. Tompkins was resolved that it should make a great difference. So it looked like trouble.

"Now, what about tay?" said Mulvaney sweetly.

Mulvaney was in his usual state of impeccability. On such occasions, and they were frequent, Tompkins was expected to stand tea in Study No. 4. Tompkins often had good remittances from an affectionate uncle, and Mulvaney appeared to regard those remittances as common property belonging to the study. Indeed, he had stated that if Tompkins stood the feeds, and he stood Tompkins, it was a fair and equal division of labour.

While Pomfret had been in Study No. 4 Tompkins had had a respite. Now Pomfret was gone Mulvaney had resumed his old sway, and Tompkins his role of universal provider. But now he had reached the point of resistance.

"Tea!" he repeated, breathing hard and deep.

"Tay!" repeated Mulvaney.

"I'm ready to stand my whack," said Tompkins.

"And sure I'm the same," said Mulvaney. "But it's tay-time, and I'm stony to the wide, and I'm depending on you, Tompkins."

"You're not sponging on me any longer!" said Tompkins, his heart beating fast.

"Spongin', is it?" ejaculated Mulvaney.

"Well, what else do you call it?" asked Tompkins.

Mulvaney eyed him. He pushed back his cuffs in a casual sort of way, and Tompkins' heart thumped faster. But he reminded himself that he had tackled Grundy of the Shell, and Mulvaney was nowhere near Grundy's form. So he stood firm.

"Sure I don't call it sponging when a fellow stands a frind his tay in the study," said Mulvaney.

"You're no friend of mine," said Tompkins. "You punched Trimble once for saying you chummed with me."

Mulvaney nodded.

"Sure, it was an insult! Nobody would chum with a duffer like you!" he said. "I'll punch Trimble again if he says it any more!"

"Well, then—"

"But it's tay-time," said Mulvaney, "and sure I'll square wid ye when me ship comes home. And I'm hungry, Tompkins dear."

"Halves or nothing!" said Tompkins.

"Haven't I told you I'm stony?"

"Then you can go and eat coke!" said Tompkins.

Mulvaney looked round the study. He picked up an exercise-book and folded it, and pointed to a chair.

"Bend over!" he said laconically.

"Do you think you're a prefect?" gasped Tompkins, between terror and defiance.

"I think it's tay-time, and I want me tay!" said Mulvaney. "Are ye going to bend over, or shall I take yore head into chancery first?"

Tompkins drew a deep, deep breath.

"Come on!" he gasped.

Mulvaney came on promptly enough. Clarence York Tompkins faced him valiantly; but in a few seconds his head was in chancery, and Mulvaney was hammering on his hapless nose. Tompkins struggled and roared.

"Say when," suggested Mulvaney kindly.

"Yarooooh!"

"Sure I'll lave off when ye're tired!"

Tompkins was soon tired. In Grundy's study there had been no escape for him; here there was escape. And the

hapless Tompkins weakened as the thumps rained on his nose.

"Ow! Leave off! Let go!" he roared. "I—I—I—I give you best, Mulvaney!"

"That's all very well, Tompkins darling," said Mulvaney, still thumping. "But what about tay?"

"I—I—I—I'll stand the tea."

"And will ye call it sponging intirely?"

"Ow! No. Ow! I—I'm willing. I'll be glad, delighted, Yarooooh!"

"That's better."

Mulvaney released his victim, and Tompkins dabbed his injured nose. Once more rebellion in Study No. 4 had been crushed. Mulvaney sat in the armchair and smiled at his study-mate.

"I'm waiting," he said. "Make it a good tay, Tompkins dear, as we're so friendly now."

"Ow! All right. Ow!"

Ten minutes later Tompkins came back to the study with a parcel from the tuckshop. Under Mulvaney's merciless eye he set the table for tea, boiled the eggs, and made the toast, and opened the sardines, and cut the cake. At intervals he dabbed his nose. When all was ready, Mulvaney sat down to the table. Tompkins was about to follow his example when Mulvaney waved him off.

"Nothin' for you!" he said.

"Wha-a-a-a-t!" gasped Tompkins.

"Sure, you've been cheeky, and you want a lesson intirely! You're going to wait on me, Tompkins dear, and if there's anything left you can have it when I'm finished!"

"I—I—I—I—" spluttered Tompkins.

"Shut up!"

For a moment Tompkins trembled on the point of resistance. But he gave in. He was irresolute, and Mulvaney was quite resolute, and that made all the difference. Dabbing his suffering nose at intervals, Tompkins waited on Mulvaney at tea, hoping from the bottom of his heart that nobody would look into the study and see him so occupied.

"Another cup of tay, Tompkins!" rapped out Mulvaney.

"Yes, Mulvaney."

"Put the cake over here."

"Yes, Mulvaney."

"And stop sniffing."

"Yes, Mulvaney."

"You've forgotten the sugar, you ass! Put the sugar in my tay."

"Yes, Mulvaney."

There was a tap at the door. It opened, and the eyeglass of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gleamed into the study.

"Tompkins, deah boy—"

Tompkins groaned.

"Sure, the dear boy's busy now, D'Arcy," said Mulvaney coolly. "He's waiting on his lord and master, and I can't spare him till after tay."

"Bai Jove!"

"Toast, Tompkins!" rapped out Mulvaney.

"Oh dear! Yes, Mulvaney!" groaned Tompkins.

Arthur Augustus fixed his eyeglass on Tompkins. His aristocratic lip curled with contempt.

"I am surprised at you, Tompkins!" he said.

"I—I—I—I—"

"I am shocked at you!"

"You—you see, I—I—" stammered Tompkins.

"I wegard you with scorn, Tompkins!"

And Arthur Augustus turned and walked away, leaving Tompkins with a crimson face. Mulvaney minor grinned.

"Buck up with that toast, Tompkins!" he commanded.

And Tompkins, in deep anguish of spirit, bucked up with the toast.

CHAPTER 8.

In Training!

"WUN away!"

D'Arcy of the Fourth spoke quite unkindly. He was fed-up with Tompkins; he felt that all his kindness had been wasted. Tompkins looked into Study No. 6 appealingly.

"I say, D'Arcy—"

"Oh, wun away! You are a wotten funk, Tompkins, and I am shocked at you!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

Tompkins retreated from the study. Again, as on a previous occasion, the kind heart of Arthur Augustus smote him, and he called after Tompkins.

"Come back, Tompkins! It's all wight!"

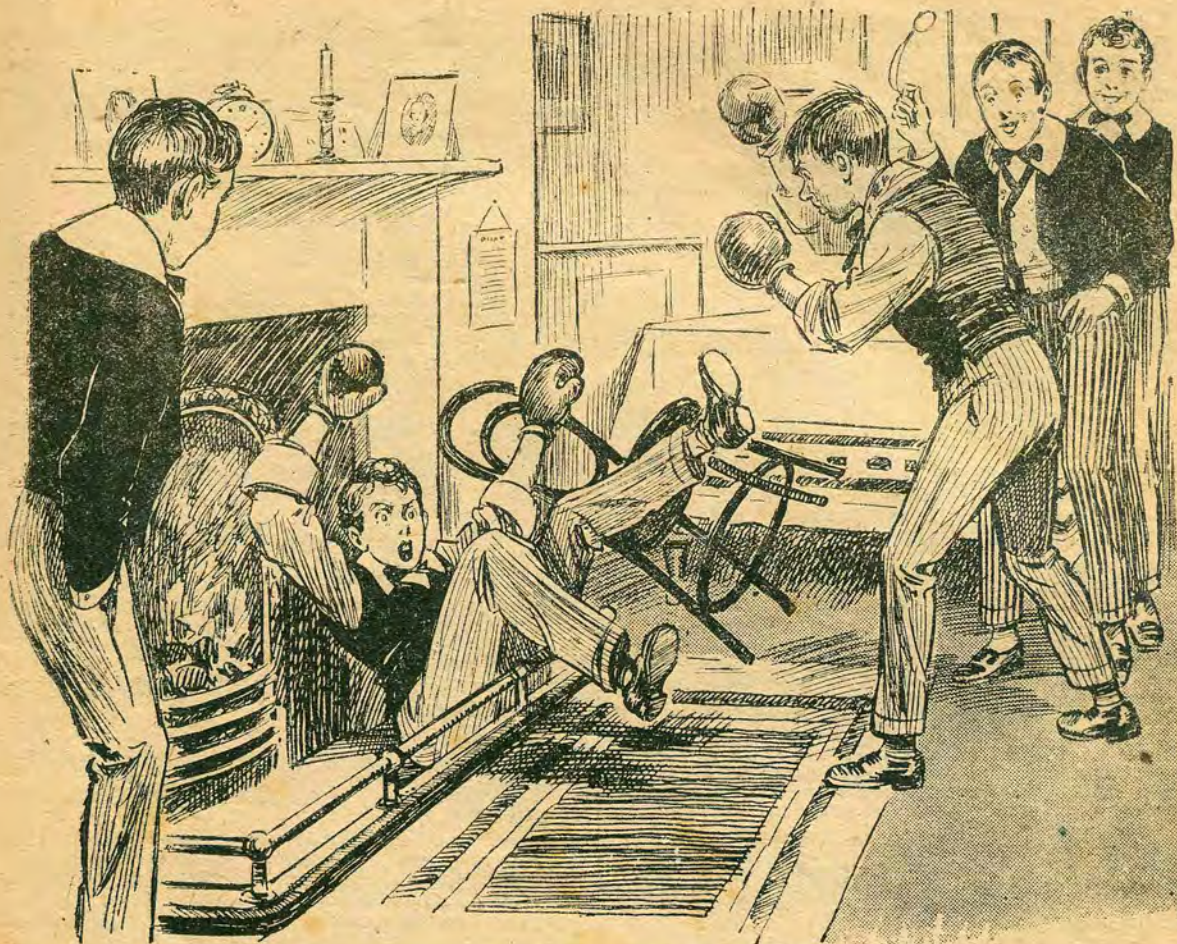
Tompkins sneaked into the study.

"I cannot help wegardin' you with contempt," said Arthur Augustus. "A fellow ought not to allow himself to be bullied."

"Look at my nose!" mumbled Tompkins.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Tompkins' nose. Certainly it was not a thing of beauty.

"You see, I was licked," said Tompkins.



"Go it, Tompkins!" cried Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Tompkins "went it" desperately. Herries was surprised by the rush, and a hefty drive sent him spinning with a terrific crash into the fender. "Bwavo!" roared Arthur Augustus, waving his eyeglass enthusiastically. "Bwavo! Man down!" (See page 12.)

"Do you think I would take ordahs fwom Mulvaney, even if he had knocked my nose wight off?" demanded Arthur Augustus severely.

"I—I suppose not."

"Of course not! Besides, you could lick the fellow if you had a little more gwit. Mulvaney is mostly gas and bounce," said Arthur Augustus. "If you have no gwit, Tompkins, I am weally vewy sowwy for you, but I cannot help despisin' you, you know."

"I—I say—"

"Howevah, I will give you anothah chance," said Arthur Augustus generously. "It is possible that you have the makin's of a man in you somewhah."

"I—I hope so," gasped Tompkins.

Blake and Herries and Digby came into the study. It was time for prep. They stared at Tompkins.

"Run away, kid," said Blake.

Tompkins diffidently backed to the door. Herries looked at him curiously.

"I hear that Mulvaney made you wait on him at tea," he said. "He's spinning the yarn in the Common-room. You're a pretty specimen of a rat, aren't you?"

"Pway don't call Tompkins names, Hewwies—"

Herries snorted.

"Well, let him get out!" he said. "He makes me feel ill! I don't like funks!"

"Must have been gammon, after all, about Tompkins scrapping with Grundy," remarked Digby.

"Yes, rather!" grunted Herries.

"It wasn't!" gasped Tompkins.

"Rats!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, get out!" said Herries contemptuously.

Tompkins backed into the passage and stopped there. Then he came back. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eye was upon him, more in sorrow than in anger. There was encouragement in the moral support of Arthur Augustus.

"Look here, Herries, I did scrap with Grundy," said

Tompkins, "and—and I'll scrap with you if you don't jolly well look out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries.

"I mean it!" exclaimed Tompkins.

"You'd fall down dead if I touched you!" chuckled Herries. "Run away while you're safe!"

"Well, I won't!" said Tompkins defiantly. "Put the gloves on, and I'll jolly well show you! There!"

"Buzz off, and don't be funny," said Blake. "We've got our prep to do."

"Blow your prep!" retorted Tompkins recklessly.

"What?" exclaimed Blake.

"And blow you!" added Tompkins, still more recklessly. Study No. 6 stared at him.

"Here, get out the gloves!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, with a cheery smile. "That's the tune! Of course, you can lick Tompkins, Hewwies."

"I hope so!" snorted Herries.

"That's what he wants! Lick him as hard as you can," said Arthur Augustus. "You are goin' to stand up to it, Tompkins! If you funk, I am done with you."

"Ye-es, D'Arcy!" gasped Tompkins.

"You see, deah boys, I am twainin' Tompkins," Arthur Augustus explained. "I am goin' to make a man of him! Heah are your gloves, deah boy. Let me help you off with your jacket. Now toe the line."

"I—I—I'm ready."

Blake and Digby and D'Arcy stood back as Tompkins faced the grinning Herries. Arthur Augustus took out his watch.

"I shall expect you to stand up for thwee wounds at least, Tompkins," he said. "If you knuckle undah in less I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Time!" said Arthur Augustus.

Herries came on, grinning, and his gloves tapped all over Tompkins. Tompkins backed away hurriedly.

"Stand up to him, you ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Catch him standing up to a bunny-rabbit!" grinned Herries.

"You heah me, Tompkins? Stand up to him, or I shall give you a feahful thwashin' myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake and Digby.

"Pway do not cackle, deah boys! I am twainin' Tompkins, and I am goin' to keep him up to the mark, bai Jove! Go it, Tompkins!"

Tompkins "went it" desperately. Herries was surprised by a rush, and a hefty drive that sent him spinning into the fender. There was a terrific crash as Herries sat in the fender.

"Bwavo!" roared Arthur Augustus, waving his eyeglass enthusiastically. "Bwavo! Man down!"

"You silly ass!" howled Herries from the fender. "What are you burbling about?"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

Herries scrambled up. Arthur Augustus' satisfaction at his downfall seemed to irritate him, somehow. He rushed forward, not at Tompkins, but at Arthur Augustus. A boxing-glove clumped upon an aristocratic nose, and Arthur Augustus sat down suddenly on the carpet.

"How do you like it?" roared Herries.

"Yawoooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Blake. "Man down!"

"Bravo!" chortled Dig.

"Bai Jove! You uttah wuffian, Hewwies, what are you hittin' me for?" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! I will mop up the studay with you, you fwightful hooligan!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake and Dig.

Arthur Augustus scrambled up in great wrath. Herries gave his attention to Tompkins, attacking that youth right and left. Tompkins had about as much chance with George Herries as he would have had with Dempsey. What happened to him he hardly knew, but he realised that he was sprawling backwards all of a sudden. D'Arcy realised it, too, as it was upon him that Tompkins sprawled.

The swell of St. Jim's was almost on his feet when he received the impact of Tompkins. He went rolling with Tompkins rolling over him.

Clarence York sat up dazedly. His head was spinning, his senses in a whirl. He was sitting on something, he did not know what, and he sat and gasped and spluttered. From beneath him came a muffled voice.

"Gewwoff!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Tompkins. "Oh crumbs! Ow!"

