

The GEM

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WEDNESDAY.



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THE AIR LINER *of the* FUTURE

INSIDE!



A THRILLING & DRAMATIC LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY—

The BOY who

With his mind set on getting back to the Grammar School, Gordon Gay realises that his only chance is to earn the "sack" from St. Jim's. Without hesitation he sets about achieving his great ambition—and in the process provides St. Jim's with the sensation of the term.



CHAPTER 1.

A Daring Plot!

"EIGHT!" remarked Arthur Augustus reflectively. "That is a good wound numbah, deah boys!"

Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby looked at their aristocratic chum in some surprise. It was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and Blake & Co. were gathered in Study No. 6, on the Fourth Form passage.

"Eight?" exclaimed Herries. "But, my dear ass, we're only seven with Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. Oh, I see—you're counting old Towser! Good man!"

"I was not countin' in Towsah, Hewwies," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "It has stwuck me as wathah a good ideah to ask Gordon Gay to join the party up wivah this aftahnoon."

"Good wheeze!" assented Blake, nodding. "Gay's a good sort, though he's an awful ass for preferring the Grammar School to St. Jim's. Still—"

"He's been wathah down in the mouth lately," said Gussy, shaking his head sagely. "I am afwaid the deah fellow will nevah settle at St. Jim's; his heart is at the Gwammah School. Howevah, a picnic with us will cheer him up a little, and, as I say, that will bwing the numbah up to eight."

"And nine with old Towser!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus drew a gleaming monocle from his waist—the GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,110.

coat pocket and polished it slowly with a cambric handkerchief. Then he inserted the eyeglass into place, and regarded Herries through it steadily.

"It will not be nine with Towsah, Hewwies," he said in a decided tone. "I have already told you that I absolutely wefuse to allow that w'etched animal to join the party."

"Now do be reasonable, Gussy—"

"I wefuse to be weasonable—I mean, I wefuse to arguo the point."

"But—"

"Wats!"

With that expressive remark Arthur Augustus ended the discussion and walked out, his noble head in the air. As the fellow who was "standing" the picnic, Arthur Augustus

—STARRING TOM MERRY & CO., & GORDON GAY OF ST. JIM'S!

WANTED *the* SACK!

MARTIN CLIFFORD

felt it was for him to decide whether Towser, Herries' beloved bulldog, was to come or not.

Having now settled who—or what—was not to come, Arthur Augustus went along to Study No. 10, on the Shell passage, to issue his invitation to Gordon Gay.

He found that junior seated on the window-seat, staring moodily out into the sunny quadrangle. The Terrible Three were also there, Lowther seated on the table whistling, Manners fitting a roll of films into his camera, and Tom Merry busy with needle and thread, mending a rent in his boating blazer.

"Cheerio, Gussy!" remarked Lowther, ceasing to whistle. "All hail to the founder of the feast, varlets!"

"Trot in, old sport!" said Tom Merry.

"Don't say you've come to tell us the picnic's off?" said Manners anxiously.

"Wathah not," said D'Arcy. "The fact is, deah boys, I was wondewin' whethah Gay would care to join the happy party?"

"Good wheeze!" said Tom. "I thought of that myself. Unfortunately, Gay's got something on!"

"Sorry, Gussy!" said Gay, his gloomy face breaking into a smile. "But I'm meeting my dear old uncle this afternoon!"

"Bai Jove! In that case, of course——"

"Fancy preferring a giddy uncle to a picnic!" remarked Lowther. "Did you ever know such an ass?"

"In this case I do," said Gordon Gay emphatically. "Uncle James goes back to Australia a week to-day. I'm going to take him up river—I want to get him alone and have a regular old pow-wow with the old boy."

Tom Merry frowned.

He liked the cheery, fun-loving Gordon Gay, and the fact that Gay seemed so unhappy at St. Jim's made him rather irritable and impatient with the ex-leader of the Grammarians.

"I'm afraid you're only wasting your time, Gay," he said quietly. "It's hopeless now to think of getting back to the Grammar School. Dr. Monk wouldn't have it, even if your uncle did give way."

"I don't think so," said Gay, a dogged look coming into

his blue eyes. "Anyway, I'm going to have a shot at getting my uncle to change his views this afternoon—before it's too late. If it was my fault that I was taken away things would be different. But it was all through a silly misunderstanding on my uncle's part, and a sillier squabble he happened to have with Dr. Monk."

"Yes; but——"

"It's no good!" said Gay. "I've tried to settle down here, and you fellows know I've done my best to play the game as a St. Jim's fellow. But I want to go back to my pals, and, what's more, I mean to go back—somehow!"

"That's rot!" said Tom Merry, eyeing Gay's flushed face uneasily. "I understand just how you feel, of course, and I can sympathise to some extent. But you're here now, and it's up to you to make the best of things."

"Not at all," said Gay coolly. "I like St. Jim's, and I like all you fellows. But I was sent here against my will, and I shan't rest until I get back again to the Grammar School. If I don't manage to get round my uncle this afternoon I shall try some other way."

"Weally, Gay——"

"Sorry about the picnic, Gussy—and many thanks," said Gordon Gay, evidently anxious to change the subject. "I'd better get off to meet nunky now—he's due by the two-fifteen."

And Gordon Gay strolled out of the study.

"Tell him from us that he's heaps more sense than his giddy nephew!" called Lowther.

"Rats!"

Gordon Gay grunted that reply, and made his way downstairs and out into the quad.

Lowther's remark made him frown still more.

Gay knew that the St. Jim's fellows, much as they liked him, keenly resented his attitude—nor could he blame them. At first he had had rather a rough time at St. Jim's. Having been the leader of the Grammarians, the Saints were naturally suspicious of him, and had not been slow to voice their doubts of his loyalty when the time came for him to "back up" his new school against his old. Upon these doubts and suspicions, Aubrey Racke, Gay's one enemy at St. Jim's, had played, causing trouble.

But all that was over now. Racke had been bowled out, and his schemes exposed. And Gordon Gay had conclusively proved his loyalty to St. Jim's, both in japes against the Grammar School and on the cricket field.

As Tom Merry had said, there was no reason at all why he



should not be happy at St. Jim's. He was now popular, and on friendly terms with all the decent fellows. Gay knew this, and he knew he ought to be happy and settled by this time.

Yet he wasn't, and he knew he never could settle down happily at St. Jim's. Had he brought it upon himself, had it been necessary for him to change schools, matters would have been different, he felt. This alone was enough to make him feel discontented. It had all been through a silly misunderstanding on the part of his uncle, and it ought never to have happened.

But it was not yet too late. His uncle was staying in England for another week, and to-day he was coming to see him. Gordon Gay was resolved to make the most of his chance that afternoon.

Gay had tramped about half-way to Rylcombe when his thoughts were rudely interrupted by a sharp sting on his ear. His sudden yelp was followed by several more as a volley of stinging peas rattled about his head.

He ducked and dodged, and then he became aware that the pea-shooters were four youths seated on a fence by the roadside. They wore Grammar School caps, and Gay grinned as he recognised the grinning faces of Frank Monk, Carboy, and the two Wootton brothers.

"Yow! Ow-ow!" he gasped. "You silly owls! Chuck it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Monk & Co. dropped down from the fence and surrounded him, pocketing their pea-shooters as they did so.

"It's dear old Gordon!" chuckled Frank Monk.

"The giddy renegade!" said Carboy.

"Our late lamented pal," added Harry Wootton.

Gordon Gay eyed his old chums rather uneasily. He was now a member of the rival school, and he was never quite sure how Frank Monk & Co. were going to treat him.

"Here, no larks, you fellows!" he grinned, rubbing his ear ruefully. "Pax! I've got to meet my uncle by the two-fifteen at Rylcombe."

Frank Monk gave a grunt.

"Oh, it's your thumping uncle, is it?" he snorted. "The silly old buffer who robbed us of our best pal."

"And our best forward and best bat," grunted Carboy.

"You were calling me a renegade and an enemy a moment ago," said Gay, unable to restrain a grin. "Well, you can't feel any more bitter about it than I do, you fellows. I'm fed-up—fed-up to the teeth!" he added gloomily again. "But I've not given up hope yet—not by a long chalk!"

Frank Monk whistled, and eyed him eagerly.

"Then—then you're not settled at St. Jim's?" he demanded.

"No, I'm not! I've nothing against St. Jim's or the fellows there—far from it!" said Gay glumly. "I'm not disloyal to the school, but you fellows know how I want to be back with you again. And, what's more, I mean to get back somehow."

His old chums regarded him with eager excitement.

"My hat!" breathed Frank Monk. "If it could only be managed! The pater was saying only yesterday what a pity it was you left us!"

Gordon Gay jumped.

"Your pater said that? Then——"

"Yes," grinned Monk. "He thinks you're a giddy model pupil, Gay. I fancy he's rather sorry he had that shindy with your uncle."

"Then it's only a matter of getting round my uncle," said Gay, his eyes brightening. "The old chap knows now that his idea about the Grammar School being a rotten school is all bunkum. It's only that silly rumpus with your pater that keeps him stubborn."

"But he'll never have you shifted again, surely," said Carboy.

"I've written to him, and he won't hear of it!" growled Gay. "But I'm not done yet; I'm going to take him up river alone this afternoon, if he'll come, and I'm going to make a fight for it."

"Good man!" said Frank Monk. "I say, why not let us come along and help? We can show the old chap just what nice, well-behaved little fellows we really are."

"Afraid that wouldn't do much good," said Gay, with a faint smile. "Your pater is the trouble, Franky. If you could only do something to bring them together——"

"Why not upset the boat this afternoon, and I'll be at hand to save your life?"

"Ass!" said Gay. "Be serious, Franky!"

"Well, you're asking for suggestions!" grinned Frank.

"And I'm—My hat!"

He broke off with a whistle.

"I believe that could be worked!" he went on, his eyes gleaming. "I was only joking, of course, about upsetting the boat; it would be a rotten trick to pitch the old chap into the water. But what about you falling overboard, Gay?"

"Me?"

"Yes, and I'd do the gallant hero act and save your giddy

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,110.

life before his eyes," grinned Frank Monk. "He'd be no end grateful, I bet, and when he learns the heroic rescuer is the giddy son of the headmaster of the Grammar School, he——"

"Phew!"

Gordon Gay jumped.

"My hat!" he breathed. "That's a wheeze, Franky. My uncle is no end fond of me—he'd be more grateful than if you'd saved his own life. But—but that wouldn't quite do the trick, even if it made him more friendly disposed towards Dr. Monk."

"But I haven't finished yet," said Frank Monk eagerly. "After I've fished you out, you could be so done up that we have to rush you up to the Grammar School in the boat. Your uncle's bound to want to come. Then my pater would soon be on the scene. He'd be proud of his giddy son, and if he and your uncle don't fall on each other's necks and make it up I'm a Dutchman. Then we step in and do the rest."

"It's a ripping wheeze!" said Carboy.

"Yes, rather!" grinned Harry Wootton. "Your nunky would be in the right mood to be talked to then, Gay."

Gay evidently thought so, too. He drew a deep breath. Stubborn as his uncle was, he was kind-hearted and forgiving. In the circumstances the old gentleman could scarcely help feeling kindly disposed towards both Frank Monk and his father. Then, a little persuasion on the juniors' part might easily do the rest.

It was worth trying, anyway. Wild as the scheme sounded there was a good chance of it coming off—if all went well!

"And—and you'll do it, Franky?" he breathed.

"Like a shot, old man!" smiled Monk. "It'll be worth a giddy wetting to get you back, old man. We've missed you no end, and it was a rotten shame you ever were taken away."

"Yes, rather!"

"It should be simple as falling off a house," grinned Monk. "The best spot for the job would be just opposite the old oak—that's the nearest place on the river to the Grammar School. We'd be waiting there, and we could drop a hanky or something as a signal."

"Then we'll do it!" said Gay, setting his lips. "Good man, Franky! You're a real good pal, and no mistake. And now we'll settle details," he added, glancing hastily at his watch. "None too much time. I've——"

"We'll come along with you to the station," said Carboy.

"Better not," said Gay, with a chuckle. "If uncle spots you with me now he may smell a rat when the plot begins to work. We'll talk it over now, and then I'll pop off!"

"Right-ho! Safety first!"

"Yes, rather!"

And for some moments the schemers discussed the plot in detail. Then Frank Monk & Co. went off in the direction of the river, while Gordon Gay, looking much more cheery and hopeful now hurried on to the station. The plot was a daring one, but it might "come off" for all that. And Gordon Gay was determined that it should.

CHAPTER 2.

A Hamper for Trimble!

"HALLO, here you are, Gussy! All ready?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was half an hour later, and all the arrangements for the picnic were complete. The juniors had changed into flannels and blazers, and the little party were only waiting for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy before starting for the river.

"Got the grub, Gustavus?" asked Lowther.

"It has already gone down to the boathouse, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus, smiling cheerfully. "At least, the basket of gwub has—I ordahed it to be sent stwaight there fwom Blankley's, deah boy. There are still a few things to be called for at the tuckshop, howevah."

"Good!"

"Ripping!"

A picnic-basket from Blankley's, and more tuck from the tuckshop, sounded quite good to the St. Jim's juniors. Tom Merry & Co. looked quite merry and bright on that sunny afternoon. It was an ideal day for a picnic up river, and they beamed at Arthur Augustus, the founder of the feast.

That aristocratic junior was looking his very best. In whatever attire the swell of the Fourth adorned himself, he looked the picture of elegance. In his boating flannels he now looked spick-and-span and faultlessly attired.

"Isn't he a picture, you fellows?" said Lowther, eyeing him admiringly. "It's really a treat just to see Gussy, without coming to the picnic as well! I feel overwhelmed at my good fortune in getting both."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"Bai Jove! You are wottin', Lowthah!"

"Go hon!"

"Howevan, we had better be makin' a start, deah boys. Bai Jove! Where evah can Hewwies be, Blake?"

"Never mind Herries!" said Blake, with suspicious haste. "Let's get on—he's following us in a few minutes, he said."

"Vewy well, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus nodded, and the juniors made a start for the boathouse, in high feather, calling at the tuckshop for the extra delicacies on the way. Only Blake looked a trifle thoughtful. The fact that Herries was delayed seemed to worry him a little.

Outside and inside the boathouse the scene was a busy one, and as the boatman and his assistant had their hands full, the juniors attended to their own wants. They had just got their boat out when a fat figure came rolling hastily down to the stage.

"Hallo, here's dear old Trimble!" said Lowther, with a chuckle. "I've been expecting him to come along. I say,

his arms was a big hamper, obviously very heavy. It was rather an ancient hamper, very much knocked about and time-stained.

Trimble blinked at it and licked his lips. Trimble had no eyes for the condition of the hamper—only its size interested him at the moment.

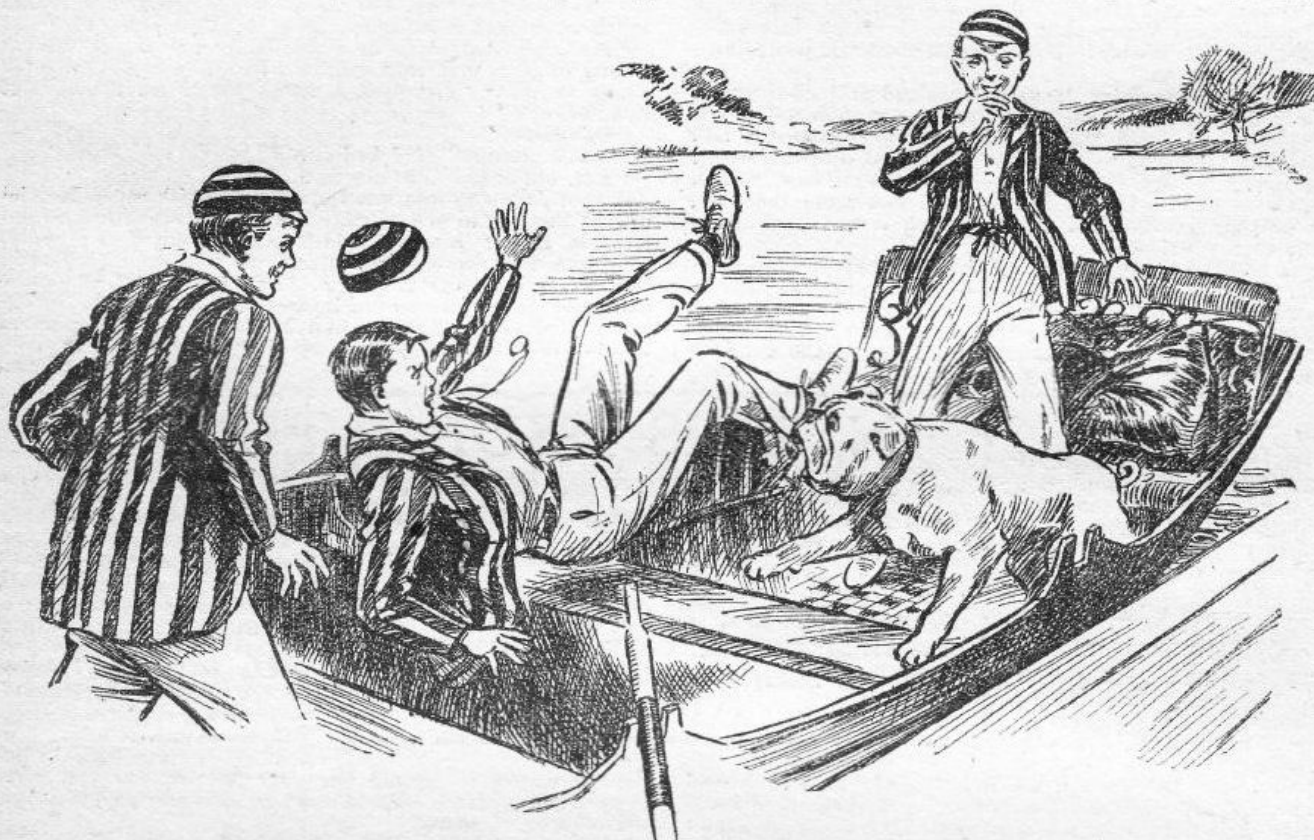
"Here we are!" gasped Lowther. "Out of the way, there—out of the way, Trimble. I'll put it in the stern, Gussy."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Gussy. "What—what—"

"All right, Gussy, leave this to me," said Lowther hastily, interrupting him. "Trust me to take care of the grub, old chap. There, that's safe enough!"

He planked the big hamper in the bottom of a small, single-scurler close by. Then he stepped back on to the stage, breathing rather hard. Obviously that hamper had been heavy.

"Now, what about it, you fellows?" he said. "I've done



"Look out, there——" Crash! "Yooooop!" Grrrrr! R-r-rip-rip! It was done in a moment. As Towser nosed round his elegant ankles, growling deeply, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped back in the rocking-boat—quite forgetting the seat behind him. He went over backwards with a crash, and then followed the sound of Towser trying his teeth on Gussy's elegant bags. (See Chapter 2.)

I'll get rid of the fat nuisance, Gussy. Just let him run on for a bit."

With that, Monty Lowther vanished inside the boathouse. Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, a fat, ingratiating smile on his shiny features, rolled up to Tom Merry & Co.

"Oh, here you are, Gussy!" he said brightly. "Just wondering if you'd got down yet! I say, you didn't trouble to invite me to the picnic, but I knew you'd be awfully disappointed if I didn't come along, old fellow."

"Wats!" said Gussy.

"Are we starting right away?" asked Trimble affably.

"I say, where's the grub, Gussy?"

"We are not startin' wight away, Twimble, and the gwub has not yet awvived!" said Gussy, polite as ever. "But I uttably fail to see how the mattah intewests you, Twimble!"

"Oh, really, Gussy! He, he, he! I can take a joke, old fellow. I say, if this is our boat I think I'll get in."

"You will do nothin' of the kind, Twimble! I do not wish to be unkind and wude; but I weally cannot stand you at any pwice, Twimble, and I wefuse to allow you to wedge in. Kindly wun away!"

"Oh, I say, Gussy, that's a bit thick!" said Trimble pathetically. "What am I to do now, then? I've cancelled my own picnic simply out of kindness and respect for you. It's not only mucked up my afternoon, but cost me a lot one way and another."

"Wot!"

"I had to tip Blankley's man five bob to take the grub back——"

"Dwy up, you feahful fibbah——"

"Oh, really, Gussy——"

Trimble paused, and his eyes glimmered. At that moment Monty Lowther came staggering out of the boathouse. In

my whack by carrying it to the boat. Who's going to take it upstream to select a suitable spot and get tea ready?"

"Bai Jove!"

"You taking on the job, Blake?" asked Lowther, winking at that junior.

"No fear!" said Blake emphatically. "Blessed if I see why I should do the dirty work on this trip."

"You, Manners?"

"Not me!" smiled Manners.

"You, Tom—somebody's got to see to the hamper and things?"

Tom shook his head and smiled.

"Nor me. Shall we toss up for it?" he asked.

"I say, you fellows——"

"You shut up, Trimble. If nobody wants to see to the grub and get tea ready, then what are we to do?" demanded Lowther. "The question is, will even a big boat carry us and a great, whacking hamper of stuff like this? Somebody ought to go on ahead and select the spot, and——"

"I say, you fellows," said Trimble eagerly, "I'll see to that, if you like. I don't mind a bit of work—not me! Look here, leave it to me!"

