

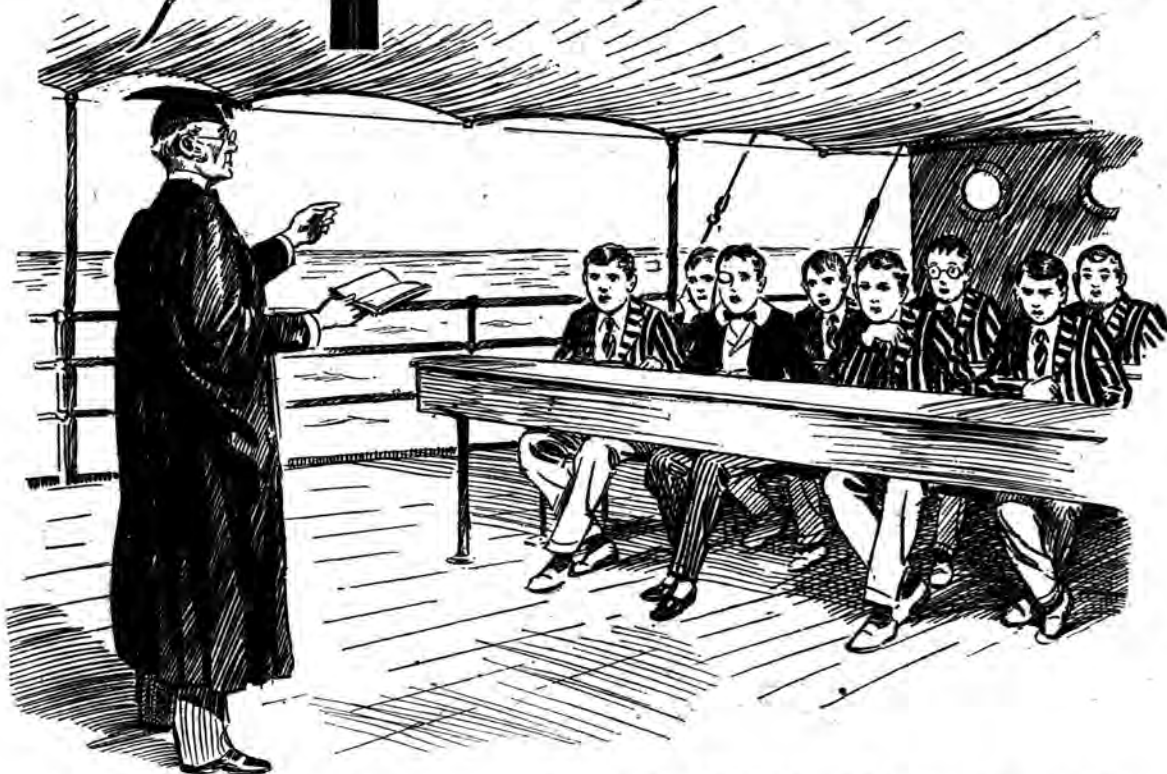
"THE FLOATING SCHOOL!" A RIPPING YARN OF
TOM MERRY & CO. INSIDE!

The GEM 2^D



TOM MERRY & CO. ARE HAVING A HIGH OLD TIME ON THE—

The FLOATING



Lines on a liner? Yes, and lessons as well, when Tom Merry & Co. are aboard the good ship Condor on a cruise with most of the fellows from St. Jim's! Read and enjoy this tip-top school yarn of St. Jim's at sea!

CHAPTER 1. St. Jim's Afloat.

"**B**AI Jove, deah boys, this is all wight!" It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who spoke. He leaned back in his chair at the long table in the dining-saloon of the Condor, with a satisfied smile upon his face.

The Condor was throbbing her way through the darkness that lay on the waters of the English Channel. The boys of St. Jim's who were spending their summer holidays on the salt water had finished supper, with the exception of Fatty Wynn. He was still busy, and was likely to be so long as any pudding remained on the table.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his right eye, and surveyed the table and the cheery faces round it. It was the first evening at sea, and most of the fellows had got over the early attacks of mal de mer. Most of them had made a good supper, and Arthur Augustus had done pretty well.

"Bai Jove, this is all wight! I weally think we shall enjoy this vac, deah boys," said the swell of St. Jim's. "It was weally a wippin' ideah of the Head's!"

"Pass the apple tart, D'Arcy."

"Certainly, Wynn. I only hope it won't be a wuff night. I haven't been seasick yet, and—"

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry. "You haven't been what?"

"Seasick. I—"

"What were you groaning about on deck, then?"

"I wasn't gwoanin'."

"What were you sprawling on the canvas for?"

"I wasn't spawlin'."

"What were you looking like a boiled codfish for?"

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"I wasn't lookin' like a wotten boiled codfish. Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, you made a jolly lot of row for a fellow who wasn't sick," Blake answered. "You could be heard all over the steamer."

"I wasn't aware that I made a wow. I felt a little bit queah, perwaps, but not what you would call seasick. I hope it won't be a wuff night."

"The ship seems to be rolling more than she was," Tom Merry remarked. "You know the English Channel! Fatty Wynn will have a high old time to-night, after that supper he has put away."

"I haven't eaten much," said Fatty Wynn, looking up from his apple tart. "Only some beef and Yorkshire pudding and potatoes, and ham and tongue, and sausages, and cold chicken, and a few other things not worth mentioning."

"You must still be jolly hungry," said Blake sympathetically.

"Well, not exactly hungry, but I think I can manage the rest of this apple tart. And perhaps some of that pudding, and some cake. I get so jolly hungry in this August weather, you know. I haven't eaten enough to be nervous about to-night. I'm being moderate on purpose."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's safest to be moderate the first night at sea," said Fatty Wynn. "Pass the pudding, will you, Lowther? You may as well put the marmalade tart this way; I shall be ready for it in a minute. And the cake. Those bananas look nice, too. As I was saying, it's safest to be moderate, however hungry you are. That's my maxim."

"You live up to it, Fatty."

"Yes, rather! Well, yes, the oranges as well, Manners—"

—GOOD SHIP CONDOR, IN THIS SPLENDID COMPLETE YARN!

SCHOOL!

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

yes, and the muscatels. The worst of it is that this ripping grub won't last. If we had a feed like this every day, it would be something like. I've a jolly good mind to have a big feed now; but I suppose I had better be moderate. It's safer."

Mr. Railton, the master of the School House at St. Jim's, looked in. Mr. Ratcliff, the senior Housemaster, was sick in his cabin—a fact not much regretted by the boys, for Mr. Ratcliff was not a pleasant-tempered man.

"Bed-time, my lads!" said Mr. Railton, with his cheery smile. "I hope you have had a good supper."

"Ripping, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I have weally enjoyed my suppah vewy much, sir. It was wathah a tweat."

"The School House boys take the aft berths, as I have pointed out to you," said Mr. Railton; "the New House boys go forward. I hope you will have a good night's rest."

"Is it likely to be a wuff night, sir?" asked D'Arcy.

"The sea is freshening up a little, but it is nothing like rough. The prefects will switch off the electric light in a quarter of an hour. Good-night, boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

And Mr. Railton, who had been very busy and overworked that day, withdrew to his cabin for a quiet smoke before turning in.

"Well, I feel rather fagged," said Tom Merry. "We've had a busy day. Lights-out in a quarter of an hour."

"Yaas, wathah! I suppose we had better make a move. I am vewy glad we are to have the blunt end of the ship. It is more appropwiate for the School House to have the best quartahs, as we were Cock House at St. Jim's."

"The what?" asked Figgins of the New House.

"The Cock House at St. Jim's, deah boy."

"Rats! As a matter of fact, we have the forward berths because the New House always takes the lead."

"Wats!"

"Oh, come! Draw it mild, Figgy!" said Blake in a tone of remonstrance. "You know that old casual ward you called a New House at St. Jim's was always lagging behind us. And if we hadn't upheld the honour of the school, what I want to know is, what would have become of it?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Echo answers—what," said Tom Merry.

"Look here—"

"Excuse me," said Skimpole, the brainy man of the School House, "I don't quite understand your remark, Tom Merry."

"I said echo answers—what."

"But it is quite impossible for echo to answer what. D'Arcy said—yes, rather. How can echo answer what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"There is nothing to laugh at, Figgins," said the scientific Skimpole. "Echo could not possibly have answered what, unless there is a most singular state of acoustics in this room. I—"

"Ass!" said Tom Merry politely.

"That is almost rude, Merry. I—"

"Oh, wing off, Skimpole, deah boy! You are a feahful ass, you know! I fully endorse the statement of my honouw-able friend Tom Mewwy. Echo answers what."

"Echo answers rats!" said Figgins, with a sniff.

"If you say wats to me, Figgins, I shall have no alternative but to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Rats!" said Figgins.

D'Arcy rose from his chair. Jack Blake promptly pushed him back into it.

"Pway don't be so wuff, Blake."

"No rows, now!" said Blake. "Rows on the first night at sea are barred. You must ring off, and Figgins can go and eat coke!"

"I wefuse to wing off. I warned Figgins, and he was impertinent to me in the most delibewate way poss. I have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"I decline to cheese it. If Figgins pwefers to withdwaw his words and pwoffah an apology—"

"Catch me!" said Figgins.

"Wefuse me, Blake."

"Oh, hold him!" said Figgins. "You can see what a state of funk I am in. I'm all of a jelly with trembling."

"Wefuse me, Blake. As a mattah of fact, I feel that I ought to thwash Figgins for boawin' my Cousin Ethel so much when she came to see me off at Southampton. I hardly got a word fwom her, because Figgings was boawin' her all the time."

"Ass!" said Figgins.

"Wefuse me, Blake!" Arthur Augustus jerked himself away, kicked his chair backwards, and rushed towards Figgins. "Now, you New House wottah—"

"School House ass!"

"Bai Jove! I'll give you a feahful—"

"Hold on!" yelled Tom Merry. "You'll have the things over in a minute!"

"I wefuse to hold on!"

And Arthur Augustus, with his eyeglass flying at the end of its cord, rushed upon the chief of the New House juniors. The grinning Figgins closed with him, and they staggered to and fro, and D'Arcy, feeling himself going, clutched out wildly to save himself.

His wild grasp caught the tablecloth, and as he went down he dragged it from the table.

Figgins and D'Arcy fell together and rolled on the floor, and the tablecloth and a terrific shower of crockery and eatables poured over them.

D'Arcy gave a gasp of horror as a jam pudding squelched in his face and an opened bottle of lemonade gurgled in his ear.

Figgins yelled, with a dish of gravy depositing itself on the back of his neck and a custard mixing up with his hair.

The crash of the crockery rang through the saloon.

"Bai Jove!"

"You utter ass!"

And the two combatants, smothered in gravy and stickiness, sat up in diamay in the midst of smashed plates and dishes.

CHAPTER 2.

Arthur Augustus Goes to Bed!

"PWAY assist me, Tom Mewwy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lend me a hand, Blake, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hewwies, please dwag this wotten tablecloth off me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I weward you as a set of cacklin' asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is all this row about?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, entering the room hastily, and gazing in astonishment at the two juniors in the midst of the wreck. "Dear me! What has happened?"

"Only a slight accident, sir," said Tom Merry, trying to control his merriment. "D'Arcy and Figgins fell over, and—"

"Surely the motion of a steamer was not sufficient to cause this accident?" said the Housemaster, looking sternly at the culprits, who had scrambled up.

They looked a pitiful pair of objects, with all kinds of comestibles spattered over their faces and clothing and hair.

"Well, you see, sir—"

"I caught at the tablecloth, you see, Mr. Wailton," explained Arthur Augustus. "The beastlay wotten thing came off, you know."

"That's how it was," said Figgins.

"As a matter of fact, I suppose you were fighting?" said Mr. Railton.

"Fightin', sir!"

"Fightin'!" exclaimed Figgins.

Both the juniors looked surprised at the accusation; but Mr. Railton was not easily deluded.

"Have you been fighting?" he rapped out.

"Well, if you put it like that, sir—" began Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah, if you put it like that—"

"Yes or no,"

"Yes, sir."

"Yaas, Mr. Waitton."

"I thought so. You will do a 100 lines each to-morrow, and now you will go to bed at once."

And, shaking a warning finger at the juniors, the School House master left the room.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye and looked at Figgins.

"I suppose you see what a silly ass you are now," he remarked. "I suppose, as a fellow of honah, you will do those lines for me to-morrow."

"I suppose I shan't. You ought to do mine."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Of all the utter asses—"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as an uttah ass—"

"Oh, shut up, both of you!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Go to bed, and leave your rowing till to-morrow. Gussy is growing into a regular hooligan."

"I wefuse to be weferred to as a wegulah hooligan."

"Take him away, Blake. He belongs to you. Good-night, you School House wasters!"

"Good-night, you New House rotters!"

And the juniors went to their quarters.

Space on board the Condor was not so extensive as in the old school at home, of course; but there was plenty of room for the 100 boys who had embarked on the holiday cruise.

Most of the fellows were inclined to take things easily, as they came; but the swell of St. Jim's was a little more particular.

He surveyed his berth with a very disapproving glance.

"Bai Jove! Does Mr. Waitton weally expect me to sleep there, Tom Mewwy?" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I imagine so. Did you expect to have a cabin to yourself, ass?"

"It would have been more appropwiate. Undah the cires, I weally don't see how I can wetiah for the night with any comfort."

"What's the matter with your berth?" demanded Blake.

"Always grumbling at something."

"I am not gwumblin', Blake, I am merely pointin' out that it is impos for me to wepose for the night on a sort of shelf."

"Then you'd better wepose on the floor," said Blake.

"Unless Mr. Railton would give up his cabin to you."

"I am afwaid that is wathah impwob, even if I asked him."

"Yes, I think it's not very likely myself. He might give you a licking, though, which would do you good."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, cheese it, and get to bed!"

"I wefuse to cheese it—"

"Now, then, lights out!" said Kildare, coming in. "You three are the last, of course. I've got a longer round to make than I used to have at St. Jim's, and I've got no time to waste."

"I am not quite weady yet, Kildare."

"Then you'd better be quick."

"I weally do not see how I am to wepose for the night on that shelf."

The captain of St. Jim's laughed.

"Well, we can't get you a special dormitory by wireless telegraphy," he remarked, "so I am afraid you will have to make it do. If you are not in bed in two minutes you will have to get in in the dark."

"I am afwaid that will be impos."

"Look here, you young ass, all the electric light in the state-rooms switches off at a single switch. When it goes out you will be in the dark."

"I wegard that as a wathah wotten awwangement."

"It has been arranged specially for your benefit," grinned Kildare. "You can't expect a Sixth Form prefect to take too much trouble over a pack of fags."

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Light goes out in two minutes," said the captain of St. Jim's. "Good-night, boys!"

"Good-night, Kildare!"

"Pway wait about ten minutes, Kildare—"

Kildare closed the door and walked away.

Arthur Augustus bestowed an extremely indignant glance upon his two companions in the cabin.

"I weally do not see anythin' to laugh at, Tom Mewwy."

"No, there isn't a looking-glass here."

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"Oh, get to bed!" said Blake. "You're jolly lucky to be in this little den with only three berths. Some of them have four or five, I believe."

"I should wefuse to occupy a cabin with four or five berths."

"Oh, rats! I'm going to take the bottom berth."

"I think I should pwefer the bottom one, if I am to

attempt to wepose in these extwemely cwamped quartahs at all!"

"More rats!" said Blake cheerfully. "It's rather rotten that we should have this boulder of the Shell with us, instead of old Dig or Herries. There's some ass been making these arrangements, or else we've got the numbers wrong."

"We're all a little mixed to-night," said Tom Merry. "I know jolly well I'm going to berth with Lowther and Manners, or else there will be a row. It's too humiliating to be shoved in with a lot of Fourth Form kids."

"I wegard that we mark as dispawagin'—"

"You'd better get undressed, Gussy, instead of wagging your lower jaw so much. The light will be out in two ticks."

"This is comfy enough," said Blake. "It would be larger if it were bigger, of course, but I shall be all right here if Gussy doesn't snore."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And I shall be all right in the second berth," Tom Merry remarked. "I can't see anything to grumble at myself."

"Yaas; but it doesn't mattah so much about you chaps, you know. Oh!"

D'Arcy broke off as the light suddenly went out.

"Bai Jove! The light's off, deah boys!"

"Well, we warned you, you know."

"It is uttably impos for me to undress in the dark."

"You'd better go to bed with your boots on, then," said Tom Merry.

"I wefuse to go to bed with my boots on."

"Well, don't make a row, whatever you do! I'm sleepy."

"Bai Jove! Somethin' will have to be done, you know. Have any of you fellows got a bicycle lamp?"

"Yes; people usually carry bicycle lamps at sea," said Blake. "You'll find a large collection of them, also some large motor-car acetylene-lamps, in my watchcase."

"Pway don't wot, deah boy. A candle-end will do—"

"Haven't any! Have you, Tom Merry?"

"Grrrooh!"

"He's asleep. I'm nearly off! Shut up, Gussy!"

"How am I to get to bed?"

"You have to climb up to the top berth, ass!"

"But I am not yet undressed."

"Undress then, imbecile!"

"I cannot undress in the dark."

"Then wait for morning, idiot!"

"I wefuse to wait for morning."

"Then shut up, donkey!"

"If there was any beastlay light in this beastlay woom, I would thwash you for those extwemely oppwobwious expressions, Blake."

Blake snored.

"It is uttably impos for me to fold up my beastlay clothes in the beastlay dark! Do you know where the switch of that beastlay electric light is, Blake?"

Blake snored again.

"I say, Blake, don't go to sleep, you know, and leave me stwanded! Don't be a beastlay wottah, you know. Blake—I say, Blake!"

Snore!

"Bai Jove! The wottah's asleep! I suppose I shall have to shake him up. This is weally puttin' me to a fearful lot of twouble."

D'Arcy groped in the dark for Blake's shoulder, to shake him, and poked a thumb in his mouth, and then a finger in his eye.

Jack Blake came out of his doze and gave a terrific yell, and D'Arcy, startled, jumped away from the bed, caught his foot in a bag, and sat down with a heavy jar.

"Bai Jove!"

Blake looked over the edge of his berth in the dark, and began to talk to D'Arcy in measured tones and strong expressions, while he rubbed his mouth with one hand and his damaged eye with the other.

"You dummy! You ass! You shrieking idiot! You've damaged my mouth, you lunatic! You've nearly punctured my eye, you maniac! Go to sleep! Shut up! Get out!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Make another sound to-night and I'll get out of bed and cut you into tiny pieces, and throw you to the sharks."

