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EVERY
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UNMASKED !

(A humorous incident from the grand school story
of Tom Merry & Co. in this issue, entitled: "STANDING
BY A FAG!")

READ AND ENJOY THIS TIP-TOP SCHOOL STORY OF—

Standing by a Fag!

by Martin Clifford

CHAPTER 1.

Mr. Selby is Suspicious!

"D'ARCY?"
"Oh! Oh dear! Yes, sir?"
Walter Adolphus D'Arcy, of the Third Form at St. Jim's, made a wry grimace as he answered Mr. Selby, his Form master.

The Third were gathered for prep, and as Mr. Selby had only just come in, really he could not expect the immediate attention of the whole Form on the instant; especially when, as in Wally's case, they were engaged in a deep and enthralling football discussion.

But it was like Henry Selby to pick on the first fellow who happened to take his eye, just as a reminder to the rest of the Form. Hence Wally D'Arcy's wry grimace.

Needless to say, that grimace was not intended for Mr. Selby to observe. But he observed it. Wally jumped as his Form master's voice rapped again.

"D'Arcy! Why did you indulge in that ridiculous facial contortion?"

Wally gasped.

"I—I— Did I, sir?"

"You did!" snapped Mr. Selby, swishing his cane suggestively.

"Oh!"

Wally seemed stricken dumb. Mr. Selby permitted a faint smile to appear on his thin features for a moment. His pupils always likened that smile to the expression of a leopard in the jungle. Evidently their Form master was in a bad temper, as was too often the case. And Wally was to be the victim.

"I hope," continued Mr. Selby, after a pause, "you do not consider the Form-room a fit place in which to exercise your facial muscles for the— the amusement of your friends and the edification of your Form master, D'Arcy?"

"Nunno, sir."

"Very well, then. We will let that pass. I was about to inquire the subject of your conversation with Frayne, D'Arcy minor. Will you repeat it?"

"Oh dear!"

Wally gasped again.

Really, Mr. Selby was piling it on a little too thick! There were times when the captain of the Third would willingly have consigned his Form master to a lingering and painful fate. This was one of them. Mr. Selby was quite obviously in the mood to play with his victim, but there was no doubt that he would find something to punish him for in the end.

And, just as it happened, Wally did not want to repeat what he had been saying to Joe Frayne when Mr. Selby came in.

"D'Arcy. I asked you a question. Will you have the goodness to answer me?"

"Oh! Yes, sir. I—I was talking to Frayne, sir."

"So I observed. And what were you saying?"

"We— we were having a football discussion, sir."

Mr. Selby raised his eyebrows.

"Football? That is hardly a subject to occupy your mind

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Not one chance in a thousand would Ernest Jameson, the scapegoat of a rascally Sixth-Former, seem to have of escaping expulsion. But that's before Tom Merry & Co. take a hand in the game!

during the preparation hour. Are you sure that was all you were discussing when I entered this room, D'Arcy?"

Wally groaned inwardly.

He had, indeed, been discussing footer with Joe Frayne. But their discussion had also concerned Ernest Jameson of the New House. Evidently Mr. Selby had caught Jameson's name, and was suspicious. Mr. Selby was always suspicious. It was his nature.

His voice was full of suspicion as it broke in on Wally's rather confused thoughts.

"D'Arcy. I heard you mention Jameson of this Form, and I understood you to say that he had just gone out of gates. I observe that Jameson is absent. If that is what you are endeavouring to conceal, your efforts are wasted!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Wally flushed as he met Mr. Selby's grim, suspicious glance. Mr. Selby's keen ears had picked up rather more than the fag had expected. There was no hope now of concealing the fact that Ernest Jameson was not in the Third Form room.

"Did I understand you to say that you saw Jameson leave the school not long ago?" demanded Mr. Selby.

"And luck, Wally!" whispered Joe Frayne sympathetically.

"Do you wish to speak, Frayne?" snapped Mr. Selby.

"Oh, nunno, sir!"

"Then kindly remain silent! D'Arcy, if you do not answer my questions at once, I shall have no resource but to cane you! Did you, or did you not see Jameson leave the school recently?"

Wally drew a deep breath.

Really, there was no help for it. Once on the scent, Mr. Selby rivalled a bloodhound for tenacity.

Why Jameson should have gone out of gates with prep in the Form-room nearly due was as much a mystery to Wally as it was to his Form master. But it was no further use attempting to conceal the fact. Jameson would have to answer for his sins when he returned.

So Wally nodded at last.

"I was strolling in the quad with Frayne, sir. Jameson passed us in a hurry. I called to him, but he went out of gates. Perhaps—"

"Perhaps what?" snapped Mr. Selby.

"Perhaps it was an urgent message, sir," suggested Wally hopefully.

"I shall interview Jameson when he returns," said Mr.

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Selby grimly. "Meanwhile, you will take a hundred lines, D'Arcy minor—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And if I hear any more ridiculous exclamations, I shall double the imposition!" added the Form master.

"Oh, my hat! I mean—"

"What?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Wally.

Mr. Selby gave him a glance, but he did not double the imposition.

Wally was thankful for that, though a little surprised. Perhaps—probably, in fact—Mr. Selby was saving himself, as it were in readiness to deal with Jameson.

The Form master picked up his book, and glanced at the clock. Five valuable minutes had been occupied by his cross-examination of Wally, and, to judge by the look on the Form master's face, he regretted it.

He opened his book—a volume of Shakespeare.

"D'Arcy minor, you will collect all books. I am about to ask you questions on the portion of 'Hamlet' with which we were dealing this morning."

There was a faint murmur among the fags, but not too faint to reach Mr. Selby's ear. The Third did not like "Hamlet."

"Silence! Make haste, D'Arcy. We have wasted enough time already."

"Yes, sir!"

Wally collected the books—a precaution Mr. Selby never failed to take when questioning his Form. Fellows thus had no chance to conceal a "crib" behind a book.

Judging from his extensive acquaintance with certain little Form-room customs, the Third might have been, if his appearance had not belied him, tempted to believe that Mr. Selby had once been a schoolboy himself.

"That will do, D'Arcy. Kindly place the books on my desk. Now, Levison. In what circumstances does the following passage occur? 'There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, and—'"

Tap!

It was a timid tap, as if the tapper was in a state of trepidation.

Mr. Selby's face hardened. He thought he could guess who it was.

Tap, tap.

"Come in!" said Mr. Selby.

The door opened, with every eye in the Form-room fixed

upon it. The Third were not surprised to see Jameson enter, looking red with exertion.

He stood in front of Mr. Selby and gasped. As his Form master's glinting eyes fixed on him the crimson of his face deepened.

"Jameson! So you have come!"

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I was delayed, sir."

"You are a quarter of an hour late for evening preparation, Jameson. I am waiting for an explanation."

"I—I said I was delayed, sir," gasped Jameson, growing redder.

"So I should imagine," agreed Mr. Selby. "You would hardly absent yourself from preparation for a jest, my boy. What delayed you?"

Jameson gasped again.

He was hot and he was crimson and he was breathless. Even the most suspicious Form master could have seen plainly that he had been running hard to reach the Form-room in time. That was commendable, at least.

But Mr. Selby wanted to know.

He bent a grim glance on the hapless fag.

"I have learned that you left the school, Jameson, not long before the preparation hour was due to commence. Now you come into the Form-room gasping for breath. I can see that you have hurried to get here. What delayed you?"

Jameson opened his mouth, and then shut it again.

He seemed in doubt.

"I—I went to the village, sir."

"To the village! For what reason?"

"A—a fellow asked me to go, sir. I ought to have remembered that prep was due, I know. I—I hope you'll excuse me sir."

Jameson really had very little hope of that at all. Mr. Selby was the last man to excuse a fellow for a breach of the school rules without a full and adequate explanation.

"Your hopes are sanguine, my boy," said the Form master dryly. "I must ask you again—where have you been, and for what reason?"

"I—I can't say, sir."

"Wha-a-at? You—you cannot tell me, your Form master?" gasped Mr. Selby dazedly.

"I'm sorry, sir. I went down to the village for a fellow, sir. I—I forgot the time. I'd rather not say anything further, if you don't mind, sir."

"If—if I do not mind!" Mr. Selby's brow grew thunderous. "Do you realise that you are refusing to answer your Form master, Jameson?"



The fag was silent.

But his lips were set, and, though his face was a little pale, there was no mistaking his determination. For some reason, known only to himself, Jameson did not intend to say more, though he knew well enough what he had to expect from Mr. Selby for such a line of conduct.

Mr. Selby took a number of breaths before speaking to the fag again. But when he spoke his voice resembled nothing so much as the rumble of an approaching storm.

"Jameson, do I understand you refuse to say where you have been?"

For a moment the fag hesitated. But he set his lips, and answered steadily enough:

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry. I—I've done nothing to be ashamed of, sir."

Mr. Selby did not answer that at once.

For several moments he eyed Jameson grimly and in silence. He appeared to be resolving what he would do. The Third waited with baited breath.

"My hat! He'll be slaughtered!" gasped Piggott, not without satisfaction.

"Shut up, you cad!" snapped Wally D'Arcy.

Mr. Selby made a movement at last, and he took up his cane.

He swished it, looking grimly at Jameson.

He could, if he liked, take the fag to the Housemaster or the Head, and discover what he was trying to conceal. But, on reflection, Mr. Selby preferred to deal with the matter himself. He had a rooted objection to seeing the affairs of his Form taken out of his hands, and he did not intend to err on the side of lenience.

"Jameson, since you refuse to tell me where you have been, I shall punish you for absenting yourself from preparation without leave, and, in addition, for disrespect to your Form master. Hold out your hand!"

Jameson gasped, but his hand came out.

Mr. Selby took a businesslike grip on his cane.

Swish!

Jameson drew in his breath, but that was all.

Swish, swish, swish!

"Hold out your hand!" rapped Mr. Selby, as the fag instinctively tucked them under his armpits.

Swish, swish!

Jameson was gasping and white at the end of that infliction—three of Mr. Selby's best on each hand.

The Form master glanced grimly at him and laid down his cane.

"Go to your place, Jameson. Levison, I asked you to give me the context of the passage I read to you. Kindly do so."

Frank Levison stood up, and Mr. Selby's discourse on "Hamlet," supplemented at intervals by members of the Third, proceeded.

CHAPTER 2.

Flogged!

"DISMISS!"

Mr. Selby said that in his usual acid tone.

But the Third did not mind. It was sufficient that, for that day at least, William Shakespeare was done with, and "Hamlet" could be cast from their minds until their Form master recalled it on the morrow.

After classes the fags would have swarmed into the corridor and out into the quad. But after prep they usually spent the brief interval before bed in the Form-room, preparing weird and wonderful supper dishes, or engaging in rough and tumbles and leap-frog.

So Mr. Selby was the first to leave the Form-room, having gathered up his books, and given Jameson a very suspicious glance.

Jameson was talking to Wally D'Arcy, and even Mr. Selby could find nothing wrong in that. He snorted, perhaps on principle, and left the Form-room.

Immediately the door closed behind him the subdued buzz in the Form-room swelled into a clamour. Ernest Jameson became the centre of a crowd of fags, all speaking at once.

"Jimmy, where did you go?"

"What did you clear off to the village for, you ass?"

"And why didn't you tell Selby?"

"Here, I say—" began Jameson, a little taken aback.

"My dear chap," said Wally D'Arcy, "you were a regular prize ass not to tell Selby where you'd been. He'd have let you off with a couple!"

"Fatehead! Don't I know that?" grunted Jameson.

"Well, what did you stick tight for, then?" demanded Frank Levison curiously.

"Awful chump, you know, Jammy!" remarked Manners minor, shaking his head. "You fairly asked for a licking."

Jameson reddened and looked more than a little flustered.

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"Look here, is it any business of yours?" he ejaculated irritably.

Reggie Manners stared.

"Well, no, if you come to that," he answered coolly. "Don't tell us if you don't want to. I'm not interested, for one!"

"Then shut up!" snapped Jameson. "As a matter of fact, there's nothing to hide from you fellows—"

"Oh, don't bother!" said Reggie Manners disdainfully.

"Look here—"

"Peace, my children!" interrupted Wally D'Arcy, holding up his hand. "No need for young Manners to get sulky—"

"No need for me to get what?" ejaculated Manners minor ferociously.

"And no need for Jammy to get huffy," continued Wally imperterbably.

"Who's huffy?" demanded Jameson.

"Chuck ragging, and behave yourself!" said the leader of the Third severely. "Now, then, you're going to tell us what you've been up to—what? We're all ears."

"Yes, get on!" growled Manners minor. "Did you fall in with some of the Grammarians?"

"No; it was Hurlingham," answered Jameson.

"Hurlingham!"

"That rotter!"

"How did he make you late, old chap?" asked Wally sympathetically.

Hurlingham was one of the lesser lights of the Sixth Form at St. Jim's, and far from being a credit to it. All the caddish traits in his character—and they were many—had been shown up prominently of late, for he had been seeking the society of Gerald Knox and the rest of the black sheep in the Sixth. Hurlingham fancied himself as a gay dog, and had paid heavily for the satisfaction of being called a "sporting young gent" during his surreptitious nocturnal visits to the Green Man, at Rykcombe, in the company of Knox & Co.

Bullying was another pleasant habit James Hurlingham had acquired from his newly-found "friends," and the many members of the fag fraternity who had felt the weight of his hand would cheerfully have consigned him to a lingering end in which boiling oil figured prominently.

Most bullies are cowards at heart, and Hurlingham was no exception to the rule. Indeed, even the rest of the rotters' brigade in the Sixth possessed a hardihood that was missing from his weak and vicious make-up.

If Hurlingham had been bullying again, Wally D'Arcy was prepared to make it his business to repay the Sixth-Former somehow—though quite how was a problem to be solved.

"The rotter caught me filling his slippers with glue!" said Jameson. "I meant to get a bit of my own back on the bullying cad, but he came back to the study unexpectedly and caught me with the blessed bottle of glue in my hand."

"Just like him!" agreed Wally. "I suppose he pitched into you?"

"No; he offered to let me off," answered Jameson, grinning a little.

"What the thump—"

"Gammon!" said Reggie Manners decidedly. "Hurlingham never misses a chance of going for a chap."

"Well, he offered to let me off," said Jameson. "Like a fathead, I accepted. You see, he wanted some cigarettes fetched from the Green Man."

"Oh!"

"Now we see daylight," observed Manners minor. "One good turn deserves another, what?"

"And you went to the Green Man for that cad?" asked Wally D'Arcy.

"I was an ass to go," admitted Jameson. "As it happened, although I had a pass and went on my bike, I had to wait at the Green Man, and it made me late."

"My hat! Dashed if I shall take up fagging for Hurlingham!" grinned Manners minor. "I don't want six from Selby as a reward for my pains!"

"Catch me going again!" said Jameson feelingly.

"I suppose you've delivered the 'smokes'?" asked Wally. "No; I didn't have time. I left them in my coat in the cloak-room."

"You blithering fathead! Suppose anybody found them?"

"I can see Hurlingham admitting they were his!" grinned Reggie Manners. "Better get them and deliver them before you get caught, Jammy."

"My hat, I didn't think of that!" ejaculated Jameson, paling. "If old Selby found them—"

"Come on!" said Wally, taking his chum's arm. "We'll hand them over to Hurlingham; and I'll tell him to keep off the grass in future at the same time!"

"You'd better keep your mouth shut, old bean," said Manners minor, "or the cad will give you something to talk about!"

"Come on, Jammy. And shut up, young Manners! When I want advice from you I'll ask for it!" snapped Wally.



Ernest Jameson took a swift glance from the top of the wall before dropping to the ground on the other side, but he failed to notice a gowned figure taking cover in a shadowy doorway and watching him with glinting eyes. (See Chapter 3.)

"Look out for Hurlingham!" called Reggie, as the door closed behind Wally and Jameson.

"We can slip into the cloak-room without being spotted," said Wally coolly. "You were an ass to leave the cigs in your coat all prep, you know."

"Oh, it's all right!" said Jameson. "You keep cave while I slip in and get them."

Arrived outside the cloak-room, Jameson slipped in; and Wally strolled casually along the corridor, with a sharp look-out for the enemy—in the shape of authority of any kind.

Jameson had hardly disappeared into the cloak-room before the sound of approaching footsteps smote Wally's ears.

He glanced towards the end of the corridor, whence the unknown was approaching. The next moment there was the swish of a gown, and a master swept round the corner. Wally gave a jump as Mr. Selby passed him. And Jameson was in the cloak-room a few yards away with a packet of cigarettes!

A whistle had been the prearranged signal. It was doubtful whether Mr. Selby would hear a whistle in the corridor without being suspicious. Mr. Selby was an extremely observant gentleman. But the risk had to be taken, and Wally drew a breath and whistled.

Whereecccip!

It was a loud and penetrating whistle. There was no doubt that it would reach Jameson's ears in the cloak-room; and he would not mistake it for a casual whistle of somebody else's.

Unfortunately, Mr. Selby was passing the cloak-room door at that precise moment. Wally held his breath as he strolled on down the corridor.

"D'Arcy!"

With a sinking of heart, the captain of the Third spun round, to meet his Form master's gimlet gaze. As he had feared, Mr. Selby's suspicions were aroused. The master of the Third was always suspicious, and an unexpected and piercing whistle was more than enough to make him so now.

He gave Wally a penetrating glance as the fag approached. "D'Arcy minor, why did you make that—that piercing sound?"

"Was it a piercing sound, sir?" asked Wally in surprise. "I—I was whistling, sir. I'm rather good at it, sir."

"You were not whistling for pleasure, D'Arcy!" snapped

Mr. Selby grimly. "In any case, whistling is forbidden in the corridors. But the sound was intended as a signal, I believe. Was it, D'Arcy?"

Wally crimsoned.

Under such direct cross-examination as Mr. Selby's there was little chance for evasion except by deliberately lying.

The fag could think of nothing to say in reply to that question. He could only hope that Jameson, taking alarm, would slip out of the cloak-room while Mr. Selby was being held in conversation and make his escape.

"D'Arcy, answer me!"

Wally gasped. Jameson's head had appeared round the corner of the cloak-room door, and he was creeping away down the corridor. In a few moments the fag would have been safe. But something in Wally's look warned Mr. Selby. He spun round just as Jameson was disappearing.

"Jameson!"

"Oh! Oh dear! Yes, sir?"

Jameson, startled, turned to meet his Form master's grim, piercing glance. At that moment, with the cigarettes intended for Hurlingham under his jacket, Mr. Selby's glinting eyes seemed to bore right through him.

"Jameson, what have you there?"

"W—where, sir?"

"Under your jacket!" snapped Mr. Selby. "You are attempting to conceal something. Show me it at once!"

"Oh dear!"

Jameson shot a fearful glance at Wally. But his chum could do nothing: And Mr. Selby's glance was upon him. Hardly daring to look at the master's face, Jameson drew out a package.

"What does it contain, Jameson?" demanded Mr. Selby, his suspicions deepening.

"Nun-nun-nothing, sir!"

"What? You have a package containing nothing?" exclaimed the master. "You are prevaricating, Jameson. I shall open the package and see for myself. From your manner it would appear to contain something of which you should not be in possession."

"Oh, sir!"

"Hand me the package!" rapped Mr. Selby.

There was no help for it.

Trembling, now that he realised the seriousness of the situation, Jameson handed over the package.

With a grim face Mr. Selby broke the string and tore off the wrapping. His face expressed sudden amazement and horror as he drew out a cardboard box—a box containing a hundred cigarettes of a well-known brand!

For some moments the Form master stared at the box as if he were petrified.

