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The Terror of the Seas!

A SENSATIONAL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO., AT ST. JIM'S—

A TRAITOR *in*



For many terms Gordon Gay, the daring and resourceful leader of the Grammarians, has led his followers in the unceasing warfare against their rivals of St. Jim's. But this week a startling change comes over the situation, and Gordon Gay, of all people, finds himself forced to take sides against his old chums!

he can't change his face, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Pway do not wot!" said Arthur Augustus. "The fact is, I have changed—I mean, I have decided, aftah all, not to wear my best toppah to go to Wayland this aftahnoon, deah boys."

The "deah boys" looked at him.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Blake. "Of all the footling dummies. After worrying us, and wasting time—"

"I merely asked your advice in the mattah," protested Arthur Augustus warmly. "It is a vewy important mattah. It is vewy necessawy for one fellow in the party to be well-dressed, and there is always the wisk of meetin' some of the Spalding Hall gals, as I have already pointed out."

"Oh, you—you—"

"On the othah hand," resumed Arthur Augustus, shaking his head seriously, "there is also always the wisk of meetin' some of those wuff Gwammah School wottahs. And if it came to a wow, my toppah might easily get sewiously damaged."

"But you've already spent half the afternoon thinking that over!" yelled Blake.

"Wubbish! Do not be wedic, Blake! I must wequest you to wait one moment while I wush indoors again and change my hat, as upon weflection I do not think it is worth while wiskin' a meetin' with those Gwammawian boundahs!"

"Oh, you—you—"

Arthur Augustus did not wait to hear Blake's further remarks. He hurried indoors again to change his elegant silk hat for one not quite so elegant.

Blake breathed hard, and then he grinned. "Come on!" he said. "We've wasted enough time on that ass, and we promised to join Tom Merry and his pals at the station."

"Yes, but—" began Digby. "Gussy can catch us up—if he runs hard enough," said Blake. "He asked us to wait a moment, and we've obliged him by waiting a moment—twenty or thirty by this time, in fact. So now we'll get off."

"Ha, ha, ha!" And chortling over Blake's interpretation of D'Arcy's request to "wait one moment," the trio started off—without Arthur Augustus.

They vanished through the gates, and several minutes later the swell of the Fourth came hurrying out, ramming a silk hat on his head as he did so. Despite the change of headgear Arthur Augustus still looked the picture of

CHAPTER 1. An Unlucky Meeting!

"ONE moment, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy halted on the steps of the School House at St. Jim's. Blake, Herries, and Digby also halted, and they gave their aristocratic chum eloquent looks as they did so.

"He's starting again!" said Jack Blake, with a sniff. "What is it now, dummy?"

"I wefuse to be called a dummay, Blake—"

"That won't prevent your being one, though," said Blake. "What the thump have you forgotten this time, ass?"

"I have forgotten nothin', Jack Blake, and I uttably wefuse—"

"Oh, don't sing that over again to us," groaned Blake. "It's always the same. We have to wait an hour while Gussy dresses, and then waste another hour while he trots back for things he's forgotten."

"I could see he was worrying about something," said Digby. "What is it this time, Gussy—forgotten your spare eyeglass, or to scent your giddy hanky?"

"Wats! I have already told you that I have forgotten nothin'!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "The fact is, you fellows, I have changed my mind—"

"Good!" exclaimed Blake, with great satisfaction. "It's time you changed that, old chap."

"High time!" said Digby, with a chuckle. "He certainly needs a new one."

"He'll perhaps be able to talk sense with a new mind," said Blake. "That'll be a nice change for us. What a pity

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—FEATURING GORDON GAY, LATE OF THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL!

the SCHOOL

by Martin Clifford

elegance, from the crown of his glimmering hat to the soles of his shining shoes.

He jumped as his eyes swept the quadrangle, and he saw that his chums had vanished.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he exclaimed indignantly. "Weally, it's too bad. The feahful wottahs have gone without me!"

That much was obvious, and taking it for granted, Arthur Augustus hurried in pursuit, seething with wrath. Blake, Herries, and Digby found Arthur Augustus very trying at times; but nothing like so trying as Arthur Augustus found them.

His wrath grew and grew as he hurried on without a glimpse of his chums ahead. But he knew they intended to take the short cut through the woods and meadows, and he knew there was ample time to catch the train even now.

But Arthur Augustus was not fated to catch the Rylcombe train that afternoon.

The first indication Gussy received of this was as he came in sight of Combe Dell—a pretty wooded dell through which a stream ran, its banks being thick now with bluebells.

In the green and blue of spring the dell looked delightful, and doubtless Gussy would have noticed this had his attention not been caught by something else first.

That was the sight of four youths seated on the wooden rail of the footbridge that spanned the stream.

The four were Mason & Co.—cheery Fourth-Formers from the Grammar School, who were far from being averse to a little harmless "fun," as Arthur Augustus had good cause to know from experience.

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

He halted, undecided. Certainly he hadn't his best "topper" on now, but, none the less, Gussy felt uneasy as he eyed the larking four.

It was too late to go back and take the route by road—too late if he wanted to catch his train. There was nothing else for it, so Gussy frowned and walked to his doom, as it were. As he strode down the woodland path Mason suddenly sighted the elegant figure and gave a chuckle.

"My hat!" he grinned. "Do my aged eyes deceive me or is this the one and only Gussy?"

"It's Gussy right enough!" chuckled Price. "All dressed up, too! Oh, what a pleasant surprise!"

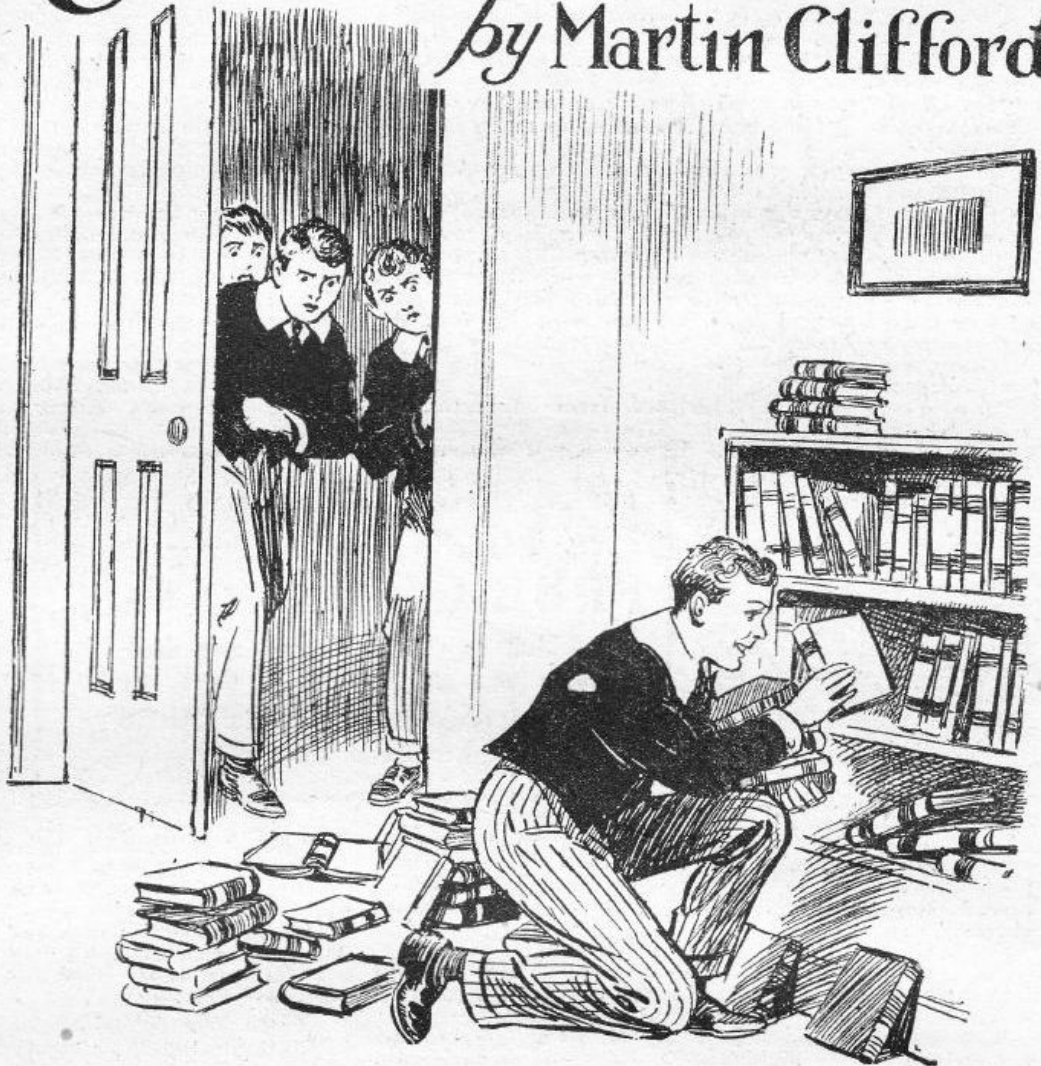
CHAPTER 2.

Gussy Follows His Topper!

"CHEERIO, Gussy!" came the chorus.

All four Grammarians swept off their caps and bowed to Arthur Augustus, completely barring the way across the bridge while doing so.

"Good-aftahnoon, you fellows!" Arthur Augustus was determined to be polite, and to give no cause for offence.



"Pway allow me to pass, deah boys, as I have a twain to catch."

"Polite and good-mannered as ever," remarked Mason admiringly. "And isn't he a picture, you fellows?"

"Beautiful."

"Dazzling!" said Price.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"But there's a speck on his topper," said Mason. "Here, I'll knock it off, Gussy—always ready to oblige a Saint."

And Mason stepped forward and knocked Gussy's silk hat on one side.

"Weally, I—"

"Now you've knocked it to one side, Mason," said Price severely. "Careless! Here, I'll put it right, Gussy!"

Tap!

This time the silk hat was tapped over Gussy's eyes.

"Bai Jove! Weally, you wottahs! Oh, cwumbs!"

It happened in a flash.

Scarcely had Price "put it right" when the third Grammarian—Croft—gave the topper another tap, this time sending it clean off Gussy's head.

Arthur Augustus grabbed at it just too late.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

The precious topper missed his frantic clutch, struck the rail of the bridge, and plopped into the rippling stream. For a few yards it sailed merrily along with the tide, and then it struck a submerged stone, lurched, and was swept round twice, after which it filled and sank.

Arthur Augustus gasped.

"You—you frightful wuffians!" he articulated. "Oh, you feahful wottahs! Oh, you—you—"

Words failed Arthur Augustus. It was only too clear

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now that the Grammarians were out to "rag" him. Politeness had availed him nothing, nor would further politeness be of any use. As a matter of fact, the sight of his topper sinking had swept away all thoughts of politeness from the mind of Arthur Augustus.

All he thought of now was vengeance—vengeance swift and terrible.

He jumped forward, with a roar, and smote the grinning Croft full on the nose. The Grammarian roared fiendishly, and sat down on the planks with a bump that shook the bridge.

Then Gussy jumped forward again, apparently intending to treat Mason in a like manner. But Mason was a trifle too quick for him. He ducked swiftly, and his arms clutched Gussy's elegant waist.

"Hold him!" gasped Croft, jumping up and hugging his nose frantically. "Hold him! I'm going to smash the silly idiot—he's busted my nose!"

But it was easier said than done. Arthur Augustus struggled and wrestled furiously.

"Chuck it, Gussy, old infant!" gasped Mason. "Chuck it, and we'll let you go, you ass! Only pulling your little leg a bit—we never meant to do in your silly topper."

But the soft answer failed to turn away Gussy's great wrath. He struggled on with redoubled fury, and more than once he nearly dragged all four with him over the planks into the stream.

"Gussy, you ass——"

"Chuck it!"

"I wefuse to chuck it!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to thwash all four of you, you feahful wuffians!"

"No good!" chuckled Mason. "The giddy old fire-eater's out for blood! Better dip his napper in the stream—just to cool it down a bit!"

Despite his wriggles and yells and struggles, Arthur Augustus was pushed and wormed over the edge of the plank bridge under the rail. Against four of them he stood no chance, though he fought like a Trojan.

"Over with him!" panted Mason. "What a pity to ruffle his beautiful clobber like this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yawwoogh! Welease me!" shrieked Gussy, his eye-glass already hanging in the stream from the end of its cord. "Oh, bai Jove! You feahful—Yoooo! Mummmmm!"

Splash!

The aristocratic head of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy splashed into the clear, rippling waters of the stream, and his yells ended in gurgles.

With two Grammarians holding on to a leg each the hapless swell of the Fourth of St. Jim's was ducked again and again, to the accompaniment of his frantic gasps and gurgles.

"Well, had enough?" asked Mason affably at last. "Going to let us off that thrashing, Gussy?"

"G-gug-groogh! Oh, gweat-gug-gug—Scott! I—I'll thwash—Gwoooogh! M-mum-m-m-m-m!"

"Once again!" said Mason regretfully. "He's still a trifle overheated!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Once again the dripping head of Arthur Augustus was gently lowered into the stream, the rippling wavelets passing over and round his hair with gentle caresses. So engrossed in their task were the Grammarians that they neither heard nor saw the approach of a newcomer on the scene.

He was an elderly gentleman, wearing a light, rather baggy suit and a very wide-brimmed soft hat. His face was chubby and good-natured—or, at least, it had been until its owner saw what was happening at the little footbridge.

Then the gentleman stopped dead and stared in great astonishment and indignation.

"Well, upon my word!" he ejaculated. "G-good gad! You young scoundrels! Release that poor boy at once, you bullies!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great pip!"

The four Grammarians almost released their grip of Gussy as that angry voice broke on their ears.

"You hear me?" cried the old gentleman, raising the stick he carried. "Release that unfortunate lad, you young scoundrels!"

"Here, draw it mild!" said Mason. "Not so much of the young scoundrels, sir. Anyway, what——"

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"If you do not obey me I will lay this stick across your shoulders!" hooted the angry gentleman. "For one thing you are obstructing my way, and for another I refuse to look on at such a disgraceful and flagrant piece of wretched bullying!"

"B-ball-bullying?"

"Yes! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! Release that unfortunate youth this instant, or——"

"Oh, all right!" said Mason. "If you order us to we'll have to, of course! Let Gussy go, chaps!"

He released his grip on the leg of the still yelling Arthur Augustus. The next moment his grinning chums did likewise. Not having any visible means of support, Arthur Augustus immediately obeyed the law of gravity and dropped head first into the stream with a wild yell.

Splash!

For a single instant Arthur Augustus seemed to stand on his head in the bed of the stream, and then he toppled over with a prodigious splash that raised a miniature tidal wave.

Fortunately the water was only a couple of feet deep at most, and after floundering about for a moment like a stranded whale Arthur Augustus staggered up, drenched and dripping, and looking a sight for gods and men and little fishes.

"Ow!" he gurgled. "Gwoooogh! Ow! Oh, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammarians roared helplessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mason. "Not our fault, Gussy—we only obeyed orders. Blame this interfering old gent! Give him a 'feahful thwashin', Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The old gentleman in the wide-brimmed hat was standing looking on in petrified astonishment and alarm. Quite obviously he had not anticipated the Grammarian jokers to obey his orders quite so literally—far from it. He had expected them to drag Gussy out of danger before releasing him, of course.

"You—you depraved young villians!" he gasped. "Upon my word! Why, I have a great mind to——"

The old gentleman halted in alarm, for at that moment Arthur Augustus floundered ashore, and then, with a roar of wrath, he went for Mason & Co., heedless of the stranger's presence.

Mason ceased to laugh and gave a yell as the drenched and raging Gussy closed with him.

"Oh, my hat! Back up, chaps! Hold on, Gussy, you—Yooooop!"

Mason went flat on his back on the bridge with Arthur Augustus on top of him, punching and pummelling for all he was worth. The blood of all the D'Arcys was roused now, and Mason soon knew it. He yelled for aid, and Croft, Price, and Pearson jumped to the rescue.

They swarmed over Gussy, and the scrap grew fast and furious. But it didn't last long. The gentleman in the wide-brimmed hat looked on for a moment in shocked amazement—but only for a moment.

With a wrathful snort he raised his stick and dashed to Gussy's rescue. The next moment the stick was in action.

Whack, whack, whack!

They were not by any means hefty swipes, but they were enough for Mason & Co. From them came a chorus of startled yells.

"Look out!" yelled Mason.

"Oh, my hat! Yooooop!"

"It's that old josser! Here, stop, you old idiot. What—Yooooop! Wow!"

Far more startled than hurt, Mason & Co. released Arthur Augustus, and scrambled frantically away, Mason himself all but toppling over into the stream. For an instant the Grammarians jammed and struggled in a bunch on the narrow bridge, and then they broke away, the stranger getting in a last whack on Mason's back as he went.

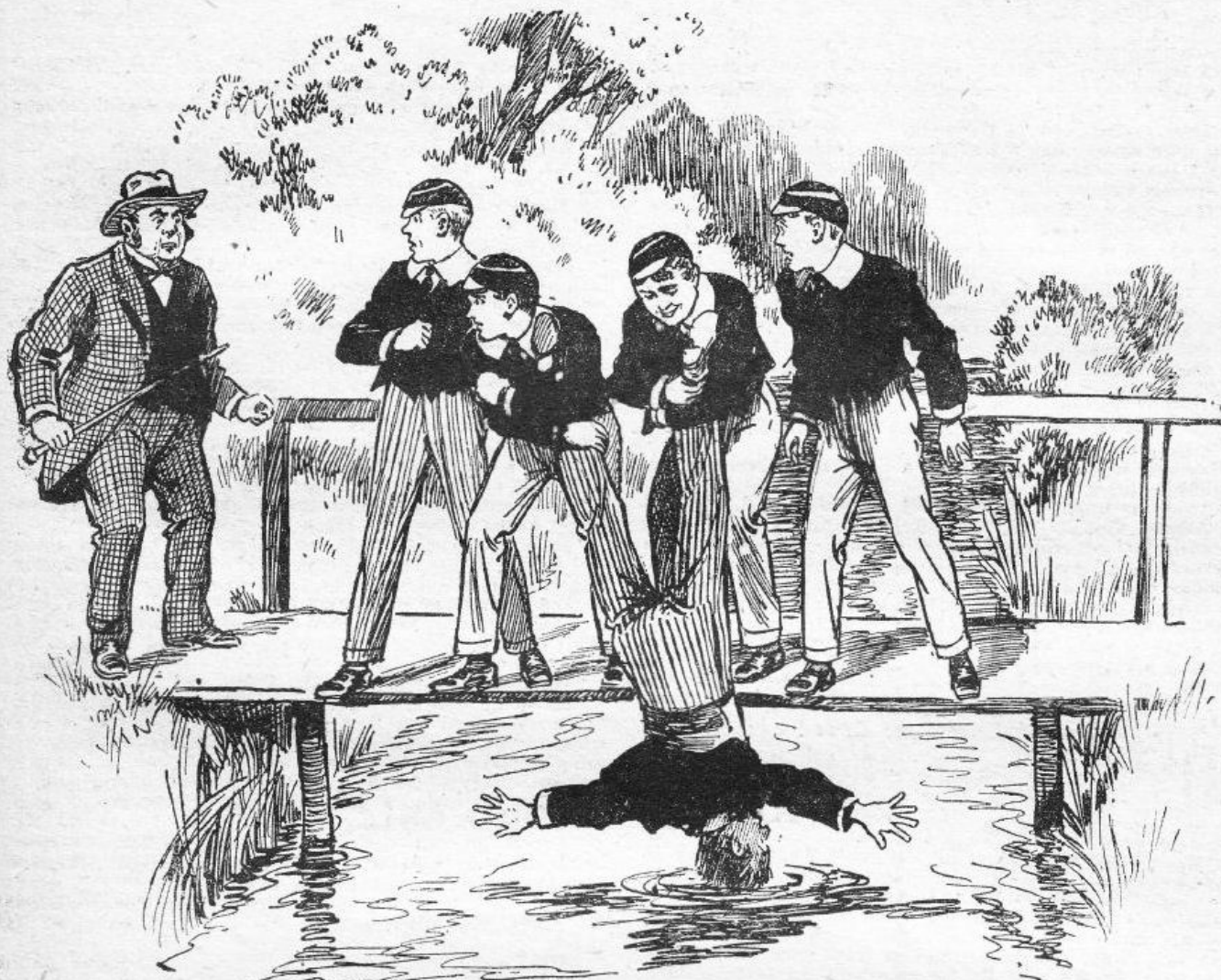
Soaked and seething, Arthur Augustus was helped to his feet by the Good Samaritan, who glared after Mason & Co.

"The—the young rascals!" he gasped. "Are you hurt, my boy? I am exceedingly sorry that it was owing to my interference——"

"Gwoooogh!" panted Gussy. "Oh, bai Jove! Pway do not wowwy about that, sir—those feahful wuffians knew what you meant; they dwopped me purposely into that wotten stweam. Gwoooogh! I am dwnched thwough, and my clobber will be wuined. Ow-ow!"

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to come, Boys!



"Gug-gug-gwooooh!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gasped frantically as the grinning Grammarians ducked him again and again in the woodland stream. So engrossed were Mason & Co. in their task that they failed to notice the approach of an elderly gentleman. "Good gad!" ejaculated the stranger. "Release that poor boy at once, you bullies!" (See Chapter 2.)

"Who are they?" demanded the stranger sternly. "From their caps—"

"Whooooogh! They are wotten Gwammawians, sir!" gasped Gussy, shaking the water from himself dismally. "They are from Wylcombe Gwammah School, and are uttah wuffians, without respect for a fellow's clobbah or anythin' else, bai Jove."

"I suspected as much," exclaimed the stranger grimly. "I have already met samples of the boys from the Grammar School. I trust that you do not belong to that school—"

"Wathah not, sir!" snorted Gussy emphatically. "I belong to St. Jim's. Those Gwammah School chaps are weally feahful boundahs, wude, and wuffianly, and dis-wespectful. For no weason whatever they assaulted me and knocked my toppah into the stweam. Bai Jove! I must wecovah it, if you will excuse me, sir."