"Eh? But you aren't coming, Trimble?" exclaimed Lowther. "Still, it wouldn't be a bad idea if Trimble likes to earn a share in the picnic——"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Lowthah, I do not undahstand! Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus suddenly intercepted an expressive wink from the humorous Lowther. The swell of St. Jim's was rather slow on the up-take, as it were; but he could not fail to see that wink.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Lowthah——"

"If Trimble doesn't mind the grind of taking this hamper upstream, then I vote we let him!" said Lowther. "The question is, can we trust Trimble?"

"That's the question!" said Blake solemnly. "Still, we shan't be far behind. I think—"

"Right as rain!" said Lowther. "Just say the word, Gussy!"

"I say, you can trust me—of course you can!" said Trimble warmly. "Look here—"

"Oh, let the fat ass get on with it!" said Blake. "We shall be here all day at this rate. Shove off, Trimble—and mind you pick out a suitable spot."

"Trust me! Leave it to me!" said Trimble, highly delighted. "Don't worry about anything, Gussy, old fellow. I'll see to it."

"Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy. "Oh! Ah! Yaas, wathah! Vewy well, Twimble!"

"Thanks no end, Gussy. I'll make everything square with my picnic next Wednesday, old fellow! Don't forget the date—next Wednesday! I shall insist upon all you fellows coming, of course."

And Trimble boarded the small boat and grasped the oars. Monty Lowther, smiling cheerily, pushed him off. The rest looked on with smiling faces, Arthur Augustus still looking a trifle puzzled. The oars splashed into the water, and Baggy, a very cheery expression on his fat face, started to pull at them. His first attempt almost upset the boat, but he soon got into his stride, though it was certainly a very wobbly stride.

But he made progress for all that. Baggy was no oarsman. The little craft wobbled and lurched, the fat Fourth-Former's oars resembling the turning of the sails of a windmill. Yet the boat moved forward on its decidedly erratic course upstream, and vanished round the bend at last. As it did so, Monty Lowther doubled up and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus smilingly, turning a glimmering monocle on Lowther. "I realised you were pullin' Twimble's leg, of course, Lowthah!"

"Bow-wow! What a brain Gussy has!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but weally, I fail to see the joke," said Gussy. "There is not gwub in that hampah, surely, Lowthah?"

"Ha, ha! Rather not, old bean! Only brick-ends and rubbish, Gussy. I found the hamper in the boathouse store-room. I do hope Baggy enjoys himself. I fancy we shan't see either him or the hamper again this afternoon."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus understood now. It was just a little wangle of the humorous Monty's for getting rid of the troublesome Baggy.

"Bai Jove! That was wathah a good ideah!" chuckled Gussy. "The fat wottah is weally a feahful nuisance, and will nevah take 'no' for an ansawah. Howeyah, we had bettah— Bai Jove, though, wherevah is Hewwies, Blake?"

"Here he comes now," said Blake. "Jump in the boat, Gussy, and we'll get off."

But Arthur Augustus did not jump in the boat. He stared along the towing-path, his features registering sudden and growing wrath.

Herries certainly was coming, but he was not alone. Trotting at his heels was a white, four-footed apparition with an ugly face, its open mouth showing two rows of businesslike teeth.

It was Towser, George Herries' beloved bulldog and Gussy's pet abomination.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "The—the feahful wottah! Hewwies, you—you—"

"Here I am," remarked Herries cheerily. "Sorry I'm late, but I had to feed Towser and get him ready. What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Mattah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Didn't I tell you that on no account would I agwee to Towsah comin', you wottah!"

"Oh, come off it, Gussy! Dash it all," said Herries indignantly, "can't old Towser have an outing sometimes as well as us? Don't be so dashed mean!"

Arthur Augustus stamped his foot—a proceeding that brought a low growl from Towser.

"I ordah you to take that feahful bwute back again, Hewwies!" he shouted. "I uttably wefuse to entah the boat with him!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,110.

"What rot!" said Herries. "If you call Towser a fearful brute I'll give you a present of a thick ear, Gussy. He's as good-looking as you any day, and a jolly sight more sensible."

"Bai Jove! You—you— Oh, gweat Scott! Take that animal away, Hewwies!" roared the swell of St. Jim's, fairly stuttering with excitement. "I tell you I will not allow you to take him in that boat."

"Oh, rats!" said Herries. "Come on, Towser, old man."

Arthur Augustus jumped away as Herries advanced to the boat and jumped in, carefully helping Towser over the gunwale. The bulldog seemed to be fully aware that Arthur Augustus objected to him, for he kept his small eyes on the wrathful Gussy, and gave vent to another low growl.

"Herries, old man," grinned Tom Merry, "better not take him. After all, Gussy's the giddy host—"

"Don't talk rot!" grunted Herries. "Gussy will soon get used to him. Anyway, I'm blessed if I'm going to take him all the way back home now. Be reasonable, Gussy!"

"I uttably wefuse to be weasonable—I mean, I uttably wefuse to go in that boat with that feahful animal!" shouted Gussy angrily. "Hewwies, I ordah you to leave that boat this instant!"

"Bow-wow!"

"You heah me?" shrieked Gussy.

"Yes, old chap! I'm not deaf!"

Arthur Augustus spluttered and danced with rage. Herries settled himself in the stern. Then he made Towser comfortable, giving him a couple of cushions for that purpose. Towser settled down, keeping one eye open and fixed upon the enraged Arthur Augustus. The rest of the juniors—excepting their aristocratic host—boarded the big, roomy boat. Tom Merry, Blake, and Manners seated themselves on the thwarts, and picked up the sculls.

"Jump in, Gussy!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Herries will see old Towser doesn't bite you, old chap!" said Blake soothingly.

Arthur Augustus flushed crimson.

"You are well awah that I am not afraid of the w'etched animal bitin' me!" he spluttered. "I am afraid of the feahful bwute wuinin' my clobber, you gwinnin' ass!"

"Oh, rot!" said Herries, who could be very stubborn on occasion. "Old Towser's as good as gold. In any case, what

does it matter if the old boy does paw or tear your silly bags, Gussy? Jump in, and don't be so thumping particular about your clobber!"

"I—I—for the last time, Hewwies," shouted Gussy, "I ordah you to leave that boat and take Towsah back home!"

"Rats! That's jolly well likely—I don't think. If you want him out of the way, take him back yourself!" snorted Herries. "I'm surprised at you being so awfully mean, Gussy."

"You wefuse to take Towsah back, Hewwies?"

"You've said it!" said Herries. "I agreed not to bring my cornet, and I think I've made enough concessions."

"Jump in, Gussy!" urged Blake. "Never mind the thumping dog! He never takes any notice of us."

This was true enough. Towser was on friendly terms with all the juniors—but that was, perhaps, because they did not mind the marks of muddy paws on their "bags" so much as did Arthur Augustus. Actually, Towser was a very good-tempered and harmless animal—as Gussy well knew—but somehow he seemed to have a particular and remarkable attraction towards Gussy's clothes, and especially his natty trousers!

Possibly Towser was aware of Gussy's apprehensions, and it was sheer mischievousness on his part.

"Yes, jump in, Gussy!" urged Tom Merry. "We'll keep an eye on old Towser!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. All was ready to push off, and the fellows at the oars were waiting. Moreover, the space on the stage was wanted.

"Move off, young gentlemen," said old Bates, the boatman.

"Yes, get out of the thumping way there!" bawled Grundy, of the Shell, who was waiting to carry his boat out.

"Bai Jove!"

There seemed nothing else for it. With a look at Herries that should have withered him on the spot, but didn't, Arthur Augustus stepped into the boat.

"All serene," smiled Tom Merry.

But he spoke a trifle too soon.

As Arthur Augustus stepped gracefully into the boat,

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Towser gave a low growl and jumped from his cushioned seat. The picnic basket was already in the prow, with Digby and Lowther seated on it. There being no room for Arthur Augustus in the prow, he was obliged to make for the stern where Herries was sitting.

Gr-r-r-rrrr!

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Hewwies, pick that w'etched animal up! I insist upon him bein' tied up tight in the stern behind the seat. I wefuse to wisk—"

Grrrrrrrr!

"Oh, gweat Scott! Hewwies—"

"Look out, there—"

Crash!

Grrrrrrrr! R-r-rip-rip!

It was done in a moment.

What Gussy had feared, came about.

The mischievous Towser nosed round his elegant ankles, growling deeply. Naturally, Arthur Augustus was alarmed, and he jumped back in the rocking boat—quite forgetting the seat behind him. He went backwards over it with a crash amid a chorus of yells, and then followed that ominous ripping sound.

It was Towser trying his teeth on Gussy's elegant bags.

Unfortunately, one of the swell of the Fourth's waving legs had caught Towser under his bulky chin, and naturally enough, the bulldog had promptly retaliated, by tearing Gussy's trousers.

Arthur Augustus shrieked.

"Yarroooogh! Keep that feahful bwute off, Hewwies! Yoop! Oh, gweat Scott!"

With great presence of mind, Tom Merry collared the still growling Towser and handed him over to his master.

"Well, you rotter, Gussy!" snorted Herries. "Fancy kicking old Towser in the jaw with your silly hoof, like that! If you hadn't had canvas shoes on you might have hurt him."

"Ow—ow! Wow! Oh, the—the feahful beast!"

Arthur Augustus staggered up in the bottom of the boat, his face crimson with wrath. He fumbled for his eye-glass, jammed it into place, and then he examined the rent in his trousers. It proved to be serious—quite four inches

of flannel having been torn from the bottom of the trousers.

Moreover, Gussy was hurt.

"Look at it!" he shrieked, almost crimson in the face with wrath. "That—that w'etched animal! Look at my twousahs, Hewwies! I knew that would happen, you uttah idiot!"

"Well, what's that in comparison with hoofing poor old Towser under the jaw?" demanded Herries in a tone of deep indignation and scorn. "I've a jolly good mind to let him have a go at you in real earnest, you silly ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and the others howled with laughter at the expression on Gussy's face. He looked at Herries with the face of a ferocious gargoyle.

"You—you wottah, Hewwies!" he choked. "Oh, bai Jove. My bags are uttably wuined! I shall have to go back and change them. Hewwies, I will give you a feahful thwashin' afterwards, for bwingin' that bwute against my expwess ordahs!"

"Rats! You clumsy owl—"

"You fellows must wait heah for me until I weturn!" gasped Arthur Augustus. He clambered ashore from the boat, eyeing Towser apprehensively, as if afraid Herries would carry out his threat. "If that wotten animal is still heah, howevah, I shall cancel the picnic and wefuse to go on with it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You heah me, Hewwies!" shrieked Gussy, shaking his fist from the bank. "If that animal is not gone by my weturn, I shall wefuse to accompany the partay, or to allow the picnic to pwoceed."

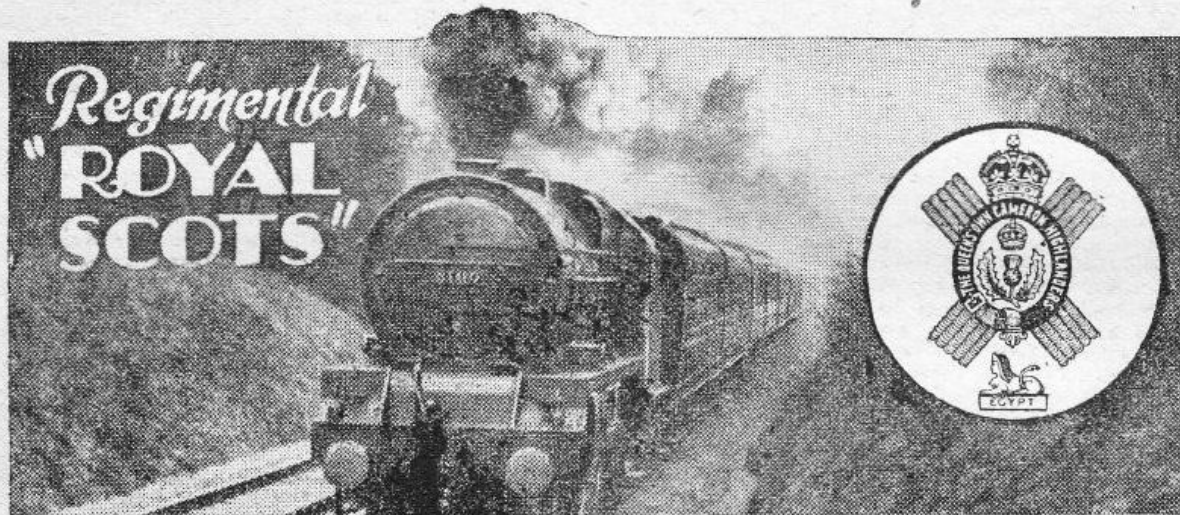
With that, Arthur Augustus stamped away in a towering rage. For some yards he walked on, and then, suddenly aware of the flapping strip of torn flannel at his ankles, he stopped and fastened it with his tie-pin. Then he strode away along the towing-path towards St. Jim's.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry in dismay. "This looks like mucking up the giddy picnic. Herries, you were an awful ass to bring Towser—you know how Gussy objects to him!"

(Continued on next page.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,110.

HERE'S THE NEXT OF OUR POPULAR RAILWAY ARTICLES!



Express engines of the "Royal Scot" class, on the L.M.S. Railway, are named after famous regiments of the British Army. This week you will learn from our contributor all about the "Cameron Highlander" locomotive.

"HIGHLAND LADDIE!"

LOCOMOTIVE 6105 of the "Royal Scot" class is named after the famous regiment of Cameron Highlanders. This unit was originally a member of the 79th Foot, raised by Cameron of Erracht in 1793 in Inverness-shire, almost entirely from men of his own clan. For many years it was the only single battalion regiment in the Army.

The Cameron Highlanders hold two remarkable records. Firstly, they returned from Corunna in 1809 with 700 officers and men down with typhus fever, without losing one of them. And secondly, they went out on the ill-fated Walcheren ex-

pedition six months later, in which so many Britishers were killed, and served through the whole campaign without losing a man. This, in spite of the fact that they were in the thick of the fray all the time.

Maybe that is why the name, "Cameron Highlander," so eminently suits locomotive 6105 of the "Royal Scot" class. Watch her thunder by on her non-stop journey from London to Carlisle, and one realises that she will not easily be turned from her purpose. Battered or bruised she will carry on with her job, never faltering, day in, day out.

Just as the men of the famous regiment whose name she bears came home from the

Corunna and Walcheren campaigns sorely wounded and ill from fever and disease, so the great locomotive must be in need of a rest and overhaul when she comes to a standstill in the quiet comfort of her shed, after her day's work is done. But like the Cameron Highlanders, she had done her job, and that is all that matters.

The Cameron Highlanders were at Waterloo and served with distinction during the Crimea. Most of you fellows will have heard the regimental march, "Highland Laddie," at some time or other, and don't the regiment make a fine show as they come swinging down the road, white plumes waving in their ostrich feather bonnets.

Standing beside the giant locomotive 6105, and gazing up at the name plate and crest of the regiment engraved upon her sides, it would be difficult to find more worthy a bearer of the honourable name of "Cameron Highlander."

"What rot!" sniffed Herries. "Let's get on without the born idiot!"

"May as well," grinned Blake. "Gussy can follow on when he's finished changing. Dash it all, he must get used to Towser! The beggar never worries us, does he? Gussy will have got over it when he's changed his bags, and we'll have tea ready for him when he turns up. Come on!"

"Oh, all right!" grinned Tom. "It's too bad, but—" He chuckled and grasped the oars again. Blake and Manners did the same, and as Gussy vanished amid the foliage along the towing-path, the boat rocked out into midstream, and was soon gliding at a good pace along the shining river upstream.

CHAPTER 3.

Baggy's Chance!

"BEASTS!"

Thus Baggy Trimble.

The fat junior was giving his frank opinion of Tom Merry & Co. Delighted as he was at having succeeded in "wedging" into the picnic party, Baggy felt distinctly aggrieved at having all the work to do. Certainly, he would never have been allowed to accompany the party had he not been on the spot to make himself useful—Baggy realised that! None the less, he was feeling far from grateful towards Tom Merry & Co.

For Baggy was finding rowing hard work on that warm, sunny afternoon. He found no pleasure in rowing, nor in the soft murmur of the silvery river as it swished and rippled past his boat. The hot sun shone down on him from a blue, cloudless sky, and Baggy's face, already crimson with the unusual exertion, was streaming with perspiration.

"Beasts!" he murmured again with emphasis. "Mean beasts! Fancy making a fellow pull this heavy hamper on his own! It would serve the beasts right if I collared the lot and let 'em go to pot!"

And Baggy ceased rowing, wiped the perspiration from his eyes, and blinked along the river, winding into the distance. But he saw no signs of the boat he had been watching for. Other boats had passed him, but of Tom Merry & Co. he saw no sign.

"Beasts!" repeated Baggy with a grunt. "They won't turn up till they think I've got everything ready! I never knew such selfish meanness! Serve 'em right if—"

Baggy paused and strained his eyes again along the shining river.

He was hot, and he was tired, and—he was hungry; very hungry indeed! Really, it was a bit thick. Why the thump should he have to wait until the others came along? Rowing made a fellow awfully hungry—he was famished in fact!

It wouldn't be a bad idea just to pull inshore and have a little snack before the others came along.

Baggy scanned the banks on either side. Then his eyes fell upon a smooth, level stretch of grassy sward. Beyond that were the shady depths of Rylcombe Woods.

An ideal spot, thought Baggy, and no sooner had the thought occurred to him than he was pulling the boat towards the bank. Not being a very skilful waterman, Baggy had some difficulty in landing. But he managed it at last. Then he blinked downstream, wiping his perspiring face with his handkerchief as he did so.

There was still no sign of Tom Merry & Co.

Baggy blinked at the big hamper.

It looked very heavy; so much to the good if it was. But the prospect of dragging it ashore made no appeal to Baggy. Should he open it in the boat, or—

Baggy decided promptly that this was much too risky. If anyone saw him they might easily think he had boned the hamper. Fellows were horribly suspicious!

Having settled the point Baggy made a start. He had drawn the boat up on the shingle, and also tied the painter to an overhanging willow. It was not an easy matter to lift the heavy hamper, but the thought of the contents, and the fear of interruption, gave Baggy additional strength.

After a terrific struggle, punctuated with gasps and pants,

Trimble hauled the hamper ashore and dragged it up the grassy bank. When well-screened by foliage, Baggy halted.

"Oh, good!" he gasped. "Fancy those beasts making a fellow do all this! Beasts! Here goes, anyway! Dash it all, a labourer's jolly well worthy of his hire! I'll just have a little snack before the others come."

He got out his pocket-knife and sawed through the string and rope that tied the hamper. Really, now he had time to examine that hamper, Baggy was very surprised at the state of it. He would have thought the fastidious Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would have been scornful of having anything to do with such a disreputable-looking hamper, much less putting good grub into it.

"Beastly old thing!" sniffed Baggy. "Fancy shoving grub in this! Why, it's only fit to—to—to— M-mum-my hat!"

The lid was up now, and Baggy was gazing into the interior of the hamper. His words ended in a stuttering gurgle of utter amazement and dismay.

"G-gug-good lor!" he gurgled, his jaw dropping.

With eyes nearly starting from his head, Baggy Trimble gazed at the collection of brick ends, stones, and old bottles and newspapers that filled the hamper.

"M-my word!" he gasped at last, giving a deep, deep groan of utter dismay. "It—it isn't grub at all! Oh crikey! It's only rubbish! That—that awful beast Lowther! He—he's spoofed me. Oh, the—the awful rotter! The—the—"

Words quite failed the grub-hunter as he realised how he had been done.

For obviously he had been done. Lowther had sent him up-river with that hamper of rubbish just to get rid of him. As he thought of the way he had toiled and sweated at the sculls Baggy Trimble's amazement and dismay gave place to wild indignation and overpowering wrath.

"The—the rotters!" he spluttered, fairly dancing round the hamper. "The—the awful rotters! Oh dear! And—and I'm whacked and nearly famished!"

Really it was enough to break a stouter heart than that of Baggy Trimble. But even as he stood there, blinking about him in deep dejection, his ears caught the sound of splashing oars out on the wide, glimmering river.

It was Tom Merry & Co. One swift glance told Baggy Trimble that. He was on the point of yelling insulting and scornful remarks at the moving boat when a thought suddenly came to him.

He wasn't done yet. He'd get his own back somehow. He'd follow them up-river and—

"Phew!" breathed Baggy, breaking in on his own reflections. "The rotters haven't seen me, and they're pulling in."

It was true enough. Baggy was out of sight himself, and his boat was safely grounded under the bank, well shielded from view from the river by the overhanging willow. And Tom Merry & Co. were pulling in towards the bank some yards away from where he stood. Their cheery laughter and chatter reached him clearly across the water.

"But where's that ass Gussy?" mumbled Baggy to himself.

Somewhat mystified, but still seething with wrath, Trimble watched from hiding. He saw the juniors jump ashore, and saw Herries land Towser. Then the others hauled a picnic-basket from the boat and carried it ashore.

"Here we are again!" sang Monty Lowther cheerfully. "Here, you've done nothing but play about with that dashed dog, so far, Herries, old son. Come and take a turn with this basket."