"Gewwoff!" came the muffled voice. "If you do not gewwoff, Tompkins, I shall stwike you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crumbs!" stuttered Tompkins, as he suddenly realised that he was sitting upon D'Arcy's neck. "Oh! Sorry! Ow!"

"You uttah ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tompkins rolled off and scrambled up. He stood unsteadily on his legs, blinking round him. Herries, grinning, threw off the gloves. Arthur Augustus sat dazedly on the carpet.

"You fwightful ass, Tompkins—"

"I—I say—"

"What did you knock me ovah for?"

"I—I—"

"You have banged my nose with your beastly elbow—"

"I—I—" stuttered Tompkins.

"You have poked somethin' into my eye—I believe it was your silly knee—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Study No. 6.

"Just wait till I get my bweath, Tompkins!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Don't go—stop him, you fellows! I'm goin' to thwash him! Don't let him go!"

Tompkins made one jump into the Fourth Form passage, and the door of Study No. 6 closed behind him with a bang. His training was over for that evening.

CHAPTER 9. Unexpected!

"OUT you come!"

On Saturday afternoon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked into Study No. 4. There was a bright and cheery smile on his face as he addressed Tompkins.

The latter was seated in the armchair before the fire, with a book on his knee. Mulvaney minor had gone out for the afternoon with two or three other fellows, and was not expected back till tea. Relieved of his obstreperous study-mate, Tompkins of the Fourth had settled down to a quiet afternoon with a book. So—although D'Arcy was taking so kindly an interest in his training, Tompkins was not wholly pleased to see the swell of St. Jim's beaming in at the door.

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"Out?" he repeated dubiously.

"Yaas, wathah! You haven't forgotten that you are in twainin', I pwesume?"

"Nunno! But—"

"I am goin' to make you fit, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus cheerily. "You are comin' on quite well with your boxin' lessons; but you have got to get more fit, you know, and learn to keep your wind. You are comin' for a ten-mile twamp this aftahnoon!"

"Oh dear!"

"Feelin' keen—what?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" gasped Tompkins, with a glance at the cosy fire, and another at the window. Outside there were clouds that promised rain, and a cold wind. "But—but aren't you playing footer this afternoon, D'Arcy? I wouldn't like to make you miss your footer."

"Tom Mewwy thinks I had bettah stand out, and he is puttin' in Cardew in my place. So I am quite at your service, deah boy."

"You—you're very good!" groaned Tompkins.

"Pway don't mench."

"It looks like rain—"

"Yaas—pwobably it will wain. Wuffin' it a bit in wuff weather will harden you, old scout!"

"You wouldn't care for a game of chess in the study?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! Then—"

"But this isn't a case of inclination, but of duty. Come on!"

"Oh!" said Tompkins.

"I am waitin' for you, deah boy!"

There was no help for it. The comfortable armchair and the cosy fire had to be abandoned. Tompkins changed his shoes for boots, and put on his coat and cap, and sallied forth with Arthur Augustus.

From the direction of Little Side came shouts from fellows looking on at a junior House match.

"Goal!"

"Well kicked, Tom Merry!"

"What about giving them a look-in, D'Arcy?" suggested Tompkins. "School House seems to be going ahead!"

"Yaas; but we are goin' for a ten-mile twamp, Tompkins. Come on!"

It was Tompkins' last kick, as it were; he yielded to his fate, and went out of the gates with Gussy. He wondered whether he would survive a ten-mile tramp; or whether he would have to be brought home on a stretcher.

Arthur Augustus chatted cheerily as they walked down Rylcombe Lane. Tompkins answered in monosyllables. He was quite grateful to Arthur Augustus for taking him in hand like this. But he thought mournfully of the warm and cosy study behind him, and the long, long trail before him.

A mile from St. Jim's the rain began to fall lightly. Arthur Augustus did not heed it; he had put on an old hat and an old coat, so rain did not matter. The two juniors turned into the footpath through Wayland Wood, and thence reached Wayland Road, and started for Abbotsford on the high-road.

"Not gettin' fagged, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, as Tompkins lagged behind.

"Oh! No! Not at all!" stammered Tompkins.

"That's all right!"

By the time Clarence York Tompkins limped into Abbotsford, he was feeling that Mulvaney minor, at his very worst, was better than training under the directions of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. As they sighted the railway-station, he turned an almost beseeching look on his cheery companion.

"Think we'd better take the train back?" he mumbled.

"The twain?" repeated Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "There is no exahcise in takin' a twain, Tompkins!"

"Nunno—but—"

"I twust, Tompkins, that you are not thinkin' of slackin', when I am takin' so much twouble to twain you."

"Oh, no! Not at all!"

"Come on, deah boy! We'll go wound by Woodedge, and home to St. Jim's—about five miles, that's all, now."

"Oh dear!"

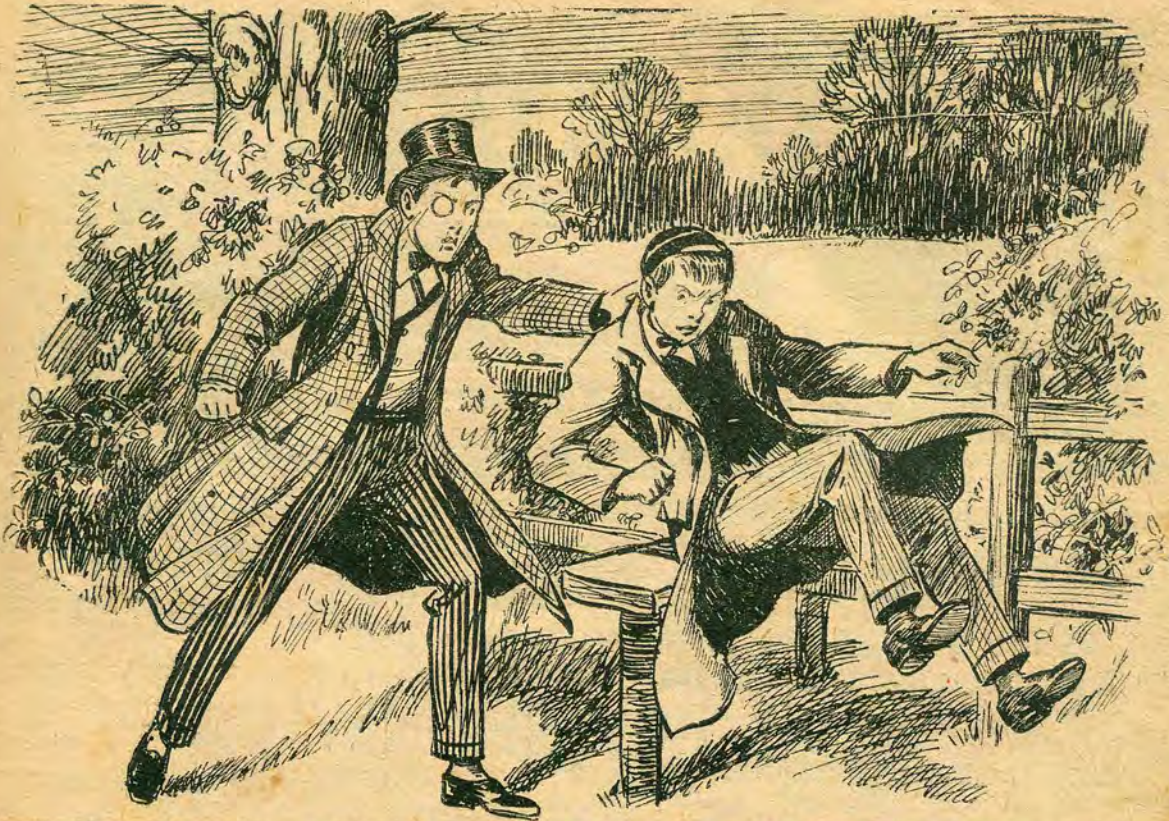
Tompkins was feeling that five furlongs would about finish him. But Arthur Augustus, who seemed as fresh as when he had started, marched him on cheerily. Tompkins' steps lagged more and more, and Arthur Augustus had to slow down to accommodate his pace to his companion's. Past the village of Woodedge—dusk was falling, and Arthur Augustus looked at his watch.

"Do you think you could put it on a little, Tompkins?" he asked.

"Oh dear!" groaned Tompkins.

"At this wate we shall be late for callin' ovah, you know."

Tompkins stopped. The juniors were following a narrow, shadowy lane, and there was a stile by the roadside. Tompkins sat down on the stile, a proceeding that Arthur Augustus viewed with surprise.



"Are you coming on or not, Tompkins?" asked Arthur Augustus. "Rats!" retorted Tompkins. "Vewy well," said Arthur Augustus, "I feel that I have no wesource but to thwash you." The swell of the Fourth strode at Tompkins, grasped him by the collar, and swung him bodily away from the stile. (See this page.)

"You can get on!" growled Tompkins. "I'm not going a step farther."

"Weally, deah boy——"

"You silly ass!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Blow calling-over! I'd rather be boiled in oil than take another step!" groaned Tompkins.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus stood in the gathering dusk, surveying Tompkins in perplexity. Tompkins was tired. He had reached that point of fatigue when fatigue turns to ferocity. His chief desire was to sit down—his next yearning wish was to punch Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hard. The pleasure of punching even Mick Mulvaney was as nothing compared with the pleasure of punching the fellow who had walked him for eight miles, and now wanted to walk him on for another two.

"Weally, Tompkins, this won't do!" said Arthur Augustus. "We shall get a waggin' fwom Wailton."

"Hang Railton!"

"Bai Jove! But we've got to get home, you know!"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Tompkins——"

"Shut up!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eye gleamed behind his eyeglass.

"Did I undahstand you tell me to shut up, Tompkins?"

he asked with deadly politeness.

"Yes! You talk too much!"

"Tompkins!"

"Dry up!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"I wefuse to dwy up, Tompkins, and I wefuse to allow you to slack while you are twainin'! Get up at once!"

"Sha'n't!"

D'Arcy pushed back his cuffs.

"Eithah you get up at once and come on, Tompkins, or I shall give you a feahful thwashin'," he said. "You can take your choice."

"Rats!"

"Vewy well—I feel, Tompkins, that I have no wesource but to thwash you!"

And Arthur Augustus strode at Tompkins, grasped him by the collar, and swung him bodily away from the stile. And Tompkins, in a state of fatigue and exasperation that bordered

on ferocity, hit out, and his knuckles landed on the noble nose of Arthur Augustus, and that youth went spinning across the road.

CHAPTER 10.

Training Tells!

TOM MERRY & CO. came off the football field and tramped back to the School House. The House match had finished in rain, with a slippery ground, and the junior footballers looked as if they had been on a special mission, collecting mud. But soap and plenty of hot water in the changing-room made a difference, and they dispersed to their studies to tea with cheery faces. The Terrible Three arrived at Study No. 6 in the Fourth with Blake and Herries and Dig—they were "teasing" with Study No. 6 that day. There was no light in the study, and no fire, and Jack Blake gave an expressive grunt as he struck a match.

"That ass D'Arcy——"

"Might have got tea ready, as he was standing out of the footer!" growled Herries.

"Blessed slacker!" grunted Digby.

"Where is Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Goodness knows! I believe he was taking that other idiot Tompkins out for a training tramp! Not back yet, I suppose."

"Never mind," said Tom cheerily. "As Gussy hasn't got tea ready for us, we'll get tea ready for Gussy. Comes to the same thing."

Six juniors soon had the fire going and a spread ready on the table. Arthur Augustus had not returned. Having already missed call-over, he looked like missing his tea. But the hungry juniors did not think of waiting.

Tea was nearly over in Study No. 6 when there was a weary step in the passage, and the door opened. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in. He looked wet and he looked muddy and he looked tired, and he looked as if he had lately exchanged his aristocratic nose for a beetroot, which he now wore in place of the aristocratic nose.

Tom Merry & Co. stared at him.

(Continued on page 18.)

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EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

PUNISHMENT at public schools is meted out in various forms. The severest form is expulsion, and the mildest form is an "impost" of fifty lines. Then we have that painful ordeal—particularly painful to the victim!—of a public flogging. This is always administered with a birch-rod.

Happily, the birch only comes into action on very rare occasions. Most swishings are performed with a cane. These swishings are divided into two classes: "handers" and "benders"—the former for light offences, and the latter for more serious ones.

There is yet another form of swishing, which is carried out with an ashplant. Prefects are empowered to use this instrument of torture.

Quite apart from corporal punishment, misbehaviour may be rewarded with impositions, "gatings," or ordinary detention.

But there are forms of punishment which are not inflicted by the school authorities, but by the boys themselves. Under this heading we have Form lickings, "bumpings," blanket-tossing, and that dreaded punishment, running the gauntlet.

The subject of punishment is rather a grim one; but lots of my readers have pleaded for a Special Punishment Number of the "St. Jim's News," and far be it from me to disappoint them!

Some fellows cherish the opinion that punishment ought to be abolished. That's all very well. A school without discipline would be an appalling place. Fellows would do exactly as they pleased, knowing that there would be no reckoning to follow, and the school would rapidly go to the dogs.

Punishment is a necessary evil. Nobody likes being flogged or gated, or made to scribble out Latin verbs by the yard; but every sensible fellow will agree that discipline must be maintained.

Of course, there are limits. In the old days the punishments were far too severe. Fellows were flogged for mere trifles, and headmasters ruled with a rod of iron. Nobody wants those dark old days to be resurrected. Punishment should always be fair and just, and not excessive.

In some schools there is too little punishment, which is always as bad as too much. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is a motto which still holds good. But a wise headmaster always knows when and how to punish; and in this respect Dr. Holmes of St. Jim's would be hard to beat. Even the angels will admit that his punishments are always just.

Grim though this topic is, we have squeezed quite a deal of humour out of it, and I have no doubt that this issue will cause many cheery chuckles.

TOM MERRY.

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A PUBLIC FLOGGING!

By Ralph Reckness Cardew.

The morning sun was rising fast,
When through the corridors there passed
A crowd as noisy as could be,
Flocking towards Big Hall to see
A flogging!

The Head was frowning dark as night,
The culprit's face was wan and white.
'Twas Trimble who was in disgrace,
And he it was who had to face
A flogging!

Then the Head's voice like thunder
rolled,
His frown was fearful to behold.
"Trimble! You stole a cake last eve,
And therefore you will now receive
A flogging!"

"Nunno! I never took the cake!
'Twas either Merry, Wynn, or Blake!
I'm innocent, I do declare!
Besides, sir, I could never bear
A flogging!"

"So kindly stay the execution,
For I've a tender constitution.
'Twill simply finish me, you know,
If I should have to undergo
A flogging!"

The doctor to old Taggles beckoned,
And then, in one dramatic second,
Trimble was hoisted on his shoulders,
To take, in front of all beholders,
A flogging!

Slowly the great birch rose and fell,
The victim gave a dreadful yell.
"Have mercy, sir! And stay your hand!
I told you I could never stand
A flogging!"

Still came that steady swishing sound,
Then Trimble on the floor was found.
He writhed and wriggled with the pain,
And vowed he'd never face again
A flogging!

POPULAR PUNISHMENTS!

WE have asked our contributors to state which form of punishment they prefer. See what they say!

BAGGY TRIMBLE:

Being a thick-skinned sort of fellow, I simply love a public flogging. It never gives me pain. When I'm hoisted on the porter's shoulders, and the Head wields the birch with vigour, it's like somebody tickling my back! I sometimes have grate difficulty in not larking outright! Some fellows squeal for mercy when they are being flogged, but you never hear me doing that!

