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The GEM 2^D



THE
RIVAL
SPEAKERS!

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THE ST JIM'S



Speeches are the order of the day when St. Jim's start their own Parliament, but the only thing the juniors agree about is shouting the speakers down!

CHAPTER 1. Something Like An Idea!

TOM MERRY had been sitting silent for some time. The dusk of the May evening was deepening over St. Jim's, and the gas was lighted in Tom Merry's study in the School House. Manners and Lowther were busy. Lowther's pen was scratching away at express speed through a German imposition. Manners, the amateur photographer of the Merry Hobby Club, was mending a printing-frame. And so Tom Merry's two chums had not noticed, for some time, the unusual shade of thought upon his sunny brow.

But Lowther's pen ceased at last to travel over the paper, and he looked up.

"There, that's done!" he said, with a sigh of relief. "Fifty beastly lines from beastly Schiller, knocked off in twenty beastly minutes! What do you think of that, kids?"

"Beastly clever!" said Manners.

"What are you doing, kid?" asked Lowther, looking at him.

"Mending the printing-frame you shoved your great hoof on yesterday."

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"Well, you shouldn't put your printing-frames on the floor, you know."

"I didn't! It was Tom Merry knocked it down with his silly elbow."

"Then don't blame me. What are you up to, Tom?" said Lowther, turning round in his chair and looking at the chief of the Terrible Three. "What the dickens are you sitting there looking like a moulting hen for?"

"Eh?" said Tom Merry, coming with a start out of a brown study.

"I say, what are you sitting there looking like a moulting hen for?" said Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I wasn't aware that I was looking like a moulting hen," he replied. "I've been thinking, that's all."

"Well, next time you're going to think, do it front of a looking-glass," said Lowther. "then you'll be able to work up a more agreeable expression, old chap. Have you been thinking about anything in particular?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Some wheeze up against the New House?" asked Lowther. "I should like to rag old Schneider for giving me that impot, and that isn't possible, so a row with the New House fellows would be the next best thing."

PARLIAMENT!

By

Martin Clifford.

"No rows for me," said Manners, "till I've got this frame mended."

"Oh, I know it's no good speaking to you when you get on anything connected with your silly photography!" grunted Lowther. "What's the game, Tom? Is it a row with the New House rotters, or shall we get along to Study No. 6 and rag Blake and Gussy?"

"Neither!"

"Well, I'm in want of a little exercise," said Lowther, looking rather aggrieved. "Why shouldn't we have a row with Figgins & Co.?"

"Well, Marmaduke has just gone away for a time," said Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. have gone to see him off at the station. We can leave House rows over for a day or two."

"Yes; but—"

"Besides, I've got something better on."

"Well, get it off your chest!"

"I've been thinking, and I've got a really ripping wheeze," said Tom Merry, with a sparkle in his eyes. "It's a thing we can all join in—ourselves, Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co.—everybody, in fact. We can put rows off for a bit. I dare say you know there was a bye-election the other day—I forget where?"

"What on earth has that got to do with us?" said Lowther, staring. "I suppose you're not thinking of setting up as a candidate for Parliament, are you?"

"Yes."

"Eh?"

"Yes, I am. Not the Parliament that meets at Westminster, but a much more up-to-date one—St. Jim's Parliament!" said Tom Merry.

"Eh?"

Manners said "Eh?" this time, as well as Lowther. Both the chums were staring blankly at Tom Merry, as though wondering whether anything had gone wrong with his mental works.

The hero of the Shell smiled serenely.

"You look surprised, my infants!" he remarked.

"Oh, no!" said Lowther. "Just wondering whether you were off your rocker, that's all!"

"I've thought out the idea," explained Tom Merry. "I think it's a really ripping one. You've heard of the suburban parliaments, of course. A lot of chaps meet, in the form of the House of Commons, and speechify and divide, and so on, and elect Ministers of the Crown, and all that."

"I've heard of 'em," said Lowther.

"So have I," said Manners. "I've got a cousin who goes in for that rot."

"It's not rot!" said Tom Merry warmly. "It's jolly good fun."

"Oh, I'm sorry! I withdraw the words," said Manners gracefully. "If that's your idea, of course, I won't call it rot."

Manners put a strong accent on the word "call," as if to imply that he reserved the right to think as he liked about it.

Monty Lowther looked reflective.

"I think there's something in it," he said. "We can extend the franchise to all the juniors of both Houses, and the election will be great fun."

"Well, that's so," admitted Manners. "Chaps can represent the towns they come from, and the majority will form the Government, and the other rotters the Opposition."

"That's it," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "There are more fellows in the School House than the New House, so there's pretty certain to be a School House Government and a New House Opposition."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good!"

"I don't know," said Manners, shaking his head. "Blake and his gang are certain to set up in opposition to us, and split the School House vote."

Tom Merry's brow wrinkled a little.

"Well, I shouldn't wonder," he remarked. "Blake has a peculiar idea that he's leader of the School House juniors,

and until he gets that idea out of his head, we shall never really get him to see reason."

Monty Lowther laughed.

"You won't get the idea out of his head with anything short of a crowbar," he remarked.

"We can go along and talk to them," said Tom Merry. "On an important occasion like this they may be willing to talk sense. Anyway, before we allow difficulties to block up the way, we ought to see what can be done. If we form the Government we shall put down cheeky juniors with a strong hand."

"Good! Those chaps in the Fourth can never be brought to show a proper respect for the Shell. Chuck that thing into the fire, Manners, and come along!"

"Rats!"

"Oh, come along, kids!" said Tom Merry, rising. "Study No. 6 will be at tea now, and we shall catch them. Nothing like striking the iron while it's hot."

"But I want to use this frame in the morning."

"Lots of time for that," said Tom Merry cheerfully, jerking the frame out of the hand of the amateur photographer, and pitching it upon the bookshelf. "Come along!"

"But look here—"

"Follow your leader, kids!"

"Oh, all right!" said Manners, with a grunt. "Get along!"

The Terrible Three left the study. It was less than a minute's walk to Study No. 6, the famous apartment occupied by Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, Tom's rivals for the leadership of the School House juniors.

The door was closed, but the click of cup on saucer and fork on plate showed that the four chums of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's were at home.

Tom Merry knocked at the door.

"Come in, fathead!" sang out the cheery voice of Jack Blake.

The Terrible Three kicked the door open, and marched in. Study No. 6 were sitting round the tea-table, and the room looked very cosy. Blake had just finished carving a ham, getting wafery slices of meat off a bone that looked as if it were bare enough for a dog to gnaw with satisfaction. He looked up at the chums of the Shell.

"Hallo, kids! You've come at the wrong time!"

"How's that?" asked Tom Merry.

"Out!" Blake replied. "I mean we're out of grub. This ham has seen service, and it's come nobly to the front again to save us from actual famine. It isn't everybody who could carve a ham like that!"

Tom Merry looked critically at the denuded bone.

"You're about right there, Blake," he said. "I don't think we'll ask you for any of that ham. We've had tea, as a matter of fact."

"There's no telling what a skilful carver with a sharp knife may do," said Blake, cocking his eye thoughtfully at the ham. "If you'd like to take tea with us, I'll do my level best with this."

"That's all right; we're not hungry."

"Please yourself, dear boys. You don't mind as going on with our tea, do you?"

"Oh, not at all!"

"Certainly not," said Lowther. "I've paid for admission, in my time, to see the animals feed at the Zoo, and I'm not likely to want to miss a show of the same kind gratis."

Blake rose to his feet.

"There's a door and a window in this study," he

remarked. "Which do you prefer as a mode of exit, Lowther?"

"Oh, pax!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We haven't come here to row. Pax!"

"That's all very well——"

"Of course it is. Go on with your tea, and if Lowther makes any more jokes we'll scrag him. They're rather rotten, anyway."

"Are they?" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "I say——"

"Cheese it, and let your uncle speak!" said Tom Merry severely. "We've come here to tell you kids——"

"Who are you calling kids?"

"To tell you young gentlemen of the Fourth Form about a new wheeze."

Blake gave an expressive sniff.

"Hum! We're beginning to know your wheezes, Tom Merry. Is it anything up against the New House?"

"Not this time."

"Something up against the Grammar School, I suppose? We shall have to look into it very carefully before we follow your lead in that direction, my pippin. We know you!"

"The last wheeze up against the Grammar School came off rippingly," said Digby. "Let's give Tom Merry his due, Blake. He isn't a duffer always."

"No; there are lucid intervals," admitted Blake.

"But what's the idea?" asked Herries.

"You see," said Tom Merry, "there has lately been a change of Government——"

"What on earth has that got to do with us?"

"Well, as politics are in the air, it's time St. Jim's came to the front in that line. We are thinking of having a St. Jim's Parliament——"

"My only hat!"

"What do you think of the idea? Same kind of Parliament that they have at Westminster, you know, only with improvements."

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Blake heartily. "I've seen something of that sort of thing at home in the holidays, and there's heaps of fun in it."

"Then you cads—I mean kids—are willing to come into the thing?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard the ideah as wippin'!"

"Certainly," said Blake, "we'll join you—rather! We elect Ministers of the Crown, and so forth, and make laws binding on the electors?"

"That's the idea!"

"You want me to be Prime Minister——"

"Quite a mistake. I had booked that for myself."

"Oh, don't be an ass. You know——"

"Anyway, it depends upon the vote of the House," said Tom Merry.

"What House—the School House?"

"No, dufer; the House of Commons of St. Jim's!"

"Ah, I see! Well, that's all right."

"Only the School House will have to stand together and rally round the old flag," said Tom Merry, with a sniff in the direction of Herries. "The New House bounders are certain to come into the game, and we don't want to be divided among ourselves. The School House ought to form the Government and the New House the Opposition."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Something in that," admitted Blake. "So long as you chaps are reasonable, I don't see why we shouldn't work together first-rate."

"That's what I was thinking. The Fourth Form ought naturally to treat the Shell with a proper respect——"

"Rats! Catch anybody respecting you Shellfish!"

"If you are going to raise difficulties at the start——"

"I'm not. It's you who are raising the difficulties by talking mere piffle," said Blake. "You are a new boy at St. Jim's——"

"I'm a what?" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"What are you talking about?"

"You're a new boy, practically," said Blake obstinately. "Anyway, I was here before you, and naturally I take precedence and so does the Fourth Form. The Shell doesn't amount to much. We tolerate you bounders——"

"Yaas, that is twue. We tolewater you boundahs——"

"Look here," exclaimed Manners wrathfully. "If you kids don't talk sense——"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Mannahs!"

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "No good rowing at the beginning of a really good wheeze. Are you ready to join in the idea?"

"Oh, yes, as far as that goes."

"Then I'll go over and see Figgins about it," said Tom Merry. "Come on, kids! We'll get Figgins & Co. to come into the thing, and then issue election writs——"

"My hat! That will be going strong."

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"May as well do the thing in style. We ought to call a general meeting of the electors of St. Jim's first, though," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Perhaps an election poster up in the Hall would be a good wheeze. It would attract attention."

"It would, and more attention than you might like, if the House masters cut up rusty," said Jack Blake.

"You have to run risks when you go in for elections——"

"Well, get off and tell Figgins. I expect he's back from the station by this time. We'll travel along to the Common-room and spread the news, and get the fellows ready for the meeting. We must have plenty of School House chaps there, or the New House will try to run the matters on their own."

"Right you are, Blake!"

And the Terrible Three quitted the study to go in quest of the rival firm at St. Jim's; and they spotted Figgins & Co. just coming in at the gate in the dusk of the May evening.

CHAPTER 2.

Figgins & Co. Cheer Themselves Up!

FIGGINS & CO. were only three again for the time. Figgins, long-limbed and muscular, Fatty Wynn, plump and cheery, and Kerr, the thoughtful and canny Scot were the three ancient members of the Co. The latest addition to their number, Marmaduke Smythe, had gone away with his "pater" for a run abroad, and Figgins & Co. had just seen him off home at Rylcombe Station.

There was a slight shade on the faces of the Co. as they came in at the gates. Marmaduke had had his faults, but his schoolfellows had liked him well, and they missed him.

"He was a decent sort," said Figgins. "We had practically cut all the nonsense out of him, and he was a good chum. I wish he hadn't gone!"

"So do I," assented Kerr. "He'll be back in a few weeks, though. What are you thinking about, Fatty?"

Fatty Wynn came out of a brown study.

"I was thinking it's a pity we didn't have more notice about Marmaduke going," he said slowly. "We might have got up some big feed to give him a send-off."

Figgins chuckled.

"Never mind; you shall welcome him with a stunning feed, Fatty, when he comes back. We'll save up our ha'pennies for that purpose."

Fatty Wynn brightened up.

"Well, that's a jolly good idea, Figgy, and it's thoughtful of you."

"Here's Tom Merry," went on Figgins, as the hero of the Shell approached. "I rather think that a House row would be the thing now to cheer us up after seeing Marmaduke off. Shall we collar him?"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Kerr. "Let's frog's-march him round the quad. We want cheering up, Figgy."

"Come on!"

"I say, you chaps," said Tom Merry, approaching unsuspectingly. "I want to speak to you on a most important matter. I was just going up to your House. Manners and Lowther are gone there to look for you. Here, I say! What are you up to?"

"Collar him!" shouted Figgins.

Before Tom Merry could dodge, Figgins and Kerr had seized him, and the next moment the plump arm of Fatty Wynn was round his neck.

"Here, I say! Hold on!"

"We are holding on!" chuckled Figgins. "Bowl him over——"

"But I——"

Over went Tom Merry, and Figgins collared his shoulders while Kerr and Fatty Wynn took a leg each in a powerful grip.

Tom Merry struggled furiously.

"You New House rotters! I——"

"Bring him along!"

"I tell you I want——"

"You want to be yanked round the quad——"

"I don't! I——"

"Can't let you off," said Figgins, with a shake of the head. "We have just seen Marmy off at the station, and we want cheering up. Yank him along!"

And Tom Merry was yanked along.

He struggled in vain; three strong pairs of arms were too much for him, and each time he wriggled he was bumped upon the ground, so that he soon gave it up.

"We'll take him to the School House and chuck him into the Hall," said Figgins. "Come along! It's kind of us to take you home, Tom Merry!"

"You howling rotters——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Come on!"



The Terrible Three dashed right into the New House Co. and knocked them right and left. Tom Merry was dropped to the ground and Figgins rolled over him, and then Fatty Wynn and Kerr were added to the heap. "Ow—ow—ow! Gerrup!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Rescue!" bawled Tom Merry. "Manners, Lowther! School House, rescue!"

Manners and Lowther looked out from the porch of the New House, whither they had gone to look for Figgins. The instant they saw the plight of their chief they dashed like the wind to the rescue—so quickly, in fact, that before Figgins & Co. saw them coming they were on the spot.

They dashed right into the New House Co. and knocked them right and left. Tom Merry was dropped upon the ground, and Figgins rolled over him, and then Fatty Wynn and Kerr were added to the heap. Tom Merry gasped and squirmed under the weight of the New House trio.

"Ow—ow—ow! Gerrup! I'm suffocating!"

Manners dragged Figgins off, and Lowther did the same to Fatty Wynn. Tom Merry jerked Kerr away and staggered to his feet.

"Sock it to 'em!" shouted Lowther excitedly. "Down with the New House!"

"Hold on, Monty!"

"We're going to wipe up the ground with them!"

"No, I tell you! Stand back, Figgins! Don't be an ass, Manners. It's pax!"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Well," said Figgins, grinning, "if it's pax I don't mind. You look rather rumped, Tom Merry, but we had to do something to cheer ourselves up, you know, after seeing Marmy off."

"Well," gasped Tom Merry, "I'd like you to cheer yourselves up some other way next time you're downhearted. I was coming to speak to you in a friendly manner—"

"Well, we couldn't guess that, could we?" said Figgins. "But I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll march you back in the same way to the spot where we picked you up."

"Willingly!" said Kerr.

Tom Merry laughed. He did not accept the generous offer.

"Oh, cheese it! I overlook your fatheaded idiocy!"

"Do you want some more?"

"Rats! I was coming to speak to you, to propose to you—"

"Oh dear! You must ask mamma!"

"Don't be an ass, Figgy—I mean, a bigger ass than you were born!"

"He can't help it," said Lowther. "He grows, you know. Naturally he gets a bigger ass every day."