And Arthur Augustus splashed back into the stream and recovered his precious topper—though it was doubtful if it would ever be fit for his aristocratic head again. He emptied the water out with a groan, and carried it back to where the old gentleman awaited him.

"You had better run back to your school now, or you will catch cold, my boy!" said the stranger. "I am glad to have met you, and possibly I shall see you again, as I hope to visit St. Jim's after my visit to the Grammar School."

"The—the Gwammah School!" echoed Gussy, with a start.

"Yes, yes! I regret to state," said the old gentleman, with deep feeling, "that my nephew is a pupil there—possibly you know him; his name is Gay—Gordon Gay."

"Oh, bai Jove! Oh—oh, yaas, sir!"

"He was sent to the Grammar School against my wishes," said the stranger. "My desire was to send him to St. Jim's. Though I have never visited your school I have heard excellent reports of it, and Dr. Holmes is a very old friend of mine, though I have not seen him for a great number of years. But I must get on to the Grammar School as my visit is short, and you must run now or you will catch your death of cold. Good-bye, my boy!"

"Oh! Ah! Yaas, sir!" gasped Gussy. "Good-bye, sir, and thank you vewy much!"

With that Arthur Augustus trotted away, glaring at Mason & Co., who were still in sight among the trees some distance away. Two of the Grammarians had dropped their caps on the bridge in the scuffle, and they did not intend to attempt to recover them until the terrible old gentleman had departed.

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as he trotted back to St. Jim's. "How feahfully blundewin' of me to wun down the Gwammawians like that. But how was a fellow to know it was Gordon Gay's uncle? Oh cwumbs!"

More than once as he trotted along, Arthur Augustus thought of turning back and explaining matters to the old gentleman. As Gussy knew well enough, Gordon Gay, as well as Mason & Co., were really very decent fellows, if mischievous and "wuffianly" at times. And Gussy was upset at the thought that he had helped to give Gay's uncle a false impression of most of the fellows at the Grammar School.

But he was wet and cold; moreover, he imagined the old gentleman would be well on his way to the Grammar School by this time. So Gussy did not turn back—nor did he look back. Had he done so, he might have been surprised to see that Gay's uncle was walking briskly on his tracks—not towards the Grammar School, but towards St. Jim's. Which was somewhat strange considering the fact that Gay's uncle had said he must "get on" to the Grammar School.

That circumstance was soon made clear, however—though not to Arthur Augustus.

As he came from the woodland path on to Rylcombe Lane, Gay's uncle stood by the stile and gazed up and down. Gussy was out of sight, and, being a complete stranger in the district, Mr. Gay wondered which direction to take. As he stood there, Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn, of the Shell at St. Jim's, came along. They stopped as Gay's uncle asked them the way to the Grammar School.

"Over the stile and through the woods," said Grundy. "That's your best way, sir—another mile at least round by the road!"

"But I have just come that way, boys," said Mr. Gay, with an angry frown. "I was directed to come this way by some schoolboys I met outside the station."

"Then they've pulled your leg," said Grundy, in his usual blunt way. "Rotten trick to play on a stranger, I must say. Not one of our fellows, of course; Grammar School cads, I bet."

"They certainly were Grammar School boys," said Mr. Gay, with some heat. "I suppose they objected to the fact that I lectured them severely for smoking. I was very unfavourably impressed indeed by all of them."

"Rotten lot, the Grammarians," agreed Grundy, with a nod. "Fearful crowd—wouldn't be found dead at their show. They've sent you at least a mile out of your way, sir!"

"Scandalous!" snorted Gay's uncle. "They were also most rude and insolent. The boy who misdirected me—a boy with an absurd lisp—was exceptionally rude."

"I know the chap," said Grundy. "Chap named Lacy—an awful outsider! I'll punch his head for you next time I see the bouncer. Leave it to me, sir! Anyway, that's your quickest way—through the woods, and then keep to the left."

And with that Grundy touched his cap cheerfully and went on with his chums.

Gay's uncle gazed after them, a deep, dark frown on his chubby features.

"Upon my word," he murmured, breathing hard. "The—the young rascals! The boys at the Grammar School must be entirely undisciplined and allowed to run wild. I am astounded—to think that Gordon is being brought up amongst such a community of young rascals. Something must be done—something must be done!"

With that Mr. Gay snorted and climbed over the stile. Then, in a state of seething wrath and indignation, he retraced his steps along the woodland path.

CHAPTER 3.

More Discoveries for Uncle!

"**B**LOW the ass!"

"The awful fathead!"

"The—the footling tailor's dummy!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby were, of course, referring to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Really, it was very annoying. Blake & Co. had never intended to go without their noble chum, of course; not far, that is. They intended to walk at an ordinary pace, and if Gussy had to run hard to catch them up, that was his own look-out, and would serve him right.

It was always the same, whether they were going for a bike spin, or for a walk, or anywhere, in fact; Arthur Augustus always delayed them in some manner. Either he kept them waiting ages whilst he changed a necktie, or polished a hat, or else he had to turn back, having forgotten, or mislaid something.

Blake, Herries, and Digby found their aristocratic and elegant chum very trying indeed at times.

They had walked on, and had even stopped for some moments to exchange gentle chaff with Mason & Co., at the footbridge. But at last Blake called a halt, as he looked back and saw still no signs of Arthur Augustus.

"The—the blithering chump!" said Blake, beginning again. "He takes the bun, and no mistake, I expect—"

"Let's go on without him!" snorted Herries.

"Those Shell fellows will be waiting!" sniffed Dig.

"Well, let 'em wait," said Blake. "Though I believe Tom Merry wanted to call at the printers in Rylcombe, so it's hardly likely. Still, we'll miss that train at this rate. My hat! It's just struck me, chaps. Supposing those Grammar School worms have nabbed him."

"Phew!"

"Never thought of that."

"They knew better than to try any tricks on with us, though they were four to three," said Blake grimly, "but they're pretty certain to try to pull Gussy's leg, and rag him a bit."

"Perhaps that's why he hasn't caught us up."

"Of course! Phew! We ought not to have— Hark! What's that?"

Through the woods came a wild howl—a howl in very familiar tones; it was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. There was no mistaking it—no mistaking, either, that Arthur Augustus was in trouble.

"I knew it!" groaned Blake. "Isn't it just like that ass to find trouble just now? He's the outside limit!"

"Better go back and see what's up, though," said Digby, shaking his head. "Can't leave old Gussy to the tender mercies of those jokers; you know what they are!"

"Oh, blow the fathead!" growled Blake.

He started back, with a snort, and his chums followed. To leave Gussy in the lurch was unthinkable, much as he deserved it—in their view. Putting on speed, Blake, Herries, and Digby raced back, and very soon they came in sight of the footbridge across the sparkling stream.

They arrived just too late, however. Arthur Augustus with his rescuer had just gone, and Mason & Co. were just putting their disarranged attire straight, as they dashed to the spot.

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"Hallo!" snapped Blake, eyeing the four dishevelled Grammarians suspiciously. "What's been going on here? What have you chaps been up to?"

"Only admiring the giddy bluebells!" Mason said politely. "Anything else, old dear?"

"We heard D'Arcy yelling just now," said Blake. "You fellows have been ragging him, I'll be bound. Where is he?"

"They've been scrapping with someone," said Herries. Mason chuckled. Being in the majority, he had no fear of Blake & Co.

"Scrapping?" he echoed. "What an idea! If you fellows really want to know where Gussy is—"

"We do!" snorted Blake. "We've been waiting for the ass. We've got to catch the two-thirty at Rylcombe. At this rate—"

"Gussy won't catch it, then!" chuckled Croft. "He's just gone home to change his clobber, I expect."

"Change his clobber?" yelled Blake.

"Yes, old chap. You see he's just had his annual. Knowing you Saints never wash, we decided to give him a bath. Notice how dirty the water is now?"

And he nodded at the murmuring stream.

"You—you rotters!" spluttered Blake. "You pitched old Gussy in the stream, you mean?"

"Well, not exactly!" chuckled Mason. "You see, Gussy was getting rather heated because his topper got accidentally knocked into the stream. So we held him by the legs, and ducked his napper in, to cool him down a bit. Then some old buffer came along and ordered us to release him. Well, we did, and he fell into the stream, of course. Not our fault, was it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Croft, Price, and Pearson.

Blake & Co. glowered. It was now clear enough that Gussy's trip to Wayland was "off"—unless he came on by a later train, which was unlikely. The knowledge suddenly reminded Blake that they themselves were very low in funds, and that they had relied upon Gussy to see them through.

"You—you rotters!" gasped Blake. "I've a jolly good mind to punch your head, Mason!"

"Try it on, old chap," said Mason affably. "Always ready to oblige a Saint with a licking—or a bath. Blessed if I know which you need the most."

"Make it a bath!" advised Price. "They never wash at St. Jim's, you know, and it would be a blessing to the public."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky rotters!" gasped Herries, who had less patience than either Digby or Blake. "We're not standing cheek like that, Blake. And they've ducked poor old Gussy in, and mucked up our trip to Wayland. Smash 'em! Teach 'em better than to pitch St. Jim's fellows into a stream!"

"Hold on—"

But Blake's warning came too late. With a warlike snort, Herries rushed at Mason, and next moment they were waltzing about, locked in deadly embrace.

"Back up!" roared Mason. "Back up, and show these Saints what's what— Yoooop!"

A tap on the nose from Herries put a stop to Mason's appeal. But it was not made in vain—in a flash, Croft, Price, and Pearson had rushed upon Blake and Digby, though those two worthies did not need much encouragement.

In a moment, a fierce scrap was in progress among the waving bluebells on the bank, and on the path. In the ordinary way, with the odds even, Blake & Co. would have been more than a match for the four Grammarians. But though Mason and his chums were not such stalwart fighters as Gordon Gay & Co., they had plenty of pluck, and numbers told. As Blake had feared, the odds proved a trifle too much.

Then came a sudden interruption. There was the sound of crashing footsteps, and through the trees burst three fellows wearing Grammar School caps. Blake had his back to them, but he heard them coming, and as they were much nearer to St. Jim's than the Grammar School, he imagined they must be Saints.

"Rescue!" he bellowed. "Rescue, St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The next moment Blake was speedily disillusioned, as a cheery voice rang out—a familiar voice.

"Yes, we'll rescue you all right—I don't think! Hold the little dears fast, Mason!"

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Blake. "Gordon Gay!"

It was the Grammarian leader, and with him were Frank Monk, and Carboy. They had been rambling in the woods, and the sounds of warfare had attracted them to the spot—unfortunately for Blake and Co. Their arrival put a sudden end to the St. Jim's fellows' resistance.

In a matter of seconds, all three were flat on their backs with Grammarians seated on their chests, and on their legs.

(Continued on page 8.)

NEXT WEEK'S PICTURE CARD!

THIS IS A BLACK AND WHITE REPRODUCTION OF THE FIFTH FREE COLOURED PICTURE CARD THAT WILL BE PRESENTED WITH EVERY COPY OF NEXT WEDNESDAY'S BUMPER ISSUE OF THE "GEM."



MARVELS of the FUTURE!

No. 5.—A TWO HUNDRED MILES PER HOUR LOCOMOTIVE.

"It can't be done!" said the wiseheads when George Stephenson set the world agog with bold schemes to encircle the earth with ceaseless relays of "iron horses." With a shake of their pessimistic heads they declared that the human body could not stand a speed so great as thirty miles an hour, and that George's daring projects would drag down to ruin whoever financed them!

Now there is running on the lines of the Canadian National Railways a gigantic locomotive whose performances are so wonderful that the doom of the present-day steam locos is actually threatened!

It is an oil-electric train, and recently tore across Canada for 3,000 miles in sixty-seven hours! Our own famous fliers, like the Flying Scotsman, do shorter distances at even greater speed. Indeed, for the time taken on its non-stop run the Flying Scotsman stands absolutely supreme in the world. But then those trains in Canada and America have a vastly more difficult job. Their length, for a start, is sometimes nearly two miles long!

The train of the future will knock all these big facts and figures violently sideways. The pace of motor-cars and aeroplanes—all vehicles—will have so speeded-up within a few years that to maintain their place on earth the railways will have to shatter records as they have never been shattered before. The 200 m.p.h. locomotive is the target at which engineers and inventors are aiming now.

These marvels of mechanical triumph will necessarily be of inhumanly vast proportions. But, in spite of that, they will be modelled on the lines of racing motor-cars—streamlined, and with every outside feature adapted to cleave through the air and make light of the terrific air-resistance with which they will, of course, meet as the thunderously pulsating mass of metal hurtles headlong! And their appetite for fuel! The

thousands of gallons of water and many tons of coal that the Flying Scotsman consumes in a journey will be but a passing snack to them!

Britain will still be right to the fore in the building of the world's trains. No other country can match Britain in this trade. Why, this very year our four big railway companies between them are building more than 425 of the most powerful engines in the world, 800 passenger and corridor coaches and luggage vans and restaurant cars, and more than 26,000 goods wagons!

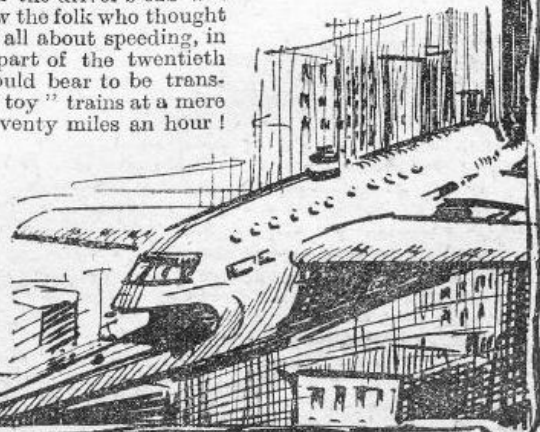
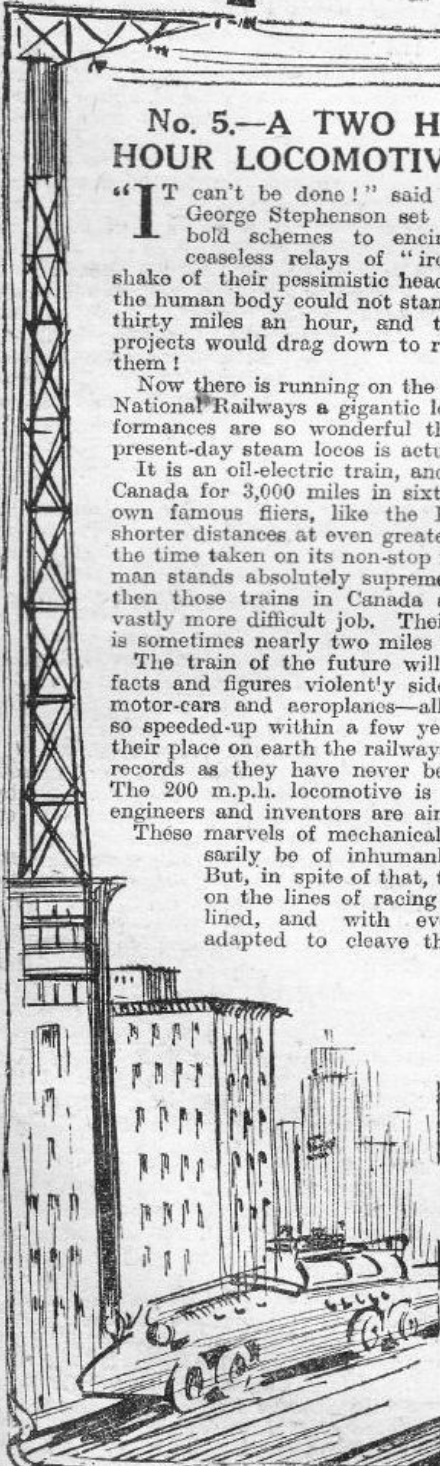
One of our railway workshops can now turn out 400 railway wagons each week, and many of the orders now on hand in this country are for railways abroad. Two of the largest locos at present in the world are now being built at Manchester for service in India, and they will cost £14,500 each!

That will give you some idea of the feverish activities and costs that will confront our engineering workshops and railway depots when those 200 m.p.h. masterpieces get going. The tracks on which these roaring giants will run will make the sleepers of our present permanent ways look like match-sticks. Bridges, viaducts—everything over which the monsters rush—will have to be rebuilt to be in keeping with the incredible loads of the future railways.

It is possible that the engines will have to be built in several sections in order that the immense length of the great mass of mechanism shall be able to negotiate, at top speed, very sharp curves. Even now there are locomotives of this type, with three "joints."

We thought it wonderful when mechanical stokers took the place on some of the world's railway systems of the human fireman and when luxurious restaurant cars and sleeping berths became regular fitments of long-distance train journeys. Those who travel in the sumptuous speeding "hotels" in the days when travel by rail is managed by the clicking of electric switches in the driver's cab will wonder how the folk who thought they knew all about speeding, in the early part of the twentieth century, could bear to be transported in "toy" trains at a mere sixty or seventy miles an hour!

Next week's article deals with an amazing giant "Air Liner," another dream of the future, which is the subject of the SIXTH Free Gift Picture Card.



A Traitor in the School.

(Continued from page 6.)

"What a lucky meeting!" grinned Gordon Gay. "We were just feeling bored with life, and hoping for a diversion like this!"

"You—you rotters!" panted Blake. "Fair play, you know, Gay! You're two to one!"

"My dear man, that's merely the fortune of war!" chuckled Gordon Gay cheerfully.

"Look here—"

"Now don't start arguing," said Gay, waving his hand. "I do hate a fellow who argues when a matter's once settled. It's only two days ago since you fellows collared me and ducked me in a horse-trough outside Rylcombe. You wouldn't listen to my blessed argument then, would you?"

"Hem! But look here—" began Blake desperately, but Gay shut him up.

"That's enough, old dear!" he said. "Plaster his chivvy with mud if he starts again, Crofty, old man! War's war, and you Saints have got to learn your places, and that Grammar School is top dog. Now, you fellows, just get busy and gather some bluebells. We're going to duck these merchants in the stream first, and then we're going to dress 'em up in bluebells, tie 'em up, and send them back home as three little boy blues. Then—"

"You are going to do nothing of the kind, Gordon! Release those boys this instant, sir!"

Gordon Gay nearly jumped out of his skin, as a deep, angry voice made that remark and command.

Mason & Co. also jumped. They wheeled round, and Mason's jaw dropped as he recognised the old gentleman who had given him the benefit of his stick.

"Oh, crumbs!" he gasped. "It—it's that old buffer again!"

"Old buffer!" hooted Mr. Gay. "How dare you refer to me in such insolent terms, boy? So you are already at your bullying tricks again? Are you not ashamed of yourselves?"

"No, we're jolly well not!" said Mason warmly. "I don't see why you should slang us like this, or interfere, sir. It's no business of yours—"

"It is the business of anyone to stop bullying," said Mr. Gay heatedly. "I refuse to stand by and witness such cowardly and scandalous behaviour. You will release those youths this instant, and you, Gordon, will accompany me at once to the school."

"Y-yes, uncle!" gasped Gordon Gay.

"Uncle!" repeated Mason, with a jump. "Oh, my hat! Is that—"

"Yes, you ass!" hissed Gay. "Shut up!"

Mason & Co. groaned and stepped hastily to the rear. They understood the position now. Gay's face was crimson. Blake & Co. were released, and they grinned cheerily as they scrambled up.

"Come on!" murmured Blake. "We'll go while the giddy going's good. We've missed that two-thirty, I expect, but we'll catch the next. Luckily, I've got enough for tickets, and Tom Merry will see us through for the rest. Come on!"

And with cheery countenances the St. Jim's fellows thanked Mr. Gay meekly, raised their caps, and departed in great haste. They were taking no chances with Gordon Gay & Co.

Those worthies scarcely saw them go, however.

"It's—it's all right, uncle!" gasped Gay. "It was only a rag—only a lark. But I didn't know you were coming, sir."

"I am well aware you did not," said Mr. Gay grimly. "I am exceedingly glad I did decide to pay you a surprise visit, however, for I have learned the sort of school you have been sent to, Gordon. And I am shocked and disgusted."

"Uncle!"

"It is useless to talk of rags, as you call them, or of larks. I have seen with my own eyes the sort of companions you associate with, and the kind of school you have been sent to is now clear to me," said Gay's uncle icily. "The school is obviously badly conducted, and discipline is at a discount. The boys have been allowed to do as they wish in their spare time, and have become nothing short of hooligans."

"Uncle, I—I—"

"Silence! I refuse to hear any excuses or denials, Gordon. I met a sample of your school fellows when leaving the station. They were smoking, and when I ventured to reprimand them they became rude and insolent."

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One boy in particular—a boy named Tracy, or Lacy—was particularly insolent, and he misdirected me, sending me more than a mile out of my way."

"But, uncle—" gasped Gay.

"That is enough Gordon! It is obvious that what I have already seen are not isolated cases. I am disgusted, and very disappointed with your school. I will make it my business to give your headmaster my opinion when I arrive at the Grammar School. Come with me!"

"Oh, crumbs! But, uncle—"

"Come!" snapped Mr. Gay. "As your guardian I am responsible for you Gordon, and if I find my suspicions and opinions are correct, I shall not hesitate to take you away from your present school. Come with me at once, as my time is short!"

"Oh dear! Look here, uncle—"

"Come!"

It was almost a roar. Evidently Gay's uncle, though good-natured enough, had a short temper, or else he had had a trying afternoon. At all events Gordon Gay did not linger longer. With a dismal glance at the faces of his startled and astonished chums, Gordon Gay followed his uncle over the bridge, and on towards the Grammar School.

CHAPTER 4.

The Last Straw!

IT was a dismal walk to the Grammar School for Gordon Gay. On the way Uncle James related his experiences that afternoon, and his nephew groaned as he listened.

But he did more than groan. He tried again and again to get a word or two in edgeways; but it was no good. Uncle James was wound up on the subject of the Grammar School. He would listen to no excuses, no explanations, all of which was rather unfair, and certainly dismaying to Gordon Gay.