(Why, you fat fibber, your yells of anguish penetrate almost as far as Wayland!—Ed.)

GEORGE FRANCIS KERR:

My favourite form of punishment is being "gated." This may seem strange until I explain. When you're not allowed to go out of gates for a week, you've very little opportunity of spending money. You can't visit a theatre or a picture-show; you can't go and see a footer-match; you can't have a jolly good feed at the village bun-shop; and you find, at the end of the week, that you've saved a small fortune! That's where the joy of being gated comes in. You save money hand over fist!

(The Scots were ever a thrifty race!—Ed.)

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

Weally, deah boys, I have no pweference for any form of punishment. I don't like bein' licked, because it's so fwightfully humiliatin', bai Jove! I don't like sittin' down to w'ite impositions, because it ruins the beautiful cwease in a fellow's twonsahs! I don't like bein' detained, because it makes a fellow feel like a dog on a chain. An' I have a wooted objection to bein' bumped, thumped, or clumped, because I considah it an insult to my noble and illustrious person. When I get into the House of Lords, I shall pass a Bill for the pwevention of punishment in our public schools.

FATTY WYNN:

They have not yet invented my favourite punishment. I'll tell you what it is. Being compelled to go to the tuck-shop, and stuff solidly for a whole hour. Rather rough on the fellows with feeble appetites; but what a glorious punishment for me!

AUBREY RACKE:

I never object to being given a hundred lines, or a thousand, if it comes to that, because I keep a duplicator in my study, and it makes line-writing a very simple matter. I merely write one sheet of lines, and run all the rest off on the duplicator. I have never yet been bowled out by a master or prefect.

(But your day of reckoning won't be long delayed!—Ed.)

The Children's Best Coloured Paper

JUNGLE JINKS

Out on Thursday—Price 2d

TRAGIC for TRIMBLE!

By Reginald Talbot.



"WHICH the 'Ead wants to see Master Trimble!"

Toby, the page, poked his head round the door of Study No. 2 in the Fourth Form passage, and made that announcement.

Baggy Trimble was there. He was having tea with his study-mates, Mellish and Kit Wildrake.

Toby's summons rang in Baggy's ears like a death-knell. His complexion changed colour. The jam tart he was eating seemed to lose its delicious flavour.

"W-w-what does he want me for, Toby?" faltered the fat junior.

"Dunno, and don't care!" replied the page. "I expect you're goin' to get a mastication."

"A what?" gasped Kit Wildrake. "You mean a castigation, surely?"

"That's it," said Toby, with a grin. "Master Trimble's goin' to get it in the neck—or a little lower down!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Trimble. He had risen from the table, and his knees were fairly knocking together.

Baggy could guess why the Head had sent for him. He had a guilty conscience. During the night he had raided the school kitchen and partaken of a rabbit-pie. He had thought himself safe; but apparently the Head, by some uncanny means, had come to hear of the affair.

The Head always took a grave view of such offences, and Baggy Trimble felt that he was in for a flogging. The mere thought of the Head's birch sent cold shivers down his spine. Never had he felt less like facing a flogging than at this moment.

"I should get a move on, Master Trimble, if I was you," advised Toby. "The 'Ead don't like to be kept waitin'."

"Oh dear!" moaned Baggy. "I—I've got a feeling in my bones that I'm going to be flogged!"

"And you'll have the same sort of feeling in your flesh presently!" said Mellish, with a chuckle. "What have you been up to, Baggy?"

"Nothing," said Trimble. "I merely paid a visit to the school kitchen in the night. No harm in a fellow doing that."

"Provided he leaves all the grub intact!" said Kit Wildrake, with a laugh. "But I expect you had a jolly good feed while you were 'merely paying a visit'."

"And now, having paid your visit, you must pay the piper!" said Mellish humorously. "Trot along and meet your doom like a man!"

Instead of trotting, Baggy Trimble crawled out of the study. Toby hurried off about his business, and Baggy found himself alone in the passage. He tried to steel himself for the coming ordeal, but it was no use. The more he thought about it the more terrible it seemed. Finally, Baggy decided that he simply could not face it.

"I've got such a delicate constitution," he murmured, "that a flogging would just about finish me! I think I'll go and hide somewhere!"

Having made this resolve, Baggy cast about in his mind for a suitable hiding-place. He decided on the coal-cellar, and to this dark and dingy retreat he made his way. He practically rolled down the cellar steps, and hurried into the gloomy cellar, closing the door after him. Then he seated himself upon a pile of sacks, to wait until the hue-and-cry was over.

Presently he could hear fellows shouting his name.

"Trimble!"

"Where's the fat bounder got to?"

"The Head wants him!"

Baggy shivered in his dark retreat, but he dared not venture forth. He could hear the hue-and-cry going on for about twenty minutes; after which his name was called no longer, and he began to feel fairly safe. He was hoping that the affair would blow over, and that it would fade from the Head's memory.

How long Baggy Trimble remained in the coal-cellar he did not know. It

.....

The Imaginary Epitaph of FATTY WYNN

By the St. Jim's Joke r.

WEEP, WAYFARER, WEEP!

FOR HERE DOTH SLEEP

THE PODGY FORM

of

DAVID LLEWELLYN WYNN

(commonly known as "Fatty")

Who, whilst keeping goal for the New House eleven, allowed Tom Merry to put the ball past him, and was promptly mobbed by his infuriated colleagues.

His last audible remark was:

"I SAY, YOU FELLOWS, I FEEL AWFULLY PECKISH!"

In his lifetime he shared a study with Figgins and Kerr, and their real motive for despatching him was probably to make more room in that apartment! For Fatty took up quite a lot of space, his belt circumference being

NOT LESS THAN 75 INCHES!

He was a familiar figure at the school tuck-shop, and his exploits in the eating line would have turned an ostrich or a boa-constrictor green with envy!

ALAS, POOR FATTY!

He leaves a gap which it will take at least three ordinary persons to fill!

With straining cheeks, we say "Farewell!"

"Adieu!" likewise "Chin-chin!"

He lost the match, his life as well—

Then what did Fatty Wynn?

seemed to him to be a number of successive eternities. In reality, it was about a couple of hours.

At last, longing for fresh air and freedom, Baggy screwed up his courage and emerged into the daylight.

The first fellow he encountered was Fatty Wynn. And there was something in Fatty's manner which at once aroused Baggy Trimble's curiosity. Fatty's face was beaming like a full moon, and he appeared to be in the seventh heaven of delight.

"Hallo, Baggy!" he exclaimed. "Where on earth have you been? The Head wanted you, you know."

"D-d-does he still want me?" quavered Baggy.

"No," answered Fatty Wynn cheerfully. "I took your place."

"T-t-took my place?" stuttered Baggy in amazement. "You don't mean to say you've been flogged?"

"Not likely!" chorled Fatty Wynn.

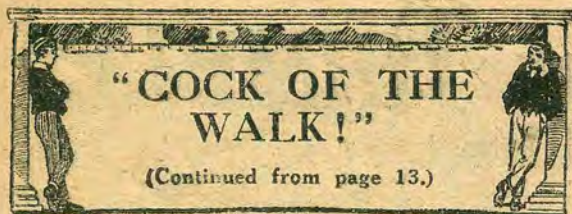
Baggy looked utterly bewildered. He waited for his plump schoolfellow to explain.

"You've missed a treat, Baggy!" said Wynn. "An Old Boy came down this afternoon—a very stout fellow—nearly as plump as you and me put together! They used to call him 'Barrel' when he was a boy at St. Jim's. He happens to be staying with the Head, and he asked who was the fattest fellow in the school. The Head told him you were, so he said, 'Would you be kind enough, sir, to invite Trimble to tea? I feel very sympathetic towards fat boys, because I know what a lot of ragging they have to put up with.' The Head agreed like a shot, and he sent for you, but you were nowhere to be found. You seemed to disappear off the face of the earth. The fellows hunted for you up hill and down dale, but after twenty minutes they gave it up, and Toby reported to the Head that you couldn't be found. The Old Boy was awfully disappointed, but the Head said to him: 'Never mind. There is another boy here, practically as plump as Trimble. His name is Wynn. I will at once invite him to tea.' And he did. Baggy, my son, I've had one of the most gorgeous spreads you can possibly imagine! Just look what you've missed!"

Baggy Trimble could only stand and blink at Fatty Wynn. He tried to speak, but words failed him. He realised that he had been too premature. He had not been wanted for a flogging, but for a feed. And he had hidden himself in the coal-cellar, and Fatty Wynn had taken his place at the festive board!

Poor old Baggy!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 841.



"Hallo! Been in a scrap?" asked Blake.

"Yaas!"

Arthur Augustus sank into a chair. Evidently he was tired.

"Been a long way?" asked Tom Merry.

"Only ten miles, deah boy."

"Well, that's a good step," said Tom, with a smile. "Did Tompkins keep it up to the finish?"

"He did not, Tom Mewwy."

"That ass wouldn't and couldn't!" said Herries. "Where did he peg out?"

"Two miles fwom heah, Hewwies."

"And you left him to it?" grinned Manners.

"He wefused to come on."

"I'd have licked him till he came!" said Blake.

A peculiar expression came over the noble face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Tompkins is a wathah extraordinaawy chap," he said.

"An extraordinary ass!" growled Herries. "Blessed if I know what you've taken him up for."

"I was twainin' him, Hewwies, to lick Mulvaney minah."

"Oh, bosh!"

"And what luck?" asked Manners, with a chuckle.

"The fact is, deah boy, I was a bettah twainah than I supposed," said Arthur Augustus. "Tompkins has come on wondahfully. I have given him a good many boxin' lessons, and now—ahem! You see, he wefused to come any furthah, because he was tired, and I told him I would thwash him if he did not come on."

"Hear, hear!" said Herries.

"So I started thwashin' him," said Arthur Augustus. "But—but—"

"But you let him off, like the soft chump you are!" said Herries.

"Nothin' of the sort, Hewwies."

"He didn't come on?" asked Tom.

"No."

"You didn't lick him?" demanded Blake.

"N-n-no."

"And why didn't you, then?"

"Because—because—" Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"Because what?" demanded the six juniors all at once.

"Because—it is weally vewy wemarkable—but—but—"

"But what?"

"He licked me!" confessed Arthur Augustus.

"Wha-at?"

Tom Merry & Co. stared blankly at the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus blinked at them ruefully. Then there was a roar of laughter in Study No. 6.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

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

"Oh dear!" sobbed Blake. "Gussy will be the death of me—I know he will! Why were you born so funny, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"He licked you!" gasped Tom Merry. "Oh, my hat! Was that what you were training him for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was weally a gweat surpwise to me," said Arthur Augustus. "Tompkins seemed quite fewocious—I weally do not know why. He did not seem to mind punishment at all. He just stood up to me, and there was a weally tewwif fight, and the uthah ass knocked me wight out. I weally nevah dweamed that he had it in him, you know. Of course, I am vewy pleased at this result of my twainin' him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But in some respects it is wathah disconcertin'," said Arthur Augustus, caressing his nose. "Fancy Tompkins bein' such a fightin'-man, you know! He was a vegulah tigh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! Here he is!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Clarence York Tompkins limped, wet and muddy, past the open doorway of the study. He stopped to look in sourly.

"That ass D'Arcy here?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"I am glad you got home all wight, Tompkins," said Arthur Augustus mildly.

"I got a lift on a market-cart," said Tompkins. "I told you I wouldn't walk back, and I didn't! Yah!"

"The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 841.

"Weally, Tompkins—?"

"Did I hurt your nose much?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm jolly glad! You'll think twice before you walk a chap off his legs another time!" said Tompkins.

"Weally, you ungwateful wottah—"

"Yah!"

Tompkins limped on to his study, leaving Study No. 6 in a roar. That unexpected outcome of Gussy's training was too much for Tom Merry & Co. They laughed till their tears ran down—what time Arthur Augustus D'Arcy caressed his noble nose. And Clarence York Tompkins, having limped into Study No. 4, sank down in an armchair, without even troubling to light the gas, and for a couple of hours at least he did not move.

When Mulvaney minor came up later he stumbled over Tompkins in the dark, and, having obtained a light, kicked Tompkins for being stumbled over. Tompkins eyed him.

"You wait till Monday!" he said.

"Phwat am I to wait for intirely?" asked Mulvaney, in surprise.

"I'm tired now," said Tompkins. "Just wait!"

"Sure I'll wait—and I'll give yez another kick to go on with for talking out of your hat!" said Mulvaney cheerily.

"Yow-ow!"

"And another for luck!"

"Wow!"

But that kick—little as Mick Mulvaney dreamed it at the moment—was the last he was to bestow upon Clarence York Tompkins. Arthur Augustus' training had not been in vain.

CHAPTER 11.

The Fall of the Mighty!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY eyed Tompkins of the Fourth a little uncertainly when they met the next morning. Tompkins came up to him with a cheery, smiling face.

"I've been lined again for fighting," he said.

"Have you weally, Tompkins?"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Tompkins. "Lathom noticed my nose. I say, D'Arcy, I'm sorry if I hurt you yesterday. I was waxey, you know—"

"You weally surpwise me vewy much, Tompkins."

"You see, I was jolly tired, and I'd have fought a dozen fellows rather than walk another step," explained Tompkins. "I'm still feeling rather stiff. But it's wearing off. I shall be all right to-morrow. Then you'll see what you will see!" added Tompkins mysteriously.

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus.

"I'm really very much obliged to you, you know," said Tompkins. "I say, I'm standing a spread to-morrow in my study. Will you come and bring your friends?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"Blake and Herries and Dig and Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther," said Tompkins. "It will be a top-hole spread—I've had a remittance from my uncle—a ripping feed, old chap! And it will be interesting, besides."

"Vewy well, deah boy, wely on me," said Arthur Augustus kindly.

"Good egg!"

That day Tompkins of the Fourth was very thoughtful, and sometimes he smiled to himself mysteriously. Great thoughts, apparently, were working in the powerful intellect of Tompkins.

The following day Tompkins seemed to be in unusually high spirits. After classes were over he paid a visit to the tuckshop, where his uncle's remittance was expended in a really lavish manner. Laden with parcels and packages, Tompkins repaired to Study No. 4 in the Fourth; and a few minutes later Mulvaney minor followed him in, as Tompkins expected.

Mulvaney surveyed the stack of good things on the table with great satisfaction.

"Sure, it's a broth of a boy ye are, Tompkins!" he said. "Ye're standing me a feed, are you? I'll fetch a few fellows—"

"I'm not standing you a feed, Mulvaney," said Tompkins coolly.

"Not?" asked Mulvaney.

"Not!" repeated Tompkins.

Mick Mulvaney pushed back his cuffs in the well-known way.

"Where will ye have it, Tompkins dear?" he asked.

Tompkins' answer was not in words, but in action. He whipped off his jacket and rushed at Mulvaney minor.

Mulvaney grinned and closed with him.

He fully expected to deal with Tompkins as easily as usual. But the surprise of his life awaited Mick Mulvaney.

Tompkins was a new Tompkins! He had discovered his own powers. Had he not licked Arthur Augustus, who was more than a match for Mulvaney?

Tompkins knew what he could do, and he proceeded to do it! He gave Mick Mulvaney right and left, left and right;

and the astonished Mick staggered across the study, roaring. Tompkins followed him up fast, hitting out.

"Take that—and that—and that—and that—"

"Arrah, and lave off!" yelled Mulvaney, backing away frantically from the whirlwind attack. "Chuck it intirely, and I'll let ye off!"