"Well, we've got a new wheeze on, Figgy," said Tom Merry hastily, before Figgins could reply to Lowther's remark. "It's a really ripping, first-rate wheeze!"

"I've heard that before," said Figgins. "Still, we want amusing now, and we're willing to look into the thing. What is it?"

"We're going to have a general election—"

"Eh?"

"And hold a St. Jim's Parliament—"

"My hat!"

"And we want you to join in. It will be ripping fun. There will be a Government and an Opposition. Of course, we shall be the Government."

"Of course you won't!"

"It will depend upon the voting," said Tom Merry practically. "What do you think of the idea?"

"Well, I dare say we can knock it into shape," said Figgins, scratching his head thoughtfully. "We elect Ministers of the Crown and all that, I suppose?"

"Yes; but—"

"You want me to be Prime Minister?"
Tom Merry laughed. It was Blake's question over again.
"Well, no; but that will depend," he said diplomatically.
"We shall have to work things out as we go along, and be guided by circumstances."

"Well, we'll help you out," said Figgins magnanimously.
"We're always willing to help a lame dog over a stile. It's a go!"

"Will you come to the meeting, then?"

"Yes, rather. Where is it?"

"We haven't decided yet; but—"

"And when is it?"

"We haven't decided that, either. But there's going to be a poster put up in the Hall of the School House."

"Rats! If we're in this thing, you School House chaps are not going to run it all on your own!" said Figgins decidedly.
"Shove the poster up in the quadrangle, where everybody can see it."

"Well, it's getting dusk."

"It will be light enough to read a poster for half an hour yet."

"Oh, very well! Anything for a quiet life!"

"That's settled, then. We'll go and get a snack, and then come along," said Figgins. "To be quite frank, I think it's a good idea, Merry, and we'll back it up."

"Good!"

The New House trio marched off.

Fatty Wynn glanced sideways at his leader.

"I don't know whether you were speaking seriously, Figgins," he remarked; "but I can't say I agree with you."

"Don't you think it's a good wheeze, Fatty?"

"Oh, I wasn't alluding to Tom Merry's idea!"

"What the dickens were you alluding to, then?"

"You said we were going to have a snack—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't know what you feel like, but a snack won't do me any good after a long walk in the lane," said Fatty Wynn. "I always get extra hungry in this May weather. I'm going to have a jolly good feed before I turn up at any old meeting."

And Fatty Wynn kept his word.

CHAPTER 3.

Skimpole's New "Ism"!

TOM MERRY dusted himself down as Figgins & Co. walked off. Manners and Lowther watched him, and Monty Lowther sniffed.

"Better have let us wipe up the ground with those rotters, Tom," Lowther remarked. "They'll be getting their ears up if we don't sit on them."

"My dear chap, it's pax!"

"Yes; but we could have made it pax after licking them."

"We don't want to start a Parliamentary campaign with an assortment of thick ears and black eyes," Tom Merry remarked. "No harm's done. Shut up, and come along!"

The Terrible Three re-entered the School House. A youth with a large head, adorned by tufts of hair and a big pair of spectacles, was standing on the top step. It was Skimpole, the freak of the Shell at St. Jim's. Skimpole was the brainy man of the Shell, and Determinism was one of the "isms" he had taken under his wing.

He dug a bony finger into Tom Merry's ribs as the latter passed him.

Tom Merry swung round with a gasp.

"You ass, Skimpole!"

"I want to speak to you, Merry."

"Well, don't bore me with your beastly bony fingers, then!" said Tom Merry, rubbing his ribs ruefully. "What's the trouble? If you're on the detective business again, I don't want to know anything about it, so I warn you!"

Skimpole shook his head.

"I have given up my detective work for the present," he replied. "My efforts were not in the slightest degree appreciated in the school."

"Ha, ha, ha! You're right there."

"Besides, now that this Parliamentary business is coming on, I shall need all my time to explain my theories," said Skimpole. "I understand that you are getting up a St. Jim's Parliament, in which matters can be thrashed out the same as in the real place, only unencumbered by ancient, obsolete forms of procedure?"

"Exactly!"

"It is a good idea, Merry."

"Thank you! You hear, chaps? Skimmy says it's a good idea. We may consider it examined and passed, then."

"Don't rot, Tom Merry. I am speaking seriously. Don't you see what a good opportunity this affords for spreading the light in the school?"

"What light—the gas?"

"Certainly not! The light of Determinism, I mean. You

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see, with the fellows formed up in a parliament, and the rest of the school admitted to the debates, I shall be able to explain the great truths of Determinism to the whole of St. Jim's."

"My only hat! What is Determinism, Skimmy?"

"It is the—the—the creed of Determinists," explained Skimpole lucidly. "You see, nobody is really to blame for anything. You are to blame if you blame anybody. No, not exactly to blame, because nobody's to blame—I mean, if you say a thing is wrong, you are wrong, because nobody is wrong—or, rather, you're not wrong, because there is no such thing as wrong. But you would be wrong if—"

"Ow! Leave off! You'll make my head ache!" howled Lowther. "What idiotic book have you been getting all that piffle from?"

"It is not piffle!" said Skimpole indignantly. "It is Determinism, and it is one of the greatest modern—modern—modern—"

"Inventions?"

"No, that's not the word. I forget it exactly, but it doesn't matter. You see, we are all human attributes to heredity and environment—"

"Ow! Four syllables at a time, by George!"

"Heredity and environment explain everything," went on Skimpole unheeding. "You see, if you are a criminal, Lowther—"

"If I'm a what?" roared Lowther.

"I don't mean that you are a criminal," said Skimpole, backing away hastily. "I said if you were a criminal—"

Bump, bump, went Skimpole's head against the wall, and then he was dropped in a sitting posture on the mat. Then the indignant Lowther marched off, with his chums laughing heartily, and the freak of the Shell was left sitting on the mat, staring blankly after them.

CHAPTER 4.

The Poster!

JACK BLAKE came out of his study, followed by his three chums. There was satisfaction in each of the four faces, doubtless the result of successful labours—for Blake carried in his hands the poster destined to call the juniors of St. Jim's to the general meeting of electors.

The poster was daubed up in red and black ink, and certainly looked imposing. As Blake said, a high style of art was not expected in election posters. Certainly, anyone who had expected it in this case would have been disappointed. But the lettering would catch the eye—that was the chief thing.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther met the chums of Study No. 6 in the passage.

Tom Merry glanced at the poster.

"So you've fixed it up!"

"I'm just going to fix it up," said Blake.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I mean, you have written out the thing. Figgins suggests putting it up in the quad, instead of the Hall, so that fellows of both Houses can read it!"

"That's a good idea!"

"Let's have a look at it before it's posted up," said Lowther anxiously. "It's rather risky leaving a thing of that sort in the hands of Fourth-Formers!"

Blake glared.

"Let's have a look at it," said Manners.

The poster remained folded under Blake's arm.

"You can look at it when it's up," he said.

"But we want to see if it's all right."

"If it isn't all right," said Blake, "it will remain all wrong. This poster is going up as it is, and that's flat!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I wegard Lowthah's suggestion as impertinent. The postah will go up just as it is, deah boys! We should distinctly wufuse to altah a single word, you know!"

"That's all very well."

"Of course it is!" agreed Blake. "Come along!"

And the Fourth-Formers marched out into the quad. Tom Merry followed, laughing, and Manners and Lowther gave in.

Blake looked about him when he was in the open air. A big elm, at a short distance from the School House entrance, seemed to be an appropriate place, and the Fourth-Formers marched over to it. The poster was flattened out on the broad trunk. The poster, being written only upon a double sheet of foolscap, was not of great dimensions, and there was plenty of room on the broad trunk to extend it almost flat.

"Tacks!" said Blake laconically.

"You hold the poster, said Digby. "I've got the tacks. Where's the hammer?"

"I've got the hammer, Dig."

"Hand it over!"

"Oh, that's all wight! I'll dwive in the tacks, deah boy! We want the thing done pwooperly!"

"You'd better give me the hammer. You'll do some damage with it."

"Oh, wats! Pway pwoduce the tacks, deah boy!"

Digby produced the tacks, and Blake extended the election poster on the trunk of the big tree. D'Arcy took a grip on the hammer.

"Hold the tacks in position, Dig, deah boy, while I hammah them in!" he said.

"No fear!"

"I weally think you oughtn't to be lazy on a gweat occasion like this, Dig! Pway hold the tacks! I might hammah my thumb by mistake."

"You might hammer mine!" howled Digby.

"Yaas, I shouldn't wondah! Accidents will happen when you are dwivin' in tacks. If you won't hold them for me, pway hand them ova, and I will do my best, at the wisk of hammewin' my beastlay thumb!"

"Here you are!"

"Thank you! Now—what's that?"

D'Arcy swung back the hammer. "That" was a howl from Herries as it clumped on the side of his head. Herries danced, clapping his head, and D'Arcy turned round and looked at him in surprise.

"Bai Jove, Hewwies, old chap, what are you dancin' like that for? This isn't a time to twy a new step, you know!"

"You confounded ass, you've bumped your confounded hammer on my confounded head!" roared Herries.

"I am vewy sowwy! I thought I felt a jar!" said D'Arcy. "Pway don't put your head in the way of my hammah again, Hewwies, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry. "He's not likely to. Keep out of the way of that hammer, kids! Gussy is dangerous at close quarters."

"I am weally not dangerous at close quartahs, unless you are clumsy and get in the way of the hammah," said Arthur Augustus. "I have been called a lazy boundah because I don't like doin' wuff work, and I am determined to show you that when it comes to usin' a hammah I can keep my end up with anybody. Have you got that postah all wight, Blake?"

"Yes. Don't keep me waiting all night."

"Certainly not, deah boy. I have othah mattahs to attend to atfah this. Digbay, do you weally wefuse to hold the tacks while I dwive them in?"

"Yes, rather!" said Digby, with emphasis.

"Vewy well. I am just goin' to begin, Blake. Pway don't show those signs of beastlay impatience; it is bad form, and you may put me off my stwoke."

"Buck up, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Are you going to use that hammer, or are you not?" roared Blake.

"I am certainly goin' to use it. I could not dwive in the tacks without it. I wegard that as a wathah widiculous question, Blake."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted the Terrible Three.

"Pway don't make that feahful noise, you boundahs! You—you may put me off my stwoke, and then I may bwain Blake by mistake."

"My—my hat, I'll—"

"I am just goin' to begin, Blake. Heah goes, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus held the tack upon the poster, and hammered at it. He gave his thumb a smart tap, and uttered a yell. But he was not to be beaten. He tapped the tack lightly to hold it, and then swung back the hammer for a heavy stroke to drive it right in. Blake gave a fendish yell as the hammer clumped on the side of his head.

D'Arcy jumped

"Blake, you quite startled me! Ow—ow!"

Blake had dropped the poster, and seized the swell of the School House. He saw D'Arcy down in the quadrangle, and jerked the hammer a ray. Then he planted his boot upon the fancy waistcoat of Arthur Augustus, and wiped it there.

"There, you howling ass!" he gasped, rubbing his head.

"I'll teach you to clump me on the napper with a hammer!"

"Ow! You howwid wottah. You have wuined my waistcoat!" wailed Arthur Augustus.

Blake grinned.

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet. He eyed the waistcoat in dismay; there were very plain traces of Blake's boot there.

"Blake, I no longah wegard you as a fwiend—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I wefuse to do anything of the sort. I am sowwy to have to bwreak an old fwiendship, but before this mattah pwoceeds any furthah, I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Sheer off!"

"Certainly not; I am goin'—"

Blake made a sign to Herries and Digby. They seized Gussy one by either arm, and ran him off the scene, vigorously but vainly protesting.

Blake rubbed the bump on his head.

"Lend me the hammer," said Lowther, "I'll shove the thing up for you."

Blake sniffed.

"I can manage it all right, Lowther."

"But—"

"Rats!"

Blake put up the poster again, and drove in the tacks to keep it in position. A crowd was already gathering round the tree. In the failing light of the May evening the glaring red and black of the election poster could be easily read.

"Hallo," said Gore of the Shell, "what sort of rot is this?"

"Oh, some more piffle of Tom Merry's!" said Mellish.

"Hallo, I didn't see you there, Tom Merry. I say, this is a jolly good idea of yours about a St. Jim's Parliament."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, you ought to be a quick-change artist, Mellish!"

was all he said.

"Let's read the notice," said Jimson. "Get your fat coconut out of the way, French; I can't see through wood."

"Order, there!" said Blake. "You can all read it without shoving."

"Order, order!" said Lowther.

There was not much order among the crowding juniors, but they were all able to read the poster. It ran as follows:

"NOTICE.

"To the Juniors, Seniors, and Master of St. Jim's.

"It having been proposed, seconded, and adopted by an influential body of School House juniors, to have and to hold a Parliament at St. Jim's

"We, the undersigned, do hereby and thusly call a General Meeting of all Fellows of both Houses at St. Jim's for the purpose of discussing the matter and arranging the election.

"All are invited, seniors being admitted if they behave themselves, and New House fellows if they wipe their boots and don't talk too much.

"The meeting will be held at seven p.m. precisely, at fresco there being no room in the school at the disposal of the electors sufficiently large to admit them all.

"The place of meeting is behind the chapel green, and fellows are requested to bring all the illuminations possible, as the moon will not be up till the meeting is over.

"Given under our hand and seal, in Study No. 6, in the Cock House at St. Jim's.

"(Signed) JACK BLAKE,

"ARTHUR DIGBY,

"G. HERRIES,

"ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY."

"I say, our signatures ought to be there!" exclaimed Manners warmly. "This thing isn't being run by Study No. 6, that I know of."

"The poster was left in our hands to be drawn up," said Blake.

"That's all very well, but you were really given that scribbling to do; we didn't put the whole business in your hands."

"I don't think that poster can be improved upon."

"It wants our signatures at the bottom."

"Well, I suppose there's no objection to that," said Blake reflectively. "You fellows will shove yourselves into everything."

"Why, it's our idea!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly. "Oh, don't argue! You can stick your names on it if you like!"

"I've got an indelible pencil," said Manners. "Here you are!"

Manners scratched his signature under the list already there, and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther followed suit. They had just finished when Figgins & Co. arrived on the scene.

"One thing," said Figgins, when he had read the notice; "I see you've all got your names at the bottom of the notice. Ours are wanted there, too."

"Rot! It's a School House idea."

"Figgins is right," said Tom Merry. "The whole school is going in for this thing, and Figgins & Co. are the representatives of the New House."

"Oh, shove the names down!" said Blake. "Shove down every blessed name of every blessed rotter in the blessed school, if you can find room on the blessed paper."

So the names of Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were appended to the poster. The crowd round the elm-tree grew thicker, and various comments were passed upon the idea, more or less complimentary to the originators.

At last Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, came out to see what the crowd was gathered for, and way was made for the stalwart Sixth-Former to read the notice.

Kildare read it, and laughed.

"Whose idea is that?" he asked, looking round.

"The suggestion came from Tom Merry," said Blake. "We've taken it in hand and knocked it into shape, Kildare."

"Well, of all the nerve!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The captain of St. Jim's laughed again, he seemed to find something very amusing in that important election notice.

"I say, Kildare," said Blake, "we should be glad to have you come along to the meeting, you know. Seniors are welcome."

"If they behave themselves, I see," said Kildare, with a glance at the poster.

Blake coloured.

"Oh, that doesn't refer to you, Kildare! We know you would—would—"

"Behave myself?" said Kildare gravely. "Well, I take that kindly from you, Blake. It is pleasant for the head of the Sixth to know that the Fourth Form has confidence in him. I don't think I shall come along to the meeting, however, unless you make too much row, and then I shall probably come along with the cane. That's a friendly hint."

And Kildare walked away with a smile on his good-tempered face.

CHAPTER 5.

Skimpole is Busy!

"THE School House will have to muster strong for the meeting," said Jack Blake a little later, as he stood in the doorway with his chums. "We can't have Figgins & Co. turning up with the whole family and any of our fellows missing it. Have you seen Skimpole lately?"

"I saw him mooning along the passage a while back," said Digby. "He had a bundle of foolscap under his arm. I think he had just bought it."

"Making a speech, very likely," said Herries. "He's got to come to the meeting, though, as he is. We're not going to have any School House junior staying out."

"Not much!"

"Let's go along to his study and see if he's there. It's getting near seven. We've got to look for Gussy, too."

"Right you are!"