When he bent his glance on Jameson again his expression was terrific.

"Jameson! This—this is worse—much worse—than I ever suspected! Your conduct this evening has made me suspicious, but I had never thought—"

"Hali a minute, sir!"

"What have you to say, D'Arcy?"

"Jammy—I mean, Jameson is innocent, sir. He fetched them for somebody else—"

"Are you yourself concerned in this matter in any way?" demanded Mr. Selby.

"Wally had nothing to do with it, sir!" interrupted Jameson. "But I can explain—"

"If you obtained these—these cigarettes for another person—and that is a story I cannot put much faith in—I order you to give me his name at once!"

"I—I—"

Jameson's voice trailed off.

He could not sneak—that was out of the question. In any case, the Head would certainly not take his word against a Sixth-Former's. So that, unless Hurlingham chose to own up, there was nothing else for the authorities to believe but that he had got the cigarettes for himself.

Mr. Selby's face showed what he thought.

"Come!"

His face white, Jameson followed his Form master to the Head's study. The matter was too serious to be dealt with by Mr. Selby.

With an anxious face Wally D'Arcy followed, to wait outside the door of the Head's study until Jameson should emerge.

He had some minutes to wait.

First, Toby, the page, appeared, evidently in answer to a summons from the Head. A few minutes after his departure, Taggles, the school porter, shuffled along the passage and disappeared into the dreaded sanctum. A few seconds later there was the sound of steady swishing—though no sound from Jameson.

Then a long wait, till at last Jameson, white and trembling, emerged into the passage.

Wally stepped forward. There was no need to speak. In silence he led his chum back to the Third Form room.

As he opened the door Reggie Manners jumped up to meet them. Wally held up a hand, and Reggie stopped.

There was a whisper in the Third Form room:

"Flogged!"

CHAPTER 3.

Caught in the Act!

"JAMESON!"

Ernest Jameson gave a start as he reached the corner of the Sixth Form corridor.

As he glanced back and saw who had called to him the fag's teeth came together, and his face set.

A night had passed since his flogging, but a good many of the aches and pains were still with him. Sympathy from his comrades was a solace, but it could not remove the physical uneasiness of his position.

Jameson was no sneak, and he had never for a moment considered giving Hurlingham away in order to save himself from the Head's birch. But for the moment he was rather fed-up with the Sixth-Former; and here was Hurlingham calling to him peremptorily and with a glint in his eyes that the fag did not like the look of at all.

"Jameson! Step into my study a minute!"

Jameson paused.

His instinct was to cut round the corner and run for the Third Form room, hoping that Hurlingham, in view of the flogging, would decide to leave him alone. But Hurlingham was an arrant bully, and was just as likely to come after him with an asphalt. Bitterly at that moment did Jameson regret the chance that had brought him to Kildare's study with a message from Mr. Raitton. But for that he would not have encountered the bullying senior.

"Jameson, what are you standing there for? Didn't you hear me?"

"All right; I'm coming!"

"Better buck up, then, unless you want gingering up with an asphalt!"

"Oh, all right!"

With a rather set face Jameson entered Hurlingham's

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study, and placed the table strategically between himself and the Sixth-Former. What Hurlingham wanted with him he did not know; but old experience had warned him to be prepared for emergencies.

Hurlingham closed the study door carefully, and turned towards the fag with a malicious grin.

"Now, you young jackanapes! I hear you bungled the little job I gave you yesterday—"

"Thanks to you, I had a Head's flogging!" snapped Jameson.

"Which was all your own fault, you little fool! If you'd taken more care—"

"Look here, I didn't split, which you ought to be thankful for!" broke in the fag. "What do you want now, you rotter?"

Hurlingham breathed hard, and his glance strayed towards a malacca cane in the corner of the study.

But he did not pick it up.

"You young cub! Is that how you speak to a Sixth-Former?"

"Yes, your kind of Sixth-Former!"

The Head's flogging had rendered Jameson a little reckless. He did not care to mince his words with Hurlingham, the fellow who had caused him all the trouble. And, for once, he felt that the senior would not dare to make a fuss.

"Well, let me tell you that I don't like it—so not so much jaw!" snapped Hurlingham.

"All right. What did you call me for?"

"Where's the package I sent you for yesterday?"

Jameson stared.

"Confiscated, of course, you ass. Did you think Selby would let me have a hundred cigarettes back again?"

"I'm asking you about the package I sent you for," said the Sixth-Former imperturbably. "I know nothing about cigarettes—probably you got the wrong parcel."

"Why, you rotter—"

"And just remember whom you're talking to!" snapped Hurlingham angrily. "Another two words from you, and I'll tan your hide as a lesson in manners. Now shut up! I want you to run down and get the real parcel—"

"I'm jolly well not going near the Green Man again, I know that!" ejaculated Jameson warmly.

"Not?" snarled Hurlingham.

"No, you rotter!"

"Perhaps a little persuasion will help you to decide differently?" inquired the Sixth-Former, with an angry look, picking up the malacca cane.

Jameson bit his lip.

He was cornered, and he realised it.

Hurlingham wanted his cigarettes—and they had been confiscated. Unless Jameson agreed to go and fetch another package, he was booked for a licking he would not be likely to forget in a hurry. It was Hobson's choice.

"I am giving you quite a lot of time," remarked Hurlingham coolly; "being remarkably patient, in fact. Are you going, or must I smarten you up a bit with this?"

He swished his cane through the air suggestively, and Jameson nodded at last.

"You rotter—"

"What?"

"I'll go."

"I thought you would," smiled Hurlingham. "I'll give you a note to Lodgey. Just a minute while I write it!"

The Sixth-Former sat down at the table and drew out a notebook. He tore a leaf from it, and scribbled a few lines to Lodgey at the Green Man.

"There you are, kid. Out off now, and don't get caught this time!"

Jameson took the note without speaking, and left the study. Hurlingham grinned as he went. The Sixth-Former had the pleasant feeling that he had reduced an unruly fag to order, and that there was no more trouble to be expected from that quarter.

Ernest Jameson's face, as he left the Sixth Form corridor, was rather grim.

He was beginning to realise that this little errand would not be the last; in fact, only the first of a whole series of similar jaunts in order to save Hurlingham running his own risks.

At the same time, until he could think of a way of outwitting the bullying senior, there was nothing to do but to obey—unless he wanted a record licking. And at the moment Jameson had had enough corporal punishment to last him some time.

There was time before dinner to slip down to the village on his "jigger," and the fag went into the cloak-room for his cap. As he emerged, he started at the sight of Mr. Selby standing in the House doorway.

Mr. Selby was not looking at him; but Jameson did not want to be seen going out. He turned and scudded back through the building to the back stairs. From these he

gained access at the rear of the school buildings, and in a few seconds he had reached the wall.

He took a swift glance from the top of the wall before dropping to the ground outside, but failed to notice a gowned figure taking cover in a shadowy doorway and watching him with glinting eyes.

As Jameson set off at a brisk pace towards the village, Mr. Selby emerged from his "cover" and walked quickly towards the masters' gate, to which he had a key.

Meanwhile, Jameson, unconscious that he was being followed, made all haste to the Green Man. His one desire was to get his unpleasant mission over as soon as possible.

He reached the disreputable inn at last, and paused before the little garden. Then, taking his courage in both hands, he slipped down a lane which ran by the garden, and from thence by a wicket gate into the grounds of the inn.

A potman caught sight of him, and an inquiry soon brought Mr. Lodgey to see him. In a few minutes Hurlingham's package was forthcoming, and the fag turned back towards the lane.

He glanced cautiously over the wicket gate before leaving. The lane was clear. Jameson slipped through the gate and ran into the road, the package hidden under his jacket.

"Ah! Jameson! Stop!"

To the fag that sudden, unexpected command was unnerving. He halted in his stride, and the package slipped from his grasp into the road.

He turned, knowing whom he was to see before he did so.

It was Mr. Selby, his eyes glinting with something akin to triumphant satisfaction, who stood before him.

In the horror of the moment the hapless fag's knees almost gave way beneath him.

He was caught—caught in the very act of leaving the Green Man—and with a parcel of cigarettes in his possession!

Jameson felt sick with horror. He knew what help he could expect from Hurlingham.

And Mr. Selby's look showed that he entertained no doubts.

"Jameson! So a flogging was not sufficient warning to you, after all? You have another package with you; I think I can guess what it contains!"

"But—but let me explain, sir—"

"You will explain to the Head, Jameson," answered Mr. Selby coldly. "That is, if you have anything to say in extenuation of your conduct. For my part, I can consider no excuse. Come!"

"But—but, sir, listen to me—"

"I shall take you to Dr. Holmes," said the Third Form master grimly. "When you deliberately avoided passing me in the House doorway my suspicions were aroused. I followed you to the rear of the school buildings, and from thence to this—this place. There is nothing for you to say. Come!"

And Mr. Selby, to close the argument, dropped a hand on the fag's shoulder and strode in the direction of St. Jim's.

To Jameson that walk back to the school was hardly real. He realised dimly that he was being taken in at the gates, and then escorted, still with Mr. Selby's hand on his shoulder, to the Head's study.

He came back to reality suddenly as Wally D'Arcy, risking Mr. Selby's displeasure, waylaid him in the Head's corridor.

"Jammy, what's happened, old man?"

"Kindly do not speak to Jameson, D'Arcy!" snapped Mr. Selby.

"But, sir—"

"I—I've been caught at—at the Green Man!" gasped Jameson desperately. "With cigarettes—you know who for, Wally. He made me go again, the rotter. And—and—"

"Come!" snapped the Third Form master.

"Hold on a minute, sir. Jameson is innocent; we all know it!" gasped Wally D'Arcy, realising the terrible position in which his chum was landed.

"Silence, D'Arcy! Doubtless the Head will hold an entirely satisfactory inquiry."

D'Arcy minor was left standing in the corridor as the door of the Head's sanctum closed behind Mr. Selby and Jameson.

"Wally, what's the matter?" asked Reggie Manners, as he hurried up, followed by several of the Third.

"The fellows say that Selby has just taken Jammy in to the Head!" gasped Levison minor. "Is it true?"

"They've caught poor old Jammy coming out of the Green Man!" said Wally grimly.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Gammon!"

"Of course, Hurlingham made him go—to fetch his rotten cigarettes!" snapped Wally. "Only we can't prove it. Hallo, here's Trotter!"

There was a step in the corridor, and the school page came along to the Head's door, tapped, and entered. He reappeared a moment later and hurried down the passage towards the stairs.

The Third-Formers guessed that he had gone to deliver a summons from the Head, and they were right.

Barely a minute had elapsed before James Hurlingham came along the corridor. His face was white, and he started violently at the sight of Wally and the group of fags.

"My hat! Jammy must have had to give Hurlingham away to save himself!" breathed Hobbs. "Serve the cad jolly well right, too!"

"Yah! You're finished, you rotter!"

"Good riddance!"

"I hope the Head flogs you, Hurlingham!" called Reggie Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a faint chuckle among the fags as the Sixth-Former went into the Head's study.

From that dreaded apartment came the sound of voices, though what was being said was unintelligible.

"My hat! I wish they'd buck up!" ejaculated Wally D'Arcy at length.

"They haven't sent for Taggles, anyhow," observed Reggie Manners disappointedly. "Hurlingham isn't being flogged!"

"Expelled o'r'aps?" suggested Joe Frayne hopefully.

"The door's opening!" breathed Frank Levison.

The Head's door opened, and Hurlingham, still pale, but with an expression of relief on his face and a faint smile round his lips, emerged.

He strode down the corridor rather quickly, and silence fell upon the little group of fags.

"Then—" began Manners minor at last.

"That cad—" breathed Frank Levison.

"Look!"

The Head's door opened again, and another figure appeared.

There was a gasp from Wally & Co. as Jameson, with Mr. Selby's grip fastened on his shoulder, came out into the corridor.

As the fag approached, Wally broke forward and grasped his arm.

"Jammy, you're not—not—"

Jameson met his glance with an ashen face.

He nodded.

"But it's all rot—you're innocent. Mr. Selby, we know he's innocent, sir—"

"The matter is closed, D'Arcy!" snapped Mr. Selby coldly. "Jameson is to leave this school to-morrow morning by the first train. Come, Jameson!"

CHAPTER 4.

Wally's Scheme!

"POOR old Jammy!"

"He—he's expelled!" stuttered Wally D'Arcy, as if hardly able to credit his senses.

"But it's all rot!" gasped Frank Levison. "We know why he went to the village—for Hurlingham!"

"And Hurlingham must have been questioned; we saw him go into the Head's study!" ejaculated Reggie Manners.

"The—the awful cad can't have denied it; he couldn't—"

"He jolly well would, if I know him!" interrupted Manners grimly. "My hat! Jammy's to be expelled for fetching cigarettes for Hurlingham! It's utter rot!"

"After them!" snapped Wally excitedly. "Blow Selby! We'll ask Jammy what Hurlingham said."

There was a rush of excited fags along the corridor in the wake of Mr. Selby and Jameson, en route for the punishment-room.

Mr. Selby glanced round angrily as the fags swept up.

"D'Arcy! Frayne! Levison! What do you want?"

"We want to ask Jameson—"



"It can't be true, sir—"

"We know he's innocent—"

"Hurlingham—"

"Silence!" shrieked Mr. Selby.

There was silence; but only for a moment.

Then the babble began again with increased vigour.

"Jammy, old man, we'll stand by you!"

"What did Hurlingham say?"

"Will you boys be silent?" demanded Mr. Selby fiercely.

Ernest Jameson's pale face took on a little colour as his friends crowded about him, regardless of the Third Form master's commands.

But Mr. Selby's grip was upon his collar, and he had no chance to say much.

"That cad Hurlingham denied everything!" he gasped desperately. "I'm expelled—unless you chaps can get him to own up!"

"And we'll do that, or burst in the attempt!" said Wally grimly.

"Rely on us, old man!" said Manners minor.

"Boys! You young rascals! Silence! Do you hear?"

Fairly seething with rage, Mr. Selby jerked his prisoner violently by the shoulder and started again for Nobody's Study, the school punishment-room in the Shell passage.

For some moments the group of fags stared at each other in silence, but their looks were eloquent enough.

"So—so Hurlingham denied everything!" breathed Wally at last. "Well, of all the howling rotters! Lynching would be too good for him!"

"Or boiling in oil!"

"He ought to be shown up!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Let's go and find the rotter now!" bawled Reggie Manners wrathfully. "We'll see whether a Third Form ragging will make him change his mind!"

"What ho!"

"Come on!"

"Hold on a minute!" exclaimed Wally suddenly.

"Rats!" snorted Reggie Manners. "Come on, you chaps!"

"Hold on, you asses!" roared the leader of the Third.

"I've got a scheme."

"Oh, good!"

There was a brightening of faces at that. Only Reggie Manners gave a grunt.

"Jammy's going to be locked in the punishment-room," went on Wally coolly. "The Head and Selby think that he'll come out to-morrow morning to be bunked."

"Well, he will."

"Why?" demanded Wally excitedly. "Suppose he was fastened in—stocked with grub—he could defy old Selby and the Head himself till further orders!"

"My hat!"

"Don't you see, you duffers?" ejaculated Wally, evidently taken with his scheme. "We can screw him in somehow—heave up some grub on a rope, and then go ahead trying to make Hurlingham confess. Until we succeed in doing that, Jameson can hang out in the punishment-room. What do you think of that for a wheeze?"

The fags did not say what they thought of that distinctly daring proposition for a few moments. But, on reflection, there was no denying its soundness. If Jameson's nerve held out, there would be at least a chance of forcing Hurlingham to admit his guilt and clearing the hapless fag. And anything was better than submitting while Jameson was expelled on the morrow.

"By Jove! Something in that, Wally," ejaculated Levison minor, after a pause.

"What do you other men think?" demanded the Third Form skipper.

"It'd work," said Joe Frayne slowly, "if we can fix Hurlingham all right."

"Leave that till Jammy's safe," said Wally. "Now let's have a whip round, to get the chap a store of grub. Shell out!"

The fags shelled out willingly to a man.

But when the money was collected it did not amount to a very striking sum. Fag pockets were not bottomless, by any means.

"Oh, my aunt!" said Wally, as he gazed at the collection. "Six and fourpence—ha'penny. Is that all we've got between us?"

"That's the lot," agreed Manners minor, with a dab at his nose.

"It won't go far," said Wally dismally. "Nowhere at all, in fact. My hat, though, I'll tap my major!"

"Oh, good egg!"

"Try the Fourth!"

"And the Shellfish!"

"That's the wheeze!"

"There goes the dinner-bell," remarked Reggie Manners. "Better leave it till after dinner, Wally. Don't forget to touch my major and his pals."

"Blow dinner!" growled Wally.

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At that moment there were far more important matters than dinner.

But there was no dodging it. Absence from a meal meant an inquiry from Mr. Selby, and Wally wanted to keep well clear of his Form master just then. So he followed the rest into Hall, containing his impatience as best he could.

The moment Forms dispersed, free for a brief interval before afternoon classes, Wally slipped out of Hall and headed for the Shell corridor.

At the end of the corridor, in a shadowy alcove, stood the apartment known as Nobody's Study, used on occasions as a punishment-room.

Within that dismal room Ernest Jameson was confined until the morrow, when he would be escorted to the station and seen off to his home—expelled. If Wally's scheme went according to plan, he hoped to alter that programme considerably.

Usually there was a prefect stationed on guard outside the punishment-room, to prevent communication with the condemned junior. But the coast was clear for Wally. In all probability the prefect had gone to dinner and had not yet returned.

With a glance along the Shell passage to make sure that he was not observed, Wally slipped into the alcove and put his mouth to the keyhole of Nobody's Study.

"Jammy!"

"Hallo!"

It was a startled exclamation from within.

"It's me—Wally. Keep your pecker up, kid!"

"I'm all right," answered Jameson, though he did not sound cheerful. "I'm glad you came, Wally. I—I suppose there's no hope—"

"That's just what there is, old bean!" whispered Wally coolly. "Now hold your jaw and listen. I may be spotted at any moment."

"Go ahead!" breathed Jameson.

In a few minutes Wally had explained his scheme, and within the punishment-room the condemned fag was full of hope. Daring as Wally's suggestion undoubtedly was, anything was to be preferred to leaving St. Jim's quietly with Hurlingham unexposed.

From the depths of despair Jameson was raised to a point of action. He felt that his chums were with him—that there was a chance.

"Wally, this is great! You chaps are real pals, old man!"

"Fathead!" retorted Wally, grinning. "I— Oh, my hat! So-long, old chap! There's somebody coming! Remember what I've said."

There was indeed somebody coming.

It was the prefect who had been on duty—Baker—returning to his post.

Wally had only a few seconds in which to act. As he caught the sound of the prefect's footsteps on the stairs, the fag slipped out of the alcove and darted along the Shell corridor.

Baker turned into the corridor just as Wally, reaching Study No 10, turned the handle and slipped into the study belonging to the Terrible Three. He closed the door carefully behind him before facing the occupants of the study.

"What the merry thump!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, who was inflating a football.

"Why this unexpected pleasure, old bean?" asked Manners major, looking up from his camera, into which he was putting films.

"What's up?" grunted Tom Merry, busy with lines at the study table.

"Only little me, dear men!" answered Wally coolly.

The captain of the Shell glanced up from his lines and frowned.

"Well, now you've come, say what you want to say and go!" he suggested. "We're busy."

"Chuck lines for a bit," urged Wally, taking a seat, uninvited, on the corner of the table. "I've come about Jameson. I want you fellows to help."

"Oh, Jameson!" said Lowther, with some interest.