"And that—and that—and that—"

Crash!

Mulvaney minor went down with a concussion that shook the study. Tompkins danced round him, brandishing his fists.

"Get up!" he roared.

"Ow! Ow! Groogh! Ow! Wow!"

"Get up! I licked D'Arcy the other day! I'm going to lick you! Get on your feet, you funk!"

"Funk, is it?" gasped Mulvaney.

He scrambled up and rushed on Tompkins. But again it was a new Tompkins that stood up to his rush.

Mulvaney ran his nose on a fist, and his eye on a set of knuckles that were bony and hard. Still he fought gamely; but the new and amazing Tompkins walked all over him. It was a long round—but it ended with Mick Mulvaney lying on his back, staring up at the study ceiling and seeing there more stars than ever were seen in the sky.

"Bai Jove!"

Tompkins' guests had arrived. Seven juniors grinned into the study at the unexpected sight of Mulvaney minor sprawling and gasping on the floor, and Tompkins of the Fourth dancing round him and yelling to him to come on.

"Hallo! Tompkins on the giddy war-path!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Why, only the other day he was asking me to protect him from Mulvaney! He doesn't seem to need it now."

"It's Gussy's training!" chuckled Blake.

"Yess, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tea's nearly ready, you fellows!" gasped Tompkins.

"Wait a tick till I've finished thrashing Mulvaney! He's going to wait at table for us."

"Bai Jove!"

"Are you coming on again, Mulvaney?" roared Tompkins.

"Ow! Wow! Wow!" Mulvaney minor sat up dizzily.

"I'm done! Sure I give ye best! Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"Good! Now you're going to wait at table, same as you made me the other day!"

Mulvaney staggered up.

"Faith and I'm not!" he gasped.

"Not?" said Tompkins. He took Mulvaney by the collar and swung him round. His right foot came with a crash on Mulvaney's trousers, and the hapless Mick staggered and fell on his knees. "Did you say 'not,' Mulvaney?"

"Ow! Wow!"

"Yes or not?" roared Tompkins.

"Howly mother av Moses! Yis—yis intirely!" yelled Mulvaney.

"That's better! Make yourself useful!" said Tompkins briskly. "Mind, I kick you every time you slack!"

"Oh dear! Ochone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co., chuckling, sat down to tea. Tompkins sat down, too—keeping a ruler on the table beside him to "touch up" Mulvaney whenever that fallen cock of the walk needed touching up. He needed it several times—fagging for Tompkins was quite new to him. But—under the influence of touching up—he soon picked up the way of it. He made toast at the fire, he buttered it carefully, he made tea and poured it out, he cut cake, he boiled eggs, he carved ham—he did every duty that Tompkins commanded; and whenever he hesitated the ruler came into play. The loud laughter from Study No. 4 brought fellows along the passage to look in, and they roared in their turn. It was quite a successful spread—the only fellow who did not enjoy it was Mick Mulvaney! He had been cock of the walk in the study; but now, like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, he had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof!

It was fortunate for Mulvaney minor that Tompkins was by nature a mild and good-natured youth. Otherwise, Mulvaney might have found life in Study No. 4 as hard as Tompkins once had found it.

As it was, Tompkins was satisfied with having shown Mulvaney his place and put him into it. Twice again Mulvaney tried his luck in combat, and each time Clarence York Tompkins knocked him out—and after that Mick gave it up. Tompkins no longer stood tea for two; no longer were his uncle's remittances borrowed; no longer were his school books requisitioned when Mulvaney wanted to boil the kettle in a hurry. Clarence York Tompkins, in his turn, was cock of the walk, and all was calm and bright.

THE END.

(A most amusing and amazing tale of Tom Merry & Co. next week. Note the title: "THE OTHER GRUNDY." By Martin Clifford.)



**Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Awarded
for Interesting Paragraphs.**
(If You Do Not Win a Prize This Week—You May
Next!)

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: The
GEM LIBRARY, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House-
Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

TUCK FOR CUMBERLAND! FAIRLY CAPPED IT!

A buxom woman, trailing a small boy by the hand, entered a village hatter's, and, of course, was immediately entertained by the usual smiling assistant. "Er—er—yes, madam, what can I have the pleasure of serving you with?" "I want a cap for this 'ere lad." "Certainly, of course, madam!" exclaimed the smiling assistant. "What size would you like?" "Nine, ten, elevens will do," said the customer, after a few seconds' hesitation. "Oh!" exclaimed the much astonished assistant. "I'm much afraid we do not keep such a size." "Ow's that?" snapped the buxom lady. "The last one I got was six, seven-eights, and now I want a size larger. 'Ow's that, come young man!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to A. E. Rutland, Station Road, Wigton, Cumberland.

UNFORTUNATE!

A near-sighted man accompanied his wife to a portrait gallery. "That's the ugliest portrait I've ever seen!" he cried, striving vainly for a better view of the abomination. "Come away, you silly!" replied his wife. "That's a mirror!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Hinnon, Church Road, Coalisland, co. Tyrone, Ireland.

MISUNDERSTOOD!

Tommy came out of the room in which his father was tacking down carpet. He was crying lustily. "Why, Tommy," ejaculated his mother, "what's the matter?" "P-p-p-papa hit his finger with a hammer," sobbed Tommy. "Well, you needn't cry at a thing like that," comforted his mother. "Why didn't you laugh?" "I did!" sobbed Tommy, disconsolate.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Victor W. Troy, 4, Shalstone Road, Mortlake, S.W. 14.

EXPENSIVE RIVALRY!

"Yes," replied the suburbanite to his friend, "I had the prettiest garden you ever saw until my neighbour's chickens scratched the roots up." "Did you do anything?" asked the friend. "I did," was the reply. "I got a big tom-cat that soon made mincemeat of his chickens. Then he bought a fierce bulldog that finished my cat. I then borrowed from an animal-trainer a wolf, who put paid to his bulldog. A little later I heard he bought a tiger to kill my wolf, and as I couldn't afford an elephant I had to give up gardening!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Offer, 41, West End Road, Southall, Middlesex.

WORSE THAN EVER!

First Boy: "Your father must be an awful mean man. Him, a shoemaker, and making you wear those old boots!"
Second Boy: "He's nothing to what your father is. Him, a dentist, and your baby only got one tooth!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Commons, Corner of Arthur and Selwyn Streets, Onehunga, Auckland, New Zealand.

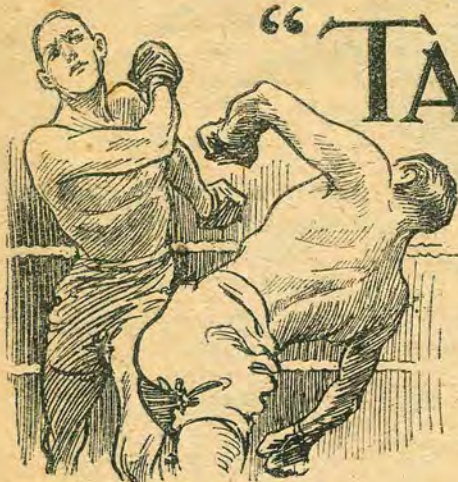
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No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by
one of these Coupons.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 841.

A Splendid Story of Tony Thornton, the fellow who has never been known to refuse a "dare" and who has earned for himself the nickname of "Take-a-Chance!"



"TAKE-A-CHANCE" THORNTON!

by Walter Edwards!

A Topping Boxing and Adventure Yarn.

CHAPTER 1. The Tempter!

DR. ONION—or some other sage—once affirmed that a nickname is a sure sign of personal popularity, but no hard and fast rule can be laid down upon this interesting point. For instance, there is a grim-visaged prison governor in America who is called many picturesque things by the beetle-browed gentlemen who writhe beneath his iron heel, and to all of them he is "Snake Bite" Grant. "Snake Bite" is his nickname, but it is anything but a sign of personal popularity, for there is not a man inside the prison walls who would not subscribe handsomely towards a wreath for the tyrant.

In the case of Tony Thornton, however, the pendulum swings the other way, for Take-a-Chance was undoubtedly one of the most popular fellows at Rundle's, the famous West Country sporting school.

Take-a-Chance was a senior, and he might have been sports skipper but for an incurable passion for "rags." He had all a junior's love of a practical joke, and the Head, although he liked Tony well enough, did not think him a right and proper person to hold the reins of office. With Thornton handling the "ribbons," he declared, there seemed every possibility of the steed of authority getting the bit between its teeth and running amok.

So Tony remained Take-a-Chance, beloved of seniors and juniors alike, a fellow who had never been known to refuse a "dare."

His rags were always quite harmless, however, although the pontifical dignity of a pompous under-master occasionally received a rude jolt. But Tony, in the ordinary way, confined his japing to the other fellows of the Sixth. Of course, there was the occasion when he had placed a bad-tempered hedgehog in the science master's bed.

But that is by the way.

Handsome, smiling, lithe-limbed, and fit as a fellow could be, Tony Thornton took life as he found it, and had he been suddenly whisked away to the North Pole he would have consoled himself with the thought that he did not suffer from chilblains. He was that type of fellow. Few were the things that could ruffle his equable temper, or disturb his habitual equanimity, and the affair of the statue—something in the nature of a tragedy—was taken with a philosophical calm that surprised even Tony's most intimate friends.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 341.

Sir Timothy Sneedle was at the bottom of everything, of course, and most of the trouble at Rundle's could be traced to the same source.

Sir Timothy, a brand-new baronet, who had by devious means managed to become a governor of the famous old school, was a gentleman who must have found a great deal of consolation in the saying that beauty is only skin deep, for his features were flat and irregular and bounded by a miniature forest of bristly, grey whiskers; and when he was annoyed—which was often—every individual whisker seemed to quiver with righteous indignation.

He was anything but an Adonis, and Timmins minor of the Third often declared that Sir Timothy's nurse must have caught the baronet's face in a door when he was young. This was merely hypothesis, of course, although there were many fellows at Rundle's who were inclined to agree with young Timmins' ingenious theory.

Sir Timothy, however, had never been invited to express an opinion upon this nice point.

Rundle's was, first and foremost, a sporting school, Rigger and boxing taking the premier place in the curriculum, and Sir Timothy Sneedle's stock took a lightning slump when it became known that he was something of an anti-sportsman. For Rundle's had no use for this anemic type, being one of the "hardest" schools in the country, where every new man had to go "through the mill" before anybody would even dream of extending the glad hand of friendship.

Every newcomer was "blooded" with a bout with the gloves, and it was upon his showing—upon his pluck, rather than upon his skill—that he was judged. Furthermore, it went hard with any timorous youngster who whined that he couldn't fight, or that he didn't wish to. He was made to fight, for every Rundle's man had to have a knowledge of the gentle art of not allowing the other fellow to take a liberty. Life at Rundle's was anything but a picnic for a boy coming straight from a preparatory school, but it was all excellent training.

Sir Timothy made known his revolutionary ideas in a long-winded speech on Founders' Day, when he addressed the assembled school in Great Hall.

Attired in a rusty frock-coat and baggy trousers, with his skinny neck encircled in a low collar that gave full play to his prominent Adam's apple, Sir Timothy coughed wheezily through his miniature forest of bristly whiskers, and ran his small eyes round the packed hall, his

whole bearing unfavourable. He was reputed to be a philanthropist, and his mean appearance suggested that his was the type of charity that started at home.

"Boys," he began, gripping the lapel of his coat and trying to look like Mr. Gladstone, "I wish to speak to you very seriously about the fetish which threatens to strike a death-blow not only at Rundle's, but at the very heart of the empire!"

This was a portentous utterance, and a stir ran through Great Hall as the speaker paused impressively.

"A fetish! He means Bolshevism!" declared young Timmins, in a shrill whisper, turning to his companion.

"Fathead!" returned little Lidstone scornfully. "He's talking about chilblains. Feet-itch! See?"

Timmins did see, and he had the greatest difficulty in smothering an explosive giggle.

"Silence!" hissed Mr. Maddick, glaring along the form, and the face of Timmins minor was one of sweet innocence.

"I refer," continued Sir Timothy, his narrow brow wearing a black frown, "to sport, that canker which is doing irreparable harm to our private and national life!"

That was straight to the point, and something very like a sibilant gasp ran through the building, for the words seemed to strike at the very foundations of the famous old school. The fellows, most of them open-mouthed, looked positively aghast, and even the Head had difficulty in controlling his features.

Sir Timothy Sneedle had much more to say in a similar strain, and he made it quite plain that, in his opinion, at any rate, games played too large a part in the life of the school.

"Most of you boys can think and talk of nothing other than House matches and boxing contests," declared Sir Timothy, warming up, "and I, for one, shall do all in my power to curtail many of the precious hours which are now given over to senseless, useless, and brutalising sports."

Again he paused impressively, but not even the suspicion of a gasp broke from his hearers, who were past everything—speechless. Had Sir Timothy taken it into his head to preach the doctrine of cannibalism, they would have listened to him with polite interest, and some show of surprise, perhaps; but that he, a governor of Rundle's, should make a violent attack upon sport, was altogether incomprehensible, unheard of, bewildering.

Not a sound broke the almost uncanny

silence as Sir Timothy glanced down at his notes.

"Most attentive—most attentive!" he mused, little dreaming that his bombshell had almost petrified his audience. He had a lot more to say, and he said it with an unctuous relish that made Take-a-Chance Thornton shift uneasily in his chair.

Tony was a great sportsman, and he loved Rundle's with a fervour that amounted almost to fanaticism, and to have to sit there and listen to the attack upon the cherished traditions of the old school brought an angry gleam into his mild blue eyes. He even wondered whether it would be altogether prudent to get up and have a few words with Sir Timothy, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he was able to stifle the almost irresistible desire.

The speech came to an end at last, and no sooner were the fellows back in their respective Houses than the baronet's bombshell was discussed with an animation which would doubtless have flattered Sir Timothy's mean little soul. He anti-sport speech was a burning brand that started a conflagration that raged through the school, and there was not a senior or junior who was not boiling with indignation.

Take-a-Chance Thornton, standing before the fire in the seniors' Common-room, was holding forth with much force, his finely-chiselled features flushed, his blue eyes glinting.

"Something must be done!" he declared almost fiercely, shaking a clenched fist under the aristocratic nose of the Hon. Beldrom Deighton. "Tame Timothy must be checked; he must be nipped in the bud; his wings must be clipped; we must put a tuck in his pinafore. This is a fight for freedom, my brothers of the Soviet, and we must unite against the tyrant who would rob us of our birthright! For he is a tyrant, my brethren, and the day will dawn when he will allow us nothing to eat—but food! Shout 'Hear, hear!' you idiots!"

"Hear, hear!" cried the smiling seniors obediently; and they knew that Take-a-Chance, despite his "rotting," did not mean to take Sir Timothy's attack lying down. Thornton, who skipped the Rugger fifteen, and had represented Rundle's in the Public Schools' Competition, took Sneedle's words as a personal affront; and there was a mischievous light in the depths of his mild, blue eyes that boded ill for the kill-joy baronet.

"Something must be done, my brothers!" cried Take-a-Chance once more. He paused thoughtfully. "I wonder of there's some way of rigging up a jolly little Star Chamber," he mused. "The only thing is, we don't want to disturb the birds that are nesting in Timothy's whiskers!"

A roar of laughter broke from the other seniors.

"I like that Star Chamber idea, old man," put in "Wowzer" Smith pleasantly. "Boilin' oil and thumb-screws and white-hot needles, and all that sort of thing!"