The Three Fourth-Formers proceeded to Skimpole's study. Blake opened the door and looked in. No notice was taken of his tap, but that went for nothing, as Skimpole was often too deeply immersed in great thoughts to notice little things like that.

Sure enough, there was Skimpole sitting at the table.

He had a pen stuck behind his ear, and paper before him, and an inkpot, and a pile of heavy-looking volumes. Apparently he was engaged in composing a speech, but the thoughts would not come. He was tapping his forehead as if to assist his brain to work—without much success.

The chums of the Fourth stared at him and grinned.

"Mad as a hatter or a poet!" said Blake. "Hallo, Skimmy!"

"Is that you, Blake? You startled me! You should not come in so suddenly upon a fellow who is thinking out social problems!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole frowned.

"I really do not see what you are laughing at, Blake!"

"Look in the looking-glass, then," grinned Blake. "Come on, kids; let's go and see if Tom Merry's ready!"

"Don't be late for the meeting, Skimmy," said Digby. "It's at seven, you know; and it only wants a quarter of an hour now."

"Oh, very good, Digby!"

"If you don't turn up you will be jolly well ragged. The School House has got to muster strong to keep the New House rotters out of it."

"Right-ho!" said Herries. "If you forget to come, I

shall come and yank you out, so remember that, if you forget."

And the chums of Study No. 6 quitted Skimpole's study. The freak of the Shell plunged his pen into the ink and began to write.

Blake, Herries, and Digby went on to Tom Merry's study, and found the Terrible Three just finishing their prep.

"Don't be late," said Blake, looking in. "It's a quarter to seven. A lot of fellows are on the ground already."

"That's all right," said Tom Merry, looking up. "We'll be up on time. We've close on done this rotten prep. See that the fellows all turn up, Blake."

"Rather! Have you seen Gussy?"

"No, not since Dig and Herries marched him off in the quad."

Blake giggled.

"He's gone off on his dignity somewhere," he remarked. "We've got to hunt him up, or he'll cut the meeting. So long!"

And the Fourth-Formers went off in search of the swell of the School House.

Tom Merry scratched away with his pen. A sound outside the study-door drew his attention a little later.

"What on earth's that?" he said. "There's somebody tapping away with a hammer or something in the passage."

"Can't be anybody fastening up the door for a lark?" said Lowther.

"No; it's not at the door."

"Have a look, and punch whoever it is in the eye," said Manners.

Tom Merry laughed, and rose from the table. He opened the study door quietly and looked out into the passage. Skimpole had just finished tacking up a notice on the wall.

"What on earth are you up to, Skimpole?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in amazement.

Skimpole glanced at him.

"Oh, just a little notice to the Shell, Merry! It's about a Parliamentary debate I'm going to hold after this meeting."

"The dickens you are!"

"Yes; and here I've got my speech that I'm going to make. If you like, you can take a copy of it for the next number of the 'Weekly.'"

"I don't like!"

"Better think twice about it," urged Skimpole. "'Tom Merry's Weekly' has been pretty rotten lately, you know, and a good stirring report of a speech on Determinism will give it a leg-up."

"Declined with thanks!"

"But, really, Merry—"

"Rats! Clear off! We're busy!"

And Tom Merry retired into the study and slammed the door.

"It's only that ass Skimpole—"

The door reopened, and Skimpole's big head and big spectacles looked in.

"I say, Tom Merry—"

Tom Merry made a jump towards him, and Skimpole disappeared. Tom followed him into the passage, and with a big blue pencil scrawled a footnote upon his notice of the forthcoming Parliamentary debate.

"Rats! Tom Merry!"

Then he retired into the study again. The door opened.

"I say, Merry, I really think you shouldn't have—"

"Will you clear out?"

"But you shouldn't have—"

"We've got to get our prep done before the meeting. You see, we've no time to kill you. Will you travel—"

"Yes, but—"

Tom Merry made a rush to the door in exasperation. Skimpole slipped out and slammed it. Tom Merry dragged the door open. Skimpole was about to erase the inscription Tom had scrawled upon his notice, but Tom did not give him time. He reached out with his foot.

Skimpole gave a yell.

"Now, get along!" said Tom Merry, with a grin of satisfaction. "As a Determinist, you've only got what you deserve!"

"Really, Merry—"

"Oh, scat!"

And Skimpole "scatted."

Tom Merry was grinning as he closed the door of the study.

The chums of the Shell finished their prep and went downstairs. They met Blake & Co. in the Hall, and the School House juniors went out to the meeting.

CHAPTER 6.

The Meeting!

TOM MERRY looked over the eager crowd and cleared his throat with a little preliminary cough, as he had heard the Head do on occasions of speeches in Hall.

"Gentlemen of the Lower Forms—"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Jimson of the Shell.

"Gentlemen of St. Jim's—"

"Hear, hear!" bawled French.

"Gentlemen—"

"Oh, get on!"

"Order!"

"Pway don't intewwupt, deah boys! Tom Mewwy will go on talkin' all night if you give him a pwetext."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not going to shut up for any New House bounder here!" replied Jimson, who belonged to the School House.

"Then I'll jolly soon make you!"

"I'd like to see you do it!"

"Then I'll—"

"Hold on! Stop it, Figgins!"

"I'm going to make him shut up!"

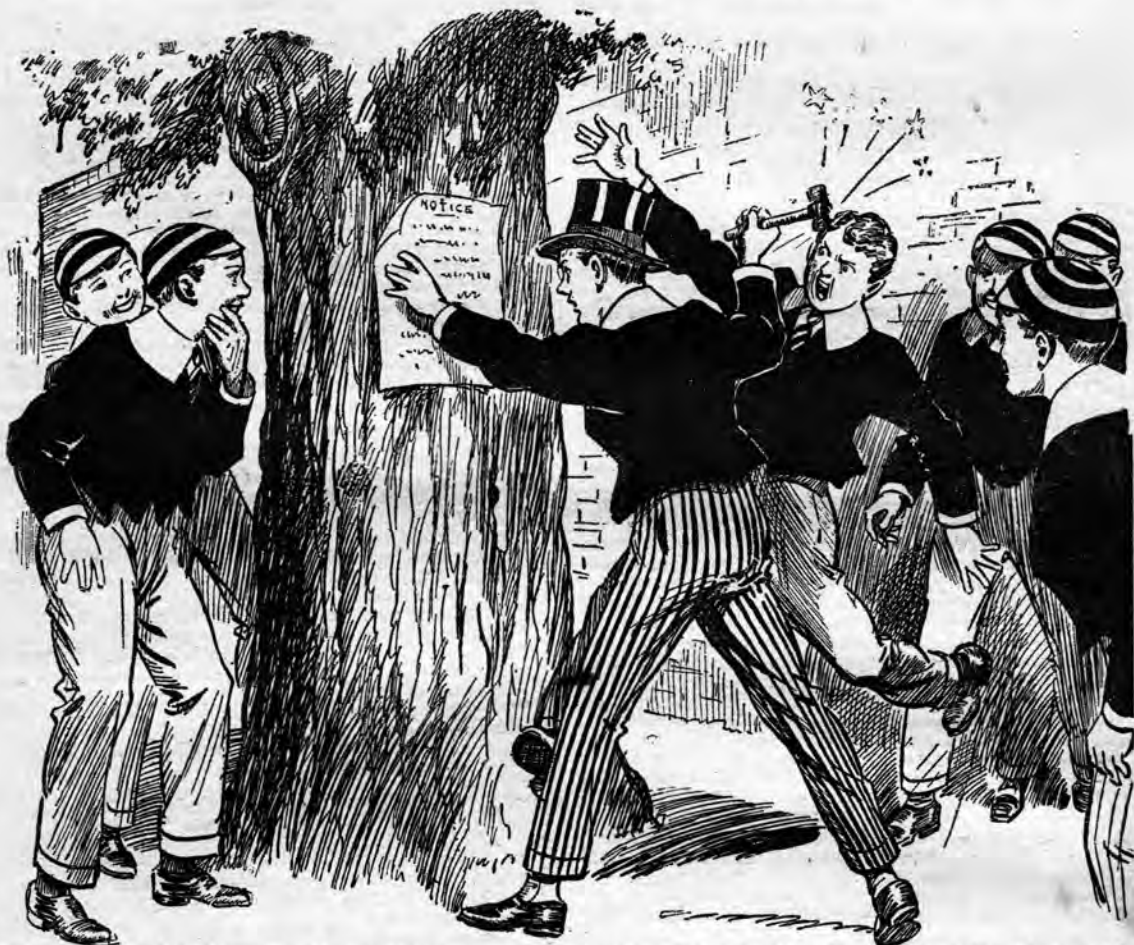
"Hold on! We can't have any fighting here!" said Tom Merry. "Jimson, shut up for a little while. If you must go on talking, go round the chapel and talk there!"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"You can't be allowed to interrupt the meeting. Gentlemen of St. Jim's—"

"Hear, hear!"

"You are called together—"



D'Arcy tapped the tack in lightly at first, and then swung back the hammer for a heavy stroke to drive it right in. Blake gave a fiendish yell as the hammer clumped on the side of his head. "Ow!" D'Arcy jumped. "Blake, you quite startled me!" he exclaimed.

"Dry up, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to dwy up, I—"

"Gentlemen of St. Jim's—"

"Hear, hear!"

"You are called together upon an occasion unprecedented in the history of the great and glorious college to which we belong," said Tom Merry.

"My hat!" gasped Figgins. "Say that over again, Tom Merry."

"Where does he get those words from?"

"I saw him looking them out in the dictionary about half an hour ago," said Jimson.

"You didn't!" roared Tom Merry indignantly.

"What were you looking out in that dictionary, then?"

"It was a German dictionary, and—"

"Oh, was it? My mistake. I thought you were looking out long words for a speech. Where did you get those stunners from?"

"If you want me to speak in words of one syllable—"

"I don't want you to speak at all, as far as I'm concerned."

"Shut up, Jimson!" shouted Figgins.

"I warned you not to intewwupt, deah boys! Now he's startin' again at the beginnin', and we shall have it all over again," said Arthur Augustus.

"Shut up, Adolphus!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! As a mattah of fact, I don't see why Tom Merry is makin' a beastly speech at all! I could explain much more concisely. You wequiah a fellow of tact and judgment on an occasion like this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Choke him, somebody!"

"I wefuse to be choked!"

"Gentlemen of the Lower School, you are called together—"

"Look here, Tom Merry, we've had that often enough!" said Figgins. "I'm not the chap to interrupt another chap when a chap is making a speech, but if the chap keeps on repeating himself, it's time a chap interrupted the chap—"

"My hat!" said Lowther. "What a lot of chaps!"

"Don't intewwupt me, Lowthah!"

"You're interrupting Tom Merry."

"Because he won't get finished. What I say is——"

"Weally, Figgins, the meetin' isn't intewested in what you say. It's what I say that they are waitin' with gweat eagerness to heah, deah boys! Gentlemen of St. Jim's——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake. "Tom Merry's too long-winded, and Gussy's an ass. Back me up, you chaps, and I'll run off a really good speech."

"Blake, you are intewwuptin' me!"

"Order!" roared Manners. "What we want is a chairman to keep order and make the silly cuckoos speak in rotation."

"That's quite right. Mannahs! I'm perfectly willin' to be chairman."

"You want a chairman who can keep order," said Figgins. "I'm chairman of this meeting, and I can lick any chap who interrupts."

"You'd better start with me!" roared a score of School House voices.

"I'll start with any one of you, or any two at a time!" retorted Figgins. "If I can't wipe up the ground with any two School House sweeps, why——"

"Order!"

"Don't you yelp at me, Monty Lowther!"

"I'll yelp at any New House rotter I like!"

"I'll jolly soon——"

"That you won't!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"My word!"

"Oh, shut up!" shouted Tom Merry. "Look here, if this meeting is going to proceed and not turn itself into a free fight, we've got to elect a chairman and give him powers to keep order."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, as the originator of the idea of a St. Jim's Parliament, I think I ought to be chairman. I therefore propose myself as chairman of the meeting."

"I second!" shouted Manners and Lowther together.

"And I third!" exclaimed Blake, rather unexpectedly backing up the chums of the Shell. "Tom Merry for chairman!"

"Never!" roared Figgins & Co.

"Hands up for Tom Merry as chairman!" yelled Blake. A forest of hands went up. The rivals of the School House being at once on this point, the voting went heavily in favour of Tom Merry, and the New House were simply out of it.

"The 'Ayes' have it!" said Blake, looking over the crowd. "Do you ask for a count, Figgy?"

"No," growled Figgins, who knew perfectly well that when the juniors of the larger House were united they always had the majority.

"Does anybody want to count?"

"Rats! No. Tom Merry is chairman."

Tom Merry took off his cap and bowed.

"Many thanks for your kind support, gentlemen! I'm perfectly willing to take the position of chairman of this meeting."

"Buck up, then. It will be dark soon!"

"That's all right. We've got some bicycle lamps here," said Blake. "Tom Merry is chairman, and we're a committee to help him keep order."

"Good!" agreed Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! I weally insist upon ordah bein' kept, deah boys."

"There's Gussy starting again!"

"Weally, Fwench——"

"Order!" shouted Tom Merry, waving his hand. "I shall now proceed with my speech."

"No, you won't!" interrupted Blake promptly.

"What do you mean, Blake? Why, you were backing me up for chairman!"

"Chairman keeps order while the speakers speak," said Blake. "You just introduce the speakers, that's all."

"Why, you young ass!"

"I leave it to the meeting!" said Blake.

"Hear, hear!" shouted the meeting delightedly.

The juniors were laughing heartily. Tom Merry was fairly caught. But the good humour of the hero of the Shell was unflinching.

"Well, if the meeting upholds Blake——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Then I'll leave my speech till later. I don't care. Which of the speakers speak first? They're all as rotten as one another, so it really doesn't matter which."

"I speak first," said Blake, "because——"

"Ahem!" said Figgins. "I speak first because——"

"I speak first, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "because——"

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"Oh, dry up, all of you!" said Monty Lowther. "It's my place to speak first, because——"

"You'll never agree at that rate," remarked Digby.

"Suppose you take the speechifiers in alphabetical order?"

"Good wheeze!" shouted a dozen voices.

The chairman nodded.

"Very well. The speakers will be taken in alphabetical order, gentlemen."

"Then I speak first!" crowed D'Arcy triumphantly.

"You?" grunted Figgins. "You're a 'D'!"

"No, deah boy. I'm an 'A'—Arthur Augustus!"

"Christian names don't count," said Blake. "There aren't any 'A's among the speakers. We shall have to start with 'B,' and that stands for Blake."

"Weally, Blake——"

"That's right," grinned Digby, who, of course, had thought that out before proposing the alphabetical test.

"Blake's first speaker."

"I don't see it!" said Figgins. "I——"

"Weally, Digbay, deah boy——"

"Silence!" shouted the chairman. "Blake speaks first. You've brought it on yourselves, so it's no good grumbling."

"If you allude to me like that, Tom Merry——"

"As chairman, I shall do as I like!"

"As speaker, I shall dot you in the eye if you're not jolly civil!"

"Order!" exclaimed Kerr. "We can't have these School House kids quarrelling with one another like this!"

"Quite so!" said Tom Merry. "Shut up, Blake! I'm surprised at you! Get on with your speech. First, though, don't forget the five-minute rule."

"What five-minute rule?"

"The rule of the Merry Hobby Club—no speech to exceed five minutes."

"Hobby Club rules don't apply to an election meeting."

"Yes, they do, if I'm chairman of the election meeting."

"You won't be chairman long if you're not jolly careful!"

"Order! Any speaker checking the chairman is thrown out on his neck, and the next man alphabetically takes his turn."

"Jolly good wule!" exclaimed D'Arcy, who was next alphabetically.

"Five minutes is no good to explain a really good idea."

"It's as long as anybody wants to listen to you!"

"Rot! I tell you——"

"I put it to the meeting," said Tom Merry, holding up his hand. "Does anybody want to listen to Jack Blake for more than five minutes?"

"No!" came back in a roar from a hundred throats.

"There's you are, Blake. That's settled."

"Oh, all right!" said Blake, with a sniff. "You don't deserve to have a speech from a chap like me at all. As a matter of fact——"

"Of course we don't!" said Reilly. "We haven't done anything to deserve it that I know of."

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Reilly?"

"Yes, if you can give me one!"

"I'll——"

"One minute gone!" said the chairman, consulting his watch. "You've got four left, Blake."