"What can we do, Wally?" asked Manners, putting down his camera.

"We've heard a lot of rumours," said Tom Merry, laying down his pen. "Now let's hear the truth."

"Jammy's in the punishment-room, waiting to be expelled in the morning," answered Wally grimly. "I've got a scheme to save him. Of course, he's innocent. Lend me your ears!"

And Wally plunged into an explanation of the state of affairs, dealing fully, and with great pride, with his wheeze to tide Jameson over until Hurlingham could be dealt with.

For once, even though it was, as Lowther put it, a "fag wheeze," there was enthusiasm in Study No. 10.

"So you want cash?" asked Tom Merry, at last. "Shell out, you mean. I've just had a tip from home. Here's a quid."

"And here's a ten-bob note and a half-crown," said Lowther.

"Ten bob from me," remarked Manners.

"That'll do from you chaps," said Wally, gathering in the spoils, so to speak. "Much obliged, old scouts! I'll run along and tap Gussy now. See you to-night, after lights out."

With a cheery nod, the Third Form leader left the study.

Tom Merry grinned as the door closed behind the fag.

"I believe the wheeze will work, if we do our part," he said thoughtfully. "I hope it does for young Jameson's sake."

"And we meet the fags after lights-out—what?" remarked Lowther.

"That's it. And there goes the bell for classes. Mind, not a word, you men."

In class that afternoon the Terrible Three discovered that Talbot and Kangaroo and one or two other fellows had been let into the secret; and after dismissal they met Blake and his chums of Study No. 6, and learned that they, too, were among the contributors to the Jameson fund.

But outside that select circle no whisper was allowed to get abroad either that afternoon or evening.

The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 went up to their dormitories that night with a feeling of suppressed excitement.

At half-past ten they slipped quietly out of bed, and, with Eton jackets over their pyjamas, and rubber-soled shoes on their feet, headed for the rendezvous in the Shell corridor.

A light glimmered in the alcove before Nobody's Study, and a voice whispered in the shadows:

"That you, Tom Merry?"

"Bai Jove, yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What are you laughin' at, Blake?"

"Quiet, you asses!" breathed Lowther warningly.

"Got your tool-chest, Blake?" came Wally's whisper.

"Yes, ass. Did you think I should forget it?"

"Well, get on, then," responded Wally. "Screw up that door so that a battering-ram wouldn't do it in!"

"Rely on me!" said Blake confidently. "I've got about half a dozen gimlets here. When I've finished with this door it won't be opened again in a hurry!"

"We'll all help," said Tom Merry.

"Keep out of the way, and you'll be helping more than you know," said Blake, getting to work.

"What about the grub, Wally?" asked Lowther.

"I've been out in the quad with some of the fellows," answered the fag. "We threw up a rope, and Jammy fastened it to one of the iron bars of the window. Then we tied on the packages, and he hauled them up. You're stocked for a siege aren't you, Jammy?"

"I shan't be hungry for a month!" came Jameson's whisper from beyond the door.

"How's the good work going on, Blake?"

"This is the last one," answered the Yorkshire junior coolly.

The last of the gimlets was screwed home up to the handle.



James Hurlingham gripped the bars of the punishment-room window with one hand and the rope with the other. The next moment he let go as if he had been bitten, and gave a yell that would have awakened the celebrated Seven Sleepers. "Yooooop!" (See Chapter 5.)

A few quick blows with a hammer were sufficient to break the six handles off, leaving the ends of the gimlets as the only visible evidence of Blake's handiwork.

But the leader of Study No. 6 had not finished his task yet. After a few seconds' groping in his tool-box he found what he was looking for in the shape of a piece of putty—putty that he had carefully prepared a few hours before. Then, with painstaking thoroughness, he proceeded to cover each of the gimlet ends in turn, with the result that within a few minutes all traces of the door having been tampered with had vanished.

"There," said Blake at last. "If Selby or the Head spots anything wrong with this door—"

"Yes?"

"Then I'll eat my hat! That's a promise!"

"Quite sure it's fixed tight?" asked Wally.

"Try and open it yourself, and see?" grinned Blake.

There was a chuckle in the dark.

There was no means of testing the door, but the juniors could take Blake's word that it was well and truly secured. Even if the gimlets were discovered, which was doubtful.

nothing short of a battering-ram could have disposed of the solid oaken door. And there was no space to wield a battering-ram in the Shell corridor.

"We'll get off, then," said Tom Merry. "Good-night, Jameson! Keep smiling, kid!"

"Good-night, you chaps! And thanks ever so much!"

"Oh, rot!" retorted the captain of the Shell. "You fellows ready? March!"

And the juniors marched back to their dormitories in silence, Blake concealing his tool-chest under his bed till morning.

In the punishment-room Ernest Jameson was awaiting expulsion. But for a fellow in that position, he spent a really remarkably calm night.

CHAPTER 5.

'Sticking Tight'

"BLESS my soul!"

Mr. Selby gazed rather blankly at the door of the punishment-room the following morning.

Behind him stood Mary, the housemaid, bearing a tray whereon reposed Jameson's last breakfast at the old school.

It had been Mr. Selby's intention to usher in the maid, and, with a few appropriate words, to leave the fag to enjoy that repast as much as he could in the circumstances.

But there was a hitch in the proceedings, and one that, for the moment, presented quite a mystery to Mr. Selby.

He had first unlocked the door and pocketed the key. Then he had turned the handle of the door of Nobody's Study. Nothing had happened. The thick oaken door had not even shaken. Obviously it was stuck.

With an exclamation, the Third Form master pushed again, considerably harder. To his surprise, the door remained fast—as fast as though it were part of the wall.

Whereat Mr. Selby gasped, and gave a fresh exclamation.

"Bless my soul! Mary, the door appears to be fast for some reason."

"It do that, sir," agreed the maid.

"What ever can be holding it, I wonder? It is not locked—"

Mr. Selby inserted his hand in his pocket and again drew forth the key of the punishment-room. Slipping it into the lock, he turned. But the door was unlocked; he himself had unlocked it only a few seconds before.

Why, then, did it remain shut?

It was a mystery the Form master could not solve.

"Dear me! This is most annoying!" ejaculated Mr. Selby impatiently.

Mary, behind him, concealed a smile.

"Shall I take the lad's breakfast back to the kitchen, sir?" she asked demurely. "It'll get cold, if we stop here."

"Wait a moment!" snapped the Third Form master. "I will speak to the boy, and see if he can enlighten us. Jameson!"

There was the sound of somebody yawning within, and a sleepy voice answered.

"Hallo! Whozzat?"

"It is I—Mr. Selby, your Form master."

"You're not my Form master now, sir, are you? I'm expelled, you know," remarked Jameson cheerily.

"What—what—what did you say, Jameson?"

Mr. Selby was almost unable to believe his ears.

"I said you weren't my Form master if I'm expelled, sir. No offence meant, I'm sure."

"You—you foolish and impertinent boy! Kindly open this door at once!"

"Open it, sir?"

"Yes, open it, you insolent young rascal!" boomed Mr. Selby, quite losing his temper. "I can only deduce that you have contrived somehow to fasten yourself in, in the faint hope that such a reckless action will delay your departure. Open this door at once!"

"Won't it open, sir?"

Mr. Selby gasped.

A giggle from Mary caused his already heightening colour to mount to a rich shade of tomato, but with an effort he controlled himself.

"The door will not open, Jameson," he said, in a grim voice. "I presume you have somehow fastened it—"

The master of the Third broke off as a chuckle came from within the punishment-room. Jack Blake had done his work well, and Mr. Selby had not the slightest suspicion that the door was fastened by any other means than a barrier on the inside. If the heavy bedstead and washstand had been jammed against the door they would form an obstacle that would take some shifting.

Mr. Selby's teeth came together with a click at the thought, and when he spoke again his voice vibrated with anger.

"Jameson!"

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"Oh, yessir!"

Ernest Jameson grinned as he answered. He did not know exactly how the door had been fastened, and Mr. Selby's evident belief that it was barricaded took him rather by surprise.

But if the master of the Third chose to think so, why not let him? A few moments' rapid thinking convinced the fag that this unexpected development was all to the good. So long as the authorities remained in blissful ignorance of the real state of affairs there would naturally be no inquiries set on foot to discover the person or persons responsible for the screwing up of the door. Tom Merry & Co., for a time, at any rate would be safe. Again, it was probable that the task of forcing a way into Nobody's Study might be delayed, thus giving the juniors the valuable time that was needed for bowling out Hurlingham.

"You will gain nothing by this reckless and foolhardy defiance, boy!" went on Mr. Selby's rasping voice. "For the last time, I order you to open this door!"

"Sorry, sir."

Mr. Selby breathed hard.

There was nothing to be got out of Jameson, that was evident. The master of the Third strode away down the Shell passage, leaving Mary staring after him. When Mr. Selby turned the corner of the passage, Mary glanced back at the door of the punishment-room. She could not resist the temptation to speak to Jameson.

"Master Jameson, Mr. Selby's gone—probably to fetch the Head, I expect."

"I don't mind. They won't get in!" responded the fag.

"Ow are you a-goin' on for something to eat, Master Jameson?"

"I've got enough grab here to last a siege out, Mary," answered Jameson coolly.

"Lawks amussy! Then you won't be wantin' your breakfast this mornin'? 'Ere they come!"

Mary disappeared along the corridor leading to the back stairs as two dignified gentlemen turned the corner. They were the Head and Mr. Selby, and they halted before the door of Nobody's Study with grim expressions.

"Jameson!"

In spite of his resolution, the fag felt a tremor as he heard the august tones of the Head.

But he steeled himself. Anything was to be preferred to submitting to a sentence of expulsion, and there was a heavy door between him and the Head.

"I'm here, sir."

"Mr. Selby tells me that you refuse to come out, Jameson. Is this true?"

"I'm sorry, sir! I hope you won't think I'm being disrespectful, but I can't," replied the Third-Former, quite truthfully.

"Enough!" said the Head sternly. "This audacity—this—this reckless defiance, will not serve you, Jameson! My decision is unalterable!"

"I hope you'll alter it when you know I'm innocent, sir," said Jameson quietly. "My friends are trying to fasten the blame on the guilty party, sir. Hurlingham—"

"Your accusation against Hurlingham is dismissed!" snapped the Head angrily. "It is totally unfounded—merely an effort to clear yourself at a senior boy's expense!"

"Until my friends can prove that I'm innocent I'm hanging on here, sir," answered the fag doggedly.

There was a pause as the Head thought it out.

It was obvious that nothing could be done at the moment. Force, and plenty of it, would be required before the door of the punishment-room could be opened.

The Head did not remain to bandy words with a fag; in his eyes the matter was ended. Jameson was expelled for an eminently good and sufficient reason. It remained merely to carry the sentence into effect.

"You will call in the aid of the seniors, Mr. Selby," said Dr. Holmes, at last. "I will leave the matter in your hands. As soon as you have opened the door, kindly escort the boy to the station."

"You may safely leave this affair in my hands, sir," answered Mr. Selby grimly.

The Head nodded shortly, and hurried off.

Mr. Selby, his eyes glinting, turned and made his way to the Sixth Form passage, where he intended to recruit aid in dealing with Jameson.

In the Sixth Form studies, though it was early yet, he collected Kildare and Darrell and Langton and Baker. By dint of combing the studies, he added Mulvaney and Macgregor, North and Dudley, and Knox and Hurlingham to the list. Rushden joined up on the way to the Shell passage.

Outside the punishment-room, Mr. Selby paused rather uncertainly. Now he had assembled his forces, so to speak, he did not quite know how to set about his task.

"Kildare, the—the door must be forced," he remarked.

"Quite so, sir. How shall we start?"

"Have you any suggestion to make yourself?"

Kildare eyed the heavy oaken door a little thoughtfully. "Looks as if it might take a battering-ram, sir," he remarked, after a lengthy survey.

"Kindly do not jest, Kildare. Really, I do not see what we are to do!"

"May I make a suggestion, sir—" began Hurlingham. "Certainly!"

"If we borrowed a long ladder from Taggles, sir, one of us could climb up to the window from outside and tie a rope to the bars. Then we could all pull on the rope and break them away."

Mr. Selby's face lit up at the suggestion.

"A splendid idea, Hurlingham! Let us secure a ladder at once!"

Mr. Selby ushered his forces into the quad in a great hurry, and inquiry was made of Taggles regarding a ladder and a length of rope.

The school porter had a long ladder, and this was lent willingly.

In a few moments it was placed against the School House wall, the end reaching to just beneath the sill of the punishment-room window.

Mr. Selby watched it being placed in position with impatience.

"That is right. Which of you is going up?"

There was no rush among the seniors.

It was possible—just possible—that tying a rope to the iron bars which protected the window might prove a dangerous task if Jameson chose to take active measures for defence.

"Bless my soul!" snapped the master of the Third, as no one displayed the slightest eagerness to volunteer. "It was your suggestion, Hurlingham. Kindly ascend and carry it out at once!"

Looks of great relief appeared on the faces of the rest of the Sixth-Formers. They were not sorry to see James Hurlingham go up first; it would be a warning to those below as to what to expect.

Hurlingham himself looked far from pleased, but with the Form master's eyes upon him, he could not refuse. Besides, he knew that the suspicions aroused in the school as a result of Jameson's accusation would only begin to die down when the Third-Former had left the school; so the sooner that was brought about the better.

Very gingerly, the senior ascended the ladder, rope in hand, till his head came on a level with the window of Nobody's Study.

There was a face at the window to meet him, and Hurlingham started as he saw that Jameson had a cricket-stump in his grasp. The Sixth-Former did not know that that stump had constituted part of the supplies hauled up the previous evening.

But it was not a time to hesitate, and Mr. Selby was calling from below:

"Pray make haste, Hurlingham! Fasten the rope to the bars!"

From below, that instruction sounded simple enough.

But as the Sixth-Former released his grip on the ladder and took a fresh one on the bars of the window he realised that there was a little more in the matter than met the eye.

But he gripped the bars with one hand and the rope with the other.

The next moment he let go as if he had been bitten, and gave a yell that would have awakened the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

"Yooooooooooooooooop!"

"What ever is the matter?" shouted Mr. Selby, from below.

"Yowooooooooop! My hand! Yooooop!"

"Come near this window again, and I'll give you a harder one than that!" promised Jameson genially, from behind the bars.

"Yow-wow!"

Hurlingham rubbed and sucked his hand, which had had a really hard knock from Jameson's stump. But he turned to the window again with courage born of desperation.

He slipped the rope round one of the bars and began to knot it, in almost frantic haste.

Jameson grinned at him from inside.

"Touch me if you dare—" breathed the Sixth-Former.

He expected, in spite of that, to feel the stump rap on his knuckles again.

He did not expect what actually happened in the slightest.

Hurlingham was on a level with the window, and his hands were occupied. Jameson, taking a good grip on the stump, lunged.

The stump caught the senior fair and square in the exact region of his fifth waistcoat button, and for a moment he tottered on the ladder. Had he been on the ground he would have doubled up.

On the ladder he could not double up without crashing to earth.

"Oooooooooooooch!"

There was one terrific gasp from Hurlingham, and then he disappeared from the window.

He clung desperately to the sides of the ladder as he half slipped, half slid, down into the quad.

Mr. Selby grasped him as he landed, and several of the seniors tried to hold him. But, in spite of them, Hurlingham sank down.

"Wow! Woop! I'm winded!"

CHAPTER 6.

Arthur Augustus Thinks It Out!

"GROOOOGH! Oooooogh! Wurrroogh!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth came to a halt in the quad, with a startled exclamation.

"Wow! Grrrrrrooogh! Groooooch!"

Arthur Augustus stared; then he started violently.

"Bai Jove! Is that a dog fight?"

"Ow! Groooooch!"

"Bai Jove! Old Towsah must have got Wally's mongrel, Pongo, and is chewin' him up!" ejaculated Gussy.

At that thought he started suddenly into action.

Herries' bulldog, Towser, and Wally's nondescript, Pongo, were usually the best of friends. But there was only one conclusion to be drawn from the succession of "GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,100."

Your Editor Says—

GLIMPSES OF WHAT WILL BE!

Last week I weighed in with a few words to "Gemites" about our new set of Wonderful Gifts. This time I am prepared to give more facts concerning our brilliant new scheme for keeping the cheery old GEM just where it always has been, namely, abreast of the times. How's this for sheer up-to-date-ness? The GEM is giving away a simply marvellous series of picture cards, in full colours, dealing with the mechanical mysteries and

MARVELS OF THE FUTURE!

We all know that Science is on the march. It is a quick step forward all along the line. The GEM set of "peeps into the future" will show you just what the roomy, luxurious liner of the air will be like as it sweeps majestically over the grey wastes of the wide Atlantic on its 3,000 miles sea journey.

The train of the future will eat up the leagues. It will travel at 200 m.p.h., and GEM readers will have the opportunity of seeing what the mighty express really is.

These picture cards, each measuring $3\frac{1}{2}$ ins. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. are magnificently coloured. They show the gigantic submarine battleship of the days that are ahead—the amazing leviathan gliding through the depths of the sea, while not forgotten, either, is the miracle of scientific ingenuity, the new liner of the desert, which will enable travellers to negotiate in comfort the arid solitudes of the vast deserts. These subjects and many others of equal importance and interest are being featured in the GEM's novel and unique series of picture cards. Artists and inventors of proved skill and ingenuity have collaborated in this wonderful effort to provide readers of the GEM with a collection of pictures, the like of which the world has never seen before. I have every confidence in saying that these Free Gifts will go like hot cakes. They're really good; no expense has been spared to make them perfect. Printed on good quality card in full colours, these

MARVELS OF THE FUTURE

will make fresh history for the GEM. We have had picture galleries of the past; the GEM is first in the field with a picture gallery of the future. Now, of course, you're eager to know when these picture cards will be given away. Just a matter of a few weeks, boys. Don't be impatient; we're not going to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar, and, as I have said before, the wait will be well worth while. More about this grand scheme next week, chums. Cheerio!

YOUR EDITOR.

growls and grunts that floated round a buttress on the school wall.

His eyeglass streaming in the wind, Arthur Augustus went forward at the double.

He shot round the buttress and halted, jamming his eyeglass into position, the better to observe the fight.

But there was no fight.

Only a group of seniors surrounding a fellow lying on the ground, with Mr. Selby in close attendance.

"My only summah bonnet! It is not a dog fight. Then what—"

Gussy made his way to the fringe of the group and endeavoured to peer at the fellow on the ground. He nudged Baker of the Sixth.

"What evah is happenin', Bakah, deah boy?"

"It's Hurlingham," grunted Baker.

"Bai Jove! Is the poor chap ill?"

"No, you idiot; only winded! Cut off!"

Arthur Augustus did not cut off.

For once, he was curious. He wanted to know, among other things, who had had the temerity to "wind" a Sixth-Former.

And there was no doubt that James Hurlingham was well and truly "winded." Quite how he had slid down the ladder successfully was a mystery. It had been a case of dire necessity. Now Hurlingham was taking his time in recovering.

"Bless my soul! Are—are you feeling better, Hurlingham?" gasped Mr. Selby agitatedly.

"Pick him up," suggested Kildare. "Lend a hand, Darrell."

Darrell lent a hand, and Hurlingham was lifted. While Darrell and Rushden supported him, Kildare grasped the back of his collar and bent him over and back again rapidly half a dozen times.

The movement seemed to have a beneficial effect on the Sixth-Former.

He stood, though rather shakily, on his own feet again.

"Ow! Wow! That young scoundrel—"

"What young scoundrel, Bakah?" inquired Arthur Augustus blankly. So far as he could observe, there was no young scoundrel in sight.