"You howwid wuffian—"

"Shut up!"

And Jack Blake settled down to sleep again.

Arthur Augustus staggered up and caught at the wall to steady himself. He felt for his eyeglass, but it was not to be found.

"I say, Blake, I've lost my eyeglass."

Blake snored.

"It is quite impos for me to undress in the dark, too."

I must have a light of some sort. Do you know where the switch of the electric light is?"

There was no reply.
"Bai Jove, the wottah is asleep again! It's weally too wuff that I should have the twouble of keepin' on wakin' him up like this," murmured D'Arcy.

D'Arcy groped for Blake's head again. But Jack Blake was not asleep—he was waiting vengefully. As D'Arcy groped for him he groped for D'Arcy and caught his nose in a strong and powerful grip.

"Ow, ow! You have got hold of my nose! Ow!"

"Yes, I thought it was that, Gussy!"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Are you going to bed quietly?"

"No, certainly not!"

"Then I'll jolly well keep hold of your proboscis till you do, that's all, you noisy young ruffian. Does that hurt?"

"Ow! Ow! Yes!"

"I thought so. If it didn't I could hold it tighter. Are you going quietly to bed without making any more noise?"

"No—yaas! Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"Honest Injun?"

above, and Blake gave a yell and sat up so suddenly that he bumped his head.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ow! I've busted my napper!"

"I'm awfully sowwy, deah boy, but in the dark——"

"You howling ass!"

"I am sowwy, but—— Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy had extricated his leg from Blake's bunk, and his other one went plunging in upon Tom Merry.

The hero of the Shell gave a roar.

"Ow! What's that?"

"Don't be alarmed, deah boy—it's only I!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I'm weally vewy sowwy to disturb you, but——"

"You shrieking ass, you've nearly broken my nose!"

"I am sowwy!"

"Get your foot out of my bunk!"

"I wefuse to move my foot!"

"My hat! I'll give you a twist!"

D'Arcy jerked his foot out of the bunk so suddenly that he knocked his knee on hard wood and gave a howl of anguish.



"I wefuse to hold on!" Arthur Augustus rushed upon the chief of the New House juniors. The grinning Figgins closed with him, and D'Arcy, feeling himself going, clutched out wildly to save himself. His grasp caught the tablecloth, and as he went down he dragged it from the table. The crash of crockery rang through the saloon. "Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Ow, ow! Yaas! Leggo!"

Blake released the swell of St. Jim's. D'Arcy staggered against the wall, clapping his nose in both hands.

"Ow! You uttah wottah! You have hurt me!"

"If you weren't a chum I'd have chucked you out of the cabin," said Blake. "Now go to sleep and don't let's have any more of your rot!"

"If I hadn't pwomised——"

"But you have, so shut up and go to bed!"

"I shan't be able to fold up my clothes in the beastly dark, and I can't even find the beastly hooks to hang them on."

"Chuck 'em on the floor, then."

"It is weally vewy hard cheese on a tidy fellow like me——"

"Ring off!"

Jack Blake turned over to go to sleep again.

Arthur Augustus, grumbling to himself, undressed, and disposed of his precious garments as best he could. Then he essayed to climb into his berth.

In the dark it was only natural that he should miss the step and send a foot plunging into Blake's berth. The swell of St. Jim's gave a gasp and clung to the edge

"What is the matter with you now, you image?"

"I've knocked my knee."

"Serve you right! Go to bed!"

"But I have hurt myself."

"I'll hurt you some more if you don't shut up and go to bed!"

"We'll shove him out of the cabin," growled Blake. "He can sleep in the feeding-room, or on deck."

"I wefuse to be shoved out of the cabin!"

"Out you'll go if you make any more row—so mind!"

There was a ring of determination in Jack Blake's voice. Arthur Augustus sniffed indignantly, but he got into his bunk, and there was peace in the cabin at last.

CHAPTER 3.

The First Night At Sea!

"FIGGINS!"

"Sn-n-nore!"

"Kerr!"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"Both you fellows asleep?"

"Sn-r-r-r-gr-r-r!"

"I say, I'm feeling rather queer," went on Fatty Wynn pathetically.

He was sitting up in his bunk in the New House quarter of the ship—the sharp end, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had named it.

Fatty Wynn was beginning to regret that big supper. The ship was rolling a little. It was a fine boat, and a good size, but the Channel was growing rough in the night, and the Condor rolled accordingly.

Fatty Wynn had dropped off to sleep, only to wake again. It was pitch dark in the little cabin, and he could hear nothing but the engines and the steady breathing of two sleepers close at hand.

And Fatty Wynn was feeling queer.

"Figgins! I say, Figgins! You can't be asleep, old chap! I say, Figgins!"

"Wharrer you want?" came a sleepy voice from the lowest of the three berths.

"Figgy, old chap—"

"Wharrer marrer?"

"I'm feeling queer!"

"Go to sleep, then!"

"I—I can't!"

"Then stay awake!"

"I—I—I feel very queer!"

"That's all right, you'll soon sleep it off, Fatty!" said Figgins encouragingly. "I'm jolly sleepy."

"So am I; but I'm queer. I say, Figgy, I can't go to sleep. You might stay awake and keep a chap company, Figgy!"

Snore!

"I say, Kerr!"

"Go to sleep!" murmured Kerr drowsily.

"But I can't go to sleep!"

"Go and eat coke, then!"

"I—I think I will get up and walk about a little," murmured Fatty Wynn. "I shall feel easier then."

He carefully climbed out of his bunk. The motion of the ship was making him feel qualmy, and the motion of himself made it worse. He had to pause several times, a hot perspiration breaking out over him before he was safely landed on the floor.

The cabin was very dark, and he groped his way blindly to the door. There was a thudding sound as he dragged clothes off the hooks, and knocked over a bundle and a travelling-bag.

A growl came from the berths.

"What silly beast is making that row?"

"Sorry, Figgins!"

"Hallo, is that you, Fatty?"

"Yes."

"What are you getting up for?"

"Oh, I feel bad!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Figgins, waking wide, and sitting up. "I'm sorry, Fatty, old chap! I told you how it would be if you bolted such a feed!"

"I don't think it was the feed, Figgy."

"What do you think it was, then? I'm not sick!"

"Well, it wasn't the feed. I think it's the stuffiness of this little cabin, and I'm going out for some fresh air."

"Like me to come with you?"

Fatty Wynn would have liked Figgins to come with him, but he knew what an effort it cost Figgy to make that offer to leave his warm and comfortable bed, and so the Welsh partner in the Co. heroically refused.

"No, that's all right, Figgy!"

"I'll come if you like."

"Don't bother. I shall be all right when I get a niff of fresh air."

"Very well. Don't lose your way coming back. All the lights are out, you know."

"I'll be careful!"

Fatty Wynn left the cabin. He was thinking more just then of the dreadful feeling within him than of finding his way back. He groped along in the darkness, and a door opened under his hand.

Fatty Wynn stopped suddenly in alarm. He did not want to wander into a cabin in the dark and alarm the inmate. A voice came from the gloom.

"Who is there?"

Fatty Wynn remained as still as a mouse.

For the voice was that of Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House at St. Jim's—Fatty Wynn's own Housemaster.

"Who is that?"

The junior slowly and silently withdrew, and groped his way onward. In the thrill of his narrow escape he almost

forgot his sea-sickness. A glimmer of light caught his eye, and he groped his way up the stairs to the promenade deck.

He caught the glimpse of a dark sky, and rough curling water and falling rain. Then a burly figure in oilskins loomed up.

"Who's that?"

It was the voice of Mr. Thropp, the ill-tempered chief mate of the Condor.

"It's I," said Fatty Wynn, in a quavering voice. "I'm feeling rather ill, and I should like some fresh air!"

"Get below!"

"But—"

"It's too rough for you yonkers to be up here! Get below!"

Fatty Wynn felt too sick to argue the matter. He crept down again. The whole place was in darkness. Masters and prefects, as well as the boys, were gone to bed. Fatty Wynn did not know what hour it was. A strange sense of desolation fell upon him. In the midst of a hundred sleepers he felt lonely, and sick, and forlorn.

And sick he was, as he sat on the lowest stair in the gloom, in the shaking of the ship. For half an hour the fat junior did not move from that step, and he might not have moved till morning, had he not been moved.

He did not hear a step behind him, and had no idea that someone was descending the stairs. A foot suddenly plunged against his back, and then there was a yell as a man went flying over him, to fall on his hands and knees on the planks.

"Wh-wh-what's that?"

It was Mr. Thropp's voice.

Fatty Wynn did not reply. He rose quietly and stole away, and the chief mate of the Condor was left to grunt and growl to himself.

Fatty Wynn scuttled off as fast as he could, without noticing much in what way he was going, and feeling considerably better now, he decided to return to his cabin.

But that was not easy.

Where his cabin was, he had not the faintest idea, and in the gloom it was almost impossible to find it.

He dared not return near the spot where he had left Mr. Thropp grunting and growling, so the only thing he could do was to keep on and trust to fortune.

He kept on, and opened several doors in the dark, in the hope of finding the right one by a whispered inquiry.

"Figgy! I say, Figgy!"

"Who's that?" growled the voice of Kildare in the darkness.

Fatty Wynn bolted.

The voice of a School House senior showed him that he was in the wrong part of the ship; he had wandered into the territory of the "blunt-enders."

"Great Scott!" he murmured. "What on earth am I to do? Where the dickens is the rotten cabin? Where's Figgins?"

He wandered on again, till a sudden idea occurred to him.

"Good! I'll ask Kildare for a light to show me the way. He's a decent chap, and he'll understand I'm not larking."

And Fatty groped his way back to the cabin he had left. Unfortunately, in the gloom he found the wrong cabin. He opened the door, and put his head in.

"Kildare! I say, Kildare!"

"Who's there?" growled the voice of Knox, the worst-tempered prefect in the School House at St. Jim's. "Is that you, Wynn? I know your voice."

"Yes, Knox. If you please—"

"I'll teach you to come and play your larks on a prefect—"

"If you please, Knox, I'm not larking. I've lost my way—"

"You'll find something if you don't get out of this cabin!"

"But, I say, Knox—"

"Get out!"

"Yes; but can you— Ow!"

Fatty Wynn yelled as a hand gripped him in the darkness, and another hand commenced to box his ears.

"Ow! Ow! Let me alone! You beast!"

"Take that—and that—"

"Ow! Ow! Yow!"

"And that!"

Fatty Wynn, desperate, hit out wildly, and the prefect gave a grunt and staggered back. He seemed to collide with something, for there was a crash and a bump. Fatty Wynn scrambled away and ran.

There was a patter of feet in the passage. The School House prefect was in pursuit. Fatty ran on, with his hands outstretched, and brought up against a wall. His hand groped round and felt a door, and in a moment he

had opened it and had stepped into the room and closed it again.

There he stood, shivering in his pyjamas and listening. He heard the angry prefect come along and growl to himself outside. But Knox did not think of looking into the cabin. Fatty Wynn drew a deep breath of relief.

"That rotter's gone! I'd better stay here a bit until the coast's clear."

"Bai Jove! Who's that?"

Fatty Wynn started. He knew the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, which came from the topmost of the three bunks in the cabin. He had wandered into the quarters of Study No. 6, the ancient rivals of Figgins & Co.

The New House junior stood quite still. He felt that if he revealed his presence it would be taken as a New House raid, and he might be pitched neck and crop out of the cabin into the arms of the vengeful Knox.

"Bai Jove! I'm certain I heard somebody in the beastly place, you know! I shouldn't be surprised if it were a burglah, Blake."

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"I say, Blake, wake up! There's a burglah in the beastly cabin, you know!"

Fatty Wynn stood breathless.

"Blake! Tom Mewwy! Wake up!"

There was a growl from Blake's berth.

"You shrieking ass, are you making a row again? What's the matter with you? Blessed if it isn't like being in a monkey's cage, or a lunatic asylum."

"Weally, Blake, eithah would be a vewy appropwiate place for you!"

"What are you making a row about?"

"I am not makin' a wow."

"You called me."

"I am perfectly aware of that, but that cannot be pwopahly chawacterised as makin' a wow."

"You shrieking dummy, what's the matter?"

"There's a burglah in the cabin."

"What?"

"There's a beastly burglah here."

"You ass! Where should a burglar come from in mid-Channel?" roared Blake.

"It is weally no good askin' me conundwums, Blake."

"You duffer!" said Tom Merry, awakened by the altercation. "How could there be a burglar? Go to sleep, and don't be a silly ass!"

"I weally fail to perceive why anybody but a burglah should entah the cabin at this extwemely late hour of the night."

"Well, has anybody entered the cabin, ass?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, you're dreaming! Go to sleep!"

"I am not dweamin'! Someone has entahed the cabin, and he's here still, and if he's a burglah he's vewy likely got a wevolvah. He may have come as a stowaway fwom Southampton, and if he finds my gold watch—"

"Ass! There's no one in the cabin."

"I distinctly heard him come in and close the door."

"Rot!"

"I wefuse to have my wemarks alluded to as wot. There is somebody in the cabin, and if it isn't a burglah, it's a New House waid."

"Ah, that's a good deal more likely."

"It has only just flashed into my bwain. Now I come to think of it, it's certainly a waid of those New House wottahs, pwobably because I thwashed Figgins."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothin' to cackle at in that wemark, that I can see, Tom Mewwy. If there is a waidah in the cabin we ought to captuah him."

"I suppose it's all rot, but I may as well look," grunted Blake. "I'll strike a match."

Blake fumbled for a match-box.

Fatty Wynn waited anxiously. He could hear Knox moving about in the passage, and he did not dare venture out; but to be discovered where he was would not be pleasant. The School House boys were certain to jump to the conclusion that it was a raid, and they were not likely to listen to any explanations.

Scratch!

The match flickered, but before it was fairly burning Fatty Wynn, acting on the impulse of the moment, gave a slight puff, and the flicker died out. The cabin was plunged into darkness again before it was lighted.

CHAPTER 4.

The Mystery of the Matchbox!

JACK BLAKE gave a growl.

"Seems windy in this cabin," he remarked. "I wonder if the door's open? The draught blew my match out!"

"Stwike anothah, deah boy."

Scratch!

Fatty Wynn, with a silent grin, gave a slight puff of his breath, and the second match also failed to reach a flame.

Blake uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"The door must be open, I suppose. There's a fearful draught here."

"Stwike anothah!"

"Oh, rats! There's nobody here—nobody but a beastly draught. I'm going to sleep."

Fatty Wynn breathed again.

"Wats, Blake! I tell you there is a waidah—"

Snore!

"Give me up the matches, then, and I will stwike one."

"You can't reach them from there."

"Tom Mewwy can hand them up."

"Right you are!" said Blake. "Take this beastly match-box, Merry, will you?"

There was no reply from Tom Merry.

"My hat! The image is asleep again! Reach down for them, Gussy."

"I am afwaid I might tumble ovah."

"Then you can't have them. Good-night!"

"Pway hand them up, Blake, and I will twy to weach them."

"Here you are!"

Blake reached up the matchbox towards the upper bunk. Fatty Wynn grinned in the darkness, and reached out, too, and took the box from Blake's hand. Blake, under the impression that he had given the matchbox to Arthur Augustus, turned over in his berth. D'Arcy was still groping in the gloom.

"Weach a little highah, Blake, will you?"

"Eh?"

"I say, weach a little highah with that matchbox."

"What are you talking about?"

"The matchbox, deah boy."

"I've given you the matchbox."

"Now, don't be an ass, Blake! It's no time for your wotten jokes in the middle of the night, with a New House wottah in the cabin, playin' some twick on us."

"I tell you I gave you the matchbox."

"And I tell you you're dweamin'."

"Do you mean to say that you didn't take it from my hand?"

"Of course I didn't."

"Then it's that ass Merry playing a silly ass trick on us. He's not asleep at all."

"The uttah wottah!"

"Merry! Tom Merry!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, waking up again. "What's the trouble? What a fearful row you fellows keep up all night! I shall be jolly glad when I get into the other cabin with Manners and Lowther! Chance to get some sleep then."

"Where's that matchbox?"

"What matchbox?"

"The one you took out of my hand when I was reaching it up to Gussy."

"Off your rooker?" said Tom Merry pleasantly. "I tell you—"

"And I tell you—"

"Bai Jove, deah boys—"

Fatty Wynn had stolen silently towards the door. He opened it without a sound. Knox was gone back to his cabin, and the coast was clear. Wynn stayed only to listen to the altercation that was rapidly growing excited.

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Look here, you Fourth Form kid—"

"Bai Jove, deah boys, an ideah has just stwuck me!"

"You'll get struck by something else if you don't shut up and let a fellow go to sleep!" growled Tom Merry.

"I've just thought of it—"

"Oh, go to sleep!"

"It may be that waidah who has taken the matchbox. He might have collahed it."

"By Jove," said Blake, "something in that! I'll jolly soon see!"

He scrambled out of his bunk, and Fatty Wynn silently closed the door and scuttled away. He chuckled as he went, wondering what would happen when the School House juniors discovered that there was no one besides themselves in the cabin.

Blake hunted for a matchbox, but could not find one, and he struck an odd vesta he found in his pocket.

The light flared out, and was quite sufficient to illuminate the little cabin. There were only three persons in it—Blake, standing there, match in hand, and Tom Merry and D'Arcy, looking out of their bunks.

"I knew there wasn't anybody here," growled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I didn't think there was, either," said Tom Merry.

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"Why can't you Fourth Form kids be quiet and let a fellow go to sleep?"

"Where's that matchbox?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Look undah the bunks, Blake."

"The boxes are there, ass. There's no room for a fly, let alone a burglar. There's no one in the room besides ourselves, and there hasn't been."

"You are quite mistaken there, deah boy. I distinctly heard somebody."

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Blake, I shall have no alternative but to get up and give you a feahful thwashin'."

Blake grunted.

"Where's that matchbox, Tom Merry?"

"Oh, blow your matchbox!"

"Now I come to think of it, it was very curious the draught should blow my match out in that manner. I suppose that was another of your little jokes."

"Good-night!"

"Where's my matchbox?"

"Gr-r-r!"

"Wake up, you rotter! Where's my matchbox?"

Snore!

The vesta had expired. Blake had no more matches, and he was in the dark again. He groped his way to the berths, and groped for Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell Form at St. Jim's was settling down to sleep when Blake grasped him.

He gave a sudden jump.

"Oh, you ass, you startled me!"

"Where's my matchbox?"

"If you say the word 'matchbox' again, I'll get up and give you a licking!" roared Tom Merry, exasperated.

"Matchbox!" said Blake promptly.

"If you say that again—"

"Matchbox!"