"Don't be an ass, Tom Merry! You don't count the time I take in explaining things to that fathead from Belfast!"

"Who are you calling a fathead?" demanded the boy from Belfast, looking warlike.

"I'm calling——"

"Two minutes gone!" said Tom Merry.

"Better get on with the speech, Blake!" chuckled Figgins.

Blake looked wrathful; but he thought so, too, and he cleared his throat and began.

CHAPTER 7.

The Speeches!

"GENTLEMEN of St. Jim's——"

"Excuse me a moment!" said Lowther, with an air of great diffidence. "Is this your own speech, Blake?"

"Of course it is, fathead!"

"You're not repeating Tom Merry's speech by mistake?"

"No, I'm not!" roared Blake.

"Oh, sorry! It sounded as if you were."

"Gentlemen of St. Jim's," went on Blake, with a red face, amid a bubbling of laughter; all around him, "you are called together on an important occasion——"

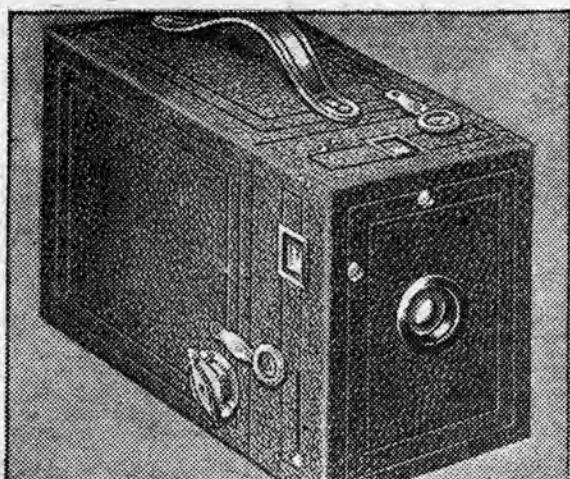
"Lowther's right!" ejaculated Figgins. "He's repeating Tom Merry's remarks—not that they're worth repeating!"

"Order, Figgins!"

"Oh, all right! Wire in, Blake!"

"An important occasion," said Blake. "We, the juniors

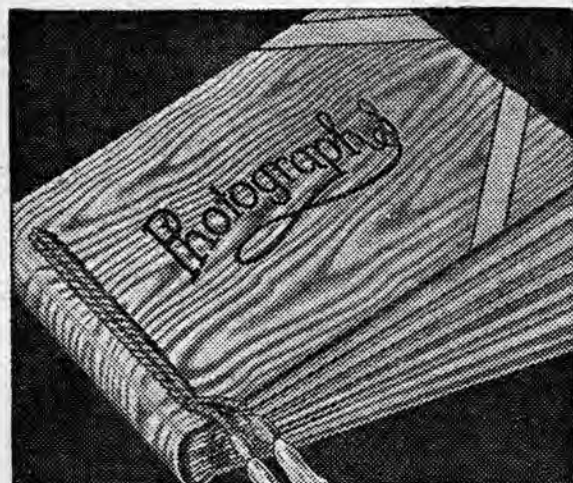
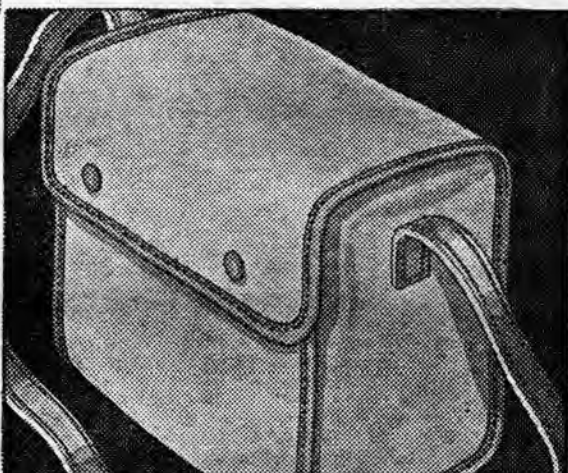
(Continued on page 12.)



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of the School House, have thought of a ripping wheeze. The first rough suggestion came from a boulder you all know, one Merry—

"Well, I like that!" ejaculated Tom Merry indignantly. "Well, if you like it, shut up, and don't interrupt!" said Blake. "This idea, gentlemen of St. Jim's, is to hold a school parliament—improved upon the one which I believe you are aware is held at Westminster."

"Yes, I believe we are aware of something of that sort," said Lowther sarcastically.

"It will be called the St. Jim's Parliament," went on Blake. "Votes will be conferred upon all the juniors of St. Jim's, and any candidate nominated by a respectable body of electors will be allowed to stand for election."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "The number of the new parliament will be fixed at twenty," said Blake. "That will be a good working number—"

"Who told you so?" demanded Manners.

"I've thought it out—"

"Yes, you'll catch us—"

"Shut up, Manners! Now, as I was saying—"

"Time's up!" said Tom Merry, snapping his watch shut.

"I'm not finished yet."

"Can't help that. Time's up!"

"I've been interrupted."

"You know the rule; you've had your five minutes. We can't stay out here all night. Time's up, and this is where you slide out."

"Slide out!" roared the crowd, who seemed to have had enough of Blake's eloquence.

Jack Blake glared round him wrathfully, but there was no gainsaying the vox populi, so to speak. He retired with his speech unfinished.

"Now then," said Tom Merry, "Digby next."

"Pwaxe excuse me, Tom Mewwy—"

"No time, now, Gussy. Stand up, Dig."

"I must weally insist upon bein' heard. I come before my friend Digby as a speakah, and though I am the last fellow in the world to put myself forward in any way, I must weally insist upon my wights bein' wecognised."

"Well, you're both 'D's.'"

"'D' stands for duffer," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Quite right, they're both 'D's.'"

"We are certainly both 'D's,'" said Arthur Augustus. "But the second letter in my name is 'A,' while the second letter in Dig's is 'I.' Therefore—"

"Oh, cut it a little shorter—"

"Therefore," repeated D'Arcy with emphasis, "I take precedence of Dig alphabetically."

"Oh, all right!" said Dig. "Get up and speak, and make it as short as you can."

"I am afraid that I cannot agree to do anythin' of the sort. I wish to move a resolution and submit it to the meetin'."

"Buck up, then!"

"A resolution to the effect that the five-minute rule shall be temporarily suspended in my favah—"

"Yes, that's likely!"

"Impossible!" said the chairman decidedly. "We shall never get through."

"I do not suggest a permanent suspension of that extremely salutary rule," said D'Arcy. "I think it should be suspended temporarily in my favah—"

"Won't wash! Mind, all this is coming out of your five minutes."

"Nothin' of the sort—"

"Two minutes and a half gone already."

"I pwotest—"

"If you take up the time protesting you won't be able to make a speech," said Tom Merry warningly. "I give you that as a friendly hint."

"I do not wegard your conduct as eithah friendly or respectful, Tom Mewwy. I demand that my resolution be put to the meetin'."

"Very well. The speaker submits that the five-minute rule be temporarily suspended in his favour. Yes or no?"

"No!"

The "No" was a roar, and there was not a single "Yes" audible. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass and surveyed the meeting in surprise.

"Oh, vewy well!" he said. "I weally had about a quartah of an hour to fill up, but I will endeavah to cwam my remarks into five minutes."

"Only one minute left."

"I do not wegard that as fair, Tom Mewwy. It is not cwicket. I weally have not commenced my speech yet, and I certainly cannot condense my observations into the extremely nawwow space of one minute—"

"Thirty seconds left."

"Gentlemen of St. Jim's, I have only a few remarks to make—"

"Thank goodness!" said Kerr.

"If that boundah intewwupts me again I shall give him a feahful thwashin'. Gentlemen of the Fourth Form and the Shell, on this auspicious occasion you will be glad to hear me say—"

"Time's up!" exclaimed the chairman.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Time's up! Clear!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I have not even commenced my speech, and it is impos for me to cleah without havin' made a few remarks—"

"Clear out! Time's up, and you're taking up Dig's time. One down, another come on," said Tom Merry. "We can't stay here all night."

"Weally, I pwotest—"

"Go and protest somewhere else, then. Half a minute of your time gone, Digby. I'd advise you to buck up if you're going to speak."

"Buck up!" howled a score of voices.

Time was passing, and the dusk of the May evening was deepening to darkness. Some of the fellows had lighted bicycle lamps and slung them on the chapel rails, and these shed a dim glimmer upon the scene.

"Buck up, Dig!"

"Right-ho!" said Digby. "Clear off, Gussy! You're in the way, old chap."

"I am sowwy, but I must wefuse to cleah off until I have addressed the meetin'," said D'Arcy firmly. "It is impos for me—"

"Are you going to get out?"

"Undah the cires, I must distinctly wefuse to get out."

"Oh, take him away, somebody!" said the chairman.

"Where's that giddy committee that was going to keep order? Yank him off!"

"I wefuse to be yanked off! Figgins, if you lay your hands on me in that wuff way I shall administah a feahful

Potts, the Office Boy!



thawashin' to you pwesently. Blake, wesease me at once, or I shall no longah wegard you as a fwiend. Lowthah, you uttah wottah, I considah you a wude beast! Mannahs, take your beastlay fingahs out of my beastlay collah! You are wumplin' my collah and hurtin' my beastlay neck, you uttah beast!"

"How much time have I got left, Tom Merry?" demanded Digby, as D'Are's voice faded away as he was dragged off.

"Two minutes!"

"I think the time ought to be extended as—"

"Nothing of the sort. This is a political meeting; not a night out. If you've got a speech to make, make it."

"Well, I've got something to say," said Digby. "Gentlemen of St. Jim's—"

"Same old opening," said Manners, who was a chess player. "Why don't some of you try something new?"

"Shut up, Manners! How can a chap talk while you are yelping? Gentlemen of this old and honoured school—"

"Hear, hear!"

"You have heard something of the latest idea. It is a jolly good idea, though the first crude conception came from the usually dense duffers you know as the Horrible Three—I mean the Terrible Three. We're going to have a ripping school parliament of about thirty members—"

"Twenty," said Blake.

"Thirty," said Digby emphatically.

"Twenty!"

"Thirty!"

"Twenty!"

"Who's making this speech?" exclaimed Digby indignantly. "Shut up, can't you, Blake? I say, we're going to have a parliament of about thirty members—"

"Twenty!"

"Chuck him out!" roared a dozen voices.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Dig's speech as wathah wotten, but ewevy gentleman has a wight to expect othah gentlemen not to intewwupt him."

"Of about thirty members," said Digby victoriously; "and as I was saying—"

"Time's up—"

"Oh, hang that, Tom Merry! Between Blake and Gussy I haven't had time to say a word—or hardly more than a word—"

"Can't help your troubles. Time's up, and you've got to clear. Figgins comes next. People, this long-legged rotter is our esteemed friend Figgins of the New House," said the chairman, introducing the speaker. "To those of you who have never heard of the New House, I may explain that it is an old, miserable casual ward where all sorts of conditions of rotters hang out—wasters who wouldn't be admitted to the School House on any terms—"

There was a roar from the New House juniors. A cabbage-stump from an unknown hand caught the chairman on the chest, and he sat down suddenly on the ground against the chapel rails.

"Gentlemen of the New House and rotters of the School House," began Figgins gracefully. "You will naturally like to hear a decent, sensible speech after all the piffle you have stood for the last twenty minutes—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Who threw that cabbage-stump?" roared the chairman, scrambling to his feet.

"Shut up!"

"Let Figgins go on!"

"Let him get finished, for goodness' sake!"

"Who threw that—"

"Don't interrupt!" howled Blake. "I'm surprised at you, Tom Merry."

"Why, you were interrupting yourself just now!"

"I wasn't; I was interrupting Digby."

"I mean you were interrupting—"

"I don't care what you mean, and I'm not a giddy chairman, anyhow. A chairman ought to keep order, not transgress on a chap's five minutes by talking a lot of rot about a mouldy old cabbage-stump."

"Order! Get on with the washing, Figgins!"

"Yaas, pway continue, Figgins, deah boy. We can stand it."

"What I say is, that it's a jolly good idea to hold a St. Jim's Parliament," said Figgins. "But we shall have to be careful in the management of it, or it will be mucked up by these School House rotters!"

"Hear, hear!" "Rats!" "Right-ho!" "Bah!"

"So long as New House fellows have the upper hand, there's no reason why the thing shouldn't go swimmingly," went on Figgins, undaunted by the yells and hisses of the School House crowd. "If we let the School House wasters get to the top, the thing will end in a muck-up. That's all I've got to say—"

"Quite enough, too!" said Monty Lowther.

"But I'm willing to submit to the voice of the majority," went on Figgins. "A chap has to give and take, and so long as the School House kids aren't cheeky, I'm willing to leave School House rows out of it. We want a parliament with about fifteen or sixteen members; it's no good having a crowd, and I should suggest sixteen as a comfortable working number."

"Twenty!" said Blake.

"Thirty!" said Digby.

"Sixteen!"

"Twenty!"

"Thirty!"

"Time's up, Figgins!" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking at his watch. "You've had twenty seconds over, and that comes out of Herries' time. Herries comes next."

"That's all very well!" said Herries indignantly.

"Of course it is!" agreed Tom Merry. "Get up on your hind legs and speak, old chap, if you've got anything to say. Time's passing, and you're entitled by the rules to bore us for four minutes and a half."

Herries came forward. Herries was not a fluent speaker, and when he was excited or confused his brain worked slowly; indeed, Digby had declared that it sometimes stopped working altogether. That was probably a libel; but really, on the present occasion Herries seemed to be nonplussed.

"Gentlemen, this is Herries, a member of a well-known collection of duffers kept in Study No. 6 in the School House!" said the chairman. "He will have the honour of addressing the meeting. Fire away, Herries!"

"Certainly!" said Herries. "Gentlemen of St. Jim's, I—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I have the honour of addressing the meeting," said Herries, catching that phrase from Tom Merry, thinking

PASTING POTTS!



it a rather neat one. "On the present important occasion, I—I—I have the honour of addressing the meeting."

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Hewwies, old man!"

"I—I—I have the honour," said Herries, growing more hopelessly confused every moment by the crowd of eyes gleaming at him, and the laughter and shouting. "As I think I said before, I—I have the honour of addressing the meeting."

"Three more minutes!" said Tom Merry.

"Don't interrupt me, Merry!" said Herries. "You'll put me off my stroke. I—I—I was going to say that—in short—that I have the honour of addressing the meeting, and—and I have—the honour—of—addressing the meeting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a formidable yell of laughter. Some of the previous speeches had tickled the audience greatly, but Herries' effort seemed about the richest of all. The juniors laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks, and the ringing merriment banished whatever shred of self-possession the speaker had left.

"Two minutes more!" said the chairman.

"Yes—yes, exactly. I—I have the honour of addressing the meeting," said Herries. "On the present occasion I—I have the honour—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of addressing the meeting—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries paused. Even he realised that he was repeating himself; but whatever he had intended to put into his speech had gone completely out of his head. He opened his mouth several times like an expiring codfish, and no words came forth; while the spectators shrieked themselves almost into hysterics.

"My hat!" said Lowther. "This is worth watching! It's a new system of jaw-gymnastics, you know. At least, I suppose that's what it is."

"Get on with the washing, Hewwies, old man!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "If you like, I will finish your speech for you, dear boy."

"One minute more!" said the chairman. "Buck up, Herries! It's the last lap."

Herries bucked up.

"Gentlemen of St. Jim's," he stammered, "on—on the present important occasion I—I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have the honour of—"

"Go it!"

"Of addressing the meeting—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the last effort of Herries. That last roar of laughter was too much for him, and he retired covered with blushes.

Blake patted him on the shoulder.

"Good kid!" he said. "It's not every fellow who can make a speech like that. Now, then, whose turn next?"

"Kerr!" said Figgins promptly.

But the juniors were still shrieking with laughter, and it really seemed as if there would never be order enough restored for the next speech.

CHAPTER 8.

An Exciting Finish!

"ORDER!"

"Silence for the speaker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order! Shut up! Fair play, now!"

The laughter died down at last. Chuckles still burst forth every few moments, but there was sufficient quietness for the next speaker to come forward. Kerr, the Scottish partner in the New House Co., was the next man alphabetically, and he was waiting with visible signs of impatience for a chance to speak. The five-minute rule was rigid, and the minutes were flying. Tom Merry grinned as he looked at his watch.