Baker pointed upward, without speaking.

Gussy followed the direction of his finger.

Jamming his monocle in his eye, he made out the barred window of the punishment-room, with a grinning face behind the bars. With something approaching a smile, the swell of the Fourth realised that Ernest Jameson was the "young scoundrel" referred to by Hurlingham.

The swell of the Fourth regarded the senior again with fresh interest.

Hurlingham was gasping still, though recovering slightly.

Mr. Selby was eyeing the window above with considerable doubt.

"I—I suppose—" he commenced at length.

The seniors waited.

"I—I presume that you—you do not feel inclined to mount again, Hurlingham—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Hurlingham, is that the way to speak to a master?"

"I'm sorry, sir! But I'm not going up there again, thank you! I don't want to get knocked off the ladder next time!"

"But—"

"I've had enough!" said Hurlingham, with more decision than he usually displayed.

And, to clinch it, he turned abruptly and strode towards the House.

Mr. Selby bit his lip and looked rather doubtfully at the rest of his supporters.

"Kildare, will you—"

"I think it would be easier and safer to wait till Jameson is forced to come out for food, sir," answered the school captain coolly.

"That will take time, Kildare. And, meanwhile, if the bars could be wrenched away—"

"It will take more than a wrench or two to shift them," said Kildare. "And Jameson can use that stump just as he likes while we try to move them. Nobody wants a dangerous fall. Better let hunger bring the young rascal to his senses, sir."

Mr. Selby breathed hard.

He did not like to admit defeat; but it was plain enough that, after Hurlingham's experience, the seniors were not disposed to attempt an entry via the ladder.

Looked at impartially, it was certainly much too risky.

But, then, the Third Form master had not to take the risk. That explained his irritability. Mr. Selby's lip curled a little as he turned to the Sixth-Formers after a survey of the window above the top of the ladder.

"If you refuse to aid me, Kildare—"

"I think we should be taking needless risks, sir,"

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answered the school captain flatly. "You wouldn't care to go up yourself, sir, I suppose?"

Mr. Selby coughed.

Another glance at the window of the punishment-room, with Jameson lurking within with a cricket stump at the ready, convinced him that discretion was the better part of valour.

He nodded rather shortly.

"Very well. Precautions can be taken to ensure that no food is smuggled into the punishment-room. I have little doubt that that will soon bring the young reprobate to his senses. I will report to Dr. Holmes."

And Mr. Selby rustled away towards the School House, followed more slowly by the seniors.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared after them, with a grin on his aristocratic face. From Gussy's point of view, the matter had its humorous aspect.

Suddenly the grin was replaced by an expression of great thought. He glanced up at the window of Nobody's Study; and then, as if making up his mind, he strode off in the direction of the School House, into which Mr. Selby and the Sixth-Formers had already disappeared.

A minute later the swell of the Fourth was cautiously ascending the stairs to the Shell passage. He knew that most of the Sixth-Formers had been with the master of the Third during the attack on the punishment-room window, and that they would probably be standing by for further orders. Nevertheless, a visit to a junior under sentence of expulsion in Nobody's Study was a very risky proceeding, and it behoved him to be very careful.

Arthur Augustus gave a murmur of relief as he turned into the Shell corridor. It was deserted. Most of the fellows were in the quad at that moment, before the bell went for morning lessons.

With another cautious glance round, the swell of the Fourth walked quickly along to the punishment-room and tapped on the door.

"Jameson, deah boy?"

"Hallo! That you, Gussy?" came the fag's cheery voice.

"I'm holding the giddy fort!"

"Bai Jove! I should neval have thought a youngstah like you would have had the nerve," answered Arthur Augustus.

"Bosh, old bean! I saw you watching the fireworks in the quad. How was Hurlingham looking? I gave him a good jab!"

"Wathah tired, deah boy. They are talkin' about starvin' you out now," Gussy informed the prisoner, with a chuckle.

"I wish 'em luck!" responded Jameson. "I've got enough grub here for a siege."

"You are a cool young boundah, you know," said Gussy admiringly. "But theah is somethin' I wanted to speak to you about, deah boy."

"Go ahead!"

"I have been thinkin' ovah your wotten posish—" began Arthur Augustus.

"My what?"

"Your position. I have evolved a scheme—"

"Tell it to Wally, then. He's trying to get Hurlingham to confess, too."

"Bai Jove! I weally think this scheme is a little too deep for Wally, deah boy. I am doin' this all on my own, you see. I wanted to ask you a question. That is all."

"Well, hurry up! We may be interrupted if anybody spots you."

"I have heard your patah is a lawyah, or a solicitor, or somethin' in the City—"

"A lawyer, you ass."

"A lawyah," repeated Arthur Augustus, with satisfaction. "Then it is twue. That is all I wanted to know, Jameson. Wely on me."

"But what the thump—"

"Leave it to me, you know," reiterated Gussy confidently.

"My wheeze is a wegulah winnah."

"But what are you going to do?"

"I am afwaid I cannot tell you that just yet, deah boy. Mum's the word, wemembah."

"Oh, of course!" said Jameson.

"Thanks awfully for the information," said the swell of the Fourth gracefully. "I am confident that befoah long I shall have pproved your innocence, Jameson. Keep your peekah up, and wely on me!"

And, with that kind-hearted advice, Arthur Augustus strolled away down the passage, leaving Jameson gazing rather blankly at the door.

Unlimited as was Gussy's confidence in himself, the prisoner in Nobody's Study would rather he had confided in Wally. But there was no gainsaying Gussy. And he might mean business. Although an ass in many ways, Arthur Augustus had his moments.

While Jameson dismissed the matter from his mind, Gussy proceeded to the Form-room for morning classes, still revolving his scheme in his aristocratic mind.

During that morning Gussy collected five hundred lines in various amounts for inattention and he was threatened with the pointer when the bell for dismissal put an end to classes.

But he strolled cheerily into the corridor with his chums, looking at peace with all the world.

"You silly fathead!" remarked Blake. "What were you day-dreaming about all the morning?"

"Somethin' wathah important, deah boy. I suppose you fellows are playin' footah this aftahnoon—what?"

"Naturally. And so are you," answered Blake.

"Your mistake, deah boy. I have some wathah important business to attend to in the village aftah dinnah."

"A new girl in the bunshop?" inquired Herries, with interest.

"No, you ass!"

"Well, what?"

Arthur Augustus smiled a superior smile, and did not answer that question.

Throughout dinner he appeared exceedingly mysterious, though Blake and his chums were discussing the footer, and had little time to notice Gussy.

After dinner, however, it being a half-holiday, Blake caught at Gussy's arm as he spotted his chum heading for the quad.

"Whither away, old bean? Why not come down to footer, like a sensible chap?"

"Pway welease me, deah boy. I am sowwy I cannot play footah this aftahnoon. Good-bye!"

And Arthur Augustus nodded and strolled elegantly out of the House in the direction of the gates, leaving Blake staring after him.

Once out of the gates, Gussy's pace quickened.

In his scheme, whatever it was, time was evidently an important factor.

He put on quite a spanking pace, and arrived in Rylcombe village in record time. He made first for Blankley's, the palatial tuckshop and general stores of Rylcombe, reappearing, a few minutes later, with a parcel under his arm. Then he hurried towards a little side street, in which nestled a little, musty shop presided over by a gentleman by the name of Isaacs.

The St. Jim's juniors sometimes had dealings with Mr. Isaacs, who had a large stock of theatrical costumes, which he hired at what he called very reasonable rates.

The little old gentleman came round from behind his counter as Arthur Augustus entered his shop. Mr. Isaacs rubbed his hands and bowed. He appeared to have been expecting D'Arcy.

"Good-afternoon. Master D'Arcy! I am pleased to see you."

"You got my lettah, Mr. Isaacs?"

"Everything is in the little room, sir."

(Continued on next page.)



Q. What is a Waterbury?

A. A cheap type of American watch.

Q. What is a thunderbolt?

A. This question has been sent in by George Stookley, of Chislehurst, who says he has found one in his back garden. Alas, George, that I should have to call you "another," but from the description you have sent me of the alleged thunderbolt, I should judge it is a discoloured lump of cement or something thrown over your garden by your next door neighbour. Actually, there is no such thing as a thunderbolt, a fact which—to use a popular expression—may come as a thunderbolt to you. The damage which you hear has been done by a visitation of this sort during a storm, is due to some electric current down to the earth. Often ancient stones and fossils are found and described as thunderbolts, but nobody has ever seen the genuine article yet.



The "missing link"—doesn't he look a beauty! Certainly he is not the kind of fellow to meet on a dark night.

Q. What is a pithecanthrope?

A. An ape-man. That creature, much sought by scientists and explorers, which is halfway between the ape and man: in other words "the missing link."

Q. How long should parsnips be cooked?

A. About seven or eight inches, "Camper Out."

Q. What is Wardour Street noted for?

A. Percy Fitzgibbon has asked me this, and has taken care to point out that he is of the family of Essex Fitzgibbons and not Worcester Fitzgibbons who accorded their support to Wat Tyler. Tut-tut! And fancy the Head himself at the prize-giving referring to you, Percy, as a Fitzgibbon from Worcester. What saucer! But to answer your question, my pedigree'd chum: Wardour Street in London—for I presume that is the street to which you have referred—has long been noted for its sale-rooms for antique furniture, and so forth. Nowadays it is the home of several film companies which have taken extensive premises.

Q. What is the difference between splints and the splits?

A. A very young reader who prefers to be known as "Wilkie Junior"—though why I can't guess, with such a rich, fruity name as Wilbraham Schaufenneimer—has sent me a postcard to say that he had been told that a friend of his "set foot on a peace of bannanna peel, did the splints, broke a leg and had to have it in splits." The leg, I presume, Wilkie, not the banana peel? Anyway, my very young reader, I am afraid your ears were not well attuned when you were told about the sad accident. Your friend, no doubt, did the splits—that curious physical manoeuvre which consists of each foot slipping in entirely opposite directions until the performer, or sufferer,

seats himself more or less heavily upon the ground. Splints, as in the case of your unfortunate friend, are strips of wood or something similar for holding a broken arm in position. A temporary splint can be made by the use of an umbrella and three handkerchiefs as shown in the picture.

Q. What is a Spoonerism?

A. Curiously enough, two readers have just heard of this expression, and their letters of inquiry arrived by the same mail. A Spoonerism, my chums, is the accidental transposition of the initial letters, or syllables, of two or more words. In this way a sentence is given a different and unintentionally humorous meaning. The word originated from a well-beloved University don, the Rev. W. A. Spooner.

On one serious occasion he is reputed to have told the surprised students that he had just "been given a blushing crow." While they strove to fathom what strange bird this might be, it occurred to them it was a "crushing blow" that he meant.



A splint for a fractured leg made from an umbrella and handkerchiefs.

Q. What is a sea chantey?

A. A song of the kind sung by seamen in sailing ships while heaving, or running round the capstan. Chantey is pronounced "shanty," G. C. B., of New Romney, and sometimes the word is spelt in that form. A good example is "Blow the Man Down," sung in the old Atlantic packets, and with an endless variety of verses which could be substituted for others of an uncomplimentary nature about the skipper, the mate, and so on. The word "blow" was sailor slang for "knock." Here is a sample of a verse from this particular sea chantey: "O blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down!"

Way-ay, blow the man down!
O blow the man down in Liverpool town!
Give me some time to blow the man down."

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Arthur Augustus nodded with satisfaction, and disappeared into the little room behind Mr. Isaacs' shop. In that little room he was soon busy—very busy indeed.

CHAPTER 7.

Lowther, Too!

"I'VE been thinking."

Dead silence in Study No. 10 of the Shell passage. Monty Lowther looked a little surprised.

He glanced from Tom Merry to Harry Manners, and from Manners back again to Tom Merry. Those youths continued engrossed in the tasks which had been occupying them when Lowther spoke.

"I've been thinking."

For the second time that afternoon Monty Lowther made that announcement.

It did not appear to cause a sensation.

Manners had his celebrated camera on the study table, and had taken off the back. He was doing mysterious things with a film pack adapter and a film pack. With such an important operation on hand, Manners could, naturally, spare no time for conversation.

Tom Merry was busily engaged in lacing up a new football.

In those circumstances, the Shell captain had no eyes or ears for Lowther.

Dead silence greeted Monty's second announcement. Whereat the humorist of the Shell snorted.

It was a derisive snort. And, strange to say, it succeeded where his former announcements had fallen on deaf ears.

Tom Merry glanced up, and Manners paused for a moment, film pack in hand.

"What's up, Monty?"

"I spoke," responded Lowther, with heavy sarcasm.

"Oh!"

"Is that all?"

Lowther breathed hard.

"No; it isn't all. In fact, it's only the beginning. If you duffers had any brains—"

"What?"

"If we had any what?" ejaculated Manners.

"Brains," repeated Lowther calmly. "As I was saying, if you had any brains, you'd be using them to think of a way of landing Hurlingham and clearing young Jameson, instead of fiddling about with mucky cameras—"

"With mucky what?" roared Manners indignantly.

"Or with potty footballs!"

"Eh?" ejaculated Tom Merry, waking up, as it were.

"Here are you two," went on Lowther grimly, "on a half-holiday, with nothing better to do than fiddle! And I've got a scheme to land Hurlingham like—like a giddy codfish!"

"Something to help young Jameson?" asked Tom Merry, with more interest.

"The wheeze of the century," answered Lowther coolly.

"It simply can't fail. Aren't you keen to hear it?"

"If it's to help Jameson, of course we are," said Manners, putting up his camera resignedly. "You know we've all been trying to think of something. Short of taking Hurlingham by the scruff of the neck, I can't think of anything. And the Head wants proof, not our opinions."

"Quite right," admitted Lowther calmly. "It's proof I'm going to get. The question is, are you two slackers prepared to spend a half-holiday dealing with jolly old Hurlingham?"

"My dear chap, if you've got a wheeze, let's hear it," urged Tom Merry. "We don't know how long Jameson will manage to hold out in Nobody's Study. The sooner he's cleared the better."

"Gather round, then," said Lowther. "You chaps know what Jameson's pater is, I suppose?"

"Can't say I remember," said Manners.

"Isn't he a giddy solicitor, or some legal johnny?" asked Tom Merry.

"A lawyer," said Lowther. "There's a difference, ass. Jameson senior is a lawyer. He was conducting a case only the other week, and I saw his name and asked young Jameson to verify it. That's our start."

"Oh!" ejaculated Manners.

"Now, the position of affairs at present is this," went on Lowther impressively. "Jameson is condemned for something Hurlingham did, or made him do. If the Head knew the truth, he would let Jameson off in a flash, and probably bunk Hurlingham. We can't help Hurlingham's troubles—"

"Not if Jameson's interests come first," agreed Manners.

"But we can help Jameson. The kid told the Head that Hurlingham was at the bottom of it all, as a last resource; but the rotter was called upon, and, of course, denied it. That finished Jameson, as the Head was bound to take

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Hurlingham's words against an unsupported accusation from a fag."

"Quite so!" assented Tom Merry. "Get on."

"My idea is this," went on Lowther coolly. "What's good enough for a headmaster may not be good enough for a court of law."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"You're not thinking of starting an action, I suppose?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Not exactly," grinned Lowther. "But something like it. Remember, Jameson's pater is a lawyer—"

"Oh, yes."

"Supposing Jameson senior, hearing that his son is expelled, but is sticking it out here, came down to investigate the whole affair—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And taxed Hurlingham, cross-examining him in legal style!" chuckled Lowther, in great glee. "Do you think Hurlingham would stand up to a legal cross-examination with as much nerve as he did to the Head?"

"My hat, no!"

"That's the scheme," said Lowther. "Jameson senior sends a letter to Hurlingham, asking him to meet him at, say, Pepper's Barn, near the village. He will give Hurlingham the chance to put matters straight by confessing or—"

"Or what?"

"Or Jameson senior will take legal means to convict him!"

"I say, are you sure he could?" asked Tom Merry, a little doubtfully.

"When the jolly old lawyer threatens an action, I fancy Hurlingham won't stop to think things out much—he'll be scared out of his wits!" chortled Lowther.



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, seated on Figgins' chest, looked down at the claimed, "or I shall have to tweak your nose—like that—!" "Y

"There's certainly a chance," admitted Tom Merry thoughtfully. "A jolly good one, too!"

"So you're going to write to Jameson's pater, and ask him to come down?" asked Manners.

Monty Lowther closed one eye.

His reply rather astonished his study-mates.

"Not exactly," he answered, grinning.

"But what—"

"How—"

"As a last resource, Jameson senior could be called in," said Lowther. "But, of course, if the Head chose to expel Jameson, the kid's pater couldn't stop him. There might be a chance of convicting Hurlingham, but we shan't need Jameson's pater for that."

"Suppose you give up talking in riddles, old bean?" suggested Manners patiently.

"Let's have it in plain English, Monty," urged Tom Merry.

"I'll put it in words of one syllable, suitable for your limited intellects," said Lowther accommodatingly. "A giddy lawyer is going to drop in on Hurlingham, just as I said—"

"Jameson senior?" queried Manners, still puzzled.

"No, fathead! You don't need to be a lawyer to look like one, do you, you ass? All you want is a shifty look, and a deep and mysterious manner."

"Oh! You know somebody who could play the part?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Oh, what a pair of asses! I'm going to play the part. Now do you see it?"

"Oh!"

Monty Lowther's study-mates regarded him rather doubtfully as he made that statement.

"Well, what do you think of the wheeze?" demanded Lowther.

"You've got the shifty look, perhaps—" admitted Manners.

"What? Why, you ass—"

"And, I suppose, as you've impersonated people before, you could do it again."



of the New House. "Pway wemain still, Figgay, deah boy," he exclaimed. "Pax! Pax, you dummy!" (See Chapter 8.)

"My hat! I believe Monty could do it," said Tom Merry excitedly. "He's a dab at theatricals, we know."

"Do it on my head," said Lowther disdainfully. "All I shall want is suitable clobber, and we can get that from Isaacs' little shop in the village. I shall frighten Hurlingham out of his wits—if any!"

"My hat! There's a chance," admitted Manners. "Good for you, Monty, old bean! You're getting quite bright in your old age."

"Thank you for nothing!" retorted Lowther. "My idea was, if you slackers weren't tired, to run over to Isaacs' this afternoon and get the clobber. Young Jameson will very likely have some of his pater's notepaper, and we could send Hurlingham a letter to-night, asking him to meet me after classes to-morrow—"

"And scare him out of his giddy wits!" grinned Tom Merry. "Good man! It's only a pick-up match this afternoon, so that will be all right. We'll go along now."

Satisfied at last, now that he had gained the support of his chums, Lowther led the way out of the study.

In the Hall, the Terrible Three passed Blake and Herries and Digby, just going down to the footer ground.

"Hallo! Not playing to-day, Tommy?" ejaculated Blake.

"Important business!" responded Tom.

"Oh, my hat! What—"

"Come on, you chaps!" urged Lowther. "We shall want all the time we've got!"

And the Shell fellows passed out of the House, without learning that they were not the first fellows to cut footer that afternoon on account of important business.

They accomplished the journey to the village at a swinging pace, and turned off the High Street into the narrow side turning wherein Mr. Isaacs had his musty little shop.

Before the shop, as Tom Merry & Co. swung into the street, there was an animated group and, as they approached, a shout rent the air.

"Help, help! Bai Jove, welease me, you wottahs! Help!" The Terrible Three halted in momentary amazement.

One glance was enough to explain matters, however.

It was D'Arcy—struggling wildly in the grasp of three well-known members of the New House at St. Jim's.