"Rats!" said Herries. "I'm going to take old Towser for a run before tea. The poor chap's a bit upset after that affair with that silly chump Gussy. Towser's rather a highly-strung animal, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said Herries warmly. "Poor old Towser isn't used to getting hoofed under the jaw, I can tell you. It's upset him. Anyway, I'm taking him for a run, just to get him away from any more excitement."

And Herries trotted away, leading his beloved bulldog.

Baggy Trimble breathed freely again. He did not like Towser, and though he had a small opinion of Towser's powers as a tracker, there was a risk of the bulldog smelling him out and giving the alarm.

"Oh, good!" murmured Baggy.

Tom Merry had taken one handle of the picnic-basket and Lowther had taken the other. The party moved away from the river, having tied up their boat. Baggy drew a deep breath and followed, moving very cautiously. Strange ideas were moving in his fat mind. He knew now that Tom Merry & Co. had never had any intention of allowing him to join them in the picnic—far from it. It had been all spoof, of course. Well, he'd show 'em!

With glimmering eyes, the fat Fourth-Former followed in the wake of the cheery party. He did not have to

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Gordon Gay gave a yelp of astonishment as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surged up to him and grasped him firmly. "All wight, Gay!" panted Gussy. "Keep still—I have you!" "Ow! Leggo, you idiot!" spluttered Gay wrathfully. "Ow-ow! Grooooh! Gerraway, blow you!" (See Chapter 6.)

follow far. In a little, shady clearing, Tom Merry called a halt, and the basket was lowered carefully on to the warm grass.

"What about old Gussy?" demanded Tom Merry. "Think he'll spot our boat?"

"Certain to," grinned Blake. "He knows the boat, and he's bound to be looking out for it. Still, perhaps we'd better keep an eye open for him."

"Yes, rather!" grinned Digby. "After all Gussy's our host, and it's hardly the thing to give your host the go-by like this. We can take a rest on the bank, and take it easy until he comes along."

"Right-ho!"

"Good wheeze!" said Blake.

Tom Merry, Blake, and Manners, who had rowed all the way upstream, were only too eager to fall in with the suggestion. They were perspiring and tired after the pull, and ready for a rest.

"Basket be all right here?" asked Digby.

"Right as rain," said Blake. "Herries will soon be along again, anyway."

"No good yanking it back to the boat," said Tom.

It was a quiet spot, and, in the fond belief that Baggy Trimble was away upstream, Tom Merry & Co. strolled back to where their boat rocked gently below the high bank. There they threw themselves down and sprawled in various attitudes on the bank, to await the coming of Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 4.

Baggy Bagged!

"THIS is tophole!" murmured Lowther lazily, lying with his handkerchief over his perspiring face. "Hope Gussy doesn't spoil the picture by making a fuss when he turns up."

"I'm afraid we ought to have insisted on Herries taking Towser back," said Tom Merry. "It was too bad. That blessed dog is sometimes a bit of a nuisance!"

"Too late now, anyway," yawned Blake. "Wonder where dear old Baggy is now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared as they thought of the fat and flabby Baggy pulling that hamper up-river.

From his hiding-place Baggy heard the words clearly, and his eyes gleamed.

"Beasts!" he muttered to himself. "Cackling beasts! My hat! I'll make 'em sit up somehow! I wonder—"

Baggy did not wonder for long. The moment the idea came to him he acted upon it. The temptation to get his own back was great, but the temptation to get his hands on the grub was much greater. Baggy really did feel that Tom Merry & Co. needed a lesson, especially as it would be such a pleasant lesson for him to administer!

He crept away through the trees, scarcely making a sound.

The thought of Herries returning with Towser made him pause once; but he reflected that Towser's sense of smell was small—despite Herries' claim to the contrary—and he



would have lots of time to get clear when he heard them returning.

Musing thus, Baggy moved on again, and in a few seconds he had reached the little clearing.

In the middle of it lay the basket, unguarded and unwatched.

On tiptoe Baggy stepped towards it, almost quivering with eagerness and excitement. Then he bent down and grasped it. To his relief Baggy found he could raise the basket easily—it was nothing like so heavy as the hamper!

With one last blink round him, Baggy staggered away with his burden.

Through the trees he went, though in a different direction from that which Herries and Towser had taken. His one thought was to put as much distance as possible between himself and the river.

On he staggered, with only a brief rest now and again. He was soon gasping and panting, and bathed with perspiration; but the realisation that he was still far from being safe spurred him on.

Really, he could scarcely believe in his good luck yet. Had Towser been on guard such a raid would have been fraught with danger—indeed, Baggy would never have contemplated it for one moment. And Tom Merry & Co.'s desire to wait on the bank for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was yet another stroke of luck.

Baggy was resolved to make the most of what he considered the chance of a lifetime.

Unfortunately, his luck was not to last.

Suddenly, as he blundered desperately on, Baggy ran almost full tilt into four youths who happened to be passing through the woods just then. Unlike Baggy, they were walking on a well-defined path, and their tennis-shoes made scarcely any sound.

Baggy was on the party before he knew it—before he had the chance to get out of sight.

He groaned deeply the instant he recognised them.

One was Frank Monk, and the others were Carboy, Harry Wootton, and Jack Wootton!

"Oh, g-good lor'!" groaned Baggy.

Retreat, like concealment, was out of the question. The four Grammarians were upon him.

"Hallo, it's the fat merchant from St. Jim's," grinned Frank Monk. "What the thump's he got there? Been raiding the silver from Rylcombe Grange, I expect."

"It's more likely grub!" said Carboy. "Can't you see

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it's a picnic-basket. I say, we're on to this, chaps. Collar him!"

"I think we'd better look into this," grinned Frank Monk. "Plenty of time before Gay comes along, I expect."

"I think so, too," said Harry Wootton, his eyes fixed on the picnic-basket. "Of course, this fat porker's raided that basket from somewhere, and we really ought to look into the matter. If we find it doesn't belong to him we must take charge of it."

"Yes, rather!"

"In any case, we commandeered it as enemy supplies," said Frank Monk airily. "All's fair in love and war!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here! I—I say, leggo my basket!" gasped Trimble in great alarm. "If you don't I'll yell and fetch those beasts Tom Merry and his pals here. There's five or six of them, besides a bulldog."

"So that's it!" grinned Frank Monk, his eyes gleaming. "This jolly old picnic-basket belongs to Tom Merry, and you're just bolting with it, what?"

"Nunno! Oh crumbs! Not at all! It—it's only an empty basket! There's no grub in it—none at all. Look here—Ow!"

Bump!

Baggy sat down with a yelp and a heavy concussion as Carboy gave him a gentle push. The next moment the four Grammarians, keeping a wary eye on Trimble, were examining the basket. They undid the catch, and then they lifted the lid.

Their eyes glistened, and their mouths watered as the contents were revealed.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a fellow who never did things by halves. When he gave a feed he could be depended upon to carry it out well. He spared neither money nor care in the selection of good things. As they blinked into the well-filled basket Frank Monk & Co. gasped with joy.

"This is great!" gurgled Frank Monk. "A ripping stroke of luck, and no mistake! See, the blessed basket's been turned out by Blankley's, and it's addressed to dear old D'Arcy. The giddy spoils of war, chaps! It's only last term that those giddy Saints raided some grub of ours."

"Yes, rather! Our turn now!"

"Oh crumbs! I say, you fellows—"

"Silence, varlet!" ordered Frank Monk severely. "Tie the prisoner up to a tree, you men. We can't risk him trotting off to fetch the enemy."

"Rather not!"

"We can be scoffing some of this ripping grub while we're waiting for Gay and his giddy uncle," grinned Monk. "Then we'll hide the rest, and after the affair's over we'll come back and continue the feed. It wouldn't be a bad idea to invite Gay and his uncle to come."

"My hat! Good wheeze!"

"Collar the basket and let's be off, then!" chuckled Frank Monk.

"Oh dear! You—you awful rotters! I've had awful trouble getting that grub, and—Yow!"

Trimble yelped as Carboy and the Wootton brothers ran him up against the nearest tree. Despite their serious task that afternoon, the sight of the good things in the basket proved far too great a temptation for the Grammarians. To leave such a ripping stock of grub in the greedy clutches of Baggy Trimble was more than could reasonably be expected of Frank Monk & Co. Moreover, it would be a great score over their St. Jim's rivals.

With the cord that had fastened the basket they tied the protesting and pleading Baggy securely to the tree. Then, carrying the basket between them, they hurried on towards the river, the luckless Baggy watching them go with feelings too deep for verbal expression. He was almost weeping with disappointment and fury. After all his trouble—with the spoil within his grasp, his luck had changed, and he had lost his liberty as well as the grub. He shivered as the fear crossed his mind that the hilarious Grammarians might easily forget him.

Supposing he was left there all night?

Baggy groaned in sheer anguish of spirit, not daring as yet to yell for help. A yell would soon bring Tom Merry & Co. on the scene, though the fat Fourth-Former realised he would have to yell sooner or later. But to yell just yet would only bring Monk & Co. back, and then they might perhaps gag him.

"Oh, the beasts!" groaned Baggy.

Meanwhile, Frank Monk & Co. had reached the river, and were just about to open the basket again when Carboy gave an exclamation and pointed downstream.

A light boat was coming up the shining river. An elderly gentleman was seated in the stern, and even from that distance the Grammarians could recognise the smaller figure at the oars.

"It's dear old Nunky and Gordon," grinned Frank Monk. "Hide that basket somewhere, chaps—the grub can wait!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,110.

Where's my giddy hanky—I've got to drop that as a signal to Gordon! Then I do the giddy gallant hero act!"

"Oh, blow!" said Harry Wootton, who was hungry.

But orders were orders, and the more serious task came before the feed. Hurriedly the basket was hidden in a near-by thicket, and then all-expecting Frank Monk took cover.

With his eyes fixed on the approaching boat, Frank Monk waited, the handkerchief in his hands. Close by was the old oak, a withered tree that was a landmark on the river. When opposite that spot Gordon Gay would be on the look-out for the signal. When he saw it he would carry out his part of the carefully-arranged plot.

Frank Monk chuckled as he waited. Really he was quite looking forward to the little plot. And if all went well—

The boat was almost opposite now. He saw Gordon Gay take a careless look over his shoulder.

The moment had come.

Frank Monk dropped his handkerchief.

CHAPTER 5.

Trailing the Tuck!

GEORGE HERRIES came back into the clearing by the river leading Towser, and keeping a very anxious eye on him. In Herries' view Towser had suffered severely—both physically and mentally—from that jolt under the chin from Gussy's shoe. Certainly, it had been a slight jolt, and certainly Arthur Augustus was wearing canvas shoes. None the less, Towser was hurt, and his nerves were upset—according to George Herries, who could see a lot of things where Towser was concerned that his chums quite failed to see.

Though Herries felt sure that the little run had done his pet good, he still regarded Towser anxiously as he came back into the clearing with him.

Herries then became aware that the clearing was empty—both of juniors and the picnic-basket.

"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated.

The thought came to him that his chums had gone off without him—possibly because of Towser. But he dismissed the thought and gave a shout.

"Hallo, hallo! Tom Merry! Blake! Where the thump are you?"

A cheery hail came back to him from the river,

"Here we are, Herries!"

Herries trotted through the trees with Towser, and soon found his chums lounging on the grassy bank in the shade.

"My hat! Thought you fellows had cleared off," said Herries. "Especially when I saw the basket had gone. I say, poor old Towser—"

"The basket gone, you say?" exclaimed Tom Merry, sitting bolt upright. "What are you talking about?"

"I was saying I rather got the wind up when I saw the basket wasn't in the clearing," said Herries. "I say, where the thump is it, chaps? I'm hungry, and could do with a snack. No good waiting until that ass Gussy comes before making a start!"

Tom Merry got to his feet. The rest of the juniors sat up and stared at Herries.

"Look here, what the thump are you talking about, Herries?" demanded Tom, a trace of alarm in his tone. "The basket is in the clearing—we left it there, knowing you'd soon be back. Don't talk rot!"

"It jolly well isn't," said Herries. "Go and look!"

All the juniors were on their feet now. With a sudden exclamation Tom Merry left them and ran through the trees. A couple of moments later they heard a yell of amazement and wrath.

"Gone! It jolly well has gone, you fellows! Quick! Come here!"

Manners, Lowther, Blake, and Digby went with a rush. As they reached the clearing they saw that Herries' statement was only too true.

For some seconds they looked at each other blankly.

"This beats the giddy band!" said Tom Merry. "Sure you know nothing about it, Herries—you're not pulling our legs, I mean?"

"Of course not!" snorted Herries. "I've only just got back with old Towser. Nice chaps you are—leaving grub unguarded like that—I must say!"

"Oh, rats! I say, this is jolly queer!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Hunt round for that basket, for goodness' sake! Let's hope it hasn't been raided—we're in Grammarian country now, you know!"

"Phew! Yes, rather!"

The juniors hunted round, some working inland, and some towards the river and along the bank. A sudden yell from Blake brought all of them rushing towards him. Blake was standing on the bank beneath a big, spreading willow, and pointing silently to a big, dilapidated hamper full of bricks and rubbish.

(Continued on page 12.)

NEXT WEEK'S CORCEOUS PICTURE CARD!

"A FORTRESS ON WHEELS."

Here's a black-and-white reproduction of next Wednesday's HANDSOME COLOURED PICTURE CARD. Don't miss it, boys!



MARVELS of the FUTURE!

No. 7.—A FORTRESS ON WHEELS.

SPEEDING up in everyday life means speeding up in warfare, too! The days have gone when fortresses of brick and concrete were fairly safe places for troops. From the air, explosive bombs and poison gas can be rained down by enemy fighting 'planes. So the really up-to-date fortresses have taken to themselves wheels—or rather caterpillar tracks.

They can dodge about, and carry the war into the enemy's own country. This is nasty for the enemy, but very encouraging for the attacking infantry who have these monster mobile forts to strike panic into the hearts of the foe and crash down his greatest defences as though they were only toys of card.

The man who invented the modern tank must have had the scheme put into his head by a particularly vivid and frightening nightmare. The engineers and mechanics who are even now improving on the tanks as fast as the latest patterns come out, are making the very first tanks—as introduced by the British to extremely startled Germans during the Great War—look like tin whippets by comparison.

The latest type of armoured car is a cross between a tank and a motor-car. Thus speed, in which the earlier types of tank were rather lacking, has been added to the idea of the mobile fortress. Inventors are taking this latest super-armoured car—which has been built for use on very rough roads in India and is fitted with transmitting and receiving wireless which can be used while on the move—as the basis of their future plans.

The really enormous tank of the future will be a completely shut-in fortress. The garrison—driver, mechanics, and men to work the great guns—will be invisible. And so the only target the enemy will have will be a mass of rapidly moving armour plate that only a "lucky" shell can pierce.

What about gas, you might ask—poison gas? Well, aeroplanes might unload quite a lot in the tank's immediate neighbourhood without harming one of the crew. Gas masks

are wonderfully efficient things even to-day.

When the colossal tanks about which we are speaking become common objects of the landscape, the crews will be provided with masks that have been brought in line with the most urgent requirements. And again the 'planes will be defeated!

These tanks will be able to fling gigantic high-explosive shells into the midst of the foe, and when it comes to fighting at close quarters—when the big guns are less useful—the garrison of the tank will push the snouts of Lewis guns, rifles and revolvers through cunningly protected loopholes, and wreak havoc at a range of very few feet.

The guns will be able to cover the tank's movements in all directions, with anti-aircraft guns as a further protection against 'planes that would approach near enough to shower down splintering bombs on the deck of the rapidly moving fortress.

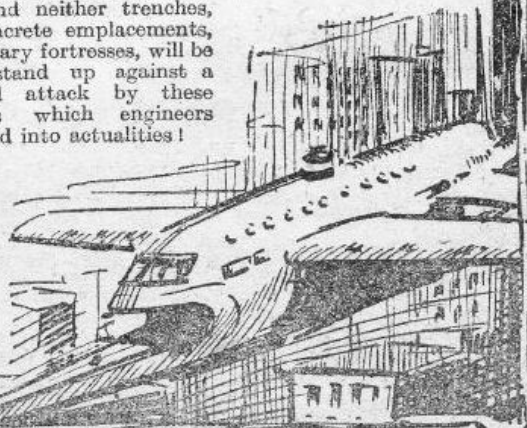
For observation purposes there will be small, bullet-proof glass peepholes. Yes, bullet-proof glass. Even to-day, armoured cars that are employed by banks and other wealthy concerns to transport bullion through the streets where bandits and gunmen might possibly lurk, have peepholes provided with glass off which bullets actually bounce!

Each tiny pane of glass, an inch thick, is really three pieces—an outer layer of thin glass, a similar layer at the back, and in between is a thick and comparatively soft piece. The outer layer "gives" when a bullet hits it at very close range, and it may splinter. But the bullet fails to pass through the other layers, and falls to the ground. Well, it will be only a step to the perfection of glass that nothing can penetrate. Then the tank of the future will be well nigh invulnerable.

A hidden mine below ground over which the mighty tank has to pass might, if touched off at the psychological moment, rip the underside and put the machinery out of action. But then the great thing in favour of these tanks will be the surprising appearances which they can put in, turning up just where the enemy has least reason to suspect.

They will be able to scurry over extremely rough ground at an astonishing pace for three hundred or four hundred miles without refuelling, and neither trenches, forests, concrete emplacements, nor stationary fortresses, will be able to stand up against a determined attack by these nightmares which engineers have turned into actualities!

Next week's article deals with "A Greyhound of the Sea," another dream of the future, which is the subject of the EIGHTH Free Gift Picture Card.



"The Boy Who Wanted the Sack!"

(Continued from page 10.)

Close by a small boat was drawn up on the shingle. "Trimble!" gasped Blake. "That fat worm's been here! He was here when we landed. He must have spotted us. He—he—"

"Must have raided the basket!" breathed Tom Merry, ending the sentence for him.

"That's it!"

"He's done us, after all!"

"Done us brown!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors blinked at each other. Not one of them had the slightest doubt that they had now stumbled on the truth of the missing picnic-basket. Trimble had landed here to open his hamper. He had discovered its contents, and then, obviously, he had seen the party land and leave the basket in the clearing.

It did not need a great deal of brain power to work out what Trimble had done then.

Tom Merry was crimson in the face with wrath.

"The—the fat robber!" he stuttered. "Come on—we've got to find him! His boat's there, so he can't have gone by the river. In any case, we should have seen him if he had. He's gone inland. We're scouts, and if we can't trail that fat idiot, I'll eat my hat!"

"Yes, rather!"

They rushed back to the clearing, and soon all eyes were examining the trampled grass. Tom Merry himself very soon found the trail—it did not need much skill to find it. He pointed to the footmarks in the grass, leading deep into the wood.

"That's his hoof for a pension!" said Herries. "I went the other way with Towser. I say, I'll bring Towser along, and he'll soon track the fat rotter down. You know what a splendid tracker he is—"

"At tracking down bloaters—yes!" snorted Tom Merry. "But Trimble's a worm and not a bloater! You tie Towser up to a tree out of the way, Herries. Come on, you chaps!"

Tom Merry led the way through the woods, never being at a loss; for Trimble, of course, had never thought of attempting to cover up his tracks. Such details never did occur to Trimble.

The trackers found their quarry at last.

At sight of the fat, forlorn figure tied to the tree the party halted in astonishment.

"Trimble!" gasped Blake.

"Trimble!" stuttered Tom Merry. "What on earth's happened, Trimble?"

"Groooh!" groaned Trimble. "Ow-ow! Cut me loose, you fellows, for goodness' sake! Ow-ow! I've had an awful time!"

In a moment Tom Merry & Co. had cut Trimble free. The fat Fourth-Former eyed them rather warily. He was in an awkward corner, unless he was careful in explaining this affair. He worked his brain desperately.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "What does this mean, Trimble? Who fastened you up like this?"

"And where's our grub, you fat rotter?" snorted Blake, keeping to the main point at issue.

"Ow! I say, you fellows, I know nothing about any grub. It—it was those Grammar School rotters!"

"What?"

"It's a fact!" said Trimble, eyeing the chums hopefully. "They—they were coming through the woods, and they suddenly attacked me, you know. As for the grub—why, it's still in the hamper, I suppose."

"Well, you fat fibber! Why, you've already opened the hamper, and you know what's in it!" said Blake, with a grin.

"Not at all," said Trimble. "I haven't the faintest idea there's only bricks and things in it."

"What?"

"It's a fact!" said Trimble. "I've left it on the bank there, and I was just coming inland to find a suitable spot when those beasts attacked me. And, I say, you fellows, they had a blessed picnic-basket with them. Fancy that! I say, you fellows, rush after them and raid it. I know there's grub in it."

"My hat!"

"Did you ever!"

Baggy Trimble had summoned all his fertile imagination to his rescue; but, as usual, he gave himself away in the process.

"You—you fat fibber!" said Tom, breathing hard. "You know jolly well what was in the hamper and the basket."

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You spotted us land, and you raided our hamper. Then I suppose those Grammar School bounders raided you and tied you up like this."

"Oh, really, Merry—"

"Dry up!" snapped Tom. "Kick the fat ass, chaps, and let's get after Monkey and his men. It's pretty clear what's happened now."