"I'm afraid it can't be done, though," mused Take-a-Chance regretfully.

"Wouldn't it be possible to add a certain liveliness to the unveiling ceremony on Saturday?" asked Slazenger, Thornton's particular friend, a twinkle in his dark eyes.

Tony's healthy face lit up with enthusiasm.

"The very idea, by Jove!" he said. "But we shall have to watch our step. This merry old unveiling performance is going to be an event in the civic life of Little Moulton, and any young gentleman who is caught acting the ox is

likely to get it in the neck. Still, I think we ought to take a chance, all the same. What think you, my brethren?"

"What's the idea, old man?" asked four or five voices.

Thornton suddenly became as grave as a dyspeptic owl, a rigid index finger upon his temple.

"Perfect imitation of a gentleman in thought," he announced whimsically; but he was thinking hard, all the same. Nearly a minute ticked away, and then a smile, like the dawn of another day, overspread his clean-cut features. "There is no reason, my brethren," he said, speaking very quietly, "why we should not do things to that imposing statue on the eve of the unveiling ceremony!"

The words, simple though they were, opened up all sorts of possibilities, and a deep chuckle broke from the assembly.

"That's so," agreed Wowzer Smith. "But you mustn't forget that it means the sack for anybody who is caught monkeying about with the work of art!"

"I do not forget, my son," smiled Thornton easily. "And it is for that reason that I am willing to sacrifice myself upon the altar of our rights!"

"You mean—"

"I mean," put in Thornton quietly, "that I shall take a chance!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Solemn Ceremony!

ONE person in Little Moulton had subscribed very handsomely to the statue of Sir Timothy Sneedle that was to be unveiled in the Market Square, and that person was Sir Timothy himself.

The baronet was mayor of the thriving little West Country town, and the idea of a statue—a lasting monument to his greatness—intrigued him. Owning a great deal of property in the town, as well as a number of shops, he regarded himself in the light of an uncrowned king of the place; and he saw nothing even remotely ludicrous in erecting an effigy of himself in the Market Square. He was the type of individual who wouldn't.

Indeed, with his worthy and self-conscious councillors about him, he was going to conduct the unveiling ceremony himself; and he had instructed the town band to master the inspiring strains of "See the Conquering Hero Comes!"

Dr. Crowthorson, the Head of Rundle's, had intimated that the school was to assemble at the ceremony in full force; and the fact that certain important footer fixtures would have to be scratched on this account did nothing to endear Sir Timothy to the schoolboys.

Still, everybody agreed that it was likely to be "great fun"; but few were prepared for what actually happened on the solemn occasion.

Saturday afternoon found Little Moulton en fete, streamers and flags lending a touch of brightness and gaiety to the narrow old Fore Street that winds its tortuous way down to the Market Square. The townsfolk, most of whom were in their Sunday best, had assembled in great numbers, whilst the whole juvenile population had been upon the spot from an early hour. Rumour said that Sir Timothy was going to distribute oranges and sweets; but Rumour, as Take-a-Chance Thornton once remarked, is in the habit of talking through its hat.

Certain it is that oranges and sweets did not figure in the unveiling ceremony—which probably accounts for the quantity of mud that bespattered the statue of Sir Timothy at a later date.

The whole of the Little Moulton Constabulary—two youthful policemen and a sergeant with a squint—had charge of the traffic arrangements, and it is pleasing to record that nothing of a riotous nature happened during the early part of the proceedings.

The vast crowd was quite orderly, and listened in open-mouthed rapture to the strain—that is, strains—of the town's silver band. The musicians, who appeared to be somewhat nervous, were either artisans or shop assistants, and each wore a misfit in the way of head-gear. For instance, the drummer, a very fat man with thin legs, had a little peaked cap that wobbled precariously upon the top of his bald head, whilst the gentleman with the cornet, a lean and stringy person with a big Adam's apple that jerked up and down like a crazy lift, would certainly have been smothered had it not been for his protuberant ears.

The new statue, which was draped in a big sheet, stood in the middle of the Market Square, and a raised platform had been erected at its base to accommodate the mayor and his retinue.

Two tiny chimes broke protestingly from the town-hall clock, and then a murmur of voices came from the end of Fore Street.

It was the cry of the sycophant!

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Sir Timothy!"

"Three cheers for the mayor!"

The police-sergeant, who looked very important, despite his squint, raised a stentorian voice.

"Make way for Sir Timothy Sneedle!" he shouted; and the assembly—the greater part of it wearing Rundle's colours—parted in docile obedience to the voice of law and order.

The baronet, resplendent in his robes of office, advanced with haughty mien and stately stride; and he might have been an undertaker's mute from the funereal expression upon his unlovely features.

It was an impressive and solemn moment—an occasion for the deep note of the organ and soul-stirring anthems; yet there was at least one person in the awed crowd who was not enthralled by the spectacle.

"You'll find the body upstairs!" cried a shrill voice; and the next moment the air was vibrating with a roar of hearty laughter.

An angry flush overspread the irregular features of Sir Timothy Sneedle; his little eyes flashed fire; down in the forest something stirred; every individual whisker bristled. In days of old he would doubtless have exclaimed: "Throw that infant to the lions!" And Timmins minor would have come to a premature and unpleasant end.

Proceeding with dignified tread, Sir Timothy halted at the base of the statue, his moist-browed councillors taking up their positions on either side of him; and it was to a crash of discordant sound that the mayor mounted the steps of the platform and raised his skinny hand in salute.

He was, of course, enjoying every moment of the affair, and his heart thumped against his ribs when he saw that the local newspapers had gone to the expense of a camera. This outstanding event in the history of the Empire might be recorded in the London Press!

Coughing in wheezy fashion, Sir Timothy gave a wintry smile, and ran his eyes over the upturned faces of the crowd, and then he began to speak.

"Fellow-townsmen and—"

Boom! Boom! Zing-tin-a-ling! crashed the silver band, fairly getting into its stride; and Sir Timothy, flushing hotly, frowned across at Jarvis, the conductor, and the melody died down to pianissimo.

Sir Timothy's wintry smile broke through the frost.

"Fellow-townsmen and—" he began. Boom! Boom! Zim-zim-zim! Ta-ra! Ta-ra! Boom! Zing! crashed out the band once more; and this time the mayor snatched at his official hat and flung it violently to the floor of the platform.

"Stop that infernal din, you idiots!" he roared, his thin voice cracking under the strain.

Zoom! Bang! Ding, ding, ding! answered the silver band; and Sir Timothy was saved from an attack of apoplexy by the timely action of the squint-eyed police-sergeant, who poked the bandmaster in the ribs and told him to "Stow that bloomin' row, can't yer?"

The unfortunate contretemps at an end, the somewhat dishevelled mayor smiled once again, and proceeded with his speech; and once more he took sport as his subject.

Having warned his fellow-townsmen against the evil of football and boxing, he turned to horse-racing and its attendant evil, betting; and his eloquence upon this part of his subject almost carried him away.

"Betting is a deadly sin, my men," he cried, his eyes flashing, "and the only persons who benefit are the low bookmakers, the parasites who should be destroyed, ruthlessly and for all time!"

Sir Timothy denounced bookmakers for fully five minutes; and he might

have talked for another hour had one of his councillors not jerked a thumb in the direction of the statue.

"Ah, yes! Quite so!" said the mayor, beaming. "Nobody in this large and distinguished audience can know how much I appreciate the public-spirited action in erecting this magnificent statue to one so unworthy as myself!"

"Hear, hear!" cried Take-a-Chance Thornton heartily; and a slight frown corrugated the narrow brow of Sir Timothy Sneedle.

"This statue is a monument that will go down to posterity as a mark of your love and esteem for one who has always tried to do his humble best for his fellow-men," continued the mayor. "And it now gives me great pleasure to unveil this work of art, that you may feast your eyes upon something that will always bring a ray of sunshine into your hearts! Behold, fellow-townsmen!"

Turning to the draped effigy, he pulled a cord; and scarcely had the big sheet dropped, revealing the statue, than a mighty roar of laughter, which must have been heard for five miles round, broke from the wide-eyed assembly, and Sir Timothy clapped his hand to his head and tottered, as though he had been struck by a spectral fist!

CHAPTER 3.

Sacked!

IT was unquestionably the statue of himself that confronted the bulging eyes of Sir Timothy Sneedle, but it was himself with a difference.

He had expected to see himself in his customary frock-coat and baggy trousers, his low collar and big black tie; but in place of these sombre garments was a

suit of draught-board checks, a vivid yellow tie, and a grey silk hat, the latter being tilted over one eye at a rakish angle!

He looked the music-hall bookmaker to the life, especially as he had an open satchel slung in front of him and a big card pinned to his chest.

"BILLY FAIRPLAY, of HOXTON! THE OLD FIRM!"

said the card. But Mr. Fairplay bore a striking likeness to Sir Timothy Sneedle!

The baronet stared at the work of art like a person petrified, whilst the laughter on all sides rose to a deafening crescendo.

It did not take the townsfolk long to realise that somebody had played a joke upon the mayor—and, for some inscrutable reason, many were the laughing glances that were flung in the direction of the Rundle's fellows; but there was not a scholar who did not look pained and shocked at the outrage!

Sir Timothy, however, had his own opinion upon the matter, for he suddenly swung round and glared ferociously at the innocent faces of the schoolboys.

"Who did it?" he cried wildly, clenching his skinny fists and shaking like a man with ague. "Who did it? I'll find out! You must find him, Crowtherston!" This command was flung at the pale-faced Head. "The scoundrel shall be found and expelled upon the spot! It's a dastardly outrage! It's an unforgivable insult! It—it amounts almost to sacrilege!" Again he turned to the effigy, and the mere sight of it threatened to rob him of his remaining vestige of sanity, for he flew at the thing and sent the silk "topper" flying from its head with a vicious sweep of his skinny arm. But he had not finished, for within a matter of seconds the check suit and yellow tie had been torn from the statue, revealing the work of art in all its original beauty.

"Some scoundrel did this during the night!" fumed Sir Timothy, glaring over his shoulder at the Head of Rundle's. "Somebody dressed my statue up like a Guy Fawkes! But we'll find him, Crowtherston, we'll find him!"

The townsfolk, forgetting the respect they owed to their mayor, were still shouting with laughter; and the fact that the baronet had thoroughly lost his temper did nothing to assuage their merriment.

Sir Timothy was making a laughing-stock of himself, and Dr. Crowtherston turned to the masters who were with him.

"Get the boys back to the school," he said shortly. "We must act at once!"

Like Sir Timothy Sneedle, he felt convinced that a Rundle's fellow was at the bottom of the "rag," and, unlike Sir Timothy, he had a very shrewd idea as to the identity of the culprit.

"It was bound to come," he murmured, as, turning slowly, he set off for the school. "It had to come—but I'm sorry!"

The tocsin called everybody into Big Hall late that evening, and the proceedings were short, but dramatic.

"Will the person responsible for this afternoon's outrage kindly step up to the dais?" asked the Head, his voice low, his fine features expressionless.

A silence, tragic and almost uncanny, settled upon the lofty old Hall. There came a momentary pause that seemed like a dreadful eternity; then Take-a-Chance Thornton rose from his seat and walked along the aisle to the dais.



Turning to the draped effigy, Sir Timothy Sneedle pulled a cord, and scarcely had the big sheet dropped, revealing the statue, than a mighty roar of laughter broke from the wide-eyed assembly.

That same night Thornton left Rundle's, never to return. He had taken one chance too many!

CHAPTER 4. The Critic!

IT was the night of the "Important International Heavy-weight Contest"—so said the posters—between Fighting Fred Fenn (England) and Pierre Lupin (France), and the Olympus Boxing Stadium was packed from the sumptuous ringside chairs to the last row of seats in the gallery.

The fight was scheduled to go twenty rounds, but the omniscient boxing scribes were of the opinion that Fighting Fred would take the long count before the bout had gone half the distance, for Pierre Lupin was a new force in boxing.

A protege of the famous Georges Moreau, the heavy-weight champion of Europe, Lupin was young and ambitious, added to which he was that nice combination of boxer and fighter that seems quite at home with any type of opponent.

Pierre had done well in France and Belgium, having cleaned up most of the men at his weight; but his contest at the Olympus Stadium was his first engagement in England.

Much interest had been roused throughout the country, for Lupin, in a number of interviews, had declared himself dissatisfied at not having been matched with Johnny Murrain, the heavy-weight champion of Great Britain. That he regarded his affair with Fenn as a "soft thing" was obvious; and he did not endear himself to the British sporting public in consequence of his contemptuous attitude.

"It will be all over in less than three rounds," he had declared on the morning of the contest; and there were many persons in the Stadium who hoped the hiding of his life—just for the good of his soul.

It was on the stroke of nine-forty-five when Fighting Fred Fenn strode down the sloping aisle leading to the ringside, and a glance at his somewhat pale features showed that the importance of the occasion was not lost upon him. To-night he was getting his chance—the chance that comes to most moderately clever boxers once in a lifetime; and a favourable verdict was going to mean much to him, probably the difference between big purses and mediocrity.

No sooner did he put in an appearance than he was greeted by a cataclysm of barbaric sound, the sober hand-clapping of the patrons in the ringside seats being drowned by the din of whistling and catcalls that came from the humble sportsmen in the pit and gallery.

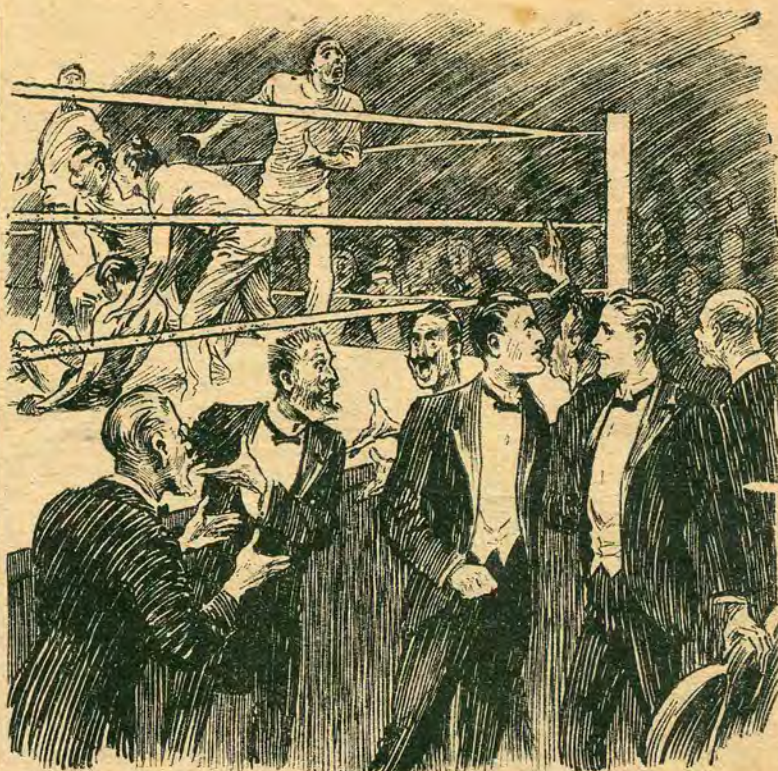
"Good old Fred!"

"Put it across 'im, Fenny, boy!"

"Now, then, Freddy!"