Tom Merry returned Blake's grasp, and rolled out of his bunk. They grappled in the darkness, and a battle royal commenced.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy peered anxiously over the edge of his bunk without seeing anything in the gloom.

"You Fourth Form silly kid—"

"You stupid Shell-fish—"

"I'll teach you to worry me about matchboxes in the middle of the night!"

"I'll teach you to collar my matchbox!"

"Go it, deah boys! Give him a feahful thwashin', Blake!"

"I'm going to!"

"You're going to get one, you mean!" gasped Tom Merry.

There was a sudden crash. The juniors bumped on the floor, and several loose articles in the cabin bumped down with them. There was the sound of an opening door, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shouted a warning.

"Cave, deah boys!"

The door opened.

"Pax!" gasped Blake.

"Rather!"

The two juniors separated, and in the twinkling of an eye they were in their bunks, pulling the bedclothes over themselves. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with wonderful presence of mind, snored as he lay down.

The door opened wider, but there was nothing suspicious to be seen in the cabin.

Mr. Railton looked on, with a puzzled expression.

"I am almost certain that the noise I heard proceeded from this cabin," he muttered. "Blake!"

There was no reply, but a steady snore.

"Merry!"

Another snore.

"D'Arcy!"

Another snore.

"Dear me, I suppose I was mistaken! Good-night, boys!"

"Good-night, sir!" said D'Arcy, without thinking.

Mr. Railton, who was turning away, turned quickly back.

"D'Arcy! So you are awake?"

Snore!

"D'Arcy!"

Snore!

"D'Arcy, you cannot delude me. You spoke just now, so it is impossible for you to be asleep. D'Arcy!"

Snore!

Mr. Railton smiled slightly, and after a moment's hesitation left the cabin and closed the door.

D'Arcy gave a chuckle.

"Bai Jove, I pulled the wool ovah his eyes that time, deah boys!"

Blake and Tom Merry gave a simultaneous snort.

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"You ass, you gave it all away!"

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort. I pulled the wool ovah his eyes a tweek!"

They did not argue the matter. Blake and Tom Merry had had enough of warfare for that night, and they settled down to sleep, leaving the mystery of the matchbox still unsolved.

Meanwhile, Fatty Wynn, aided by striking the vestas contained in that same matchbox, had found his way back to Figgins' cabin. He entered it, with a great deal of relief, and climbed back into his bunk.

Figgins woke up.

"Hallo! Is that you, Fatty?"

"Yes, Figgins."

"Feel better?"

"Yes, much better. Rather empty, though. I say, Figgins—"

"Good-night!"

"I say, Figgins, is there anything to eat in the cabin?"

Figgins was already asleep again, and Fatty Wynn, after repeating his question twice, turned over and went to sleep, too.

CHAPTER 5.

The Trousers!

TOM MERRY was the first of the St. Jim's juniors to awaken in the morning. There was a watery gleam of sun through the closed porthole, and a dash of rain on the glass. The morning was not a fine one.

But Tom Merry felt very well and fit, and he had awakened with a first-class hunger, as he would have termed it. He rolled out of his bunk and gave Blake a shake. The Fourth-Former grunted.

"Tain't rising-bell yet!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You're not at St. Jim's now, kid. Get up!"

Blake rubbed his eyes.

"Hallo! Is it time to get up?"

"Of course it is!"

"Well, wake Gussy. I say, can you open the porthole? It's pretty stuffy in here. I'd rather sleep with the porthole open, if it were allowed."

"You're right—it is close. I'll try!"

Tom Merry reached up towards the porthole, which was over D'Arcy's bunk.

The swell of St. Jim's was still sleeping the sleep of the just. The porthole had been fastened overnight by a seaman, but Tom Merry succeeded in opening it. The next moment he wished he hadn't, for a dash of wave came furiously in, and in a second his pyjamas were soaked. And Arthur Augustus, who lay directly under the shower, was soaked, too.

He started gasping out of his sleep.

"Bai Jove, it's wainin'!"

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "It is! I'd better get this thing shut again or we shall have the Channel in."

"Well, you were an ass to open it," said Blake.

"Why, you told me to!"

"I didn't know it was a rough morning; besides, you're not bound to do as I tell you," said Blake, keeping in his bunk out of reach of the spray. "You're an ass!"

"Help me to get this thing shut!"

"No good two of us getting wet!"

"There are two of us already!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I wegard Tom Mewwy as a feahful ass! Have you got that thing shut?"

"Yes, at last!"

"Pway get out of the way, then, and let me get up. I'm simplay soaked. The wave has dashed in all ovah me, you ass!"

"Blake's fault!"

"Blake is an ass, too! I am feahfully wet! Bai Jove!" went on D'Arcy, as he skipped out of his bunk. "There isn't much woom for three fellows to dwess in this cabin. Do you think you could manage to dwess outside, Tom Mewwy?"

"I am afraid not."

"Pway don't be inconsiderate."

Tom Merry laughed, and dressed. Arthur Augustus made a long face as he examined his clothes. He had left them anywhere the previous night, having had to undress in the dark. The splashing through the porthole had reached them, and they were decidedly damp.

"Bai Jove! I can't weah these things!" he ejaculated.

"Well, you've got others, I suppose, haven't you?"

"No; that is the unfortunate part of the mattah," said D'Arcy, with a thoughtful wrinkle in his brow. "You see, I packed three twunks to come to sea with me, and Mr. Waiton vewy inconsiderately stopped two of them at Southampton. I had no opportunity of unpacking them."

and sorting out the things on the landing-stage."

"No, I should say not!"

"I chose the largest twunk, but, you see, I had packed my coats and waistcoats in that, and some linen, and so forth. All my extwa pairs of twousahs were in one of the othah twunks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is no laughing mattah, Tom Mewwy. You have caused my twousahs to be soaked with watah, and I have no othahs to change into!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you cackle at my howwid misfortunes in that mannah, I shall lose my tempah, Tom Mewwy, and I might be pwoked to stwike you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's rough on Gussy," remarked Blake, with a grin. "The unfortunate part is that I haven't any extra trucks to lend him. I've only brought two pairs, and one of them

"Hardly, Gussy."

"Then I shall have to weah Blake's."

"Will you?" said Blake, jumping out of bed and seizing his trousers. "Not much you won't, you young bounder!"

"But I cannot go without any twousahs on, Blake."

"Well, can I, ass?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that! What am I to do, deah boy?"

Tom Merry winked at Blake.

"The only thing is for you to remain here, Gussy, while Blake and I go scouting and find you a pair of trousers."

"Good! That's vewy thoughtful of you, Tom Mewwy. Pway go at once!"

"In a jiffy, kid!"

And as soon as they were dressed Tom Merry and Blake left the cabin, and Arthur Augustus sat on the edge of the lowest bunk to wait. Tom Merry grinned at his companion as he closed the door of the cabin.



"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy had extricated one of his legs from Blake's bunk, but the other went plunging in upon Tom Merry. "You shrieking ass, you've nearly broken my nose!" roared the hero of the Shell.

is the Sunday pair, and I couldn't have them profaned by a fellow like Gus."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Besides, they're locked up in my box, and the key is on Digby's bunch. I put it there for safety!" chuckled Blake.

"That is wathah wotten. I shall have to bowwow a pair of twousahs of you, Tom Mewwy. Your twousahs are not of a cut that I particularly admiah, and it will be wathah wotten to have to weah them. But I suppose I must put up with it for once!"

"You won't have a chance," said Tom Merry coolly.

"I suppose you are not goin' to wefuse me the loan of a pair of twousahs in suet an extwemity," said D'Arcy, with great dignity.

"My dear chap, I'd share my last pair of trousers with a chum, but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Blake.

"Oh, pway stop goin' off like a beastlay alarm-clock, Blake, deah boy! This isn't a laughin' mattah at all. Why can't you lend me a pair of twousahs, Tom Mewwy?"

"Because my box isn't in this cabin at all. It went along with Lowther's."

"I suppose you could wur along in your pyjamahs to Lowthah's cabin, couldn't you, and get me a pair?"

Tom Merry laughed and slipped his trousers on.

"I've got an idea," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha! I thought you had!"

"What price getting Gussy a pair of seaman's trousers?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We can get them from the steward, I think. He's a jolly-looking codger. Let's got along to his room and see, anyway."

The juniors found Mr. Price, the chief steward, in his room. Mr. Price was a red-faced, jolly looking Welshman, and looked as if he loved a joke. But he looked amazed when Tom Merry made his request.

"You want what?"

"A pair of trousers."

"I suppose this is a joke, look you," said Mr. Price. "Run away—I'm busy!"

"But we want a pair of seaman's trousers, the older and tarrier the better," said Tom Merry. "A chum of ours has got his trousers wet in the rain, and hasn't a second pair. We're helping him in the hour of need."

"That's it," said Blake. "We're out to buy a pair of trousers, and we're ready to pay for them if any of the hands has a pair to sell."

Mr. Price laughed heartily.

"I see, you young rascals! You needn't buy them—I can lend you a pair, and you can return them to me."

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"Thanks awfully! You're a pal!"

Mr. Price disappeared for a few moments and returned with a pair of trousers which had certainly seen better days, and seen the last of them some time since.

"I wear them when I have any dirty jobs to do!" exclaimed Mr. Price. "They're not the latest Piccadilly style."

"Ripping!"

"First rate!"

"They're rather large for me!"

"Ha, ha, ha! They'll be larger still for Gussy. Thanks awfully! You shall have them back safe and sound."

And Tom Merry and Blake returned to the cabin, carrying the precious garment between them.

Arthur Augustus was waiting anxiously.

"Bai Jove, you've been a long time, deah boys!" he exclaimed as the juniors entered.

"We've nearly broken our necks hurrying," said Blake.

"Don't be ungrateful, Gussy!"

"I don't mean to be ungrateful, deah boys, but it's wathah uncomfy sittin' here with nothin' on. Have you got a pair of twousahs for me?"

"Of course. I suppose you know you can depend upon us in case of need?"

"Yaas, wathah! Where are the twousahs?"

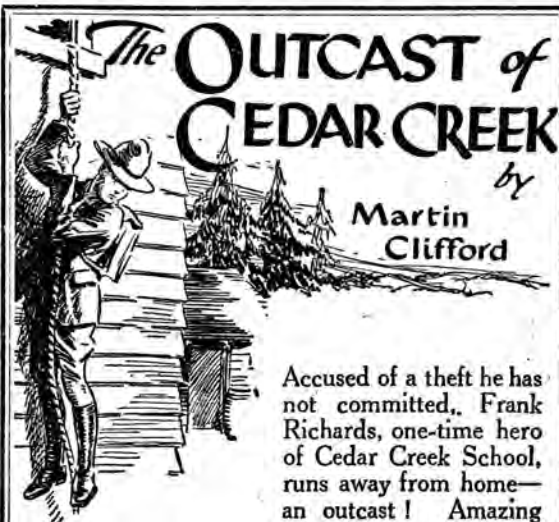
"Here they are!"

Blake brought the ancient pair of breeches into view. Arthur Augustus looked at them. Then he put up his eyeglass and looked at them again, and then he turned a freezing glare upon Blake.

"I pwesume this is a joke, Blake?"

Blake looked surprised.

"No, not at all; it's a pair of trousers."



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"I mean, you have brought them to me for a wotten joke."

"I've brought them for you to wear."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Do you think they are rather large?" said Tom Merry.

"Large!" howled D'Arcy. "They're big enough for a whole family my size! And look at the cut!"

"They're not cut."

"I mean the make, you ass! And they are dirty."

"Well, you can't expect everything in this world. They're trousers, and trousers are what you want."

"I should uttaly weseuse to weah any twousahs like that!"

"Then I don't see what you are to do."

"Go and find me a pair belongin' to one of our chaps."

"That's all very well, but chaps aren't so willing to part with their trousers. Nobody's going to lend you his best pair to fool about in."

"You can twy, anyway."

"My dear chap, we've tried, and we've borrowed these trucks of a very generous man who was willing to help in the hour of need—"

"I weseuse to weah those trucks!"

"Oh, you'll get used to them!" said Tom Merry, picking up D'Arcy's damp garments. "I'll take these to the steward and ask him to get them dried."

"Don't take my twousahs away, Tom Mewwy—"

"But they have to be dried."

"I shall have to weah them. I cannot weah these howwid garments you have brought here. I have to considah my dig."

"You can't wear damp trousers, Gussy. As your medical adviser, I cannot allow it."

"I insist upon doin' as I like!"

"You can do anything you like except wear damp trousers. I cannot have you catching rheumatic fever, pneumonia, and lumbago under my very eyes. Why, a chap who wears damp trousers is booked for the coffin. You are a reckless young ass! I suppose you don't want to be buried at sea tied up in a hammock, do you?"

"Oh, pway don't wot!"

"I can't let you run such risks!"

"I insist upon wunnin' the wisk if I like!"

"Well, you won't!" said Tom Merry, and he bolted from the cabin with the trousers under his arm.

Arthur Augustus dashed excitedly after him.

"Tom Mewwy—Tom Mewwy! You wottah! Bwing my twousahs back!"

But Tom Merry had disappeared. Blake caught the excited swell of St. Jim's by the arm just in time to stop him from commencing a pursuit in his pyjamas.

"Hold on, Gussy!"

"Welease me!"

"You can't go out without any trucks."

"I want my twousahs!"

"Suppose you meet Ratty?"

Arthur Augustus, at the mere suggestion, jumped back into the cabin and closed the door.

Blake grinned.

"Bai Jove, deah boy, I nevah thought of that!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "But what am I to do, now that wottah has taken away my twousahs?"

"He's saved you from catching rheumatic pneumonia—"

"Yaas, but what am I to do for a pair of twousahs?"

"Here's this ripping pair we've found for you. You can't say they're not big enough."

"They're too big!" hooted the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's.

"Great Scott! There's no satisfying some people!" said Blake. "I believe you would find something to grumble at if we brought you a first-class, gilt-edged pair of trucks hung with pearls and diamonds!"

"I should look a widiculous object in a pair of twousahs big enough for a fat man of fifty."

"You'd look worse in your pyjamas."

"Can't you go and find me a bettah pair?"

"It seems to me that we've taken a lot of trouble over you already, Gussy. Still, I'll go and look round. If I don't come back in five minutes you'll know I'm not coming."

And Blake left the cabin before Arthur Augustus could remonstrate.

He ascended to the upper deck, to the dining-room—which had been the first-class dining-room when the Condor was a passenger ship. The massive glass dome was blurred with rain, but the scene within was cheerful enough. Stewards were preparing the breakfast for a 100 or more fellows, and the breakfast was of a solid description. Digby and Herries had just come in, and they at once greeted Blake.

"What's the matter with the image?" exclaimed Dig, looking at his chum in amazement.

"Off his rocker!" said Herries.

Blake's conduct was certainly surprising.

He turned round slowly on his heel, describing a complete circle, so as to take a survey of the dining-saloon. He came slowly back to his original position, and grinned blandly at his amazed chum.

"Qualifying for Colney Hatch?" asked Dig.

Blake shook his head.

"No; I've promised Gussy I'd have a look round, and I've had it, that's all."

"What do you mean?"

Blake explained. Digby and Herries roared.

"My hat!" gasped Dig. "I shall be glad to see Gussy come up to breakfast in the steward's old trucks!"

"He won't come," grinned Herries.

"He'll have to. I say, Tom Merry!"

"Hallo!"

"What have you done with Gussy's trucks?"

"Given 'em to our steward to dry."

"Good!"

"He doesn't know which cabin they belong to, so they can't get back to Gussy. We have saved the one and only Gus from catching cold in his legs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! What are you kids doing all that cackling about?" grunted Knox, the prefect, coming up from the main deck in a yachting cap.

The juniors looked at him.

"We were thinking how nice you look in that cap, Knox," said Blake. "It would suit you a little better if your face wasn't the colour of putty."

The prefect reached out, and the juniors dodged away. Mr. Railton came up and took his seat at the head of the Sixth Form table. The electric bell was buzzing, and the boys of St. Jim's were flocking up to breakfast. But there were two people who did not appear. One was Mr. Ratcliff, the senior Housemaster, who was still sick in his cabin; the other was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 6.

Arthur Augustus Wears Them!

MR. LATHOM, the little quiet gentleman, who had the honour of taking the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, came along to the dining-room and sat down at the head of the Fourth Form table. The Forms dined at separate tables, just as if they had been at home at St. Jim's. Indeed, but for the lofty glass dome over their heads and the motion of the ship under them, the boys might have fancied themselves gathered in the dining-room in the old School House.

Mr. Lathom glanced down the table, and noted the vacant seat. He peered again through his spectacles.

"Where is D'Arcy?" he asked.

As no one was particularly addressed, no one felt called upon to answer.

"Where is D'Arcy, Mellish?"

"I think he hasn't come up, sir."

"Go down and tell him to come up at once!"

"Yes, sir."

Mellish went down to the main deck, on which deck all the juniors were berthed.

There was silence at the Fourth Form table. Tom Merry and the others who were in the joke waited with great interest for the appearance of the swell of St. Jim's. Mellish came back grinning, and alone.

"Well, where is D'Arcy?" rapped out Mr. Lathom.

"In his cabin, sir."

"Did you tell him to come up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, why is he not here, then?"

"He says will you please excuse him, sir, because——"

"Is he ill?"

"No, sir."

"Then tell him to come up at once, or he will be punished severely!"

"Certainly, sir."

Mellish went down again. In a minute, or less, he reappeared, grinning more than ever. He was alone.

"Well, Mellish?"

"He says will you please excuse him, sir."

Mr. Lathom turned red with wrath.

"No," he thundered, "I will not excuse him! If he is not ill, there is no reason why he should not appear at the breakfast-table. Go down and tell him that if he does not come instantly I shall send down a prefect."

"Yes, sir."

Mellish carried the message. When he reappeared he was choking with laughter.

Mr. Lathom eyed him sternly.

"What are you laughing at, Mellish?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I, sir? Was I laughing?"

"Yes, you were."

"I—I— Ha, ha, ha! He's coming, sir."

And Mellish went to his place and choked. All the juniors looked round to see Arthur Augustus enter, wondering what there was about the swell of St. Jim's to amuse Mellish so much. The fellows were looking curiously from the other tables.

There was a yell as Arthur Augustus appeared. The swell of the School House was dressed with his usual care and with his usual good taste, with the exception of his trousers. He wore a fancy waistcoat and the whitest of white linen, a gleaming collar, and beautiful shoes, and a jacket that fitted like a glove.