"Yes, rather!"

"I say, you fellows, I'll tell you what! I'll lead you—Yooooop! Yow! Here, what—Yarroooooh!"

Trimble fled at a great rate, Blake lunging out at him with his shoe as he went. In a moment the five juniors were on the trail again—this time with grim and wrathful faces. If Frank Monk & Co. had gained possession of the picnic-basket, then there was not much hope of regaining it, unless Tom Merry & Co. were quick.

Fortunately the trail was easy to follow. Frank Monk & Co. had not troubled to hide it. The trampled grass led the Saints on and they soon found where the grub-raiders had left the path and made for the river.

And then, just as the gleaming Rhyl came in sight through the trees Tom Merry & Co.'s attention was riveted by a figure on the bank.

It was Frank Monk, and he had a handkerchief in his hand.

"Now," breathed Tom Merry. "Careful, though! Those other rotters can't be far away. Leave Monkey to me! Ready?"

"Yes."

"Then—on them St. Jim's!"

And Tom Merry flung himself upon Frank Monk—just as that startled youth dropped his handkerchief and gave the signal to Gordon Gay out on the river.

CHAPTER 6.

Not According to Programme!

CRASH!

"Yow-ow!" yelled Frank Monk. "Oh, my hat!"

He went crashing down, with a wild yell of alarm.

The next moment he was locked in a grim, deadly embrace with Tom Merry.

At the same moment Manners, Lowther, Blake, and Digby flung themselves upon the startled Wootton brothers and Carboy.

Their startled yells quite drowned, so to speak, the splash that came from the river as Gordon Gay obeyed the signal of the dropped handkerchief.

All happened in a brief few seconds. Gordon Gay did not give Frank Monk another glance after seeing the handkerchief drop. He just swiftly acted as per programme—catching a most realistic crab, and then—

How it happened his alarmed uncle scarcely saw; his attention had just been taken by the sudden commotion on the bank, when—

Splash!

Gordon Gay was in, floundering in four or five feet of water and yelling desperately for help.

"Good gad!" stuttered Gay's uncle.

The Australian gentleman jumped up in the rocking boat, his tanned features startled and alarmed. He seemed about to jump over to his nephew's aid—a possibility Gordon Gay and his fellow conspirators had certainly never bargained for. But fortunately, there was no necessity.

Other rescue was at hand!

From an elegant junior who had been coming along the towing-path came a sudden startled exclamation:

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had changed his torn trousers at St. Jim's, and was returning along the towing-path, keeping a good look-out for his chums, when the yell for help rang across the river.

He turned his head, and his face paled at sight of the struggling figure in the water.

Gordon Gay had the reputation of being a powerful swimmer; but, obviously, he was in difficulties now—or so it seemed to Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, bai Jove!" repeated Gussy, in great alarm. "Hold on, Gay, deah boy—hold on!"

Splash!

Arthur Augustus was in, swimming strongly to the rescue.

Amid the commotion Gordon Gay did not hear him coming. Gay had by this time realised that something had gone wrong—that the great scheme had "come unstuck" somewhere. For from the bank came sounds of battle and strife. Frank Monk & Co. were yelling frantically for "pax," and trying to make the attackers realise how matters stood. As he glimpsed what was happening there, Gordon Gay spluttered in dismay.

He gave a yelp of astonishment as Arthur Augustus surged up to him and grabbed him firmly.

"All wight, Gay!" panted the gallant Gussy. "Keep still, deah boy—I have you!"
 "Ow! Leggo, you idiot!" spluttered Gay, swallowing a great quantity of water in his alarm. "Ow-ow! Mum-mmm! Groogh! Gerraway! Leggo blow you!"
 "Bai Jovel Pway keep still, Gay!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I cannot wescue you if you do not—Yooooop!"

Arthur Augustus yelped as Gordon Gay, in sheer desperation, planted his fist on his gallant rescuer's nose.

"Go away, you idiot!" shrieked Gay. "Help, help!"

The ex-Grammariān had not given up hope yet; there was still a chance that Monk would break away and carry out the rest of the programme.

But Arthur Augustus was a stickler!

He had heard often enough that drowning people fought with their rescuers in their fright, and he instantly closed with Gay again, despite the risk of another punch.

Gay struggled desperately, but Gussy was in earnest. For several brief seconds the scene out in the river resembled a dog-fight more than a rescue from drowning. But Gay realised that the game was up at last—when a boat reached the spot and his uncle's grasp closed upon him.

"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Gay.

"All right!" rapped out Uncle James, grunting as he leaned over the stern of the rowing-boat. "I have him, my boy! Gordon, my lad—"

"Grooogh!" gulped Gordon Gay, his crimson face displaying no signs of gratitude whatever. "It's all right, uncle; I'm as right as rain, and I'm touching bottom! It's only about four feet deep just here!"

"Good gad! I imagined—Gad! Get into the boat, boy!" spluttered Gay's uncle, his alarm gone now. "Are you all right, my brave lad?"

Evidently the old gentleman was addressing Arthur Augustus now!

"Yaas, wathah!" spluttered Gussy, suddenly discovering that he could stand upright in the water. "It is all wight now! Pway allow me to help you into the boat, Gay, deah boy!"

"If—if you don't gerraway," hissed Gordon Gay, in sulphurous accents, and giving Gussy a ferocious glare over his shoulder. "I'll—I'll—I'll bust your silly boko, you blundering, footling idiot!"

"Oh, bai Jovel!"

"Gordon!" exclaimed Uncle James, quite scandalised, as

(Continued on next page.)



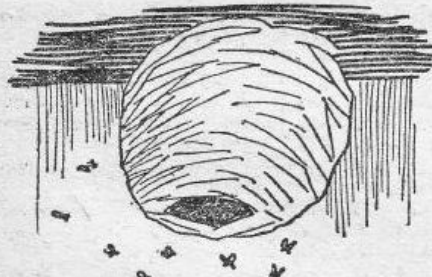
frosted or icy, and this is probably what you had confused in your mind. Glacis, however, means the bank that slopes down from a fortress and on which the attackers are exposed to the defenders' fire. And, by the way, talking of this reminds me of the question asked by a sergeant of a recruits' squad during the War. "What is a fortification?" he demanded. Back came the answer from one of the awkward squad as quickly as a cork out of a bottle: "Two twentifications, sergeant!"

Q. Who were the first paper makers?

A. Wasps. No, chums, I am not joking; this is really the fact. Wasps and hornets were Nature's paper makers long before man ever turned to the art. The way that a wasp makes paper is most interesting. With its strong jaws the female wasp shaves off tiny bits of wood and chews them into pulp. Later it spreads this pulp in layers and, as it dries, the pulp turns into strong paper for use in nest-making. The paper that we use for newspapers, books, correspondence, and so forth, is also made from wood pulp, or at any rate a very great deal of it. Paper can be made also from rags, straw, old ropes and several other things.

Q. What is the difference between Insurance and Assurance?

A. A Weston boy who signs himself with the rather pugnacious sounding appellation, "Two-Fist Tommy," has written to me in this strain: "The other day my teacher told me that I had got



The nest of the wasp—made complete of paper. How do the wasps do it?

far too much insurance. When I told my big brother, he said he was talking through his hat. Is that so?" I am rather inclined to think, Tommy, that it was you who were talking through your hat. Without doubt you gave your brother a garbled account of what teacher had said to you. I suggest he said that you had plenty of assurance, probably meaning either self-confidence or impud-

ence. In business affairs the word insurance is used where fire and other such risks come into question: whereas, assurance is the term used where a life is concerned. Thus a man might take out a policy for fire insurance or for life assurance.

Q. What is a freebooter?

A. This, J. Saffley, was hardly the appropriate term to apply to the Fifth-Former who kicked you down a flight of stairs. It means a pirate or similar kind of adventurer—and what fellow cares two toots about being called a pirate! I note with approval, though, that if he does it again you intend to show your annoyance in more marked fashion by slamming the door.

Q. Where do the Pathans live?

A. In Afghanistan, though many have spread over India. The word "Pathan" is pronounced "Pah-tan," and the name is applied rather indiscriminately among many Afghan tribes. Mostly the Pathans are hill-men, and those to be found in India usually adopt money-lending as their calling.

Q. What is a glacis?

A. This, according to a young Taunton reader, is one of "the silly ass" questions

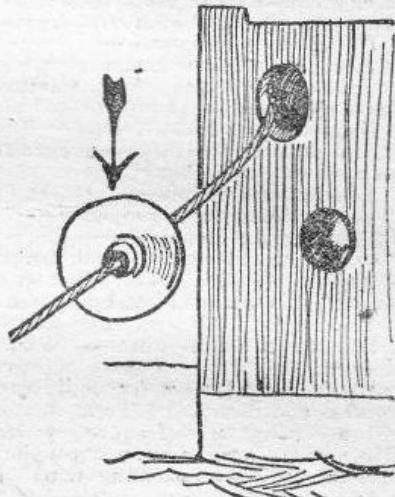
set by his Form-master in a general knowledge paper. His answer to it was that glacis was an ice-cream, which roused his teacher to an unappreciated sarcasm. Certainly my young friend, the French word *glacis* means something



Fierce fighting men are the Pathans of Afghanistan—here's one.

Q. What is a rat guard?

A. A great disk of metal, C. R., fixed on to the mooring hawseers of a ship in port to prevent rats from either leaving the vessel or getting aboard. Rats are great carriers of disease, notably the deadly bubonic plague which all port authorities take precautions against.



Guards (indicated by arrow) are fixed to the ropes of anchored ships to keep off the unwelcome attentions of rats.

Q. Who was Long John Silver?

A. Bless me! Have you never read "Treasure Island," my young friend who signs himself "Sixteen This Summer"? This is a wonderful adventure book by that prince of writers, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Long John Silver is a pirate bold in it whose acquaintance you should make with as little more delay as possible!

(Now then, chums, what about it? Surely you can catch our wise old Oracle napping? Have a shot at it, any way.)

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He helped his nephew over the stern. "How can you speak in that manner to such a gallant boy?"

"I don't care!" hooted Gordon. "What did he want to butt in for—"

"What—what— Silence, sir!" cried Gay's uncle, trembling with indignation. "I am astounded at your base ingratitude, Gordon—astonished and disgusted! You will return to St. Jim's with me at once! You, my dear boy," he added, turning to look down at Arthur Augustus, "had better accompany us before you catch cold."

"Bai Jove! That is all wight, sir; the water is not vewy cold!" gasped Gussy. "I will get back to the bank, and the wun back to the school will soon warm me. Thank you vewy much, all the same!"

"And my thanks are due to you, my boy!" said the Australian gentleman warmly. "I can only say that I am thankful my nephew, little as he deserves it, belongs to a school that turns out such gallant fellows as you!"

"Oh! Oh! Ah! Yaas, sir!" gasped Gussy. "Thank you vewy much, sir! You are vewy kind!"

"Not at all, my boy! I will see you later at the school, I hope! You are sure you are quite all right?"

"Oh, yaas, sir!"

Arthur Augustus, looking very much the worse for wear, but beaming after such flattery, waded back towards the river bank. Gordon Gay, almost bursting with emotion, caught up the oars, water still streaming from him. His uncle, with bronzed features crimson with indignation, gave him a glare and picked up the rudder-lines.

Gay's dearest desire just then was to go after Arthur Augustus and smite him hip and thigh. But he suppressed it—remembering rather late in the day that to give the game away would quite put an end to his hopes.

With feelings too deep for words he turned the boat and started to pull away downstream, giving the fellows on the bank scarcely a glance in his deep dejection. The great scheme had failed—thanks to Tom Merry & Co. and the well-meaning Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Meanwhile, the battle on the bank had come to an end some moments ago—Tom Merry & Co. having suddenly realised what was going on in the river.

But the comedy—or tragedy—was over, and they were only in time to see Gay hauled aboard the boat, and they watched in amazed wonder what followed.

"What the thump does it mean?" asked Tom Merry, as Gay's craft moved off downstream. "Gay can swim like a fish, and there's only about four foot of water there, anyway."

"What does it mean?" ejaculated Frank Monk, dabbing a streaming nose with a handkerchief. "It means you've mucked up the whole game, you blundering footling idiots! As for that ass—that born lunatic—that—that—"

"Bai Jove, you fellows—"

Arthur Augustus staggered ashore just then. He gave a startled gasp as Frank Monk, followed by his equally disgusted and wrathful chums, rushed at him.

"Bai Jove, you fellows, what—"

"You footling owl!" yelled Frank Monk. "What did you want to chip in for?"

"You howling chump—"

"You burbling tailor's dummy—"

"You chunk of imbecility—"

"Smash him!" gasped Monk furiously. "If he hadn't chipped in we should have done it all right! Roll the footling ass in the mud and bump him!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Bai Jove! What—what— Yawwoooogh!"

Bump!

Arthur Augustus, water still streaming from his bedraggled and drenched boating flannels, went down with a crash under the rush of the angry Grammarians.

His startled howl echoed across the river.

"Here, we're not standing this!" snorted Blake. "Pile in, you chaps!"

"Yes, rather!" roared Tom Merry. "The cheeky rotters!"

The next moment another wild and whirling scrimmage was in progress as Tom Merry & Co. piled in. They were not likely to stand by and see Arthur Augustus bumped by four Grammarians like that.

In less than a minute Frank Monk & Co. were prisoners, glaring up wrathfully at their captors.

"Now, perhaps you'll tell us what this game means?" said Tom Merry grimly. "Like your cheek to bowl over one of our chaps before our eyes! You say Gussy's mucked your scheme up—what thumping scheme?"

"I'll jolly soon tell you that!" spluttered Frank Monk.

And he did, the St. Jim's fellows listening in amazement. But as they understood they roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to laugh at!" hooted Frank Monk. "If that ass hadn't chipped in I should have dived in when you

stopped scrapping, and all would have gone off as we expected. Now it's all mucked up. That ass—that born idiot!"

"Bai Jove! So that was why that feahful wuffian stwuck me on the nose and wefused to be wescued!" gasped Gussy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. howled. To them it was not so serious that the plot had failed. Naturally, they held the opinion that Gay was an ass to want to leave St. Jim's to go to a measly show like the Grammar School.

"Ha, ha! Well, you silly chumps!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Of all the silly hare-brained wheezes I ever heard of, that takes the bun! Still, it might have come off—"

"Of course it would!" snorted Carboy indignantly. "You rotters can cackle, but—"

"Anyway, let us go now!" gasped Monk angrily. "You're too many for us this time, but we'll make things square before long! Leggo!"

"Not much!" smiled Tom Merry. "You're forgetting one little detail, my dear friends. What about our grub? What about our picnic basket, Monkey?"

"Oh!" Frank Monk & Co. had forgotten all about that.

"We'll let you go when you've told us where our basket is, dear infants," grinned Tom Merry. "Trimble said—"

"So you've seen Trimble?" Frank Monk grinned faintly.

"Yes. Come on, or we'll make you wish you'd never laid hands on our grub!" said Tom Merry, looking about him.

"What have you done with it, you cheeky owls?" Frank Monk chuckled. The grub was scarcely three yards away from Tom Merry as he spoke, but the Grammarian leader meant to bargain with the enemy before handing it over.

"Yes, we know where it is," he grinned, feeling master of the situation. "And we'll let you have it if you promise to make it pax and let us join you."

Tom Merry smiled. He also felt in command of the situation.

"I see you've got your nice, clean boating flannels on, Franky," he murmured blandly. "If you don't tell us where that grub is in three minutes we're going to roll you in the mud, and afterwards give you a bath in the river to give your clobber a wash. It'll need it!"

"Oh crumbs! I say, you fellows, be decent—"

"In the circumstances we're being very decent," said Tom. "You raided our grub, knowing it was ours. Well, one minute's nearly gone."

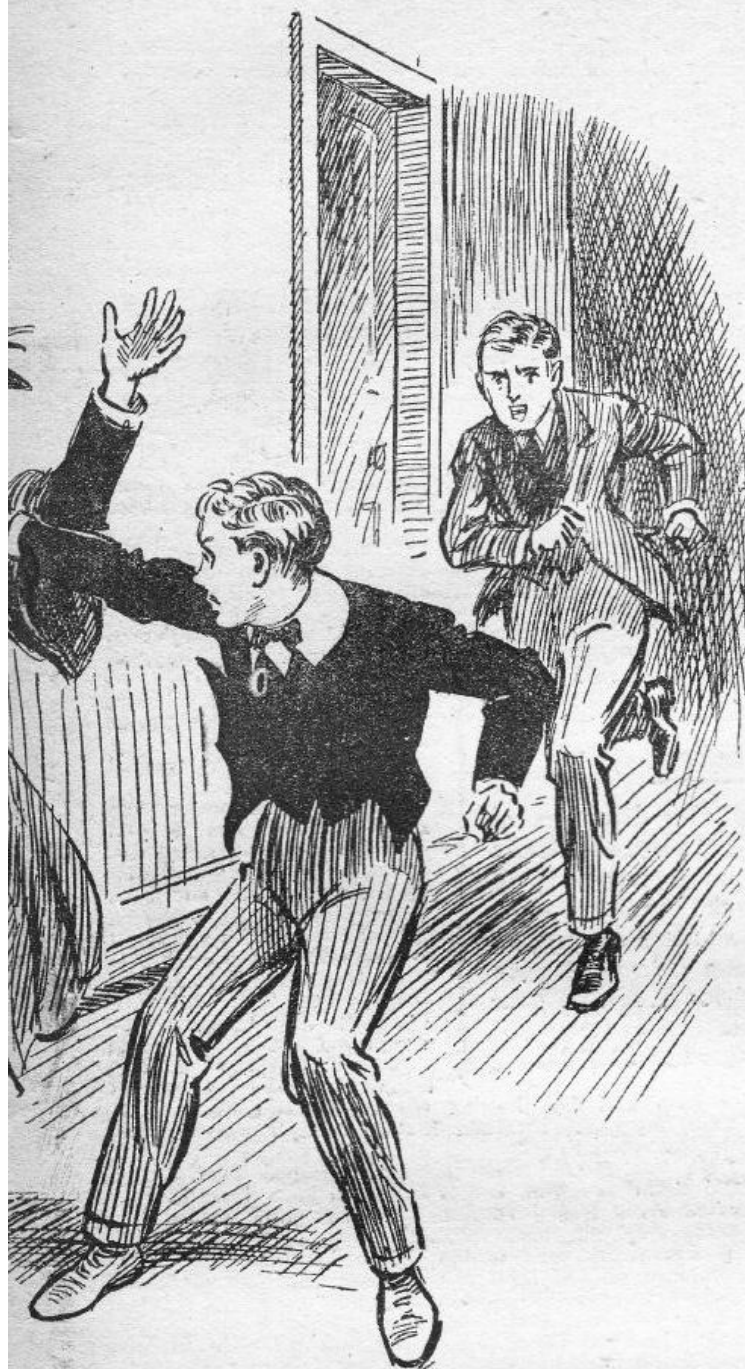
"Look here—"

"Minute up, old chap!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Monk. From the grim expression on the faces of Tom and his chums Monk realised they



"Leggo!" roared Gordon Gay, as Mr. Selby threat, Gay reached up suddenly and grasped the squealed Mr. Selby. He released the junior as



ped him and held on. "Leggo, or—" Instead of finishing his m-master's left side-whisker and tugged it—hard! "Ya-ooop!" gh he had suddenly become red-hot. (See Chapter 8.)

meant every word of their threat. He blinked at his chums, pinned to the ground helplessly like himself. "Oh, all right, you rotters!" he gasped. "We'll get our own back another time, though. It's in the bushes there!"

He nodded towards the bushes where the basket was hidden. Blake chuckled as he dragged it out and examined it.

"All serene!" he chuckled. "Not a giddy thing touched! You can let 'em go! What about you, Gussy?"

"Oh deah! I shall have to wush back and change again. That feahful ass, Gay—"

"No need to do that!" grinned Tom Merry. "We've got our bathing-costumes with us in the boat. You can have a rub down and wear a bathin'-costume and a towel for tea while the sun's drying your clobber, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! That is a vewy good ideah, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, his noble brow clearing. "Then—Bai Jove! What about Hewwies and that w'etched Towsah, though. I uttably wufuse—"

"Oh, you can leave Towser and Herries to us," said Blake hastily. "We'll insist upon Herries tying the blessed dog up, and keeping him out of the way. Now, don't start—"

"Vewy well, if you will do that, I will join you," said Gussy, with dignity. Actually the sweli of St. Jim's was very hungry, and he did not wish to be out of the picnic—the picnic he had organised and provided "Vewy well,

deah boys! And I twust that beast Towsah will behave himself this time. But about these wottahs—"

And Arthur Augustus frowned reflectively at the dismal-looking Frank Monk & Co. Arthur Augustus was a very tender-hearted youth indeed, and forgiving to a fault. The downcast faces of the four Grammarians smote Gussy in his tenderest spot.

"These fellows have weally acted vewy cheekily," he went on, shaking his head; "but—but, aftah all but for them that feahful wascal Twimble would have scoffed all the gwub, and we should have none appawently. If you fellows are willin' to forgive them, I am, and as there is plenty of gwub—more than we shall need—I pwopose we make it pax, and ask them to join us."