Uncle James was a very decent old fellow. Gordon Gay had seen very little of him; but he had long ago arrived at that opinion. None the less he was a very trying old gentleman, with strong prejudices and strong opinions. He knew very little of school life, and he appeared to have formed the opinion that bullying was a very sad blot on most schools, which was certainly an unfortunate mistake on uncle's part.

But, in regard to the Rylcombe Grammar School, Uncle James certainly was prejudiced unfavourably even before visiting the district. His desire had been to send Gordon Gay to St. Jim's, where the friend of his youthful days was now the headmaster. But Gordon had been sent to the Grammar School. Uncle James could not forget that, or overlook it. Like Gordon himself, Uncle James had spent nearly the whole of his life in Australia, and he had undoubtedly lost touch with school life, which was scarcely surprising in the circumstances. And it was most unfortunate that his first encounter with Grammarians was with Lacy & Co., the black sheep of the school, and that his adventures since had been so disastrous.

Much as the St. Jim's fellows affected scorn for the Grammar School, they would have been the last seriously to call it a bad school. As a matter of fact, they were well aware that it was an excellent school, and that the fellows, with very few exceptions, were thoroughly decent. The rivalry between the two schools was good-humoured rivalry, and actually the Saints and Grammarians were on very friendly terms on the whole. Certainly, both Grundy and Gussy had not dreamed of the serious interpretation Mr. Gay had placed upon their careless remarks.

But Mr. Gay was unaware of that, nor would he listen to his hapless nephew's desperate attempts to explain.

He had already been insulted by Grammar School boys, and had been caused annoyance and trouble by being wrongly directed by them. And the other Grammarians he had met, as yet—even his own nephew—had, in his eyes, shown themselves to be bullies and young ruffians.

Uncle James was disgusted and disappointed, and he did not mince his words. Gordon Gay was almost in despair by the time the Grammar School was reached. He shuddered at the thought of his uncle expressing his opinions to Dr. Monk. Dr. Monk was a kindly old gentleman; but he was very proud of his school, and, being somewhat short-tempered, not at all likely to put up with nonsense from anyone.

There would be trouble, and—

Gordon Gay groaned, and made a last desperate attempt.

"Uncle," he pleaded, "do listen to me a moment before you see the Head. You're making a mistake—"

"I am not making a mistake at all, Gordon!" snapped Mr. Gay impatiently. "I am very disappointed in your school, and still more disappointed in you. Do you think I can mistake the evidence of my own ears and eyes, boy? Rubbish!"

"But—"

"Not another word, Gordon!" said Uncle James. "I utterly refuse—"

"But—but do come to the study before seeing the Head!" gasped Gordon.

"I will certainly come to your study first," snapped the irate old gentleman, "as I intend to see your books, and to learn what progress you are making here! I shall then interview Dr. Monk, and place my views before him."

"Oh," gasped Gordon, "very well, uncle!"

He fairly gasped with relief. If he could only get his terrible uncle into the study he might succeed in persuading the stubborn old gentleman that things were nothing like so bad as he supposed.

Alas! Fate had still another tragic blow in store for Gordon Gay, and his uncle!

Into the School House and upstairs to the Fourth Form

got first the book, and then the carefully-prepared mixture. His startled bellow was enough to rouse the whole of the Grammar School.

With soot and flour enveloping him as in a shroud, he stood and coughed and sneezed as if for a wager.

Gordon Gay almost fainted.

"G-good heavens!" he stuttered. "What—what— Oh, my only sainted aunt!"

For a full minute Uncle James stood, showering soot and flour around him, while he coughed and sneezed, and strove to give vent to his feelings in wrathful roars. But at last he got his eyes and nose clear somewhat, and then he fairly danced with rage.

"Who—what— Gordon, you young rascal!" he bellowed. "What does this abominable outrage mean? What—what— G-gug-good gad! Grooogh!"



Dr. Monk gazed somewhat haughtily over his spectacles at the soot-covered figure of Gordon Gay's Uncle James. "Sir! My dear sir—" "Look at me!" bellowed Uncle James. "Never have I been subjected to such an outrage! This—this is the last straw! I—I—" Words failed him. (See Chapter 5.)

passage went uncle and nephew. In the ordinary way visitors to the boys were supposed to be shown into the visitors' room previous to seeing the Head—a formality they were expected to observe beforehand. But, in this case, Gordon Gay was only too glad to accede to his uncle's demand to visit his study. They arrived at the door at last, and Gordon Gay paused.

"This is it, uncle," he said, eager to say something favourable. "It's a ripping little study, and my chums and I are no end comfy here."

Mr. Gay grunted. Gordon pushed at the door, which was already ajar, and, as he did so, Uncle James entered in his brisk, businesslike manner.

It was unfortunate that he did so—very unfortunate indeed—for there was a booby-trap fixed up above the door, and Uncle James received the full benefit of it. Again an enemy of the luckless Gordon Gay had been at work, and again Uncle James was the sufferer.

As the door swung back sharply there sounded a faint noise above, and then—

Swoooooosh!

Down upon the startled head of Uncle James came first a book, and then a cardboard box. In the cardboard box was a quantity of mixed flour and soot, and Uncle James

There came a sudden patter of feet in the passage, and several Fourth-Formers dashed round the corner. They were Mason, Croft, Price, and Pearson.

Mason pulled up short, his face the picture of utter dismay as he saw what had happened.

"Oh lor'!" he gasped. "Oh crumbs!"

Gordon Gay gave him a ferocious glare. He guessed it was Mason's work; and he was right there. Like Blake & Co., and the Terrible Three at St. Jim's, Gordon Gay & Co. and Mason & Co. were rivals who combined together against outsiders, but who played japes against each other at home often enough.

On this occasion Mason and his chums had rigged up the trap before going out, as a pleasant little surprise for Gay & Co. on their return at tea-time. Mason had only remembered it some minutes after Gay and his uncle had left them, and with his chums he had rushed back to school at top speed, guessing Gay would take his uncle to his study.

But they had arrived several seconds too late—the damage was done. What Mason & Co. had feared had come about. Uncle James had got it instead of his nephew!

Mason gazed, horror-stricken.

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"Oh, you awful ass, Mason!" groaned Gordon Gay. "I suppose this is a bit of your work! You've done it now! I'll punch your silly head later on for—"

Gay paused as his uncle wheeled round on him suddenly.

CHAPTER 5.

The Blow Falls!

OBVIOUSLY, Uncle James, busy as he was at the task of clearing eyes and nose of soot and flour, had overheard his unguarded remarks. "What is that, Gordon?" he hooted. "Upon my word! Is it possible that this is yet more of that young rascal's work? Boy, did you set that abominable trap over the door?"

"Oh crumbs! Y-yes, sir!" gasped Mason, too startled to think of trying to evade the question. "I—I'm fearfully sorry, sir. I—I didn't mean it— Here! Oh, my hat!"

He gave a gasp of alarm as Uncle James jumped forward and, grasping him by the jacket collar, shook him wrathfully.

"You—you young scoundrel!" stuttered the old gentleman. "I—I have a very good mind to—to lay my stick about you! Poof! I—I—"

He was interrupted. There sounded a heavy tread in the passage, and a stately figure in cap and gown came hurrying to the spot.

Gordon Gay gave a deep groan as he recognised the Head—Dr. Monk.

"What—what is happening here, boys?" asked the Head of the Grammar School irritably. "Gay what— Good gracious! Who is this individual? And what— Bless my soul! Release that boy this instant, sir!"

Mr. Gay released the hapless Mason—much to that youth's relief. He promptly faded into the background. Dr. Monk gazed somewhat haughtily over his spectacles at the flour and soot-covered figure of Uncle James.

"Who are you, sir?" he repeated coldly. "How dare you assault a boy from this school, and what—"

"Who am I?" almost bellowed the raging Uncle James. "I am Mr. James Gay, the uncle and guardian of one of your unfortunate pupils, sir. I came here to discover for myself the kind of school my nephew—poof!—was attending. And now I have satisfied myself as to its nature I intend to take my nephew away at the earliest possible moment, sir."

"Sir! My dear sir—"

"Look at me!" bellowed Uncle James. "Look at me, an unsuspecting visitor to your school, covered from head to foot in flour and soot. Poof! Never have I been subjected to such an outrage! This—this is the last straw! I—I—I—"

Words failed Mr. James Gay.

Dr. Monk blinked at him in growing anger and amazement. Naturally he was not at all pleased at Mr. Gay's remarks concerning the Grammar School.

"Pray calm yourself, my dear sir!" he said icily. "This—this conduct—before my pupils—is most unseemly. If you desire to take your nephew away from this school you are quite at liberty to do so. I fail, however, to understand your reasons, and I still fail to understand the meaning of this extraordinary commotion, and how you came to be in such a state, sir!"

"Can't you see?" hooted Uncle James. "I am the victim of a rascally trick, sir. But I do not blame the boys so much—nor do I intend to point out the culprits. The responsible persons are the authorities of such a school that permits its pupils to roam the countryside like hooligans, and to behave like ill-mannered savages!"

Dr. Monk raised his hand. His brow was dark with anger.

"That is enough, sir!" he said angrily. "If you have anything further to say perhaps you will be good enough to come to my study. As I have already stated, I have no objection, none whatever, sir, to your nephew. Will you be good enough to come this way, Mr. Gay?"

"I will come when I have made myself a little more presentable!" was the wrathful answer. "Gordon, get me a clothes-brush this instant, sir."

"Oh! Ye-es, uncle!" groaned the unhappy Gay.

"Very well, sir!" snapped the Head. "Gay, you will show your uncle to my study later."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Dr. Monk strode away, his features pink with wrath.

Mr. Gay, his face a curious study in black-and-white, followed Gordon Gay into the study, watched by a crowd of scared Grammarians.

He obtained a clothes-brush, and set to work to make his uncle presentable. Carboy also obtained another brush and lent a willing hand. Frank Monk and Harry Wootton rushed off for a basin of water and a towel and soap, and very soon Uncle James was looking more presentable.

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Luckily the soot and flour was dry, and most of it came off easily enough. But the anger of Uncle James seemed to grow and grow as his covering of soot and flour grew less and less.

During the cleaning operations Gordon Gay tried to talk to his uncle, but Mr. Gay refused to listen. He wanted to do all the talking that was necessary. And the dismay of Gay and his chums grew deeper as they listened. Uncle James was undoubtedly a "corker." Once his mind was made up on a subject, argument and pleading were useless. He had reached the conclusion that the Grammar School was no fit place for his nephew, and nothing would alter that conclusion. Hadn't he seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears? Hadn't he suffered in his own person from the results of the slackness and utter lack of discipline at the school? And instead of receiving sympathy and regrets from the headmaster, hadn't he met with angry words and chilly disregard of his complaints?

Uncle James was snorting like a warhorse in his impatience to interview Dr. Monk, and Gordon Gay groaned as he realised what it might lead to—if it already hadn't led to it. Uncle James was ready at last—most of the soot and flour was brushed off, and he was looking more respectable now.

With his round face pink with wrath, he followed Gordon Gay from the room and along to the Head's study. The junior tapped, and the next moment Dr. Monk's voice snapped an invitation, and Uncle James went inside.

Gordon Gay almost tottered back to his chums.

"Well?"

"Goodness knows!" groaned Gay dismally. "He's gone inside. The Head looked like a giddy Gorgon. I'm afraid there'll be a fearful bust-up, and then—"

"But—but he can't take you away!" gasped Harry Wootton in the greatest alarm. "It would be too awful for words, old man! It's just gas—"

"I'm afraid not; the silly old buffer really means it," said Gay unhappily. "He's an awfully good sort, really; but he gets queer ideas in his napper, and he's fearfully stubborn—worse than that chap Grundy at St. Jim's. And he's got the Head's back up—"

"He has and no mistake," agreed Frank Monk, looking very serious. "The pater can be stubborn when he likes, too. Oh crumbs! This is awful!"

In dismal apprehension, the chums waited for the result of Uncle James' interview with the Head. It was a very short interview. There came a sudden sharp rap at the door. It opened and Uncle James appeared. He was breathing hard, and his features were almost scarlet with wrath.

If he had been in a rage before he was simply boiling over now. The signs were unmistakable, and Gay and his chums stifled their groans of dismay.

Behind Uncle James was Tubb, the pageboy, who was hiding a grin with a grubby hand. Evidently Tubb had overheard something interesting.

"Gordon!" stuttered Uncle James, "you will pack your belongings at once, and shake the dust of this school from your feet without an instant's delay."

"Wha-what?"

"Never have I been so insulted!" gasped Mr. Gay. "I am a plain speaker, and I have given my plain views and opinions of the conduct of this school to your headmaster. Instead of admitting the truth and regretting the state of affairs here, he has denied my statements absolutely—refused to listen to me, in fact."

"Uncle—"

"There was nothing else for it!" stuttered the old gentleman. "I refuse absolutely to allow you to remain here one moment longer than is necessary, Gordon. Your term fees have already been paid, of course, and you shall leave this very afternoon—the moment you have packed, in fact."

"But—but uncle—please listen—"

"Not a word, Gordon. Nothing shall alter my decision—indeed, the attitude of Dr. Monk has made it impossible for me to reconsider the matter. You will pack your boxes immediately. Dr. Monk has already telephoned for a cart to take them to St. Jim's."

"To—to St. Jim's?" gurgled Gordon Gay.

"Exactly! I myself am going there now, and will arrange with my old friend, Dr. Holmes, for you to enter St. Jim's at once. The moment you have packed you will follow me there. I shall expect you there within the hour. Upon my word! I am thankful, indeed, that I came to-day, or I should never have discovered the truth."

"But— Oh, my hat! Uncle, do listen to me a minute! I'm awfully happy here, and I should hate—"

"Nonsense!" Mr. Gay raised his hand. "I am the best judge as to what is best for you, Gordon. As your guardian I feel it my bare duty to remove you from this—this school, and to place you in more suitable surroundings. You

will pack at once, and follow me to St. Jim's without delay."

"But—" "You need not trouble to show me out," said Uncle James, with bitter sarcasm. "Your headmaster has instructed the page to show me the door."

With that Uncle James nodded to the grinning page and followed him as he led the way out of the Grammar School precincts. Gordon Gay gave a deep, hollow groan of utter, hopeless despair.

"Well," he said—"well, of all the—the—" Words failed him.

"Hard cheese!" said Frank Monk dismally. "But perhaps it will fall through, old man. And, after all, we'll be able to see a lot of you if you do go to St. Jim's."

"St. Jim's," choked Gordon Gay. "Who wants to go to St. Jim's? Why, it—it's too awful for words! Oh, the awful old idiot! And it's all the fault of that cad,

buffer started slanging us, and it served him jolly well right! What the deuce has it got to do with you, any— Here, what— Yooop!"

Crash!

Lacy howled as Gordon Gay dragged back the chair and pitched him out on to the carpet with a terrific bump. What happened to him next Lacy scarcely knew. He only knew it was something decidedly painful. Gordon Gay was raging, and he let Lacy know it. He grabbed a fives-bat, and then he grabbed Lacy, and brought the two into contact in no half-hearted fashion.

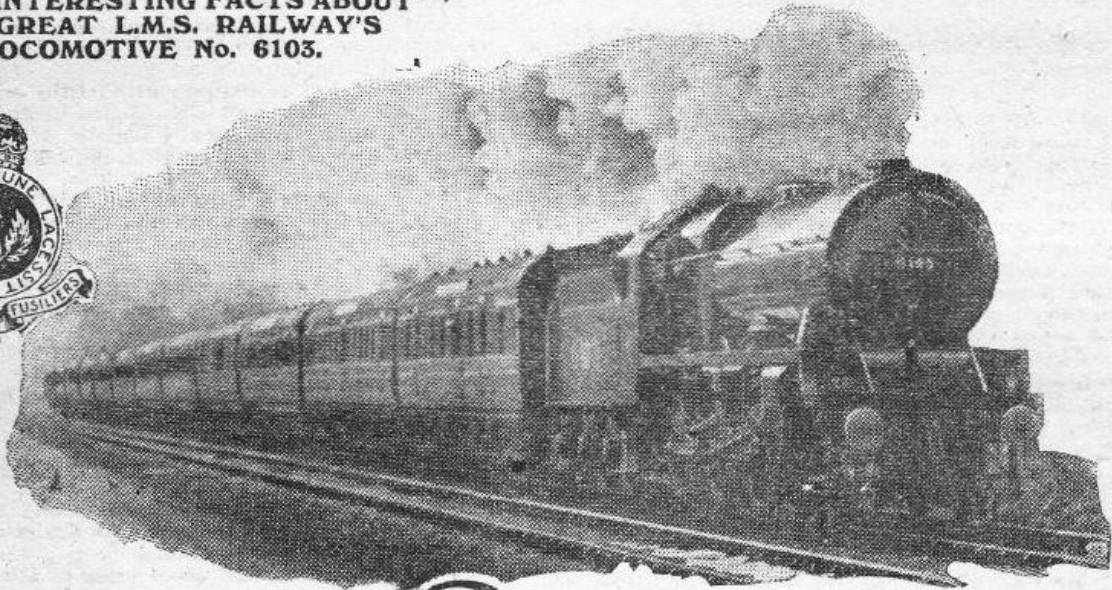
Lacy howled and yelled and roared with anguish as the fives-bat whacked home on his person. It was a terrific batting, and Lacy tired of it long before Gay did. But the Grammarian leader himself tired at last. He flung the bat into a corner, and then, feeling a trifle better, though not much, he went back to his study, breathing hard.

If he had to go, then it couldn't be helped. But, at least,

A FEW INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE GREAT L.M.S. RAILWAY'S LOCOMOTIVE No. 6103.



Express engines of the "Royal Scot" class, on the L.M.S. Railway, are named after famous regiments of the British Army. You will learn from our contributor all about the "Royal Scots Fusilier" locomotive.



Regimental "ROYAL SCOTS!"

Here comes Locomotive Number 6103 of the "Royal Scot" class. Her official name is Royal Scots Fusilier, after the famous regiment, but rather would we call her by the latter's nickname, "Earl of Mar's Grey Breeks."

Why the regiment took that nickname is rather obscure, but curiously enough there is a very good reason why the mighty locomotive should be called thus.

The story goes that the driver of this engine upset a pail of water on the foot-plate on one occasion, splashing his trousers considerably, so that he was obliged to stand for several minutes in front of the open door of the furnace to dry them.

Whether this is a true story and whether the driver's trousers were grey it is difficult to say. But, nevertheless, there it is, and provides good and sufficient reason why that mighty mass of red-and-black mechanism, Locomotive Number 6103, should be known as "Earl of Mar's Grey Breeks."

The Royal Scots Fusiliers bear an honourable record. They fought at Bothwell Bridge, Walcourt, and Steinkirke, and took part in Lord Cutts famous charge at Blenheim, side by side with the Royal Scots Lothians.

The regiment distinguished itself at

Malplaquet, Oudenarde, and Dettingen, afterwards serving in America and the West Indies. It also did fine work in the Crimea.

As in the case of the Royal Scots Lothians the Royal Scots Greys and the Black Watch, the corps bears upon its Regimental Crest the inscription—"Nemo me impune lacessit"—(No one provokes me with impunity.)

Locomotive No. 6103, named Royal Scots Fusilier, is worthily upholding the honourable tradition of that famous regiment.

(Another interesting railway article next week, boys.)

Lacy! If he hadn't misdirected my uncle this wouldn't have happened."

"I don't know," said Frank Monk, shaking his head. "The old top seemed to have made up his mind—"

"Rot!" hooted Gay, almost beside himself with dismay. "It was all that cad's fault, and, what's more, I'm going to smash him! I'll—I'll—"

Without stopping to finish Gordon Gay made a rush for the door and dashed out. His chums looked at each other, and then they dashed after him. They were just in time to see their leader vanish into Lacy's study.

Lacy was at home, sprawling in an easy chair, with his feet on the mantelpiece. He looked up and glared as Gay rushed in.

"Now, my pippin'!" snapped Gordon Gay. "I understand that you met an old chap this afternoon, Lacy—an old fellow wearing a wide-brimmed hat? You sent him towards St. Jim's, instead of here, I believe, Lacy."

"Well, what if I did?" sniffed Lacy. "The cheeky old

he had had the satisfaction of knowing that Algernon Lacy, the cause of the trouble, had met with his just deserts. It gave him some little satisfaction; but it was with a very heavy heart that Gordon Gay, helped by his sympathetic chums, packed his belongings, prior to shaking off the dust of the Grammar School from his youthful feet.

CHAPTER 6.

Rough on Cussy!

"BAI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started.

The swell of the Fourth was standing at the window of Study No. 6 in the Fourth, gazing out on to the green-carpeted quadrangle. The old quad looked peaceful and pleasant in the spring afternoon's sun.

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shine. But Arthur Augustus was feeling neither peaceful nor pleasant, and he took no pleasure whatever in the landscape.

It was some time since Arthur Augustus had returned. He had changed his clothes and tidied himself up, but he was far from being in his right mind, as it were. Arthur Augustus was not himself yet. He was still burning with righteous indignation at the treatment he had received at the ruthless hands of the Grammarians. His trip to Wayland had been "scotched," his clothes damaged, and his own sacred person had been subjected to gross indignity. The only comfort Gussy could derive from the affair was the thought that he had not, after all, gone out in his best topper that afternoon.

That was some comfort to Arthur Augustus. It proved that his judgment in such matters was to be relied upon; and his best silk hat still reposed safely in a hat-box in the dormitory.

Yet Arthur Augustus seethed with indignant wrath still, and he was dwelling upon his wrongs when his eyes fell upon five youths who had just entered the gates of St. Jim's. From his sunny window Arthur Augustus had a good view of them.

He started as he recognised them.

One was Gordon Gay, the leader of the Grammarians, and the others were the Wootton brothers, and Carboy, and Frank Monk. And Gordon Gay was carrying a suitcase, whilst Frank Monk carried a handbag.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Gussy, in astonishment.

It was not unusual for Grammarians to visit St. Jim's. Often enough Gordon Gay came over to discuss important footer and cricket matters with Tom Merry. More than once, with perhaps one of his chums, he had stayed to tea with the chums of the School House. Behind the keen rivalry between Tom Merry & Co. and Gordon Gay & Co. there was genuine friendship and mutual goodwill.