"Only one minute left, Kerr," he remarked. "Better make the best of it, old chap!"

Kerr was a canny Scotsman. He wasted no time in argument, but plunged directly into his subject.

"I've got a few words to say on this subject, kids. I back up all Figgins said—"

"Hear, hear! Good old Figgins!"

"And I've got some more to say, too. I think the St. Jim's Parliament ought to be held in the box-room in the New House—"

"Rats!" exclaimed Blake. "The empty garret in the School House is just the place, of course! Cheek!"

"Shut up, Blake, and let Scotty get on!"

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"I think that the Parliament should meet in the New House," said Kerr. "We should be able to keep better order. I also think—"

"No time for what you think!" said Tom Merry. "Time's up!"

"You don't mean to say it's a minute yet, Tom Merry?"

"It's a minute and two seconds!" said Tom Merry severely. "You've exceeded your time, Kerr. Never knew such a falkative lot of bounders. Now then, Lowther, you're next!"

Monty Lowther stepped up, as Kerr slowly and unwillingly retired. Kerr felt that he had been done, but argument was useless. Herries had involuntarily taken up most of his time; but nobody seemed to mind excepting Kerr himself.

There was nothing confused about Monty Lowther. He was as cool as a cucumber, and keen as a knife. He stood with his hands in his trousers pockets in an easy attitude to address the meeting.

It was possible that the very easiness of his attitude made



the crowd inclined to heckle him, for there were catcalls galore before he started.

"Order!" shouted Tom Merry. "Silence for Montague Lowther, Esquire!"

"Better shut up!" said Lowther. "You can make a row another time, you know. I've got a few words to say, and you had better listen, too. I've been thinking out the idea, and I've got an important point to touch on. It's a question of the constituencies. Each member of Parliament has to be elected by a constituency, and I think we had better adopt the suggestion of making up each constituency of a certain number of voters. Say, every dozen fellows can elect a member of St. Jim's Parliament, those dozen form the constituency, and the constituency—"

"Fond of that word, ain't he?" Figgins remarked.

"And that constituency," repeated Lowther, "will take its name from the largest town represented among the dozen voters."

"Good idea!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Well, not bad!" said Blake thoughtfully. "Yes, upon the whole I think we can adopt the plan. Of course, I should have thought of it later."

"Weally, I had something of the same sort in my mind already, deah boys; but it had not taken definite shape, you know."

"I think the plan would work out well," said Lowther.

"You see—"

"I say, isn't time up?" demanded Kerr.

"Ten seconds more," said Tom Merry, looking at his watch.

"Same thing. This is where you slide out, Lowther."

"I'll slide out when I like, Kerr!"

"You'll slide out now!"

"Time's up!" said Tom Merry. "Off you go, Monty! Now then, it's Manners next. Buck up, Manners! Gentle-

develop your plates and films in a cupboard under the stairs, and the daylight developer isn't a thing you want to use always, though I've got one. So I think—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think that a proper dark-room for the juniors, properly fixed up and ventilated, would be a boon and a—"

"I say, I hope the meeting isn't over!" exclaimed the voice of Skimpole, as the amateur Determinist came bustling through the crowd. "I've just fetched a special speech."

"Shut up! Manners is talking."

"Yes, I can hear that; but I have no doubt that Manners will be willing to shut up, as I have something of great importance to say."

"Shut up, Skimpole!"

"Chuck him out!"

"My dear friends and fellow citizens of this great and glorious community—"

"Shut up! It's Manners' turn—"

"Sit on his chest!"

Skimpole, however, was determined to be heard, and as he could not have a hearing at this meeting he decided to hold one on his own. This he proceeded to do within a few yards of the "official" meeting. But it was not a success. Nobody took the slightest notice of him, except a terrier belonging to one of the Third Form fags which was taking a stroll in the quad.

Meanwhile, the "official" meeting proceeded.

"Merry, next," said the chairman. "I will now proceed—"

"Chairman comes last, if at all," interrupted Figgins.

"Fatty Wynn comes next."

"M' comes before 'W'—"

"Very likely; but Fatty comes before chairman!" grinned Figgins. "Besides, you've had a part of a speech already, and chairman has to come last with his few words."

"Oh, very well; roll him on, then!"

Fatty Wynn came forward. The expression on his face showed that he had something to say. He hurriedly thrust the remains of a jam-tart into his breast pocket, and wiped his mouth as Figgins pushed him into view.

"Go it, Fatty!"

"Certainly!" said Fatty. "There's an important point in this new scheme that has been, I believe, overlooked. You have talked about the constituencies, and the place of meeting, and the number of members, but I haven't heard any allusion made to the refreshment department—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Good old Fatty!"

"And then, another point equally important. Wouldn't it be a jolly good idea to celebrate the opening of St. Jim's Parliament with a big feed, by general subscriptions, to include fellows in both Houses and all the Lower Forms," said Fatty Wynn. "I should be happy to place myself as cook at the disposal of—"

"Fellow-citizens of St. Jim's, if you will listen to me—"

Skimpole, determined to be heard, was fairly bellowing.

"We won't, Skimmy! Dry up!"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Fatty Wynn good-naturedly. "I had about finished, anyway."

"Thank you, Wynn!" said Skimpole. "It is quite right of you to withdraw your useless and idle speech in favour of the important things I have to utter. You have all been wasting your time. Talk about Nero fiddling while Rome was burning! Here you are, talking more piffle while the crisis long foreseen by wise men is arriving in the history of the world. Determinism—"

"Boo!" "Rats!" "Scat." "Chuck it!"

"Determinism is coming, like the flood tide setting in, and ere long I hope to see this school converted to the new and glorious creed. These interruptions do not deter me; I do not even blame you for them. As a Determinist, I know that you are not really to blame, as nobody is to blame for anything, and everything in existence is equally right and wrong. There are, in fact, no right and wrong, for everything—"

"I wonder what on earth he is talking about," Lowther remarked. "Have you the faintest idea, Skimpole?"

"The day is coming when the sunburst of Determinism will rise on the earth like the full moon on a dark night—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You may laugh! Yes, my friends—my misguided but beloved brothers—you may laugh! You may laugh!" roared Skimpole. "But it's coming! I see it in my mind's eye! I feel it in my heart! Ow, ow! Who threw that cabbage-stump at me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Am I discouraged by this ribald laughter? Am I downcast by the grinning of a crew of foolish youths, with no more brains than would go on a penny-piece?—Certainly not! I hurl back your laughter in your teeth. I say—"

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"Collar him!" shouted Pratt. Skimpole looked at the crowd closing in round him and then broke into a run and dashed away; but the excited juniors were not to be denied. The freak of the Shell disappeared, with a crowd of juniors tearing in fierce pursuit!

men, this is Harry Manners, whom you all know to be a—"

"Duffer!" said Figgins.

"Whom you all know to be a respectable and prominent member of the School House society," said Tom Merry. "Go it, Manners old son!"

Manners rubbed his chin thoughtfully. He had his turn at making a speech, and he wasn't going to miss it; but he couldn't think of anything in particular to say.

"Go it, Manners!"

"Well," said Manners, "my idea is that St. Jim's Parliament ought to pass a law making it compulsory for the school authorities to rig up a good dark-room for the amateur photographers of the Merry Hobby Club—"

There was a shout of laughter. The juniors had wondered what Manners was going to say, but they had hardly expected him to start on his hobby at that moment.

"You see," went on the speaker, "it's rotten having to



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THE ST. JIM'S PARLIAMENT!

(Continued from previous page.)

"Oh, it will interest you; it's a curious coincidence:

"Dear Merry.—We're holding a discussion in our study at half-past seven, and we should be glad if you three came along. It's to discuss about nominating the candidates for the school parliament.—Yours sincerely,

'G. FIGGINS.'

"What do you think of that, kids?"

"I don't think anything about it."

"Figgins wants us to go and see him."

"Go and see him, then."

"But Blake wants us to go and see him at the same time."

"Well, why can't you go?"

"And we're holding a discussion in this study at the same time—"

"Hold your row instead."

"Are you going to move, Manners?" demanded Lowther.

"Yes, I am; when I'm ready."

"It's all very well to wear a fellow out like this," said Monty Lowther. "If you fag me out waiting for the moves, I shan't consider you win."

"Rats! How can I move when Tom Merry is chattering away like a blessed magpie, and fellows come in slamming the door every second or two?"

"Oh, come," said Tom Merry; "there have only been two slams!"

"Shut up!"

"By Jove, he's moving at last!" said Lowther.

"There you are, Monty, you beast! King's bishop to rook's seventh, and if you can get out of that you can use my head for a football!"

"I suppose I can castle—"

"Ass! Your knight's square is under check from the knight."

"So it is. All the same—"

"Finished?" asked Tom Merry.

"No," grunted Lowther. "How that chap keeps on talking! I shall have to look into this; I'm not going to be checkmate because Tom Merry can't leave off talking! Hallo, there's some demon at the door again!"

The study door opened.

Skimpole of the Shell put his head into the room. Skimpole's head was a very large one, and if he had had a body to match he would have been a youthful giant, but Nature had been more and more sparing as she went downward, so to speak, and Skimpole had a large head, a body small in proportion, and legs smaller in proportion still.

"I say, Merry, I want to speak to you if you are not busy," said Skimpole, looking into the study.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'm not busy, except in receiving invitations," he replied. "But you mustn't speak above a whisper, or you will be killed by a chess maniac."

"Oh, chess! Not much of a subject for a fellow with brains," said Skimpole, with a disparaging glance at the chess table. "A brainy fellow ought to take up a deeper subject, and if Manners or Lowther cared about it, I wouldn't mind letting them into some knowledge on the subject of the Schopenhauer philosophy."

"Get out!" roared Manners.

"Eh? Did you address me, Manners?"

"Yes, I did. Do you want your head bunged under the grate?"

"Certainly not."

"Then get out!"

Skimpole looked at Tom Merry inquiringly.

"Manners seems excited," he remarked. "Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, no; only he's playing chess! What do you want, Skimmy?"

"I just looked in to tell you that I'm addressing a mass meeting in the quadrangle at half-past seven, and I should like you fellows to come along—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to laugh at, Merry."

"I do, though. Sorry we can't come, owing to a press of previous invitations from other quarters," said Tom Merry, laughing.

(Continued on page 19.)

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SEE WHAT'S IN—



Address all letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! Have you dug into this week's great yarn and found it to your liking? I'll say you have. Well, stand by now for another rip-smorting story featuring the St. Jim's Parliament and—wait for it—the schoolboy Prime Minister! For sheer entertainment and lively reading next Wednesday's grand long story of Tom Merry & Co. will be hard to beat. Look out for

"PRIME MINISTER OF ST. JIM'S!"

and be prepared for a good long laugh. In more serious strain is the next instalment of David Goodwin's fine story:

"CHUMS OF THE FIGHTING FLEET!"

but you will find it to your liking—full of action and the atmosphere of the sea. Tell your pals about these two "treats of the week," and let them know how good they are. How's your coupon collection? Getting bigger and bigger? That's the style! Don't forget to cut out this week's coupon and put it in a safe place. In a few weeks from now I shall have pleasure in giving all GEM readers a special BIG BONUS coupon, in addition to the usual weekly one, that will be worth 250 POINTS. Don't miss this, what ever you do!

Many thanks all you fellows who have written in saying how much you like the "Potts Picture Strip." It will be included in next week's GEM, and you will find Potts just as amusing as ever. Order your copy of the GEM early—that's the safest way of avoiding disappointment!

HEARD THIS ONE?

Jim: "Let's see who can make the ugliest face."

Bill: "Not likely. You've got a big start over me!"

THE SILENT SHOT!

The modern gunman would give a heap to know the secret of a British inventor who claims that he has made a silencer that can be fitted to any gun, whether it be a hand automatic rifle or a machine-gun. In a test recently carried out several shots were fired, but in the surrounding rooms no one heard anything out of the ordinary. In the test-room itself all that could be heard was a soft "plop" like the shutting of a heavy book. The War Office is considering this useful invention, which takes the form of a small phosphor-bronze cylinder and a decompression chamber weighing no more than a pound. In addition to cutting down the noise this silencer has the effect of reducing the heating of

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the barrel during rapid fire, and cuts out the tell-tale flame and smoke as well. Imagine your desperate gunman with such a weapon—he would be doubly dangerous. But the inventor of this silencer has the well-being of the public in mind, as he has announced that his invention will not be placed on the retail market for every gunman, or would-be gunman, to add to his armoury. That's one comfort.

THE REVOLVING TABLE!

A novel "dining-table" is having a great vogue on the Pacific Coast these days, for it appeals to the man with a big appetite and a small purse. He pays a fixed sum, then seats himself at a giant circular table. In front of him, moving slowly on a belt, travels a score or more of dishes, containing such dainties as would satisfy even Baggy Trimble or Fatty Wynn. If the diner sees a particular item on the menu he fancies, he waits for the large glass box containing it to come round. Then he opens a flap, takes out a plate with a liberal portion of "eat" on it, and sets to. As the belt moves on its circular journey continuously, the diner can pick what he likes and as often as he likes. In addition, he hasn't to bother about a waiter, for these sometimes trying folk are not needed. "Eat as much as you like" is the slogan of the restaurants who have adopted this novel revolving table and the result seems to satisfy both diner and proprietor.

STILL GOING STRONG!

Too old at twenty is a term often applied to horses, for the friend of man begins to get a bit wonky at the knees after his nineteenth birthday. At twenty-five, if he ever reaches that ripe old age, he is a real "pensioner." Investigations recently brought to light some interesting facts, among which, standing high in the world of records, is the age of "Maggie." She is a "dairy" horse who was born as long ago as 1894 and is still going strong—doing her job of work with unflinching regularity. "Maggie" is now thirty-eight years old and is still going strong! A Shetland pony, in Leicestershire, however, is said to be forty-five years old! Then there is the story of a pony owned by a Northampton fruiterer, which worked right up to the age of fifty-two before it went to its happy hunting ground. But "Old Billy" beat them all—he lived to the ripe old age of sixty-two!

A SUPER MAIL PLANE!

Before the end of this year Britain will possess the fastest mail aeroplane in the world—a giant, all-metal plane with two supercharged air-cooled engines. Two pilots will be able to fly this bus through its long journeys, for there will be plenty of room for them and they will be able

to take turn and turn about at the controls with restful intervals between. A top speed of two hundred miles per hour is the aim of the constructors, with a cruising speed of one hundred and fifty miles an hour. Another big point is the matter of fuel. This super plane will be able to cleave the skies for a thousand miles or more without having to land for fresh petrol. How much mail will it be able to carry? Just a small matter of 1,000 lb.! Already this super plane is being built by enthusiastic craftsmen eager to do their bit to give Britain a mail plane that will make the rest of the world sit up and take notice!

BIG BEN WRONG!

In a recent chat I mentioned one or two facts about Big Ben, which is perhaps the best-known clock in the world. And since that paragraph appeared all manner of "facts" have come to hand from GEM readers concerning London's famous timepiece. Of them all, however, the following is the most interesting. Twice every hour, writes my correspondent, Big Ben is five seconds wrong. Owing to the weight of the big hand it spurts downwards on approaching the quarter-past-the-hour and arrives there five seconds in front of the official Greenwich time. To counteract this "gain," the weighty hand finds it so much labour to the upward climb to the quarter-to-the-hour position that it loses the "pinched" five seconds. Thus, at the full hour Big Ben chimes out true Greenwich time. Twice a day Big Ben is corrected from Greenwich, and is wound up only once a week!

ON THE BALL!

Negroes of the African forest have taken up Soccer with great enthusiasm, but the players scorn the use of football boots and stockings. They prefer to shoot goals with their bare feet. As many as two thousand natives will attend a "first-class" match, and usually they become so excited that a free fight between them develops while the game is going on. One outstanding feature of negro footer is the speed of the players, but they have yet to learn that team work brings more goals than individual play. Doubtless that will come along with experience and with it perhaps a first-class "All-black" team who will challenge England's best at Wembley!

THE BEAR AND THE "BEES"!