It was really very generous indeed of Arthur Augustus, and, after a pause, Tom Merry chuckled and nodded.

"Well, that's very noble of you, Gussy—just what one might expect from you, in fact! If Blake's agreeable to feeding these poor, starving Grammar School worms, I am."

"It's a go!" said Blake, with a laugh. "After all, Gussy's right. These fellows have saved the grub. We'll call it pax and bury the hatchet, and feed our giddy faces together."

And it was so. Frank Monk & Co., hardly able to believe their good fortune, were allowed to join in the picnic that followed. Arthur Augustus proceeded to shed his drenched garments, and laid them out to dry in the sun, donning a bathing-costume and a big towel in their place, whilst Tom Merry handed over his blazer as an additional covering. On a grassy, sunny bank the basket was unpacked, and Grammarians and Saints fraternised at tea on the best of terms. Fortunately, Towser was on his best behaviour, and Arthur Augustus was soon as cheerful as the rest, and when the party broke up at last, he returned to St. Jim's in the best of humours, and ready to forgive Gordon Gay.

Unfortunately, Gordon Gay was not ready to forgive him!

CHAPTER 7.

Gordon Gay's Campaign!

"YOU rotters!"

"What—"

"You burbling chumps! You footling fatheads!"

"What the thump! Oh!"

Tom Merry understood as he stared at the wrathful face of Gordon Gay.

His chums also understood, and they could not help chuckling. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, frowned. The picnic on the banks of the shining Rhyl had been a huge success, and the party were returning home in the best of high spirits. It was really too bad to be met by Gordon Gay in this manner, raking up unpleasant incidents that were past and done with.

"Weally, Gordon Gay—" began Gussy coldly.

"As for you!" stuttered Gordon Gay, glowering at the noble swell of the Fourth. "As for you, you blundering tailor's dummy—"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Gay—"

"Done in the eye!" gasped Gay, who was obviously under great stress of mind. "Dished and done! A really ripping scheme mucked up by you, you blinking owl. But for you everything would have gone rippingly. I've a jolly good mind to mop up the quad with you."

Arthur Augustus crimsoned with sudden indignation. Really, it was too bad. He had acted from the very best of motives—and without giving a thought to any risk he might have been running. Worse still he had utterly ruined a suit of boating-flannels, besides having his aristocratic nose badly damaged by the fellow whose life he had attempted to save.

Really, it was a bit too thick altogether. Arthur Augustus thought of the creases and rumples in his bags and blazer—crumples and creases beyond hope of ever being removed. He thought of his swollen nose, and the base ingratitude of Gordon Gay.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Pway hold my jacket, you fellows, and I will give this wude, ungwateful wuffian a feahful thwashin'!"

"That's what I'm waiting here for," gasped Gay, "only it's going to be the other way about, you—you idiot! I've been waiting here for you to come in to give you a licking!"

He started to remove his jacket, and Arthur Augustus did likewise. Tom Merry's chuckle ended abruptly.

"Here, chuck it, you silly asses!" he gasped. "You can't scrap here in open quad! Gay, you ass! Couldn't you see it was all a mistake—in any case you shouldn't have tried such a footling wheeze. Chuck it!"

"That's right!" said Blake. "Any scrapping and we'll pile in, too, and bump both of you!"

"That's the programme!" assented Tom Merry grimly.

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"In any case we're full in sight of the Head's study window now, you idiots! Chuck it!"

Gordon Gay breathed hard, but he replaced his jacket, realising that to start scrapping in full view of the windows was scarcely wise in the circumstances.

"Oh, all right!" he gasped. "I'll see D'Arcy another time! The—the burbling chump! The footling fathead! The—the—"

"I refuse to stand here and listen to your insultin' remarks, Gay!" snapped Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you as a wude, wascally wuffian!"

With that he tramped away, his noble features crimson.

"You're an ass, Gay!" said Tom Merry sharply. "After all, Gussy acted for the best, and in any case the wheeze was an idiotic one in my view. What good would it have done?"

"It would have come off, anyway!" snorted Gay, his face dark and dismal. "Now—now things are worse than ever!"

"Where is your uncle now?" asked Tom. "Has he gone?"

"No—he went in to have tea with the Head!" grunted Gordon Gay, glaring towards the School House.

"He jawed me all way down the river, and after jawing me again, he went off to the Head. I'd hoped he'd have had tea with me up river—in fact, he would have done if all had gone well."

"Well, perhaps this will make you stop acting the goat!" said Tom. "There's no reason why you shouldn't settle down here in time. Take my tip, and make the best of it."

"Rats! I'm not done yet by a long chalk!" said Gordon Gay, setting his lips. "My uncle goes back in a week to-day—if I don't act now it will be too late. I mean to force the issue somehow—especially now I know Dr. Monk would have me back again."

"But, my dear ass—"

"It's no good talking!" said Gay, his good-humoured face looking sulky now. "I've written to my uncle—pleaded and begged to be sent back. He won't hear of it. Well, we'll try other methods. The only thing now to do, as uncle won't take me away, is to get sacked!"

"What?" almost yelled Tom.

"That's it—sacked!" said Gay, nodding. "I've thought it all out, and that's my programme now this wheeze has come unstuck."

"I say, isn't that old Bland by the gates—talking to Taggles?"

"Yes, it is, you born idiot!" gasped Tom Merry. "But look here, never mind old Bland—"

"But I want to mind him!" said Gay reflectively. "Dear old Colonel Bland's a governor of St. Jim's, and a very big man. D'you think if I added to my misdeeds by chucking a bucket of water over old Bland, that I should get sacked?"

Like Brutus, Gay paused for a reply.

"Sacked!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "You'll get sacked all right if you did that—and perhaps you'd bag a flogging as well. Look here, Gay, to talk like this is all bunkum!"

"Is it?" said Gay calmly. "Well, if it has to be a flogging as well as the sack I shall have to make the best of it. Anyway, I think I see just how to do it. You chaps watch if you want to see some fun. The old buffer will be going into the School House in a minute, I expect."

With that Gordon Gay took to his heels, and vanished through the doorway of the School House.

"Well, the—the silly owl!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Is he potty?"

"He must be!" said Manners. "I bet he'll do what he said about drenching old Bland, anyway."

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry looked quickly towards the gates. He knew that Colonel Bland, who was a frequent visitor to St. Jim's, always stayed for a chat with old Taggles, the school porter, before going in to see the Head. Colonel Bland, in addition to being a school governor, was an old St. Jim's boy, and he took great interest in the school, wandering about the place at his will, and when he desired. In fact he was generally regarded as something of a nuisance—possibly even by the Head!

As Tom looked, he saw Taggles touch his hat, and Colonel Bland walked off towards the School House doorway in his usual brisk manner.

The juniors gazed after him almost fascinatedly. The next moment they caught sight of something else—a figure

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,110.

that was in the act of climbing out of the window over the porchway on to the leads.

It was Gordon Gay, and in his hand was a fire-bucket—apparently full of water, for he staggered as he moved it towards the stone balustrade.

"G-good lor!" gasped Blake.

"My-my hat!" choked Tom Merry. "The—the awful ass means it! Gay, you ass—"

In sudden alarm, Tom Merry shouted in the desperate hope that Gay would hear and heed.

But it was in vain.

Colonel Bland was on the steps now. He had not seen the figure above, for by this time Gay was crouching low behind the stone balustrade.

But as Colonel Bland reached the top step, the waiting junior straightened himself, lifted up the heavy bucket on to the stone balustrade, and then—

Swoooooosh!

The water from the bucket descended in a flood.

But it did not descend upon Colonel Bland.

For even as the bucket was up-ended, Colonel Bland stepped suddenly back again—though whether it was because he had glimpsed the boy above, or whether it was because two forms had just emerged from the School House—the juniors did not know.

At all events the colonel was fortunate—he missed the descending stream, and the first of the two forms just emerging from the School House doorway received the full benefit of it.

It was Gordon Gay's uncle and the Australian gentleman gave a yell that could have been heard a mile away, as that sudden rush of water descended upon him.

He sat down with a bump, water streaming from him at all points.

"G-good gad!" gasped Colonel Bland.

Some of the water had splashed him, and several stray drops had reached Dr. Holmes, the venerable Head of St. Jim's, who had been just behind Mr. Gay.

It all happened in a moment—the thing was done before even Gay himself had quite realised it. But realisation came the next instant as he recognised that yell and glimpsed the sprawling form below. He gave one convulsive gasp and fled, leaving the fire-bucket behind him.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Blake. "Gay's done it now! If he was spotted—"

"He was spotted right enough!" gasped Tom Merry. "Old Bland saw him, and is bound to know him; and his blessed uncle looked up, too, and must have spotted him looking over. Oh, great Scott!"

It was really very serious. Indeed, judging from the expressions on the faces of the Head and Colonel Bland, "serious" was far too mild a term.

Uncle Gay only looked wet and bewildered as yet. But as the Head and the colonel helped him to his feet his face went crimson and he gave a terrific snort.

"Outrageous!" he spluttered, shaking himself like a dog. "Abominable! The—the young rascal! The reckless young villain! My—my nephew! My own nephew! Doctor, you saw—"

"I—I did not see who the—the rascally culprit was," stammered Dr. Holmes. "Mr. Gay—my dear, dear sir—"

"I—I saw the young rascal, doctor!" gasped Colonel Bland, his features purple with wrath and indignation. "This is the most amazing outrage in my experience! Good gad! The boy must be caught at once! He must not be allowed to escape! I am convinced that the depraved young rascal intended that water for myself, doctor!"

"Good gracious!" stuttered the Head, who had not got over the shock yet. "Bless my soul! The—the boy certainly shall not escape! He shall be punished—he shall be punished with the utmost severity, sir! My dear Mr. Gay, pray come to my room without delay. You must have a hot bath, and I will supply you with fresh clothing. This—is unheard-of—astounding and distressing in the extreme! I will certainly—"

The Head led Mr. Gay away, and Colonel Bland followed, with a glare at the staring crowd that had gathered. They vanished, Mr. Gay leaving a trail of water in his wake.

Only then did Tom Merry & Co. really regain their breath.

They were staggered. Even Manners had not really expected Gordon Gay to keep his word. But the daring junior had done so—at least, he had attempted to empty a bucket of water over the august head of Colonel Bland. Unfortunately, again his wheeze had come "unstuck"—

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again he had failed. It was his own uncle who had suffered—the uncle whose good graces he was so desperately anxious to gain.

Really it was most tragic.

Tom Merry & Co. felt quite sorry for the hapless schemer.

But it was quite possible that he had gained his point, however. After ragging Mr. Linton's room—if he really had done so—and now playing such a prank, it was scarcely to be expected that he would escape very severe punishment.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom, who really liked the reckless and fun-loving ex-Grammarian. "Oh, great pip! The poor chap's fairly done it now! Let's go and see if he's in the study. Of all the born idiots—"

Words failed Tom, and he led the way to Study No. 10 in great haste. On the way Trimble stopped them.

His fat face was ablaze with excitement.

"I say, you fellows," he gasped, "what do you think? Somebody's chucked a bucket of water over Gay's blessed uncle—nearly got the Head himself, I believe! I say, was it— Yoooop!"

Bump!

"A little more on account for what you did this afternoon!" said Blake, wiping his foot on Baggy's fat form as he passed.

Tom Merry & Co. went on to Study No. 10, and there they found Gordon Gay. He was sprawling in the armchair in an attitude of the deepest dejection.

He nodded his head and gave a deep, dismal groan as they entered and regarded him silently.

"Well," he mumbled, "did you ever in all your giddy life hear of such awful luck? Oh, my sainted aunt! Even if I do get the sack now, the old chap will be so waxy with me he may not let me go back to the Grammar School—in fact, I feel almost certain he won't. Do you fellows think so?" he added anxiously and hopefully.

Tom Merry almost exploded.

"You—you raving lunatic!" he said in concentrated tones.

"You—you potty chump, Gay! I—I did think you had more sense than this, you fearful ass! Even if you did get the sack—which you've a dashed good chance of getting now—d'you think for one moment that Dr. Monk will take you back after being sacked in disgrace from one school, you— Oh, you make me tired, Gay!"

Gay brightened up a little.

"You—you think there's hope of the sack, then?" he asked. "The question is—will my uncle—"

"Blow your uncle!" said Tom Merry, in great exasperation. "The question is—will Dr. Monk ever take you back, you frabjous lunatic?"

"Eh? Of course he'll take me back!" sniffed Gay. "Don't talk rot. Dr. Monk's a decent old buffer, and he knows me well enough. He'll take me back like a shot, of course. In fact, it's my belief he'd ask to have me back now if it wasn't for that shindy with my uncle. Well, if I can get sacked from here my uncle will be in the soup, won't he? There won't be time for him to rush about finding another school for me and getting me 'n, you know. I've worked all that out. He'll be desperate, for he has to sail back to Australia on business next Wednesday. Well, what will he do?"

"Give you the licking of your life and send you to a home for idiots, I expect," said Blake.

"Oh, don't rot! This is a serious matter!" said Gordon Gay. "Now, my idea's this. My uncle will be desperate, and he'll go begging Dr. Monk to take me back—he'll pocket his pride, you know. And Dr. Monk will be jolly glad of an excuse to pocket his. See? Then—well, all will be plain sailing. The beaks here will be jolly glad to get rid of me, and the beaks at the Grammar School will be glad to have me back. See?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Of all the born idiots—"

"Oh, don't start that silly rot again!" sniffed Gay. "Now, do you fellows think I ought to make quite sure of things by cutting along now and ragging old Railton's study?"

"Oh, you—you—"

"I've thought of other good wheezes, too!" said Gordon Gay, wrinkling his brows thoughtfully. "I thought of turning on all the water-taps in the bath-rooms and letting the water flood the show, you know. Then I had the idea of shaving one of Selby's side whiskers off in the night. Another wheeze I'm thinking over is to screw all the masters' bed-room doors up to-night. I did think of asking Glyn to make me a supply of stink-bombs, too, to chuck into their bed-rooms first; but that might get old Glyn into a row, so that's off. I say, have you fellows got any wheezes to suggest?"

The fellows looked at Gay—their looks were most eloquent. "You see, I've got to make quite sure I shall get the sack, and not just a flogging or gating," explained Gay frankly. "I can't afford to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar! My idea is to do the thing thoroughly—on the wholesale scale, (Continued on next page.)



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you know. What about painting Railton's chivvy blue when he's asleep? That should put the tin hat on things, shouldn't it?"

The fellows did not answer—they couldn't just then. And at that moment the door was kicked open, and Kildare, the captain of the school, strode in, his face very grim.

"Gay here?" he snapped. "Oh, there you are, my lad! Come along—Head's study at once! I fancy you know what about!"

Gay grimaced.

"Is the Head waxy, Kildare?" he asked.

"Just a trifle," assented Kildare. "I once saw him waxier, though, and the chap he was waxy with then was booted out of St. Jim's that same night. But p'raps you'll only get a flogging, kid."

"Oh dear! I say, don't you really think I shall get sacked, Kildare?"

"Eh?" The skipper of St. Jim's stared at him. "Don't I think— Oh, don't try to pull my leg, you young ass! You've got enough trouble to face as it is."

"But I say—"

"That's enough! I'm not here to discuss that!" said Kildare gruffly. "Get a move on—the Head's waiting!"

And Gordon Gay got a move on, giving the juniors a dismal look as he walked out, with the Sixth-Former at his heels.

"Well?"

"What happened, Gay?"

The Terrible Three looked up anxiously as Gordon Gay came into Study No. 10 about twenty minutes later that evening.

During Gay's absence Tom Merry had been even more disturbed and uneasy than his chums. Tom liked the fun-loving and high-spirited ex-Grammarian. In his view Gay was likely enough to get expelled if he went on as he had started. But he felt quite sure, also, that such expulsion would never result in bringing about Gay's great desire—namely, his return to the Grammar School. In the circumstances Tom felt that the only result of Gay's hare-brained scheme would be to bring down a heap of trouble upon himself.

It was possible that he had already got the sack—he had certainly earned it. But Tom was hoping sincerely that he had not got it.

He eyed Gay's face sharply now. That youth looked disgusted and dismayed.

"Rotten!" he answered in a dismal voice. "My luck's out!"

"You—you've got the sack, Gay?"

"Eh? Of course not, ass! No such luck!" groaned Gay. "I'm going to get a Head's flogging in the morning. My uncle insisted on that! Would you believe it?"

"Oh!" gasped Tom in great relief. "Have you seen your uncle?"

"No; the old chap refused to see me to say good-bye!" said Gay, with a faint grin. "I'm not surprised in thecircs. He's coming back to say good-bye finally to-morrow night, I think, so I've got to pull it off somehow soon, haven't I?"

"You born idiot!"

"Well, you asked for the sack, anyway!" said Lowther. "You begged and prayed for it, and if ever a fellow deserved it you do."

"If that's all the dashed sympathy you fellows have to offer—" said Gay warmly.

"It is, and all you deserve, you footling idiot! I hope this will be a lesson to you! Perhaps you'll chuck the silly game now, and settle down, Gay," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, rats! I suppose you fellows don't understand," sniffed Gay gloomily. "At all events, I'm not done yet—not by a long chalk. And I've got to do something jolly quickly."

"Well, my hat!"

"I want the sack," growled Gay. "But I jolly well don't want a flogging. I didn't expect that at all. I don't mean to have it, if I can help it. I can tell you. Well, the only way to avoid that now is to do something else—something that will quite put the tin hat on things and turn the balance in favour of the sack. See?"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Imbecile!"

"Oh, go on!" snorted Gay. "I tell you you fellows don't grasp the position. It's either the sack or nothing for me! Before morning I've got to earn the sack somehow—no half-measures this time! Anyway, I don't mean to do any prep this evening, so I'll spend the time thinking out wheezes."

"Oh, you—you—"

"If you fellows do happen to think of a dodge let me know," said Gay earnestly. "It must be something that's

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not too steep, but will really turn the scales in favour of the sack! You've got the idea?"

"Oh, my hat! Gay, you awful ass!" said Tom Merry pleadingly. "Do chuck it—stop acting the goat, for goodness' sake! If you do get the sack, can't you see that Dr. Monk would never dream of taking you back—"

"Oh, don't sing that over again!" said Gay wearily. "If you've got no practical suggestions to offer—"

"I have!" said Tom. "It's a jolly good one!"

"What is it?" said Gay eagerly.

"Take your medicine like a man in the morning, and then chuck this footling, idiotic game, and make the best of things; that's the only practical suggestion I have to offer."

"You silly owl—"

"It's you that's the silly owl!" said Tom grimly.

"You're also a born idiot, a footling imbecile, and a—"

"Oh, rats!" said Gordon Gay crossly. "Go and eat coke!"

And with that he marched out of the study, apparently in a huff. Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders hopelessly and got his books out for prep. Evidently it was useless to talk to Gay—the ex-leader of the Grammarians had made up his mind and was not to be moved either by argument or pleading. The captain of the Shell could only wonder how it was going to end.

CHAPTER 8.

Amazing!

"WHAT the thump—" explained Tom Merry.

"What's the matter?" said Gordon Gay.

Tom Merry stared at him.

Gordon Gay had been very quiet all evening—evidently busy thinking "wheezes" out for earning the sack from St. Jim's. Whether he had thought of any or not Tom did not ask him, nor did Lowther and Manners. As a matter of fact, they were rather fed-up with Gay and his dodges. They had lost patience, and were inclined to let him stew in his own juice, as Manners put it. In any case, they knew the ex-Grammarian would have ignored their opinions and remarks.

During prep they had left him to himself, and after prep they had stayed in the Common-room until bed-time. On the way up to the Shell dormitory, Tom Merry had noticed that Gay was smiling, and he had wondered if the "sack-hunter" had thought of a new wheeze for his amazing campaign.

But Tom and the rest of the fellows in the dormitory—excepting Gay himself—were undressed and climbing into bed before Tom noticed anything unusual in Gay's attitude. Then Tom saw that Gay had made no attempt to undress, with the exception of taking off his gym shoes.

"What the thump!" ejaculated Tom again. "Aren't you going to get undressed, Gay?"

"Me? Oh, no!" answered Gordon Gay calmly. "I'm having a night out, old sport."

"What—what—"

"Like to come?" asked Gay affably. "I just feel like kicking over the giddy traces a bit to-night!"

"You—you awful ass!" gasped Tom in sudden alarm.

"You see," explained Gay, lowering his voice, "it's like this! I can see that it's no good just playing japes and all that. I don't want floggings and gatings. I've got to do something really serious—like breaking out at night—so I'm off out to-night—"

"You—"

"Of course, I'm not really going to stay out!" admitted Gay, with a chuckle. "It's spoof really! I've made a sort of bed of cushions in Study No. 10, and I shall sleep there and turn up in the morning. The beaks, of course, will think I've been out on the giddy razzle all night. That should do it, shouldn't it?"

"You fearful idiot!"

"Thanks, old top—praise from you is praise indeed! You're sure—"

"Kildare will be here in a second, Gay!" called Talbot. "Better buck up and get undressed, old chap!"

"My belief is he's thinking of running away to escape his flogging!" said Lowther. "That it, Gay?"

There was a chuckle—the fellows had been very interested indeed in Gay's adventures that evening. But Gay only smiled.