Even as the Terrible Three gazed, D'Arcy was lifted on high by Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn and bumped—hard—on the cobbles.

Bump!

"Woooooooooooooop!"

"Rescue!" roared Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 8.

Figgins is Puzzled!

"COMING, Gussy!"

"Collar the New House rotters!"

Bump!

Figgins & Co. spun round as these shouts burst upon their ears and, in doing so, they released their hold on Arthur Augustus. The immediate result was that D'Arcy descended violently to the ground for the third time.

And Figgins & Co. were not a moment too soon.

The Terrible Three had spotted Gussy in the grasp of their deadly rivals of the New House, and they did not pause to ask questions.

Crash!

Bump!

"Collar them!"

"Back up, New House!"

"Hurrah!"

In the space of ten seconds, a wild and whirling scuffle was in progress, its storm-centre being the rumbled form of Arthur Augustus. Gussy's yells rose above the din of the scrap.

"You feahful wottahs! Keep off! Bai Jove, my twousahs are uttably wuined!"

In vain did Arthur Augustus scramble out of the way of the scuffling feet; he was bumped into, and rolled over again in the dust.

"Go it, Figgy!"

"Into them, Tommy!"

With a desperate effort Gussy scrambled clear at last and rose, dusty and gasping, to his feet.

He gazed at the terrific scrap which raged before him a little dazedly.

Both sides were shouting "Collar them!" at frequent intervals, but at the moment it was difficult to decide which side was collaring which.

"Come on, Gussy!" shouted Lowther, at grips with Kerr.

"Wade in!" urged Manners, struggling grimly with Fatty Wynn.

Arthur Augustus rubbed his eyes with his hand. He did not need much urging to join in the fray. The next moment he had hurled himself into the midst of the struggle, and his fists shot out like piston-rods among the New House trio.

Three against three gave no advantage on either side, and the struggle might have gone on for some time. But with Gussy's aid, the Terrible Three speedily began to gain the upper hand.

Figgins, fighting hard, went down, and Gussy, exhausted, sat heavily upon him.

Tom Merry, freed, turned his attention to Kerr and Wynn, and in a few moments they, too, were on their backs, with Lowther and Manners seated comfortably on their chests.

Tom Merry, his nose streaming crimson, staggered.

He drew out his handkerchief and mopped at his nose, what time Figgins chuckled.

"Tapped your claret, Tommy?"

"Take a look at your eye," suggested Tom Merry, grinning.

Figgins could not observe his own eye; but it was rapidly taking on a rich violet shade.

"Pway wemain still, Figgay, deah boy, or I shall have to tweak your nose—like that—"

"Yoop!"

"Or like that—"

"Pax!" roared Figgins. "Pax, you dummy! We give you best."

Arthur Augustus, grinning, ceased to tweak Figgins' rather prominent nose.

Tom Merry gave the three prisoners a rather grim glance. "I think it's up to us to make an example of these chaps," he remarked, after some thought. "Piling on to old Gussy in the public highway—"

"Fathead! We saw him coming out of Blankley's, and we wanted to raid his parcel," grunted Figgins.

"Oh! What parcel?"

"Bai Jove! Where is my parcel?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

He glanced round the scene of the battle, and his eyes lit on a brown-paper parcel lying at some distance, and looking decidedly the worse for wear.

"There it is, bai Jove!" said the swell of the Fourth anxiously. "Gweat Scott! I believe the awful wottahs have squashed it! Pway sit on Figgins for a moment, Tom Mewwy—"

"Here it is," answered the captain of the Shell, with a grin, picking the dilapidated parcel up.

"Thanks, deah boy." Arthur Augustus took it gingerly, evidently fearing the worst.

His fears proved to be only too well founded, for as he tore part of the paper wrapping away he disclosed the remains of what once had apparently been a cake. Now it looked as though it had been under a steam-roller!

Gussy's feelings were too deep for words. He glared down at Figgins with a glare that should have shrivelled the long-legged leader of the New House on the spot.

"Oh crumbs!"

Fatty Wynn gave a groan. He had readily fallen in with Figgins' plan to relieve Gussy of his parcel when the New House trio had spotted the swell of the Fourth emerging from Blankley's. The chance of ending the famine in the study was too good to be missed. But now that happy prospect had vanished from his gaze like a beautiful dream. Hungry as he was, even Fatty was not likely to have much use for the contents of Arthur Augustus' parcel now.

"Hard cheese, Gussy!" said Figgins. "But you can blame it on these School House wasters—"

"You uttah wottahs!" gasped the swell of the Fourth, regaining his breath at last. "You have absolutely wuined a ten-shillin' cake. Pway get up at once, and I will administrah a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

"Mercy!"

"Hold on, Gussy," interposed Tom Merry grimly. "We'll attend to these chaps. Tarring and feathering might be a bit too steep—"

"I should jolly well say so!" ejaculated Figgins. "Why, you rotters, it was only a grub raid!"

"You New House worms have got to be taught to leave School House grub alone," grinned Monty Lowther. "What's the sentence, Tommy?"

"A good bumping," said Tom coolly.

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Manners and Lowther in chorus.

"You dare—" began Figgins sulphurously.

"Followed by the frog's-march through the High Street," continued Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"Ripping!"

"You—you dare!" gasped Figgins. "You rotters, I'll—"

What Figgins might have done was not destined to be known.

A sudden shout from Lowther distracted their attention. "Look out! Grammar School cads!"

In a moment Figgins & Co. were released and on their feet.

With danger from the Grammarians in the offing, House rows sank to a point of insignificance. School House and New House united to deal with Gordon Gay and his merry men.

And Lowther's alarm was not a moment too early.

At the end of the narrow street nearly a dozen fellows had come in sight, all wearing the familiar Grammar School cap. At their head was the redoubtable Gordon Gay.

"My hat! Too many for us!" gasped Manners.

At the same second there was a shout from Gay as he spotted the St. Jim's men.

"Aho! Saints! At 'em, men!"

With a rush the Grammarians swept up the narrow street.

Tom Merry & Co. did not pause.

It was one of those occasions when discretion is eminently the better part of valour.

"Cut! Run for your lives!" gasped the captain of the Shell.

His comrades needed no bidding.

As Gordon Gay & Co. swept to the attack, the Saints turned and darted into the High Street.

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They caused quite a sensation as they stampeded at top speed along the sleepy village street, with the Grammarians whooping only fifty yards behind.

"Ow! Wow! I can't keep this up!" gasped Fatty Wynn desperately, as the seven juniors pelted out of the village into the lane leading to St. Jim's.

"Grab his arms!" rapped Figgins. "We daren't stop!"

He took one of the Falstaff's fat arms, while Tom Merry grasped the other, and Fatty Wynn was half lifted and half dragged over the ground.

It was quite a thrilling chase while it lasted. Fortunately for the Saints it did not last long.

A turn in the road brought them in sight of several St. Jim's fellows—Levison, Cardew, and Clive, with Talbot, Gore, Kangaroo, and Clifton Dane close behind.

At the sight of these reinforcements Gordon Gay & Co. stopped short. But before they could decide whether to put up a fight against odds or beat a hasty retreat there was a shout from Tom Merry:

"Rescue, St. Jim's!"

The newcomers took in the situation at a glance, and they needed no second bidding. The fourteen Saints swept down on the enemy, and the next moment a wild and whirling conflict was in progress in the lane.

"Sock it to 'em!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Back up, Grammar School!" roared Gordon Gay.

The scrap raged fast and furious. The Grammarians were putting up a stiff fight against superior numbers, and many of the Saints were soon showing signs of damage.

But the fight could have only one result. Man after man Gordon Gay & Co. went down, hitting out furiously, until they were all sprawling on the ground with their victorious foes seated on their chests.

"Who's top dog now?" asked Tom Merry, when he had regained his breath somewhat.

There was really only one answer to that question, and it came in a roar:

"St. Jim's!"

"Rats!" snorted Gordon Gay. "You've got the best of it now, but we'll put the kybosh on you properly next time! Make it pax!"

But he did not speak very hopefully. One look at the grinning faces of Tom Merry & Co. showed the leader of the Grammarians that the possibility of their making it "pax" was very remote.

Tom Merry chuckled as he looked down at the flushed face of his rival.

"What a hope!" he sighed. Then he turned to his followers: "I think we're all agreed that these wasters have been getting too jolly cheeky lately," he said grimly. "It's about time they were shown, once and for all, that St. Jim's is miles above their weight."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why, you played-out lunatics—" began Gordon Gay, in great wrath.

"What price bumping them and sending them back to their casual ward tied in a row?" suggested Monty Lowther.

"Good egg!"

There was a howl from the Grammarians. That proposal filled them with wrath and dismay.

"You awful cads!"

"Don't you dare—"

"We'll slaughter you!"

But their threats of future vengeance passed Tom Merry & Co. by like the idle wind which they regarded not. Despite their struggles, each of the hapless Grammarians was grasped and bumped soundly on the hard, unsympathetic ground.

Then Kangaroo produced a length of cord from his pocket, and before Gordon Gay & Co. had recovered their breath they were hauled to their feet and securely tied in a row, with their hands fastened behind them.

Tom Merry & Co. surveyed their handiwork and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you—you rotters!" Gordon Gay almost choked.

"Just you wait!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Tom Merry had not finished yet. Quickly taking a sheet of paper from his pocket-book, he scrawled a few words in pencil on it. Then he pinned the notice to the jacket of Gordon Gay, the leader of the procession. It read:

"THESE PRIZE IDIOTS
WERE FOUND WANDERING,
AND SENT BACK TO THEIR HOME
AT
RYLCOMBE GRAMMAR SCHOOL!
PLEASE TREAT THEM KINDLY!"

The St. Jim's fellows yelled afresh as they read that announcement; but it was far from being a laughing matter

to the long line of Grammarians, their faces crimson with mortification.

"Look here, you rotters!" gasped Frank Monk. "We can't go back like this!"

"Can't you?" grinned Tom Merry. "I rather think you can! Give 'em a start with your boots, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

"On the ball!"

Chortling gleefully, the Saints proceeded to give the procession a start. Wild howls arose from Gordon Gay & Co. as hefty boots landed on various portions of their anatomies.

"Ow! Stoppit! Yow!"

"Yaroooooh! Keep off, you rotters!"

"Get a move on, dear men!" chuckled Ralph Reckness Cardew.

The "dear men" got a move on. There was really nothing else for it. The one thing uppermost in the minds of the Grammarians was to put as great a distance as possible between themselves and the lunging boots of their enemies. Gordon Gay had been fully determined not to budge an inch, but the pressure from the rear left him no choice in the matter.

Next moment the procession was careering wildly down the lane, its members putting on as much speed as their hampering bonds would allow.

Tom Merry & Co. almost wept.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" sang out Monty Lowther. "Mind you don't get lost on the way home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The last of the Grammarians disappeared round a bend in the land, and their yells died away in the distance.

Tom Merry, gasping with merriment, turned to the five Shell fellows and Cardew & Co., who had come to the rescue in the nick of time.

"Thanks, you chaps!" he said. "We were rescuing our one-and-only Gussy from Figgins when the Grammarians came after us, and we had to run for it. We've scored this time, and no giddy error; but if you take my tip you'll give the Grammar School a wide berth after this."

The captain of the Shell's advice was too good to be ignored. Gordon Gay & Co. would very soon be on the war-path, thirsting for revenge, and woe betide any Saint who fell into their hands.

Leaving the seven juniors still chuckling, the Terrible Three went on towards St. Jim's, together with the New House trio and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

At the gates they parted company with Figgins & Co., and Gussy went on into the School House, still bemoaning the loss of his cake.

Tom Merry and his chums remained near the gates. "My hat! And we haven't got the clobber!" said Manners.

"Couldn't go into Isaacs' with Figgy hanging about," said Tom Merry. "I'll run over now on my bike, alone. You chaps can attend to that letter—what?"

"All right," assented Lowther. "I'll try and borrow Railton's typewriter, if he's out. Manners can scout in the passage."

"Right-ho!" remarked Manners. "Mind you don't run into the Grammarians, Tommy."

"Rely on me!" said the captain of the Shell.

He slipped across the quad, and returned in a few moments with his bicycle. Meanwhile, Lowther and Manners had gone into the House.

Tom Merry wheeled his machine into the lane and pedalled off at full speed. He did not observe a lanky figure emerging from the New House, and cutting swiftly across the quad in the direction of the cycle-shed. In a few seconds, unknown to the Terrible Three, George Figgins was pedalling after Tom Merry.

The New House leader was feeling somewhat suspicious.

He and his chums had observed Gussy leaving Blankley's, and had followed him to Mr. Isaacs' little shop. Tom Merry & Co. had arrived in time to rescue the swell of the Fourth from a ragging, and they, too, had been heading for Mr. Isaacs' establishment.

There was no other reason why they should enter the musty side-street, so far as Figgins knew. And, watching from the cover of the House doorway, he had observed the

Shell captain leaving the school on his bike, evidently for a good and sufficient reason.

Figgins was in a very suspicious mood as he followed in Tom Merry's wake towards the village.

A few minutes later, Lowther and Manners were strolling along Masters' Corridor, endeavouring to appear careless and casual.

In Lowther's pocket reposed a sheet of business notepaper, which he had obtained from Ernest Jameson's desk in the Third Form room. The fog had been mystified when the humorist of the Shell had told him what was wanted, through the door of the punishment-room, but his demands to know what the game was only brought the unsatisfactory reply: "Wait and see."

At the door of Mr. Railton's study Lowther paused.

There was no sound from within.

Tap!

If Mr. Railton answered that tap Lowther had an excuse ready.

But the Housemaster did not answer it. He had gone for a stroll on that sunny half-holiday.

With infinite caution Lowther opened the door and looked in. The study was empty. On the table stood Mr. Railton's typewriter.

"Keep scout, Manners."

"Right-ho, old chap! I'll whistle if anybody comes along."

While Manners strolled carelessly in the corridor, Lowther was busy with the clicking typewriter.

He came out of the Housemaster's study at last, and Manners gave an exclamation.

"Done it?"

Lowther nodded.

A minute later the typed letter was safe in Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

Manners and Lowther were reading it over when Tom Merry returned, flushed from his ride.

"Is that the letter, Monty?"

"Sure, old top. How about the clobber?"

"All fixed. Isaacs seemed a bit puzzled, for some reason. But he'll have it all ready to-morrow afternoon."

"Good egg!"

There was deep satisfaction in Study No. 10.

At the gates, George Figgins was just dropping off his bicycle, with a very thoughtful expression on his lean features.

CHAPTER 9.

Gussy the Impersonator!

"GAD! Oh gad!"

Hurlingham of the Sixth stared at the sheet of paper in his hand as though it had bitten him.

His face was deathly white; he trembled in every limb.

To James Hurlingham it seemed as if the shadow of the "sack" was looming over him already.

He had come downstairs the following morning and glanced casually in the letter-rack as usual. There was a letter for him, with a neat, typewritten address:

"JAMES HURLINGHAM, Esq.,

St. James' School,

Rylcombe, Sussex."

The Sixth-Former opened the letter and glanced at its contents without any special apprehension. He rather expected it was a circular of some kind. When his eyes fell on the single sheet which it contained they almost started out of his head.

The letter was brief and to the point:

"Cardigan Chambers,
"Gray's Inn Road, E.C.
"James Hurlingham, Esq.,
"St. James' School, Sussex.

"Dear sir.—My notice has been drawn to the fact that through your denial of a charge, Ernest Jameson, of your school, has been expelled.

"I learn, further, that the boy has not left, but insists that he is innocent, and that you are guilty of the offence for which he has been condemned.

"It is my intention to see Dr. Holmes this afternoon (Thursday), in order to investigate the matter fully. If, THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,100.

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however, there is anything we may have to say to me, I shall be waiting in the building known as Pepper's Barn, near Rylcombe Station, at five p.m. precisely.

"Faithfully,
"LAWRENCE JAMESON.
(J.P. Jameson & Fawcett.)"

To Hurlingham, the grim, legal style of that neatly typewritten sheet was a nightmare. He could hardly believe that he had really received a communication from a lawyer—that he was threatened with an action to prove Jameson's innocence.

Hurlingham had shifted his guilt on to the fog's shoulders because he saw no other course to take. He had expected the fog to be punished severely, and the matter to blow over. Instead, the Head had taken a serious view and expelled the Third-Former.

There was nothing, in these circumstances, that the senior could think of but to stick tight and hope for the best. He had just begun to hull himself into a sense of security when this bombshell came out of the blue.

"By gad! What am I g'in to do now?"

James Hurlingham pressed his hand to his brow in an effort to solve the problem.

He read and re-read the letter, his fear growing at each perusal.

The postmark on the envelope was badly smudged and quite illegible, having been concocted, as a matter of fact, with the aid of a juvenile painting set borrowed from Wally D'Arcy. But Hurlingham did not glance at the postmark.

His eyes wandered from the neat, printed heading on the paper to the faultless, terrifying typewriting below.

The import of the letter seemed to burn itself on Hurlingham's mind. He stuffed it into his pocket as Blake and D'Arcy and several other fellows came up to the letter-rack.

"Bai Jove! Hurlingham is lookin' wowwied!" remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

The Sixth-Former walked hastily away to his study. There, at least, he could contemplate the unhappy position which he had landed himself in.

But by the time classes were due he had arrived no nearer to a solution of his problem. His mind was pre-occupied in class, a fact which Dr. Holmes, who was dealing learnedly with Aeschylus, with an occasional remark concerning Euripides, was swift to observe. He had more than one sarcastic remark to address to Hurlingham that morning, but the Sixth-Former heeded them not. He had something rather more important on his mind than the words of the ancient Greeks.

It was not a happy day for Hurlingham. Throughout the afternoon he was thinking about his coming interview with Lawrence Jameson, of Jameson & Fawcett.

He knew that Jameson's father was a lawyer, now he came to recall it to mind, and it never occurred to him to doubt that Lawrence Jameson was Ernest Jameson's father. Lawrence Jameson had been careful not to say that he was, but Hurlingham had inferred it, just as he was meant to do. Knowing nothing of the source of that letter, he could hardly suspect trickery.

When at last he was free for the day, the Sixth-Former was feeling almost grey with worry. But Mr. Jameson had to be interviewed; there was no avoiding that. Hurlingham had realised clearly enough that his only chance of remaining at St. Jim's was to see and placate the legal gentleman somehow.

He had a little time to kill before setting out, and he took a turn or two in the quad. Several fellows noticed him there, among them Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Gussy came out of the School House, glanced at Hurlingham, and hurried out of gates, bent, evidently, upon some mysterious errand of his own. He was followed a few minutes later by three fellows, carrying bags—Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners. They looked at Hurlingham and grinned.

"The dear man is going through it!" chuckled Lowther. "Put it on. We haven't much time."

The Terrible Three disappeared out of gates, leaving the Sixth-Former still taking turns in the quad. He was thinking hard, but he had not arrived at a solution of his difficulties.

He did not observe three fellows—two ordinary and one fat—emerge cautiously from the New House, one of them with a bag. They had left the school some minutes when Hurlingham glanced at his watch and turned his footsteps towards the gates.

It was a short walk to Pepper's Barn, and he would be in plenty of time. The juniors who, unknown to him, had left as soon as they were released from their Form-rooms, had ample time to reach it by now, if they wanted to.

In the lane, the Sixth-Former walked with his eyes on the ground.

In a very few minutes he would be face to face with the

father of the fellow he had sought to ruin, in order to save his own precious skin. It was not a pleasant prospect, and James Hurlingham shrank from it. But it had to be faced. The mere thought of a legal action made him tremble all over.