The Norwegian postal authorities had a tough problem to solve, not long ago, for reports kept reaching them of telegraph poles being found uprooted. There had been no gales or storms of sufficient strength to account for this, so an expert engineer was sent to investigate. The solution of the problem came in the shape of an inquisitive bear, who was seen to listen carefully against a telegraph pole and then start digging into the ground at the base of it for all he was worth. Eventually the pole and the cables attached to it came hurtling to the ground, whereupon the bear sniffed round disgustedly for several minutes and then sheered off. It was the buzzing of the wires that attracted the bear in the first place. That buzzing reminded him of bees—and bees reminded him of honey, of which he was very fond. Yet this bear uprooted several telegraph posts and did damage to the extent of hundreds of pounds before he realised his mistake.

THE ST. JIM'S PARLIAMENT!

(Continued from page 17.)

"I really wish you would come. I've got a speech written out, and it's a regular ripper, full of statistics."

"I'm not particularly gone on statistics, thank you."

"But really—"

"Kick him out, Tom, there's a good fellow!" said Manners imploringly. "Are you moving your knight, Lowther?"

"Yes, I'm going to exchange knights with you."

"But really—"

"Right you are. There!"

"But, really, you fellows," said Skimpole, "when it's a question of nominating the candidates for the first meeting of St. Jim's Parliament, I think you might put such a thing as chess aside; I do, really!"

"Kick him out, Tom, or I won't chum with you any longer."

"Get out, Skimmy!"

"But, really—"

"Manners wants me to kick you out, and I couldn't refuse him a little thing like that. Better travel along," said Tom Merry, getting off the table.

"If you're in earnest, Tom Merry—"

"Deadly earnest, I assure you."

"But I want to explain to you—"

"Wait a minute while I get my football boots."

But the freak of the Shell did not wait. He scuttled out of the study and banged the door hard.

Manners gave a wrathful yell.

"That's about the tenth time that door has banged!"

"No, only the third, old chap," said Tom Merry soothingly. "And you insisted upon his going out of the study, you know."

"There you are, Lowther, my pawn up. I suppose you can see it now?"

"I'm not so sure about it."

"Oh, don't be obstinate! It's mate in one more move, unless you sacrifice your queen's bishop, and that puts it off only one move more, as my rook comes straight on."

"Yes, but—"

"Well, take your time," said Manners, leaning back in his chair. "You can jabber now, Merry, if you like. What were you—"

"No, he can't!" howled Lowther. "He'll put me off my game. I fancy I can manage this with the queen to the bishop's eight."

Manners smiled. He was an old chess-player, and he did not need to look at the board to know whether there was anything in Lowther's contention or not.

"Oh, look at it, Monty!"

"I'm looking. I think—"

The study door opened, and an eyeglass, with a face behind it, looked in. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, from Study No. 6, the swell of the School House of St. Jim's.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Tom Merry.

Lowther reached out for a cushion.

"Hallo, deah boy!" said D'Arcy languidly. "Blako asked me to look in as I was passin', to see if you were comin' to the meetin' in Study No. 6 aftah tea."

"Get out!" rapped out Lowther.

Arthur Augustus turned his monocle upon Monty Lowther with an air of surprise and disdain.

"Did you address me, Lowthah?"

"Yes, I did. Get out!"

"You are a wude wottah!"

"You're interrupting the game!"

"The intewwuppon of a game of chess is not a sufficient excuse for wudeness," said D'Arcy frigidly. "I must wefuse to excuse you on such fwivolous gwound, Lowthah."

"Are you going?" roared Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Whiz!

"Look out!" yelled Tom Merry.

But the warning came too late. The cushion whizzed from the hand of the wrathful Lowther, and it caught Arthur Augustus full upon the chest. The swell of the School House sat down suddenly in the doorway.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "What—what was that? Lowthah, I wegard you as an obstinate beast, and I shall give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Get out!"

But the swell of the School House did not get out. He sprang to his feet and dashed straight at Lowther.

"Look out!" yelled Manners. "You'll have the chess-table over!"

But Arthur Augustus was too excited to think about such a trifle.

"Hold on," gasped Lowther, "you utter ass!"

He grappled with the excited swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus lurched heavily against the chess-table, and it went flying. There was a roar from Manners as pieces and pawns went scattering over the floor.

"Oh, you utter ass!"

"I am sowwy, Mannahs; but I am goin' to give Lowthah a feahful thwashin'!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

And the next moment the combatants were rolling among the scattered chessmen.

CHAPTER 10.

D'Arcy Causes Trouble!

TOM MERRY was laughing too much to interfere. Arthur Augustus and Lowther rolled over and over.

Manners was whooping with wrath. He had been deprived of his checkmate, after playing for it for nearly an hour. It was enough to excite his wrath.

"You utter ass!" gasped Lowther.

"You uttah wottah!"

"Oh, chuck it!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with tears running down his cheeks. "Don't be a pair of silly asses, you know! Chuck it!"

"I'm going to suffocate this idiot!"

"I'm goin' to give this boundah a feahful thwashin'!"

"I say, Manners, collar Lowther, will you, and I'll take care of Gussy?" exclaimed Tom Merry, who was really afraid that the excited combatants would hurt one another.

Manners did not move.

"Let 'em go on," he said. "Monty can make pea-shucks of him as easy as winking. He ought to be slain for spoiling a checkmate."

"Yes, but—"

"I had Lowther mate in one move more."

"Rot!" gasped Lowther, looking up from the furious combat for a moment. "Rot, Manners. I should have played my queen to bishop's eight!"

"Bosh! That wouldn't have made any difference!"

"It would have busted your game!"

"What about my rook?"

"Oh, blow your rook!"

"Well, of all the silly asses!" said Manners. "I wanted to finish the game, so as to make the thing clear even to Lowther's intellect; but really I never expected him to deny a perfectly evident thing like that."

"I should have played my queen to—"

"Oh, rats!"

Lowther jerked himself away from Arthur Augustus. He left the swell of St. Jim's gasping on the floor.

"Let's set 'em out again as they were!" gasped Lowther. "I'll jolly soon show you whether I was mate in another move!"

Manners sniffed.

"Can you remember where half of them were?"

"Well, we could try."

Arthur Augustus struggled to his feet. He did not seem to be satisfied yet, for he rushed straight at Monty Lowther. But Tom Merry caught him by the shoulder and dragged him back.

"Hold on, Gussy!"

"Pway welaase me, Tom Mewwy!"

"Chuck it! My dear ass—"

"If you do not welaase me immediately, Tom Mewwy, I shall lose my beastlay tempah and stwike you."

"My dear ass, you've done enough damage. There's Lowther looking as if he had gone through a mangle or under a motor-bus."

"Well," said D'Arcy, pausing, "if Lowthah likes to confess that he has had a feahful lickin', and that he deserved it, I am willin' to let the mattah dwop."

"Rats!" said Lowther, without looking round.

"Then I shall continue to thwash you, Lowthah, until—"

"My dear Gussy, you will spoil your clothes."

"My clothes are already wumped and dustay, Tom Mewwy, and my collah is wumped, and my tie disawwanged. There is nothin' more that can happen, so I may as well finish thwashin' Lowthah. Pway welaase me!"

"Gussy, if you think it's the real Chesterfieldian thing to come and make a row in another fellow's study, you've got a lot to learn," said Tom Merry severely.

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"If you choose to apologise to Lowther, we'll look over it."

"But Lowthah biffed me with a cushion in the most

brutal way, and gave me a shock to my beastly system, which threw me into quite a fluttah," protested D'Arcy.

"It's no good arguing, Gussy. You have behaved in a really ungentlemanly way, and the less you say about it the better," said Tom Merry, shaking his head.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'm going to slay that ass," said Manners, picking up the cushion. "Lowther will never allow now that I had him mate in one move."

"Because you hadn't anything of the kind," said Lowther. "I should have played my queen to bishop's eight."

"You ass, I'd have wiped it off with my rook!"

"Blow your rook!"

"Look here, Monty—"

"It's no good saying you had me mate in one move," said Lowther obstinately. "My belief is that in a few minutes more I should have had you cornered."

"Me cornered?" howled Manners. "Why I played chess before you were born—at least, before you ever saw a chess-board! Me cornered! Why, I could play you without a queen, and with my eyes shut!"

"Well, your pieces were in a rotten position!"

"You utter imbecile!"

"Who are you calling an imbecile?"

"You—your dummy! I had you mate in one move!"

"If you're looking for a swelled nose, Manners—"

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Lowther—"

"If you can give it me—"

"I'll jolly soon—"

D'Arcy screwed his eyeglass into his eye. It really looked as though the chums of the Shell were coming to fisticuffs, and Arthur Augustus watched them with interest.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy," he remarked, "I have nevah seen Mannahs and Lowthah fightin', and it will be an interestin' sight. Let us stand in the doorway and watch the duffahs, deah boy."

Tom Merry did not seem to see it in the same light. He ran quickly between Manners and Lowther, bestowing a hearty thump upon each of them, and the two chess champions staggered away.

"What are you up to?" roared Monty Lowther, glaring at his leader.

"What the dickens—" began Manners wrathfully.

Tom Merry looked at them sternly.

"What do you mean by quarrelling, especially before that grinning ass from Study No. 6?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, perhaps I was rather hasty," said Manners. "I oughtn't to have called you an imbecile, Lowther."

He put a great deal of stress on the word "called," as if to hint that his opinion was unchanged, all the same.

"I don't mind that so much," said Lowther. "What gets my back up is your maintaining that you had me mated in one move, when it was perfectly clear—"

"I tell you I had!"

"I tell you you hadn't!"

"My rook—"

"My queen—"

"Oh, shut up, both of you!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "If you talk about chess again I'll give you a licking each, so look out!"

"Bai Jove, I should like you to do that while I'm pwsent, Tom Mewwy! I should wegard it as distinctly amusin'!"

"Gussy's at the bottom of the trouble," said Tom Merry darkly. "He upset the chess-table. We had better scrag Gussy, and that will make everything all right."

"Agreed!" said Manners and Lowther simultaneously.

And the Terrible Three made a movement towards the swell of the School House.

D'Arcy skipped out into the passage with great alacrity.

"I refuse to be scawged, Tom Mewwy, and I wegard the suggestion as diswepsectful!" he exclaimed. "Are you comin' to the meetin' in Study No. 6, or are you not?"

"Not," said Tom Merry.

"It's a wathah important meetin'."

"Then you had better go and attend it."

"Oh, vewy well! If you fellows choose to be left out in the cold it's your own beastly fault," said the swell of the School House.

And he walked away.

Manners collected up the chessmen. Lowther set the table upon its legs.

"We'll have another try," said Manners, "and if I don't mate you—"

Tom Merry jerked the table away.

"No, you won't!" he said cheerfully. "You've played enough chess. We've got to think about the St. Jim's Parliament now."

"Hang the St. Jim's Parliament!"

"Now then, Manners!"

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"Oh, very well!" said Manners resignedly. "What about the St. Jim's Parliament?"

"It's time to nominate the candidates," said Tom Merry. "You know the system we have all agreed to. The Lower School at St. Jim's is to be divided into constituencies of a dozen each, and they're to elect the members."

"That's right."

"We've made up a list of the fellows and divided them into dozens. The question now is to make them vote for us. As we have free voting, they can choose whom they like to represent them in Parliament."

"And leave us out of it if they choose?"

"Exactly! It would be rather a disappointment to start an idea like this and to be left out of the elected Parliament."

"Well, rather!"

"So we have got to do some electioneering. Now, at three of us want to be members of the St. Jim's Parliament."

"We do."

"Then we shall have to hustle, that's all. But I've been thinking—"

"Well, give us the results of your unusual mental exercise, old chap," said Monty Lowther.

"Why, it would give the thing a sort of tone if we had a senior or two in it," said Tom Merry. "Of course, it's an affair of the juniors, I know; but if we could get a Sixth-Former of some standing in the school to take it up and become Speaker—"

"Good! But they'd very likely only cackle if we asked them."

"Oh, I don't mean to ask any rotter like Knox, or Sefton. I was thinking of Kildare, or Darrell, or Rushden."

"My hat! If we could get Kildare to become Speaker it would make the thing go," exclaimed Lowther. "None of the Upper Form fellows would care to cackle if the captain of St. Jim's were bossing the show."

"That's what I was thinking."

"Well, what do you say to an influential deputation to call on Kildare and ask him to stand for election?" said Manners. "A deputation would be the right thing, you know, to show that the whole body of electors would like him to stand."

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's right. An influential and representative deputation of electors—"

"If we could get Kildare it would make the New House wasters sing small," said Lowther. "Better lose no time about it."

"You've lost plenty of time over your rotten chess," said Tom Merry. "If Gussy hadn't stopped you, I expect you'd have kept it up all the evening."

"Oh, no, not at all!" said Manners. "I had Lowther mate in one move more."

"Rats!" said Monty Lowther.

"I had only to play my rook to—"

"Oh, cheese it! Don't start all that over again," said Tom Merry. "I think we may as well go along to Blake's meeting and Figgy's meeting and stop them talking rot, and gather them into the deputation."

"Well, that's a good idea."

"Kildare is certain to be in his study about eight o'clock, and we'll catch him there and persuade him to stand for election."

"Good wheeze! Let's get along!"

The chums of the Shell left the study and walked down to Study No. 6. It was close upon half-past seven, and the sound of voices from Blake's study seemed to show that the discussion had already commenced.

"Hallo, they're at it!" grinned Lowther. "Seem to be getting excited, too!"

The voices within Study No. 6 were certainly raised. Suddenly, as the Terrible Three drew nigh, the door of the study was opened, and a figure came hurtling forth headlong. It plumped down on the floor, and the door was slammed again.

CHAPTER 11.

The Nomination of the Candidates!

"SKIMPOLE, by Jove!"

It was indeed the freak of the Shell who had been so unceremoniously ejected from Study No. 6. Skimpole picked himself up and adjusted his spectacles and blinked at the chums of the Shell.

"Hallo, Skummy!" said Tom Merry sympathetically. "What's the trouble now? I see you've retired from the meeting on your neck. Have you been preaching determinism, tommyrotism, or silly dufferism?"

"I have been pointing out a few facts to those obstinate persons," gasped Skimpole. "I was interrupted most rudely."

These interruptions I forgave, as rudeness of manners is only a sign of bad training in early youth, and the fault thereof lay with Blake's parents, doubtless extremely coarse and brutal persons, as I pointed out to him, and would have demonstrated, but he grew violent."

"Ha, ha, ha! I am not surprised that he grew violent, Skimmy."

"Violence is no argument," said Skimpole, rubbing his bones, which had come in contact with the floor. "Violence proves nothing."

"There are some subjects a fellow can't argue about," explained Tom Merry. "Some observations can only be replied to with a dot on the nose—and a lot of your remarks are of that kind."

Skimpole shook his head.

wash my face before I carry on any more of my propaganda work," he murmured.

And the Determinist of St. Jim's went disconsolately down the passage.

Tom Merry put his head into Study No. 6.

"I say, Blake, we've come— Groooh!"

A pat of butter plumped into Tom Merry's eye.

"Hallo, Merry! Is that you?" exclaimed Blake, coming forward. "I'm sorry! Ha, ha, ha! Very sorry! I thought it was that ass Skimpole coming back."

"You—you ass!"

"I'm— Ha, ha, ha! Sorry! Quite a mistake!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, putting up his eyeglass to survey Tom Merry. "But weally you do look wathah funnay, Tom Mewwy."



WHIZ! "Look out!" yelled Tom Merry, but the warning came too late. The cushion whizzed from the hand of the wrathful Lowther and it caught Arthur Augustus full upon the chest. The swell of the School House sat down suddenly in the doorway. "Bai Jove!" he gasped.

"A reasonable man ought to be willing to argue," he said. "Argument sheds light on the most abstruse subjects!"

"Rats! What's the good of arguing? You go on for ever, getting more mixed up every minute, and finish in a regular tangle," said Lowther. "You can go and eat coke, Skimmy! Let's go in to the meeting, chaps."

"I am not going to give up the good work for the sake of personal safety," said Skimpole. "A true Determinist is bound to spread the light in and out of season, and I have not yet given up the hope of converting Study No. 6. They are intelligent lads, and therefore bound to agree with me in the long run, only they are rather impatient."

"Go it, Skimmy!"

"I say, Blake, I— Ow!"

A jam tart caught Skimpole on the nose and stuck there, and the freak of the Shell staggered back into the passage.

"If you come here again we'll rag you to fragments!" roared Jack Blake's voice.

Skimpole rubbed the jam off his face.

"Dear me! What a mean action! I must really go and

Tom Merry wiped the butter off his face. The juniors in Study No. 6 were laughing; but it had really been a mistake, and the hero of the Shell was a good-tempered fellow. He wiped the butter away without getting angry.