But this was distinctly unusual. Gordon Gay & Co. were in force. Moreover, they carried a handbag and a suitcase.

Gussy started and frowned.

Was it a rag? Had the Grammarians dared to enter the precincts of St. Jim's in order to carry out a jape on their rivals?

"Bai Jove!" breathed Gussy, yet again. "I weally must see into this remarkable affair. Yaas, wathah! I shall also wemonstwat stwongly to Gay wegardin' my tweatment by Mason this aftahnoon."

With this intention in his noble mind, Arthur Augustus leisurely left his study and waited in the passage. If Gay & Co. intended to visit Tom Merry's study, they would have to traverse the Fourth Form passage to do so. If they had come to visit Study No. 6, here he was to receive them, and upon their explanation would depend whether they would be allowed to enter or not.

There was the tramp of feet in the passage very soon, and Gordon Gay and his friends appeared. Arthur Augustus looked at them rather curiously. Gordon Gay was a fellow with a sunny disposition, and his chums were also fellows who looked upon life with a joyful eye. Altogether they were a cheery, rollicking crowd of juniors in the usual way. But just now they looked anything but joyful and cheery.

Gay's chums looked like fellows walking in a funeral procession, while Gay himself looked like an undertaker when business was bad.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his suspicions somewhat relieved. "Is anything the mattah, you fellows?"

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Gordon Gay dispiritedly. "I say, is my uncle here?"

"Your uncle, deah boy? Oh, bai Jove! I wemembah now! I met him in the woods this afternoon, of course. And that weminds me, deah boy. I am afwaid I wathah wan down the Gwammah School to the old gentleman, bein' quite ignowant of his identity. I twust—"

"Oh!" snorted Gay. "So it was you who gassed to my uncle this afternoon. I guessed from his description that it was you, you footling idiot!"

"Bai Jove! Weally—"

"You—you thundering ass!" hissed Gordon Gay.

"Weally, Gay—"

"You born idiot! You burbling jabberwock! You chunk of imbecility! You walking tailor's dummy! You—you—you—"

Gay spluttered in his efforts to express himself in a manner suitable to the occasion.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I see no weason whatevah for this wudeness, Gay. I wegwet vewy much my thoughtless wemarks to your uncle. But weally—"

"You babbling booby!" hissed Gay. "You've helped to put the tin lid on things with your footling chatter! You—you've helped to make my uncle think the Grammar

School's a blessed reformatory! You've helped to make the old duffer see things that didn't exist, and he's taken me away! I've left the Grammar School for good, you fumbling, blithering, babbling jackass! Oh, you—you—"

"Oh, gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus, genuinely alarmed and dismayed. "Is that weally a fact, deah boy? Pway accept my sincwest apologies, old fellow. If I can do anythin' to make amends—"

"You can do nothing, you raving lunatic! The damage is done now, and I've left the Grammar School for good! It's too sickening for words!" groaned Gay. "Is my uncle here now? Have you seen him?"

"Nunno, deah boy!" gasped Gussy, quite upset. "I have not seen him. But weally—"

"Well, he was coming here—he was coming to make arrangements for me to join this dashed casual ward of a school. Fancy being taken away from a school like the Grammar School and shoved in a hole like this. Oh, you—you—"

Arthur Augustus gave a start as he understood.

"Oh, gweat Scott!" he ejaculated. "Is that weally a fact, deah boy? Are you comin' here?"

"Yes, I thumping well am!"

"Oh!" Gussy understood now what the suitcase and handbag signified. His brow cleared and he smiled beamingly. "Oh, bai Jove. How weally wippin', Gay. Then I have done you a weally good turn aftah all, deah boy."

"Wha-a-at!"

"I see no weason whatevah for bein' pipped about the change," said Gussy innocently. "Weally, it is a vewy fortunate thing for you, Gay. I have nothin' to say against the Gwammah School weally. It is not a bad school as schools go. But in compawison with St. Jim's it is a feahful place, and I shouldn't care to be found dead there myself, deah boys."

"What?"

"There is no denyin'," proceeded Gussy with delightful frankness, "that the Gwammah School is wathah a shabbay show, and that you will be fah bettah off at St. Jim's. Aftah all, the Gwammah School is weally miles below St. Jim's in ewevy way, and you are vewy lucky indeed to get shifted. Congwats, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus smiled at Gordon Gay. Apparently he was under the impression that he was cheering him up—softening the blow, as it were, by enlarging upon the great improvement the change would bring to him.

But if the noble Gussy was under that impression, he soon had reason to change it.

Gordon Gay's chums glared speechlessly; Gay himself eyed Arthur Augustus with an almost petrifying glare.

"Well," he gasped. "Well, if that isn't the frozen limit! The last blinking straw! Oh, you—you—"

"Smash the cheeky ass!" said Frank Monk sulphurously. "Rub his silly chivvy in the dust! We'll teach him better than to—"

"Weally, you fellows— Yooop! Here, what— Leggo, you wuffians— Yawwooop!"

CHAPTER 7.

Monk & Co. Make Amends!

"YOOOOOP!"

Arthur Augustus descended to the linoleum with a bump and a howl.

"Roll the awful fathead over!" gasped Gay.

"Show him just what we think about—"

Gordon Gay suddenly broke off with a gasp, aware that a newcomer had rustled upon the scene. It was Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House. He looked at the scene in amazement.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "D'Arcy—what—what—who— Ah! So you have arrived, Gay?" he added grimly, suddenly recognising that youth. "H'm! Is this your manner of celebrating your change of school, may I ask?"

There was deep sarcasm in Mr. Railton's tone. The Housemaster had often spoken to Gay, both at St. Jim's and on the playing-fields, and he knew him well. But it wasn't the sarcasm that affected Gay, and made his face flush and his heart sink to his boots. It was the fact that the Housemaster had referred to the change of school.

Up to the last, even until that moment, Gay had cherished a lingering hope that the matter would fall through—that it would not come to the worst. He had hoped that Dr. Holmes might not take him in, and that his uncle would feel obliged to swallow his pride and anger and take him back to the school he loved—the school where he was a leading light, and where his chums were.

Now, with the Housemaster's words, that hope faded.

"Nunno, sir!" he gasped. "Only a joke!"

"Yaas, wathah!" panted Arthur Augustus, scrambling up. Hurt and wrathful as he was, Arthur Augustus did not wish Gay and his friends to get into trouble. "It was onlay a joke, Mr. Wailton, and I twust you will ovahlook it; weally it was my own fault, sir, I suppose."

"Very well, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton. "You will take fifty lines for causing a commotion."

"Oh, yaas, sir!"

"Gay," said Mr. Railton, turning to that youth again. "Your uncle is here, and you are required in the head-master's study at once. I was just on my way to inquire if you had arrived."

"Ye-es, sir!" groaned Gay. "I—I say, sir," he added, anxious to know the worst once and for all. "Is it all fixed up—am I coming here, sir?"

"Yes, my boy. It is somewhat unusual, and very short notice," said Mr. Railton, with a cough. "But the matter has been now arranged, and you will take your place in the Shell. You will join Merry in Study No. 10—he is an old friend of yours, I think. Now will you please accompany me to see Dr. Holmes before your uncle goes?"

"Oh! Oh, ye-es, sir!"

Handing his bag to Frank Monk, Gordon Gay gave his chums a despairing look, and followed Mr. Railton to the Head's study. It was all over—the deed was done. Frank Monk and his chums looked at each other blankly and hopelessly when he had gone. Like their leader they had hoped to the last that it would all end in smoke, and that the awful thing would never happen.

But it had happened. Gordon Gay, the cheery leader of the Grammarians, was now no longer a member of the Grammar School. He was a member of the rival school—St. Jim's! Never again would he lead them on footer field, on

cricket field, on the river, or in other sports and games. Never again would he lead them to victory in japes against the St. Jim's fellows. Gay's chums felt a sudden blank in their lives.

"Oh!" gasped Frank Monk. "Oh, m-mum-my hat! Oh, great pip! Isn't it awful, you fellows? Poor old Gordon!"

"What awful, putrid luck!" groaned Harry Wootton. "Did you ever hear of such a thing?"

Arthur Augustus coughed. Really he could not understand why the Grammarians were so upset about it. After all, the change was for the best. It was absurd—to the noble Gussy—that anyone should imagine the Grammar School was as fine a place as St. Jim's—too absurd for words! What there was to be dismal about, Arthur Augustus quite failed to see. The change was undoubtedly for the best. Gordon Gay was a lucky fellow to get such a remarkably pleasant and profitable change. And his chums were really awfully selfish not to see it, and be glad for their chum's sake.

That was Gussy's view. He began to point out his view to the Grammarians.

"Weally, you fellows," he said with mild severity, "I am wathah surprised at this attitude. Aftah all, Gordon Gay will be a gweat deal bettah off in ewevy way."

"Oh, dry up!" hissed Frank Monk.

"Weally, Monk—"

"This is awful—"

"I do not see it at all, deah boys," said Gussy, anxious

(Continued on next page.)



Among the amazing calculations made by our office Oracle is that if all the tuck-boxes sent to schoolboys in Great Britain during the last

term were piled up one on top of the other, they would probably fall down!

Q. What is the secret of the "talking drums" of the African bush?

A. The drums are used by certain tribes of natives and by means of them they convey messages over long distances. It was believed at one time that the savages had a kind of primitive Morse code, but this was found not to be the case. The secret of the "talking drums" is that they reproduce the actual sound of certain words.

Q. Which is the oldest ball game known?

A. Tennis.

Q. Who was Ferdinand Foch?

A. Late Marshal of France and for the last part of the Great War the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied troops. He died at Paris on March 20th of this year at the age of 77. It is believed that Marshal Foch will go down to history as one of the greatest generals who ever lived. Like many soldiers he was a man of few words and a typical story is told about him in this connection. During the War he was visited by two English Cabinet Ministers who asked him how he proposed to make his big attack on the German army. Foch had his wonderful plans all laid out in his mind, but puffed for fully a minute at his pipe without expressing his thoughts. Then suddenly to the alarm of the Cabinet Ministers he kicked out with his boot. "Like that!" said Foch, and that was all they could get out of him. It has been said of him that he was "a great Christian, a great gentleman, and a great man." Could any man earn a finer epitaph?

Q. Who was Odin?

A. Chief of the gods of Scandinavian mythology. He was supposed to rule the heavens and the earth and the underworld—all save Jotunheim, the home of the frost giants. His messengers were the equally mythical Valkyries whom he sent to lead the souls of warriors to Valhalla,

the hall of heaven for the gloriously slain. In the long winter nights of Norway and Sweden many tales are told round the pine-log fire of Odin and his valour.

Q. Where did dirt-track racing start?

A. In Australia, "Sporting Fred." "Down under" they have always been keen on cycle racing, and then motor-cycle events came into vogue. Many of these had to be held on grass tracks which became dry and wore so badly that they were churned into dirt and dust. As a result, motor-cycle racers almost automatically developed great skill in skidding, until races were deliberately held under such conditions as may be seen at any of the dirt-tracks in this country. Sporting Fred, it is not for me to advise whether you shall take up the game or not. You state that your present profession is ladder-holder for a window-cleaner. (I believe you're pulling my leg.) Sitting on the bottom rungs while your mate slips the leather over the grubby old panes, is less apt to give you a strain than a job astride a bucking racing bike!



Dirt-track racing first started in Australia—now it is one of our most popular sports. See what the Oracle has to say about it.

Q. What parts has a ship's anchor?

A. A ring or shackle, stock, shank, crown, arms, flukes, and bill.

Q. Who wrote "The Barrack Room Ballads"?

A. Rudyard Kipling, who was born in 1865, published this collection of verse in 1892. They include such well-known ballads as "Gunga Din," "Mandalay," "Danny Deever," and "Oonts," which is the Hindustani word for "camels." My young reader, Percy Peplow of Bermondsey, who sent in the question, may recite any poem at the vicarage social without either writing or calling upon Mr. Kipling to get permission.

Q. What is the Doggett's Coat and Badge?

A. Always glad to hear from a girl reader, Chrystobelle! Glad also to know you are so keen on sports, and that you consider the jewel among weekly papers is the GEM. But to answer your query: The Doggett's Coat and Badge refers to a race held annually among Thames watermen—a race instituted by Thomas Doggett in 1715 to encourage good rowing.

Q. What is an imbroglio?

A. A Second-Former who signs himself "Lover of Peas"—the spelling is his—says there has been a fine old row at his school. He and some other chaps were discussing cricket fixtures in the Common-room, when, by way of a break, they started up a game of footer with somebody's socks which they took off and tied in a ball. In the midst of it a wild chase started after Rugg major's dog which was hunting Smith minor's cat that had eaten Biggins' pet canary. During this chase, the House-master looked in and inquired about an imbroglio. So my reader-chum, A Lover of Peas, said it must have been under the cupboard, because they had raked around everywhere else in the Common-room after "Spotted Dick," which is Rugg's dog. At this the master up and smote my young correspondent on the oral appendages, otherwise the ears, for getting fresh. And Lover of Peas is wanting to know "what the thump sort of animal is an imbroglio, anyway?" An imbroglio, chum, is no species of flesh, fish, or fowl. It is a complicated situation—or generously translated, a rumpus, embroilment, scrummage, riot, fracas, unseemly disturbance, bear-garden, embarrasment, commotion, rough-house, or thumpin' hullabaloo. So why didn't your master say so?

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still to point out the great advantages of the change to Gordon Gay. "I think it is weally vewy selfish of you fellows to make Gay feel dissatisfied, instead of helpin' him to wealise his gweat good fortune. You are takin' all the gilt off the gingabbread for him, you know."

"Oh, you—you—"

"There is no weason to get angwy, Monk," said Gussy severely. "I am onlay twyin' to point out what a weally wippin' thing this is for Gay. Instead of bein' at a second-wate school, among wathah a lot of duffahs, he will now enjoy the gweat advantages of an excellent education, and will be able to get a weally good knowledge of footer an' ewicket, an' all that sort of thing, you know. Aftah all—Bai Jove! Why are you glowewin' at me like that, Car-boy?"

"Oh, you—you—"

"Do look at things in the pwopah light, you fellows," said Gussy, shaking his head. "You must admit, you know, that the Gwammah School is wathah a second-wate show, and that—Bai Jove! What—Welease me, Monk, you—Oh! How dare you—Yow! What—"

Like wolves on the fold, Gay's chums descended upon Arthur Augustus as one man. They grabbed him, and once again he smote the linoleum with a bump and an astonished howl.

"Hold him!" gasped Frank Monk, in sulphurous accents. "Hold the burbling duffer. Here, drag him in here! He's given us his views, and now we'll let him see what ours are."

"Yes, rather! In with him!"

"Look here—Oh, bai Jove! Welease me, you feahful wottahs! I—Oh, bai Jove!"

Scarcely knowing whether he was on his head or his heels Arthur Augustus was rushed into Study No. 6, and the door was closed. Then a hand was clapped over his mouth to stifle his startled yells, and his hands wrenched behind him.

"Gag him!" gasped Monk, assuming the leadership now Gay was gone. "Gag him and tie him up! We'll teach him, the cheeky rotter, and we'll teach those other rotters, too! We'll show 'em that, even if Gay's left us, we can still keep our end up. We'll show 'em—we'll—we'll—"

Words failed Frank Monk in that moment of acute emotion. Despite his struggles and wriggles, Arthur Augustus was gagged with his own handkerchief, a scarf being tied over his mouth to keep the gag in place. He gurgled and gurgled, but he gurgled in vain. The Grammarians were not in the mood to be merciful.

Then Gussy's hands were tied behind his back, and he was seated in a chair, and a cord was passed round and round him, fastening him securely.

"There," said Frank Monk, when the operation was ended. "That's settled this born idiot for a bit. Hold on, though—that's not enough!"

Monk looked round, and then went to the study cupboard. It was fairly well stocked with foodstuffs, but a tin of treacle caught Monk's eye, and he satisfied himself with that for the moment.

He opened the tin, obtained a spoon, and with the aid of this he started to daub the hapless D'Arcy's frantically contorted features with treacle. He ladled it first on his neatly-parted hair, and then he daubed it liberally on Gussy's nose and cheeks, and ears and chin. Arthur Augustus looked a sight when the operation was completed.

"Never have I seen Gussy looking such a sweet young thing," remarked Monk, when he had finished. "If he don't attract all the girls he'll attract the wasps and bees."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now we'd better be getting busy in other directions," said Frank Monk briskly. "As I say, we've got to make it clear to these Saints that though we've lost our chief the old firm's still going strong. Gay's a St. Jim's fellow now, so we've got to keep our end up on our own, and there's nothing like making a good start."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

The Grammarians got busy, watched by Gussy's goggling eyes. They carried him and the chair near to the door to be out of the way, and then they started to wreck the study. And they did it thoroughly.

First, the contents of the cupboard were thoroughly mixed—treacle with the jam, and salt and pepper and mustard with the jam and treacle and sugar and tea and butter. Blake & Co. were not likely to enjoy any of the foodstuffs in the cupboard, plentiful as was the supply.

Then the coal was emptied into the table drawer, and into other receptacles of a like nature. After this Arthur Augustus and the chair were lifted on to the top of the table, and from this lofty eminence D'Arcy watched the further proceedings, which consisted of piling the chairs and fire-irons round him and his chair in a sort of pyramid from which his treacly features protruded weirdly.

Finally, the carpet was drawn up at the ends, and

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fastened by the corners with string round the table, and suitable inscriptions written in chalk on the pictures and on the mirror over the mantelpiece.

"There, that'll about do for a beginning," said Frank Monk, with satisfaction. "We'll just fill those slippers and footer boots with treacle and stuff, and then we'll get off."

"Ha, ha! Right-ho! What about Tom Merry's study?"

Frank Monk frowned, and then he shook his head.

"No; we'll leave that alone," he said. "It's rather a pity—we'll never get another chance like this for ages. But if you remember, Railton said old Gordon was booked for that study. We'll spare it for that reason. We won't add to the poor old chap's worries by ragging his new study, chaps."

"Phew! Never thought of that! Of course!"

"We've done enough to go on with," said Frank Monk briskly. "This will make it clear to these Saints that we're still in the business, and there's life in the old firm still."



With a spluttering bellow, George Alfred Grundy went for the smiling and trampling about the little shop, locked in a fierce embrace. "Oh, dear! Murphy in horror and"

And now we'll go while the going's good. We'll see poor old Gordon later—he's promised to look us up often."

"Yes, rather."

Frank Monk bowed to the wriggling, treacly Gussy, whose weird face just showed over the pile of fire-irons and chairs and other domestic articles.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" he called. "Farewell, sweet thing! Remember us to Blake, and tell him that when a giddy tree's pruned it grows stronger as a rule. We've been pruned by the loss of our pal, but we'll thrive none the less. And this is a bit of a start. Good-bye-e-e-e, old dear!"

Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle, gurgle!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Grammarians, now Frank Monk & Co. as of old—in the times before Gay arrived at the Grammar School—kissed their hands to the hapless Gussy, and took their departure, and the door closed behind them, deadening their chortles.

It had been a tragic afternoon for both Arthur Augustus and Gordon Gay. There had also been tragedy in it for Gay's faithful chums, but at least they had found no little compensation in ragging Study No. 6, and showing they were, though downhearted, still alive and kicking.

CHAPTER 8.
Out for Vengeance!

"HERE we are again!"

Monty Lowther made the remark cheerily as the Terrible Three, with Blake, Herries, and Digby, entered the gates of St. Jim's. All of the chums looked happy, and they felt happy. Blake & Co. had met the Terrible Three in Wayland as they anticipated, and Tom Merry, being in funds, had come to the rescue in that respect. They had rambled round the town, and had made various purchases—Herries some cornet solos from the music-shop, and some dog-biscuits for Towser from the grocers; Tom Merry a new pair of batting-gloves; Blake some picture postcards; Manners some new rolls of films; Lowther a supply of comic papers; Digby a copy of the "Magnet"—all had something to buy, and then, after tea at the bunshop, they had returned cheerily homewards.

"Here we are again!" remarked Lowther. "My hat!"



ing Gordon Gay with a ferocious rush. The next moment the two were dear me! Do please stop fighting, young gentlemen!" wailed Mother and alarm. (See Chapter 11.)

Wonder what dear old Gussy's been doing with himself all afternoon? If he was drenched through as you say, Blake, he'll have spent most of the afternoon changing his clobber, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was hard lines, though!" laughed Blake. "Still, it was the ass's own fault. If he hadn't gone back it wouldn't have happened. He wouldn't have fallen into the giddy hands of those Grammarians."

"We must make Mason and his pals sit up for that—Gay as well!" said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "Can't allow them to get their ears up like that!"

"Rather not!"

"Just as well that old chap happened along when he did!" said Blake. "They were going to put us through the mill, the fatheads! I say, I'm about ready for another tea, you fellows! Like to call in with us and have some, Tommy? We've got a fair stock in the study cupboard."

"Well, we don't mind if we do," grinned Tom Merry. "I'm beginning to feel peckish again myself."

"What-ho!" said Lowther.

They arrived at last at Study No. 6. Blake pushed the door open, expecting to be greeted by the dismal face

of Arthur Augustus. But for some moments after opening the door and his first look into the Study, Jack Blake did not even see Arthur Augustus' face, dismal or otherwise.

He just stood stock-still on the threshold of the study and blinked inside with eyes nearly starting from his head. There was a sudden series of gasps over his shoulder as his companions caught glimpses of the havoc.

"What—what—" gabbled Blake. "G-gug-good heavens!"

"Well, my only hat!" gulped Herries.

Digby gave a roar.

"Ragged!" he howled. "The blessed study's been ragged! Who on earth—"

"Who's done it?" gasped Blake faintly. "Oh, my only hat! What unspeakable outsiders have been at work here? What—"

Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle!

Blake nearly leaped out of his skin as that weird noise sounded scarcely a yard from him. He looked up, and then he gave another jump as he saw the decorated features of Gussy poking up from the pyramid-like structure on the table.