But his trousers were large—not to say immense—and were of the commonest and coarsest blue cloth. They were rolled up at the ankle to render it possible for the junior to walk, and tightened round his waist in folds, and secured by a cricket belt.

The contrast between the huge, flapping trousers, with their stains of tar and grease, and the natty attire above was very striking.

A roar of laughter rang through the dining-saloon. Arthur Augustus' face expressed a fixed indignation, and he marched straight to his place, with a very red countenance. Mr. Lathom peered at him in amazement.

"D'Arcy!" he jerked out.

"Yaas, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, stopping and facing the master with great dignity.

"What—er—what do you mean by appearing here in those—those—er—ridiculous garments, D'Arcy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" rang up and down the table.

"Silence, boys! Explain yourself, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, sir——"

"How dare you appear here in that ridiculous garment!"

"I had no choice in the mattah, sir. A silly ass——"

"What?"

"A silly ass, sir, opened the porthole in my cabin and drenched my twousahs, and I could not put them on."

"Surely you had a second pair?"

"No, sir. They were left behind at Southampton by Mr. Wailton's ordahs."

"But—but you could have found something better than—than those absurd things I am sure, D'Arcy."

"They were brought to me, sir, by a person who called himself my fwiend," said Arthur Augustus.

"Dear me! Your appearance is most absurd!"

"Yaas, sir. I am perfectly awah of that, and I did not wish to appeah in public until my twousahs were dwy, but you insisted."

"Dear me! You may take your place, D'Arcy."

"I should pwefer to go and look for some othah twousahs, sir."

"Take your place!"

There was no help for it.

Arthur Augustus sat down between Blake and Digby, trousers and all. He began to eat in stony silence, keeping his eyes fixed upon his plate, while the whole length of the table were in a giggle.

"Find those bags comfy?" whispered Blake.

Arthur Augustus made no reply.

"I say, Gussy, do you find those trucks all right?"

"I wufuse to hold any conversation with you, Blake!"

"But I'm anxious to know if I've pleased you."

Arthur Augustus gave him a freezing look.

"You have not pleased me, Blake!"

"After all the trouble I took, too!" said Blake, with a sigh. "You're a very difficult fellow to please, Gussy."

"You have made me look widiculous!"

"We did our best. There's not another pair of trousers like those in the whole room."

Digby giggled.

"That's so; nor in the whole ship," he remarked.

"You're a pair of wottahs!"

"Catch me scouting round looking for trousers for you again!" said Blake. "Next time you can come up to breakfast in your pyjamas."

"I no longah wegard you as a fwiend!"

"Silence there!" said Mr. Lathom.

And the conversation ceased. Arthur Augustus maintained his manner of reserved dignity when breakfast was over, and it assorted oddly enough with his absurd trousers. When the juniors left the tables, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came over to make affectionate inquiries of D'Arcy.

"Find the trousers all right?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

D'Arcy put up his eyeglass and fixed him with a stony glare.

"I wufuse to speak to you, Tom Mewwy!"

The hero of the Shell looked amazed.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"You and Blake have succeeded in makin' me look widiculous!"

"Well, that wasn't very hard."

"Quite easy!" said Lowther. "Nature started it, and there wasn't much to do."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I say, I'd like to take a snapshot of you in those trousers!" said Manners eagerly. "I haven't unpacked my camera yet, but I can do it if it leaves off raining."

"It's clearing off now," said Tom Merry.

"Good! I'd like to put Gussy on a picture postcard like that, and send some off to the fellows left at home."

"I would wefuse to give you permish for anythin' of the sort!"

"Then you don't like the trousers?" asked Tom Merry.

"I wegard that as a widiculous question!"

"They're roomy. It's not a tight fit," said Tom Merry, surveying the garments in question. "I don't see that you've got anything to complain of."

"I'm going to unpack my camera," said Manners.

Arthur Augustus turned on his heel and strode haughtily away. He left the Terrible Three chuckling away like lunatics—chuckles that were joined in by everyone who caught sight of D'Arcy and his trousers.

CHAPTER 7.

No Lenders.

"I SAY, Skimpole, deah boy—"

Skimpole, the brainy man of the Shell, looked up as Arthur Augustus tapped him on the shoulder. He was sitting in a corner with a pencil in his hand and a pocket-book on his knee, making notes.

"Did you speak to me, D'Arcy?" he asked absently.

"Yaas, wathah! I want to know—"

"Ah, you want to know what I am engaged upon," said Skimpole, beaming through his glasses. "Very good. I have unpacked the notes for the great book I am writing on Determinism, and am adding to them. In the clear atmosphere of the sea I hope to be able to think out—"

"I wanted to know—"

"Yes, I am explaining. I am now engaged upon the three hundred and forty-fourth chapter of my book. It deals with—"

"I wanted to know if you could lend—"

"No, I couldn't very well lend you my notes, but I will explain the matter to you fully so that you will quite understand. In the first place, this chapter deals with the subject of Determinism and the higher ethics—"

"I wanted to know if you could lend me—"

"I pointed out in the clearest possible way, if everything is the result of heredity and environment, heredity and environment are unmistakably the cause of everything. The great and profound truth is one of the triumphs of Determinism—"

"I wanted to know if you could lend me a pair of—"

"This profound truth once established—"

"Of twousahs—"

"Eh?"

"I wanted to know if you could lend me a pair of twousahs."

"Trousers! I'm talking about Determinism."

"I'm talking about twousahs."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Weally, Skimpole—"

"I cannot bring my mighty brain down to such trivial matters. What does it matter whether one has or has not

trousers so long as the great truth of Determinism is established. I say, my friends," said Skimpole, waving his hand and addressing an imaginary audience, "what does it matter if—"

"Oh, wing off, deah boy! I want to bowwow a pair of twousahs—"

"The combined influence of heredity and environment—"

Arthur Augustus gave it up. He stopped his ears and hurried away.

Skimpole looked after him and shook his head.

"Curious!" he murmured. "Curious how little these deep questions seem to interest the average youthful intellect. Strange that Nature should have endowed me with mental powers so far in excess of those of any other boy—or even man. It is my duty to exercise these great powers for the benefit of humanity."

Arthur Augustus looked anxiously round for someone from whom he could borrow the required pair of trousers. It had been arranged for lessons to take place on board the Condor in the same way as if the boys were at St. Jim's, but during August they were to be shorter. It was getting near the time for morning lessons, and D'Arcy shrank from taking his place in class in those absurd trousers. Fatty Wynn was sitting on one of the tables, looking over a printed card, and Arthur Augustus came up and tapped him on the shoulder. Fatty looked round.

"I say, Wynn," said D'Arcy affably. "Can you lend me—"

Fatty Wynn shook his head.

"How much?" he asked dubiously.

"I don't mean tin; I mean—"

"Oh, that's all right! Have you seen this paper?"

"No. Can you lend me—?"

"You see what it is, don't you?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"It's the tariff of a tuckshop run here by Mrs. Price. Price is our steward. They've opened a tuckshop on the upper deck, on the other side of the entrance there, and the steward's wife is running it. Good wheeze, isn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah! Can you—"

"We can get feeds, you see, the same as if we were at St. Jim's. There's time for one before morning school if you like. It's closed during lesson hours."

"What I want is—"

"There's a fine assortment of pastries—Mrs. Price makes them herself. I will show you the place if you like."

"Can you lend me a pair—"

"If you're coming you may as well come along," said Fatty Wynn. "The things are jolly good, and the prices are reasonable. I've sampled them already. I'm feeling a little bit qualmy this morning, which was why I didn't eat much breakfast. I only had some bacon and eggs and sausages and bread-and-marmalade, so I shan't be able to make much of a feed. Still, if you feel inclined to come, I'll come along with you."

"I want you to lend me a pair of twousahs."

"A pair of what?"

"Twousahs!"

"Oh, rats! Do you want to come to the tuckshop or don't you?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"I want a pair of twousahs!"

"Well, I'm going, anyway."

And Fatty Wynn, still consulting the tariff, walked away.

"I say, Wynn—"

But the New House junior turned a deaf ear.

Potts, the Office Boy!



Arthur Augustus staggered and dropped his eyeglass as he received a sounding slap on the shoulder. He swung round indignantly, and found himself looking at the grinning face of Reilly of the Fourth.

"Weally, Weilly—"
"Faith, and it's a foine sight you look, entoirely!" said Reilly. "Manners is getting out his camera—"

"He can put it back again, then. I say, Weilly, can you lend me a pair of twousahs, deah boy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Will you lend me a pair of twousahs, you wottah?"

"Faith, and I wouldn't spoil the fun for anything, darling. Sure, it's a thing of beauty and a joy for ever ye look now."

"You wottah!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Reilly was doubled up with laughter. The indignant swell of St. Jim's reached out and gave him a push, and Reilly sat down violently on the floor. Arthur Augustus walked away.

There was a buzz of an electric bell.

The swell of St. Jim's made his way slowly to the aft dining-room—formerly devoted to second-class passengers, now taken up as a class-room for the Fourth Form. The Fourth-Formers were gathering there for morning lessons, and every face but D'Arcy's wore a huge grin. Arthur Augustus sat upright at his desk, with a fixed expression of dignity upon his face.

CHAPTER 8. On View I

MR. LATHOM looked sharply at his class more than once. He knew that D'Arcy's trousers had caused a considerable amount of merriment, but that did not account for the wave of mirth that seemed to pass over a portion of the Form. It was suppressed whenever the little Form master's eyes turned that way, only to break out again. It centred round Kerr, the Scottish partner in the New House Co. More than one fellow seemed eager to see his "Ovid," though what they could find of interest in it was a puzzle.

The class was droning through the *Metamorphoses*. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been construing, and as he stood up there was a fresh giggle.

"Really, boys," said mild, little Mr. Lathom, "I must—er—ask you to be a little more quiet. Go on, D'Arcy—Monte suo senior iudex consedit—"

Arthur Augustus went on.

"Kerr, you will construe now,"
Kerr started.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, go on."

"I—I've lost the place, sir."

"Bring your 'Ovid' here," said Mr. Lathom sternly.

"My—my 'Ovid,' sir?"

"Yes. You have been drawing something in the book."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Bring it here at once!"

Kerr rose to his feet. Under cover of the desk he changed books with Figgins and then stepped out virtuously before the class.

"Give me your book, Kerr."

"Certainly, sir."

Kerr handed the "Ovid" to Mr. Lathom. The master of the Fourth went through it, looking at the blank leaves at the beginning and end.

Then he looked decidedly puzzled.

"I thought I saw you drawing in this book with a pencil, Kerr!"

"Did you, sir?"

"Why were the other boys looking over your shoulder?"

"I will ask them, sir."

"Never mind! Go back to your place and construe."

Kerr obeyed. His book was passing from hand to hand in the Fourth now, and the flyleaf caused a chuckle wherever it was passed.

Kerr was something of an artist, and he had drawn a very good representation of Arthur Augustus in his famous trousers. He had exaggerated the picture a little, making the trousers much larger than they really were, and the effect was decidedly comical.

The book passed along, almost under the eyes of the short-sighted little Mr. Lathom, and when it came to Mellish he passed it to D'Arcy.

"I say, D'Arcy, have a squint at this," he whispered.

D'Arcy glanced at the drawing carelessly. Then a flush came into his face, and his eyes gleamed.

"I wegard you as a diswespectful wottah, Mellish," he muttered. "If we were not in class I should give you a feahful thwashin'."

"See the likeness?" grinned Mellish.

"No, I do not see the likeness."

"D'Arcy, you are talking," said Mr. Lathom, turning, with a frown, towards the swell of St. Jim's.

"I am sowwy, sir, but—"

"You will take fifty lines."

"Pway allow me to explain."

"One hundred lines, D'Arcy. If you speak again I shall give you a more severe punishment than lines."

That was Mr. Lathom's way. He was very patient and amiable, and would put up with almost anything, but all of a sudden he would come down like a ton of bricks, and generally upon the wrong person.

But D'Arcy, in his present irritated mood, was not disposed to take it lying down.

"Weally, Mr. Lathom," he said, "I must explain, with your permish, that in the pwesent instance I was not to blame—"

"Silence, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, wathah! But undah the circs, sir—"

"Come out here, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Lathom, laying down his book, with an angry look. "Come out before the class, sir!"

"If you will give me permish to explain the position—"

"Stand out here!"

"But, weally, sir—"

"Will you obey me?" cried Mr. Lathom, making a stride towards the desk.

Arthur Augustus skipped out before the class.

"Yaas, sir, certainly; but—"

"You will stand here," said Mr. Lathom, taking Arthur Augustus by the shoulder and leading him to the wall. "You will stand there till next lesson."

D'Arcy and his celebrated trousers were in full view of the whole class, and there was a general giggle.

The swell of St. Jim's flushed scarlet.

"Weally, Mr. Lathom—"

"Stand there!"

CAUGHT!



"I object to bein' made to look widiculous."

"Silence!"

"That's all vewy well, but—"

"Another word, D'Arcy, and I will send you to Mr. Raillon to be caned."

Arthur Augustus relaxed into indignant silence. But Kerr was on his feet now.

"If you please, Mr. Lathom, it wasn't D'Arcy's fault. It was I who caused him to speak. You see, I—"

"Indeed! Come out here, Kerr."

Kerr came out.

"Stand beside D'Arcy. You will both remain there till the end of the lesson," said Mr. Lathom, whose temper had been considerably ruffled.

"But, sir—"

"A word more from either of you, and you will be caned. We will resume our work, which has been interrupted quite long enough. I will keep order in this class, or I will know the reason why."

And the lesson went on.

Arthur Augustus stood looking the picture of unhappiness, with the eyes of the class upon him and his trousers.

The Latin lesson was, fortunately, the last of the morning, and when it was over the class was dismissed. Blake tapped D'Arcy on the shoulder as they went out.

"I say, Gussy, I'm sorry you had to—"

Arthur Augustus jerked himself away.

"I do not wish to hold any communication with you, Blake."

"But, I say—"

"I no longah wégard you as a fwiend."

"Now, look here, ass—"

"I wéfuse to be called an ass, especially by a person whom I no longah wégard as a fwiend," said D'Arcy frigidly.

"I will thank you not to address me."

"Oh, very well! I was going to offer to get you a pair of trousers."

"Oh, in that case, perwaps I may be willin' to accept your apologies."

"Hold on! I haven't offered any yet," said Blake coolly.

"And, as you no longer regard me as a friend, I don't think I'll offer any trousers, either."

And Blake put his hands in his pockets and walked away, whistling.

"I say, Blake—I say—"

But Jack Blake did not turn his head.

Arthur Augustus looked round for Digby, and found him.

"Dig, old fellow, you might get me a pair of twousahs."

Digby shook his head.

"Can't be did. If you no longer regard Blake as a friend, it can't be managed. I'm standing by old Blake."

"In that case, I shall dwop your acquaintance."

"Drop it, then," said Digby.

"Vewy well. I say, Hewwies, old man—"

"Oh, don't talk to me!" said Herries. "I'm standing by Blake and Digby. If you drop their acquaintance, you drop mine, too!"

"Vewy well; I dwop the lot of you!"

"Much obliged!"

Arthur Augustus marched off haughtily. He met the Terrible Three as he made his way down to the main deck, determined to rummage among the berths until he found a pair of trousers.

They stopped and looked at him.

"Same old trucks!" said Tom Merry.

"They're not so bad when you get used to them," said Monty Lowther. "I rather like a fullness about trousers, now I come to think of it."

"Wait here a minute while I get my camera, Gussy," said Manners.

"I wéfuse to do anythin' of the sort. And I will thank you wottahs not to address me. I dwop your acquaintance."

Tom Merry pretended to faint in the arms of Manners and Lowther, and the swell of the School House sniffed indignantly and walked on. He went into his cabin, hoping to find some garment belonging to Blake, or Tom Merry, and the first object that caught his eyes was a pair of trousers hanging over one side of the bunk. They were his own!

They were quite dry, and had been nicely folded out. Arthur Augustus gave a gasp of relief, and—contrary to his usual habits—he changed his garments in record time.

"Bai Jove! That feels bettah!"

Mr. Price, the red-faced man, looked in at the door and grinned.

"Done with those trousers of mine, sir?"

"Oh, they're yours, are they?" said D'Arcy.

"Yes, sir. The young gents asked for the loay of them as yours were wet. They didn't fit you very well, did they, sir?"

Mr. Price's face was perfectly innocent, and he looked like a man who had done a very good-natured action.

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"No," said D'Arcy, "they did not fit me. But—but I am vewy much obliged to you for lending them to me, and for dwying' my own twucks. I should be glad if you would accept this half-crown."

"Thank you, sir."

"How long have my twousahs been here, Pwice?"

"Oh, I put them in here immediately after breakfast, sir!" said Mr. Price. And he took his departure.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt as if he could have kicked himself. All the time he had been trying to borrow a pair of trousers his own were waiting for him in the cabin, if he had thought of it, and he had endured untold sufferings for nothing. He was inclined to kick himself; but he felt that it would afford him more satisfaction if he kicked somebody else, and he left the cabin with a glint in his eyes.



"Ha, ha, ha!" There was a yell of laughter as Arthur Augustus, in the whitest of white linen, a gleaming collar and beautiful trousers, was rolled up at the ankles in the tub.

"D'Arcy—"

CHAPTER 9.

Justice is Satisfied!

FATTY WYNN came out of the cafe—as Mrs. Price called the tuckshop she had started on the upper deck for the St. Jim's juniors—with a contented smile and a smear of marmalade upon his plump face. The fat junior of the New House had quite recovered from his sea-sickness, though the wind was still blowing hard, and the steamer was far from steady. He had done full justice to Mrs. Price's marmalade tarts, and he felt satisfied with himself and things generally.

"Looking for a tuckshop, Gore?" he asked, as the cad of the Shell came along, with a discontented look upon his face. "I'll show you—"

"No; I'm looking for a match," said Gore. "Have you got one?"

"What on earth do you want a match for?"

"A smoke."

"You ain't allowed to smoke."

"You ain't allowed to gorge yourself like a prize porker, but you do it," said Gore. "I'm not allowed to smoke, but I do it. See? Got a match?"

Fatty Wynn grinned as he felt in his pockets for a matchbox. He still had the box he had taken from Blake's hand in the dark the previous night, and he was rather anxious to get rid of it. He had a feeling that it would not be conducive to his comfort to be discovered as the raider of that occasion. Tom Merry's nose and Blake's eye told how the argument over the matchbox had ended.

"Here's a matchbox," he remarked. "You can have it if you like."

"Thanks!" said Gore.



Augustus appeared. He wore a fancy waistcoat and the sea, and a jacket that fitted like a glove. But his trousers were enormous folds. Mr. Lathom peered at him in amazement. What—!?