With a little nervous smile playing about his lips, the boxer gripped the top rope and slipped into the ring, followed closely by old Bill Batty, his chief second, and three sweater-clad gentlemen who looked anything but a beauty chorus. Each had his profession stamped indelibly upon his battered face, but they were a good-natured, grinning little family party.

A full minute ticked away, a period of time that seemed like an hour, and then the curtains parted once more, and Pierre Lupin, debonair and smiling, made his initial bow to the British public; and no good purpose could be served by blinking at the fact that his reception was somewhat chilly, even Arctic.



"I claim a foul!" cried a Frenchman, who was standing near the referee. "That man Fenn hit Pierre low!" "Don't talk rot, old man," said a pleasant voice at his back. Swinging round, the Frenchman found himself looking into the smiling blue eyes of a young man of eighteen or so.

Whether in keeping Fenn waiting he was playing the old American trick—that of trying to get the other fellow's nerves on edge—is open to question, but if such was the case he merely succeeded in putting the crowded "house" into a bad humour.

"Get a move on, Lupin!" shouted an impatient voice from the gallery as Pierre moved leisurely down the gangway, his white teeth gleaming, his sleek head smooth as a billiard-ball.

"Villy voo get a jerk into it, see voo play, monsoor?" asked a Cockney from the back of the pit. "You're puttin' a severe strain on the old Ongtonk Cordial!"

The shrill voice brought a roar of laughter from all parts of the packed building, and Captain Adrian Bland, the promoter, heaved a sigh of relief.

Little time was wasted upon preliminaries, the examination of bandages, and so on taking no more than four or five minutes, and then came the command:

"Seconds out!"

Scuttling through the ropes like so many scared rabbits, the sweater-clad figures dropped to the floor. Then:

Clang!

The boxers met in the middle of the ring, Fenn tight-lipped and serious, Pierre smiling and nonchalant; and, the customary handshake over, the former stepped out of distance and commenced to circle round his man, meaning to take his measure, whilst the Frenchman watched him with amused, mildly contemptuous eyes.

It had long been Lupin's boast that such was his personality that he could often beat his opponent before a blow had been struck, and he was doubtless experimenting upon Fighting Fred Fenn.

Fenn, however, proved to be a bad subject for this mind-over-matter business, for he suddenly feinted with his right, darted forward, and pushed out a straight left that smashed against the Frenchman's mouth and removed that contemptuous smile, much as a damp sponge removes a figure from a slate.

It was a hard blow, and unexpected, and Lupin's sleek head went back with an unpleasant jerk; and even as he skipped backwards, hoping to get out of danger, he shipped a jolt just under the heart, a nasty, snappy, upward punch that made him gasp.

He had covered up in a flash, however, tucking his lean chin away and adopting the American crouch, but he was forced to give ground as Fenn waded into him, both gloves twitching in a most disconcerting manner.

"At him, Freddy!" came a roar from the gallery.

"Shake him up!" cried a sportsman from the pit, as though the handsome Pierre were a bottle of sauce.

"What are you grinnin' about, old man?" inquired somebody else solicitously.

There was a shade of irony in the question, for the debonair Frenchman was smiling no longer; indeed, his thin lips were set in a grim, straight line, and the fixed look in his dark eyes was scarcely pleasant to behold. Gone was the virile type of romantic actor, and in its place was the primitive fighting-man who looked almost vulpine.

Lupin had looked forward to an easy and spectacular victory, and this early turning of the tables had upset his plans and given him an ugly bruise just under his heart.

Still retreating, he peered over his gloves at the solemn-faced Briton, and then like lightning he leapt, shooting

out a left that was a sleep-pill. He had hoped to take Fenn off his guard, but Fenn had made a close study of his foxy methods, and that lightning punch, instead of connecting, merely grazed the jaw.

Fenn must have had wonderful judgment, for he had moved his head but a quarter of an inch, and, added to this, he timed another upward punch that caught Pierre Lupin in the base of the chest and forced a coughing grunt from his parted lips.

It was a terrific blow, and Lupin became suddenly limp, and the next moment a snappy hook crashed against his jaw, and he crumpled up like an empty golf-bag, to sink to the canvas in a huddled, grotesque heap.

"Two—three—"

The toneless voice was already droning the boxer's death-knell, but there was so much shouting round the ring-side that nobody appeared to be taking the slightest notice of the officials.

"Pierre was hit low!" shouted an immaculate young man on the right of the referee, jumping to his feet, his handsome face flushed, his dark eyes gleaming. "Fenn hit him low! It was a foul!" He spoke in English, and then followed a torrent of French as he shouted across to the wild-eyed seconds in Lupin's corner:

"A foul! A foul!"

The cry was taken up in many parts of the building, but it was the knot of well-groomed men near the referee who were protesting most vehemently. There was a party of them, all in evening dress and bearing the stamp of gentlemen, and it was obvious that their support of their French companion was done more in the spirit of a "rag" than anything else.

"I claim a foul!" cried the son of Gaul again and again. "That man Fenn hit Pierre low!"

"Don't talk rot, old man!" said a pleasant voice at his back; and, swinging round, he found himself looking into the smiling blue eyes of a young man of eighteen or so.

"M'sieur?"

The tone was haughty.

"I said you were talking rot, old man!" repeated the stranger. "That body-punch was perfectly clean. The best man won!"

"You think that, do you?"

The eyes of the Frenchman's companions were upon the stranger—smiling, good-natured eyes.

"I do. I couldn't have done better myself," came the cool reply.

The other man flushed, obviously somewhat nettled.

"Pah!" he said. "You talk—how do you say it?—through your bowler hat!"

"You shouldn't say that, old man!" put in one of the party reprovingly.

"That's rude, you know!"

"I care not!" snapped the Frenchman, still looking very red about the ears. "He has his remedy."

"Meaning that we should have a little mild flirtation with the gloves?" smiled the stranger, a twinkle in his mild blue eyes.

"As you wish, m'sieur!" came the ready answer. "The hospitality of our club is at your service. I am put out. You told me not to talk the rot!"

"What do you say, old man?" asked another of the party eagerly. "Why not have a couple of rounds in our gym? It'll be no end of a 'rag'!"

The stranger ran his eyes over the slim Frenchman, noting the slender wrists and somewhat narrow chest. It did not look like a fair deal to him, and he hesitated.

"Perhaps m'sieur is afraid?" sneered the Frenchman.

The stranger rose from his chair, a hard light in his mild blue eyes.

"Not in the least, I assure you," he said easily.

"Then you will box with me at my club?"

"Certainly!" smiled Tony Thornton. "I'll take a chance!"

CHAPTER 5.

The Knock Out!

THE gymnasium of the Berrington Sporting Club, in Piccadilly, is one of the most perfectly equipped apartments of its kind, and Tony Thornton's eyes were shining as he stood inside the boxing-ring and waited for the Frenchman to emerge from the dressing-room.

Tony had already slipped out of his coat and waistcoat, and the assembled members were smiling in happy anticipation as they ran expert eyes over the young man's magnificent frame.

The disgruntled Frenchman was soon upon the scene, having removed coat, waistcoat, dress shirt, and collar, and Take-a-Chance saw that his limbs, although slender, were strong and wiry.

The Hon. Derik Brough, the amateur heavy-weight, consented to hold the watch, and it was to his mellow call of "Time!" that Tony and his opponent moved from their respective corners.

Each employed the first half minute of the round getting a measure of the other, and then the Frenchman commenced to use both hands in a manner which convinced Tony that he had taken on somebody who was certainly not a novice. The Frenchman's speed was almost bewildering, whilst the blows from those slender arms were as powerful as a kick from a mule. And he was quick—like a ray of light. And his defence was a revelation.

The end of the first round found Take-a-Chance upon the retreat, for the other fellow's uncanny speed seemed to increase with the passing of seconds.

The next round was what is sometimes described as a tear-up, and the Hon. Derik Brough afterwards declared that it made the Great War look as harmless as a pillow-fight.

Both men fought with a speed and

strength that made the onlookers gasp, and fistic science played a very big part all the way through. The boxers were almost perfect in both defence and attack, and the end of the round found them showing obvious signs of wear.

The minute intermission at an end, they came up for the third—and final—round, and the manner in which the stranger set about the Frenchman brought an involuntary cry from a dozen members. He was a human fighting machine at that moment—a thing of flashing arms and legs—and such was the devastating power behind each punch that he quickly had his man reeling before him, a gasping, battered, almost pitiable figure.

Then over came a left—then a right—then another left, and the Frenchman's knees sagged beneath him, and he pitched forward upon his face. "Out!"

It was half an hour later, and the members of the Berrington Sporting Club were crowding round Tony Thornton who was standing before the open fireplace in the mellow old smoke-room.

"Of course, I recognise him now," he smiled, his blue eyes shining with excitement. "I guess my luck was in!"

"Not at all," said Bryan Milton, the racing motorist. "The best man won, and Moreau will be the first to admit it!"

"And I am, dear fellow!" cried the heavy-weight champion of Europe, striding across the carpet with outstretched hand. "You were magnificent! Superb!"

Take-a-Chance Thornton flushed as he gripped the boxer's lean hand.

"Thanks!" he said. "It's jolly decent of you to say so, Moreau!"

"But why have I not heard of you?" asked the Frenchman. "Where have you been fighting? There is no other heavy-weight in your country who can compare with you! You are superb!"

"I don't suppose you've heard of me, because I was at Rundle's until a week or so ago, and then I was sacked!" smiled Thornton, a trifle wistfully. "Still, that's a long story!"

"And what are you doing now?" asked the Hon. Derik Brough. "Forgive the question, won't you?"

Tony Thornton gave a slight shrug of his broad shoulders.

"I am at a loose end just now, as a matter of fact," he confessed. "Just floating around, you know; but I expect I shall swot for the Bar."

"No, no, my friend! You must not!" cried Moreau, his voice vibrant with alarm. "You are the man your country is waiting for—a heavy-weight! You will go far! You can beat Johnny Murray; you can beat me; perhaps you may beat Jack Nelson, the American! You are born for it; it is in your blood!"

"There's a lot in what Moreau says, old man," put in Brough. "Why don't you think about it? The Berrington would back you, of course!"

Tony Thornton looked thoughtful; and then, in characteristic fashion, he came to a decision.

"Moreau, O Son of Gaul," he said, smiling into the champion's eyes, "I'll take a chance!"

THE END.

(Look out for a grand yarn of thrilling mystery in next week's GEM, chums, entitled: "THE BEAD NECKLACE!" By Reginald Wray. The St. Jim's story for next Wednesday is a corker, also—a real scream, which no Gemite can afford to miss. The title is "The Other Grundy!" It's extra-special!)

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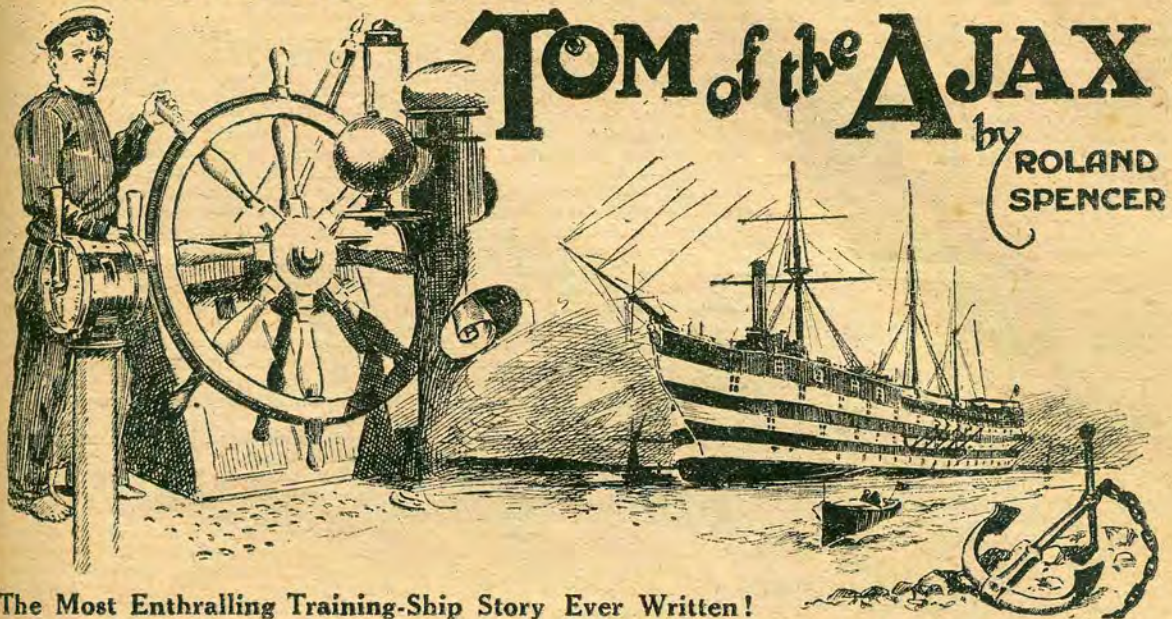
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YOUNG BRITAIN

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Another thrilling instalment this week, chums!



The Most Enthralling Training-Ship Story Ever Written!

An Amazing Finish!

THE friendly notice of a popular C.P.O. like Gale was something to be sought after, and Tom's act did a lot to help Hemming with his other companions, who had been none too pleasant with him of late, in spite of his break with Burr. But now Hemming joined in with the others, and was laughing and shouting with the rest, when a ship's officer came hurrying up to shout angrily for order.

The excitement brought about by the imminence of the gig-race grew to something like fever pitch as the hour drew near. Gig-racing was the sport on board the training-ship, and the enmity of Stoniky Burr for Tom Gale, which was well known aboard the Ajax, added interest tenfold. As far as the starboard watch was concerned, it was a race between Hoods and Blakes. They would never believe that either of the two port boats—the Nelsons and the Frobishers—could take first place that evening—or second place, either, for that matter.

The youngsters of the divisions that had been already eliminated in the heats were lining the bulwarks on the upper deck of the training-ship, or rowing round in other boats near the starting-line, when at last the four crews paddled out to their position. A shout went up that scared the seagulls for half a mile down the river.

The course was a stiff one—a mile up against the tide to a buoy which had to be rounded, and then a mile back with the stream to the Ajax.

The Blakes were the first to paddle out to their starting position between the training-ship and the shore. Burr, sitting in the stern with the yoke lines in his hands, glanced queerly at Tom as the Hoods paddled out with the Frobishers.

Tom, shouting orders to his crew, did not notice Burr; he did not see that odd look in Burr's face as the leader of the Blakes glanced almost furtively up and down the river.

There was plenty of traffic on the water, going down with the ebb tide—barges, coasters, and tugs, with a big liner disappearing in the soft, first mists

of evening down towards Sea Reach, in tow of a couple of tugs. From somewhere on the opposite shore came the chug, chug of a far-off motor-boat. Hemming, in the Blakes' gig, noticed that Burr seemed to listen as the sound came to them.

"Clear the course there, you there in the jolly-boat!" roared the officer of the watch through his megaphone, and the smaller boat drew in towards the side of the great training-ship. "Get in line there!"

The four gigs paddled into line, but it was some little time before the officer was satisfied. A deadly silence had fallen—a silence fired with tense expectancy.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

TOM GALE, a sturdily-built youth and chief petty officer of the starboard watch aboard the famous old training-ship Ajax.

STONIKY BURR, C.P.O. of the starboard watch, a bully of the first water.

DICKY WEST is a cheerful ginger-headed youth and a staunch chum of Gale's.