"Gussy!" he gurgled. "Gussy, you awful idiot! What—what—"

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry, staring. "Somebody's been making hay here, and no mistake, Blake!"

"The—awful rotters!" gasped Blake.

"Is this how Gussy amuses himself when you fellows are out?" asked Lowther blandly. "If it is, I must say I can't admire his giddy choice of amusements."

Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle, gurgle!

Evidently the hapless Arthur Augustus was trying to tell them something. Possibly he was begging them to release him from his predicament. At all events, Tom Merry was considerate enough not to waste any more time.

He hastened to the table and started to drag the chairs and things off it. Then he got out his pocket-knife and cut through Gussy's bonds.

A moment later the gag had been removed, and in a state almost of collapse, Arthur Augustus was helped down from the table.

"Gwoooogh!" he gurgled. "Gwoooogh! M-mum-mmm! Oh, bai— Gwoooogh! Jove! Gwoooogh!"

"Those beastly New House worms, I suppose!" growled Blake, eyeing the wreckage in great wrath. "This is beyond the limit, you fellows! We—we'll make those New House cads squirm for this."

"Gwoooogh!" gasped Arthur Augustus, scraping handfuls of treacle from his hapless features. "Gwoooogh! It wasn't the New House fellows at—gwoogh!—all!"

"Wha-at?"

"Then it was Cutts and those rotters from the Fifth!" gasped Herries.

"Not at all, deah boys!" wailed Gussy, hardly knowing what to do in his distress and dismal condition. "It was those—gwoooogh!—beastly Gwammarians!"

"What? Great pip! You don't say—"

"You mean those Grammar School bounders have been here?" yelled Tom Merry, in astonishment. "But how—"

"I tell you they have!" almost shrieked D'Arcy, getting his real voice back at last. "Gwoooogh! Look at me! I am in a feahful state, and I have suffahed tewwibly. Those wascals—those feahful wuffians—those scoundwels—"

"Tell us what's happened!" said Tom Merry. "Keep calm, old chap! You say the Grammarians have been here—"

"Yaas! Fwank Monk, those two Wootton wottahs, and Carboy came with Gay, you know. The wascals collahed me, and tweated me like this! Then they—"

"Oh, great pip!" ejaculated Lowther suddenly. "They may have been to our study, too. Come on, Tommy—quick!"

"Phew! Yes, rather!"

Tom Merry and Manners followed Lowther from the study with a rush. They were sorry for Blake & Co., but their sorrow was eclipsed by the dreadful fear that their own study had been treated likewise by the daring raiders.

They vanished, and Blake looked about him helplessly, his face crimson with wrath.

"This is too thick, Gussy!" he gasped. "Look at the state of the study, and it looks as if they've mucked up all the grub in the cupboard, too!"

"But look at me!" wailed Gussy. "Aftah suffewin' a dwenchin' at their hands, I have had to suffah still more indignity and injuwty!"

"Well, I expect you asked for it!" sniffed Herries wrathfully. "In fact, I shouldn't be surprised if it wasn't your silly gas that made them do it."

"Bai Jove!" Gussy almost choked; it was the last straw. "Bai Jove! You are a wotten, unsympathetic wottah, Hewwies! It was not my fault at all, you feahful ass! Look at me—look at this tweacle and stuff—"

"We can see it!" snorted Blake. "I bet Herries is right, and that you asked for it."

"Bai Jove! You—you—"

"But how long have the cads been gone?" demanded Blake. He gave a start. "My hat! I suppose they have gone by this—"

"Monk and his wotten fwiends have gone," said Gussy, his voice trembling with emotion. "But Gordon Gay has not! You see—"

"Gay hasn't?" yelled Blake.

"Wathah not! He is in Study No. 10, I expect," said Gussy indignantly, "and I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin' the moment I have cleaned—"

"You mean to say Gay's still here?" shrieked Blake. "In Study No. 10—"

"Oh, yaas! Of course! You see—"

"Come on!" yelled Blake. "We'll show him—we'll—"
He broke off and made a leap for the door. Digby and Herries were only a split second after him. They vanished, evidently bound for Study No. 10, and vengeance—if Gay was there to be avenged upon.

Arthur Augustus blinked after them. He realised that his chums were far from realising the full position yet. They naturally took it for granted that Gordon Gay had been the leader in the ragging of their study, and they wanted his gore. Not having giving Gussy the chance to explain, they were completely ignorant of the fact that Gay was now a member of St. Jim's, and that he had been placed in Study No. 10.

Blake & Co. had to learn that yet.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Gussy. "Howevah, that feahful wuffian, Gay, deserves a thwashin', and I intend to give him one if those fellows do not."

With that, Arthur Augustus hurried away to the bathroom for a much-needed wash and clean-up before seeking out Gordon Gay. It looked as if the Shell's new recruit was in for a very exciting time during his first afternoon at St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 9. Hard Lines!

"ROTTER!"

That, to put it very mildly indeed, was Gordon Gay's view of things.

The interview with Dr. Holmes was over, and his uncle was gone. Gay felt almost thankful to see him go. Much as he was attached to the breezy old Australian, Gordon Gay felt he could never forgive him for taking him away from the Grammar School, and pitching him into St. Jim's.

Gay had nothing against St. Jim's. He called it a "measly hole," and many other things as well, when referring to it to his chums, or in the hearing of the Saints. In the lofty view of the Grammarians, St. Jim's was little better than a lunatic asylum, when compared with the Grammar School, and its occupants were all howling idiots, useless alike at work and play. There was the general view—to hear them talk. But as the same view, judging from their expressed opinions, was held of the Grammar School by the St. Jim's fellows, there was no harm done.

But actually, Gordon Gay knew St. Jim's was a very fine school, just as was the Grammar School. There was little to choose between them, so far as scholarship and sport was concerned. Certainly St. Jim's was older—very much older indeed, which was often made much of by the Saints. At all events, Gay knew St. Jim's was a splendid school, and that the fellows there, with very few exceptions, were as decent as one could wish to meet.

Yet the Grammar School was his school. He had no desire to leave it to go to St. Jim's—far from it. His heart was heavy as lead as he thought of his chums, and of his prospects there—now gone for ever. Tom Merry & Co. might be the finest fellows in the world, but they would not make up for the loss of his staunch chums Frank Monk, and Carboy, and Lane, and the Wootton brothers. Gordon Gay gulped as he sat moodily in the armchair in Study No. 10, and thought the matter out.

His brain was still in a whirl, and he could scarcely believe that it had actually happened. Only that morning—and early in the afternoon—he and his chums had been planning fresh, gigantic japes against their rivals of St. Jim's—only that day, he and his chums had discussed their chances against the Saints in the forthcoming match on the following Wednesday.

Small wonder that he could scarcely believe that it was true.

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To the very last, Gay had hoped for the best—hoped that something would prevent the worst. But in the Head's study he soon knew it was all up. Dr. Holmes had not quite liked the situation. He usually did dislike mid-term arrivals. But in other ways he disliked the affair. Dr. Monk was a scholastic friend of his, for one thing. He had before doing anything else, tried his best to make peace between Mr. Gay and the Head of the Grammar School. He had talked to Mr. Gay—when he could get in a word or two edgewise—and he had tried to make it clear that he was labouring under a misapprehension—more than one misapprehension, in fact.

Dr. Holmes knew the conditions at the Grammar School well enough, and he had a high opinion of the authorities there. He tried to point out that there was no foundation for Mr. Gay's suspicions and claims. There was little, if any, bullying there, and the boys were kept under good control and supervision. What he had seen and experienced was nothing more than good-humoured rivalry and practical joking—which was perfectly true, excepting in the case of Lacy & Co.

But Mr. Gay was adamant. If he took it in, he ignored the explanations. In any case, the matter had gone too far—both Dr. Monk and Gay's uncle had lost their tempers

completely, and there was no hope of a reconciliation. Dr. Holmes even got on the phone and spoke to Dr. Monk, who, while stiffly raising no objections to Gay joining St. Jim's—which was scarcely his affair now—also made it quite clear that he refused to have him back at the Grammar School.

It was all up—Gordon Gay realised that clearly enough now. And his brow was dark and his heart heavy as he sprawled in the armchair in Study No. 10, and moodily reviewed the situation.

For a long time he remained there, deep in his gloomy, bitter thoughts, and then he got up at last. It was no good pulling a long face—no good weeping for his lost happiness, so to speak. After all, St. Jim's was not a bad school, and Tom Merry & Co. were very decent fellows. He would make the best of a bad job. After being leader and junior skipper at the Grammar School, it would be hard to knuckle under, and be one of the rank and file under Tom Merry. Still, that couldn't be helped. He was a St. Jim's fellow now, and he would play the game, and do his best for his new school. He almost laughed as he imagined himself scoring runs against the Grammar School, and taking part in ragging his old pals, and helping to dish them.

For some time he stared out into the quad, and strolled round the study, looking at objects of interest there, and then he started to unpack his books and other belongings. There was plenty of room in the study and he cleared part of the lower cupboard to make room for his things there. Then he started to make room on the bookshelves for his books.

It was past tea-time now, but he was not hungry—in fact he never thought of food. There would certainly have been a sensation in the dining-hall had he appeared there for his tea, for scarcely a fellow in the school yet knew of the change in his circumstances. He grinned as he yanked out a pile of books belonging to the Terrible Three, in order to put his own books together. The Terrible Three were booked for a surprise when they did get in.

He was right there, as it happened, and the surprise came quickly on the thought.

He was still grinning, in fact, when hurried footsteps sounded outside, and the door burst open, and Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners dashed in.

They had half-feared to find the room in a similar condition to Study No. 6. Instead, however, they found it almost as usual—excepting for the books and articles scattered about, and Gordon Gay.

The trio jumped as they sighted him on his knees before the bookshelves, with a pile of their books scattered around him on the floor.

"Well!" gasped Tom Merry. "Well, of all the—the check! Here he is—here's that rotter, Gay, anyway!"

"Caught in the act!" exclaimed Lowther.

"On the nail!" said Manners. "Just making a start with his giddy ragging, I suppose."

"Hold on!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Now, don't get excited, my infants. If you'll sit down and make your giddy selves at home I'll explain—"

Gordon Gay got no further. The Terrible Three, apparently, did not wish to sit down and hear him explain. They felt they knew without his explanation. It was clear

enough to them. After ragging Study No. 6 Gay had come along to Study No. 10 in the Shell to continue the good work—possibly even then Monk and the rest were ragging some other St. Jim's study.

That, at all events, was the impression and conclusion the Terrible Three arrived at.

Being utterly ignorant of what had happened, they naturally enough took that for granted.

As one man they went for Gordon Gay, and that astonished youth yelled as he went crashing over with the Terrible Three sprawling on top of him.

Gordon Gay had fully expected the Terrible Three to be astonished to see him there, but he had not expected them to take it like this. Being ignorant of the ragging of Study No. 6, Gay was naturally taken quite unawares.

He yelled and roared in astonishment as the trio of Shell fellows rolled on him and bumped him.

"Yaroooogh! Whoooop! Leggo, you burbling asses! I tell you—Yooop! Hold on!" he shrieked. "Lemme explain—"

"No need to explain, old top!" panted Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "You've gone a trifle too far this time, Gay, my lad. We've seen Blake's study, and if we hadn't turned up in time ours would have been the same."

"No doubt about that!" snapped Manners. "Give the cheeky owl socks! My hat! Jevver hear of such impudent cheek?"

"Yaroooogh!" Gay bellowed as Lowther crammed a handful of cinders down the back of his neck. "Yooop! Oh, you awful idiots! Don't; I tell you it's all right!"

"Yes; quite all right now," agreed Tom Merry breathlessly. "Very much all right, in fact. You're going back to that lunatic asylum you call a school wishing you'd never seen St. Jim's after this, old fruit. Give him socks! Hand that fives-bat over, Monty. Then we'll give him some glue and ink over his hair and chivvy!"

"And then we'll frog-march him downstairs and kick him out!" said Manners.

"Good wheeze!"

Bump!

"Yaroooogh!"

* Gordon Gay was turned over. Tom Merry began to bring the fives-bat into play.

Whack, whack, whack!

Gordon Gay howled with dismay and anguish. He was still howling when the door flew open again, and this time Blake, Herries, and Digby rushed into the study. As they took the situation in they gave three blood-curdling roars.

"Got him! Oh, good! The daring, cheeky rotter! Hold him!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hold him!" bawled Blake ferociously. "I'm going to make him wish he'd never left Australia! I'm going to make him wish he'd never been born, the fearful vandal! Our study—wrecked! Our grub all mucked up! Coal in the drawers, and—"

Words failed Blake, so he started in with actions. He sent Tom Merry sprawling, grabbed the fives-bat himself and set to work with a will, giving the hapless and unfortunate Gay the full benefit of his strong right arm.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Gordon Gay's voice rang out far and wide in tones of dire anguish. Blake was not in a mood to be merciful. He laid it on as if he were breaking coal. Gay struggled in the grasp of Manners and Lowther, but he struggled in vain.

It was not Gordon Gay's lucky day.

But an interruption came—fortunately, perhaps, for the new Shell fellow.

The door opened again, and this time it was Mr. Railton who looked in. He looked in, with an alarmed face, his alarm changing to anger as he saw what was "on."

"Upon my word! Boys—Blake—how dare you! Leave that boy alone! Blake—Lowther—Manners—Bless my soul!"

The deep, stern voice was enough—more than enough. Blake dropped the bat; Manners and Lowther leaped up as if electrified. Gay, gasping and panting as if for a wager, scrambled slowly and painfully to his feet.

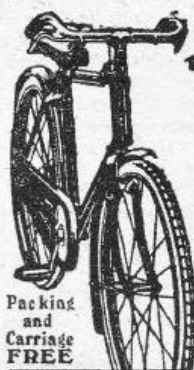
"What does this mean, Merry?" snapped the House-master severely. "How dare you assault Gay in this manner?"

"I—I—I—" Tom Merry stuttered and stopped. He could not explain the facts—the facts as he knew them, that is—very well. It might get Gay into serious trouble at the Grammar School.

But he was soon to learn that there was little risk of that.

"I demand to know what this extraordinary scene means, Merry!" snapped Mr. Railton. "I placed Gay into your study because I was under the impression that you and he were on friendly terms."

(Continued on next page.)



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"You—you placed him here?" gasped Tom, scarcely knowing what he said. "In—in this st-study?"

"Exactly. He will share this study with you in future. I am very sorry indeed that you have given him such a very unpleasant welcome, boys," said the Housemaster, eyeing the Terrible Three severely. "It is very unkind and most inconsiderate. In any case, if you objected to his being in this study you should have spoken to me instead of taking the law into your hands in this outrageous manner."

"Oh!" gasped Tom. "But—but—"

Evidently Mr. Railton had jumped to the conclusion that the Terrible Three objected to Gordon Gay being placed in Study No. 10. But none of the St. Jim's juniors realised that, of course. They were utterly bewildered and in the dark as to what Mr. Railton was talking about.

Only Gordon Gay guessed, and he could not help a feeble grin flitting over his dusty, heated features.

"You—you're making a mistake, sir," he ventured to gasp. "These fellows know nothing yet of my being sent here, sir, I fancy. And—and—"

"Oh! Ah! Yes, yes!" said Mr. Railton, his brow clearing. "I understand now. I was forgetting that it is unlikely they should know the facts. Merry!"

"Y-yes, sir!" gasped Tom.

"Were you not aware that Gay has been transferred from the Grammar School?"

"What-what? Oh! Oh, nunno, sir! M-mum-my hat!"

"He has joined us to-day, boys," said Mr. Railton, frowning somewhat. "And I have placed him in this study with you, Merry, Lowther, and Manners."

"Oh!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared at the Housemaster with goggling eyes.

"Doubtless," proceeded Mr. Railton, with grim irony, "Gay himself will explain the full circumstances of the transfer. But I shall be obliged if you will make him comfortable here, Merry, as I fear the change is a very unwelcome one for him. I was under the impression that he was a friend of yours, and that—"

"Oh! Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Tom. "He is, and—and we're awfully glad to have him. We—we didn't know anything about it—we've been out all the afternoon. We came back and found him moving books out of the bookshelves, and we—we thought—we thought—"

"They thought I was ragging the study," explained Gay, quite frankly. "It wasn't their fault, sir. It was just what any fellow would think, wasn't it?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes, of course," Mr. Railton smiled. "I understand now. Well, well. I trust that there will be no more of this, and that you will be great friends with Gay, boys."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"In the circumstances I will overlook this—this commotion," said the Housemaster; and he departed, his lips twitching a trifle.

Mr. Railton knew well enough of the keen rivalry between the juniors, and he quite understood now—or imagined he did. Fortunately he was blissfully unaware of what had taken place in Study No. 6.

When he had gone the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. looked at Gay.

"Well!" gasped Tom Merry. "Well, my only hat!"

"You—you silly owls!" gasped Gordon Gay, rubbing himself ruefully. "You—you burbling chumps! Ow-wow! You've nearly busted me with your silly games! Ow! Why didn't you make sure before you jumped on me like that? Ow-wow!"

"Make sure?" spluttered Blake heatedly. "What about our study? What about ragging our study, you boulder?"

"Eh? I haven't been ragging your study!" exclaimed Gay in astonishment.

"You haven't?" yelled Herries.

"Of course not. I came with my pals, and then Railton took me to the Head. After seeing the Head, I came straight here, and haven't been out of the study since."

"Then—then—" babbled Blake. "Who did do it? Our study's in an awful mess. It looks as if a cyclone has struck it—absolutely wrecked and mucked up. And we found poor old Gussy gagged and bound and stuck up on the table in a chair!"

"That's a fact," said Herries. "Can you explain that, Gay?"

Gay started.

"Oh!" he gasped. "It—it must have been Monk and the others! Phew! That's it! I left them talking to Gussy in the passage outside your study door, Blake. Gussy was telling them how lucky I was to be shifted from a measly lunatic asylum like the Grammar School, and Monk and Carboy and the rest were waxy about it, I expect."

"Phew!"

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"That's it for a pension!"

The juniors understood now. It wasn't Gordon Gay at all. It was his chums from the Grammar School. And obviously Gussy's tactless remarks had raised their ire, and led them to commit the outrage.

"Oh, that ass, Gussy!" gasped Blake. "Trust him to get himself into a mess and bring trouble on us. Oh, the—the—"

"But this beats me, Gay!" exclaimed Tom Merry, eyeing that dusty youth blankly. "What's it mean? Why have you been transferred from the Grammar School?"

Gordon Gay groaned and explained. Tom Merry & Co. stared and stared as they listened.

"So here I am," concluded Gay glumly. "Nice thing, ain't it? This is my giddy school now. And that awful idiot, Gussy, is as responsible for it all as much as anyone."

"Well, what if he is?" snorted Blake, not a little annoyed by the way Gay was taking it. "The blessed Grammar School is played out. It can't hold a candle to St. Jim's. You ought to be jolly thankful you've been sent to a decent, respectable school at last."

"Hear, hear!"

"Don't talk rot!" said Gay angrily. "Who wants to be sent to this measly show at all? I don't! I tell you—"

"Now, look here, Gay," said Tom Merry bluntly, "coming down to brass tacks the Grammar School is a good school, and so is St. Jim's. I'm sorry you've had to leave there and come here, for your own sake."

"And ours," grunted Blake.

"You ring off a minute, Blake," said Tom, who could feel for the late Grammarian leader. "It's hard lines to leave your pals, and it's hard lines to lose your job of skipper there, and all the rest of it. But it's done, and it can't be helped. It's up to you now to make the best of it."

Gordon Gay laughed, remembering now his resolution to put the past behind him, and make the best of the present.

"Right! I'm sorry, Tommy!" he said, taking a deep breath. "I mean to try my best to make the best of it, really. I forgot for the moment. I'm here, and I'll play up!"

"We'll expect you to," said Tom grimly. "You're a St. Jim's man, and it's up to you to play the game and back your new school up whether it's against the Grammar School or any other school, both in japes and in games. Got that?"

"Yes, I have," said Gay frankly. "Of course, I will. But it isn't easy to do it right away."

"I can see that," said Tom, smiling. "Well, I don't mind saying you're a jolly good man, Gay, and we're jolly glad to have you! You shall have a place in the team, of course. We can't afford to miss a good man when we've got one. And, as for the rest—well, if you want pals we're here, and so long as you play up you should be happy enough here."

"Yes, rather!"

"And now, what about some more tea, chaps?" said Tom briskly. "As your study's mucked up, you Fourth chaps had better stay here and join us. Had your tea, Gay?"

"Not yet," grinned the new St. Jim's fellow.

"Then you can join us, old chap. We've had one tea, but we're ready for another. As for Frank Monk and his lot—well, we'll deal with those merchants another time, and you shall help us, Gay."

"Oh!" gasped Gay, frowning. "Oh! Ah! Yes, of course!"

And the juniors started to get a belated tea ready in honour of the new St. Jim's fellow—Gordon Gay, late leader of the Grammarians. But Gay did not seem to enjoy the honour. In fact, he was looking anything but cheery. The thought of his chums at the Grammar School had not made him feel happy. And now Tom Merry's remarks about expecting him to help against them did not tend towards easing matters, either. Still, it was up to him to play the game, and he meant to do so. Whether he would be allowed to carry out his intentions was another matter, however.

CHAPTER 10.

Chums and Enemies!

"OH, blow!"

Tom Merry sounded exasperated.

It was two days after the sensation caused in the Lower School of St. Jim's by the advent of Gordon Gay.

Most of the fellows had expressed their satisfaction at having such an extremely useful recruit. Tom Merry especially was delighted. Gay was a very good man on the playing-fields and with the gloves, and in every other



A roar of rage went up from the crowd of juniors as Gordon Gay appeared. "Here he is!" "Here's the rotten traitor!" "Smash him!" "Now, Gay, you rotter!" cried Tom Merry, holding a paper in front of the astonished Gordon Gay. "What's the meaning of this?" (See chapter 12.)

respect. Moreover, he was a sunny-tempered fellow, with a cheery disposition, and had been exceedingly popular at the Grammar School. There was every prospect of his becoming popular at St. Jim's also—if he played up to expectations.