He took the matchbox and walked away. The rain had ceased, but the promenade was wet and cheerless. The Condor was grinding on through the sloppy sea, and the men on deck were in oilskins. Some of the boys were out on the sheltered way, and others in the Common-rooms. Gore made his way below with the matchbox in his hand, seeking a quiet corner where he could smoke.

George Gore of the Shell was very much given to smoking. He was the leader of the junior "Smart Set" at St. Jim's, a smart set that had been made to smart more than once by Tom Merry & Co. Gore had pretty well spoiled his wind by smoking, but that did not break him of the habit. He kept it up to show that he was independent, and could do as he liked, though he was very careful not to show it in the presence of a prefect.

As he came downstairs he met Arthur Augustus coming up. D'Arcy had changed his trousers, and looked himself again. The glimmer of the metal matchbox in his hand caught the eye of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Where did you get that matchbox, Goah?"

"Mind your own business!" retorted Gore, who was on very ill terms with the chums of the Fourth Form. "Let me pass."

"Where did you get that matchbox?"

"What the dickens has that got to do with you?"

"It's Blake's matchbox."

"Rats!"

"And it wasn't a New House waidah in the cabin last night, ahtah all, then," said Arthur Augustus. "It was a School House fellow. It was you, you wottah!"

"Off your dot?" asked Gore.

"Give me that matchbox."

Gore started.

"What on earth should I give you this matchbox for?"

"I shall return it to Blake."

"Oh, get away!"

"And also I am vewy stwongly inclined to give you a feahful thwashin' for the twick you played on us, Goah."

"Ha, ha, ha! You couldn't thrash one side of me."

"Weally, Goah—"

"Oh, get away; your face worries me!"

"I will wowwy you more seviously, then," said D'Arcy, whose usually calm and serene temper had been disturbed by the affair of the trousers, and who was more than usually ready for a dispute. "Undah the cires, I considah that it is imposs for me to let you off without a thwashin', considewin' that you woke us up and made a feahful bothah last night."

"You're dreaming!"

"I am not dwreamin', and pwevawication will not do you any good, Goah. I know Blake's matchbox when I see it."

"Fatty Wynn gave me this matchbox."

"Pway don't take the twouble to tell me any whoppahs. Goah, I shall not believe them. I know you too well. I will twouble you for an apology."

"Oh, travel along!"

"I wefuse to twavel along without an apology."

"Then I'll jolly soon shift you!"

"I'd weally like to see you do it, Goah," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

As he would really like to see it, it probably did not matter that Gore gave him a shove that sent him staggering down two stairs, to lose his footing and roll to the bottom. Yet when he sat up again he looked as if he had not been pleased.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Gore, as he followed the swell of St. Jim's down the stairs. "Are you setting up as an acrobat, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! I will give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Get away!"

"I absolutely wefuse to get away!"

And D'Arcy clutched hold of Gore, who struggled with him savagely.

There was a patter of feet, and Tom Merry and Blake came on the scene.

"Hallo! Gussy's changed his trousers," said Tom Merry. "Now he's trying to collect up the dust with them."

"I'm not twyin' to collect up the beastlay dust."

"What are you doing, then?"

"I am thwashin' Goah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry was justified in laughing; for, but for D'Arcy's assurance on the point, he would really have thought that Gore was thrashing D'Arcy. The Shell boy had jammed the Fourth-Former up against the stairs, and was pommelling him.

"What has Gore been doing, Gussy?"

"He waided our cabin last night."

"Rats!" said Blake. "There wasn't any raider. It was Tom Merry who took the matchbox out of my hand."

"It wasn't, ass!" said Tom Merry.

"If you call me an ass—"

"I've just discovahed the matchbox in Goah's hand."

"By Jove! He's got it! Look! Blake, is that your matchbox?"

Blake uttered an exclamation.

"Yes. I scratched those initials on it myself with a pocket-knife. What were you doing with my matchbox, Gore?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Dwag him off, deah boys! He is wumplin' my collah!"

Blake and Tom Merry seized Gore and dragged him off. The bully of the Shell struggled fiercely in their grasp.

But he struggled in vain. He was not a match for either of the two young athletes, and together they held him helpless.

"Let me go, you rotters!" he gasped.

"No hurry," said Blake. "You raided our cabin last night—"

"I didn't!"

"Where did you get that matchbox, then?"

"Fatty Wynn gave it to me."

"That's a whopper!" said Blake, who was justified in doubting Gore's word, knowing by past experience that he never hesitated at an untruth when it served his purpose. "I know that Wynn was sick last night, and he couldn't have been in much condition for a raid. You raided our cabin—"

"I tell you I didn't!"

"You might tell me till you were black in the face, but I shouldn't believe you," said Blake coolly. "You raided our cabin, and scoffed my matchbox, and started me punching Tom Merry's head by mistake."

"And me blacking Blake's eye by another mistake," said Tom Merry.

"And both of the wottahs bein' vewy wude to me," said D'Arcy.

"I tell you—"

"After the feast," said Blake, with a shake of the head, "comes the reckoning. I don't bear malice for any sort of a jape, but one good turn deserves another."

"Exactly!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Therefore, I think it stands to reason that Gore ought to be ducked in the sea—"

"You silly duffer!"

"Or, as there might be some difficulty about that, he ought to be ducked in a bath-room as the next best thing."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then bring him along. Gussy has dropped our acquaintance, but we will accept his aid as that of a stranger in helping to get Gore to the bath-room."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Lend a hand, and yank him along."

Gore struggled and shouted, but he was yanked along to the passage upon which the bath-rooms opened, and jerked into the nearest.

Tom Merry started the tap running, and Blake jammed Gore's head under it, and the bully of the Shell wriggled and roared.

"Are you sorry you raided our cabin?"

"I didn't!"

"H'm! He says he wants some more!"

"I don't! I didn't! I won't!"

"So often as you tell a prevarication, Gore, I shall take it to mean that you want some more," said Blake, turning on the tap again. "Now, are you sorry you raided our cabin last night, Georgie?"

"I didn't, you beasts! Yes, I'm sorry!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"You won't never do such a thing no more, not if it was ever so!" demanded Blake, with the solemnity of a judge.

"Ow! No! Oh! No! No!"

"Good! Justice is satisfied!" said Blake. "Gore can go now and dry his mop. I hope this will be a lesson to you, Gore, not to raid the cabins of your elders in this reckless way," said Blake severely.

"Ow! You rotter! I'm wet!"

"Yes, I thought you were getting wet when I turned the tap on," assented Blake. "The water is wet here, the same as at St. Jim's. No good blaming me; the fault is in Nature, but—"

But Gore did not wait to hear any more. He rushed furiously from the bath-room, to seek some means of drying his dripping hair. The juniors followed him, laughing.

As they came back amidships they were met by Figgins & Co.

"Hallo! What's the matter with Gore?" asked Figgins, looking at the School House boys suspiciously. "He's just rushed past us with his head wringing wet."

Tom Merry laughed.

"He's just had a ducking. He raided our cabin last night, and started us fighting by mistake, and we thought that one good turn deserved another."

Figgins & Co. burst into a roar.

"He told us a yarn about Fatty Wynn having given him my matchbox when I found it in his hand," said Blake.

"When I found it in his hand, deah boy!"

"Don't talk to me, Arthur Adolphus D'Arcy. You've dropped my acquaintance, and I don't know you from Adam. Of course, we knew Fatty Wynn hadn't given him the matchbox."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the New House Co.

"Look here, what are you cackling at?"

"Nothing," said Figgins, with the tears streaming down

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his cheeks. "Nothing, only Fatty Wynn did give him the matchbox."

"Eh?"

"Fatty Wynn did give him the matchbox."

"How did Fatty Wynn get it?"

"I took it from your hand last night, when you thought Tom Merry took it," said Fatty Wynn, with a gurgle.

"You—you—you— Then it was you?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Bai Jove, deah boys, justice is not satisfied, after all!"

"Oh, yes, it is!" said Fatty Wynn. "Gore borrowed that matchbox to go down to have a smoke against rules, so he deserved a ducking. Make it pax. Somebody's been punished, so justice is getting along all right. That's good law."

And the School House boys assented, and pax it was accordingly.

CHAPTER 10.

D'Arcy's Dig!

AFTERNOON lessons on board the Condor finished at four o'clock, and as the rain had long ceased, most of the boys went up to enjoy the sea breezes. Mr.

Ratcliff was still keeping his cabin. The senior Housemaster was the worst of sailors, and the sea was still very rough. Mr. Railton had tried to persuade him to venture on deck, but the sick man refused so abruptly that the School House master did not renew the subject.

The steamer was throbbing on through a choppy, sloppy sea. The sun was glimmering in the west through watery clouds. The prospect of the Channel was decidedly uninviting. Tom Merry held on to the rail with his hair blowing about his ears, and his collar turned up, and looked over the expanse of water. Here and there the black smoke of the steamer loomed through the watery haze. Here and there was the brown sail of a small craft scudding through the wind.

"This is all right!" shouted Tom Merry, in Lowther's ear. "It's a change from the old quad at St. Jim's, old fellow."

"Yes, rather!" said Lowther. "Bit wet, though, isn't it? There's more rain to come down yet."

"Never mind, it's jolly here, all the same. This breeze makes you as hungry as a hunter. I'm beginning to feel like Fatty Wynn. Hallo, Gussy, don't go too near the side or you'll be over."

Arthur Augustus, holding his cap on with one hand, and his eyeglass with the other, stared haughtily at Tom Merry.

"Did you address me, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes. Don't do your Piccadilly walk too near the rail, or you'll go over when she rolls, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"You'll be a drowned donkey if you get into the water," said Lowther. "Jolly hard work to pick anybody up in a sea like this."

"I shall not get into the watah!"

"Do be careful, Gussy!"

"Pway don't address me, Tom Mewwy!"

"Why not?"

"Because I wefuse to wecognise you as an acquaintance any longer. Aftah the outrageous affair of the twouseahs I cannot wogard you as a fwend. I have to considah my dig."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus walked on with an air of extreme dignity. He left the Terrible Three holding on to the rail, and cackling.

Arthur Augustus was not holding on to the rail. He sauntered along as if he were safe at home on the Piccadilly pavement, or in the quadrangle at St. Jim's. The grace of his movements was somewhat impaired by the necessity of holding his cap on, and by the fact that his monocle was continually blowing off and fluttering at the end of its ribbon.

Blake, Herries, and Digby came along, clinging to one another, and staggering in the gusts of wind that blew over the steamer.

"Catch hold, Gussy!" called out Blake.

"I wefuse to catch hold!"

"It's not safe for an ass like you to prom on his own. Catch hold, and we'll see you safe," said Digby.

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

"What's the matter with you, duffer?"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a duffah!"

"Catch hold, then!"

"Pway do not address me, Blake!"

"Eh?"

"I do not wecognise you as an acquaintance. I shall be extwemely obliged if you will not force your conversation upon me!"

Blake grinned.

"By Jove, I'd forgotten! I don't know this chap, kids. Run along, little boy!"

"I wefuse to be addressed as a little boy!"

"Go and eat coke!"

And the three chums swung on with linked arms, and D'Arcy staggered in the gusts of wind alone. He bumped against Reilly, who threw out his arms and caught hold of him round the neck and righted himself.

"Faith, and I was nearly over, Gussy."

"Pway welease me!"

"Sure, and it's saving ye from a fall I was!"

"Pway don't bothah me, Weilly. Aftah your bwutal conduct in wefusin' to lend me a pair of twousahs I cannot wegard you as a fwiand, or even as an ordinawy acquaintance. I shall be extwemely obliged if you will not address me!"

"Faith, and I—"

But Arthur Augustus marched on with a dignified stride. He left the boy from Belfast cackling like a lunatic.

Skimpole came staggering along with a bundle of papers under his arm.

"I say, D'Arcy, lend me a hand!" he gasped. "These beastly things are blowing about. I've already lost my notes for my chapter on the Effect of Causes in Producing Results, and I shall have to think it all out again!"

"I wefuse to lend you a hand!"

"Eh?"

"You wefused to lend me a pair of twousahs!"

"Catch!" yelled Skimpole, as a sheet blew from under his arm. "Save it!"

D'Arcy, his good nature proving stronger than his dignity, made a clutch at the escaping sheet and missed, and sat down on the deck.

The paper whistled off in the wind and floated over the funnel. Then it travelled aft, and a gust carried it fairly in the face of Mr. Thropp, the chief mate, who was standing outside the chart house on the bridge. Then it whisked away, leaving Mr. Thropp muttering things, and finally vanished over the stern.

Skimpole clung to the rest of his papers and grunted.

"There go the rest of my notes on Determinism, or the Theory that Every Result is the Effect of a Cause, and

that every Cause is the Producer of an Effect," he groaned.

"I shall have to think all that out again."

"Why don't you do all that below?" said D'Arcy. "It's wathah windy to bwing papahs on deck."

"Yes, but Gore is such a cad, you know. He tried to set light to my papers. That is his idea of a joke, and he nearly destroyed the fruit of months of mental labour. But I am afraid I cannot— Oh, there goes another paper!"

And Skimpole dashed away after his notes. He was not in time to prevent them from escaping over the lee rail, however.

"Bai, Jove, that fellow is an awful ass!" murmured D'Arcy. "Fancy payin' so much attention to that widiculous Determinism, and weawin' waistcoats of such a feahful style! Some fellows nevah seem to know what things weally mattah and what things don't."

And he resumed his Piccadilly walk.

Tom Merry shouted to him down the wind.

"Look out, D'Arcy! She's rolling!"

Arthur Augustus did not deign to look round.

But the steamer was rolling, and at the same time a fierce gust of wind swooped down.

D'Arcy's cap went flying from his head, and he made a frantic clutch at it, lost his footing, bumped hard on the deck, and rolled. The next moment there was a shriek of horror from fifty throats.

"Man overboard!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was over the rail!

The splash in the sea was drowned by the wind and the throbbing of the steamer, but several fellows caught a glimpse of a white and startled face as it disappeared in the froth of the rolling billows.

For a moment or two horror held everyone petrified—with one exception.

The exception was Tom Merry.

The hero of the Shell had dashed forward as he saw D'Arcy going, but too late. He stopped at the rail, but only for a second—to fling off his cap and jacket. Then he dived.

"Tom!" shrieked Lowther.

(Continued on page 19.)



WRIGLEY'S under canvas

There's always a place for the familiar Wrigley packet in camp. The Wrigley custom is a useful one . . . and healthy too. No wonder it is popular under canvas. It freshens and cools the mouth . . . bucks you up. At the same time, Wrigley's 'after every meal' cleanses the mouth and teeth . . . aids digestion. Take some to camp with you.

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E.M.32

THERE'S A LOT TO INTEREST YOU IN—



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

HALLO, chums! There's another exciting story of Tom Merry & Co. aboard the good ship Condor in next week's bumper number of the GEM. As the title—

"THE OCEAN REBELS"

—suggests, Tom Merry & Co. have got a "grouse" against someone. That someone—have you guessed it already?—is Mr. Ratcliff! Look out for thrills and surprises next Wednesday, for this story is one of the best of the present holiday series. Keep an eye open, too, for the next chapters of

"THE WORLD WRECKERS!"

This unusual story teems with thrilling adventure, and gets more interesting as the weeks go by. By way of comic relief Potts the Office Boy "obliges" with another full-o'-laughs picture strip. Order next week's GEM in advance—it's much too good to be missed!

MAN WHO CANNOT SINK!

At the end of this month another Channel swimmer will try his luck "between" Dover and Calais. But this aspirant to fame is different from all his predecessors. He had the misfortune years ago to lose both his legs in a tramway accident. Up to that time he had never been able to swim. Then, again by accident, somebody pushed him into a swimming bath, and to his surprise he found that he couldn't sink! This started him swimming with a vengeance. Now he declares that he is more at home in the water than he is on land. In his attempt upon the Channel crossing he reckons to stay in the water for about seventy hours! Sounds almost impossible, doesn't it; but already this legless champion has proved that he can stay in the water, without any ill effects, for over a hundred hours! According to his statement, Mr. Charles Zibelman (he's an American) will eat steak, chicken, rice, bread - and - butter during his long swim. Furthermore, he will smoke about a hundred cigars! Well, well—anyone who can do all these things should find our "spot" of Channel easy!

THE BUTTERFLY CLOUD!

Butterflies! Butterflies! Thousands of 'em! Millions of 'em! Yes, and the fellow who uttered this wasn't dreaming. THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 1,280.

He's a Californian who woke up one day to see a vast cloud of butterflies, reckoned to be thirty miles wide, travelling towards him from the Sierra Nevada slopes to Sacramento Valley. He wasn't the only one who "bumped" into this living cloud! Motorists in Lassen National Park had to shove on their brakes. The windscreens of their cars were alive with multi-coloured butterflies, whilst the waters of Lake Tahoe, over which the "cloud" slowly and majestically passed, were turned to a delicate shade of orange by the reflection of the butterflies' wings. What's the reason for this sudden invasion, ask you? Simply a desire on the part of the lady butterflies to find a better feeding ground.

THE DEMON BOWLER!

He's only an "eighteen-year-old," but his bowling would put many a cricketer twice his age to shame. In the recent match at Lords between the Rest and Lords' Schools, J. H. Cameron—the "demon" in question—sent down a formidable mixture of googlies and leg breaks and brought off astonishing results. In the first innings he skittled the Lords' Schools entire side for the low score of forty-nine runs—at least, that was all the ten batsmen could knock up off his bowling, although they "collected" a few from other bowlers in the Rest side. And just to show that this amazing performance was no fluke J. H. Cameron took the only two wickets that fell in the second innings. Twelve wickets in succession is the dream of many a bowler which, alas, rarely materialises. Cameron's average for the match reads like this—29.1 overs, 5 maidens, 72 runs, 12 wickets! No wonder the Somerset County Cricket Club is "after" him.

UP, UP, EVER SO HIGH!

Not so very long ago the world gasped at the amazing performance of Professor Piccard, when he ascended to a height of forty-eight thousand feet in a special balloon in order to study the changes of atmosphere at extreme heights. Now the professor is going to have another shot, but this time his ambition is to "touch" an altitude of fifty-two thousand feet. The gondola attached to the balloon, which will do duty as a "living-room," "control-room," etc., for the professor and his assistant, M. Cosyns, is a very special affair, so constructed as to withstand atmospheric conditions as the balloon anchored above it soars up and up into the limitless blue. If a fifty-two thousand feet "ceiling" is reached the professor will have set up a record that will require some beating. We wish him luck!