He turned the bend in the lane and came in sight of the barn. As he did so he nearly collided with a figure hurrying in the opposite direction.

"Good gad! Who—what—" The Sixth-Former started violently, while the figure came to a sudden halt, with an ejaculation of surprise.

Hurlingham's way was barred, and he stared in blank amazement at the apparition that confronted him.

The half-hour that had elapsed since Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had left the school had been a busy one for the swell of St. Jim's.

As a result of his visit to Mr. Isaacs the day before, Gussy had kept an appointment with that gentleman's assistant at a prearranged spot in Friardale Wood. Blake & Co. had many times had cause to bless their noble chum for keeping them waiting while he adjusted a necktie, or selected a topper; but they would have been amazed could they have seen the lightning speed with which Gussy changed into the clothes the costumer's assistant took from his bag.

There was a look of satisfaction on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face when he had finished. Mr. Isaacs' assistant, however, as he gazed at the weird and wonderful figure before him, seemed on the point of choking.

The part of the wood which Arthur Augustus had chosen in which to make his transformation, though secluded, was not far from the lane, and in a few minutes he was striding briskly towards the school. The shadow of expulsion hung over Ernest Jameson in the punishment-room at St. Jim's; but the swell of the Fourth was confident that, providing nothing went wrong with his well-thought-out plan, the fog's name was as good as cleared.

Arthur Augustus would have been very surprised had he known anything of Tom Merry & Co.'s activities that afternoon. Fortunately, perhaps, for his peace of mind, he did not. So far as he knew, the scheme he had evolved in his noble brain with the object of saving Jameson from the "sack," had occurred to no one else at St. Jim's. That fact, Gussy reflected, was rather strange, for one of the great merits of his plan was its simplicity.

Acting on the discovery that Mr. Jameson, the father of the expelled Third-Former, was a lawyer, he intended to visit the school in a disguise that would enable him to pass as that gentleman, and to confront James Hurlingham in a manner that would unnerve the rascally senior completely. After that the extracting of a complete confession from Hurlingham would not present much difficulty—or so Arthur Augustus imagined.

The next moment, however, as he suddenly found himself face to face with James Hurlingham, he realised that that scheme would have to be put into operation much sooner than he anticipated.

Senior and junior stared at each other, bereft of speech. Gussy was utterly taken aback at this unexpected meeting with the fellow who was the object of his visit to the school in disguise. As for Hurlingham, he seemed to be paralysed for the moment as he took stock of the figure before him.

It was not a tall figure; not quite so tall as Hurlingham himself, though it looked as if it wore springs in its heels to increase its height. It was draped almost from head to foot in a long black garment approaching a rusty hue. Cracked black patent shoes peeped out from beneath the voluminous cloak.

But it was the head that took Hurlingham's glance and held it.

There was very little of the face on view at all, but that was amply compensated for by a flowing black beard reaching almost to the figure's waist, and a curly black moustache covering the nose, mouth, and chin completely. Only a pair of gleaming eyes were visible, and these were shaded by fierce, beetling eyebrows. An immaculate "topper," crowning a shag of tousled black hair, completed the apparition.

Had the stranger stepped straight out of a comic opera, Hurlingham would not have been surprised. But to encounter it in broad daylight was a totally different matter.

"By gad! What—who on earth are you?"

The Sixth-Former found his voice at last, and in it there was more than a note of suspicion.

The figure was much too remarkable to be true, and Hurlingham was only too eager to grasp at the notion that the man was an impostor. He badly needed somebody on whom to wreak his temper just then.

"By Jove! Out with it! Who do you think you are?"

The stranger's eyes gleamed a little as Hurlingham spoke in that bullying tone. His hands, clasped behind his back,



There was a gasp of amazement from the crowd in the Shell passage as the head and shoulders of Ernest Jameson were framed in the broken door of the punishment-room. And small wonder, for the face of the expelled Third-Former was wearing a cheerful grin! (See Chapter 12.)

came to the fore, holding a knobbly walking-stick. He twirled his black moustache majestically before replying.

"You were not expectin' to meet me, Master Hurlingham?"

The senior started afresh.

"Eh?"

"Perhaps you are unaware of my identity, my boy?"

"Your—your identity?"

"Exactly! You may not have heard of—ahem!—Theophilus Jameson, of Jameson & Sturgees, lawyers of the City of London—"

"The-Theophilus Jameson!" stuttered Hurlingham, hardly able to credit his senses.

"That is the name, deah boy. It wathah surprisesh you, I expect?"

"Theophilus Jameson, of—of Jameson & Sturgees!" repeated the Sixth-Former, gasping for breath. "Why, you little sweep—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"You young whelp—"

"Bai Jove! I must request you to withdraw those statements immediately, Hurlingham!" ejaculated the "lawyer," with deep indignation.

"Withdraw them? Why, I'll tan your hide!" howled Hurlingham, quite beside himself with rage.

"Wemembah who I am—"

"You're D'Arcy of the Fourth, you young rotter!" roared Hurlingham, grasping at the flowing black beard. "You look about as much like a lawyer as a grand duke!"

"Bai—bai Jove! Welsease me—"

Yank!

It was a hard yank—a yank with all Hurlingham's strength behind it. And it was successful.

A moment previously the stranger had appeared an elderly, bearded, and bewhiskered old gentleman, with an intensely legal manner.

As Hurlingham yanked, beard, moustache, eyebrows,

and tousled wig came off in his hand, all at one fell swoop. The lawyer staggered, gasping with surprise. It did not need a detective then to discover his identity.

Arthur Augustus gasped and crimsoned as Hurlingham held up his beard, moustache, eyebrows, and wig.

"Oh! Oh deah! Bai Jove! What a fwest!"

CHAPTER 10.

More of Them!

"**B**EARD all right?"

"First rate, old chap!"

"Good!"

"Making-up" was proceeding at a furious pace in the ramshackle building known as Pepper's Barn.

The Terrible Three had reached the barn in good time, Tom Merry carrying the bag wherein was the material for transforming Monty Lowther into an emergency Jameson senior.

In that bag was a variety of articles invaluable for their purpose.

Mr. Isaacs had been, perhaps, just a little surprised at being asked to supply a second lawyer's outfit, having just received the same request from Arthur Augustus. But with Mr. Isaacs business demanded no inquiries. He was prepared to supply frock coats, cloaks, and topers until further orders, so long as there was hard cash forthcoming to pay for them.

Lowther had nothing to grumble at with regard to his equipment; there was a frock-coat, topper, umbrella neatly rolled, patent shoes, striped trousers, and a box of grease-paints for altering the youthful appearance of his features.

Making-up his face was Lowther's chief care. The clothes would look the part easily enough, provided a close scrutiny of his features did not give the show away, and to his face Lowther was devoting keen attention.

He affixed a wig by means of a skull-cap which came down

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over his forehead. The line where it met the flesh was concealed by a false wrinkle, indistinguishable among the others with which Lowther adorned his brow.

A trim, short beard followed, and gave him a most grim and uncompromising appearance. Lowther gazed at his reflection with satisfaction.

"How's that, you chaps?"

"Topping, old man! Buck up—it only wants a few minutes to five!"

"My hat! Does it?"

Lowther took-up a stick of grease-paint, and worked on swiftly.

Two deft lines, one on each side of his nose, added years to his appearance. A pair of bushy eyebrows and careful shading near the cheekbones added to the effect. A few final touches, and Monty Lowther's face was completely changed. From his collar upwards he looked fifty, at least.

"Ahem! Are you boys friends of my son?"

Tom Merry started quite violently as that deep, grim voice broke upon his ears.

"My hat! Monty, old man, that was great!"

"Think it will pass?" asked Monty Lowther, in delight.

"No danger at all," said Manners confidently.

It did not take Lowther long to slip out of his Etons and into the frock coat and striped trousers. With black patent shoes, a gold watch-chain, a stiff white collar, with black tie, and a shining "topper" to finish, it was hard for Tom Merry and Manners to recognise their chum.

With an air of great dignity, Lowther picked up the neatly-rolled umbrella, and tucked it under his arm. He drew a pair of pince-nez from his breast pocket, and perched them on the bridge of his nose.

"How's that, umpires?"

"Top-hole!"

"By Jove, Hurlingham won't recognise you like that!" breathed Tom Merry admiringly. "It's cast-iron!"

"I told you fellows I could do it on my head," answered Lowther confidently. "Watch the interview, and you'll have the treat of your young lives."

"As you go out of the door, we'll slip out through the back," said Manners. "Then if Hurlingham wants to get into the barn, so as not to be seen, you can bring him in."

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry was standing at the little window, staring across the field towards the lane.

"He should be here any minute now," said the Shell captain. "I— My only summer bonnet!"

"What?"

"What in thunder—"

Lowther and Manners leaped across to the window. The sight that met their gaze almost staggered them.

Really, it was difficult to believe that it was actually happening. James Hurlingham had appeared round the bend in the lane, to find his way barred, and it was at the top-hatted, bearded, robed figure in his path that Tom Merry & Co. stared.

Presumably, the figure was supposed to be some kind of an elderly gentleman—though from his remarkable attire, it was difficult to tell with certainty what kind. But even at that range the Terrible Three had no hard task to recognise the figure. They knew it too well. And a moment later, as a dulcet tone floated across the field, they knew for certain.

"Gussy!" ejaculated Lowther dazedly.

"Gussy—that footling, blithering chump!" gasped Manners.

"Gussy—what the merry thump is he up to now?" breathed Tom Merry.

The three juniors gazed out of the window hardly able to believe their eyes.

They had not organised this little jape merely as a harmless jest on Hurlingham. The matter was serious enough indeed. And they were relying on Lowther's well-known histrionic skill to terrify the Sixth-Former into doing justice by Jameson. For Arthur Augustus to "butt-in" at this critical moment was a catastrophe—nothing less.

"My hat! Can he—could the awful idiot have thought of the same wheeze?" breathed Lowther.

"Must have!" answered Manners grimly. "He—he thinks he can pass as an old gentleman—with that accent and—"

"And what a make-up!" sobbed Lowther. "Why, I can recognise the awful fathead from here!"

"Look!" ejaculated Tom Merry tensely.

The Terrible Three watched, fascinated, and on Lowther's wrinkled face there broke a beam of hope.

It had not taken James Hurlingham long to see through Gussy's phenomenal "get-up," though the swell of St. Jim's fondly imagined that his disguise was perfect. That his well-known aristocratic features, or his equally famous

accent would give him away had not occurred to Gussy's powerful intellect.

There was a chirrup of joy from Lowther as Hurlingham grabbed at Arthur Augustus' board, and the whole of his "disguise" came off in the senior's hand!

For a moment, Gussy was revealed, swathed in a black coat, but unmistakably himself!

Hurlingham's voice came to the ears of the Shell fellows in the barn, and Lowther chuckled.

"What luck! Hurlingham will think Gussy was up to some potty jape. This is where I come in, what?"

"The ass jolly nearly queered the pitch," said Tom Merry, opening the barn door cautiously. "Hurlingham may be a bit suspicious, old chap. Watch out for him!"

"And don't forget to give Gussy a taste of your giddy gamp!" urged Manners. "That will put more realism into it—and Gussy deserves it!"

"Rely on me," said Lowther coolly. "Keep out of sight, that's all."

As Tom Merry opened the door, Lowther, with a dignified tread, left the barn and strode towards Hurlingham and Gussy.

His chums watched him breathlessly.

Hurlingham's face was convulsed as he gazed at the swell of St. Jim's. He had never for a moment suspected that that legal letter was a hoax; but the thought had leaped into his mind now, and his anger was almost beyond control. He was preparing to vent all that he had suffered upon the hapless junior.

"Now, you young villain!"

The prefect made a grab at Arthur Augustus, but the junior ducked and dodged away, gasping.

"Boy!"

James Hurlingham stopped in his stride, as though he had been shot.

He turned in the direction of the voice, and stiffened all over.

It was not a comic opera villain that met the prefect's eyes—it was a staid and exceedingly grim-looking old gentleman, possessed of a hard and penetrating voice.

For a moment, Hurlingham gasped helplessly.

All his fears returned tenfold.

"Hurlingham! I presume you are the boy I came here to meet?"

"Are—are you Mr. Jameson, sir?"

"Whom would you take me for?" ejaculated the "lawyer" testily. "May I inquire who this—this apparition may be? A friend of yours, perhaps?"

He gave Gussy a grim glance.

"Bai-bai Jove, you know—" began the swell of St. Jim's feebly.

"I will give you one minute in which to leave us!" snapped the lawyer, gripping his umbrella. "After that I—"

Gussy gasped.

He did not take a minute. Throwing dignity to the winds, he fled precipitately down the lane.

Frowning, the lawyer turned his attention to Hurlingham. His eyes gleamed behind his bushy brows as they rested on the Sixth-Former's white face.

Hurlingham had barely recovered from the shock he had received at the startling appearance of a second and apparently real legal gentleman. The disguised Monty Lowther guessed that he was in a state of "blue funk" that would make it all the easier for him to carry through his scheme successfully.

"Do you mind if we go into the barn, sir?" said the senior hurriedly. "We're not likely to be disturbed there."

Mr. Jameson nodded grimly. Had he known what was working in Hurlingham's mind, however, it is probable that he would not have been quite so easy in his own.

There was suspicion in the Sixth-Former's mind—deep suspicion. He could not recognise Lowther; it was doubtful whether the Head could have performed that feat just then. But Hurlingham was not unaware of the skill of the junior dramatic society, and after his experience with Gussy he was very wary indeed.

It was a risk, but Hurlingham determined to take it.

He followed the lawyer through the broken gate and along the path leading to the barn. Suddenly, with a movement that took the disguised humorist of the Shell completely by surprise, the Sixth-Former's hand closed tightly on the neatly-trimmed beard, and with all his force he pulled.

The result was startling.

Lowther's disguise was really good, but it was not meant to stand wear and tear of that description. As Hurlingham tugged, the beard came off, and the senior staggered back, gasping, but triumphant.

"You—you young hound—"

"Mum-mum-my hat! Oh, my giddy aunt!" groaned Lowther.

"Who—who are you, you little sweep?" snarled Hurlingham, his fists clenched threateningly. He appeared inclined to throw himself upon the gasping junior.

"I'm—I'm Lowther!"
 "You'll pay dearly for this!" snapped the Sixth-Former, his lips white with rage. "I've a good mind—"
 "Boy!"
 What Hurlingham had a good mind to do was not revealed.

For the second time a harsh, metallic voice broke upon him, and he spun round fiercely.

This time he was not surprised to perceive an ascetic-looking gentleman of perhaps fifty-five staring grimly at him. Hurlingham was getting used to receiving such stares. He did not hesitate as this severe personage confronted him. He made a leap.

His grasp closed firmly on the gentleman's short, pointed beard. Hurlingham put his beef into that pull.

Yank!
 "Yooooooooo! Grrrooht! Good—good gracious! What—what—never in my life, you young puppy—you—"
 The Sixth-Former paled, and his grasp relaxed.
 To his horror, the beard had remained fixed.
 It was real; the old gentleman was the lawyer without a doubt.

And, judging by his expression as he recovered from Hurlingham's sudden assault, his temper was of a rather vitriolic variety.

"Gad! Oh gad!"



"Jameson, old man!" said Tom Merry blankly, indicating the elderly visitor in the study. "Don't you—don't you recognise your father?" "My—my father!" stuttered the Third-Former. "That's not my father!" "Wha-a-at!" The Terrible Three leaped almost clear of the floor. (See Chapter 13.)

Hurlingham gasped helplessly.
 At that moment he would have been devoutly thankful if the ground had opened and swallowed him up!

CHAPTER 11.

Mr. Selby is Surprised!

LOWTHER stared.
 Hurlingham started.
 The stranger glared.
 He seemed furious and flushed—and indignant, as was only natural in the circumstances.

Lowther could only stare and gasp with astonishment.
 As the originator of the scheme to impersonate Mr. Jameson, it naturally astounded him to behold the lawyer himself at such an appropriate moment; it was as though Mr. Jameson had been aware of Lowther's scheme and had come down personally to put a stop to it.

For Hurlingham it was a moment of horror; there was nothing for him to do but stare and gasp and wait for the storm to burst.

The stranger was some time getting his breath again.
 While he did so his keen glance played on Lowther and the Sixth-Former alternately.

Hurlingham stepped forward after a lengthy pause, adopting his most conciliatory manner.

"If you'll let me explain, Mr. Jameson—it was all a mistake—"

"Pray keep your distance, Hurlingham, if you are the boy I arranged to meet," responded the stranger coldly.

"I—I was expecting you, sir!" gasped Hurlingham desperately. "This—this young rascal—"

"What—what?"

"This young rascal, sir," continued Hurlingham, indicating Lowther, "dressed up to impersonate you, and I thought you were another of the young scoundrels. You see—"

"One moment."

The stranger drew out a pair of glasses and set them on his nose. He looked Lowther up and down grimly, while the unhappy impersonator squirmed.

The lawyer turned to Hurlingham after a careful scrutiny.
 "Do you mean to inform me that—that this person bears any resemblance whatever to myself?"

"Oh, no! None at all, sir!" gasped Hurlingham.

"I should imagine not. Then why did you mistake him for me?"

"I—I—"

Hurlingham floundered.

Really he could not explain that. The two Mr. Jamesons were both, apparently, elderly gentlemen, either of whom might have been the lawyer. The only difference was that Lowther's whiskers were detachable. But the lawyer evidently did not appreciate comparison.

"I—it was very foolish of me, I admit!" gasped the Sixth-Former at last. "There—there really isn't much likeness, of course. I hope—"

"Kindly remain silent!" snapped the lawyer grimly.

"You, boy—I suppose you hoped to play some reckless jest upon this young ruffian?"

Hurlingham crimsoned.

For a second there was a faint smile on Lowther's face.

"How—how did you get here, sir?"

"Answer my question!" thundered Mr. Jameson.

"Oh, yes, sir! It was all a—a joke on Hurlingham."

"May I inquire what kind of a joke?"

"Well, there's no need to keep it back any more," said

Lowther more easily. "We thought we'd frighten Hurlingham into confessing to the Head, and thereby save your son from being unjustly expelled. I suppose you've heard from the Head, sir?"

"I have learned that the poor lad is under sentence of expulsion," assented the lawyer. "That he is innocent, of course, goes without saying. It remains only to fasten the guilt upon the right boy and then prosecute!"

"Prosecute?" stuttered Hurlingham.

"Exactly. I may say that I already suspect you, boy. It appears that my son accused you of forcing him to fetch cigarettes from an inn of doubtful character."

"I assure you, sir—"

"Naturally, I believe implicitly in Ernest's word. There is no doubt in my own mind that you are the guilty party, Hurlingham."

"I—I—" Hurlingham trailed off.

"Do you deny it?" thundered Mr. Jameson.

Hurlingham was silent. Of what use were denials when this keen-eyed lawyer seemed able to read his very thoughts?

"I understand that you, my boy, intended with the aid of that ridiculous garb to terrify this boy into admitting the truth?" went on the lawyer, with quite a benevolent glance at Lowther.

"It was my scheme, sir," said Lowther. "Tom Merry and Manners helped me. Tommy! Manners! Here, old tops!"

From behind the cover of Pepper's Barn two heads peeped forth, and at a wave from Lowther, Tom Merry and Harry Manners trotted across the field to join the little group near the lane.

"Hallo! We were wondering what on earth was happening!" ejaculated the captain of the Shell as he came up.

In a few words Lowther explained.

All eyes were turned on the lawyer.

He was regarding James Hurlingham, and it was plain that the Sixth-Former realised that the game was up.