"No, that isn't it! The fact is, you fellows," he said, addressing the dormitory in general, "I'm going out to-night—keep it dark. Any of you fellows care to kick over the traces and come?"

Apparently nobody did—they all stared blankly at Gay.

"What about you, Racke?" asked Gay. "Like to come for a run to the Green Man, what? You know the way, of course! A chap like you who's fond of throwing good money away."

"You silly fool!" sniffed Racke.

"What? You funk it, too?" said Gay in astonishment. "What about you, Crooke? Just a run as far as the Green Man—"

"Oh, rats! I suppose you've gone potty!" said Crooke.

The door of Tom Merry & Co.'s study suddenly flew open and Mr. Railton appeared in the doorway. Behind him were Mr. Linton, Mr. Selby and Kildare. They fairly blinked as they saw Gordon Gay locked in the grasp of George Alfred Grundy, both of them showing considerable signs of wear and tear.

(See Chapter 9.)



"Not at all! I'm very serious, and if none of you fellows will come—"

He was interrupted by a warning cry from near the door.

"Look out—Kildare!"

Gay looked towards the door, and as he saw Kildare framed in the doorway he gave a startled gasp and scrambled into bed with his clothes on, dragging the sheets hurriedly over him—or partly over him. It was quite clear to others as well as to Tom Merry that he had purposely allowed Kildare to see him doing so.

"Oh, the awful idiot!" breathed Tom.

Kildare had seen him—in fact, he would have been blind had he failed to do so, or to see that Gay's uncovered shoulders showed that he still had his jacket on!

"Good gad!" ejaculated Kildare.

He strode into the room and approached Gay's bed.

"Gay, you footling young idiot!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "What's this game? Why aren't you undressed?"

"Oh!" said Gay.

From his tone Gay sounded suddenly alarmed.

"Get out!" snapped Kildare. "Get out, you young idiot!"

"I—I say, Kildare," gasped Gay, winking at Tom Merry, "it—it's all right. I'm in bed!"

"I see you are," said Kildare, with terrific sarcasm. "And if you aren't out again in two seconds I'll give you the licking of your life!"

"Oh, I say, Kildare!" complained Gay. "I'm in bed, aren't I? What's the matter?"

There was a chuckle round the dormitory. The Sixth-Former imagined Gay was pulling his leg, and his lips set grimly.

He did not argue the point; he just whisked the sheets off Gordon Gay, grabbed him by one leg, and whirled him out of bed.

Bump!

"Yoooooop!"

Gay landed on the floor with a terrific bump and a howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" hooted Kildare wrathfully. "This silly young idiot's antics are nothing to laugh about. Now, Gay," he added grimly, taking out his watch, "I'll give you just one minute to get undressed and into bed!"

Gay scrambled up. He was a trifle red in the face, but he seemed quite unperturbed. Again he winked at Tom Merry—a wink that was not lost upon Kildare—and then he seated himself on the bed.

But he did not start to undress. Instead, he started to put on his gym shoes.

Kildare only seemed to be aware of what he was doing

when the shoes were on; then his eyes nearly came out of his head as he saw it.

"Why," he spluttered, "you cheeky young monkey!"

"You cheeky old monkey!" retorted Gay. He turned and addressed the dormitory. "Sure none of you fellows want to come out on the razzle to-night? Now do be sports, and never mind this old monkey here!"

There was a breathless silence. It was time for the ceiling, or even the heavens, to fall, when a junior talked like that before Eric Kildare.

Kildare gasped like a stranded fish.

"Why, you—you little sweep!" he spluttered, grabbing up a slipper from the floor. "Get over that chair!"

"Rats!"

"What—what!" roared Kildare. "You hear me?"

"Rats!"

Kildare said no more. He dropped the slipper and made a ferocious rush at Gordon Gay. That junior dodged and shoved out his foot.

Kildare went a header over the foot, and as he crashed to the floor, with a gasping howl, Gordon Gay bolted from the dormitory.

"Oh, great pip!"

"He's mad!"

"Stop, you young scoundrel!" bellowed Kildare.

He jumped up and tore in pursuit, trembling with wrath. But Gay was well ahead, and he would have been down stairs the next second had not Knox of the Sixth appeared on the landing just then.

"Stop him!" roared Kildare. "Stop that young fool, Knox!"

Knox did his best to obey. The cad of the Sixth usually disliked obeying Eric Kildare, but in a case like this he was always ready and willing to obey.

He jumped in front of the fleeing Gay, his face wearing a grin.

The grin disappeared the next second.

With head lowered, Gordon Gay struck him with the force of a battering-ram full in the waistcoat.

Gerald Knox gave a strangled yelp and sat down hard, with a bump. Had he been a foot nearer the stairs he would have gone down them headlong.

The next moment Gay had flashed past him and was sliding down the banisters at express speed.

For once Eric Kildare forgot his dignity as a prefect, and the next moment he had reached the top of the stairs, and, ignoring the groaning Knox, went down the banisters after Gay. All Kildare wanted at that moment was to get within reach of Gordon Gay.

When he reached the bottom of the stairs, however, Gay was fleeing ahead along the corridor at a great speed. Kildare dashed after him.

And then another obstacle presented itself to Gordon Gay—in the form of a master this time.

It was Mr. Selby, the master of the Third Form. He was just going up to bed, and he halted at the sight of Gordon Gay racing towards him.

"Stop him!" roared Kildare. "Stop him, sir!"

"G-good gracious!"

Mr. Selby jumped. He was not made of heroic stuff, and the idea of tackling the racing junior did not appeal to him. With a startled gasp he skipped hastily to one side.

Unfortunately, Gay had expected him to attempt to stop him, and he swerved to one side.

His swerve took him full into Mr. Selby's side-step, as it were, and the result was a collision.

Mr. Selby yelled as the back of his head came into sharp contact with the passage wall. Mr. Selby's only desire after that was to grab hold of Gordon Gay.

With a snort of pain and anger, he grabbed Gay just as that youth was about to race on, and his grasp held.

"Leggo!" roared Gay, as Kildare's footsteps pounded towards them. "Leggo, or—"

He didn't finish his threat. Instead, he reached up suddenly, and—

Mr. Selby, the master of the Third Form at St. Jim's, got the shock of his life then.

For Gordon Gay grasped his left side-whisker and tugged it—hard.

"Yo-ooop!" squealed Mr. Selby.

He released the junior as though he had suddenly become red-hot. It was what Gay expected and intended him to do. He took advantage of it and flew on, just as Kildare raced up.

Ignoring the stupefied and flabbergasted Mr. Selby, Eric Kildare tore after Gordon Gay, his brow thunderous.

In the hall-way Kildare felt quite sure he would capture his quarry.

But he was wrong. The big hall doors had not been locked and bolted yet, and as Kildare reached the hall he was just in time to see the reckless junior tear open one of the big doors and vanish into the night.

Kildare gasped and raced for the doors. He ran out on to the School House steps, and stared out into the dark quadrangle.

But Gordon Gay had vanished. Not a movement in the darkness greeted the skipper's gleaming eyes.

He realised it was hopeless to follow.

Almost as in a dream the Sixth-Former returned, and found Mr. Selby still leaning against the passage wall and stroking his cheek dazedly.

"You—you saw it, Kildare!" he gasped. "That—that boy—that wretched young rascal, he—he actually pulled my whiskers!"

"I saw it, sir," said Kildare grimly. "This means expulsion for him, sir."

"Undoubtedly—undoubtedly!" gurgled Mr. Selby. "Kildare, never in my whole experience as a schoolmaster have I experienced such a humiliating and outrageous insult. Never have I known such an abominable outrage. He—he— You saw him, Kildare; you are a witness of what took place. I shall expect you to be a witness when the matter is brought before the headmaster!"

"Yes, sir; of course, sir. He also bowled me over, and nearly sent Knox headlong downstairs. It's the sack for the kid, right enough! I'm sorry, but—"

"I shall insist upon expulsion, Kildare!" gasped Mr. Selby, his eyes glittering with wrath. "Nothing less than the extreme penalty for such abominable and lawless behaviour will satisfy me. I shall insist—you hear me, Kildare?—I shall insist upon expulsion—nothing less!"

"He'll get that all right, sir," said Kildare. "I'll go along and report to Mr. Railton now."

"You need not, Kildare," stuttered Mr. Selby. "I myself will do so this very moment. We shall see—we shall see!"

Almost at a run he started off in the direction of Mr. Railton's study. Kildare frowned, and returned to the Shell dormitory.

CHAPTER 9.

The Outside Limit!

"WELL, I'm blowed!"

"The awful maniac!"

"He's mad—mad as a hatter!"

"Must be. This means the sack for him!"

"Yes, rather!"

Tom Merry did not join in the remarks concerning Gordon Gay and his extraordinary behaviour.

In the Shell dormitory there was a buzz of excited voices.

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after Kildare had vanished. Several of the juniors got out of bed and crept to the door to listen for sounds of the pursuit.

In Tom Merry's opinion, Gay really had finished things this time. If he had gone out, then it was a certainty he would be expelled, in view of the offences already to his credit, or discredit. To break out at night was a very serious matter indeed—a crime that alone might mean the sack, certainly a flogging. And in Kildare's hearing Gay had spoken of going out on the "razzle."

Tom knew that Gay did not mean it—that the hare-brained junior intended to go out and then enter the House again by the box-room window and go to No. 10 Study, to sleep there for the night. Apparently that was Gay's great scheme, and apparently he had made all his arrangements.

The scheme was certainly a mad one; but it was one that would undoubtedly gain for Gay what he was working for—the sack. Of that Tom Merry was assured; and the assurance filled the skipper with dismay.

"I heard Knox yelling just now!" whispered Gore, tiptoeing in his bare feet from the door. "I believe Gay's upset him, or something. And I fancy I heard old Selby."

"Oh, my hat!"

Wildly excited and scared, the Shell juniors strained their ears for further sounds.

"He must be absolutely potty!" said Talbot. "I'm thumping sorry, anyway, for he was a jolly decent chap."

"Hear, hear!"

"Rot!" said Grundy, with a growl. "He's a cad! Fancy going to a dingy pub like the Green Man! The rotten blackguard!"

"You silly ass—" began Tom Merry warmly.

"I've a jolly good mind to go after him!" said Grundy. "I'll drag the cad back by the scruff of his neck. Fancy disgracing the Form like this! Yes, I'm blowed if I don't go—"

Grundy was interrupted as the door opened and Kildare came in. The Sixth-Former's face was red, and he looked very grim indeed.

"Get that light out!" he snapped.

"I say, Kildare, what's happened?"

A score of voices asked the question breathlessly.

"You'll know that soon enough," snapped Kildare.

"That young fool's gone past the outside limit this time!"

"We heard Knox yell—" began Talbot.

"He bowled Knox over—nearly knocked him downstairs!" said Kildare.

"And Selby—did he—"

"He pulled Selby's whiskers, if you want to know!" said Kildare. That bit of news was too big a temptation for even the lofty Kildare to resist telling. "The raving young lunatic's booked for the sack this time, and he's jolly well asked for it, if anyone did. I'm sorry—the kid must have lost his dashed senses. But—anyway, out with that light—sharp!"

"Look here," said Grundy, great indignation in his voice. "I'm not standing this, Kildare! I'm not seeing my Form disgraced by that cad! I'll go after him and fetch him back!"

"What?"

"I know where he's gone!" said Grundy. "I'll fetch the cad back by the scruff of his silly neck. Leave it to me, Kildare!"

And George Alfred climbed out of bed.

Kildare stared at him, and then jumped forward, with a snort of wrath. He grabbed the astonished Grundy, whirled him up, and fairly threw him, big as he was, back into bed. Then he snatched up a slipper, whirled the zealous junior over into a suitable position, and started operations with the slipper.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Grundy roared in wrath and amazement.

"There," gasped Kildare breathlessly, halting at last.

"Go out after him, will you! Perhaps that'll teach you not to pull my leg, Grundy! I've stood enough nonsense from Gay, without you starting! Any fellow out of bed after this will be reported to Mr. Railton! Got that?"

"Y-yes, Kildare!"

"Ow-ow! Yow-ow!" roared Grundy.

The light went out and Kildare vanished, banging the door after him. Kildare, apparently, was not in a mood to be trifled with just then.

Grundy sat up in bed in the gloom.

"The—howling dummy!" he gasped, evidently referring to Kildare. "Fancy—after my offering to do his job, and fetch that cad, Gay, back!"

"Oh, shut up, you burling chump!"

"I jolly well won't!" snorted Grundy. "I'm going to do what I said—the job you ought to tackle, Tom Merry. Nice junior skipper you are, I must say! That rotter has got to be fetched back!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"All right!" gasped Grundy. "You'll see!"

He lay down in bed, and silence reigned in the dormitory, save for excited whispering as the extraordinary situation was breathlessly discussed. Most of the fellows expected Gay to be caught—but they did not expect to see him again that night. If he was caught he would undoubtedly be taken straight to the punishment-room.

So they composed themselves to sleep at last, and one by one they dropped off. Tom Merry was half-asleep himself when, suddenly, he heard a movement from Grundy's bed.

"Hallo, what are you up to, Grundy?" he demanded, sitting up in bed.

"I'm going after Gay, of course!" said Grundy warmly. "Think I funk the job? I'm going to do the job you ought to do, Tom Merry."

"You silly fool—"

"Kildare's an ass!" snorted Grundy in the gloom, climb-



from one of the studies made him pause, his heart thumping a trifle.

Who was in the study at that hour?

The sound was soon located, and the burly Shell fellow found that it came from Study No. 10.

Grundy hesitated a moment, and then he went to investigate.

He gently opened the door, pushed it wide, and strode in. Then he jumped.

A candle was burning in the room—and a junior was there, calmly undressing by its dim, flickering light.

It was Gordon Gay.

He had just finished putting on his pyjamas!

Grundy could scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes.

"M-mum-my hat!" he stuttered. "Gay—what the thump are you doing?"

As the struggling occupants of the carriage brought up against the door, it flew wide open and there was a sudden yell of alarm. "Look out!" Gordon Gay gasped convulsively as he felt himself falling, while Carboy gave a shriek. (See Chapter 11.)

ing out of bed as he spoke. "He's got no idea of his duty—like you! I'm going to show both of you what your dashed duty is!"

"Look here, Grundy!" said Tom Merry quietly. "Don't be an ass, for goodness' sake. You're only asking for the sack yourself! I tell you Gay doesn't intend to go to the Green Man at all. It's only his spoof!"

"Rot!" said Grundy. "You funk going after him yourself, and you're jealous of me scoring by doing your job and bringing the rotter back! That's it!"

"You ass—"

"Rats! Piffle! Shut up!" snorted Grundy.

Tom Merry had been about to climb out of bed, but he changed his mind, and his lips set. If Grundy was determined to play the fool, then why not let him? Tom knew the burly Shell fellow would resist any attempt to stop him in any case. Grundy was a fellow who always knew better than anyone else, and who never would take either advice or information he didn't wish to take.

So Tom "let him rip!"

Grundy finished dressing in the darkness, and crept out of the dormitory, closing the door behind him.

He crept along the deserted corridors, scarcely making a sound in his socks, his shoes in his hands. Here and there a light showed beneath a door, showing that all the masters had not yet retired. Realising this, Grundy went carefully, not wishing to have his dutiful intentions scotched by capture!

He reached the Shell passage at last, and was just about to make his way to the lower box-room when a sound

Gay gave a start, and then he snorted as he recognised the great George Alfred.

"Oh, you!" he said. "Well, you footling chump, what are you doing here?"

"Doing here!" gasped Grundy. "I'm after you, of course, you rotter! I was going after you to fetch you back—to prevent you disgracing the Form and School!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Gay, with a chuckle.

"It's nothing to grin about!" snorted Grundy angrily. "I suppose you've funk'd going, after all!"

"What a marvellous supposer you must have, Grundy!"

"I want no cheek!" said Grundy darkly. "I want to know what's the meaning of this rot? Why have you made a bed on the couch?"

"Well, where do you expect a fellow to make one—up the chimney, or in the coal-scuttle?"

"That's enough!" said Grundy magisterially, eyeing Gay grimly. "I want no cheek, and I'm asking no more questions. You'll drop this rot and come up to the dorm—at once!"

"Oh, my hat! Since when have you had the power to give giddy orders, Grundy?"

"I've told you I want no cheek!" bawled Grundy, quite forgetting the need for caution at that hour. "Pack up and clear off to bed at once, Gay!"

"Go and chop chips! You're too funny to live, Grundy!"

"You won't?" roared Grundy.

"Not much! Get out! You've mucked—"

"Then I'll jolly well make you!" bellowed Grundy. "I'll take you to bed by the scruff of your silly neck! Think I'm standing this sort of thing, if Tom Merry does? Not likely!"

And with that George Alfred rushed to the attack, his big fists whirling.

Gordon Gay, who had been the best junior boxer in the Grammar School, smiled and met him with a straight left that sent the zealous and well-meaning Grundy into

the fireplace with a resounding crash of falling fireirons. In the quiet stillness the sound was ear-shattering.

Crash! Clatter, clatter! Crash!

"Yoooooop!" roared Grundy.

He jumped up at once, however, and the next moment the two were at it hammer and tongs.

Gordon Gay had realised by this that Grundy had quite upset his calculations, and that his little "night-out" scheme was ruined. Well, he might as well create as much row as he could instead—especially as Grundy seemed anxious for it.

He piled in with a will. He was feeling furious with the blundering George Alfred, and he showed his feelings now by giving that worthy a very warm few minutes.

Backwards and forwards across the study, crashing into table and chairs, and making a most fearful noise, went the combatants, both of them heedless of noise.

Grundy did not think of it, and Gay was quite pleased to hear it, and he made no effort to keep quiet. He was bound to have his little scheme stopped now, and so this little rumpus would make up for it in some measure.

Only Gay seemed to hear the sounds of opening doors and of alarmed voices outside the study. Then suddenly the door flew open and Mr. Railton appeared in the doorway. Behind him showed the sour features of Mr. Selby, and behind Mr. Selby were Mr. Linton and Kildare. All were fully dressed, which was accounted for by the fact that the three masters and Kildare had been discussing Gay in the Housemaster's room when the uproar broke out. They fairly blinked as they saw Gordon Gay locked in the grasp of George Alfred Grundy.

Both showed considerable signs of wear and tear—Gay's nose was running red, and one of Grundy's eyes looked as if it had met trouble.

"Gay!" shouted Mr. Railton.

"Grundy!" gasped Mr. Linton. "Grundy—Gay— Bless my soul!"

Kildare was more practical. He ran into the room and fairly hurled the juniors apart.

Mr. Railton's lips set grim as his eyes ran round the disordered room.

"Well?" he asked quietly, as Gay and Grundy stood back, panting and gasping. "May I ask what this extraordinary scene means?"

The Housemaster's calmness was terrifying.

Both the juniors were silent, however.

"I will ask you, Grundy," said Mr. Railton. "I fancy I can guess why Gay is here, and what these cushions on the couch mean, also the blankets."

Gay jumped, and looked at Mr. Railton sharply. Somehow he didn't quite like the tone in which Mr. Railton had spoken. It almost seemed as if the master had guessed his scheme.

"I am waiting, Grundy. If you do not answer me, possibly you will answer the Head."

"I—I—" stammered Grundy.

"It's hardly Grundy's fault, sir," put in Gay. "Don't blame him—he can't help being a bit officious! He was born like that. You see—"

"Gay!" gasped Mr. Railton.

"He came after me, of course," said Gay. "He felt it was his duty to prevent me disgracing the House! I'll take all responsibility, sir," he added eagerly. "It's every bit my fault!"

"Oh, indeed!" snapped the Housemaster, his eyes fixed steadily on Gay's cheerful, battered features. "Oh, indeed! Grundy!"

"Y-yes, sir!" groaned Grundy.

"Go back to bed at once! I will deal with you in the morning."

"Yes, sir; but I want to explain—"

"Go!"

Grundy gasped and went—there was no arguing with Mr. Railton when he spoke like that. The Housemaster turned to Gay.

"Now, Gay," he said, almost pleasantly. "You have caused quite a lot of trouble this evening—an extraordinary amount, in fact. Did I not know certain facts regarding you I should almost suspect that you had suddenly taken leave of your senses."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Gay—he liked Mr. Railton's tone less and less.

"In the first place, you attempted to assault Colonel Bland, a member of the Governing Board of this school. You failed in that. Since then you have gone out of your way to cause further trouble and to make yourself a nuisance—at whatever risk to yourself. It would almost seem, Gay, that your intention was to earn expulsion from St. Jim's."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Gay. "Oh, crumbs!"

"In fact," resumed Mr. Railton smoothly, "knowing as I do that your one desire is to leave St. Jim's and return to your old school, I had already reached that conclusion when Mr. Selby and Kildare made their report to me a short time ago."

"Oh—oh, my hat!"

"This," said Mr. Railton, pointing to the temporary bed on the couch, "quite settles the matter as far as I am concerned. My suspicions were evidently well founded. You had no intention of spending the night out of doors. Gay?"

"Ahem!"

"Answer me, sir!"

"Oh, dear! I—I—"

"Your intention was solely to give that impression," said Mr. Railton. "Your hope was to add still further to your misdeeds in the expectation that you would be expelled from St. Jim's, Gay."