HEARD THIS ONE?

Prison Visitor: "And why are you in prison, my good man?"

Convict: "For driving a car too slowly."

Visitor: "Good gracious. I can hardly believe that."

Convict: "Well, you see, sir, the bloke whose car I pinched, jumped in another and overtook me."

BLOWN FORTY MILES!

Most of you have seen those huge sausage-shaped balloons anchored to the ground by means of a stout cable, and known as observation balloons. Well, how would you like to be in one when the cable broke and the balloon began to drift away up into the clouds? No takers? Don't blame you. Yet such an experience befell three O.T.C. cadets at Tidworth recently. Fortunately for them they were accompanied by an experienced flying officer, who eventually landed the "runaway" after an exciting journey of forty miles or so across country. True, he finished up the journey on top of a bungalow, but landing an observation balloon in circumstances like these is a ticklish and dangerous job. The cadets scrambled out of the "basket" little the worse for their adventure save for a few minor bruises.

CHARLIE CHAPLIN JUNIOR!

Seven years old is Charles Spencer Chaplin—one of the famous film comedian's two sons—but he's got his own ideas about his future. When the reporters who interviewed him put the question "Do you want to grow up to be like your father?" young Chaplin replied: "No! I want to be a great actor!" Did the reporters laugh—you bet they did, and how!

A GOOD TUCK IN!

Speakers at the recent Medical Association Meeting had a lot to say about the average modern boy—nice things and otherwise. But one certainly uttered words of comfort to those of us who possess a "healthy" appetite. This doctor declared that a boy *Can Not* overeat, and that he works better after a good square meal. This was in response to someone who ventured to say that boys eat too much, with the result that they can neither work nor play well after a "feed." So all of you fellows with a "large" appetite take comfort. According to Dr. Reginald Miller, of London, "more scholarships can be won on beef than on buns." Hear, hear!

A LUCKY FIND!

He was a rag-and-bone man, and he was busy running through the various articles of "cast-off" clothing he had collected when he discovered among them the astonishing sum of two hundred and ninety pounds in Treasury notes. Straightway he handed over his "find" to the local police, and eventually the amount was claimed by its forgetful owner. It is to be hoped the honest finder was not forgotten.

MIND YOUR HEAD!

I dare say you've had your ears "stung" by hailstones, but you might have had a worse fate had you been in Potter, Nebraska, not so long ago when hailstones 17 inches round and weighing one and a half pounds, fell upon that town!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE FLOATING SCHOOL!

(Continued from page 17.)

Manners gave an inarticulate cry. But Tom Merry was gone! The rolling waters were over him, and the steamer throbbed on. And now it was life or death for two instead of one!

CHAPTER 11.

For Life or Death!

TOM MERRY cleft the water like an arrow as he struck it, and as he came up his hand struck something that floated in the waves. He had calculated well—his hand was upon Arthur Augustus, and his grasp instantly fastened upon the collar of the swell of St. Jim's!

The fall into the water had almost stunned D'Arcy, and he was helpless at the mercy of the waves.

He was not a good swimmer at the best of times, and in such a sea he would have been powerless, even if he had had all his wits about him.

But it was different with Tom Merry. The champion junior athlete of the School House, the finest swimmer in the Lower Forms of St. Jim's, was more fitted to fight for his life amid the surging waves.

He grasped D'Arcy and kept himself afloat, and as he was thrown up upon a billow he looked round for the steamer.

His heart sank as he saw her.

The Condor had almost instantly reversed her engines, and stopped, but she seemed terribly far away.

For the moment, from the top of the surge, Tom could see the great ship, the whole length of her, with the black smoke pouring from her funnel and her rail crowded with anxious faces.

Then he went down into the trough of the sea and the steamer disappeared from view.

Tom Merry set his teeth hard. Whether a boat could reach him in such a sea he did not know, but he meant to fight hard for his life and keep afloat as long as possible.

To swim towards the steamer in that rough sea was almost impossible. It required all his efforts to keep himself and D'Arcy afloat. To that task he bent all his energies.

D'Arcy's eyes opened wide and turned, with terrified inquiry, upon the stalwart lad whose grasp was holding him from death.

Tom Merry tried to catch the words as D'Arcy's lips moved.

"Bai Jove!"

"Buck up!" said Tom Merry, shouting to make his voice heard above the wind. "We shall be picked up!"

"Bai Jove! I must have fallen into the sea!"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Did you fall in, too, Tom Mewwy?"

"No!"

"Bai Jove! You jumped in?"

"Yes."

"That was weally wippin' of you, Tom Merry, aftah I had just drooped your acquaintance."

"That's all right."

D'Arcy's lips moved, but his reply was dashed away by a gust of wind, and Tom Merry did not hear a word.

The hero of the Shell looked round anxiously as he was borne on the top of the surge.

The steamer seemed farther away than before. But a boat had swung down into the sea. Tom Merry could not see the boat, but his quick glance noticed that the place of one was empty, so he knew that it must have been lowered.

He lost sight of the steamer again. A rough, choppy wave overwhelmed him, and for some seconds both boys disappeared under a mass of water.

But Tom Merry did not lose his hold upon Arthur Augustus. He came up again, breathless and gasping, bobbing like a cork, and the swell of St. Jim's came up with him.

D'Arcy's face was deathly white now, but there was still intelligence in his eyes. He had not lost his presence of mind. Many duds ways the swell of St. Jim's had, but in the moment of terrible danger he showed that he belonged to the true British breed. He knew that he was in the

grim shadow of death, and he faced it with cool pluck and nerve.

He was trying to speak, but for some moments the wind and water drowned his voice. Then Tom Merry heard at last.

"Is there a boat coming?"

"Yes."

"Suah?"

"It was lowered."

"Can you see it?"

"No."

The wind roared again, and words were dashed away.

Tom Merry's clothes were soaked, his boots full of water. He felt as if an invisible giant's hand was dragging him down—down to cold death in the gloomy depths of the sea.

The buffeting of the waves was exhausting him, and D'Arcy was almost a dead weight. The Fourth-Former was trying to swim, but his efforts were worth little. He was a weight upon the stronger lad, and Tom Merry's strength was fast giving out.

Could it come?

Would it be too late?

A chill ran through Tom Merry's veins.

It was hard to die!

Like a glimmer of strange light scenes and faces flashed through his brain—the kind, old face of Miss Priscilla, the charming smile of Cousin Ethel, the old green, shady quadrangle at St. Jim's, the cricket field, with its white-clad figures, the glorious old river, with the shadows of the trees mirrored in its depths.

The voice of D'Arcy brought him back to himself.

Tom Merry stared at him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was pulling himself from his rescuer's hold, and for the moment Tom Merry thought he had been overcome by one of those unreasoning fits of terror common to drowning people, and did not know what he was doing.

But the white face of the junior was earnest.

"Let me go!"

"What do you mean?"

"I—I can't swim, and you are goin' undah!" gasped D'Arcy. "No good both goin'. Let me go!"

Tom Merry tightened his grip.

"Both or neither!"

"No good both going!"

Tom Merry did not answer, but his grasp was fast upon the junior's collar. He did not regret his action, and he did not mean to go back on it. For life or death, he meant to see it through. It was sink or swim together.

"Tom Mewwy—"

"Buck up, Gussy! The boat's coming!"

"Can you see it?"

"Not yet."

"Then—save yourself, Tom Mewwy."

A choppy wave broke over their heads, and they disappeared under it. When they came clear again D'Arcy's face was white and set and rigid. He was insensible.

A groan left Tom Merry's lips.

His strength was almost gone. Would help never come?

"Aho!"

The boy started, and a thrill ran through him. As he was lifted on the wave-crest he saw a boat labouring through the rough waves, and a hand was raised, showing that he had been seen.

He had no strength to shout back. He could only struggle for his life and wait.

The boat drew nearer.

Mr. Green, the second mate of the Condor, was standing up in her, keeping his footing by a feat of balancing possible only to a sailor.

His eyes were fixed upon the floating junior, and he made signs in silence to the seamen at the oars.

"Help!"

Tom Merry gasped out the word.

"Aho!"

The boat came nearer. A great wave surged down upon it, carrying Tom Merry and D'Arcy upon its crest.

Mr. Green stood ready, and his men backed him up well. With head and shoulders in frothing water, Mr. Green grasped Tom Merry, and as the boat rose upon the waves they came out of the water together.

"Got him!"

Tom Merry, still grasping D'Arcy, was dragged into the boat.

His brain was swimming now, and he fell blindly into the bottom of the boat.

"Safe now, lad!"

But Tom Merry did not hear, did not know he was safe, for darkness had rushed upon his vision, and he knew no more.

CHAPTER 12. The Right Hand of Friendship.

"TOM!"

Tom Merry started. It was Monty Lowther's voice, but not the usually light, careless tone of the joker of the Shell.

It was a low voice, with a strange shake in it—a shake Tom Merry had never heard in Lowther's voice before. What had happened? Where was he?

There was a glimmering of subdued light in his eyes, and around him several faces that were dim to his sight at first. He was lying in a bunk—a much more spacious bunk than his own in the junior cabin on the main deck.

"Tom!"

In a flash recollection returned. Tom Merry sat up hastily, passing his hand across his eyes with a quick gesture.

"Is Gussy all right?"

"Yes," said the deep voice of Mr. Railton. "D'Arcy is all right, Merry. He has already recovered consciousness."

"I'm jolly glad!" said Tom Merry.

He looked round him a little uncertainly. His vision was growing clearer now, the strange buzz in his head subsiding. The cabin was glimmering with a subdued light. A shade had been placed round the electric lamp. Beside his bunk Mr. Railton and the ship's doctor were standing, and near them were Manners and Lowther. Dr. Pounce was feeling his pulse.

"I say, I'm all right," said Tom Merry.

The little fat doctor smiled.

"I'm glad to say you are, my boy," he said. "Matters might have been a great deal worse. You will get up in the morning pretty nearly as well as ever."

"Oh, am I to stay in bed for the rest of the day?" said Tom Merry, in dismay.

"It is night now, my lad."

"Night? Then I—"

"You have been insensible for two hours."

"My hat!"

The doctor spoke aside to Mr. Railton for a few minutes, and then left the cabin.

Meanwhile, Manners and Lowther drew nearer the bunk.

"It's all right," said Tom, strangely touched as he saw

that there was a wet streak down either of Lowther's cheeks. "It's all right, kids!"

"I know it is," said Monty, with a gulp. "But—but it mightn't have been."

"We thought—we—we thought—" stammered Manners. Tom smiled faintly.

"I suppose I looked like a goner?"

"Yes."

"Jolly glad I'm not, anyway. And Gussy is all right?"

"Yes. He came to some time ago."

Mr. Railton came back to the bunk, and the chums of the Shell withdrew a little.

The Housemaster's face was very kind as he looked down upon the junior.

"How do you feel now, Merry?"

"Rather seedy, sir."

"You will remain here for the night—"

"But this is your cabin, sir."

"Yes, it is mine."

"You—you can't be turned out like this, sir!"

"I shall make myself comfortable, Merry," said the Housemaster. "Don't trouble about that. Heaven be praised that matters are no worse! I hope I shall never feel again as I felt when I saw you in the water and thought that the boat would never reach you in time. You have performed an heroic action, Merry."

"Oh, sir!"

"If you had not dived in for him, D'Arcy would certainly have been drowned. As it is, he has suffered less than you. We owe it to you that our voyage has not commenced with a terrible tragedy." Mr. Railton's voice trembled for a moment. "And we owe it to a merciful Providence that the matter did not end with a double tragedy. Can I do anything for you now, Merry? Would you like your friends to remain with you?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"You must not talk too much," said Mr. Railton. "You must keep quiet."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Railton quitted the cabin.

Manners and Lowther sat on the edge of the bunk, and Tom Merry sank down on the pillow again.

"My hat!" murmured Lowther. "I never saw Railton look so out-up in my life before. He was as white as a sheet on deck!"

"So were you," said Manners. "And you stood blubbing when they brought Tom up the side."

Lowther turned scarlet.

"I didn't!"

"Yes, you did."

"I was just gasping because the wind was in my eyes."

"Oh, rats!" said Manners. "I felt jolly like blubbing myself, for that matter."

"Tom looked as if he was a gone coon, and so did Gussy. Poor old Gus! That's his last pair of trousers ruined. He'll never get the salt water out of them."

Tom Merry chuckled faintly.

"He'll have to wear the steward's old bags again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is Gussy still in bed?"

"No, I think he's getting up. He's not much the worse for it; he's only had a ducking. You had all the work. I say, we were watching you, you know. We saw you nearly all the time, and you held Gussy up a treat."

"He's a good little ass!" said Tom Merry. "He wanted me to let him go when he thought we were both sinking."

"Did he really? By Jove! I'll lend him a pair of my Sunday bags!" said Manners.

"Bai Jove! Will you weally, Mannahs?" said a voice at the door. "I wegard that as wathah wippin' of you."

Arthur Augustus came into the cabin. He was wearing a dressing-gown of a gorgeous pattern, and looked not unlike an Eastern sultan in full state.

"I came in to see how you were, Tom Mewwy," he remarked, coming towards the bunk. "I accept Mannahs' genewous offah. That has been weighin' on my mind."

"What has been weighin' on your mind?" asked Tom Merry.

"My twousahs. I was thinkin' while we were in the wathah that even if we were wescued my twousahs would be wuined."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "I wonder if anybody but Gussy would have thought of his trousers at such a time!"

"It's a wathah important mattah, Lowthah," said D'Arcy, screwing his monocle into his eye. "I say, Tom Mewwy, you do look seedy!"

"Same to you!" grinned Tom Merry. "You've got a complexion like putty."

"I feel wathah wotten, but I was most anxious about the twousahs. I am afwaid they will shwink; and, anyway, the shape will be spoiled, after boin' twice soaked and dwied like this. If Mannahs is sewious in 'his offah—"



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"Take that—and that!" yelled Knox. "Ow, ow! Yow!" hooted Fatty Wynn. Then he hit out wildly in return, and the prefect gave a grunt and staggered back as Fatty's fist connected with his nose!

"Quite serious!" said Manners magnanimously.
"Good! I suppose you don't mind if I have the twousahs altered a little? You weally weah twousahs of a wathah pwovincial cut—"

"If you start altering my trousers—"

"They will be too long for me, too."

"You can turn them up at the ankle."

"Yaas; but I should pwefer—"

"You're not going to alter my trucks, Gussy. Let me catch you damaging them, that's all!"

"Oh, vewy well! I weally wish, though, that you would weah twousahs of a more fashionable cut, Mannahs. Then the pwesent difficulty would not have awisen."

"Still the champion ass!" grinned Lowther.

"I wefuse to be alluded to as a champion ass! I want to speak to you, Tom Mewwy. You saved my life—"

"He's always saving up something that's no good," Lowther remarked.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"That's all right, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I am weally vewy gwateful! You weniembah that I had dwooped your acquaintance owin' to that wotten twick you and Blake played on me with the steward's twousahs. Undah the cires, I cannot do less than forgive you, and extend the wight hand of fwendship."

And Arthur Augustus extended it.

Tom Merry laughed as he accepted the right hand of friendship, and gave it a grip that showed that his strength was returning.

"Can we come in?"

It was Blake's voice at the door. Digby and Herries were looking over his shoulder.

Arthur Augustus gave them a glance of disdain.

"Pway don't bothah now," he said.

"We want to congratulate you—"

"I cannot accept congwtulations fwom persons with whom I am not on terms of fwendship!" said D'Arcy frigidly.

"My dear ass—"

"Pway wetiah!"

"It has occurred to me that this is Tom Merry's abode, and you are rather off the lines in issuing orders," Blake remarked. "Can we come in, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Weally, Tom Merry, undah the cires—"

"This is another chance for the right hand of friendship," explained Tom Merry. "You can extend it to these three rotters, too."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I am afraid that will be impos, unless they apologise."

"But I haven't apologised."

"You have saved my life, deah boy, which is bettah still."

"His own life won't be safe when that gets about," said Blake darkly.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We've come to talk to Tom Merry. We can't allow any strangers in the cabin. You must extend the right hand of friendship, or else bunk."

"I wefuse to extend the wight hand of fwendship!"

"Now, Gussy—" began Tom Merry.

"I am sowwy to have to wefuse you anythin', Tom Mewwy, aifah you have bwavely wisked your life and spoiled your clothes to wescue me fwom a watery gwave; but I cannot extend the wight hand of fwendship to these wottahs. If they remain in the cabin, I shall have no alternative but to wetiah."

"Well, we're going to remain," said Blake, sitting down.

"I think you're ungrateful, Gussy! You've spoiled your trousers, and I was going to borrow the steward's old trucks for you again."

Arthur Augustus gave his erstwhile chum a withering look, and walked haughtily out of the cabin. A general chuckle followed him.

Figgins & Co. looked in at the door while the School House fellows were still chuckling.

"What's the joke?" asked Figgins. "We looked in to inquire after a giddy invalid, but you seem to be enjoying your little selves."

"Somebody going to stand a feed?" asked Fatty Wynn.

Blake explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Figgins. "I firmly believe that Gussy will be the death of me yet. But after what has happened he must be brought round."

"He's as obstinate as a mule."

"I've got an idea—" said Kerr.

"Get it off your chest, my son."

"Gussy has forgiven Tom Merry because he rescued him. Suppose you three chaps were to rescue him—"

"But he's not likely to fall into the sea again."

"He could be chucked in," suggested Digby.

"I don't mean that," grinned Kerr. "Suppose three New House fellows had hold of him and were going to souse his head in a bucket of tar, and you came along and rescued him in the nick of time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing heartily. "Go ahead, my sons; and if Gussy extends his right hand of friendship we'll all have a feed in here at supper-time. As a giddy invalid, I'm allowed to have my way—and that's my way!"

"Now you're talking!" said Fatty Wynn. And so the plot was plotted.

CHAPTER 13.

Another Heroic Rescue!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS walked away from the cabin with a haughty stride, and it was not till he was on the main deck of the Condor that he remembered that he had not yet arranged with Manners about the loan of the trousers.

His dressing-gown was a triumph of colour, but it had its disadvantages, being, in fact, rather airy on a windy evening.

But the swell of St. Jim's shook his head at the thought of returning to Tom Merry's quarters. He had disowned the chums of the Fourth as acquaintances, and he meant to keep it up.

"I suppose it will be all wight if I go to Mannah's cabin and bowwow the pair of twousahs fwom his box?" he murmured. "I have weceived his permish, so it will be all wight. Anyway, I think I'll do it, and ask him aftahwards."