Certainly there were a number who viewed his arrival with suspicion and misgivings. Racke & Co. especially determined to run down the new Shell fellow at every opportunity, taking good care to do it behind his back. However, Gay had been a Grammarian, and a leopard cannot change his spots, they argued. Whether he was now a St. Jim's fellow or not he would be bound to back up his old school. Because he now wore a St. Jim's cap, it did not follow he would back up St. Jim's and be loyal to the school, they opined—especially as he did not disguise the fact that the change was distinctly unwelcome to him. In unguarded moments Gay forgot himself, and said things that gave that impression at all events.

As a matter of fact, the late Grammarian leader did not settle down well by any means. He could not forget the Grammar School, and the happy time he had spent there, try how he would. He was miserable, and he showed it. Nor could he help giving tongue to his feelings in the matter, despite his good intentions.

This, of course, did not help to make the suspicious fellows less suspicious. In their view Gay would let the school down at the first chance he got, either on the cricket-field or off it. And when it became known that Tom Merry was putting Gay in the team for the Grammarian match the doubters had a lot to say in the matter.

Moreover, Gay himself added to the doubts and misgivings by his actions in visiting the Grammar School. He was seen several times in the company of Frank Monk & Co. Tom Merry himself felt it was rather injudicious of him in that respect. Certainly it was hard lines on Gay if he could not see his old pals a little. None the less, it was causing uneasiness.

On this particular evening, however, Tom Merry had other matters to think about.

The junior skipper of St. Jim's stood on the School House steps, his sunny face wearing a frown. In his grasp was a parcel. The parcel was addressed to the printer in Rylcombe, and its contents were very important, for

the parcel contained the "copy" for that week's issue of "Tom Merry's Weekly," the bright little weekly paper published by the juniors of St. Jim's, and edited by Tom Merry.

Tom's only worry and anxiety at the moment was to get the copy to the local printers in time for press. That was a very important matter indeed, and accounted for the anxious frown on Tom's youthful features.

"Oh, blow!" he said again, to nobody in particular. "Of all the asses—"

"What's the matter now, Tommy?" asked Lowther, who, like Tom Merry, was in flannels and a blazer, and who came out and joined Tom on the steps just then. "Oh, hasn't the giddy copy gone after all?"

"That ass!"

"But—"

"That awful dummy!" gasped Tom, glaring across at the gates. "I might have known that frightful dummy would forget and let me down."

"Why, what—"

"Grundy!" spluttered Tom. "He said he was going to Rylcombe, so I asked him to call in at the printers for me with this. He said he would. He said he'd look in on his way out for the parcel. And he's gone—gone without it. The—the ass!"

"Sure he's gone?"

"Yes. Just spotted him vanishing through the gates! Isn't that like the duffer? The ass! The chump! The born idiot!"

Tom Merry waxed eloquent on the subject of Grundy's many deficiencies.

"Buzz after him on your bike!" grinned Lowther.

"I'll have to," grunted Tom. "That means holding up cricket practice. Oh, blow! Likewise dash! It's got to be in old Tiper's hands before six o'clock, though. I promised him on the phone that it wouldn't be a minute later."

"Plenty of time—heaps!" said Lowther. "Only just finished tea, Tommy. I'll slip over, if you like, on my jigger."

"No, you jolly well won't!" snapped Tom. "I can't go, either. The match comes off next week. We're going to give those cheeky Grammar School bounders the licking

of their lives this time to start the season, my lad. With Gay's help it'll be a walk-over, too. But we're taking no chances, and we're putting in every second we can at practice. And now that ass, that born idiot—"

"Why not look up someone else to take it instead of gassing?" suggested Lowther politely. "Hallo! Here's Gay! Looks as if he's going out."

And Lowther eyed Gordon Gay fixedly as that youth came out of the School House. Gordon Gay was not in flannels, and, so far as Lowther knew, he ought to have been.

Apparently Tom Merry had expected him to be ready for practice, also. He glared at the ex-leader of the Grammarians.

"Hallo! What's this, Gay?" he exclaimed. "Not changed yet?"

"Ahem! Not this evening," said Gay cheerily. "Sorry, old man! I'm booked for Rylcombe!"

"Why you—you—"

"No need to get excited," grinned Gay. "In any case, practice isn't so necessary for me as it is for you, old chap."

"Oh, isn't it?"

"Nunno. You see, being an old Grammarian, I can play cricket, and have been brought up to keep myself in trim always," explained Gordon Gay blandly. "Sorry, and all that!"

Tom Merry spluttered.

It pleased Gordon Gay to pull Tom's leg in that strain often—too often, in fact. It was rather a dangerous practice. Tom was getting rather tired of it. Gordon Gay simply would not, and apparently could not, forget that he was an old Grammarian, and he would not let his new comrades forget it.

But at times it got on Tom's nerves. Whether Gay was only joking or not, Tom objected to being reminded at all times that the Grammarians did things better and more efficiently than did the Saints. Really, it was very unwise and very trying for the captain of the Shell, who was anxious to believe the best of Gay.

"You—you ass!" he gasped. "Chuck that rot, Gay—I'm about fed-up with it!"

"Not so fed-up with it as I am, old chap!"

"You know you're expected to turn out for practice this evening," said Tom.

"Yes. But I've got an engagement, old bean."

"With your Gramamr School pals, I suppose?" Tom was unable to restrain himself from saying that.

"Not at all! It's a giddy engagement with the dentist," grinned Gordon Gay; "and I only wish I could attend cricket practice instead, I assure you. It's to have a thumping tooth stopped, and I should have gone last Wednesday, but that business of my shifting quarters sent it clean out of my mind. I can't let the man down a second time."

"Oh," said Tom, his face changing. "That's different, then; but you should have told me."

"Hadden't the chance! Only just had a phone message from old Tuke, the giddy torturer. He's just got to know I've changed schools, and asked me to turn up this evening. Sorry. But—"

"You'd better go, of course," said Tom, his face clearing. "Hope it won't be bad, old chap. Oh, good! That reminds me. Just hand this in to old Tiper, at the 'Rylcombe Gazette' printing office, will you?"

"Right-ho! Copy for that giddy rag of yours, what?"

"It isn't a rag, you ass—"

"Sorry—should have said mag," grinned Gay cheerfully, taking the parcel handed him. "Ta-ta! Mind you don't sit on your wicket. You know what you are, Thomas."

And with that final warning the irrepressible Gordon Gay hurried off, taking the precious copy for "Tom Merry's Weekly" with him.

"The cheeky ass!" snorted Tom, glaring after him. "Why can't he chuck his silly leg-pulling! I'm about fed-up with it!"

"Sure we can trust him with that copy?" said Lowther, with some anxiety. "You know what a fearful spoofer he is. And—"

"Of course!" said Tom, staring. "Why shouldn't we? Gay's a silly chump, but he's straight, and he knows how to play the game. This silly rot of his is only gas—he doesn't mean it, I suppose, though it gets my rag out. Anyway, let's get down to the ground. Hallo, here's Blake and his crowd!"

And joining Blake & Co. Tom Merry and Lowther went off to the cricket ground for the practice match. Though annoyed at Gay's absence, Tom realised it couldn't be helped, and he accepted Gay's explanation without question.

Meanwhile, Gordon Gay was hurrying to the village; unpleasant as his interview with Mr. Tuke, the dentist, was likely to be, Gordon did not wish to be late for the appointment, having already failed to keep it once.

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Just outside the village he almost bumped into Frank Monk, Carboy, Lane, and the two Woottons.

Gay frowned a little. Glad as he always was to see his old chums, he realised that it wouldn't do at all to be seen in their company too often. In fact, Gay was beginning to see that his friendship with them was making him decidedly unpopular at St. Jim's. The Racke affair had shown him the danger he ran, and more reasonable fellows than Racke had spoken out plainly about it.

But he returned his chums' cheery grins.

"Cheerio, Gay," said Frank Monk. "How goes it, old top? My hat! You're getting awfully thin, old chap!"

"Shockingly!" agreed Lane solemnly. "It's the awful grub they dish out at St. Jim's, you know. Regular pig-wash, I believe!"

"And he's getting rather a strained look about the eyes," said Carboy, shaking his head. "I do hope he isn't catching the general complaint there. Mental diseases are catching. I believe—especially feeble-mindedness! They're all lunatics at St. Jim's, and I feared Gay might catch it."

"You silly asses!" grinned the Grammarians' old leader.

"Cheese it! That's getting worked threadbare. As a matter of fact, my intellect's improved wonderfully since I left the lunatic asylum and came to St. Jim's."

"Why, you bounder—"

"Now, don't rag him," said Frank Monk, giving his chums a warning look on the sly. "We were just on the look-out for you, old fellow."

"You knew I was coming to the village?"

"Yes—you're going to the giddy dentist's, what?" grinned Frank Monk. "Old Tuke rang Adams up, and he told him you were at St. Jim's now, and Tuke said he'd ring you up there. See? So we looked out for you. How are things going, Gay?"

"All right," said Gay guardedly.

"Anything on?" asked Frank carelessly. "Those Saints up to any larks?"

Gay chuckled.

"My dear man, you can try to pump me until the cows come home, but you won't get anything out of me," he said cheerfully. "I'm a St. Jim's man now, and I mean to back my school up, so you can put that in your pipes and smoke it, once and for all. You fellows know how I feel about things. I didn't want to go to St. Jim's, but now I'm there I'm playing up for all I'm worth. You fellows can look out. If I get the chance to dish you I shall."

"Dear me!" said Frank Monk. "This is a very sad blow to us, friend Gordon. Alas, my p-poor brother! Gone to the bow-wows and turned on his p-poor old pals! Boo-hoo!"

"It's not as bad as that," chuckled Gay. "We're still pals, I hope; but at the same time we're giddy enemies where business is concerned. Got me?"

"Boo-hoo!" sobbed Frank Monk, taking out his handkerchief and mopping his eyes. "W-won't you come over to Mother Murphy's and have a last ginger-pop with us—for the last time, before we p-part for ever?"

"I'll come after I've delivered this giddy parcel at Tiper's show and been to the dentist's," grinned Gay.

"Do come now," begged Frank Monk, exchanging a curious wink with his companions. "Just one ginger-pop ere we part! Let the dentist wait, and old Tiper boil his head. What d'you want to see old Tiper for, anyway?"

"Nothing much, old bean!" smiled Gay. "But I'll put business before pleasure if you don't mind, dear men. I'll meet you over a ginger-pop in Mother Murphy's afterwards. Cheerio!"

And Gordon Gay hurried on with his parcel. Outside the printing office Mr. Tiper was standing, looking up and down the street. Gordon Gay handed him the parcel, telling him who had sent it, and then he hurried on to the dentist's surgery higher up the street and vanished inside.

Mr. Tiper glanced at the parcel, grunted, and, stepping into his office, he planted the parcel on the counter and returned to the doorway.

Frank Monk's eyes gleamed.

"Blow him!" he said, evidently referring to Gordon Gay. "I was hoping the ass would come to the tuckshop first to give us a chance to get our hands on that parcel. Now—"

"But what's the wheeze?" demanded Carboy. "I could see you'd some game on. But—"

"Didn't you spot that parcel?" said Frank Monk. "I spotted the label on it at once, and guessed what it was. It's the blessed copy for that awful rag those Saints publish—'Tom Merry's Weekly.'"

"Oh! Oh, I see! But—"

"If we can only get our hands on it for a few minutes we might do something," breathed Monk. "I'm going to show Gay and his new pals that the old firm's going strong, and that we can keep our end up better than ever. If only I could—"

Along the street came a youth wearing an inky apron

and carrying a basket-covered with a cloth. It was Mr. Tiper's youthful assistant, and Frank Monk guessed at once what Mr. Tiper himself had been looking out for.

It was his tea; evidently Mr. Tiper intended to work late, and had sent the youth for his tea from his home on the outskirts of Rylcombe.

The inky youth handed over the basket, and then at a word from his master he grabbed a big package of printed handbills and went off with them along the village street, evidently to deliver them to a customer.

"Phew! What ripping luck!" breathed Monk. "I bet the old chap will go into his private room behind the giddy shop for his tea—bound to. Oh, good! He has! Now for it!"

Mr. Tiper had vanished through the doorway leading into his private room which was behind the office—this being really more of a shop than an office. The door closed upon him, and, with a warning glance at his grinning chums, Monk crept softly into the shop.

The watching quartet fully expected him to grab the parcel on the counter and bolt with it. But Monk did not. With his eyes fixed on the inner door, and his ears strained for sounds, he rapidly untied the bundle of copy. He glanced hurriedly through it, with a grinning face, and then he suddenly took out one of the sheets of foolscap and crammed it into his pocket. Then he drew a spare sheet towards him, grabbed pen and ink from the counter, and started to write with feverish haste.

"Well, the nerry bounder!" breathed Harry Wootton, watching from the doorway. "I think I see his game now. You chaps keep cave in case Gay comes back—or that kid."

They kept cave; but they did not have to do so for long. After a few breathless minutes Frank Monk finished writing, hurriedly blotted what he had done, and then rearranged the copy and quickly wrapped up the parcel again, leaving it as before.

Then he stole out of the printing office, a gleeful grin on his face.

CHAPTER 11. Grundy Speaks Out!

"WELL?" His chums surrounded Frank Monk as he emerged into the street.

"All serene! I didn't do as much as I'd hoped to do," he grinned. "I'd hoped to fill the whole giddy number with new and more original stuff of my own. But I thought I'd better not risk it. Better to get a bit in safely than to get caught and have the whole jape mucked up."

"Yes, rather! You are a nerry bounder, Monk! If old Tiper had come out—"

"But he didn't," chuckled Monk. "He never does come out of his giddy lair, you know, until you've rung that bell on the counter umpteen times. I knew that! I just managed to get the 'Editorial' re-written, and then I thought I'd better get while the giddy getting was good."

"Ha, ha! Yes! But—"

"I fancy Tom Merry will open his eyes when he reads that 'Editorial'!" chuckled the new leader of the Grammarians. "He won't see it until the number's out, as old Tiper does the proof correcting just as he does with our mag. We'll try to collar some copies if we can. Dear old Gordon! He little thinks we've done him down after all. Let's go and drink his health in ginger-pop now. I expect he'll be turning up soon."

"Ha, ha, ha!" And the Grammarians went

along the street towards Mother Murphy's. As they passed the dentist's a well-known figure emerged. It was Gordon Gay, and he was smiling cheerily.

"All serene!" he grinned. "I went in in fear and trembling, but old Tuke says the giddy tooth doesn't need stopping after all. I tell you I was jolly glad to hear it. He just examined my molars again, and then pushed me off. Now what about that ginger-pop?"

They crowded into the tuckshop, Monk & Co. in just as high feather as Gay was, though their former leader little dreamed the reason. Inside the shop a burly junior was disposing of a ginger-beer, but he lowered his glass and glared as the Grammarians crowded in, followed by Gordon Gay.

"Cheerio, Grundy!" called Monk, for the fellow was George Alfred Grundy of the Shell. "Mind, or you'll turn that pop sour putting it near a chivvy like yours."

"Think you're funny, don't you?" snorted George Alfred, bestowing a glare upon Gordon Gay. "Hallo, Gay! Hobnobbing with those rotters again! I'm jolly well disgusted with you!"

"Good!" said Gay cheerfully. "Have another ginger-pop, old fellow—my treat?"

"I jolly well won't!" snorted Grundy. "Think I'm the fellow to allow a dashed traitor to stand me ginger-pop? Not likely!"

"Traitor!" gasped Gay. "Oh, my hat!"

"What else are you?" hooted Grundy. "A fellow who pals with the enemy is a rotten traitor in my opinion. I'm a plain fellow, and I speak as I find. I'm not the fellow to mince my words. I always speak my mind and let a fellow know just what I think of him."

"That explains why you get your head punched so often," said Gordon Gay. "If you're asking now—"

"I'd like to see you or any of your pals punch my head!" was Grundy's scornful answer.

"Bah! I'm blessed if I can understand Tom Merry putting up with it."

"That's because your intellect isn't up to it, old man. Don't try to understand anything. Don't attempt to work it out. Rest is what a feeble intellect requires."

"I want no cheek, Gay!" roared George Alfred. "I'm fed-up with you! If Tom Merry stands your cheek, I jolly well won't, I can tell you! What are you doing hanging about Rylcombe with these Grammar School worms now? What are you doing in here with 'em now?"

"Listening to a born idiot gassing at the moment," smiled Gay. "Sure you won't drink a ginger-pop with me, Grundy?"

"No; I'm blessed if I can drink pop with a fellow—"

"Try," urged Gordon Gay. "I'm sure you can if you try, old fellow. You're such a clever chap, Grundy. Here, let me help you."

And Gordon Gay brought up his flat hand and jerked the bottom of Grundy's glass, which he was holding a few inches below his face. The sudden jerk sent the ginger-beer full into the heated face of the great man of the Shell.

"Ooooooh!"

Grundy gasped and spluttered frantically, ginger-beer in his mouth, his eyes, and nose, and streaming down his rugged face.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monk & Co.

"Sorry!" said Gay. "But some went into your mouth, I hope."

"Groogh! Gug-gug-groogh! Oh, you—Grooogh!" gurgled Grundy, fairly dancing with rage. "Oh, you—you—"

Slamming the empty glass on the counter, Grundy gave a

Your Editor Says—

AND THE NEXT!

Another spanking FREE GIFT for you to-day, chums! Another next week; another to follow that, and so on—every Wednesday bringing with it one more to swell the wonderful collection you're building up! Isn't it just great? Trust the good old GEM to lead the way!

What better FREE GIFTS could my readers wish for than these magnificently produced picture cards showing MARVELS OF THE FUTURE on land, sea, and in the air? Never before has anything been attempted and carried out on such a scale as our great Free Gift scheme; and, naturally enough, its amazing and instantaneous success has broken all records!

This week we take a trip to Davy Jones' Locker, and are provided with a glimpse of a stupendous under-water craft—a veritable submarine battleship.

And then, following it up, comes a TWO HUNDRED MILES PER HOUR LOCOMOTIVE of the future, besides which even the mightiest of present-day expresses would be dwarfed to midget size. I know every one of my readers will want to add No. 5 to their set, so, if they haven't done it already, let me urge them once more to

ORDER NEXT WEDNESDAY'S "GEM" TO-DAY!

A really outstanding yarn from the pen of Martin Clifford tops the bill in next week's bumper programme. The title—

"CONDEMNED BY THE SCHOOL!"

will give you sufficient idea of the plot to know that it provides a powerful sequel to this week's story of Gordon Gay and the chums of St. Jim's. 'Nuff said!

Another budget of posers answered by the "Oracle"; an interesting article on the subject of the famous L.M.S. Royal Scot Locomotive No. 6,104; and last, but by no means least, a further gripping instalment of our serial will make next week's great FREE GIFT NUMBER one to be remembered! Don't miss it!

YOUR EDITOR.

pluttering bellow and went for the smiling Gordon Gay with a ferocious rush.

The next moment the two were trampling about the little shop, locked in a fierce and desperate embrace. Mother Murphy raised her hands in horror and alarm.

"Oh, dear me! Do please stop fighting, young gentlemen!" she wailed. "Master Monk, Master Carboy, stop them, please!"

"Certainly, ma'am!" grinned Frank Monk. "On the ball, chaps! Grundy needs cooling down a bit! Stand aside, Gay!"

Gay jumped aside as Frank Monk grabbed a syphon of lemonade and pointed the nozzle at Grundy, who was leaning against the counter, gasping.

Swoosh!

Lemonade shot from the syphon and splashed into Grundy's dripping face, and over his chest. Grundy roared with rage.

Just in time Monk placed the empty syphon on the counter and jumped back as Grundy rushed at him ferociously, lemonade and ginger-beer streaming from him.

But he was collared at once by the Grammarians, and he went down with a crash and a howl.

"Yarroogh! Oh, you—Groogh—Rotters!" he roared. "Why, I'll—I'll—Mum-mum-mmmmm!"

Grundy's spluttering yells ended in a queer gurgling sound as Carboy swiftly grabbed a jam-tart and plastered it over his mouth.

"Now we've stood Grundy a drink and a tart!" said Frank Monk. "But Mother Murphy's getting excited, I fear. As we've been appointed official chuckers-out, I think we'd better do our job before Grundy gets greedy and wants more."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy apparently did want more. He scrambled up, fairly seething with rage, but before he could recommence hostilities he was grabbed on all sides and rushed to the door. Gordon Gay opened it, and then Grundy went out with a rush, dropping in the streets outside with a bump and a howl.

He was up again in a moment, and again he went flying out, all arms and legs. This time he stayed out. He gathered himself together and tottered away, breathing out terrific threats, and mopping jam and crumbs and liquid refreshment from his features and clothes.

Gay watched him go with a rueful grin.

"More trouble for me when I get back!" he said, with a grim chuckle. "Blessed if I can get away from trouble, somehow! You silly Grammar School bounders have landed me in for it again!"

"Who are you calling names?" asked Frank Monk pleasantly. "Don't forget you've admitted yourself an enemy, Gay, old sport. For two pins we'd give you what we've just—"

"Pax!" grinned Gay. "I'm not hunting for more trouble. And we've not had our ginger-beer together yet. Let's have it, and then I'll get back."

They had their ginger-beer quite amicably together, and then Gay started back for St. Jim's, feeling not a little puzzled at the curious smiles on the faces of his old comrades as they parted from him. He was to learn what they meant later on.

Gay was rather expecting trouble when he got back—from Grundy. But the trouble came in a different manner from what he had expected. The practice match was over, and he found Tom Merry and his chums, Lowther and Manners, in Study No. 10. They eyed him grimly as he came in.

"So you've got back?" snapped Tom Merry.

"Yes, here I am, old dears, as large as life and twice as natural!" grinned Gay. "Grundy been here after me?"

"Yes. He's been here with his yarn. We pitched him out because he spoke a bit too plainly for our liking," said Tom. "He was raving, and is after your gore. But we've told him what to expect if he comes back again."

"Good! I'm not hunting for thick ears from Grundy!" chuckled Gay. "Did he—"

"He told us all about it," said Tom, eyeing Gay steadily. "You helped Frank Monk and his lot to chuck Grundy out of the tuckshop in the village, I believe, Gay?"