Trouble arises when a mysterious, sinister man in green spectacles approaches Burr. He gives his name as KALCHE, and he enlists the aid of Burr in a plot against Tom Gale, without, however, giving any reasons.

Following this Tom falls an easy prey to a trick of Burr's, is disgraced, and struck off the list of boys detailed to sail on the annual cruise round the British Isles aboard the *Ulysses*.

A mad impulse seizes him, however, and, stealing out of his bunk at night, Tom plunges over the side of the Ajax, swims to the *Ulysses*, clambers aboard, and stows himself away in the chain-locker. His wild adventure comes to a sad ending, for, on reaching Harwich, he is taken ashore and delivered to the guard of an express for his journey back to the Ajax.

The train is wrecked. Tom is crawling out of the wreckage when he is rushed upon, overpowered, and carried to a car, in which he is conveyed to a lonely house on the moor. He effects an escape, however, but Kalche and his men are soon hot on his track.

With the aid of AVALANCHE HUME, the famous detective, Tom gains his freedom, and reaches the *Ulysses* in time to win the boxing contest for the "Avalanche" Cup.

Later, Hemming owes up to the painting of the Ajax's nose, and Gale is reinstated as C.P.O. The hands of the two then meet in a grip of friendship.

That same evening, during a friendly chaff at the tea-table, Gale pells Hemming with a bread pellet.

(Now read on.)

Chug, chug, chug, came the distant sound of the motor-boat somewhere in the stream, hidden by the trailing mist-wreaths that were drifting on the surface of the river.

And then—
Crack!

The starting-pistol rang out. Simultaneously the long oars, that had been held upright in two straight lines along the length of the boats, dropped into the crutches. The blades lashed out, churning the dark water to foam. The gigs leapt forward like things alive. The race had begun!

A great roar went up from the Ajax, as the four gigs shot through the water dead level. Though the onlookers had all been eliminated from the race by the earlier heats, each youngster hoped that the final victors would be a division from his own watch.

"Starboards! Starboards!"

"Po-o-o-orts! Go it, ports!"

Already it was seen that the Nelsons were forging ahead, and the port watch fellows, looking on, grew hoarse with cheering. But the Nelsons were their one hope. Already the Frobishers were dropping behind. The pace was too hot for them.

The Hoods and the Blakes, only a few yards separating their oar-blades, might have been lashed by invisible ropes. The bows of the two gigs were still dead level. But already the two starboard gigs were drawing, inch by inch, nearer and nearer to the leading boat.

"Sock into it, you chaps!" yelled Tom, in the stern of the Hoods' gig. "Put your beef into it! Pull, Watkins, you lame duck—pull!"

It was grim, desperate work against the strong ebb tide, and the teeth of the boat crews were set viciously, doggedly. The sweat streamed from them, and the four coxs shouted themselves hoarse as they urged their crews on. Staring, coxing the leading gig, felt that he was being overhauled, and yelled desperately to his men to keep their hard-won lead. A port cheer came from the Ajax as the Nelsons' gig was seen to draw away again from her pursuers.

And still the Blakes and the Hoods struggled on side by side, neither able

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to creep ahead. The Frofishers were well behind, pulling desperately; but it was obviously a lost race already, as far as they were concerned.

And then Tom's heart leaped. Though only by inches, he saw that the Hoods were fighting their way ahead, hot in the wake of the leading Nelsons.

Stoniky Burr saw it, too. He meant to beat Tom—for the bully it was a personal tussle; there was no question of divisional rivalry in this race where Burr was concerned. He shouted savagely to his crew. His tongue was like a lashing whip, and at the still further effort of will and muscle of the Blakes, they won back those lost inches and more. Burr's face was lit with ugly triumph as the Hoods fell behind.

The Nelsons' lead had decreased again, and though Starling urged on his crew till his voice was little more than a hollow croak, the leaders were unable to hold their own. They had started off too hard, and now they had to pay for it. A distant starboard cheer from the Ajax, left well behind now, came to their ears as the Blakes fought their way past the Nelsons, to be followed by the Hoods.

Dicky West, at stroke in the Hoods' gig, could see the Nelsons dropping back. He glanced at Tom's face, and read there, in its tense expectancy, that they were nearing the buoy.

"Pull, pull, pull!" Tom, swaying to the motion of the oars, saw that it was useless to hope to round the buoy before the Blakes. But here was where a bit of good coxing would help them, and he judged to a fraction as he called suddenly:

"Ease off, port—pull, starboard! That'll help me with the rudder! Pull, pull, pull!"

The gig came round beautifully, the blades of the port oars within a hair's breadth of the buoy.

"Now!" yelled Tom.

The sweating youngsters felt new life in them as the tide seized the boat and drove it on. The Blakes were a quarter of a length ahead, neither losing nor gaining, and the two gigs cut through the water with smashing speed. Tom's face was set. Could the Hoods hope to get ahead now?

"Sock into it!" he shouted again. "Get down to it! Show the lubbers what the Hoods can do!"

The Hoods gained a few inches. Then it seemed to Tom that the Blakes drew ahead again. Dicky West, his eyes staring dimly at nothing in particular, saw vaguely that the Nelsons were just rounding the buoy, with the Frofishers a few lengths behind them. Beyond, up the river, the mist seemed denser. A foghorn blared out from an invisible ship.

"Fog's coming down the river pretty quickly," muttered an officer aboard the Ajax, as he peered through his binoculars at the distant gigs as they came swiftly nearer. "It'll be sickening if it closes in on those youngsters and spoils—" He broke off, to exclaim swiftly: "The Hoods are almost level now! Now the Blakes have drawn away—no, the Hoods are after 'em!"

The face of the officer was keen and excited. He made a slight adjustment of his glasses.

"Blakes ahead still! Jove, they're moving! They've whacked 'em—no, hanged if they have! See the Hoods spurt! By Jove, they're dead level!"

He moistened his lips with excitement. Almost utter silence reigned on board the Ajax, broken by the same chug, chug, chug of an unseen motor-boat, not far away now, though still hidden by the wreathing ghostliness of white mist.

"Still level!" muttered the officer. "What a tussle! The other two are well out of it now. Blakes or Hoods it'll be. Blakes, I think. Yes; they've drawn ahead again!"

Tom, urging on his men in that desperate fight for the lead was but dimly aware of the enclosing mist. He had eyes for one thing only—the even flash of the Hoods' oars, and the racing gig beside them, with only five yards of water in between the oars.

Dead level again. The misty shape of the Ajax was looming big before them now. Could they do it?

"You've got to do it!" Tom shouted hoarsely to his crew. "We've got to beat 'em, and we shall if you can put every ounce of strength into a last spurt! Think of the Hume Cup! Are you ready for it? Now!"

"Pull, pull, pull!" — from the Blakes' boat.

"Pull, pull!" croaked Tom.

They were very near now.

"Only just in time, too!" muttered Mr. Landiar, on board the training-ship. "That mist is closing in fast!"

The youngsters aboard the Ajax had already rushed to the starboard side of the ship. The outer boom was the winning-post, and a roar of excited shouting swept up again as the two gigs came leaping nearer, Tom and Burr shouting hoarsely in the sterns.

"Blakes win! Blakes win!"

The shout echoed out deafeningly, with the gigs still a dozen feet from the boom. Tom did not hear it. He only knew that the rival boat was ahead and that the Hoods were still losing inches.

"Oh, smash into it! Pull, pull!" he cried painfully, though believing his cry useless.

The Hoods heard his voice, and every ounce of muscle and weight was behind the last flashing strokes of their oars. Tom had half-risen in his seat, the blood singing in his head.

"Blakes! Blakes win!"

The two gigs shot past the boom. And then a shout louder than before rose from the upper deck of the Ajax—a shout of excited amazement.

"No, they don't! Hoods win! Hoods! Hoods!" And then: "Crumbs! What a spurt!" said someone in an awed voice.

As if by a miracle, the Hoods had pulled off the race by seconds!

Dicky West collapsed over his oar, and Tom rubbed his aching throat. The mist was thick in the river, and out of it he heard the wash of water as some craft cut through near the training-ship, and the chugging engine of a motor-boat drawing towards them.

The officer of the watch, who had just shouted the result through his megaphone, leaned over towards the two gigs on the water.

"Paddle in quick, there! This mist is getting thick!"

Tom turned to one of his crew—a small youngster named Cook, who was utterly played out.

"Take the rudder, Cook!" he said. "You look done up. I'll take your oar as we paddle in. Now then, you chaps, pull yourselves together! Just a bit of a paddle, and we'll be aboard! Show 'em we can win and still have something in store!"

He rose to his feet to change places with Cook. Behind him he could hear the lashing of oars as the Nelsons came pulling in, half a dozen lengths ahead of the Frofishers. Then Tom glanced suddenly into the dense patch of mist that had rolled over the face of the river against the Ajax. It seemed to him that the motor-launch he had heard was very near—dangerously near.

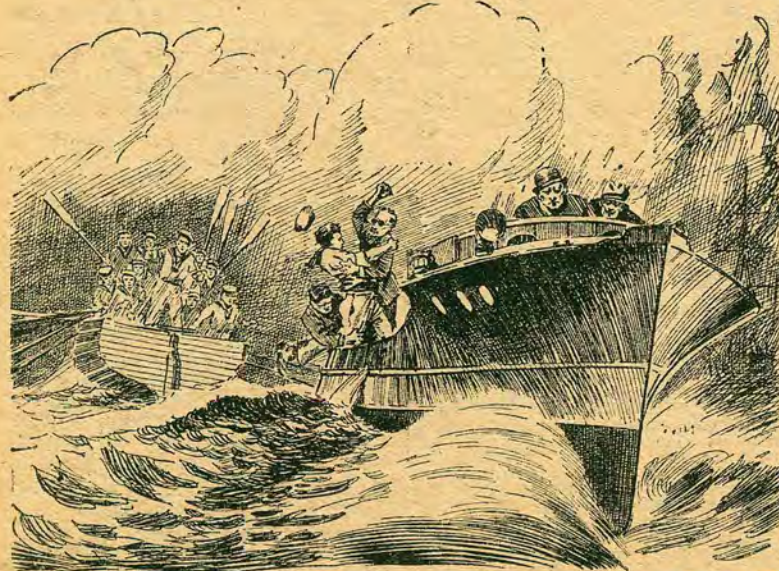
"Launch ahoy!" he yelled, in sudden alarm. "Look out, you—"

And then it was on them, leaping out of the mist, a lean, grey shape. In a moment the engines had been cut off, and it came gliding alongside the gig, smashing a couple of oars. A startled cry broke from Tom.

Three men stood in the launch, with a fourth at the helm—and one of those figures was wearing green glasses!

"My heavens! Kalche—"

The launch was alongside in an instant, before the other youngsters saw what was happening. Two of the men leaned over, and Tom felt strong hands seize him. The next moment he was fighting desperately, vainly, as he was dragged over the gunwales. He heard the engine of the launch start again as the launch drove forward, heard excited shouts from the gig—



The launch glided alongside the gig in an instant, and, before the youngsters realised what was happening, Tom was seized and dragged over the gunwale.

"And then the launch gathered speed, leaving him struggling helplessly with his captors, in the stern sheets of the flying craft.

It was all so swift that he could hardly realise what had happened—it was all unreal, like an evil dream. But he knew in his heart that by sheer, amazing daring, Kalche had captured him again—was carrying him off, a helpless prisoner, up the river in the onrushing motor-launch!

Pursuit!

"**L**IE still, young whelp!" The words were hissed savagely in Tom Gale's ear as he fought desperately in the stern sheets of the plunging motor-launch. He saw the malignant face of Kalche, with the great green lenses of his glasses peering horribly into his eyes.

"Lie still!"

Tom was on his back, held down by the man who knelt upon his chest. The youngster could hear the water smashing against the bows of the swift little craft, could see the ghostly white mists that shut them in like a wall. The great bulk of the Ajax had already been swallowed up in the veiling mists.

The sheer, amazing daring of it all left him in a confused whirl. But a few moments before he had been standing in the gig, with its crew of exhausted Hoods, after snatching victory by a hair-breadth from the Blakes; it had happened in a moment—the launch leaping from the mist, and the brief struggle as he was seized and dragged over the gunwale of the boat into the captors' craft. And now the launch had darted off again into the mist, and was racing up the river in the swift-gathering darkness with its helpless prisoner.

The excited shouting from the gig died away in the distance. Tom lay still, breathing fast, trying to collect his senses.

How had Kalche known? It could not be by mere chance that he had come upon the scene just at the moment when his daring act had been possible. And Tom remembered now that he had heard the motor-boat before the commencement of the race. Kalche must have been in the vicinity, waiting his chance. And that could only mean one thing—Burr had told Kalche of the coming gig race, and the man had seized the opportunity thus afforded.

Still dazed by the unexpectedness of it all, yet half-admiring the reckless daring of the man, Tom lay inert in his captor's grasp. His arms were pinned to the floorboards, and Kalche's hidden eyes seemed to glimmer with triumph behind the glass.

"So we meet again, Tom Gale! I believe that is the name by which you are known aboard the ship? Yes, we meet again!"

He shifted his grip on Tom's right arm.

In an instant Tom had wrenched his arm free, had struck up fiercely at the exulting face with his clenched fist. The blow smashed into Kalche's teeth, and a scream of fury broke from the man. Instinctively his hand went up to wipe the blood from his broken lips, and Tom did not waste a moment in seizing his chance.

He jerked up his knees, striking again at the face of Kalche. The strong youngster's unexpected move unseated his captor, and the next instant Tom had struggled to his feet.

The three other men in the launch uttered startled shouts, Kalche, cursing



In answer to Kalche's knock the door swung silently back. Then Gale started as he saw that the man who had opened the door was a little old wizened Chinaman. "Allee vell!" he muttered, beckoning Gale and his captor to enter.

volubly in some foreign language, lay on the floorboards, struggling to rise. The second foreigner sprang at Tom with a claw-like hand outstretched, while the little rat-faced man at the tiller uttered an oath and dropped his cigarette.

Tom recognised them all as the three accomplices of Kalche who had been with him at the house in the fens. He saw the big man, for all the world like a professional pugilist of the lower grade, stoop and grab at something in the bows. Then the youngster sprang for the gunwale.

Strong swimmer as he was, Tom would not have hesitated to leap into the river and swim for safety. But he did not have the chance.

"Hold him—hold the little cur!" shrieked Kalche; and grabbed at Tom's ankle.

Tom twisted away. He had one knee on the gunwale, when from the corner of his eye he saw the big man in the bows springing forward. He ducked instinctively, felt something graze his hair as it whistled above his head. Then the man struck again.

The bar of iron crashed home on the back of the youngster's head. He fell back into the launch with a groan.

Kalche, clawing himself to his feet, dabbed at his mouth with a handkerchief as he stood looking down at the motionless form of the unconscious boy. His face was twisted with savage fury—horrible to see.

"Not killed him, 'ave yer?" asked the little rat-faced man at the tiller nonchalantly, lighting another cigarette. He peered down at the still form, the cigarette drooping from his dirty lips. "Neow. 'E's stunned, thet's all. Little perisher!"

The launch, swaying as it raced on, drove deeper and deeper into the dense mists. The youngster on the floorboards lay quite still.

Dicky West, startled amazement in his face, had leapt to his feet with a warning cry as the unexpected attack from

the motor-launch had taken Tom so utterly unawares.

The red-headed young Hood, exhausted as he was after that terrible struggle for victory in the gig race, realised in a flash what was happening. He snatched up his oar, shouting to the rest, and aimed a blow at one of the figures in the launch. But already it was slipping from them, with Tom struggling in the stern sheets with his captors.