"You've changed your mind and come along to the discussion, after all," said Jack Blake. "Good! We were just talking about nominating candidates for the election, when that ass Skimpole came in with his proper—proper—proper something—"

"Proper gander," said Herries.

"Ha! Yes, I knew it was something about a gander, or a goose, or something," said Blake vaguely. "Thank goodness, we've got rid of him! I don't suppose you chaps will talk much more sensibly than he did, but it's a change, at all events."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Mannahs and Lowthah as duffahs. They were playin' chess just now, instead of thinkin' about the beastlay election, you know. Talk about Newo fiddlin' while Wome was burnin'!"

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"The juniors are divided up into constituencies of a dozen chaps each, each constituency named after the biggest town represented by any chap in the dozen," said Blake. "I thought that a ripping idea. At first, I mean. All the electors had to do was to turn up on polling day and elect us, and everything in the garden would be lovely. But—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"But some of them have shown an inclination to elect other representatives, eh?"

"That's it. There's Belfast—"

"Where?" asked Manners, looking round as if he expected to find that great and famous city in some corner of Study No. 6.

"Not here, ass!" said Blake witheringly. "Belfast is in Ireland, as you'd know if you looked on the map, or if you knew anything—which you don't!"

"Oh, cheese it! Go on!"

"What about Belfast?" asked Tom Merry. "Get on with the washing."

"Well, in the voting list we've lumped together all the fellows from the north of Ireland under the head of Belfast, as that's a jolly big place."

"Nothing wrong with that, is there?"

"No; only we naturally thought that Belfast would elect one of us—say, Digby, as his grandmother was an Irishman—an Irishwoman, I mean. She was an Irishwoman, wasn't she, Dig?"

"Yes," said Digby. "Her maiden name was Murphy."

"That sounds slightly Irish," agreed Tom Merry. "It's either Irish or Italian, I can't think which for the moment."

"Oh, don't rot!" said Blake. "Murphy is a fine old Irish name, and dates back thousands of years—at least, a jolly long time. Dig is really a Murphy, and so he can claim to represent Belfast, I should think."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But the constituency doesn't see it," said Blake, with an aggrieved look. "They've been holding a meeting in young Reilly's study. You know young Reilly?"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "He's a good footballer, and I put him in the junior team at the end of the season in place of Gussy, who had gone serenading on the day of an important match."

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"That's the chap," said Blake. "Now, I know he was a good footballer, and he plays cricket, but that's got nothing to do with parliamentary business."

"Nothing at all," agreed Tom Merry.

"Therefore, it's like his cheek to want to represent—"

"His native city?"

"Oh, I wasn't going to put it like that!" said Blake rather uneasily. "Digby, as a true-born Murphy, can represent Belfast, I should think. But the dozen asses have been meeting in young Reilly's study, and they've nominated him as their candidate."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That won't do, you know," said Herries. "We can't have any strange dogs in the kennel like that, of course."

Tom Merry laughed.

"But surely the constituency has a right to do as it likes, Blake?"

"Oh, yes, of course! I'm not denying that; and if they like to elect Digby to St. Jim's Parliament I've got nothing to say against that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose an Irish chap naturally takes to an Irish name," said Blake. "The only thing I can think of is for Dig to assume the name of Murphy for a time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a rather good idea," said Tom Merry gravely. "Are you thinking of taking out letters patent? You'd have to consult Sir Robert Digby. He would otherwise be surprised on his next visit to St. Jim's to find that his son and heir had turned into a Murphy—"

"Oh, don't rot!" said Blake. "Dig would become Murphy simply for the purpose of St. Jim's Parliament. I think that ought to do the trick."

"We'll try it," said Herries.

"If it doesn't answer," said Blake thoughtfully, "we can go to Reilly's study and give him a fearful licking."

"He might call up the rest of the constituency and give you the licking," suggested Tom Merry.

"Yaas, that is weally quite poss, Blake."

"Besides, what about the freedom of election?" said Lowther. "Lickings to the electors are barred?"

"Yaas, wathah! What about the freedom of election, Blake?"

"Well, we'll see," said Blake. "To get on with the washing, we're thinking of nominating Herries to represent Cheshire, as he comes from Chester. Gussy will be the member for Piccadilly—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I myself am going to represent York, as I was born there. All the Yorkshire chaps have agreed to vote for me."

"Good old Yorkshire!"

"Now, are you kids putting up for the election at all?" asked Blake, looking at the Terrible Three inquiringly, and by no means abashed by the indignant glare he received in return.

"I should say so!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Of course, we three are going in."

"If you can get elected—"

"There will be some thick ears if we don't—"

"What about the freedom of election—"

"Oh, rats! Lowther is standing for Durham, as that's his county. Manners will be the member for Liverpool, as that's the nearest city to his birthplace—and a jolly good city, too. I—"

"You stand for Huckleberry Heath, I suppose?"

"No, I don't. I was born in India, and sent home when I was a nipper, and so I stand for Britain Beyond the Seas," said Tom Merry, with some little importance.

"Well, that's a jolly big constituency," said Blake. "You'll have to rope in the Colonial votes. Dig, of course, stands for Belfast—"

"You won't beat Reilly very easily."

"Well, we're going to try. Of course, it's understood that we all back one another up as far as we can," said Blake inquiringly.

"Yes, certainly; but candidates don't vote for other candidates, you know."

"You can use your influence for us, though, and we'll do the same for you. We ought to make some arrangement of the same sort with Figgins & Co. Union is strength, you know."

"Well, why shouldn't we?"

"Figgins asked us to go over to some rotten meeting or other in his study at half-past seven—"

"Ha, ha, ha! He asked us, too."

"We may as well go over in company. We're half an hour late, but those New House bounders ought to feel honoured by our coming at all."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's go, then," said Tom Merry. "By the way, I want to propose a good idea—"

"Not one of your own?"

"Yes, my own."

"What do you mean by calling it a good idea, then?"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "What I say is, that we ought to have a fellow of some standing in the college for Speaker to give the thing a tone—"

"Tom Mewwy is quite wight, and I have no objection in the world to bein' nominated for Speakah—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy! I was thinking of a deputation to Kildare to ask him to become Speaker of St. Jim's Parliament—"

"Jolly good idea!" said Blake heartily. "I don't believe in letting seniors into anything as a rule, but Kildare is a jolly good fellow, and he'll know how to behave himself. We'll ask him."

"Yaas, wathah! And I'm quite willin' to be chairman of the dep. What you wequiah is a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"We'll ask Figgins, too," said Tom Merry. "Let's get over to the New House."

And the seven juniors walked out of the School House in the May dusk to the rival House on the other side of the quadrangle.

CHAPTER 12.

The Deputation!

F IGGINS of the New House rose from his seat at the table in his study and stretched himself. Kerr followed suit, and Fatty Wynn looked over the table with a careful eye to see if anything eatable was left. But the table was clear, and Fatty rose, too.

"Now we're ready for them," said Figgins.

"Yes, if they come," said Kerr.

"It was very thoughtful of Figgins to fix the meeting for after tea," remarked Fatty Wynn. "I don't know what we should have done if—"

"We had enough for six," said Figgins. "As Fatty counts four at a feed, there was just enough to go round. I fixed it for after tea because there will be a lot coming. As a matter of fact, it's getting on for eight now, and if those School House rotters don't come soon the House will be closed, and they won't be able to."

"If they don't come to the discussion I suppose we shall proceed to nominate the new candidates without them?" remarked Kerr.

"Exactly!"

"Hallo! What's the row in the quadrangle?" exclaimed Figgins, going to the window. "It sounds like a lot of chaps yelling."

"So it is," said Kerr, looking out of the window. "Looks to me as if they're chasing somebody."

"Hallo!" said a voice at the door. "Anybody at home?" Figgins turned round.

"Come in, Tom Merry! Come in, Blake! You're late."

"Can't be helped. We had important matters to attend to," said Blake. "I see you've had tea, and there's nothing but a smell of sardines left."

"Yes, you see—"

"Yes, I see that Wynn has eaten too much, as usual."

"Look here, Blake—"

"I'm looking. Mind you don't roll over, Fatty. If you once started rolling you would never stop. But we haven't come here to chip Fatty Wynn—"

"Certainly not! We should never be so rude as to chip a gentleman in his own quarters, however ridiculous an ass he might be—"

"If that's for me—" began Fatty Wynn wrathfully.

"Oh, that's all right, Fatty!" said Figgins. "Gussy naturally has a fellow-feeling for ridiculous asses! Birds of a feather—"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"We've come over to discuss the nominations," said Tom Merry. "We've also got another matter to suggest, but we'll have the nominations first. I've made a list of the constituencies we are standing for. How do you like it?"

Figgins looked at the slip of paper the hero of the Shell handed to him.

"Well, they're all right," he said. "We'll back you fellows up if you back us up. That's a fair arrangement."

"Quite fair."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Kerr is the member for Glasgow," said Figgins—"I mean, he's going to be. All the south of Scotland fellows are lumped under the head of Glasgow, and there isn't much doubt that they'll vote for Kerr."

"Quite right," said Tom Merry. "And I suppose Fatty Wynn is standing for Cardiff?"

"Yes; that's his native place."

"It is a pity Marmaduke is not here at present," said Arthur Augustus. "He could stand for Petticoat Lane—"

"Did you come over to the New House in search of a thick ear, Gussy?" said Figgins in a tone of friendly inquiry.

"Certainly not, Figgins. I regard that as a weally widdle question."

"I regard you as a really ridiculous ass, so we're square. I'm standing for Bristol, as that's where my people come from. I say, what a fearful row they're making in the quad. What is the matter out there?"

The visitors to the New House chuckled.

"Oh, Skimpole's evidently been spouting again and the chaps are chasing him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was wathah funnay," said D'Arcy. "I was wathah inclined to stop and watch them, but I considahed that these youngstahs would pwobably get into mischief without me—"

"And now—" said Tom Merry.

"I was speaking, Tom Mewwy—"

"I know you were, Gussy!"

"What I mean is, you were intewwuptin' me."

"Quite aware of that, Gussy. As I was saying, Figgins—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We're going to ask Kildare to stand for election, to become Speaker of the St. Jim's House of Commons," said Tom Merry, unheeding. "Will you chaps come with us in a deputation? The captain of the school as Speaker will give the thing a tone."

Figgins nodded cordially.

"We're on, Merry. Kildare is a first-rate chap, though he's a School House fellow. But don't you think that it would make the school parliament a bit more tony if we had a New House senior as Speaker?"

"No, I don't."

"We could ask Monteith. He's our head prefect, and—"

"Monteith is barred. You used not to think so awfully

(Continued on next page.)



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E.M.32

much about him," said Blake. "I can remember the time when you tied him up in a bicycle-shed—"

Figgins coloured.

"He's improved since then."

"Well, yes. I admit he has. But Kildare never was a rotter, and he's captain of St. Jim's, too. We are going to ask Kildare."

"Well, I agree," said Figgins, after a moment's thought. "I know it would give the thing a better look to have the captain of the school in it. But if Kildare doesn't take it on—"

"Then we'll ask Monteith," said Tom Merry. "If the school captain won't come in, the head prefect of the New House will be the next best."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "Let's get along and do the deputation trick now."

"We're ready," said Figgins. "There are some details we were going to discuss, but we can leave them over. Let's get along."

"Come on, then."

The juniors left the study, and Kildare was duly asked to stand for election. He did not, however, accept the invitation, and, somewhat downcast, the deputation decided to invite Monteith.

CHAPTER 13.

The Speaker!

MONTEITH was not in his study, but the deputation ran him to earth in the prefects'-room. He was talking to Baker when the juniors came in sight, but he stopped to look at them curiously. It was not a common sight to see the Terrible Three, Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co. on terms of alliance; and what they could all want in the New House was a mystery to the prefect.

The deputation halted. Monteith's eyes looked over them like a gimlet. Baker stared, and so did several other fellows from different parts of the room. Tom Merry coloured a little. Kildare had been interviewed in the privacy of his study, but it seemed that the deputation was to have an audience this time.

"Do you want to speak to me, you kids?" asked Monteith, looking at them.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "We've come over—"

"Better get to the point, Tom Merry. Monteith can see for himself that we've come over, deah boy. Get to business."

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"I wotuse to shut up! I considah—"

Blake gave the swell of the School House a dig in the ribs, and he shut up with a gasp.

Tom Merry went on.

"We're a deputation, Monteith," said Tom Merry, in a tone of explanation. "We want you to stand for election for St. Jim's Parliament, and we promise you the post of Speaker beforehand."

Monteith stared, and then laughed.

"Ah, I have heard something of that rot you kids are getting up," he remarked.

"It isn't rot," said Blake warmly. "It's a jolly good idea."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "All sorts of questions are thrashed out in one of these parliaments, Monteith, and lots of light let in on lots of subjects. It's a really good idea, and I should have expected a fellow of your intelligence to see it at once."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah Monteith's intelligence is wathah of a low ordah—"

"Shut up! We want you to be Speaker of the St. Jim's House of Commons, Monteith. As head prefect of the New House, you are a person of some standing, you see."

Monteith laughed.

"Why don't you ask the head prefect of your own House, Merry? You would get more eclat from him, as he's captain of the school as well."

"Well, you see—" began Tom Merry diplomatically. It would not have been judicious to tell Monteith that he was being offered the post because Kildare had declined it; but Arthur Augustus rushed into the breach, as usual.

"You see, Monteith, we have already asked Kildare, and he has wotused," he said.

The next moment the swell of the School House gave a howl of anguish, as Monty Lowther stamped on his toe.

"Ow! Lowthah, you uttah wuffian! What did you do that for?"

"Shut up, ass!"

"I wotuse! Gentlemen, pway suspend the pwoceedings of the deputation for a few minutes, while I give Lowthah a feathur twashin'!"

"I am afraid you must go and do that in your own House," said Monteith.

"It won't take me many minutes, deah boys!"

"Cheese it, Gussy!"

"I decline to cheese it! I have been tweated wudely by Lowthah, and he has hurt my beastly toe, to say nothing of scwaping the polish off my boot!"

"I'll scrape the polish off your features if you don't shut up!" growled Monty Lowther. "Can't you see that Monteith is getting impatient?"

"Weany, Lowthah—"

"We should be glad, Monteith," said Tom Merry, "if you would accept this post. You would make a first-rate Speaker."

"I thank you!" said Monteith. "Somehow, I don't feel quite equal to the strain of parliamentary life, especially in a junior school parliament."

"Oh, really, you know, we should make it easy for you!"

"Ahem! I have some doubts about whether it would be easy for anyone to keep you youngsters in order."

"Oh, that's all wigat, Monteith! I shall be there, too, you know, and I shall be keeping an eye on them."

"All the same, I am afraid I must decline. Perhaps Baker feels inclined to take it on," said the prefect, looking at his companion with a grin.

Baker laughed and shook his head.

"You might do worse, Baker," said Figgins. "If you refuse, we may have to have a School House fellow as Speaker, and that will be rotten!"

"Sorry I don't see my way to taking it on," said Baker. "You might ask Taggles."

The deputation gave him a glare of indignation. Taggles was the school porter of St. Jim's. The deputation glared, and turned on its heels and walked away, leaving the two New House seniors chuckling.

"We seem to be rather hard up for a Speaker," Tom Merry remarked, as they stopped in the passage to consider the situation.

"Look here, we're not going to go hunting around corners for a beastly Speaker!" exclaimed Blake. "It's an honour to whoever gets the job, and if they like to turn up their noses at it, let 'em. We're not going around to any more swelled-headed asses!"



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Arthur Augustus watched with interest. It really looked as if Manners and Lowther were coming to blows. Tom Merry did not seem to see it in the same light. He ran quickly between his two chums, bestowing a hearty thump on each of them, and the two juniors staggered away. "What are you up to?" roared Lowther, glaring at his leader.

"If you call our head prefect a swelled-headed ass—"
"Oh, don't rag now!" said Blake crossly. "This makes our parliament look ridiculous, and it is really a rather serious and important affair, if those silly chumps could only see matters in the proper light."

"Well, we want a Speaker," said Digby.
"I am quite willing—"
"Suppose we were to ask our Housemaster?" said Blake, struck by a brilliant idea. "Let's ask Mr. Railton to become Speaker."