Gay started, and looked a trifle uneasy.

"Well, I did," he admitted. "But—"

"You backed your old pals up against a St. Jim's fellow!" snapped Tom. "It's not good enough! I suppose Grundy was cheeky to you—I expect he was. But that makes no difference. As a St. Jim's fellow you ought to have backed him up against outsiders. Instead of that you apparently helped to rag him, and then to pitch him out."

"Oh, crumbs! Well, I suppose I did," admitted Gay. "Still—"

"That sort of thing's got to stop, Gay," said Tom Merry meaningly. "The sooner you drop Monk and his pals the better. You can be friendly with them in the ordinary way, as we are. But this hobnobbing's got to stop. And if I

hear of any more of this backing up Grammar School chaps against your own men I shall call a meeting of the Shell and Fourth, and you'll be in for a batting. Got that?"

"Ye-es. But listen—"

"That's enough!" said Tom impatiently. "I want to hear no excuses, Gay—nothing will alter the facts. But you know what to expect in future."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Gordon Gay.

And he groaned deeply. But he did not attempt to make any excuses. He was feeling as fed-up as Tom Merry and Grundy. Life at St. Jim's was not turning out a bed of roses for Gordon Gay, though, had he only known it, the real trouble was yet to come.

CHAPTER 12.

Treachery!

"GOT 'em?"

Tom Merry asked the question cheerily. It was some days later, and Tom was standing on the School House steps, chatting with Blake & Co. and several other fellows. But it was to Monty Lowther that he addressed the question.

Lowther had just come in from the village, having cycled over immediately after tea.

It being publication day of the "Weekly," Tom had sent Lowther to the printer's in the village in the hope of getting a few copies. In the ordinary way they should have been sent altogether to St. Jim's by Mr. Tiper. But for some reason or other they were late, and Lowther had been dispatched to discover why, and to get a few copies to be going on with.

"Got 'em?" repeated Tom, as Lowther came up the steps, removing his cycle-clips as he did so.

"Got a couple of copies," said Lowther breathlessly. "Old Tiper says he'll send the rest this evening by the giddy boy. Here you are!"

He took two copies of "Tom Merry's Weekly" from his pocket and handed them over.

"Haven't looked at 'em, but Tiper says they're O.K.," said Lowther. "I say, I spotted that rotter Monk and his pals hanging round the printer's. Up to some game, I'll be bound!"

"Blow them!" said Tom.

He hastily turned the pages of his famous "Weekly," eager, naturally enough, to see his own effusions. His glance fell upon his Editorial. It was there, all serene, though what—

Was it there? Tom Merry blinked and blinked at it in growing wonder as his eyes started to scan the printed lines. Then he gave a roar.

"Here, what's this? What the thump? Oh, great pip!"

"What's the matter now?"

Tom did not answer for a moment. He seemed to be struggling for breath as he read the Editorial through from beginning to end. Then, with another roar—a ferocious roar this time—he threw down the copy of the "Weekly" and fairly danced upon it.

"What the dickens are you playing at, Tommy?" demanded Jack Blake. "Bats in your belfry? A screw suddenly come loose in the top story? Or is it the sight of your giddy literary work?"

"Look at it!" shrieked Tom, grabbing up the paper and shoving it before Blake's nose. "Look at my Editorial—or what should be my Editorial! Look at it!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Shut up!" snapped Blake.

He started to read the "Editorial," and as he read, his eyes opened wider and wider. For the "Editorial" was certainly a curious one to have come from Tom Merry's pen. It read:

"EDITORIAL.

"A CONFESSION.

"It is with a sad heart that the Editor of 'Tom Merry's Weekly' takes up his pen this week, dear readers. For terms now it has been his task and torture to address his amiable readers in this column—readers who, as he is well aware, are brainless idiots and hopeless dolts, little less removed from imbeciles than he himself; for terms he has blown his own tin trumpet and shut his eyes to the glaring facts that St. Jim's is little more than a lunatic asylum, and that its hapless inmates are in urgent need of strait-waistcoats and padded cells; for terms he has, with his tongue in his cheek, praised their prowess on cricket field and footer field, in swimming-pool and on the river, though well knowing them too hopelessly incompetent even to play marbles or hopscotch, that their sporting abilities would disgrace an infant school, and that in japes and schemes they are feeble fumblerers and blithering bunglers; for terms, alas, your Editor has realised all this, knowing that he himself was equally incompetent either to lead his fellow lunatics, or to edit a magazine for sap-headed tadpoles. All this your Editor now humbly and contritely confesses, for the time

has come when the truth must be told to the world. A new era has dawned for St. Jim's, a new star has arisen on the horizon. In despair the authorities have appealed to the neighbouring Grammar School, and that public-spirited school, out of deep pity and compassion, has supplied St. Jim's with a new leader, who will teach the unfortunate Saints how to play football and cricket, and, it is devoutly hoped, put ginger and life into our dead and played-out community.

"Your sad and contrite Editor,
"THOMAS MERRY."

As Blake read that extraordinary "Editorial" aloud, his voice becoming more and more emotional as he proceeded, gasps and ejaculations of amazement and anger came from his hearers.

"Oh, gweat Scott!" mumbled Arthur Augustus, in horror. "Does it weally say that, Blake?"

Blake looked at the hapless Tom Merry with eyes nearly starting from his head.

"You—you didn't write that—that stuff, Tom Merry?" he yelled.

Tom Merry shook his head, dumb for the time being. He felt as if the whole world was tumbling around his ears. His startled chums grabbed at the papers in turn and read that amazing "Editorial," anxious and yet almost dreading to read it with their own eyes.

It was staggering. "Did I write it?" stuttered Tom Merry at last. "Did I write it, Blake? You awful dummy! Of course I didn't write it! D'you think I'm absolutely potty? D'you think I'm the helpless imbecile that—that awful 'Editorial' says I am? Oh, my hat!"

"But—but—how—what—where—why—"
"Can't you see?" shrieked Tom Merry, dancing with rage. "Can't you see what it means? Those beastly Grammar School bounders must have got hold of the copy and substituted that awful 'Editorial' for mine! Can't you see? It's the work of a dashed traitor—that howling rotter, Gordon Gay! I asked him to take that copy to the printer's in Rylcombe—gave him the parcel, little dreaming what he would do. Oh, what—what a born idiot I was to trust the worm!"

"Bai Jove!"
"Well, my only topper!" gasped Blake. "You—you were a blithering idiot, Tom Merry! That must be it!"
"I know it is!" groaned Tom. "The cad's let us down. Most of the fellows said he would sooner or later, and I wouldn't listen to 'em. His yarn about going to the dentist was all spoo! And we know he was with Monk and his old pals in the village. Didn't he go in Mother Murphy's with them when Grundy was there? And didn't he back them up against Grundy? Oh, the—the reptile!"

There were roars of wrath from Tom's chums as they understood—or imagined they did.

By this time quite a number of fellows had gathered round, and the two copies of "Tom Merry's Weekly" were handed round and read before Tom Merry was aware of it. The "Editorial" brought howls of laughter from some, but most of the juniors were furious and savage. Like Tom Merry and Blake, they knew only too well how serious the situation was. If the Grammarians once got a copy—and doubtless they would if they could—it would be all up. St. Jim's would never hear the last of it—that awful "Editorial" would be circulated round both the Grammar School and St. Jim's, and the Grammarians would learn it off by heart and use the phrases as deadly weapons against their rivals.

It was too awful for words.
Tom Merry saw a dreadful disaster facing him.
The Grammarians had already scored by getting that "Editorial" published in the "Weekly," but if the papers were circulated it would be a crowning blow for Tom Merry & Co.

As the chums of St. Jim's stood helplessly grinding their youthful teeth with rage a newcomer appeared on the scene. It was Gordon Gay, and a roar went up as he appeared.

"Here he is!"
"Here's the rotten traitor now!"
"Smash him!"
"Pulverise him!"
"Slaughter him!"

A score of angry juniors closed on the astonished Gordon Gay.

"Here, what's this mean?" he demanded in alarm.
"You've got the cheek to ask that question?" roared Tom Merry. "Here, gimme one of those dashed papers! Who the thump's got them? Oh, good!" he added, as Blake handed him one. "Collar the other, for goodness' sake, before the world knows! Now, Gay, you rotter! What's the meaning of this?"

Gordon Gay jumped as his eyes ran down the precious "Editorial."

"M-mum-my hat!" he gurgled. "Oh, what a giddy

scream! Who was ass enough to shove that in, Tom Merry? You?"

"Why, you—you—"
"Smash the grinning rotter!" roared Grundy. "Here, lemme gerrat him!"

"Hold on!" gasped Tom Merry. "Never mind Gay now—there's no time to be lost. We've got to get hold of every one of the copies printed somehow, and destroy them. Come on! Get your bike, Blake. Come on—sharp!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah! Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

The "deah boys" did run. They dashed helter-skelter round to the cycle-shed, and in a matter of seconds the Terrible Three, with Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were racing hard for the village, hoping against hope that they would be in time to collar all the copies printed before the Grammarians could chance to get hold of one. They knew only too well the ruthless ingenuity of Monk & Co.

They vanished in a cloud of dust.

Scarcely had they gone through the gates, however, when Racke of the Shell, who had been an interested and grinning spectator of the scene on the steps, turned to Gerald Crooke.

"Now's our chance to put a spoke in Gay's wheel!" he breathed. "Those cads are going to try to get all the copies of that silly rag before the Grammarians can collar any. But they won't if we can help it. Come on—quick!"

There was an interesting fight proceeding on the steps between the indignant George Alfred Grundy and Gordon Gay, but Racke and Crooke did not stay to witness it. Arriving at the door of the prefects' room, Racke peered inside. Then he chuckled.

"All clear!" he said. "Come inside, Crookey, and listen by the door. Give me the wink if you hear a prefect or a beak coming. Here goes!"

It was a risky proceeding Racke contemplated, but he did not hesitate in his eagerness to put "a spoke in Gay's wheel"; moreover, he had more than one score to settle with Tom Merry & Co.

Crossing to the telephone, Racke was soon in touch with the Grammar School. Somewhat mystified, Crooke heard him ask for Lacy, and heard part of his conversation with that shady youth. When Racke replaced the receiver at last he was smiling cheerfully.

"Well?" asked Crooke, a trifle scared. "What's the game? Oh! You've put Lacy up to dropping the hint to Monk and his pals?"

"Exactly!" smiled Racke. "When Tom Merry and his pals return with the bundles of the giddy 'Weekly,' they'll find Monk and a crowd of Grammarians in ambush in the lane. That's the wheeze I've passed on to Lacy, anyway, and if those fellows are slippery enough it'll come off beautifully. Lacy seemed quite pleased to help—like me he's glad of a chance to get his own back. And now let's— Oh!"

Racke jumped as he noticed a weedy, bespectacled figure in the doorway. It was Herbert Skimpole, the scientific genius and champion bore of the Shell.

"Ah! I imagined nobody was in here," said Skimmy, blinking in at the two. "I fancied I heard the telephone-bell, and I wondered if anyone was in to answer it, my dear fellows. I am exceedingly glad, however— What! Ah! Oh!"

Racke gave him a push, and Skimpole sat down with a bump, the heavy volume he carried banging to the floor. Racke walked out with Crooke grinning cheerfully. He had feared for the moment that Skimmy had overheard them, but he realised now that Skimmy had merely heard the tinkle of the bell as he had replaced the receiver, and had looked in to see if anyone was there.

(Continued on next page.)



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With his chum the humorous Racke walked out again, hoping to see the end of the Grundy-Gay fight. But both Grundy and Gay had vanished from the School House steps, likewise the crowd. Evidently someone in authority had put in an appearance and stopped the fight. So Racke and Crooke strolled down to the gates to await developments, if any, of their little scheme.

CHAPTER 13.

* The Grammar School Scores !

"W E'RE lucky!" breathed Tom Merry.
"Jolly lucky!" said Blake thankfully.
"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry & Co. agreed that they had been very lucky indeed.

The chums of the School House had arrived at the printing office in fear and trembling. Knowing Monk & Co. as they did they feared the worst—feared that by some dodge or other the scheming Grammarians would manage to get hold of some of the copies—possibly by bribing the printer's boy, or some other way.

But the Grammarians hadn't. The printer vowed that only the two copies Lowther had taken had left his office, and his assistant said the same, adding that neither had even left the office since the copies were run off the machine.

It was a great and glorious relief to Tom Merry & Co.

Certainly the Grammarians had scored in getting that dreadful "Editorial" into the paper at all. But that was the limit of their success. They would never have the pleasure of seeing the result of their handiwork. The two copies already dished out were in the Saints' possession, and they would be destroyed together with the whole issue. Tom Merry determined the whole bundle should be taken to Study No. 10 and solemnly burned there.

They were not counted and tied up when the juniors arrived at Mr. Tiper's. But after a somewhat lengthy wait, all were ready and the bundle tied up and handed over.

Then, with the precious bundle tied on the carrier of Tom Merry's bicycle, the juniors started back for St. Jim's.

They were still in a state of seething wrath, though deeply thankful that things had not turned out worse. All agreed that they might easily have done, and that luck had been with them.

"But we'll boil that cad Gay in oil for this," said Tom Merry, his brow dark. "Blessed if I can understand the fellow at all. I used to think him an awfully decent fellow—one of the best, in fact! His shift from the Grammar School seems to have turned his silly head completely."

"Yaas, wathah! It's a gweat pity!"

"It is," said Tom. "I'm rather sorry for the fellow myself—he's awfully cut up about it, and seems as if he can't settle down at St. Jim's. I wish he would, and had played the game, for he's a good all-round man."

"Rot!" said Blake. "Piffle! I don't feel sorry for the worm at all! I should have felt sorry for us, though, if his rotten scheme had come off properly. I'm beginning to think that Racke was right the other day, after all. Grundy certainly was—Gay admitted that. But this is real treachery—he's let us down badly, and he deserves all he's going to get."

"Well, he does," said Tom, setting his lips. "And we'll see he gets something that he'll remember. Dash it all, we can't have a traitor among us, giving us away like this. Fancy him handing that copy to his pals before—What's that?"

"Only a bunny," said Blake, glancing carelessly into the hedge whence the rustle had sounded. "As I was saying—"

Blake never got the chance to repeat what he had been saying, for in that instant the attack came, swift and overwhelming.

There was a clatter of falling machines—a chorus of startled yells and bumps. Then the Grammarians were swarming over the Saints. There were at least twenty of them, and resistance was hopeless from the first, though Tom Merry & Co., realising what a calamity had befallen them, fought like Trojans.

The roadway swarmed with figures, struggling amidst the fallen machines.

"Give in, you cripples!" called the voice of Frank Monk cheerily. "You're outnumbered and outflanked! Here us smile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammarians did smile—loudly—as the desperate resistance of Tom Merry & Co. was slowly overcome, and one by one the hapless Saints were trussed up like chickens with cord the enemy had provided themselves with.

"Oh, you—you rotters!" panted Tom Merry, as he lay flat on his back in the roadway, with Frank Monk seated on his chest and Carboy on his legs. "You must have known we were coming this way. What are you after, you cads?"

"Only a little bundle of rags," smiled Monk. "Just a pile of rubbishy papers. Have you found it, chaps? Oh, good! That's it!" he chuckled, as Harry Wootton untied the bundle from the carrier of Tom Merry's bike. "Hear us smile again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you—you cads!" spluttered Blake. "Who put you up to this? Who told you we were bringing that bundle to St. Jim's just now?"

Frank Monk chuckled.

"That would be telling," he grinned. "A little bird told us when to expect you this way, old dears. We got here just in time. Awfully kind of you to bring that bundle along like this. But we're not going to be selfish. We'll divide the copies of your giddy rag, and distribute half at the Grammar School, to be sent back to St. Jim's. Possibly we'll send them separately to various fellows at St. Jim's to be quite sure of everybody seeing one. Such valuable contributions should be circulated far and wide—especially Tom Merry's 'Editorial.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you—you awful villains!" gasped Tom. "Let us go now, anyway. But—but what's this?"

"This" happened to be a farm-cart with high rails at the sides, evidently used for carting cattle to market. The hapless Saints soon knew what it was to be used for now. Obviously, the Grammarians had their plans cut and dried. Despite the wriggles and pleadings of Tom Merry and his luckless companions, they were yanked to their feet, and then their faces were daubed with mud from the ditch, and weird-looking lengths of cardboard were wrapped round their waists and tied there with string.

"Here, you awful rotters!" yelled Blake. "What are these things, you cads?"

"Strait-waistcoats," explained Frank Monk. "According to Tom Merry's 'Editorial,' they're necessary articles of attire for St. Jim's fellows. That cart is your padded cell on wheels. We mustn't risk you getting violent and injuring yourselves."

"Oh, you—you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The seven St. Jim's fellows were lifted into the cart amidst howls of laughter from the Grammarians. There was a grinning yokel at the horse's head, evidently pressed or bribed into service by the raggars.

"Ta-ta!" said Frank Monk, blowing kisses at the almost weeping St. Jim's juniors. "By the way, we practically forced that driver to take on the job, so no good blaming him, old dears. But you know how to play the game, don't you? Good-bye, bluebells! Good-bye loonies! Who's top dog now?"

"Grammar School!" howled Monk's followers; and then followed by the yells and cat-calls of the Grammarians, the cart rumbled away towards St. Jim's with its cargo of "loonies."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The almost hysterical laughter of the Grammarians died away, and Tom Merry & Co. groaned in deep bitterness of spirit as the farm-cart rumbled on towards St. Jim's. It was a sad homecoming indeed, and the thought of the bundle of copies of "Tom Merry's Weekly," safe in the enemy's hands now, nearly caused Tom Merry and his luckless chums to weep salt tears of woe.

(Continued on page 23.)

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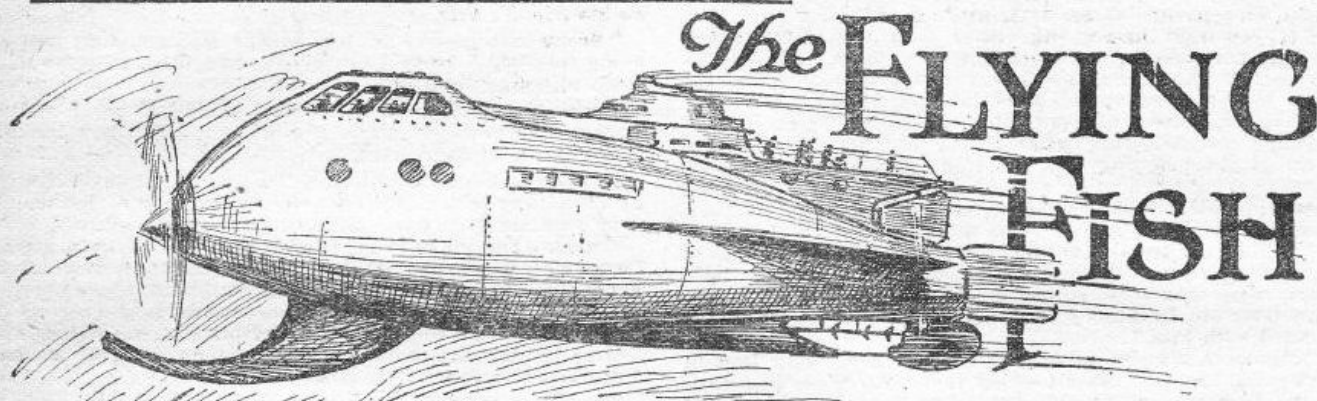
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THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

RODNEY BLAKE, a stocky youngster, whose one ambition is to follow in the footsteps of his father, Adrian Blake—a special news correspondent now out of England on business for his paper—is spending a few days with

DR. FRASER, prior to joining the staff of the "Sun."

Together with his chum,

DAN LEA, a stalwart son of Devon, Rodney is strolling along Littleworth Cove when he sees a strange-looking craft manned by foreigners which resembles an airship and a boat combined.

PRINCE ALEXIS KARAGENSKI, the ship's commander, informs Rodney that there is a serious case of illness on board and asks for the services of Dr. Fraser. The doctor goes aboard and some time later Rodney and Dan are captured by Prince Karagenski's men and taken on to the ship as prisoners. The strange craft, to the amazement of the two chums, then rises after the fashion of an airship and speeds them away. During the journey the Russian prince informs Rodney that the power and riches of the Karagenskis had been torn from them by the revolution, and in consequence he was having built a fleet of Flying Fish with which he hoped to conquer the world. Eventually reaching the "Valley of No Escape," the headquarters of this amazing menace to the world's peace, Rodney and Dan meet Prince Karagenski's son, Sacha, whose willingness to be friendly makes the two chums feel more at home than they might otherwise have done in such sinister quarters.

(Now read on.)

Shut in from the World !

HOW very sinister those quarters were the next few days were to show Rodney and Dan. For the first time, while housed in a thick-walled, lowering castle on the edge of a dense pine-forest, with the busy valley spread out far below in full view, the two lads found opportunity to study the position and to learn more about the huge conspiracy into which they had been so unexpectedly plunged.

At home in England, amid the calm and freshness of the Devon moorlands, such a conspiracy would have seemed ridiculously impossible, a wild dream incapable of ever becoming real. Yet, here in the Valley of No Escape, it was all too real indeed. They had already had proof of how powerful a weapon these people had forged in the Flying Fish, which had brought them here. On this, its test voyage, the craft had proved itself practically perfect. The heads of the conspiracy, in the hearing of the lads, made no secret of their satisfaction. Work on the remaining nineteen was proceeding at fever pitch.

Of this the lads saw nothing. The high-walled area of the works, guarded at its half-dozen gates by Colonel Stangerfeld's uniformed men, was the one part of the valley into which they were not allowed to penetrate. Otherwise, their movements were unwatched and uncontrolled. They could roam the valley from end to end. Possibly the heads of the conspiracy knew they would realise at once how impossible it was to think of escaping.