The other Hoods, knowing nothing of Tom's strange connection with the mysterious Kalche, were left too staggered and amazed to move a finger till it was too late. They stared after the disappearing launch with wide eyes, struck utterly mute.

"My heavens! They've got him—got him! Quick—"

Dicky West leapt for the yoke lines, his first instinctive idea being to pursue the motor-launch. Then he realised with a groan how utterly futile that would be.

"It's no good!" he muttered helplessly. "Too late!"

He peered through the mist. But the lean, grey shape of the launch had been swallowed up. Out of the unseen they could hear the throbbing beat of its engine, fainter now, muffled by the enveloping blanket of fog.

Excited shouts and cries of amazement came to Dicky's ears from the upper deck of the Ajax, towering high above them. The officer of the watch was standing with his megaphone in his hand, as though frozen where he stood, gazing blankly after the launch that was carrying away Tom Gale—whither? Then suddenly the officer leapt to life. Dicky heard his shouted orders as he disappeared for a moment from his sight behind the high bulwarks.

"Lumme, what on earth—"

A Hood suddenly broke the silence in the gig. At once a score of voices broke out, high pitched for the most part with startled fear. The youngsters' faces were white.

Dicky West, as P.O., turned to them. "We've got to get back aboard and tell all we know!" he cried. "They mayn't have seen everything from the ship. It's no good trying to follow the launch—not at the speed it's going! Watkins, hand your oar over to port; they've got two oars broken where the launch hit—"

Dicky seized the yoke lines and shouted orders to the youngsters as they pulled as hard as their exhausted arms would allow towards the Ajax. The strong tide had carried them a good way down with it by now.

Steering inside the training-ship, Dicky took the gig smartly alongside the gang platform. In another minutes the Hoods were aboard, being swiftly questioned by Commander Boyce. Several officers, their faces startled, stood near.

"Came jumping at us out of that patch of mist, sir!" explained Dicky West. "We heard the launch coming, and Gale yelled out to warn 'em that we were there. Then they were alongside before we knew where we were, and dragged Gale into their launch—he'd been standing up in the stern, so it was easy enough to do it. He fought 'em, but they'd got him, sir, and were off like greased lightning before we knew what was happening!"

Dicky's face was very white. He was in deadly fear for his chum.

A sudden incisive voice cut in. Dicky swung round, and his face lit up.

Avalanche Hume had joined them, his eyes gleaming with a light that Dicky knew. A wonderful wave of hope swept through the Hood fellow, though he scarcely knew why. He realised what he had not known before—that Hume had been aboard the training-ship to watch the gig racing in this, the last contest but one for the Hume Cup.

"Commander Boyce, I must speak to you alone! There is no time to be lost."

The commander nodded, flashing the detective a quick look.

The two men turned and strode off, and the other officers moved away, talking in low tones. At once an excited crowd surrounded the Hood fellows. Hemming, looking very played out after his ordeal in the gig race, came pushing through to Dicky. His face was as white as paper, his eyes strained with fear.

"Gale—what on earth does it mean? What are those men going to do to him? I—I—" He choked. "What are they going to do to Gale?" he repeated, his voice pitched queerly high.

Dicky, who felt very near choking himself, was touched by Hemming's obvious terror for the kidnapped boy.

"Don't I wish I knew!" he groaned. "It—it— Oh, I can't tell you everything, but I think it will be all right."

Dicky forced the ghost of a smile, and Hemming turned away. Dicky moved off miserably towards the door at the head of the gang-ladder, where it opened into the mess-deck. If possible, he meant to have a word at least with Hume before the detective left the ship.

He had not long to wait, though it seemed long enough to Dicky, with his crowding, anxious fears. Suddenly the engines of a motor-launch came purring out of the mist, which hung thickly now over the broad face of the river. It glided up to the gang platform, and the next moment Avalanche Hume appeared, running along the mess-deck to the gang-ladder.

Dicky clutched his sleeve.

"Mr. Hume!"

Hume looked down sharply, and his

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eyes twinkled at the sight of Dicky's pale face. It was strange to Dicky to see that twinkle at such a time as this. He did not know, as Tom did, that that twinkle always accompanied Hume's fighting smile.

For the fraction of a second Hume paused.

"Keep your pecker up, Dicky!" he said coolly. "I've got a launch, it's waiting there now. Commander Boyce sent for it over the cable, and the chap hasn't wasted much time, as you see. Wish me luck—that's all I ask."

"What! You mean—"

"I mean I'm off after 'em! I'll be on Kalche's heels before you can say 'knife,' unless my luck's dead out."

The next instant Hume was leaping down the gang-ladder. Dicky West, his eyes gleaming, watched the athletic figure of the man who had earned for himself the name of "Avalanche," as he jumped lightly into the waiting launch. In a moment the lean, lithe craft—a veritable greyhound of the river—was gliding away from the training-ship, gathering speed with every second.

"Wish you luck? I should say I do!" muttered Dicky. "Good luck! Good luck!"

The youngster stood peering after it long after the little leaping craft, with that fine, reckless figure standing in the stern, had been swallowed by the mist.

Chinatown!

TOM opened his eyes slowly. His head was aching horribly, and patches of fire seemed to be dancing in his eyes. He could hear a wash of water. What did it mean?

Then realisation came sweeping back. He remembered everything, and he struggled to raise his dizzy head.

Vague, dark outlines met his gaze, blurred against a background of swirling greyness. He made out the sinister figure of Kalche peering ahead into the mist. His accomplices, too, were gazing keenly forward now, and Tom noticed that the engines of the launch seemed to be running slower.

"Must be getting near, wherever it is they're taking me this time," he thought dully.

The mist, lying in heavy patches on the water, with queer, empty spaces and alleyways of clear air in the heart of it, suddenly thinned out, and Tom made out the black shapes of houses not far away on the north side of the river. Street lamps gleamed, and square yellow windows, like staring eyes, glared out unblinkingly over the murky swirl of water. Then the mist closed in again.

In the centre of the river a fog-horn blared out suddenly, though for the most part the water traffic had been forced to a standstill. A moment later the man at the helm swung the tiller to port. The launch twisted round towards the now unseen shore.

Tom tried to struggle into a sitting posture, but his wrists and ankles were bound, and he could not. He realised that he was biting into a gag that had been thrust between his teeth while he lay unconscious.

"Kalche is pretty thorough to-night."

Tom told himself ruefully.

He heard a whispered word in the

stern of the launch, and suddenly the purr of the engines ceased. They glided swiftly through the mists, to come suddenly into another patch of clearer air. As they did so Kalche suddenly gripped the arm of one of his companions.

"Listen!"

Muffled by the fog, but not very far behind, though till now the sound had been unheard above the noise of their own craft, the purr of another motor-launch came to their ears.

"What's that?" muttered Kalche.

The man at the wheel grunted.

"Nothink! We ain't the only bloomin' launch on the bloomin' river. You can't bloomin' well expect it, boss!" he said. "Don't stand fur nothink!"

The dark shape of a wharf loomed up before them. In answer to the touch of the helm the launch swung alongside, its side grating against the stone. Barely seen in the dimness, a flight of worn steps ran down to the water, dripping and pooled with water by the falling tide.

"Hallo-o-o!"

The exclamation came from the big man with the face of a professional pug. Kalche turned.

"The nipper's come round!" said the other tersely. He had seen Tom's eyes staring out from his pale face.

With an exclamation Kalche peered down towards his prisoner. He muttered impatiently.

"Curse it!"

"Shall I knock 'im on the napper agin, boss?" inquired the little rat-faced man at the helm, wriggling his cigarette in his mouth with his tongue till it drooped from the required end of his mouth.

"No," said Kalche abruptly. "We daren't risk it. Suppose something happened—if you hit too hard?"

"As if I would, boss?" returned the other in an injured voice. "I ain't a bloomin' bibby. I knows what it is to be keeful."

Kalche shook his head. The launch had come to a standstill by the steps.

"We will risk nothing," he said. "He's no use to us dead, whereas, alive—" He broke off, and his hand went to his pocket. Something gleamed in the watery moonlight, and there was an ominous ring in his voice as he stooped towards Tom. "Listen! You are going to be taken ashore now. It is a pity you have recovered consciousness—for your sake! You might be tempted to try for an escape, and that is impossible. If you should, I shall not hesitate to shoot! Understand?"

Tom nodded. His head was aching still, and a kind of dull apathy seemed to have possession of him. He knew that even if the chance presented itself he would not have the energy to make a bolt for it.

He was dragged roughly to his feet. From out of the mist he heard vaguely the purr of that other motor-boat as it passed by up the river, feeling its way slowly through the fog.

With Kalche gripping one arm and the hefty giant gripping the other, he was led stumbling up the steps. His ankles had been freed, but his hands were still lashed behind him, his mouth was still gagged. He wondered how Kalche dared take him in that condition, for if anyone were about it must be seen that the youngster was bound.

But evidently Kalche knew the lie of the land. Not a soul moved in the

shadows that lurked everywhere on the lonely causeway at the head of the steps. "Wonder where we are?" Tom said to himself dully. "London—the East End—"

His thoughts were broken as his captors suddenly came to a standstill at a dark doorway beneath a low arch. A street-lamp glimmered in the murk a dozen yards away, revealing a dingy, cobbled street, quite empty. Kalche knocked. In answer to his second knock the door swung back silently, and Tom was hurried through into a dimly-lighted passage. The door closed.

He heard a sigh, as if of relief, from Kalche. Then Tom started as he saw that the man who had opened the door was a little, old, wizened Chinaman, who was bobbing obediently before Kalche.

A sickly, pungent smell filled the passage, together with the reek from the smoking oil lamp that swung above their heads.

"Allee vell!" muttered the Chinaman. He moved off into the darkness to lead the way, Kalche and the other man gripping him still. The other two men had not accompanied them to the house. Evidently they were to take the motor-launch away from the wharf to a mooring.

Tom, stumbling on in his captors' grip, realised dazedly that he was being taken through a maze of dark passages, lit only here and there by murky oil-lamps. Once or twice he was conscious of dim yellow figures in the shadows, felt rough cloth brush his face as they passed heavy ornamented blankets that were slung across the passages. Then a door was opened, and he was flung in roughly by Kalche.

The youngster collapsed on to a pile of dirty blankets in one corner of the room,

lit like the others with its reeking oil-lantern. From somewhere near he could hear the wash of water as it sluiced past in the misty darkness at the edge of the river.

Kalche chuckled. "There, my young friend! It is indeed a pleasure to have you with us again like this! And this time I think that you will not tear yourself away quite so soon. You can never escape from here as you did from the house in the fens. Besides, our esteemed friend, Mr. Avalanche Hume"—there was a sneer in Kalche's voice at the word "Avalanche"—"cannot help you this time!"

Kalche stepped back, and the door closed with a bang. A lock clicked.

He was shut in, a weak and helpless prisoner, in that cold, dank room of shadows and silence. From somewhere not far away the eerie whisper of flowing waters was the one sound that broke upon the youngster's ears.

strictness of a training-ship life, was not so cowed down and troubled as to suffer from faint-heartedness. His senses were all on the alert, for he intended to make himself just as troublesome as he could to that sinister figure in the green spectacles when next he should visit the room.

Thus, listening intently, he caught once more the purring sound of that launch that had passed them by—the muffled sound of the engine mingling with the gurgling of the water which he could faintly hear somewhere below.

The launch was returning—running down-river with the tide again. Why? Tom suddenly found himself buoyed up with hope, but it was only a faint hope at which he clutched, like the proverbial drowning man at the straw.

And yet, who would be cruising up and down in the river fog in a fast motor-launch? It was no pleasure jaunt, for sure. Police? The blue-uniformed river-police patrolling their beat? Probably. But did that signify anything?

Tom racked his throbbing brain to pull his thoughts together. The alarm would have been given on the Ajax. The officers on the ship would immediately telephone ashore to the police. A telephone cable ran under water from the ship, and Tom knew that it would be merely a moment's work to inform the shore of this fresh attempt on him.

And the shore police! Were they such a slow-moving body as many people believed? Would there be visits of an inspector to the Ajax, a detailed report to write out before action could be taken?

Tom knew better. Since his acquaintance with Avalanche Hume, Tom had learnt that the police work in their own silent, swift way, leaving the world to criticise them as it would. The shore police at Fleethithe would at once

Hulme Shows Up!

TOM did not connect the sound of the motor-launch which had occasioned exclamations of alarm from Kalche and ironical words of assurance from the rat-faced little man with any rescue party in pursuit. He just lay there in that reeking atmosphere, and gave himself up to despair.

So now, just when things seemed to be straightening themselves out, he was plunged up to the neck in his perilous adventures once more. What a vain thought it had been—that Kalche had given up his attacks on Tom, that the man, in deadly fear of Avalanche Hume, had disappeared for ever.

The young Hood, however, used to the

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telephone to Cold Harbour Station of the River Police, since it was a river crime.

Young Gale suddenly felt a wave of buoyant hope surge up in his breast the more he thought of the business. And the motor-boat was pulling up! What was that? A revolver shot! It pierced the lazy sounds of the gurgling water like a knife.

There were shouts, too—loud, raucous cries as of persons hailing each other from different points on the shore. It was rescue, for sure!

But would the police find the house? They might capture Kalche's launch and the rat-faced little man and his companion left in charge. But might not he, Tom, be still as far from rescue as ever? Suddenly shouts sounded out in the vile den in which he had been imprisoned. Shrill cries of alarm, as from a Chinaman, hoarse shouts from English throats, the thumping of feet pounding along passages and up towards his own room.

Tom perspired freely as he wrenched at his bonds. If only he could free himself he might be able to fight and struggle, and so delay matters for the criminals

that they would be too slow in making a get-away.

But even as he commenced to tear at his bonds the lock of his door clicked, the portal was thrown open, and Kalche and the pugilistic giant burst in on him, both in great excitement.

Tom had never before seen Kalche excited. So it was a near thing! The lad stiffened himself, and jerked and tugged as the men laid hands on him and tried to wrench him to his feet.

"Little ear!" rasped Kalche, his words fierce and sibilant. "Drag him along head downwards if he won't walk!"

The men seized Tom by his freed legs, but the plucky youngster lashed out savagely.

Kalche, however, fended off the blows, and in a few minutes each man had a grip of one leg. Thus Tom, gamely bending his knees and jerking about with his bound body, was hauled from the room.

Tin-tack heads in the bare boards of the floor tore his clothes and cut the back of his head; but the brutes gripping his legs took no notice of his pain. They just dragged him on along the passage.

There was a new outburst of shouts below, the thumping of feet which, it seemed, were beating on the flags of a pavement outside, and then a crash on a door which made the whole house shake from foundation to ridge.

"Quick!" gasped Kalche. "The river way! Once past the hall and we have a good chance!"

But the door was down, and Tom fell in a heap as his legs were released. The lad felt the cold brush of air across his face, felt the quiver of the carpetless floor as heavy feet pounded in, and then the concussion of Kalche's revolver being fired just above his head.

"There!" cried a voice that made Tom's heart beat wildly with pure joy. It was the voice of Avalanche Hume, the man for whom Tom felt such a strong affection, the man who had already plucked the boy from Kalche's vile hands time and again.

"Don't shoot! They've got the boy! Follow me!"

Avalanche Hume had come to the rescue!

(Another thrilling instalment of this powerful serial next week, chums. Don't miss it!)

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