And he set forth in search of Manners' cabin. He found it after some time, and found there Manners' best pair of nether garments, and calmly appropriated them. They were not of the really fashionable cut of his own, and they were a little too long in the legs, and rather roomy about the waist! But they were a decided improvement upon a dressing-gown.

D'Arcy put them under his arm and returned to his own quarters, and there proceeded to dress with great care.

He had an ample supply of all things but trousers, so he was able to make an elaborate toilet, and Manners' things looked very well when they were turned up at the ankles.

D'Arcy surveyed himself as well as he could in a hand-mirror, and was pretty well satisfied with the results.

"Bai Jove! It makes a fellow feel bettah to be decently dwessed again," he murmured. "I weally think I look wathah nobbay. The twousahs are a little baggay, that's all. Bai Jove! What's that?"

MAN OVERBOARD!



Tom Merry & Co. deal very effectively with Mr. Ratcliff, the New House tyrant, in next week's gripping yarn of the Chums of St. Jim's at sea!

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The door of his cabin was suddenly opened. Three youths rushed in, and in a moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was lying on the floor, with Kerr sitting on his chest, and Fatty Wynn on his legs.

Figgins closed the door, and dumped down a pail that, from its colour, looked as if it had been used to contain tar.

"Got him!"

"You uttah wottahs!"

"Captured him at the first swoop," said Figgins, with much satisfaction.

"Let me get up, you beasts!"

"You're a giddy prisoner."

"I will shout for help, and——"

"Rats! You've quarrelled with Blake and Dig and Herries, and nobody else is likely to take the trouble to come."

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Besides, if you yell we shall shove some of this tar into your mouth."

"I should uttably wefuse to have any tar shoved into my mouth."

"You won't have any choice, Gussy."

"What do you wottahs mean by this outwage? You are wumplin' my attiah feahfully. I will give you a thwashin' when I get up!"

"It's a House row," explained Figgins. "We're going to show you School House kids that the New House is the Cock House of St. Jim's, and the sharp end the leading end of the Condor. See? We're going to anoint you all in turn with tar, and we're going to start with a chap about your size."

D'Arcy shuddered.

"You feahful beast!"

"Roll him over this way. We shall have to pick him up by the heels and dip his head into the tar-bucket."

"Right you are!" said Kerr.

"I've got his legs," said Fatty Wynn. "Up he goes!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy struggled desperately. The thought of having his aristocratic head plunged in a tar-bucket was unspeakably horrible to him. When would he ever get his hair clear of the sticky tar?

"Pway don't be such feahful wuffians!" he gasped. "Figgins, don't be a beast! Kerr, don't be such a wuffman! Fatty Wynn——"

"Shove him over here!"

"He's coming."

"Pway don't! Help! Blake—— Oh, you wottahs! Help!"

"Hallo! What's the row here?" exclaimed Blake's voice suddenly.

Blake, Herries, and Digby rushed in. There wasn't much room in the little cabin for six or seven juniors, and they rushed right into Figgins & Co. and tumbled them over.

"Help!" gasped D'Arcy. "The uttah wottahs are goin' to stick my beastlay head into a beastlay tar-bucket, deah boys! Wescue!"

"Kick them out!"

"Go for the New House rotters!"

"Here, not so much of your rotters!" exclaimed Figgins warmly. "You'll jolly well get hurt if you begin any——"

"Out you go!"

D'Arcy, as he scrambled out of the way of the combatants, had no idea that it was a put-up rescue. As a matter of fact, it was no longer one. The juniors planned a sham fight, but as soon as it started the old hostility of the rival Houses proved too strong for them, and they were soon fighting in earnest.

"Kick them out!" roared Blake.

"Buck up, New House!" gasped Figgins.

They swayed and struggled in the narrow space. But D'Arcy, as soon as he had dusted down his clothes, joined in the fray, and the odds were then against the New House.

Figgins & Co. were ignominiously ejected from the cabin and sent sprawling out. Blake slammed the door.

"Bai Jove! We have licked them!" said D'Arcy.

Blake rubbed a very swollen nose. Digby mopped the claret from the corner of his mouth with his handkerchief. Herries staggered, breathless, against the tar-bucket, fell over it, and bumped down.

"Well, we've licked them!" grinned Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! They were goin' to stick my head in the tar, deah boys—a vewy wuffianly pwoceedin' even for Figgins. I am awfully gwateful to you for wescuin' me in this hewoic way."

"I'm afraid I can't accept your thanks, Master D'Arcy," said Blake coldly. "You see, I don't know you. I can only accept gratitude from a fellow I know."

"Same here," said Digby. "Who is this chap?"

"Weally, Dig——"



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy struggled desperately. The thought of having his aristocratic head plunged in a tar-bucket was unequally horrible to him. "Help! Blake, help!" "Hallo, what's the row here?" Blake, Herries, and Digby rushed into the cabin.

"Let's get out," said Herries. "I don't like being shut up in a small cabin with a stranger."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

Blake turned to the door.

"Pway listen to me, deah boys! I am quite willin' to ovahlook any little difference we may have had, and to allow our acquaintance to wesume its old footin'."

"Oh, are you?" said Blake. "Well, if you apologise, and—"

"The apology is due to me."

"Well, we will waive the question of an apology," said Blake magnanimously. "Shall we admit this young person into our circle again, kids, and give him another chance?"

"That's not the way to put it. I'm givin' you permish to wewen my acquaintance," explained Arthur Augustus. "I'm not askin' it of you as a beastlay favah."

"That makes no difference; we'll grant it as a favour."

"But weally—"

"We know you," said Blake, with a wave of the hand; "we are acquainted with you. We resume your acquaintance so long as you behave yourself. Where's the right hand of friendship?"

The right hand of friendship was offered and taken, and it was pax again between the chums of the Fourth Form.

"It would serve Figgins & Co. wight to take this tar along and duck them in it," D'Arcy remarked, with a glance at the pail that had been kicked over. "Bai Jove! Deah boys, there isn't any tar in it!"

Jack Blake grinned.

"Sure, Gussy?"

"You can see it for yourself, Blake. It's as dwy as anythin'!"

"So it is! Figgins must have forgotten the tar."

"Pewwaps he was only foolin' all the time, and did not weally mean to tar me at all," said Arthur Augustus reflectively. "Still, I am vewy much obliged to you fellows, and I do not wegwet havin' wesumed your acquaintance."

"That is generous of you, Gussy," said Blake, with due humility.

"Well, as a mattah of fact, deah boy, it is my intention to be genewous."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally fail to see anythin' in that wemark to cackle at."

"Oh, come along, Gussy! Tom Merry is going to have a spread in Railton's cabin, as a privilege of a giddy invalid, and we're all invited."

"Bai Jove! It's fortunate we have made it pax, then, or you wouldn't be able to come."

"I don't think it would have been us who were left out. But come along."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The chums of the Fourth, on the most amicable terms again, made their way to Tom Merry's quarters. The table was drawn up beside the bunk so that Tom Merry could sit to it, propped up with pillows and cushions. Lowther and Manners were there, and a steward was laying the table. The spread was really a good one, and showed Mr. Railton's thoughtful appreciation of Tom Merry's conduct.

"Hallo! Have you fellows made it up?" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We heroically rescued Gussy from Figgins & Co.," explained Blake. "After a gallant and desperate struggle, with casualties on both sides, we defeated the foe."

"Did you?" said Figgins, coming into the cabin, holding a slightly reddened handkerchief to his nose. "You mean you were defeated!"

"Oh, don't talk rot, Figgy!"

"Tom Mewwy, are these wottahs comin' to the spwead?"

"Please don't allude to my guests as rotters, Gussy!" said Tom Merry severely.

"Bai Jove! I weally beg your pardon."

"It is pax all round this evening," grinned Figgins. "Heroic rescues and the right hand of friendship are the order of the day. I hope that Gussy isn't going to start making a row in another fellow's quarters."

"I weally hope I am incapable of such extwemely bad form, Figgins."

"Then don't argue. This looks a promising spread."

"I was just thinking so," remarked Fatty Wynn. "How fortunate it is that we have got over our sea-sickness! We shall be able to do it justice."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Go ahead!" said Tom Merry.

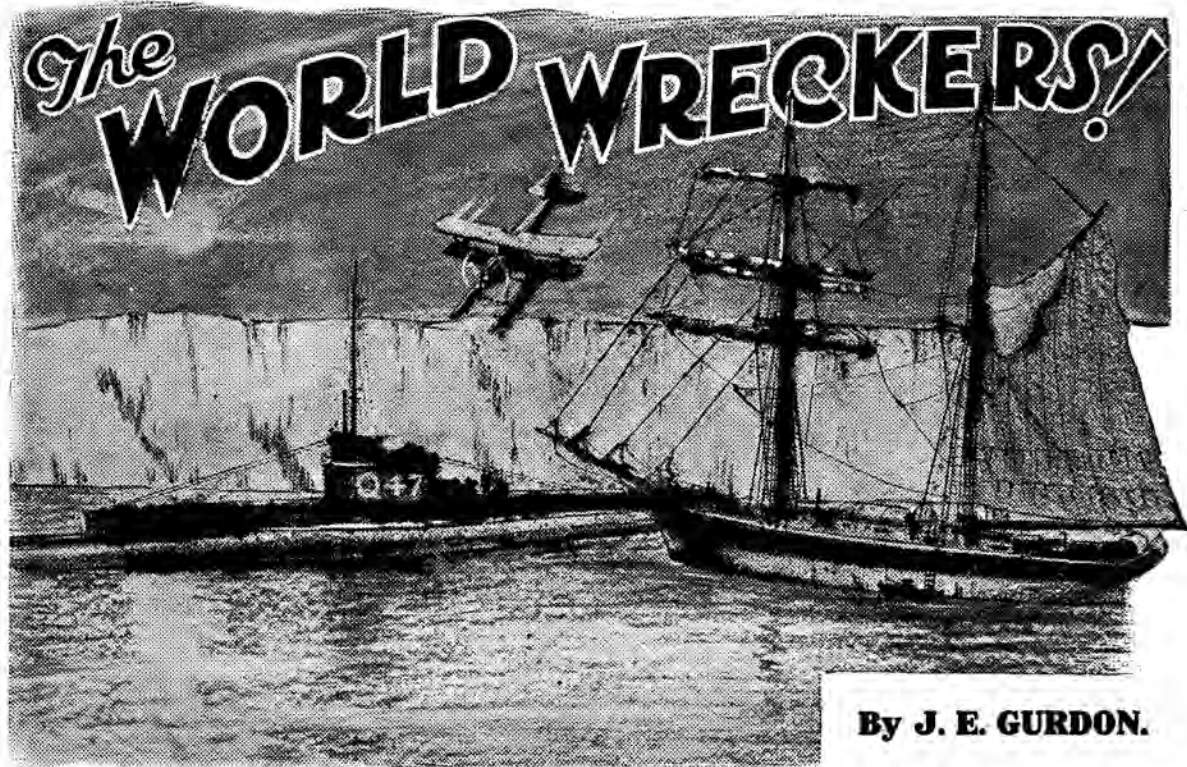
And the juniors of St. Jim's went ahead.

THE END.

(Mr. Ratcliff recovers from his sea-sickness next week, and tries to play the tyrant! "The Ocean Rebels!" is a really splendid yarn of Tom Merry & Co. at sea! Order your GEM now!)

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START RIGHT AWAY ON OUR THRILLING ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE YARN.



By J. E. GURDON.

The World Wreckers, a band of criminals, have discovered the secret of controlling the earth's weather, and have threatened to destroy the British Empire if they are not paid a huge sum of money. The British Government's reply is to send a submarine, an aeroplane, and a base ship to search out the Wreckers' headquarters, which are known to be somewhere in the Antarctic. Jim Tempest, one of the airmen, captures a plane from the Wreckers, but discovers one of the enemy aboard. He plans to knock him out by electrocuting him.

Jim Succeeds!

JIM opened the throttle slightly and pulled back the stick, for his plan needed as much height as possible. Mounted close to his left elbow was the vulcanite disc for plugging in the suit, and lower down against the cockpit floor, along the flex between disc and dynamo, was the resistance box which regulated the amount of current that was allowed to come through.

Luckily for Jim these fittings were on the side away from Redbeard.

Pretending to be busy with the tail skid trimming wheel he leant down, wrenched the further flex away from its terminals on the resistance box, and wedged the torn, naked strands of wire between the edge of the box and a steel fuselage strut.

A glance at the altimeter told him that he had sufficient height. With a yell of triumph he banged the stick hard forward against the dashboard.

Wires shrieking, fabric drumming, the biplane ducked her nose and fell like a stone, her rudder a thin line against the zenith.

Instantly the dynamo revolutions rose to twice, three times, four times their normal speed, and the full force of the high tension current they generated poured through the broken flex into the steel framework of the machine.

Comfortably insulated in his rubber diving-suit Jim felt never a tingle of this terrific force. Standing up on the rudder-bar as he dived he still managed to keep an eye on the partition opening.

The bearded face had disappeared.

"And that," shouted Jim, gently easing back the stick, "that proves the value of steel construction and modern comforts—eh, Mossyface?"

There was no reply.

The engine's thunder died as he throttled back and began an easy spiral down to where two copper pin-heads marked the spot where he and Rex had left their helmets.

Five minutes later he had landed, rather more than a mile above the point where the submarine lay.

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A glance into the rear cabin revealed a crumpled figure sprawling on the floor. Jim did not, however, investigate, for he had too much else to do.

Swiftly, yet methodically, and without haste, he unpacked the waterproof spare-part-container, which was slung flat against the fuselage between the under-carriage V's. Here there were two pairs of skis, a twin-bladed propeller, and tools of every description; but Jim was not concerned with any of these. All that he took was a sizable hammer, a coil of wire rope, and half a dozen steel screw pickets, commonly used for mooring-ropes.

Leaving the engine running, so as to save time in case of attack from the air, he shouldered his load and tramped to the water's edge.

Down to the last detail his plans were cut and dried.

Since the morning the Barrier higher up had delivered one of its frequent colossal loads of ice into the sea. This had split up into the usual crowd of bergs, each one weighing several thousand tons, which were drifting slowly outwards from the coast, driven by tide and current.

Gauging the angle and distance to the buoy which now bobbed above Q 47, he leapt for a berg that was all but grazing the shore before rounding the point that led to the seaward drift.

At once he got very busy. The screw pickets he arranged in arrow formation on the ice, then hammered home till only their rings protruded. The wire rope he doubled and threaded through the rings so that all six were taking an equal strain, and the free ends emerged from the two broad corners of the arrow. Such an anchorage, he knew, would almost hold an Atlantic liner in a gale.

By the time he had finished this work the berg had drifted to within a few hundred yards of the buoy.

Having attached the four strands of wire loosely to his belt he waited until the last possible moment, and then plunged into the icy rollers.

He was almost unconscious by the time he reached the buoy and had made the ropes fast to the pennant, and he never afterwards could remember how he regained the berg.

Two vivid impressions, however, pierced through his reeling senses as he lay fighting for breath upon the ice.

One was a glimpse of the wire ropes tightening—tightening—then of a sudden drooping slack. At that he croaked a feeble cheer, for it meant that the ponderously moving mass of ice had jerked the submarine free of her clinging mantle of mud.

The other was also a glimpse.

From immediately overhead the biplane that he had left on the Barrier was spiralling down to land.

That sight was the last straw. For the first time in his life Jim Tempest fainted from sheer weakness.

Two faces were bending over him when he came round. One he recognised instantly as Commander Sherwell.

"All O.K.," said the commander cheerfully, in answer to his unspoken question. "Your yank did the trick beautifully, and the remaining tank brought us up. She's moored alongside now."

"Feeling better?" chirped another voice.

Jim sat up with a bounce.

"Rex!" he gasped.

"The same," returned the boy grinning widely.

"But—how did you get here?"

"Flew over in the biplane you left lying about so carelessly. You see," he went on, seeing Jim's utter bewilderment, "when I dropped into the cabin back yonder, that red-bearded brute laid me cold with a spanner, and I didn't blink again till after you'd left. The Sleeping Beauty seemed very quiet—you jolly nearly killed him, by the way—so I hopped across to lend a hand."

"Good effort," smiled the commander. "And good luck also that they haven't come chasing after us with those troop carriers."

"They couldn't very well," explained Rex casually, "cause I shot up all their petrol tanks before bolting for the biplane. That's what made 'em all so wild. But I say, sir, d'you know it's getting on for dinner-time—and we haven't yet had lunch?"

A gale from the south-east screamed over the edge of the Great Ice Barrier, driving streamers of powdery snow far out to sea. High clouds of ice balked the thin Antarctic sunshine, wrapping the black waters and white cliffs in a dingy shroud of green and yellow shadows.

Commander Sherwell had brought Q 47 as close in shore as he dared, letting her ride at anchor on the surface; for the big submarine was too badly damaged either to venture out to sea or to submerge.

In a roomy shelter built of snow blocks, under the lee of the Barrier, was the cabin biplane that Jim and Rex Tempest had captured from the World Wreckers.

Whistling hideously but cheerfully, the two were busy at the radial engine, minutely adjusting valve clearances, when footsteps crunched up to the shelter, and the canvas screen across its entrance was thrust aside.

"Hallo, you two!" greeted the commander, rubbing away an icicle that had formed on the end of his nose. "Cease work for a bit. I want a few words with you."

He settled himself comfortably on a packing-case while they climbed down from their stipladder.

Looking at him keenly, Jim saw that the commander's hatchet face seemed even leaner and more lined than usual, and that about his eyes were the dark rings of sleeplessness.

The veteran flyer nodded as he read these signs. He himself during the Great War had known the responsibility of command and the wearing anxiety of carrying on when everything went wrong.

"Dirty weather brewing!" he mused, silently wiping his oily hands on a lump of cotton waste. "Wonder what fresh snag we've struck."

Young Rex, however, scented no trouble. Eighteen years old, utterly tireless, and without a care in the world, he was finding their desperate adventure just one thumping good rag after another.

"Is it possible to fly in this weather?" began Commander Sherwell abruptly.

"Yes," answered Jim promptly. "It is possible to fly. But whether it's also possible to land without busting the machine is a different proposition altogether. We should get down somehow. I can guarantee that. But in this blizzard the kite would be half out of control near the ground, and some old bump might chuck us down like a ton of bricks."

The commander granted thoughtfully.

"Then that scheme's a wash-out," he said, with decision. "Out of our entire force of one brigantine, one submarine, and one aeroplane the ship's already in the hands of the enemy, and the sub has struck a mine and is totally unseaworthy. We therefore cannot risk smashing the machine. H'm!"