Indeed, it had been well named the Valley of No Escape. Rodney and Dan were at first inclined to laugh at the idea, but they were soon to see how true it was. By considerable feats of engineering the valley had been deliberately cut off from the outside world. The swift-flowing river, which cut it in half east and west, entered and left the valley through tunnelled locks, which were heavily fortified and guarded. There was another outlet to the north, and by this way entered the bulk of the material which came daily into the valley on carts and automobiles. It was a winding pass between precipitous heights, its entrance and entire length so strongly guarded that no one could hope to enter or leave by it unseen.

Nor was it possible to escape from the valley by way of the peaks which surrounded it. The lads, during their walks together had examined these. They found that, wherever once it might have been possible to cross them into the outer world, dynamite had blown away the ground, so that nothing but a precipice yawned below.

It was easy now to understand how the thousands of workmen in the valley submitted, perforce, to their imprisonment and the brutality of their guards. The last were of mixed German and Russian nationalities.

The thousands of workers, the lads discovered from Sacha Karagenski, were political prisoners of the Soviet Republic, wretched half-starved creatures hounded to and from their long hours of enforced labour under the whips of their brutal guards and the threat of death.

Not once, but many times, as the days began to pass swiftly, the lads would hear the ragged sound of rifle shots, and indeed themselves actually witnessed the guards doing to death some protesting convict victim.

Meantime, up in the castle, the heads of the conspiracy lived in luxury. Far into the night, feasting and carousing, they boasted of the day which was soon to dawn, when the civilised world—and especially the British Empire—would be their footstool, on which they would trample at their will! They were a strangely mixed community, obviously overshadowed by the hunchbacked and horrible Boronov, like a grey wolf with his jagged, unclean teeth eternally agn.

It was evident that the others feared him, excepting, perhaps, Von Roden, whose hatred of Britain always leaped from his tongue when he caught sight of the two English lads. He and Boronov were hand in glove.

The Greek, Mirapoulis, and the Egyptian, Abbas Fazil, were not of so much importance. They had put large sums of money into the conspiracy, in return for what they could get out of it when it succeeded.

Prince Karagenski, so Sacha explained, had come into the thing for the reason that he had no money and was in desperate circumstances. It was he who had first discovered Ashton, the English inventor of the Flying Fish, trying in vain to sell his invention as a commercial vessel. But, because he was too poor to afford the construction of a model, he had only met with rebuffs. The prince, seeing something in the idea, had got in touch with Mirapoulis, and persuaded the latter to find the money.

From that, the model being an amazing success, Ashton's invention had become the basis of the present conspiracy, and the people who knew of it were banded to secrecy. Of all of them, Sacha's father was least in favour of the use being put to the invention. But, once involved in it, withdrawal was impossible. Boronov and his countless Soviet spies had ruled with a rod of iron. So far, apart from Rodney's father, no outsider had obtained the slightest inkling of the threat lurking in that distant Caucasian valley.

Ashton, the inventor, once he had discovered to what use his invention was being put—a use which had carefully been kept secret from him till the first Flying Fish had been completed—had tried to escape and tell the truth to the world. He had been caught in the nick of time, but had only been recaptured after being badly wounded. And since, for certain important reasons, they wanted him restored to health in order to help in the construction of the remaining vessels, they had called in at Tidewell for a doctor.

It was natural that, once they had begun perforce to settle down in the Valley of No Escape, the two lads should try to get a word with Dr. Fraser, whom they had not seen at all since that night when the three of them had been forcibly carried off from Tidewell in the Flying Fish. The doctor, they early discovered, was not quartered—as they were—in the castle. He and his patient were in a largish stone building on the far side of the town, used as a hospital.

They had made several attempts to see him there, as the days went by, but without success, being refused admittance by the armed guards on the hospital gates, the chief of

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,108.

whom was a particularly obnoxious one-eyed giant named Wummburg, a fellow-countryman and friend of Kraft. It was evident that Wummburg, influenced by Kraft, regarded them with particular malevolence.

"If you want to see the doctor," he said, "you get a written permission from Herr Boronov. And I don't think you get it. Now, come no more worrying me. Peoples what come here making worries sometime gets shot by accident."

That, of course, was a foolish threat, at which Rodney laughed, remembering what Sacha Karagenski had said about Boronov holding him as a hostage to compel his father to abandon his campaign against this plot. Often, in those days, Rodney and Dan talked together of the former's father, where he might be and what he might be doing.

"If I'd only been wise enough to open that packet Lord Braxton gave me," he was saying one late afternoon, "I'd know more than those rotters do up at the castle. And they keep poor old Braxton shut up so tightly that one can't get a word with him."

"Maybe that's just as well, Mister Rodney," said Dan in his cautious way. "Seems to me that, in a place like this, least said means soonest mended. And so we do know Lord Braxton have been disobliging enough to them at the castle to say nothing about what that packet did tell. So, the packet being lost for good, nobody's going to know the truth from that, anyway."

All of which was correct enough. The lads had learnt only this morning, through Sacha, that Lord Braxton, confined since his arrival to a suite of rooms and his own company in a wing of the castle, had undergone a long examination as to the contents of that packet. Boronov and his friends had done their utmost, by threats of torture, to try and force the millionaire to divulge what Adrian Blake had written to him. But he had stubbornly refused, denying that he knew where Adrian Blake was, or anything about him.

So there the matter stood, it seemed, and the best thing was to be glad that the packet, and its secret, had been fortunately lost at sea. Still, aware now that his father was actually alive, Rodney would, naturally, have given a great deal to know where he was and what he was doing.

"He may, of course, have actually reached London by now," he said to Dan, as, in the fast-falling dusk, they were making their way across the bridge over the river to return to the castle.

Sacha had left them a few minutes since to join his father in the big wireless offices near the gates of the works. And, friendly as they were with Sacha by now, it was only when they were without him that Rodney and Dan felt quite safe to discuss such matters as this.

"I doubt that!" he said. "For this reason, Mister Rodney. Us being with that Russian chap, I didn't feel like saying anything to you till now. But before we came away from the castle this afternoon I heard the prince and that Boronov and Von Roden talking, as I was passing the library door. It was about some wireless message and your father. Seemed to me they'd heard something important about Mister Blake; but I couldn't quite catch what, and that Kraft came creeping along at the minute, wanting to know why I was hanging about."

"So you didn't really hear anything definite?" questioned Rodney eagerly.

"Only there'd been some message from outside that seemed to be important, as if it told them more than they'd known before. Seemed, anyhow, they knew he wasn't in England."

"I hope they haven't caught him!" frowned Rodney, and flung out a little gesture of impatience. "It does seem all wrong, doesn't it, Dan? There's father somewhere outside, and here we are, right inside and cut off from him, with no chance that I can see of ever being of any use. What on earth can we do?"

Standing there in the swift-falling blackness of night, the question seemed unanswerable. Cut off from the outside world by those towering peaks, the only outlets filled with men armed to the teeth, no prison could have been stronger. On the one hand, dark and drab, hunched this town of slaves, as safely imprisoned as themselves. On the other hand, noisy with the clanging of machinery, and lit by the flares of furnaces stretched the giant works, the docks of the growing Flying Fish, the factories manufacturing bombs and poison gas. What was to prevent that grim shadow from sweeping over the world—a world which would probably laugh if it were told such a shadow existed?

The Rescue in the Mist!

IMPATIENTLY Rodney turned away from the distant glare of those sinister works, and, with his friend, began to take the road through the dark town towards the castle. To the darkness of night had now been added a mist which made it difficult for them to see their

way. The houses on each side of the road were silent, though now and again a furtive figure could be seen entering or leaving them. Suddenly Dan laid a detaining hand on his friend's arm.

"Seems curious-like to me, Mister Rodney, that we be being followed," he said cautiously; and for a moment they stood still and listened.

Unquestionably, some little way behind them, footsteps were moving softly through the mist, which had now become thick like a white blanket.

In the next moment, however, their attention was attracted by something which happened in an opposite direction. A door was suddenly flung wide, and a yellow glare flooded the mist. The glare came from one of the many drinking hovels with which, the lads had noticed, the town was dotted. From this, staggering and howling with pain, there hurried an old, white-haired figure, thin hands held out, as if vainly trying to shield their owner from attack. Behind the figure, in pursuit, there lurched another, that of a man quite familiar to the two lads.

"It's Wummburg!" exclaimed Rodney, under his breath. "He's drunk, or something, and he's flogging that chap unmercifully. Why, the chap's too old to do anything for himself. Here, Dan, we can't just look on at this!"

The next moment, flitting past them in the mist, the old man fled from the pursuing Wummburg, who was cracking a knout brutally over his head, till suddenly he found himself confronted by Rodney and Dan, when he staggered to a halt, staring at them in drunken stupidity and amazement.

"Hallo!" he growled, recovered from his surprise. "And what vas you doing here, Spitsbuben? Get out of my way, worrying me and preventing me from my duties—"

"Duties!" snapped Rodney, gripping Wummburg's whip-arm with a sudden jerk which threw the man off his balance and set him cursing.

"Get out of my way!" spluttered the German.

But Rodney, with Dan beside him, stepped more decidedly than ever in the man's path.

"If it's one of your duties to flog an old and defenceless man like that, it's time you took up another job!" said Rodney. "Anyhow, while we're here, you don't get any nearer to him!"

"You let him escape!" spluttered Wummburg. "You young pig, you shall at vonce with me come to the Herr Colonel! You shall soon see—"

"So shall you!"

Rodney's right fist flashed out and caught the advancing one-eyed giant a smashing blow under the right of his jaw, causing him to stagger back on the uneven road and fall awkwardly on the dusty ground.

But only for a moment. Swiftly as Rodney had bent down and picked up the whip which had fallen from the man's hand, he was up again, bellowing like a bull to someone in the drinking den and hurling himself on the lads. At the same moment, answering his urgent call, there came tumbling out on to the road three other men to join in this unexpected fray.

Dan, without hesitation, left Rodney to attend to Wummburg, while he himself gave the new arrivals little opportunity to take stock of the real position. Four to two, at first, did not seem any too formidable odds, for Dan disposed effectually of one among his three almost in the first blow. Wummburg, with only his fists for protection, was by no means so formidable as Wummburg with a whip or a gun in his hand. And Rodney relished the chance given him to punish this mountain of flesh.

But the noise of the fracas had quickly brought other people on the scene, and the thickening mist made the rough-and-tumble of fighting a difficult matter. Rodney got one hefty blow in on Wummburg, which caused the German to stagger back into the mist, howling with rage and pain. Other uniformed figures began to appear in a crowd. Wummburg was shouting to them in German to seize the "junge Engländer." Rodney, fighting back an avalanche of guards he could scarcely see for the mist, wondered how Dan was faring, and wishing he could get near to him, so that they could slip away into the mist together.

But Dan seemed nowhere near at hand. From the sounds that drifted to Rodney, his friend was evidently carrying on a small battle on his own some distance away. Rodney, launching out at a man trying to seize hold of him, stepped back out of the rays of the light, meaning to try and reach Dan somehow. Instead, unexpectedly he was seized from behind round the neck, so tightly that he could scarcely breathe, so powerfully that it was vain to struggle against such a grip.

What was happening exactly he did not know, except that he was being dragged backwards. He could hear the



An old man came staggering from the doorway of the hovel, followed immediately by Wummburg, who was flogging the former with a heavy whip. The old man staggered under the cruel blows. "Look here, Dan," exclaimed Rodney, "we're not going to stand this!" (See page 26.)

bellowing voice of Wummburg becoming increasingly distant. He heard Dan whistle—three lilting notes which they had often used on the far-off Devon coast when they wanted to find each other. But the grip round Rodney's neck drew him inexorably backward, despite his struggles. It seemed as though he was being carried down steps, and he tried to shout to Dan.

"Shut up, ye blithering spalpeen!" hissed a wholly unexpected voice in his ear, startling him and causing him to cease struggling.

He found himself, when the clutch on his neck was suddenly withdrawn, in what looked like an underground kitchen, lit by the faint gleam from an oil-lamp.

Someone, a fur-clad and bearded figure, was engaged in softly closing and barring a wooden door above the steps down which Rodney had been dragged. But the latter was less concerned with the bearded man than with the one who had spoken to him—someone about whom he had almost forgotten, the queer, monkeylike little Irishman, who had been an engineer on the Flying Fish, and had suggested that he might become a friend in need—as, indeed, he seemed to have done.

"So it's you?" gasped Rodney, staring at him.

"Begad, and it's Larry O'Hagan himself, it is!" chuckled the other. "And a nice pair of fire-eaters you and your friend are, it seems. Begad, and it's not English you should be, at all, at all. Though what good you're going to do for yourselves, setting on a fellow like Wummburg I can't see. And there I was, following the two of ye, and hoping for a quiet word with ye—"

"We thought someone was following us," said Rodney. "That was what Dan said, just before that little tussle began. And why were you following us, then?"

"To bring ye down here, nice and quiet, and introduce my friend to ye."

The Irishman indicated the fur-clad and bearded figure of a Russian standing by in the shadows.

"Your friend?" asked Rodney, staring.

"Sure, and don't you know him as well?" chuckled the Irishman.

And then the fur-clad and bearded figure in the shadows spoke, awakening a sudden and amazed understanding in Rodney.

"You can't be quite as handy with your eyes as you are

with your fists, sonny," he was saying, "if you don't recognise your own father!"

The Secret Plot!

"FATHER, is it really you?"

Rodney might well have been forgiven the touch of doubt in his voice. For who would have recognised in this shabby and stooping figure, with its grimy and bearded face, the ordinarily immaculate and debonaire newspaper correspondent, Adrian Blake? Yet here, with outstretched hands laid on his shoulders, and drawing the lad towards him in an affectionate embrace, was unquestionably the father of whom Rodney had always been so proud.

"After all, sonny," he said, with a little laugh, "it's a splendid testimonial to the effectiveness of my disguise that even you don't know who I really am."

"If it hadn't been for your voice I should never have dreamed it was you, dad!" exclaimed Rodney, hoarse with emotions surging in him at the moment—delight at knowing for certain that his father was not only alive, but so close to him all the while as he was now proved to be.

"It's come as a bit of a shock!" he added. "First of all, Von Roden told me you'd been murdered. Then I discovered you hadn't been. And only just now Dan and I were talking about you, wondering where you were and what you were doing. Then, all of a sudden, to find you actually here, in this valley—well, you must know how glad I feel!"

"Well, well!" Adrian Blake patted his son's shoulder affectionately. "And I'm glad enough to see you again, laddie! If I hadn't been a bit smarter than Von Roden and the crowd up at the castle imagined me to be I would indeed have been a dead man long ago. However, here I am, though they don't know it. And here are you! Glad as I am to see you, sonny, I'm not nearly so pleased that you've chosen this particular spot for a little holiday—you and Dan."

"Couldn't very well help it—could we, Dan?" exclaimed Rodney, who had noticed after a glance round the dimly-lit room that somehow Dan had discovered his way here as well.

"Best holiday I ever had—so far, Mister Blake!" grinned Dan in his slow way, evidently as perplexed as Rodney had been to find himself confronted with the latter's father and Larry O'Hagan in this mysterious underground room.

"A bright pair, both of you are!" laughed Adrian Blake. "Anyhow, I know all about how you came here. I had the shock of my life the morning you two landed here from the Flying Fish. I was standing almost close enough to you to touch you, and came very near to giving myself away. Afterwards, from O'Hagan and Fraser, I discovered how it all came about, and what had been happening. So now we can only make the best of a bad job."

"It doesn't strike me as so bad at all," said Rodney. "Now I know you're here as well, dad, it makes it jollier. Of course, it's tremendously serious, and all that. And Dan and I would like to know—"

"How I came here, and what I'm doing?" nodded Adrian Blake. "That's just why Larry here was following you in the fog!"

"And ye must needs be spoiling for a scrap with Wumberg, ye pair of spalpeens!" chuckled the Irishman. "Ye came very near to dishing everything. When the real fighting begins—"

"Real fighting?" questioned Rodney, puzzled.

"Begorra!" chuckled the Irishman. "And are ye after thinking that your father and Larry O'Hagan came here for a rest-cure?"

"I'd better explain," said Rodney's father. "The world menace being arranged by those people up at the castle had to be crushed. There was eventually only one way to do that—from inside here. Well, when Von Roden and the others had imagined they'd killed Adrian Blake, he felt that was a very good chance to escape their attentions and set about finding a way in here. That, luckily, presented itself as unexpectedly as it was convenient."

And then Rodney learnt what had been puzzling him ever since he had discovered his father here—how the latter had managed so daringly to be in this valley, right under the noses of the people who thirsted for his life, apparently without being suspected.

Cunningly avoiding the murder-trap set for him, while giving the impression that it had succeeded, he had hidden himself awhile, completely changing his appearance and passing unobserved through the circle of Boronov's spies. Certainly, the fact that Adrian Blake had not, after all, been murdered had eventually leaked out.

It was at Warsaw that, by good chance, accident not only helped him to make his disappearance the more complete, but to make his way to the Valley of No Escape without his identity ever being questioned. At Warsaw he had a good friend in the Polish chief of police; and the latter had detained a certain Alexis Saranoff, a Russian chemist from Hamburg, who was making his way to this very valley with letters of introduction and recommendation as an expert in poison gas.

"The chance was too good to be missed," said Rodney's father. "I fixed matters up with my friend, the chief of police, and the real Alexis Saranoff was tucked away safely into prison, as a dangerous Soviet spy, under another name. Meantime, of course, I became Alexis Saranoff, taking the passport and letters of recommendation and baggage of the real one, crossed the Russian frontier, and was received here with open arms."

A daring enough plan, and quite successful so far. It appeared that nobody here had ever seen the real Alexis Saranoff, and the false one looked so unlike Adrian Blake that Von Roden and the others had been completely deceived. Anyhow, meanwhile, the impersonation had proved useful. Gradually, as Rodney and Dan listened, the object of it all was explained.

"But now you're here, dad," Rodney had asked, puzzled. "I don't see what you can do to smash this thing from inside. These people, from what Dan and I have seen, are top dogs!"

"So they appear to be," agreed Adrian Blake. "And that's exactly what we've been letting them think they are, with their thousand-odd armed guards and their machine-guns. Top dogs of what? Some ten thousand poor, miserable devils of Russian and Polish workmen—political prisoners—who don't look as if they've the pluck and stamina to stand up for themselves. Yet though the people in the castle don't know it, that's exactly what they have. The worm is about to turn."

"A sort of mutiny!" nodded Rodney, seeing daylight at last.

"And one with a kick behind it, let me be after telling you!" retorted the Irishman. "A devil of a fine bust-up it's going to be when it does get starting."

(That Rodney and Dan will make themselves mighty useful in this rebellion you can rest assured, chums. Look out, then, for an extra-thrilling instalment of this powerful serial in next week's GEM.)

"A TRAITOR IN THE SCHOOL!"

(Continued from page 24.)

"Oh, the—the cads!" gurgled Tom Merry. "Oh, the awful rotters! But we'll make them squirm for this! We'll make them wish they'd never been born! As for that cad, Gay—"

"That sweep—"

"That treacherous bounder—"

"That—that double-dealing rotter—"

"Yaas, wathah! The feahful wuffian! The—the wascal!"

Tom Merry & Co. strove to find suitable words to express their opinion of Gordon Gay.

"I expect he's grinning up his sleeve now," groaned Tom. "He couldn't have got to the Grammarians before us, of course. But it's easy enough to see what's happened. The sweep's got on the telephone and phoned his pals, telling them where we'd gone, and how to nab us."

"That's it. That's it, for a pension!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He knows where the telephone is. He could have used a master's telephone for that matter. Oh, the—the—"

Words failed Tom.

"No good gassing about it now, anyway," said Manners dismally. "The damage is done. We'll tackle that sweep, Gay, when we get back to St. Jim's. But why not tackle this carter merchant now, and try to persuade him to release us. We can't go to St. Jim's like this. We'll be the laughing-stock of the school."

"My hat! I never thought of that!" snapped Tom, brightening up a trifle.

He called to the driver; Blake called to him. Every one of them called to him. They called, and then, thinking he must be deaf, they bellowed and howled to him. But it made no difference. Either the carter, walking by the horse, was deaf, or else he didn't wish to hear them, which was certainly the most likely theory.

Tom Merry & Co. gave it up at last. They realised that once again Monk & Co. had been too smart for them, and had bribed the man not to heed them.

With muddy, dismal faces, and hearts sinking almost into their boots, the little crowd of hapless objects stood in the jerking, rocking cart, and groaned in chorus as it rumbled up to the gates of St. Jim's.

To relate the sad experiences in detail of that luckless homecoming would be too harrowing. It was certainly the most humiliating experience Tom Merry & Co. had ever undergone. Several fellows were already at the gates when they arrived there, and the several grew to a crowd in a very few moments. Long before Tom Merry could be lifted out, the cart was surrounded by a surging mass of fellows, most of them nearly in tears with laughter. Tom Merry & Co. certainly did look sad and woeful sights.

The Grammarians had scored with a vengeance this time. Tom Merry & Co. had to admit that. But they had scored with the help of a traitor in St. Jim's—a fellow whose scheming had handed over his fellow Saints as a burnt-offering to their enemies.

And Tom Merry & Co. very soon made this clear to the fellows once their bonds were cut free, and the mud cleared from their features. And then, still followed by a laughing crowd, they tottered indoors for a much-needed wash. Newly swept and garnished, but with grim faces and seething inwardly with rage, they went to interview Gordon Gay. And with them went a crowd of fellows. None of them smiling or laughing, for they knew the facts now, or what were generally believed to be the facts.

Once again Gordon Gay, the ex-Grammarian leader, but now a St. Jim's fellow, had backed up his old school—played false to his trust and helped the enemy, breaking his solemn word in doing so. But this time the proof was clear—or the Shell and Fourth believed it was clear. And they meant to have a grim reckoning with the traitor before the evening was out.

It remained to be seen how Gordon Gay would face his accusers, and what steps he would take to defend his honour. But things certainly looked black for the ex-skipper of the Grammar School, who had been sent to St. Jim's against his will, but who had done his best to play the game!

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the splendid sequel to this yarn, entitled: "CONDEMNED BY THE SCHOOL!" which will appear in next week's GEM together with another topping FREE picture card.)