"Oh—oh, sir!"

It was a groan.

"I—I have never heard of such—such a thing!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"Absolutely outrageous!" gasped Mr. Selby, pointing a shaking forefinger at the unhappy Gay. "He—he actually pulled my—my whiskers, Mr. Railton. Surely expulsion—"

"Rest assured that Dr. Holmes will know how to deal with the situation, Mr. Selby," said Mr. Railton grimly. "Short of actual expulsion the most severe punishment will be meted out to the boy for his outrageous behaviour. But Dr. Holmes is not likely to be forced, if I may put it so, into expelling him. He is certainly not likely to accede to this boy's desires in that respect in the circumstances."

Gordon Gay groaned. All his plans, his schemes, his hopes, were falling about his head like a pack of cards. The game was up—he was bowled out.

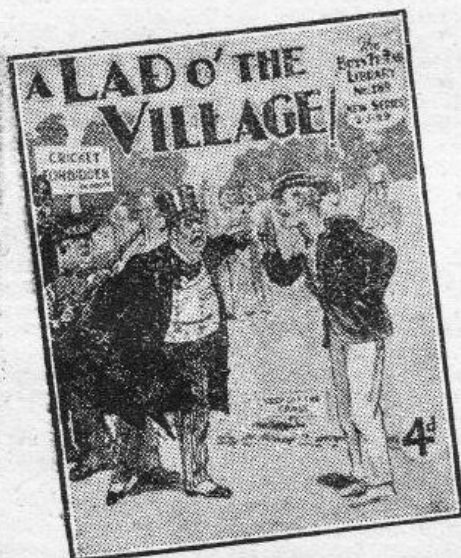
"Gay!"

"Y-y-yes, sir."

"You have, apparently, not taken into consideration the fact that masters have had a great deal of experience in dealing with the youthful mind," said Mr. Railton. "Nor have you given us credit for possessing a certain amount of common-sense. Your plot has failed, and to-morrow you will be punished as you deserve. That is all for to-night. Kildare, will you kindly escort Gay to the punishment-room, and lock him in?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Come along, Gay!"

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And Gordon Gay went—he had no choice in the matter. He had played his cards and he had failed—failed dismally. And not only was he as far as ever from all hope of obtaining his desire, but he had “bagged” a flogging, and what else was coming to him. Certainly he had earned it—even he had to admit that to himself.

But that reflection brought little comfort to Gordon Gay as he lay and thought of what the morrow had in store for him.

CHAPTER 10. Poor Old Gay!

GORDON GAY was the chief topic of conversation at St. Jim's the next morning. It was known very early that he had spent the night in the punishment-room. And it very soon leaked out what he had done, and just why he had done it.

The astonishing story filled everyone with amazement. That any fellow should go out of his way to earn the sack was something entirely unusual and startling.

It created an extraordinary sensation.

Gay was absent from Chapel and missing from breakfast. Nor did he turn up at the beginning of morning classes. And it was supposed then that he had, indeed, got the sack.

But that theory was soon shattered. At the commencement of second lesson Gordon Gay entered the Shell Form-room and took his place quietly.

It was noticed that he showed a peculiar reluctance to sit down. His face was quite pale, and he seemed very subdued indeed. Mr. Linton eyed him rather sympathetically, and did not speak to him after motioning him to his seat. The rest of the Form gave him commiserating glances. They thought him an awful ass; but they could not help admiring his nerve and courage.

After morning lessons, Tom Merry & Co. got the chance to speak to Gordon Gay, as he came out of the Form-room. They regarded him silently at first, while Gay gave them a sickly sort of smile.

“Get it hot, old man?” said Tom at last.

“Just a little!” said Gay somewhat airily. “Old Monk at the Grammar School can lay it on—he's no end beefy. But the Head here can beat him at his own game! I shan't be able to sit down in comfort for the rest of the term!”

“Hard lines. But you did ask for it, you know. We warned you—”

“Oh, don't start that again!” snorted Gay. “But that isn't the worst, you fellows,” he groaned. “I'm gated for the remainder of the term, and I've bagged the biggest impot of my giddy career!”

“Poor old chap!”

“Hard lines!”

“We'll help you with the impot, old chap.”

“I'm hoping you won't need to,” said Gay, already showing signs of brightening up. “I'm not done yet, of course.”

“Eh? What's that?”

“My uncle's making his last visit to-night before going home to Australia,” said Gay. “I think I told you fellows. He was too waxy with me last night to say good-bye then—in any case he's got to bring me back the clobber the Head lent him to go to his giddy hotel in yesterday,” grinned Gay. “Well, he comes at five—four-thirty-five in Wayland, you know! Anyway, it's my last chance of doing it.”

“Well, upon my word!” gasped Tom. “Haven't you had your lesson yet, Gay?”

“Eh? Don't talk rot! You fellows don't understand! It's no good going on with the sack dodge, of course, now they've spotted it. In fact the Head made it clear when he jawed me that it was no good—trickery he called it,” grunted Gay. “Did you ever! Well, I've dropped that idea, and now I've got to get some other wheeze that will work.”

“Well, you—you ass!”

“I've got to think of some way out of it before uncle goes!” said Gay dismally. “It'll be too late after that! Look here, can't you fellows help a chap? Surely you can think of a wheeze that will work?”

“You—you—”

“Frank Monk suggested kidnapping my uncle, and keeping him prisoner until he agreed to let me go back to the Grammar School,” said Gay. “But, of course, I couldn't agree to that. The old fellow's a jolly good sort, and I wouldn't dream of it—not playing the game!”

“Fathead!”

“If that's all you fellows can do to help me—”

“Not at all!” said Tom. “We can do something else to help—to help you come to your senses, and stop acting the goat. Perhaps a good bumping or two might do that! Collar him!”

“Here—what—I say—yoooop!”

Bump!

The Terrible Three strewed the quadrangle with Gordon Gay, and walked on. Apparently they had no intention of helping in any other direction than that. Tom Merry himself was breathing hard, and he was really losing patience with the sack-hunter. Gordon Gay certainly was the outside limit.

Gordon Gay avoided the Terrible Three after that, and they did not get a chance to speak to him until afternoon classes were over. Then Tom Merry called to him as he was hurrying towards the gates.

“Hold on, Gay!” he gasped. “Where the thump are you off to?”

“Going to meet my uncle!” said Gay glumly, halting.

“I say, keep it dark!”

“But you're gated, you ass!”

“I know! I asked Railton to let me go, and he refused. Well, I'm going. That's all.”

“But look here—”

“Rats!”

Gordon Gay went on—almost bumping into Gerald Knox of the Sixth. Knox started after him.

“Here, come back, you young rascal!” he called. “If you're going out—”

“I am, old top!”

“Come back!” roared Knox.

“Rats!”

Gordon Gay took to his heels. Knox stepped behind him briskly for a moment, and then he went in pursuit at top speed, his face red and angry. Outside the gates he found Gordon Gay just mounting a bicycle—evidently Gay had placed it there in readiness early on!

“Stop!” yelled Knox furiously. “Stop at once, you young sweep! Stop! You know you're gated—”

“Rats!” called Gay, and he jumped into the saddle.

The Sixth-Former flushed red as a chuckle went up from several fellows at the gates. Then he made a sudden rush at Gay.

His clutching hand grasped the saddle just as the machine was moving, and he held on desperately. He regretted it the next moment, for as Gay drove hard at the pedals, the sudden pull dragged Knox headlong.

Crash!

Gerald Knox measured his length on the ground, and Gay shot away, waving his hand cheerily back at the enraged senior.

There was a yell of laughter as Knox staggered up, wiping mud from his face with a hand that fairly shook with rage.

He ignored the crowd, gouged his eyes clear of mud, and then dashed back into the quadrangle, making at top speed for the cycle-shed. The look on his muddy features boded ill for the St. Jim's scapegrace.

Meanwhile Gay was riding hard for Rylcombe. At the station he housed his machine, and hurried on to the platform. His face brightened as he saw three fellows just leaving the station bookstall. They were Frank Monk, Carboy, and Harry Wootton.

“Cheerio, old sport!” grinned Frank Monk. “How goes it?”

“Any luck?” asked Carboy anxiously.

“Luck!” said Gay in disgust. “Heaps and heaps of it; tons of it, in fact. I've been fairly wallowing in luck since I saw you chaps. But it's all been bad luck.”

And he hurriedly related his recent experience to his old chums.

“Hard lines, old man,” said Frank Monk sympathetically.

“Sure we can't do anything? I say, why not let us come along and talk to the old chap?”

“Well, it might do good, and it couldn't make things worse,” said Gay glumly. “Anyway, here's the giddy local—get your tickets quick, if you are coming.”

“What ho!”

Frank Monk raced for the tickets, and they clambered aboard the train. Just as the train was starting, a tall figure dashed on to the platform, and made for a carriage. But a porter pulled the late arrival back, and the train steamed out.

“Phew!” gasped Gay. “It was that rotter Knox—after me! I say, you fellows may come in useful after all!”

“But he's missed it!” grinned Carboy.

“I know—but I heard his motor-bike! I'd forgotten he had one, and he might follow,” groaned Gay. “Anyway, you fellows keep him off, will you, if he does turn up.”

“We will!” grinned Frank Monk.

CHAPTER 11. The Unexpected!

THE juniors almost expected to see Knox waiting on the station at Wayland, for the train was a slow one, and it was possible for the Sixth-Former to have overtaken it. But he was not there, and in great relief they hurried round to the platform where the Abbots-

ford train was expected. It came in at last, and the Australian gentleman alighted from it. He gave his nephew a very grim look, and Frank Monk & Co. a still grimmer one.

But he was a kindly old gentleman, and he said nothing regarding their presence, and those cheery youths were on their best behaviour. Gay had hoped that his uncle would agree to staying in Wayland for tea, but to his disgust the old gentleman insisted upon going straight to St. Jim's.

They had not long to wait for the local train to Rylcombe—a fact Gay was thankful for, as every moment he half expected Knox to turn up. Gay breathed freely when it came in at last.

But his relief was short-lived.

As he was escorting his uncle towards it there came a shout from behind—in a familiar voice

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Gay.

He gave a quick look back, and at sight of the furious Sixth-Former running towards them he stifled a groan, and hurried his uncle on.

But Frank Monk & Co. stayed behind. They had agreed to "settle" Gerald Knox, and they intended to do so. As Knox rushed up they collared him low, and brought him crashing down. The next moment they were scrambling into the carriage.

But Knox was not to be outdone this time. Hurt and raging, he pelted up and tumbled into the carriage before Carboy had the chance to slam the door.

"You young sweeps!" he roared, as the train started. "I'll make you sit up for that! As for you, Gay—"

He rushed at Gordon Gay, and brought his flat hand across the junior's face with a resounding slap.

"Boy!" cried the astonished Mr. Gay. "Bless my soul! Boy, how dare you!"

He stood up hastily; but Knox had no eyes for him; he had scarcely seen him, in fact. The cad of the Sixth at St. Jim's was hurt, and he was in a terrific rage. He grasped Gay, and began to thump him furiously.

It was too much for Frank Monk & Co.

The next moment they were piling in with a will, and the group went in a struggling heap across the compartment. They brought up against the door with a crash.

The door had merely been pulled to by Knox as he had scrambled into the carriage, and now it flew wide open, and there was a sudden yell of alarm.

"Look out!"

Gordon Gay gasped convulsively as he felt himself falling, while Carboy gave a shriek.

But it was Frank Monk who acted.

His hand went out, and he grasped his chum firmly and held. Gay's feet slid from under him, and he fell into a sitting position near the doorway.

"Quick!" gasped Frank Monk. "I can't hold—quick!"

"Good heavens!"

Mr. Gay woke to sudden life, and, with the aid of Carboy and Wootton, he held on to Gay and Monk, wherever a grip could be got.

There was a swift, confused struggle in the doorway, and what followed nobody seemed to know clearly. A combined pull dragged Gordon Gay over the brink of danger. The next moment Frank Monk gave a cry as he stumbled and fell over Gay's huddled form. He crashed against the edge of the doorway and then disappeared, falling headlong from the train.

"Good heavens!"

For a single instant all the occupants of the carriage remained as they were, stupefied by the sudden, unexpected catastrophe. Then Carboy gave a cry of horror, and, jumping up on to the

cushions, he dragged frantically at the communication-cord.

Scarcely one of the juniors had any recollection of what happened next. There was a sudden grinding of brakes, and before the train had slowed to a stop Gordon Gay, followed by Carboy and Wootton, was jumping down on to the line and running back along the track, his heart thumping with fear.

Slow as the local had been going, it was some little time before they sighted Frank Monk, and when they did so they almost shouted in heartfelt relief.

Gay grasped his chum and held him until Carboy dashed up. A few seconds later Mr. Gay, followed by the guard and one or two passengers, came hurrying up and joined them.

Between them they carried the half-conscious junior back to the train. Frank Monk fainted right away then, but by the time Rylcombe Station was reached he had recovered somewhat.

Mr. Gay took charge of matters with unexpected firmness and efficiency. He seemed to be deeply affected.

"I will take you home myself, Monk, my boy," he told Frank, as he helped the still-dazed junior from the train. "Thank Heaven for your most miraculous escape! But you have shown real grit in the face of what seemed like certain death, and it shall not be overlooked! I shall have much to say both to you and your father. I fear I have misjudged you and your friends from the Grammar School. Gordon, please get a taxi or a car without delay!"

The only taxi at the station was commandeered, and Frank was rushed to the Grammar School and placed in the sanatorium. But, happily, as he felt quite sure himself, no bones were broken and no serious damage done. He was suffering severely from bruises and shock, however, and the school doctor ordered him to remain in bed for some days.

Gordon Gay was sent back to St. Jim's almost at once by his uncle, and he returned there in the deepest dejection—a state of mind that was not improved when Kildare took him straight to the detention-room and locked him in.

All was up now—the junior felt quite sure of that. Indeed, he had already decided to do his best to settle

down at St. Jim's, realising at last—rather late—that he was only running his own head against a brick wall in his defiance.

When Mr. Railton sent for him late evening and told him that he was to pack his boxes and return the next day to Rylcombe Grammar School, Gordon Gay got the shock of his life. It seemed like a miracle.

Actually the facts were simple, if unexpected.

Mr. Gay had a great deal to say to Dr. Monk. He not only praised Frank Monk's pluck, but he apologised, like the gallant old gentleman he was.

And, not to be outdone, Dr. Monk apologised in his turn, and invited Uncle James to dinner also. By a fortunate chance Dr. Holmes was also dining with Dr. Monk, and over the dinner the matter of Gay, naturally enough, was brought up—an amicable discussion regarding that hare-brained youth that resulted in Mr. Gay agreeing with the general opinion that his nephew would be better back at his old school. And so it was arranged—Dr. Holmes himself being obviously relieved to get rid of such a troublesome and unwilling pupil.

Next day Gordon Gay made his joyful return to the Grammar School, there to take his place as junior skipper again, and to lead his cheery followers once more on cricket field and in japes against the young gentlemen of St. Jim's!

THE END.

Your Editor Says—

HOW'S YOUR COLLECTION LOOKING?

"FINE!" As if I didn't know that was what you'd say! Six of the wonderful free picture cards you're collecting with the GEM every week are in your possession now, chums, and I can just picture your grins of delight whenever you take a look at them.

Though there are still ten more of these grand FREE GIFTS to come, you'll be able by this time to get a good idea of how your set will look when completed. Just think of it! Sixteen magnificently-produced cards in full colour—each one of them well worth keeping—the whole collection forming a unique and fascinating picture gallery of the future.

This week's card, with its picture of an amazing air liner, is followed up in spanking style by No. 7, "A FORTRESS ON WHEELS"—a monster mobile fort which will revolutionise the war of the future.

Don't miss it, whatever you do, and for safety first

Order Next Wednesday's "GEM" To-day!

When I tell you that the standard of next week's stories is quite on a par with the FREE GIFTS, I know you'll be looking out for something extra-special—and you won't be disappointed! First we have a really out-of-the-ordinary yarn of the chums of St. Jim's, entitled:

"THE INSEPARABLE THREE!"

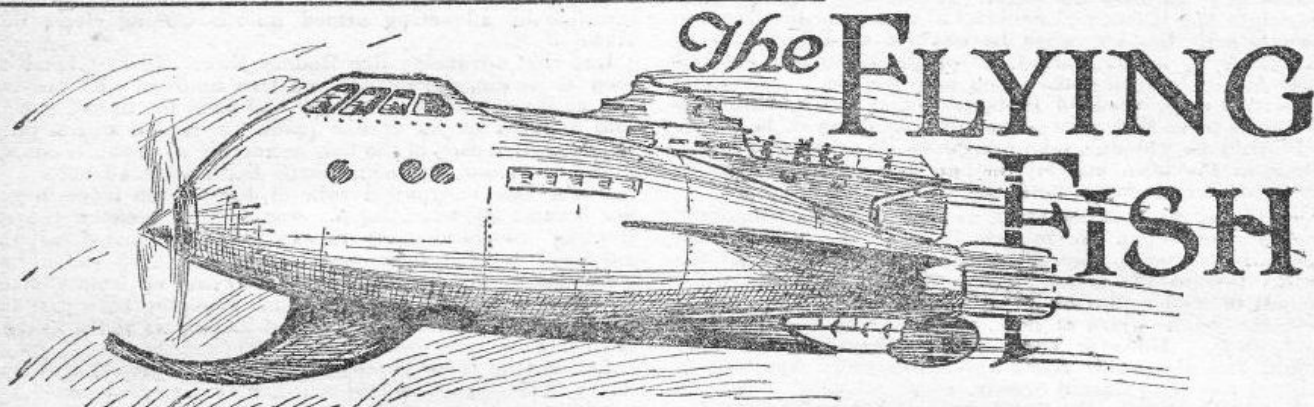
dealing with the arrival of three amazing new boys.

Other splendid features include one of the best instalments yet of our thrilling serial—"THE FLYING FISH!" another set of replies showing our tame ORACLE at his brightest and best; and, to wind up, an interesting article on the subject of the L.M.S. "Royal Scot" Locomotive, No. 6106.

Cheerio, chums, till next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE GREATEST ADVENTURE STORY EVER WRITTEN! By LESLIE BERESFORD.



On the shoulders of two boys, Rodney and his pal, Dan, rests the success of the revolution in the "Valley of No Escape." Formidable indeed is their task, but with true British pluck, they face the overwhelming odds arrayed against them!

A Night of Fate!

"THE young viper of a son!" spluttered Wummburg, dragging out a bulky automatic. "Joost the young fellow I've been wanting. And where de son is ve find also de father!"

For the second time that night, Rodney and Dan closed with Wummburg and his underlings, not waiting a second for them to be prepared with arms. Wummburg's automatic was barely drawn from its holster than a powerful punch from Rodney rendered useless for the moment the arm which purposed using it. The onslaught of the two lads, aided by the fog, took the Germans by surprise. There were only four of them left, and by this time the street was filling with furtive figures emerging all armed from the houses.

For a while it looked as if Wummburg and his men must inevitably be overwhelmed. But, unexpectedly, there appeared on the scene Colonel Stangerfeld and a dozen or more men, before whose arrival the revolutionaries drew back, firing from corners and the shadows of house doors. And the appearance of Colonel Stangerfeld with his reinforcements sealed the inevitable capture of Rodney and Dan within the next minute or so.

"So?" murmured the colonel, discovering who they were. "The young son of Blake? That is good. And the father?"

But there was now neither time nor opportunity for any search to be made for Rodney's father, as Colonel Stangerfeld realised with an angry oath. From every side the small force of armed guards was being fired at by the revolutionaries. Taking the two lads with them they began to beat a hasty retreat in the direction of the castle. As for Rodney, whatever happened to him he did not care. His father was a long way from being captured now.

The unexpectedness and ferocity of the attack in the fog so astonished Colonel Stangerfeld and the party of armed guards that they were momentarily stricken with panic. Their attention was diverted from the two lads just captured, and they were fully occupied in saving their own skins. Two of the guards dropped at the first ragged volley, and Colonel Stangerfeld flung out an angry oath as a bullet sent his military kepi flying from him.

Both Rodney and Dan were bundled backward in the precipitate retreat which followed, forced to accompany it because they stood as much in danger of being hit by the revolutionary fire as their captors did. But when the edge of the town had been gained, and the revolutionary fire had gradually ceased, a halt was made in the darkness for a consultation between the colonel and Wummburg.

They were evidently astonished at the force of the outbreak, and Rodney could hear them talking about the discovery of hidden arms as being more important than had at first been imagined. His father's name—as the

false Alexis Saranoff—was linked up with it. But Colonel Stangerfeld laughed at the idea of any mutiny proving really successful.

"If it were not for this internal fog," he was saying in German as Rodney listened, "we would wipe it out at once. At the moment we are certainly hampered. But, when the fog lifts, we will flog the life out of these pigs. As for that insolent Blake, we will soon capture him and hang him sky-high with his son. You, Wummburg, take the whelp to the castle, with three of your men, while I go with the rest and make my way to the barracks to see about this mutiny. Be careful that boy is not as easily lost as those stolen arms seem to have been."

But that, when Wummburg turned to his men grouped behind in the fog, was exactly what seemed to have happened. A minute or so earlier, as the men exclaimed, the two lads had been standing there among them. But now they were nowhere to be seen, though none of the guards had noticed their disappearance.