"Wats!" said D'Arcy. "He hasn't time, and he would regard it as infwa dig to pweside at a meetin' of a junior parliament."

"Ass! I mean an honorary Speaker. Of course, he wouldn't turn up at the meetings!"

"Then we shouldn't have the Speaker," said Herries.
"His name would give us the eclat we want, and show the school that our parliament was the real, dignified business we ourselves know it is."

"Something in that," said Figgins.
"Of course, there's something in it, or I shouldn't have suggested it. Let's go and speak to Mr. Railton. You'd better let me be the spokesman this time, Tom Merry. You've made rather a muck of it, so far."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Blake! Come on!"
The deputation drifted across the quadrangle again. Monty Lowther remarked that they would know that route well soon, but he was frowned into silence.

Mr. Railton was in his study, and he looked up in surprise at the juniors when Tom Merry, after knocking, opened the door and presented himself.

"If you please, sir," said Tom Merry glibly, "we want to appoint you as honorary Speaker of the St. Jim's Parliament. There would be another Speaker to do all the work, and you wouldn't have to appear at the meetings, or pay any subscriptions, or anything. May we appoint you an honorary Speaker?"

The Housemaster smiled genially.

"Certainly, Merry! I have no objection."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! It is weally quite a welief to find somebody who is willing to become Speaker of the—"

"Shut up, D'Arcy!"

"I think we ought to tell Mr. Wailton how extremely gwatful—"

"Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night, boys!"

The deputation left the study, Arthur Augustus being bundled out among the others.

"Well, we've got an honorary Speaker, at any rate, and one whose name will impress the fellows," said Blake. "We must put up a notice of some sort somewhere, so as to let the fellows know about it."

"I have been tweated wuffly—"

"As for the working Speaker, we shall have to settle about him after the elections," said Blake. "It can be decided at the first meeting of the St. Jim's Parliament."

"I wefuse to wemain with the deputation unless you all immediately apologise!"

"Rats!"

"Then I withdwaw!" said Arthur Augustus, with great dignity.

And he walked away with his nose in the air. As the work of the deputation was done, and it was close upon bedtime, D'Arcy's withdrawal did not make much difference.

Figgins & Co. returned to the New House, getting in just before the doors were locked, and for that evening the parliamentary candidates of St. Jim's rested from their labours.

THE END.

(There are sure to be ructions when "Parliament" meets, don't you think? Believe me there are, as you'll see in next week's grand yarn "PRIME MINISTER OF ST. JIM'S!"—Ed.)

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CHUMS OF THE FIGHTING FLEET



Although he is only the junior middy on the Victorious, Ned Hardy is determined to clear the name of his brother Ralph, who was dismissed his ship after being "framed" with a robbery. With his pal, Jinks, Ned goes to a secret meeting place expecting to meet his brother, but the two middies are suddenly attacked by some men, one of whom Ned recognises as a Russian spy. At the last moment, two prize fighters come to the rescue and collar two of the men. Ralph arrives with police and the men are arrested.

Ralph Explains!

"**W**HAT were the men up to? Were they going to spifficate us?" exclaimed Jinks.

"It's hard to say. They might have finished you; but it's more likely they intended kidnapping you," answered Ralph.

"Jupiter! What for?"

"It's on the card they intended to hold you as a hostage for Dimitri, and so try to get him released in return for your safety."

"I'm well out of that," said Ned.

"Yes," chuckled Ralph. "It would have been an awkward fix for both of us. Who's your friend?"

"This is Victor Jinks, sharpest snottie on the flagship, and my best pal."

"Of course," returned Ralph, shaking hands with him, "I remember now. Heard all about your latest campaigns, Jinks. So you're taking a hand in the game with Ned—eh? Well, you've had a sample of the danger of it, and I can tell you, youngster, it'll be safer for you to back out. You see what it's going to be like."

"Back out!" snorted Jinks. "Why I wouldn't have missed a sportin' evening like this for a year's pay, sir. Lovely ruin; gang of crooks, prize-fighters to the rescue, and we've bagged two spies at the first shot. Topping, I call it!"

The Chatham Chicken related his experience in the train—how he had overheard the spies' conversation when under the seat, and the way he had acted upon it. Ralph listened, and the Chicken afterwards answered several questions of his.

"We shall want you at the trial, Chicken!" he said.

"Trial?"

"Yes! This'll be a police-court case! The two we've got will get six months. That'll show Voroff & Co. what they're up against!" said Ralph. "Those men of mine were plain-clothes constables that I picked up at the police station in Chatham as I came through. They know me there!"

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"I wish I'd put a bit more of a head on that bloke afore he was run in, then!" said the Chicken. "You see, sir, I've treated this young ossifer—which I understand is your brother—rather mean. I—"

"Oh, rot!" said Ned. "The Chicken's a good sort, Ralph; don't you listen to him. We had a bit of a boxing-match—"

"What! You?"

"He knocked me out proper!" said the Chicken, with a grin.

"Oh, it was just an accident," said Ned, "or a miracle! A good thing for Vic and me. You ought to have seen the way they bowled those louts over! I say, can't we get out of this, Ralph? If you've done investigating, I've had enough of this tin tabernacle!"

"We'll say good-bye then, governor—" began the Chicken.

"Not much you won't!" said Ralph. "We're going to celebrate this capture by the best feed Chatham can give us! You'll come, and your friend—eh—Mr. Basher, too! No refusals taken! Come along!"

The two bruisers turned unaccountably shy, and wanted to back out of it, but Ralph would allow nothing of the kind. Arm in arm they went down the hillside. A hundred yards or so along the road at the bottom Ralph's car was waiting with lights out. He had driven it from Sheerness, and as it was a six-seater there was plenty of room for them all. In a few minutes the car was dashing along the high road to Chatham.

"This is a bit of all right!" declared the Chicken. "I'd knock a bloke out every night for a treat like this!"

They slid into Chatham, and pulled up at the police station. The Chicken and the Basher did not seem to like the prospect. However, they only had to give their names in as witnesses in connection with the case, and Ned and Jinks filed their names as prosecutors, under Ralph's direction. The prisoners were then safe in the cells. Ralph collected his party and drove off.

The motor drew up at the best hotel in the place, and the five alighted.

"Only got leave till ten o'clock!" said Ned.

"And it's nearly that now," added Jinks, with a grin.

"That's all right!" said Ralph, winking. "You'll have to stay up here for that police-court case. I'll get a message sent down to your commander. This way, Chicken! Here, waiter, the very best supper for five that the hotel can turn out, and give us your best room to ourselves!"

"You don't seem afraid of our being spied on by Voroff & Co.!" grinned Jinks.

"They'd think before they meddled with the Chicken and the Basher!" chuckled Ralph. And in a quarter of an hour's time the five sat down to a meal that really did credit to Chatham's best hostelry.

Both the middies were in uproarious spirits after the success on the hill and the getting of a day's free leave, and the Chicken and the Basher, though shy at first, were gently thawed out by a little champagne, and proved the best of company. The Basher, in particular, kept them in roars of laughter by relating some of his adventures in and out of the junior prize-rings. The fun was kept up till midnight.

The middies, after a final chat with Ralph, tramped up to bed. Rooms had been taken for them in the hotel, and though hammocks are very good things to sleep in, a bed is not bad for a change. Within ten seconds of slipping out of their clothes, the chums were snoring.

There was no bugle to wake them in the morning, and, being pretty tired, Ned and Jinks slept like the dead until nearly ten o'clock.

They demolished a huge breakfast, including kidneys and other dainties quite unknown to the gun-room of the Victorious—though the degenerate ward-room sometimes had them—and at eleven o'clock the boys had to repair to the police court with Ralph.

The two prisoners—the sailor and the Russian—were placed in the dock, and charged with a conspiracy against Edward Hardy and Victor Jinks, of his Majesty's Navy, and of assulting the same with intent to do grievous bodily harm. Ned and Victor identified the prisoners in court. They both pleaded "Not Guilty," and the inspector then asked the magistrate to remand the prisoners for a fortnight, as there were several other things against them to be looked into, and the police wanted to investigate their record. The magistrate remanded them accordingly, and they were marched back to the cells.

"You won't be wanted for a couple of weeks now, young 'uns," said Ralph. "When the case does come on, I expect they'll commit those two beauties for trial at the assizes. They're not charged with spying, because there is no evidence of that. But they're safe out of harm's way for a year. And now you and Jinks had better scuttle back to your ship, or there'll be fur flying! Stop! There's one more thing I wanted to ask you!"

"What's that?"

"You remember the deckhand aboard the steam-yacht—an Englishman—who caught you and hauled you aboard? You told me about him before!"

"Yes, he got away when the yacht grounded," said Ned. "A big, tough-looking chap! It isn't him they've got in the cells?"

"No, he's still at liberty, and he's one of the big guns!" said Ralph. "If I'd got hold of him we could bring the thing home to these two, and several other matters besides. His name's Dennis Clegg, generally known on the North Sea as 'Long Dennis.' He's a couper there by trade."

"A what?" asked Jinks.

"A couper—a man who sails a fishing-vessel and sells illicit drink on her to the Dogger Bank fishermen when our gunboats are out of the way!"

"A sort of floating pub?" said Ned.

"That's it! There are no worse brutes afloat than coupers—they're pests of the sea. Long Dennis is one of the toughest. He puts in a lot of work for Voroff when at his trade, and still more while his vessel's laid up and he's ashore. I wanted to mention Dennis to you especially, because if you get news of him at any port you touch, let me know at once! Keep your eye lifting for him!"

"We'll look out for the couper!" said Ned.

Two hours later they were back on board the flagship.

Wexton Receives a Shock!

"SUFFERING conger-eels! What was this game at Chatham last night?" said Keppel, as he opened the newspaper next morning and came upon the account of the police-court case. "Assault on two midshipmen! Prisoners remanded!" he read out. "Didn't you get enough assulting here in the morning, Hardy?"

"It was nothing. Just a little barney," said Ned cheerfully.

He and Jinks had agreed to keep their own counsel about the affair. The other middies were eager to hear all about it, and Jinks, whose imagination was always in working order, spun them a yarn that would have shocked Baron Munchausen.

"I wondered why Number One didn't flay you alive for being out all night. We all thought there'd be no end of a row," said Acland.

"Trust Hardy to get his name in the paper," sneered Wexton, "if there was half a chance."

Before Ned could answer, Grimshaw came in.

"I say, you fellows, we're ordered to Harwich!"

"Harwich! I didn't know there was water for us there," said Keppel.

"The things you don't know would still fill a notebook or two," snapped Grimshaw. "There's plenty of water since they dredged the fairway out."

"Hear that?" said Ned as he went out, slapping Jinks on the back. "How many best girls have you got at Harwich?"

"Not one, dear boy—positively not one," said Jinks gloomily. "I shall have no one to console me nearer than Ipswich, which is ten miles up the river."

On the morning tide next day, an hour after the bugles blew for general drill, all preparations were made, and the Victorious slipped her moorings. She steamed majestically out under the guns of Garrison Point, and away past the Nore Lightship to open sea.

It did not take long to leave the dim coastline out of sight, though the ship was never many miles away from it, as she stood out to clear the shoals, and went north-eastwards down King's Channel.

Ned and Victor were both on duty in the forenoon-watch, and came below as the ship passed the Sunk Lightship. Wexton, who had an hour on his hands after instruction, was beckoned aside by Sub-Lieutenant Grimshaw.

"Well," said the senior sub, very acidly indeed, under his breath, "you made a rotten mess of that fight, Wexton!"

"That beast Hardy has such extraordinary luck!" complained Wexton. "It was a sheer accident his knocking out the Chicken."

"And all it's done is to make the little hound more popular than ever!" said Wexton's cousin savagely. "If you think you'll get that ten pounds out of me to pay the boxing bouncer, you're mistaken."

"All right," said Wexton, with a meek sigh. "I suppose I must lose it. I paid it him in advance."

Grimshaw muttered under his breath. He had plenty of money, but did not like parting with it. It did not occur to him at the moment that Wexton was lying, and had only really paid the Chatham Chicken a pound; but, on thinking it over, Grimshaw decided that it would be best not to throw Wexton over, in case a better chance occurred. He had reasons for wishing to have a follower of his own among the midshipmen. Grimshaw took a five-pound note from his pocket-book.

"Here's half," he grunted; "you'll have to lose the other half. You were a fool to pay the man anything until the job was done."

"He wouldn't take it on at all unless he got the money first," said Wexton, taking the note. "Thanks awfully. I suppose I must lose the other five pounds."

Grimshaw growled out some rather powerful language as he turned away, and Wexton, with a private wink of delight, buttoned the note into the inside pocket of his jacket and went out towards the boat deck.

"That's four quid to the good, anyway," he said to himself. "I only paid the Chicken a quid on account; and I'll spoke Hardy's wheel yet—on the cheap. Get out, you brute!"

The last remark was addressed to Smiler, the bulldog, who gave a growl as Wexton passed. Wexton hated Smiler, and Smiler despised Wexton. The bulldog was chained to his kennel in a narrow space near the starboard turret, well out of the way.

Smiler, usually so amiable, was feeling a trifle annoyed. His dinner was late, and he was hungry. He did not see why his dinner should be late merely because the Victorious had gone to sea. He was gnawing and polishing one of yesterday's bones as an appetiser.

"Beastly mongrel!" muttered Wexton.

Smiler took no notice of Wexton, but became excited as a steward approached bearing a tray from which came a savoury smell. But it was not for Smiler. It was the remains of the ward-room lunch.

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"Here, let me have that, Smith!" said Wexton, and, despite the protests of the steward, he took from the tray the large, luscious drumstick of a roast goose. Wexton glanced up and down the alleyway. There was nobody in sight when the steward disappeared. The midshipman offered the leg to Smiler, who sprang at it with a gasp of gratitude.

Smiler's chain was too short, however—he could not get hold of the drumstick. The grinning Wexton held it just out of reach. He got a real pleasure out of tantalising Ned's dog. It was the next best thing to worrying Ned himself.

Smiler awoke to the fact that he was being made a fool of, and his wrath rose. He made terrific plunges at Wexton,

and growled like a thunderstorm. The more frantic he grew, the more Wexton laughed.

"Great Scott! Look at that swab Wexton!"

Aeland was the speaker. He and Keppel were up above on the bridge-way, some little distance off. Aeland, seeing what Wexton was about, was hurrying forward to protest when Keppel caught hold of him.

"Don't make a row, you chump!" murmured Keppel, with a grin. "Bear a hand with this!"

He fetched a long pole boathook, and stalked Wexton carefully. The latter had not even seen the two middies above him. He was engrossed with Smiler.

Suddenly the boathook was poked over the rail and hitched into the seat of Wexton's trousers; at the same moment Keppel and Aeland heaved on the other end of the pole. Wexton gave a howl as he felt himself hoisted into the air.

"Leggo! Help!" he shrieked.

Right above Smiler's nose he hung, kicking and sprawling, and the two middies kept him there. In his panic he still gripped the drumstick like a vice. Smiler, excited to madness, made furious plunges at him, leaping up and down like a jack-in-the-box, missing Wexton every time by a couple of inches, while the suspended midddy, scared nearly out of his skin, yelled like a flock of seagulls.

Jinks, coming up from the gun-room just then, gave a whoop of joy. Before the officer of the watch could cross the upper deck to see what the noise was about, Keppel and Aeland swung Wexton to one side and dropped him clear of the dog.

Wexton scrambled up and bolted for the gun-room, almost blubbing with fright, while Smiler pounced on the fallen drumstick and scrunched it up ecstatically. Jinks had to lean up against the barbettes, and was found there helpless with laughter a minute later by Ned Hardy.

"You missed something there, old chap!" gasped Jinks, wiping his eyes. "Wexton twirled like a cockchafer on a pin just over the tripehound's nose. Don't get shirty about it—Smiler hasn't taken any harm, and he's a drumstick to the good. Hallo! Harwich right ahead!"

He pointed to the spire of the church like a needle above the roofs of the distant town, as the Victorious steamed in from seaward, and half an hour later the ship had passed Landguard Fort, entered the splendid mile-wide harbour, and turned up the river Stour, where she anchored abreast the town.

(Ned is not out of trouble yet! Voroff and Co. are determined to "get" him! Look out for thrills in next week's great instalment.)

Read "Prime Minister of St. Jim's!"

Next Week!

Take a look at the small reproduction of the cover below—that's only one of the side-splitting incidents in this ripping yarn!



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