Hurlingham had hoped to scrape off clear of blame, and leave Jameson to face the music. But the threat of a judicial action had taken all the stuffing out of him.

Quite what the law would make of the case, Hurlingham did not stop to think. He knew he was in the wrong, and an investigator of Mr. Jameson's calibre would not take long to ferret out the facts. After that, Hurlingham could expect short shrift from Dr. Holmes.

His only chance, so far as he could see, was somehow to placate the lawyer before he saw the Head—a somewhat formidable task.

"If you'll give me a chance to speak, sir—" he began hurriedly.

"You may say anything you wish, Hurlingham," said Mr. Jameson coldly.

"If we could arrange this matter amicably, sir—I mean, I'll do anything in my power to help your son. I didn't realise the position before—"

"You did not realise that it was serious for the lad to be expelled on your account?" queried the lawyer.

"I—I mean, perhaps I was blind to the rights and wrongs of the affair. I'll see Mr. Selby—"

"Who is Mr. Selby?"

"His Form master, sir. If I appeal to him, he may be able to get the sentence rescinded."

"And if not?"

"I—I'll make him see reason somehow," promised Hurlingham desperately.

The lawyer appeared to consider.

But he shook his head after a pause.

"I am afraid you are only seeking to gain time," he said grimly. "I shall have to interview Dr. Holmes, and if that is of no avail, I shall take steps to start an action. I will not see my son condemned and expelled in another boy's place."

"Give me a chance, sir!" panted the Sixth-Former, almost at the end of his tether. "I'll own up and make everything right for your son if you'll only give me the chance!"

He looked pleadingly at the lawyer.

"These fellows will entertain you while I see Mr. Selby—and the Head, too, if need be," went on Hurlingham. "If your son is declared innocent, sir, will you be satisfied? I know I don't deserve it, but my people—"

Hurlingham bit his lip.

It was a bitter pill for him to swallow—to be forced to plead to the lawyer before juniors he hated. But the lawyer's threat left him no alternative. He hung breathlessly upon Mr. Jameson's answer.

The lawyer nodded slowly.

"Very well," he agreed. "You do not deserve this leniency, but on the other hand, I do not wish to create a bother if it can be avoided. I will accompany you to the school, and doubtless these lads will keep me out of sight till—"

"In the study, sir," said Tom Merry at once.

"Very good! I will wait while you interview this Mr. Selby and the Head. If Ernest's name is completely cleared I shall go without reporting your despicable conduct to Dr. Holmes—as it richly deserves. If not—"

Mr. Jameson left that to Hurlingham's imagination.

The prefect was almost gasping with relief.

"If you don't mind, sir, I'll get on ahead—"

"Make all haste!" said the lawyer curtly. "I will walk to the school with these lads."

Hurlingham made off at a trot for St. Jim's.

At that moment

he did not pause to consider his lofty dignity as a senior. The possibility of being the central figure in a legal action made the Sixth-Former tremble. That had to be avoided at all costs, even if it meant a confession before the Head.

Rather a confession, at any rate, than the exposure that was certain to come if Mr. Jameson investigated the matter.

The lawyer and the Terrible Three were following at a much slower pace, and Hurlingham reached the school with several minutes in hand.

His footsteps led him straight to Mr. Selby's study.

Quite what he was to say, and how he was going to say it, Hurlingham had no idea. But he realised that if it was not said by the time the lawyer arrived, his number would be up. It was neck or nothing.

Tap!

"Come in!"

Mr. Henry Selby glanced up irritably as the Sixth-Former entered and stood on the study carpet, gasping.

Mr. Selby's glance was always irritable. It became more so as he noticed Hurlingham's excited state.

"What do you want, Hurlingham?"

"I—I—it's about Jameson, sir!"

"Oh! Has the wretched boy given himself up?"

"Eh? Nunno! I mean—I don't know, sir!"

Mr. Selby stared at the Sixth-Former.

"Then what do you mean, Hurlingham? Your manner is peculiar!"

"About—about Jameson, sir. He's innocent!" said Hurlingham, getting it out at last.

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"What—what? The boy is innocent? What makes you think this, Hurlingham?"

"I—it was my fault, sir!" gasped the senior miserably. "Your fault? I fail to understand you. Kindly be more explicit."

"I—I mean, he went to the Green Man to fetch cigarettes for me, sir," faltered the Sixth-Former.

Mr. Selby took a deep breath.

"For you?"

Hurlingham nodded, his eyes fixed on the floor, and for some moments there was silence in the study. Then Mr. Selby spoke, and his voice was grim.

"You will accompany me, Hurlingham!"

"Where?" The Sixth-Former's voice sank almost to a whisper.

"To the Head!"

CHAPTER 12. Before the Head!

TAP!

"Dear me! How disturbing!"

Dr. Holmes laid down a weighty volume of Sophocles and glanced at the study door with considerable displeasure.

The reverend Head of St. Jim's had been enjoying a quiet half hour before tea with one of his favourite volumes; a volume which would have given any fellow in the Lower School a headache.

him. He nerved himself to face the ordeal that lay before him.

Dr. Holmes put on his glasses and gave his visitors a look of inquiry.

"Well, Mr. Selby? Has the wretched boy in the punishment-room given himself up?"

"It is not concerning that that I have come to speak," said Mr. Selby hastily. "It is regarding Hurlingham."

"Pray proceed!"

"This boy," began the Third Form master, with a grim look at the Sixth-Former, "a few minutes ago burst into my study and confessed to having been the cause of Jameson's visits to the Green Man to fetch cigarettes!"

"What?"

Dr. Holmes gave the master of the Third a look of almost incredulous amazement. For a moment he seemed at a loss for words. Then he fixed his eyes on James Hurlingham, and his brow grew black.

"Hurlingham! Is this the truth?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Do you mean to tell me," thundered the Head, "that Jameson's accusations were true, in spite of your denials—that you were guilty of deliberate falsehood?"

Hurlingham was silent.

"Upon my word! I am shocked and astounded!" went on Dr. Holmes. "What has prompted this amazing confession I cannot guess. It comes at a time when the boy

Schoolmaster Arrested!

Mr. Selby, of the Third Form, is one of the most unpopular, if not the most unpopular, master at St. Jim's. His Form considers him a tyrant, and those juniors who do not come into contact with him very much are of the same opinion.

It is with mixed feelings, therefore, that they learn of the arrest of Mr. Henry Selby.

Sensation!

What has "old Selby" done?

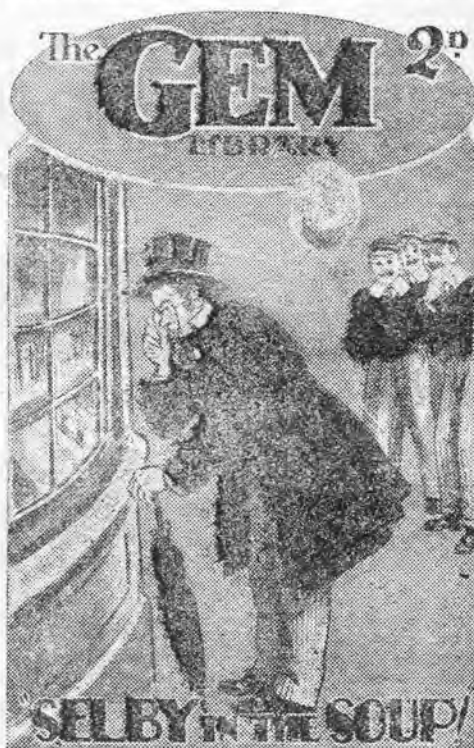
And what a disgrace to the school!

Then, into the picture steps Harry Manners, of the Shell. There is little love lost between Manners and the tyrant of the Third, and it is a great surprise to all when Manners forgets their feud and takes up the cause of Mr. Selby. There are many more surprises in this story, which contains drama, thrills, and humour.

Look out for the title:—

"SELBY IN THE SOUP!"

Give in your order
for next week's issue of the "Gem" to-day, Chums!



But the Head found enjoyment and consolation in this volume; in the times of the ancient Greek philosopher there were no Public schools, or schoolboys such as Dr. Holmes was used to dealing with all day.

He found a quiet haven in the profound reflections of Sophocles, and he did not appreciate this interruption in the least.

There was a rather impatient tone about his summons.

"Come in!"

The study door opened, and two figures stood upon the threshold.

"Dear me! Mr. Selby. And Hurlingham. Pray step in!"

Hurlingham and Mr. Selby stepped in—the senior first. The Third Form master regarded Hurlingham somewhat in the light of a recalcitrant fag, whom he had brought up for judgment, and he was taking no risks of a sudden dash for freedom.

But Hurlingham was only too eager to get the whole affair over and done with. He knew that time was short, and that open confession was the only course left open to

has been condemned, and but for his own—ahem—remarkable conduct, would have left the school. Have you anything to say?"

Hurlingham licked his dry lips.

"I—I was mad, sir," he almost groaned. "I—I didn't realise what I was doing when—when Jameson accused me. I couldn't face being expelled. But afterwards I had time to think of what I'd done, and I—I—"

The Sixth-Former trailed off into silence.

"I am glad that your conscience would not allow you to keep silent and see a terrible injustice done to an innocent lad," said the Head sternly. "That, at least, is in your favour. Nevertheless, such unprincipled conduct on the part of a Sixth-Form man comes as a great shock to me, and I shall have to consider seriously whether I can allow you to remain in the school. For the present, until I have arrived at a decision in the matter, you will remain within gates. You may go!"

And Hurlingham went.

He gave a deep gasp of relief as he closed the door of the Head's study behind him. He had escaped the dreaded

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legal prosecution, but that interview had not been a light price to pay.

The Sixth-Former's steps had died away down the passage before Dr. Holmes turned to the master of the Third.

"Jameson's actions in defying authority were not the outcome of a reckless hardihood, as we had believed," he said quietly. "They were those of an innocent lad, and I am deeply thankful that the truth has come to light before he had left the school in disgrace. I should be glad if you would tell him that his name has been cleared, Mr. Selby, and return with him here as soon as the barricade has been removed."

Mr. Selby nodded, and left the study.

There was a troubled look on the Head's kind old face as the door closed behind the Third Form master. Not for a moment had he believed Jameson's wild accusation of Hurlingham. It had been his word against the Sixth-Former's, and the Head had had no misgivings in sentencing the fag to expulsion.

Hurlingham's belated confession had cleared Jameson, but it had also shown the real character of a member of a Form that should have been above suspicion. It had been a disturbing revelation for Dr. Holmes, and he paced the study with a clouded brow. He halted the next moment as there came a tap at the door, and Mr. Selby entered hurriedly. There was no sign of Jameson, and the Head looked at the Third Form master in surprise.

"Mr. Selby!" he exclaimed. "Where—?"

"Dr. Holmes!" burst out the Form master breathlessly. "We have been deceived. The door of the punishment-room is not barricaded!"

"Not barricaded? Then what—?"

"The door has been screwed up," said Mr. Selby. "We can hardly blame ourselves for not seeing through the deception. It was only after a close examination, following Jameson's explanation that the door had been fastened from the outside, that I discovered the screws, concealed by a substance resembling putty."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head. "Who can have been responsible? Ahem! Perhaps that need not be gone into at the moment. Will you see Taggles, Mr. Selby, and request him to force an entry at once?"

Mr. Selby rustled out of the study. A few minutes later the sound of heavy blows proceeding from the direction of the Shell passage, announced that the attack on the door of Nobody's Study had commenced.

The commotion drew wondering fellows from all directions. The news spread, and within an amazingly short space of time, a swarm of fags and juniors, with a good sprinkling of seniors, had gathered outside the punishment-room.

Wally D'Arcy gave a low whistle of dismay as he hurried up with his chums.

"Oh, crumbs!" he gasped. "Poor old Jammy's done for this time!"

And the leader of the Third voiced the general opinion.

To the rapidly swelling crowd in the corridor there seemed no doubt that they were witnessing the end of Ernest Jameson's losing fight against authority—an end that had been inevitable from the outset.

But this sudden development had descended upon Wally & Co. like a bombshell for until that moment Wally's scheme for saving Jameson had appeared to be working like a charm. They had chortled gleefully when the authorities, "spoofed" into the not unnatural belief that the expelled fag had barred himself in, had decided that hunger would soon force him to surrender. That state of affairs, from the Third-Former's point of view, could not have been better.

They had been grimly determined to clear their chum's name at all costs, but even the most optimistic fag realised that the task of forcing Hurlingham to confess would take time.

Thanks, however, to a stroke of really "spiffing" luck, as Wally expressed it, everything had seemed to be plain sailing. With a chance to formulate plans and to carry them out, the heroes of the Third had little doubt of the success of their campaign against the rascally Sixth-Former.

But now, so suddenly and without warning that they could hardly believe it, that cheering prospect had vanished. The truth had been discovered—how, they did not know and hardly cared at that moment—and they could only stand by helplessly while their chum was secured.

There would be no chance of helping him a second time. Ernest Jameson would leave St. Jim's in the charge of a prefect the next morning—expelled for a crime of which he was innocent.

Crash, crash!

The old oak panels of the punishment-room splintered under the onslaught of Taggles' axe.

Wally D'Arcy's hands clenched.

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"Hang it!" he muttered. "Can't we do something?"

"We've done all we could, Wally," said Frank Levison hopelessly. "It's no good. That cad Hurlingham—"

"The blackguard!"

"The howling rotter!"

The Third-Formers fairly seethed with rage at the thought of the fellow who was saving his own skin at the expense of their innocent chum.

And the swelling murmur from the crowd in the passage told them that their feelings were shared by practically every fellow there. The Head of St. Jim's might be prepared to take James Hurlingham's word against that of Ernest Jameson—he did not know the Sixth-Former's real character. But the rest of the school did, and few had any doubt that he would hesitate to lie himself out of a tight corner, if necessary, without the slightest scruple.

Crash, crash!

A jagged hole had appeared in one of the panels of the punishment-room door, and it widened gradually under the blows of the axe.

A hush descended on the crowd as Taggles stepped back from the door at last, breathing hard. The next moment it was broken by a gasp of amazement from the onlookers as the face of Ernest Jameson appeared in the opening.

For an instant, there was silence. Everyone, from the lordliest prefect to the lowliest fag, stared speechlessly at the Third-Former, as if deprived of breath.

And small wonder, for the look of hopeless dejection or of sullen defiance they had expected to see on the face of the expelled junior was far from being in evidence. Instead, Jameson's eyes were shining, and his face, though rather pale, was wearing a cheerful grin.

For a moment, he seemed taken aback at the sight of the crowd that blocked the passage. Then, as his eyes met the wondering gaze of his chums, he gave a glad exclamation.

"Wally! Franky! Hallo, you chaps!"

The words broke the silence and the spell.

Instantly a babel of voices broke loose, and as one man the crowd surged round the door of Nobody's Study.

The scene in the Shell passage rapidly took on a resemblance to half a dozen fast and furious Rugby scrums combined.

Mr. Selby's attempts to restore order were futile. In the uproar his sharp voice was scarcely heard, let alone heeded.

Everyone seemed to be asking questions at once, and, no satisfactory answers forthcoming, there was a general scramble to reach the door and obtain information at first hand, so to speak.

Wally D'Arcy & Co. were propelled forward by the irresistible force behind them, and jammed against the splintered and broken door. Not that they had any objection. They were face to face with Ernest Jameson, and, like the rest of the fellows, they were burning with eagerness to know what had happened to cause this apparently amazing change in the state of affairs.

"Jammy, old man!" gasped Wally. "What—what's happened?"

"You chaps know about as much as I do!" returned Jameson breathlessly. "You could have knocked me down with a feather when old Selby told me I'd been cleared—"

"Wha-a-ut!"

Once again the Third-Formers were suddenly bereft of speech. They stared at their chum as if they could scarcely believe their ears.

Frank Levison was the first to recover his voice.

"But—but how—" he stuttered.

There was no chance for further questioning, however.

Mr. Horace Selby, by dint of much energetic elbowing, had managed to force a way through the crush to the door. The uproar died down a little as he faced the crowd.

"Boys! How—how dare you!" he hooted. "Silence!"

The master of the Third turned to the fag whose head and shoulders were framed in the broken door. "Jameson," he snapped, "you will come with me to the Head's study at once!"

"Yes, sir."

With a helping hand from Taggles, Jameson climbed through the opening and dropped into the passage. He gave his chums a cheerful wink, and followed Mr. Selby in the direction of the stairs.

It was the signal for a general movement on the part of the crowd.

The amazing news had spread from lip to lip like lightning. Jameson's innocence had been proved! His name was cleared! If a bombshell had been dropped suddenly in the Shell passage it would hardly have caused a greater sensation. How it had all come about was a mystery on which no one could attempt to throw any light. One thing was certain, developments would soon be forth-

coming, and every fellow had made up his mind not to miss them.

With about half the school following a few yards in the rear Mr. Selby and Jameson made their way to the Head's study. A deep voice sounded from within in response to the Third Form master's tap, and the two entered.

The door closed, leaving the waiting crowd at the end of the passage seething with excitement and awaiting the result of that interview with great impatience.

Dr. Holmes rose from his chair as Mr. Selby entered the study with Ernest Jameson.

"Jameson, my boy," said the Head kindly, his eyes on the fag's face. "Let me tell you at once that your innocence has been established. Hurlingham has confessed."

"What! Con-fessed!"

Jameson stared open-mouthed at the Head. He had been prepared for almost anything, but certainly not for this.

"Hurlingham has made full confession that he sent you for the cigarettes which were found in your possession," continued the Head gently. "The terrible injustice which would otherwise have been done has thus been averted, and I am deeply thankful."

"My hat!" gasped Jameson, regardless of the august presence of the Head and Mr. Selby.

"I deeply regret that suspicion should have fallen unjustly upon you, my boy," said Dr. Holmes, laying his hand on the fag's shoulder in his most kindly manner. "You may return to your Form, and I hope that we shall all forget this unpleasant matter as soon as possible."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"That is all, then. Perhaps, Mr. Selby, you will—ahem!—request Taggles to see that the door of the punishment-room is repaired as soon as possible?"

"Certainly, sir!"

A moment later, at a benevolent gesture of dismissal from the Head, Jameson left the study, still wondering whether he was on his head or his heels.

CHAPTER 13.

The Mystery Solved!

"HERE he is!"

There was almost a shout from the waiting crowd as the door of the Head's study opened and Ernest Jameson came out.

He reached the end of the corridor, and in an instant he was surrounded.

"Now, then, young Jameson—"

"Out with it!"

"Has the Head—"

"Is it true—"

Jameson grinned as questions were fired at him from all sides, like bullets from a machine-gun. One idea was uppermost in all minds just then—that of getting to the bottom of this amazing affair.

"I can soon tell you what's happened," said the Third-Former. "Hurlingham's confessed!"

"Wha-a-at!"

It was a long-drawn-out gasp of incredulity.

"I know it wants some swallowing," said Jameson. "Don't ask me how it's happened. It beats me!"

"Well, my only summer bonnet!"

"This licks cock-fighting!"

"Who'd have thought it?"

Certainly no one at St. Jim's would have thought it. The idea of James Hurlingham risking expulsion to save a fag was one that needed some time to get used to, as Ralph Reckness Cardew put it.

"Who said the giddy age of miracles was past?" demanded Wally D'Arcy jubilantly. "Hurlingham's played up and put things right for Jammy! Up with Jammy!"

In the grasp of many willing hands Ernest Jameson was lifted shoulder-high.

"Now then!" shouted someone. "Three of the best! Hip, hip, hip—"

And three cheers were given with a force that nearly lifted the roof.