Actually, when Wummburg began to bellow and call his men all the blind idiots in the world, and the colonel ordered an immediate search, the two friends were quite near at hand. They were crouching within a few paces of the colonel and Wummburg, hidden from them only by the sill of an open window. It had been Dan who, a few seconds earlier, had accidentally discovered a building and an open window so close at hand, he had whispered a hint to Rodney and vaulted noiselessly over the sill into the darkness beyond, his friend close at his heels.

Huddled motionless out of sight, and scarcely daring to breathe, Rodney had listened to the German talk of the colonel and Wummburg, and now with Dan, waited while the two raged and stormed and set about searching for them. For a moment or two it seemed as though escape was impossible, for an electric torch was brought into use revealing the existence of the open window.

However, the very use of the electric torch, and the noise of search, seemed to have attracted afresh the attentions of the revolutionaries. A violent outburst of firing from the darkness around brought the search to a sudden end, and the colonel and his men were once again involved in a desperate fight for their own safety. Gradually, hampered by the fog, and uncertain of the strength of those attacking them, they were pressed back towards the castle.

"Well, that's that, Dan!" laughed Rodney, as the noise of battle rolled away into the distance and they stood upright again with some relief. "Perhaps it's just as well you got us away, though I wasn't too certain when I followed your suggestion. I was inclined to go quietly with them. Dad counted on us being a bit useful at the castle. There's that secret way, don't forget, to be found."

"I know that, Mister THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,110.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

RODNEY BLAKE, a stocky youngster, whose one ambition is to follow in the footsteps of his father, Adrian Blake—a news correspondent now out of England on business for his paper—is strolling along Littleworth Cove in company with his chum,

DAN LEA, when he sees a strange-looking craft resembling in shape an airship and a boat combined.

PRINCE ALEXIS KARAGENSKI, the ship's commander, informs Rodney that there is a serious case of illness aboard, and in consequence succeeds in getting Dr. Fraser, the youngster's guardian, to go aboard. Some time later Rodney and Dan are captured by KaragenSKI's men and taken on to the ship as prisoners. The strange craft then rises after the fashion of an airship and speeds them away to the "Valley of No Escape" where, in the charge of Wummburg, an obnoxious, one-eyed giant, and a host of armed guards, are thousands of prisoners building at desperate speed a fleet of Flying Fish. With this formidable fleet the heads of the conspiracy hope to conquer the whole world. Following a rumour with Wummburg Rodney, to his amazement, comes face to face with his father. Adrian Blake hurriedly explains that, under the guise of a Russian expert in poison gas, he has gained access to the conspirators' stronghold with a view to encouraging the half-starved slaves to revolt against their task-masters. The deception is discovered, however, that same day, and Rodney is hurrying off to warn his father of the fact when he overhears Wummburg boasting to his men that both he and his father will be food for the wolves before morning.

"So I'm to be food for the wolves, am I?" says Rodney, confronting the giant. "Well, we'll see. But meanwhile, remember, wolves have teeth!"

(Now read on.)

Rodney," agreed Dan. "I thought of that. But it wasn't as if we knew the secret. It was only a chance that we might find it out, and doubtful at that according to your own father. Besides, when he was for sending us up to the castle he didn't know those people there had got the real Alexis Saranoff come along large as life."

"That's true," nodded Rodney. "And that's something he ought to be told right away. Not knowing it, he might take risks he wouldn't take otherwise. We'd best get back down in the town and try to find him. Things seem to be pretty lively down there, don't they?"

The firing down in the town, as they left their temporary shelter and began to retrace their steps, had become increasingly tense, especially in the direction of the works beyond the river. From that direction came the sounds of loud explosions at intervals, and, in spite of the fog, the yellow glare of fires could be seen burning here and there. However contemptuous Colonel Stangerfeld might feel about this rising there was every sign that it had, at any rate, started briskly.

Naturally enough, the two lads were not to go very far without being challenged. They had indeed not long entered the actual town, with its clustered rabbit-warren of hovels, than rifle shots rang out from the darkness, and the warning whine of bullets whizzing past their heads brought them to an abrupt halt.

Wild figures converged on them from every side, hands grabbing at them, and voices questioning them fiercely in Russian.

Rodney tried in vain, with his limited knowledge of that language, to explain that they were friends. These frenzied revolutionaries understood nothing excepting—as one of them seemed to be pointing out bloodthirstily—that the two lads were part of the company up at the castle, their hated enemies. Rifles and knives made a bristling hedge around the two at the moment, when Rodney had an inspiration, and mentioned the name of Piludski.

Instantly, though still suspicious, the revolutionaries became less aggressive and frenzied. They jabbered together in Russian, one of them appearing eventually to persuade the others. Finally, the lads were grabbed by a half-dozen of them, and dragged hurriedly farther into the town, and eventually thrust into the lighted interior of a house. Here, to their intense relief, was the man whose name Rodney had mentioned.

"One good turn deserves another!" said Rodney to his friend as the Pole, recognising them instantly, spoke rapidly and energetically in Russian to those who had brought them.

As a result, Rodney and Dan were released at once and treated with immediate respect.

Piludski did not speak much English, but he seemed to understand that the two chums were in search of Rodney's father. That, from what they gathered of his broken English, was a difficult problem. He did not seem quite to know where Adrian Blake was to be found. He suggested that he should arrange for two of his men to take the boys somewhere, though where they could not understand.

In the midst of this, however, Piludski's attention was attracted by an urgent message just come in. It seemed that some attack had commenced, which needed his presence elsewhere. With people coming and going in a great state of excitement the two chums seemed to have become forgotten. And the rattle of machine-guns close at hand, bursting suddenly into activity, seemed to suggest a good reason why.

Following the others out of the house, Rodney and Dan realised that a heavy drive was being made by armed guards, whose figures in the now slightly drifting fog could be distantly seen in the flames of a building alight on the far bank of the river.

Unarmed, and mainly anxious to find Adrian Blake, they realised that this attack was so much in the nature of a surprise that the revolutionaries stood in danger of being stampeded and driven back.

"We ought to give them a hand!" said Rodney. "But fists are no good in a case like this, and we haven't even got one gun between us."

"Bide there a second, Mister Rodney!" called out Dan, and dived afresh into the house, from which he emerged in no time with a small sack in his hands.

"Bombs!" he said. "I rested my eyes on them in there just now, and thought how handy a couple of them might be in one's pocket at a time like this. Couple of dozen, I should say. Half for you and half for me."

Bombs they were, as Rodney could see in the growing light of burning which pierced the fast-thinning fog. A kind of bomb not unlike the Mills type, with which he had become acquainted through his school cadet corps. And

while Dan and he divided them and stored them handy, Piludski and his revolutionaries were violently thrown back, the line of advancing armed guards coming closer into view.

Into that advancing line Rodney threw the first bomb as soon as its pin was drawn, and Dan followed with another just as the explosion of the first had flung the line of guards into disorder at its nearest point. A second and a third followed from each of the lads as rapidly as possible, adding to the confusion and momentarily halting the advance.

Under this unexpected rain of bombs, the machine-gun fire became suddenly dumb. And in that moment the retreating revolutionaries—themselves as surprised as the guards—recovered their morale, and began to sweep forward again, with reinforcements hurrying up from another direction to join them. They came sweeping back past the figures of the two lads, and hurled themselves at the guards, who, in turn, were flung backwards.

And among those joining in with the reinforcements was Larry O'Hagan. The Irishman had evidently witnessed the bombing incident and its effect on the attackers, and—when the armed guards had found they were doomed to failure on this occasion, and had withdrawn altogether—he came hurrying back to greet the lads, surprise in his eyes and a grim chuckle of joy on his lips.

"So this is what you call obeying orders, is it, begorrah?" he said, slapping Rodney on the shoulder. "And didn't I hear your father afther telling ye that the best place for ye was up at the castle? And that's not here now, is it? And throwing bombs about as if they was cricket-balls! What's the meaning of it, at all, at all?"

Rapidly Rodney explained what had happened to change their plans, how he and Dan had discovered that the real Alexis Saranoff had arrived in the valley, and Adrian Blake's real identity was unmasked. Also how afterwards they had come to give him warning at the underground headquarters that he was to be arrested, and had done what they could to keep Wummburg and his men away from the house while Larry O'Hagan and he got clear to start the revolution.

"We thought he ought to be told as soon as possible, as otherwise he might take risks he wouldn't do if he knew they'd found out who he really is," Rodney was explaining when he noticed the startled expression on the Irishman's face.

"And, begad!" said the latter, under his breath. "It's half an hour or more too late you are for that, me son! It's just about that time since your father went straight up to that same castle to follow out a plan he'd had in his mind all the while, never reckoning they'd suspect who he was. There was something he was afther, and it was only to be got at the castle. That was one reason why he wanted you two young spalpeens up there, and he went there himself when he and I left that house, counting on being still taken for the real Alexis Saranoff, so as to work his plan right under their noses."

Rodney Conceives a Plan!

FOR a moment Rodney was too startled to speak. This was staggering news after all the trouble Dan and he had taken to prevent such a thing from happening.

"You're quite sure he's gone there?" he asked hoarsely, swept by emotion.

"When your father made up his mind to go anywhere," replied the Irishman, "it was a certainty that he went there. In this case, he was feeling specially safe. He'd never have dreamed the other fellow would be turning up and spoiling things. Begorrah, and it's devilish awkward, it is! He'll be there easy by now."

"Then there's no chance of much hope!" said Rodney, with a little gulp of misery in his voice. "They were going to shoot him—and me, too—when they got us, so Wummburg said. They may have shot him already—"

"And they may not!" interrupted O'Hagan, light-hearted as Irishmen are at the most critical of moments. "I'd not be making so sure about that, me son. Begad, and to my thinking, those folks up at the castle will be too busy wondering what's happening down here for them to be thinking about executions at the minute. They'll keep those tit-bits till later. No, you don't want to be worrying over small things like that."

"Small!" exclaimed Rodney. "Anyhow, something's got to be done. I can't hang around doing nothing—"

"That's true enough!" chuckled the Irishman. "And if we hang about here we'll be corpses ourselves in no time. Let's get to cover, anyhow, while we think things over."

That necessity was uncomfortably emphasised by the



Suddenly the two boys found themselves surrounded by the maddened revolutionaries. Rifles and knives bristled around them, and in vain Rodney tried to make the peasants understand that he and his chum were on their side. (See page 26.)

sudden splatter of machine-gun bullets so close to them that the two lads ducked and followed the Irishman from their exposed position to a more sheltered one in the shadow of some houses. The mist was rapidly thinning now, and the two lads could see that they were in a street leading down to the river.

Beyond this the big area of the works was a scene of burning and furious fighting. With the lifting of the mist the armed guards were beginning to press their attacks with more certainty, able now to see somewhat how the land lay and who they were fighting. From the barracks near the power house they were trying to storm the works to regain them. On the north side of the town, too, the firing had become suddenly heavy.

It was on that side that the greater part of the armed guards were concentrated, and from that side, O'Hagan told the two lads, the danger was greatest. Evidently a considerable portion of that force had been hurriedly brought to a position just below the castle, and were trying to thrust a spear-head through the north-eastern corner of the town to reach the river and cross it.

These were the guards whom the two lads, with their use of bombs, had greatly helped to drive back. But a number of them seemed to have recaptured the eastern lock and had crossed the river that way. These were now the cause of the renewed machine-gun fire, which was driving back the revolutionaries. The Irishman and the two lads were obliged once again to retreat from their new position, which was enfiladed by this latter force, while a stampede of retiring revolutionaries swept them apart.

What had happened to O'Hagan they did not know. Thin in some parts, the fog was still lying thick in others, and the last they saw of the Irishman he was disappearing into it, evidently engaged in stemming the stampede. Themselves, they were pushed back by the onrush, and were then thrust into a side-street. A second later the tide of combat had passed them: Dan pulled the more impetuous Rodney back into the darkness of an open doorway, with a sharp little exclamation of warning, as a wave of uniformed guards with their machine-guns swept past the side-street in pursuit of the revolutionaries.

It did not take them long to discover that they were cut off from Larry O'Hagan and the revolutionaries by a strong barrier of armed guards, with Colonel Stangerfeld and Von Roden directing operations. The former took up his position at the end of the side-street, not many yards from where

the two lads hid in the doorway; and from what Rodney heard him saying to Von Roden it was evident that he had changed his opinion about the possibilities of the rising. Von Roden as well was alarmed.

Rodney, listening, was able to learn how the situation actually stood according to the reports obtained by telephone from various parts of the valley. What troubled Von Roden most, it appeared, was the fact that the revolutionaries' success in capturing and doing their best to demolish the works had been complete. South of the river only a small force of armed guards entrenched in the power house remained alive, and these dare not venture out. North of the town, too, the guards had been pressed back towards the wireless station and the northern pass.

"Borodov has wirelessed to Moscow for troops," Rodney heard Von Roden remarking, "but it may take some days before they can get here. The situation is certainly dangerous. It is not of much use to us now that we have that cursed Englander safe up at the castle. We may yet not be very safe there ourselves. But what troubles me most is the chance that those mad fools down there in the works may smash up our Flying Fish before we can regain that side of the river. If we could only reach that and get aloft. In half an hour a half-dozen bombs could be dropped on this town, and the rising would be over. Can't we press forward more urgently, Stangerfeld, than we are doing?"

Rodney could not overhear what the colonel replied to his impatient companion, for heavy reinforcements of armed guards were being rushed up at the moment, making the position of the two lads highly dangerous if they did not want to be captured. And by this time the first signs of dawn began to appear, so that little opportunity remained for them to escape unobserved and find some way to rejoin the revolutionaries.

The question naturally uppermost in Rodney's mind was how, or in what way, he could help his father. He had been sorely worrying over this while Von Roden was talking, and Rodney had pricked up his ear when he overheard the plan to recapture the completed Flying Fish, and to use it to fly over the town and bomb the revolutionaries into submission. That, of course, would mean an end to the rising if the plan succeeded, and that had to be prevented.

But another thought came to Rodney's mind, and, after

telling Dan, in undertones, what Von Roden had said, he put his scheme to his friend.

"No doubt it sounds a potty idea, Dan," he said, "but it might, after all, be possible, if we can only get hold of Larry O'Hagan. Why not get the Flying Fish up in the air ourselves, and use it as a weapon against the other side before they have a chance to do anything? Larry must know something about how it works. Anyhow, we've got to do what we can to warn him what they're after. Let's get a move on, and find him."

Dan agreed. All the same, surrounded as they were with the enemy, and with the light growing stronger every minute, it seemed no easy matter to effect their object. But, while they were hiding in the dark and meditating a sudden rush, for the second time that night Dan conceived a way out of a difficult situation. Just outside the door, in the growing light of the street, sprawled the dead bodies of three armed guards in their heavy military overcoats and kepis, and with their rifles and bayonets near them.

"Here we are, Mister Rodney!" said Dan under his breath, pointing towards the bodies. "It may seem a bit gruesome, taking things from dead men, but that's our only way out without being noticed. Those overcoats and caps and arms are what we want. It isn't too light yet for us to rouse suspicion if we mix with the rest as guards."

"That's the plan!" nodded Rodney. "Nice or not, that's the only way out for us. Don't let us waste any time, Dan."

A few minutes later, in the grey dawning, two uniformed guards emerged from the darkness of that doorway and walked nonchalantly along the side-street in the opposite direction to that in which Von Roden and the colonel were. In the faint light, with overcoat collars turned well up and kepis rammed low over their faces as they mingled unobtrusively with the other armed guards, they had no great fear of detection. Rodney, listening to the guttural German remarks bandied to and fro, gathered that these were men from the northern pass, not long arrived in the valley. They never questioned the two comrades who had joined them.

In that way the two chums marched with the attacking force to the front, a ragged line of street fighting representing to them a frontier beyond which was freedom. It was heavy fighting, for apparently Larry O'Hagan had steadied the stampede of the revolutionaries. The latter, in strong force, were pressing Colonel Stangerfeld's guards with great courage. So successfully, too, that as the two lads reached the line, the guards were retreating to a less-exposed position.

Here the earlier advantage of their uniformed disguise was turned into a danger to them; for the revolutionaries naturally imagined them to belong to the enemy. They had no time or chance to throw off their disguise when they were attacked by an avalanche of wild revolutionaries, seizing on them and yelling threats. It was more than ever now a case of fighting for their lives.

Fortunately, while they both had their backs to a wall, and had so far succeeded as to throw off the clawing hands trying to strangle the life out of them, the revolutionaries clearly deciding to shoot them without further delay, there rolled up a thick cloud of smoke from some house burning violently at the river-edge. Neither Rodney nor Dan wasted an instant in taking advantage of this unexpected screen to their movements.

"After me—quick, Mister Rodney!" exclaimed Dan, grabbing his companion by the arm. "I know just where we are now."

Behind them, as they raced silently side by side, the revolutionaries were to be heard distantly, raging over the escape of their imagined enemies, between themselves and whom the black cloud of smoke had made a convenient pall. But by now the two lads were outside this again in the grey dawn, when Dan led the way down a side turning under a big building, with no one in view at the moment—a building Rodney vaguely recognised as the hospital.

Both of them, with one accord, began to tear off their military overcoats and kepis, as dangerous in this part of the town as their own clothes would have been in the part held by the armed guards. The change had just been completed when they were interrupted by a surprised voice with a broad Scottish accent just behind them.

"Weel! I've heard aboot wolves in sheep's clothing, but ye seem to have reversed the process, laddies! What seemed to be wolves have turned out to be lambs. Anyhow, it's a fortunate meeting. I've been wondering what was happenin' to ye both."

"And begorra," chuckled an Irish brogue, "it's a case of something always happening with these two spalpeens,

doctor! They're regular Maskelyne and Devant, the pair of them. You never know where they're popping up, or how."

All's Well!

NOTHING more convenient after all their trouble could possibly have happened than for them to come upon Larry O'Hagan at this moment. Nor could the two lads have been more pleased to see anyone again than they were to meet Dr. Fraser, from whom they had been separated ever since they came to the valley. The sight of him brought back, especially to Rodney, memories of far-off Tidewell and the days when he had longed for adventure, little dreaming how swiftly his feet were to be caught in the net of this amazing intrigue, bringing him more of adventure than was altogether pleasant.

Something of that adventure banged and blazed and rattled around them at this instant, and there was very little time for talk on anything but the urgency of the moment. Dr. Fraser had a hospital full of wounded, and was only snatching a moment for a word with the Irishman. The latter had come to the hospital to ascertain the truth of a rumour that Piludski was mortally wounded. He was, at any rate, so badly hit that he could take no further part in the fighting.

"So, you see, me sons," said O'Hagan whimsically, "there are only you and me left to carry on this little war. Are we downhearted?"

"No!" declared Rodney and Dan together, and the former began to explain what had happened since the Irishman and they had become separated, and of Von Roden's overheard plan for the recapture and use of the Flying Fish.

"My idea was that we—you and the revolutionaries—should use the Flying Fish first," explained Rodney. "If we could get her to fly over the castle, Mr. O'Hagan, and the people in it were given a time limit to surrender as prisoners, or be bombed from above, they'd climb down without much argument. And that would settle the whole matter—as well as save my father's life."

"Might it?" chuckled the Irishman grimly. "Well, it's an idea, anyhow, though I'm afraid it's not so practicable as it sounds. There's no one, you see, to handle her."

"Couldn't you?" asked Rodney.

"Devil a bit, could I! It's not so easy as saying your alphabet, let me be afther telling you. Apart from Von Roden, there's only one person does know the workings of her complete enough to take her up and handle her properly. That's the poor fellow Ashton, who invented her. And he's as mad as a March hare. Doesn't even know his own name, does he, doctor?"

"And probably never will," said the doctor. "That's where those brutes up at the castle punished themselves and him. In preventing him from escaping, the blow they gave him killed the brain they'd intended to make of service to them."

"Anyhow," said the Irishman to Rodney, "it's lucky you happened to bring along that piece of information, me son, as to what Von Roden had in mind. We'll get busy seeing that he's kept conveniently distant from that Flying Fish, whatever else happens."

With Adrian Blake imprisoned up at the castle, and with Piludski laid up in hospital, the whole onus of carrying on the revolution lay on Larry O'Hagan's shoulders, and he wasted no time in accepting the responsibility. Night had definitely given place to day, and this allowed one to see more clearly the whole situation. Very different the valley looked when the mist had vanished and the red eastern sun flooded the scene.

Smoke and flames still partly hid the works, where the giant slips in which the new Flying Fish had been under construction were all burned. Portions of the town were burning as well, and an explosion at the power house had partly wrecked that building. As far as the fighting was concerned, that died away somewhat after the sun had risen. Colonel Stangerfeld's attempt to retake the town from the castle side had been resisted. Only a small eastern portion of it lay in his hands, and the revolutionaries still held the bridge which joined the town on the works side.

It was true that he and his men still had the eastern portion, enabling him to cross the river that way. But here again a strong force of revolutionaries held him up, and apparently he was waiting for reinforcements from the barracks near the northern pass.

(Next week's instalment is full of startling developments, chums. Don't miss it whatever you do. And what's more don't forget that next week's GEM contains another topping FREE picture card.)

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