Jameson looked down from his lofty position with flushed face and shining eyes. It had been a time of dark trouble for the plucky fag—with the shadow of expulsion hanging over him. But by the hand of Providence, it seemed, the clouds had lifted at the eleventh hour. There was a suspicious moisture in the Third-Former's eyes as the last of the three rousing cheers died away.

"Jameson, old man!" It was Monty Lowther who spoke. He had been an extremely interested spectator of the sensational happenings in the School House that evening, and now he edged his way through the crowd to where the cause of the sensation sat perched on the shoulders of his chums. "Jameson," said Lowther cheerily, "we've arranged a spread in Study No. 10 to celebrate the occasion, and reserved the place of honour for you. Will you come?"

Wally D'Arcy answered that question before his chum could open his mouth to reply.

"Jammy thanks you for your kind invitation," grinned the leader of the Third, "and says he'll have much pleasure in accepting—and so will we! Quick march!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And, to the accompaniment of "See, the Conquering Hero Comes!" whistled loudly and discordantly, the triumphant procession made its way to the Shell passage. Outside Study No. 10 the guest of honour was lowered to the floor, and Monty Lowther threw open the door.

Jameson entered the study with Wally D'Arcy, Frank Levison, and Curly Gibson. On the heels of the four fags came Jack Blake & Co. Talbot and Kangaroo followed, while Lowther brought up the rear and closed the door.

The Terrible Three's study was one of the roomiest in the Shell passage, but it had certainly not been made to hold thirteen fellows with ease. It was a tight squeeze, but the sight of the tempting array of eatables on the groaning board more than compensated for any lack of comfort.

For the moment, however, nobody had eyes for the loaded table. The gaze of every one of the guests was fixed on the figure which had risen from the study armchair. It was that of a thin gentleman of middle age, with a grim, bearded face.

For several seconds there was silence. The ten fellows who had crowded into the study were evidently wondering who this extraordinary visitor might be. The smiles which Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had been wearing were giving place to puzzled frowns.

Things were hardly working out as the Terrible Three had expected. Ernest Jameson was obviously as surprised as the rest; there was no sign of recognition in his face as he stared at the elderly occupant of the study.

It was Tom Merry who broke the silence.

"Jameson, old man," he said blankly, "don't you—don't you recognise your father?"

"My—my father!" stuttered the Third-Former. "That's not my father!"

"Wha-a-at!"

The Terrible Three leaped almost clear of the floor. "I don't know him from Adam!" snorted Jameson. "If he's told you—"

The captain of the Shell swung round on the man who, until that moment, he had fully believed to be Mr. Jameson, the father of Jameson of the Third.

"What does this mean?" he demanded. "Who are you, then?"

A curious grin appeared on the face of the visitor.

"My dear Thomas," he replied cheerily, "surely you don't need to be told that?"

Every fellow in the study jumped, as if electrified; for, instead of the harsh, metallic tones they had expected to hear, the words were spoken in a voice with which all in Study No. 10 were perfectly familiar.

"Kerr!"

"Kerr, you spoofer!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Kerr!"

"Kerr—all the time!" murmured Monty Lowther faintly.

"Little me!" grinned the New House junior. "I fancy nobody suspected anything, did they?"

"But—but what's it all mean?" asked Jameson bewilderedly.

"Explain, you asses!" roared Blake.

"Yes, rather! Cough it up!"

Tom Merry looked round at the mystified faces, with a grin.

"Well, I take my hat off to Kerr," he said. "He's spoofed us all along the line!" And the captain of the Shell proceeded to give a brief account of what had happened at Pepper's Barn after afternoon lessons. There were gasps and chuckles when he came to the finish of the story of the three Mr. Jamesons.

In common with the rest of the school, except the very few "in the know," the fellows in the study had wondered what had been responsible for James Hurlingham's amazing last-minute confession. Now they knew.

"What a wheeze!" chortled Blake. "Thank goodness, it came off, though Guasy did his best to make a muck of it!"

"Weally, Blake, you wottah—"

There was a look of deep gratitude in Jameson's face as he stood in front of Kerr.

"Then—then I've got you to thank for what's happened?" he stammered. "I don't know how to—"

"Oh, rot!" growled Kerr uncomfortably. He gave a reminiscent chuckle. "It was worth doing, for the fun alone. The look on dear old Hurlingham's face when I threatened a legal action was worth a guinea a box!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But the beard," ejaculated Tom Merry suddenly—"it stuck tight when Hurlingham yanked it!"

(Continued on page 28.)

UP AGAINST IT IN AUSTRALIA!

There seems to be no end to the perils that drop up in the path of our Adventurous Trio. But they have managed to survive them. This week, however, they find themselves in a tight corner out of which there seems no way of escape!



A STIRRING AND DRAMATIC NEW SERIAL STORY OF ADVENTURE, FEATURING BOB AND SYD, TWO PLUCKY SCHOOLBOYS;

By PERCY A. CLARKE.

Syd Is Subtle!

"BY gravy!" gasped Steve. "That rascal Sweetman is on our trail after all!"

The pals scowled, while the toughs, peering over the edge of the precipice, laughed and jeered at them.

"Better come up!" yelled the leader. "We can stay here all day, chums. Don't make no difference to us!"

It certainly looked as if the chums would have to surrender. Above them, the crowd of toughs were waiting. Beneath them, the million snakes were waiting, slithering about over each other, their coils rasping on the rocks.

Steve pushed his hat back and scratched his head.

"Mind you, chums," he said, "I'm not surprised that Karl Sweetman has his pals in this here country. You can mostly find rogues anywhere you want to. But how the jumping wallabies he's got on our track beats me. And further—"

"Does that matter now?" queried Bob irritably. "We're in a fix, anyway, and the first thing is to get out of it—if we can!"

"But Sweetman is wise to us," argued Steve.

"All the more reason why we've got to get across this gorge," put in Syd.

Steve eyed the valley of snakes dubiously.

"You don't get me across there," he said. "Dingoes, you'd never get more'n a yard—if that. Look at them reptiles! Look at their heads! Poisonous, every one of 'em!"

"I've a good mind to try!" snapped Syd tersely. "Snakes don't strike, as a rule, unless they're disturbed."

"Wise man, you are," sneered Steve. "By gravy, you can't see the ground for snakes. How're you going to get across there without disturbing 'em?"

"My plan," explained Syd, "is to edge along this precipice—scout around a bit—and maybe we'll find a spot where the snakes are not so thick."

"What a hope!" growled Bob dismally.

"Ah, well," sighed Steve, "anything's better'n stopping still!"

The chums crawled from bush to bush. It required some nerve, and sure feet, seeing that the precipice rose sheer above them and dropped sheer below them. At any moment a false step might precipitate one of them down to the snake-infested gorge below. Bob nearly suffered that fate when a branch he was clutching snapped off, but he was quick and saved himself. Overhead, the watching ruffians jeered at him.

"Safer up this way, pommy!" they called.

The pals made no answer, but continued on their dangerous way, all the time edging downwards, and scanning the snake-infested gorge below.

"Guess it's hopeless," said Steve.

"You don't know yet," rasped Syd.

"Reckon I do!" retorted Steve. "D'you think them crooks 'ud let us wander about this way if there was a chance of us getting away?"

There was considerable horse sense in that remark, and Syd had to admit it, but he hated to surrender to Karl Sweetman's hirelings.

"I'm not saying we're beaten till I've tried to get across," he said, slipping down towards the snakes.

"Don't be mad, Syd!" called Bob. "It's death!"

"Sure, it is!" cried Steve. "Quicker'n anything! Come back, you all-fired idjit!"

But Syd wasn't stopping for anybody. He was gradually sliding down the precipitous side of the cliff. Bob and Steve just couldn't let him go alone, however much they disagreed with him. They followed behind him, calling to him to stop.

Syd reached the bottom. He stood there facing the snakes. They raised their wicked-looking heads, and hissed in chorus. It sounded like surf on the rocks.

"Come back!" roared Bob. But Syd stood there motionless. He did not move hand or

Traveled across two continents by a gang of cunning crooks, Steve Barrett, in possession of a Black Ruby, eventually reaches England. With the aid of this Black Ruby, Steve has hopes of making his fortune, for the ruby is the key of a claim of land in Queensland rich in precious stones. The crooks, however, succeed in gaining possession of the Black Ruby, and make good their escape. Steve enlists the services of Bob Crompton and Syd Dyson, two plucky, athletic fellows, with whom he sets off in a wild dash south on the trail of the Black Ruby. After a series of exciting events, the chums retrieve the precious stone and board the Maharajah, bound for Australia. By means of a clever ruse, Sweetman and his gang also get aboard the liner, regain the coveted trophy, and secrete it in a knot at the end of Ah Wong's pigtail. Wise to this move, Bob catches the Chinaman fast asleep in his bunk, cuts off the "queue," and rejoins his chums. The three jump ship when nearing Perth, and under cover of darkness reach the shore. Fate is against the plucky trio, however, for they are pursued by a gang of toughs in the pay of Sweetman. The toughs succeed in wrecking their car. Extricating themselves from the wreckage, the chums are horrified to discover a snake-infested gorge beneath them, and the toughs peering over the precipice, chuckling with delight.

(Now Read On.)

foot. Suddenly Steve saw a monster snake within six feet of Syd. Its wicked head was raised and drawn back. Its great jaws were open, at right angles with the flat skull, revealing the coiled tongue and the venom fangs. The eyes glared balefully, and Syd was fascinated, staring at the huge serpent as if in a stupor, waiting for the crashing, poisonous blow that was to come.

Steve hated snakes, but he never deserted a pard. He did not call. He just slid down the slope, raising a white cloud of arid dust. But he never reached the bottom. Instead, he stopped his descent abruptly, by clutching at a bush. Then he reached down, and his great, strong brown hand, gripped Syd's shoulder like a vice.

One terrific heave, and up came Syd, clean off his feet. The snake struck, its head shooting out like lightning, passing an inch or two below Syd's boots.

Steve set Syd on a ledge of rock, and one hand thus freed, he wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"That," he said, "is as near a thing as ever I saw."

"Thanks!" said Syd huskily.

He was white to the lips. He knew, even better than Steve, what a narrow shave he had had.

And from overhead came the jeering of the toughs.

"Go on!" they called. "Why don't you walk across? If the snakes miss you, we won't. We got guns up here!"

Steve scowled darkly. He had no choice in the matter at all. Besides, he knew this country. He knew that before long the sun would be at full strength, and they would be dried up, hanging to the bushes on that terrible cliff, to drop an easy prey to the vicious snakes below. Better lose the Ruby altogether than allow Syd and Bob to suffer such a fate!

"Strikes me," he said grimly, "we'd better surrender to them skunks up there, and see what happens."

"Never!" rasped Syd.

"Not much!" snapped Bob.

But the toughs were getting impatient. They let rip with their revolvers, and the bullets spat dust in the faces of the pals. None of them was hit, however. It was obvious that the shooting was intended as an exhibition of what the toughs would do if forced.

"Make up your minds, pommies," called the leader. "Don't want to hang about here all day if we can help it. What are you going to do about it?"

"Better chance it," urged Steve.

Syd nodded, and Bob agreed, grudgingly.

"All right," called Steve, "we're coming up!"

"It's just as well!" jeered the ruffians.

The chums clambered up the cliff, from bush to bush, from rocky ledge to stunted tree, and the toughs helped them over the edge on to level ground.

As soon as they reached the top of the cliff they were seized roughly, and their wrists were tied behind their backs.

"Leaving nothing to chance, are you?" queried Steve.

"Now, you look here!" rasped the leader. "We've got no grudge against you. We're only doing what we're told. See? We aim to let you ride into camp, but give us any lip and you walk. Get that!"

Steve grinned pleasantly.

"Right-ho, chum," he said. "You've got the whip-hand o' me."

"Glad you realise it."

Steve and the boys were hoisted up on to three horses, and the cavalcade set off across the arid desert. The sun began to burn and scorch. The horses kicked up the dry dust, and it settled on the prisoners' faces like a mask.

It was a ride of at least two hours, but to the boys it seemed a lifetime. Eventually they rounded a bend in the trail between the rocks, and they came on a grimy mining camp, consisting of about twenty rough huts, clustered round a larger hut of corrugated iron and rough-hewn wood, which was the saloon.

Outside this saloon the party drew rein. The prisoners were roughly hauled off their horses and hustled inside, up the steep stairs to a tiny room above, and flung down on the floor.

Before they could rise again a couple of men had secured their ankles.

"They did not say a word."

The toughs grinned and departed—all except the leader, who paused on the threshold regarding them with a grin of amusement.

"Sure," he said, "you've been good, and haven't given us much trouble. I'll let Sweetman know about that when he comes. It might make it easier for you."

"You don't know Sweetman like I do, then," retorted Steve, "or you'd know he hasn't got any time nor pity for friend or foe."

"I don't know a lot about him, that's true," admitted the crook; "and I don't know as I want to."

"Wise feller!" grinned Steve. "But tell me this, chum. How did Sweetman get you to stop us?"

"Simple, chummy. This here town is sure growing, and I'm keeper o' this here saloon, and I just got me a telephone wire laid across the desert to the nearest station. See? Sweetman just naturally gets me on the phone. Only had that wire laid about a week, and it's brought me this here commission, with a hundred quid for me now I've caught you."

Steve scowled, but Syd laughed gaily. He laughed till he cried.

The crook gazed at him with distinct disapproval.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

Syd's laughter ceased, but he was still grinning.

"It strikes me," he said, "you don't know the first thing about Karl Sweetman. D'you really think you'll get that hundred pounds?"

"He promised it to me," said the tough.

"But I'll bet you won't get it! He won't even thank you," retorted Syd. "He's after something big, and he won't worry about you when he gets it."

The crook scowled and hesitated. He stroked his unshaven chin thoughtfully.

"D'you know what he's after?" he queried, carefully closing the door of the room.

"Rather!" cried Syd. "We've got a sparkler—worth a fortune—"

"You idiot!" roared Steve. "What did you tell him that for?"

The crook's eyes glittered.

"Where is it?" he asked huskily.

"That's our little secret," said Syd slyly.

The crook frowned and clenched his fists.

"Might as well be reasonable," he warned. "I could have the three of you bumped off and no one would be any the wiser."

"And then you wouldn't learn our little secret," Syd taunted him.

"Well, spill the beans," urged the crook. "And if it's a good sparkler I'll set you free, and we share and share alike. Let's have a look at it. Or do I search you?"

"You won't find it by searching us," said Syd. "There's no need for that. You untie my hands. I can't show it to you trussed up like this."

Steve began to see daylight. He held his breath and waited.

The crook hesitated, however, and glanced at the door. He listened intently. Then he seemed to make up his mind. He guessed that it must be something worth while that had made Sweetman want to stop the three pals in their dash into the interior, and it might be worth more than a hundred pounds to him to trick Sweetman and stand in with the pals.

Accordingly he drew a clasp-knife from his pocket, opened the blade, and cut the ropes that secured Syd's wrists and ankles. He reckoned he could easily master Syd if he tried any monkey-tricks.

Syd rose to his feet and massaged his arms.

"Well," rasped the crook, "where's the sparkler?"

Syd moved to the grimy window and began to fumble in his pockets. The crook went and stood behind him, his hands itching, impatience in every line of his hulking great body.

"Buck up!" he urged.

Suddenly Syd spun round. He brought his bunched knuckles to the crook's jaw in a vicious half-arm jab. It was totally unexpected, but it succeeded. The ruffian had no time even to cry out. He just grunted and slithered back helplessly across the room, to crash against the opposite wall and drop, half stunned, in a heap.

Syd acted quickly then. He leapt to the door and wedged the one and only chair under the handle. He grabbed the crook's knife and released Bob and Steve.

Already the men downstairs were yelling and shouting. The fall of the crook had shaken the whole saloon, and they wanted to know what it was all about.

"By gravy!" cried Steve. "You sure were smart, sonny. But what next?"

Syd went to the window and threw it open wide. He had seen already, and had made his plans. Beneath that window was a hitching-rail, and half a dozen horses stood there.

Here was a way of escape!

(It was a chance the three chums could ill afford to miss! How they fare in this great dash for liberty, you will learn when you read next week's instalment of this powerful serial.)

"Standing by a Fag!"

(Continued from page 25.)

"I took the precaution of using some special rubber solution on it!" grinned Kerr. "Hallo, Figgy! Trot in, old man! Come on, Fatty!"

For once, there was no move to eject the New House juniors from Study No. 10. Figgins and Fatty Wynn chuckled as they took in the situation at a glance.

Tom Merry waved a hand towards the groaning table.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you were invited here for a celebration spread! File in!"

The guests needed no second invitation. As many as possible secured positions round the table—with Jameson in the place of honour. The rest found seating accommodation where they could—on the coal-scuttle, the window-ledge, and on the floor.

"Well, I must admit you played up well, Kerr," said Monty Lowther, filling his glass with foaming ginger-pop. "I originated the scheme, of course."

"Oh, of course!" grinned Figgins.

"But how on earth you New House bounders got wind of it I don't know," ended Lowther, in great puzzlement.

"Dear man," chuckled Figgins, "we could see you were up to something that afternoon you caught us in the village, so I fellows Tom Merry to Isaac's shop on my bike—"

"The dickens you did!" ejaculated the captain of the Shell.

"And just made a few tactful inquiries," went on Figgins joyfully. "Isaac told me what you'd ordered fast enough, and that put us on the trail. You see, something of the same wheeze had occurred to Kerr—"

"Oh, of course!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"But we hadn't had time to put it into execution," continued Figgins imperturbably. "Once we knew you fellows were on the job, we watched you carefully, followed you out of gates this afternoon with our make-up in a bag—and the rest you know."

"What price the New House now?" chorled Fatty Wynn. And, for once, there was no adequate response to that.

"Heard the news?"

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Baggy Trimble, the Paul Pry of the Fourth, put his head round the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell and asked that question in a voice that fairly shook with excitement.

Two days had passed since the sensational events in which Ernest Jameson had played such a prominent part. During that time St. Jim's had discussed hardly anything else.

"What news, you fat ass?"

"Hurlingham's gone!"

"What?"

"Fact!" exclaimed Baggy. "I was passing the Head's door, when my bootlace happened to come undone. The Head was talking to Railton, and I simply couldn't help overhearing—"

"You fat eavesdropper!"

"Oh, really, Tom Merry! I think you might be a little grateful to me for bringing you the news. Hurlingham asked his people to take him away. He must have cleared off during afternoon lessons."

And Baggy rushed away to spread the news.

"It's true enough, no doubt," said Tom Merry quietly. "We might have expected it. Hurlingham could hardly have stayed on here after what's happened, even if the Head allowed it."

"I—I suppose not," said Manners.

"Let's hope he'll make a fresh start somewhere else," said the captain of the Shell soberly; and his chin nodded.

Within an hour Baggy Trimble's startling information had been confirmed. Hurlingham's study was unoccupied, and all his personal belongings had gone.

The general opinion was that voiced by Tom Merry. The Sixth-Former's existence would have been an impossible one at St. Jim's after what had happened. In the circumstances, the best thing he could do was to leave the school quietly of his own accord.

Hurlingham was not likely to be heard of at St. Jim's again. Wherever he went, Tom Merry & Co. hoped sincerely that he would make a fresh start and retrieve the past. The Sixth-Former had had a stern lesson, and it may be that their hopes were fulfilled. Who knows?

Certain it is that the fellows who had rallied round Jameson in his hour of need were never likely to regret the part they had played in Standing by a Fag!

THE END.

(Now look out for another topping long story of Tom Merry and Co., entitled: "SELY IN THE SOUP!" which will appear in next week's bumper number of the GEM. Order it early.)

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WEEKLY