He paused, then went on speaking, as though thinking aloud:

"All the same, we've got to recapture the brigantine, not only in order to release Captain Bruce and his men, but also because until we do so we can't get the spares necessary to repair Q 47. Moreover, we've got no time to waste, because the World Wreckers' ultimatum expires in ten days' time. If we haven't found 'em and scotched 'em by then, either the British Government have got to pay some staggering indemnity, or else these brutes'll turn loose their infernal magic and lay the whole Empire flat with typhoons, floods, and what not."

As he fell silent the howl of the gale rose to a siren-like screech, while the massive snow walls of the shelter shuddered beneath the blast.

In the lull that followed he suddenly jumped to his feet, jaw set, and lips tight with grim determination.

"Since you can't fly," he said, "we shall have to attack without any preliminary reconnaissance. Bad tactics, but it can't be helped."

"Attack—yes," agreed Jim grimly, "but not without reconnaissance. We'll get the information you need."

"And wreck your craft getting it! No, Tempest, that game's not worth the candle. I refuse to sanction any reconnaissance flight until it can be made with reasonable safety to the machine. We shall have to trust to luck, land a party, march the three miles up the coast to where the ship is lying, and have a go at 'em from the shore. If they're not keeping their eyes skinned, we may rush 'em by surprise. If they are—"

He broke off with a grin and a shrug.

"Just a moment, sir," put in Rex, as the sailor made for the entrance.

"Well, what is it?"

"With this wind, and the tide setting down the shore, one could drift a boat or something along to the spit of ice that sticks out just this side of the ship. Once there, a fellow could creep to the top of the spit and see what the blighters are doing."

"Already thought of that. Trouble is, we've only got collapsible canvas boat in Q 47, and in this sea they'd fill up like old buckets before they'd gone half the distance. Also—"

"But, sir—"

"Also, it's utterly impossible to get along the foot of the Barrier because of the surf, and if anyone tries it along the top he'll simply get sniped by a sentry and give the show away. Napoo, I'm afraid, young fella!"

"But," persisted the boy, "I wasn't thinking of canvas boats. I meant these."

The commander stared at the objects to which Rex pointed, and as he stared a slow smile spread over his face.

"You've hit it!" he ejaculated softly.

It was two metal seaplane floats that had given Rex his idea.

Although most of their flying was done over land, and the biplane was therefore normally fitted with skis, floats were very necessary spares in case operations should take them far out to sea. The pontoons were therefore stored with other equipment against one wall of the hut.

"We can rig up cross members to support a raft between the two," went on Rex, "an' the whole outfit'll float like a cork."

The Killers.

REX was proved right a couple of hours later, when a party from Q 47, having worked with furious energy, ran their queer craft on to a flat segment of ice that was about to break away from the foot of the Barrier.

So well timed was this manoeuvre, in fact, that the launching crew barely had time to scramble ashore before the great mass tore itself free with a crack like the explosion of a siege gun, and surged thunderously seawards through the rollers.

Such bergs were constantly being rent from the Barrier by the ceaseless gnawing of the waves, and it was only this fact that made it possible to get the raft out into open water, for her pontoons would have buckled like eggshells in the crashing cauldron of surf that fringed the shore.

Once the berg had ploughed its way through the chaos of spray and foam, Jim and Rex slid their mount to the leeward edge, kicked off, and took to their paddles with strong, steady strokes.

Although only five or six hundred yards out to sea the face of the Barrier was already invisible behind a failing screen of snow and driving spume.

Nor was there a skyline to be seen around the whole circumference of horizon—only heaving flanks of sullen water

and savage lines of grey and white traced by the storm against the murk.

Like a paper boat on a mountain torrent the frail structure soared and sank, bobbed and swayed. Silently and unremittingly the two plied their paddles, their eyes fixed on the swinging compass that was mounted in the floor of the raft between their feet.

It required two and a half hours of back-breaking toil to cover the three miles journey to the ice spit, but their navigation was correct, for when the raft had been safely beached, and they had climbed to the humped summit of the ice, it was to find themselves looking straight down upon the brigantine, which was bucking and groaning at anchor close inshore.

Ten minutes they spent, noting every detail to be seen aboard the ship and the disposition of the enemy's machines and posts along the coast further east, then slithered down to the raft and set out on the long pull back.

So numbed were they by cold and fatigue after another hour's paddling that at first neither could understand the column of vapour that suddenly spouted up from the sea less than a hundred yards away on the starboard beam.

But another column spouted, a third, a fourth—the last so close that it roared like a blast from an air-compressor.

As the vapour fell back upon the raft the air seemed queerly warmed.

At that, realisation came to Jim in a flash.

They had blundered into a school of killer whales—the fiercest and most cunning of all the wolves of the sea.

Killers, as well he knew, could attack and destroy a sperm whale of fifty times their own bulk.

Rex saw the first huge hideous head that burst through the waves.

Six feet into the air it rose vertically. A vicious little piggy eye rolled in their direction. A monstrous mouth gaped, revealing teeth like bayonets.

One after another the black and tawny heads reared up all round the craft. The roar of their spouting mingled to form one thunderous drumming. The dense vapour was stifling, and sickly to smell. The sea seethed and boiled about the vast plunging bodies.

For Jim and Rex attack and defence were alike impossible. Their one hope of escape lay in the chance that the monsters might take no interest in them.

Because movement might catch one of those pig-like eyes, they sat rigid in their seats, muscles set, scarcely daring to breathe.

It was the hardest, most nerve-searching ordeal that either had ever endured.

The dangers of the air they knew, and the wicked whine of machine-gun bullets—both they could face without more than a tingle. Those perils, however, were all in the day's work, when one could fight with brains, eyes, and hands. This sitting on a thing like a storm-tossed cork—sitting with teeth gritted and limbs frozen, waiting blindly and dumbly for the flip of a fluke to hurl sky-high or dash under water—this was sheer punishment.

Yet they stuck it, and luck held.

How long it lasted neither could afterwards quite decide. Jim hazarded seven hours as a rough guess. Rex argued it must have been more like nine. Their watches suggested a maximum period of not more than three and a half minutes.

And there was nothing wrong with the watches.

Whether the killers thought them too small fry to be worth bothering about, or whether their eyes were unable to see clearly above water, neither Jim nor Rex was disposed to investigate at the moment.

It was sufficient for them that one by one the heads ceased rising, and the spouts diminished until, through the wrack and spray, only fins and glistening hull-like shapes could be seen submerging slowly in rings of foam and bubbles.

"Crikey!" croaked Rex. "Aren't we having a topping trip!"

Jim did not reply. He was frowning with narrowed eyes at the last of the sinking monsters.

There was something familiar about the sleek back with the upright edge of the fin cutting the water.

He racked his brain to find the comparison, then suddenly let out a whoop of triumph.

"C'm on, Rex!" he yelled. "Get busy! We've got to beat those tiddlers back to the sub!"

"What's the bright idea?" howled Rex, grabbing his paddle and putting his back into the job.

Jim chuckled, and jerked his head towards the spot where the last of the killers had vanished.

"Bait!" he shouted.

Ready hands hauled them aboard the moment the raft bumped alongside Q 47. Both were as done as though they

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had come in from a Marathon over rough country in the teeth of a hurricane, but mugs of steaming chocolate soon drove out the numbness and fierce cold.

Commander Sherwell waited until their teeth had stopped chattering.

"Well?" he asked quietly.

"There's a school of killers coming this way," answered Jim. "If your quick-firer can get one of 'em without blowing the brute up we've got the ship!"

Most men would have thought he was listening to raving nonsense, but the sailor knew Jim Tempest.

A few brisk orders to a petty officer and he turned his attention again to the flyer.

"We'll bag your whale," he promised. "Anything else you want?"

"An engine of some sort, and— But I'd better outline the scheme first."

The Bogus Submarine!

DURING the hour's council of war that followed both Commander Sherwell and Rex added their suggestions to the plan that Jim had conceived. The finished programme, therefore, was about as fool-proof as human ingenuity and forethought could make it.

While they were still discussing final details the quick-firing gun on the deck above began its venomous, staccato barking.

A minute later the petty officer whom the commander had instructed, entered the ward-room and saluted.

"Have to report, sir," he announced, "one killer whale, incapacitated by shell fire, range seven hundred yards, on the port quarter."

Since there was no other way of reaching the carcass, Q 47 had to weigh anchor and draw alongside its victim—a manoeuvre which, because of the submarine's holed condition, called for extraordinarily tricky and accurate seamanship.

The job was done, however, with usual naval precision, and the dead whale was secured to the submarine's hull by steel hawsers and high-tension springs—the latter being used to absorb the tugging and slackening caused by the heavy seas.

A glance at the monster told Jim that Q 47's gun team had lived up to their reputation for uncannily true shooting. It had been neatly killed by a head wound, and was otherwise quite uninjured.

The work next to be done was tackled swiftly and methodically.

While the carpenter, with timber and lashings, rigged a small platform supported by scaffolding around the tail of the killer, three seamen removed the engine from the submarine's motor-sledge. Two others, with tubing and air pumps, inflated the animal's lungs to prevent it from sinking.

Next a petrol tank was mounted on the platform, the engine connected with the tank and secured by bed-plates and heavy bolts, and shafting run aft from the engine to an underwater screw behind the tail. A fixable water rudder was then adjusted, and a couple of long poles lashed upright to the mighty dorsal fin.

Grinning broadly, Commander Sherwell watched the completion of the work from the deck of his submarine.

"There's just one finishing touch needed," he murmured, scribbling a note which he handed to a seaman. "Three bits of canvas of the right shape will do the trick. Cartwright is pretty useful at camouflage work. I've sent a chit down to him about it."

Within ten minutes the seaman was back from Cartwright, the third officer. He was clutching three queerly-cut fragments of canvas, and was obviously under the impression that his skipper had turned slightly mental.

But the carpenter caught the idea quickly enough when the three objects, wrapped into a bundle, were tossed across to him.

A little vigorous hammer and nail work with the canvas, and the defunct killer acquired a new and distinguished identity.

Boldly showing against the grey fin, for all the world to see, were the markings "Q 47."

"Cartwright's cut 'em out very neatly," chuckled the commander. "Hope they don't blow away. 'Pon my word, that lump might be a sister ship!"

This statement was no more than plain fact.

Wallowing awash the hulk of the whale might have been the submarine herself, for the fin was of much the same size and shape as the conning tower, while the two upright tubes resembled periscope and ventilator. With the canvas letters and figures the disguise was complete.

"Now to map out the exact schedule," said Commander Sherwell, leading the way back to the ward-room. "We've

got to synchronise our watches and time every movement to the fraction of a minute."

When these essential preparations had been carried out, Cartwright and a picked crew of three clambered on to the platform fixed to the killer and started up the engine.

Slowly, but gathering speed, the huge mass moved away, towing the tiny pontoon raft. A cheer from Q 47 followed the strangest motor-craft that ever cut water.

Next the commander, with a force of fifty men, landed, climbed the Barrier, and struck diagonally inland along a track that would bring them within a mile of the brigantine's position.

Back at her old moorings under the shelter of the ice-cliff, Q 47 remained, guarded only by a skeleton crew.

Three hours later Jim and Rex hauled their machine out to the carefully-battered runway, swung her nose into the wind, warmed the engine, and took off.

The main force of the gale had now spent itself, but continually the biplane staggered beneath the shock of raging squalls. For Jim it was a ceaseless fight with the controls to keep a level keel and hold a course; for Rex, in the navigator's cabin, the first few minutes of flight felt like being rolled along inside a barrel over cobblestones.

Once well out to sea, however, and away from the turbulent air of the cliffs, the struggle to control became less strenuous and Rex was able to set about making everything shipshape.

Although as a rule totally enclosed, the rear cabin could be opened by sliding its roof along a grooved recess. When this was done a rack and pinion, operated by a crank, raised the Scarfe mounting for the Lewis gun flush with the fuselage.

Swinging the gun around its circle and up and down, Rex saw that there were very few "dead angles" or "blind spots," formed by wings or tail-plane, to interrupt his fire.

Satisfied on this point, he turned his attention to the bomb-sight, a lens of large diameter, let into the floor of the cockpit, and fitted with a system of adjustable wires for the measurement of drift and groundspeed.

Having fired a smoke cartridge over the side, to give him this drift and groundspeed, he made his observation, set the sight, and made sure that the bomb-release lever was clear of any loose object that might foul it.

Most of the bombs themselves were invisible, being slung from racks underneath the main planes, but two spares, of identical type, had been wedged into clips against one side of the fuselage, ready to drop by hand should the occasion arise.

None of the bombs was filled with high explosive, for they were not intended to inflict material damage, but to set up an impenetrable smoke-screen on the ground.

While Rex was attending to his various jobs, Jim had climbed to ten thousand feet and reached a point exactly four miles south-east-by-east from the brigantine.

Although the heaped-up jungle of drifting clouds afforded plenty of cover, he made no attempt to hide.

This was because the main object of their flight was to distract the attention of the enemy while Commander Sherwell and his force worked round to their appointed position on land. At that moment, according to the carefully-timed programme, the dummy Q 47 would have to come within sight of the brigantine. Naturally, the pirates would turn loose their artillery upon the raider from the sea, and while they were blazing away the shore party could take them by surprise from the rear, further aided by a curtain of smoke-bombs that the biplane was to lay along one flank.

Such was the plan of campaign that had been worked out.

In all respects it seemed sound enough, provided that the machine was not attacked. Both Jim and Rex, however, felt safe on this score, for their scouting on the ice spit had shown that the enemy only possessed troop-carriers.

It was therefore with an uncommonly nasty shock that Rex saw a formation of five scarlet fighters shoot up through the clouds like shells fired from howitzers.

He grabbed the speaking-tube.

"Hi, Jim!" he called. "There are five fearful fellows chasing us after us!"

"I know," came the calm response. "Interfering blighters, aren't they?"

"I should jolly well think so! Aren't you going to dive on 'em, Jim, before they've gained height? You could bag a couple first burst."

"So I thought, but now I'm afraid not. The fusee spring's just bust in my gun. They're your pigeons, Rex. Happy shooting!"

"Cripes!" yelled Rex, then banged a double drum of ammunition on the post of his Lewis gun.

The situation was just about as bad as bad luck could make it.

Even with her front gun in action, the biplane would have been hard pressed, for she was not built for fighting and was slow on the controls.

To have to scrap five with nothing but the back gun—Rex grunted, laid his cheek to the spade-grip, and aligned the ring and bead of the foresight on the leading fighter.

Scarcely breathing, then, he held his fire, waiting till the target should come within certain range.

As the attackers approached he saw that four were single-seaters, while the fifth carried a gunner in the after cockpit.

In diamond formation they climbed to within a thousand feet of the biplane, then the two-seater flattened out, leaving the scouts to continue their onslaught alone.

Rex clenched his teeth.

The bead of the Norman foresight on the muzzle of his gun bobbed and wavered as he picked out the leader, coolly calculating speed and deflection.

Gently he squeezed the trigger.

With an irritated cackle the gun burst into chattering fury.

Scarlet-tipped tracer leapt at the target, trailing thin threads of bluish smoke.

For a second the boy was blinded by the stinging fumes of cordite and burnt oil.

When sight cleared, the clean-cut lines of the scout had vanished.

In its stead a thing like a pine-cone of rippling fire was dropping slowly through the clouds. Only a rudder and the tips of wings protruded from the flaming mantle.

Even slower than the cone, a white jellyfish-like object sank by its side. Beneath the white shape dangled a human figure. The scout pilot had taken to his parachute in time.

"One!" gritted Rex, whirling his gun to the machine that followed.

But the remaining three had learnt their lesson. A collective head-on rush was dangerous. Like experienced fighters, they changed their tactics.

The flanking machines half rolled upwards and climbed. The pilot in the rear pulled back his stick and zoomed like a rocket. Then as though obeying a word of command, all three turned about and dived together, one from either side, one upon the tail.

Faced with such a triple attack, ninety-nine gunners out of a hundred would have lost their heads and blazed wildly and ineffectually.

The Fight!

FIGHTING down that natural impulse, Rex chose his man, settled his sights on the starboard scout, and took aim as though he were firing at a toy balloon on a practice shoot.

From three angles a hail of bullets lashed at the biplane, ripping the wing fabric, splintering the camber rigs, and pounding at the fin.

Rex shifted his gun a fraction of an inch and waited. He seemed to be looking straight into the enemy's twin fire-spitting muzzles.

A flying wire parted, snapped back with a wail, and sliced through the knuckles of his gauntlet.

Unruffled, he fired.

He could see his bullets smashing into the scout's engine cowlings.

Like a wounded bird the little machine reared up, tumbled clumsily over sideways, and fell.

"Two!" he breathed.

It was worse, perhaps, for Jim in the front cockpit, since he was unable to help except by cunning flat turns and skids to confuse the enemy's deflection shots. Anything like active aerobatics he dared not attempt, for his machine was no match for the nimble scouts, and the stunting would inevitably put Rex off.

The windows of his cabin were punctured and starred by bullets. One concentrated burst had sliced away the whole back from his wicker seat. Petrol, gushing from a rent in the after petrol-tank, sluiced and slushed about his feet.

Just the touch of a burning tracer on that floor—

He suppressed a shudder.

From behind him the Lewis clamoured again. A gaudily painted plane flashed erratically past his port wing tip.

Rex had bagged his third pigeon.

The biplane creaked and groaned as Jim wrenched her round to face the one survivor that still harried the tail like a hound on the haunches of a spent stag.

Thanks to that wily manoeuvre, the fourth shot for Rex was the easiest of all.

To the scout pilot, 500 feet higher, the biplane now made an approaching target. Only by diving ever steeper could he hold her in his sights.

Rex watched the long engine dip, chuckled, and swung his gun, not up, but down over the side.

A scattered spray of tracer whined past. The scout was plunging too fast for accurate shooting. Almost vertically

it howled down between tail plane and wings, through drifting mists.

The Lewis was ready and waiting. Its questing muzzle hovered, pointed, and pumped hot lead after the fleeing shadow.

"Four!" yelled Rex.

Abruptly the gun stopped.

A glance told him what had happened. Something must have slowed up the extractors, for a round had been rammed into the breech before the spent case was flicked clear. Both cartridges were now wedged tight, and the whole mechanism of the gun was jammed.

"Double feed!" he growled. "Lucky it didn't happen before, or—Who did that?"

A gaping hole had opened in the fuselage just behind the Scarfe ring—a hole punched by a neat burst from below.

Rex had crowed too soon. There was still the two-seater to be reckoned with.

At first he could not spot the attacker; then Jim, who had felt the machine stagger from the impact of bullets, switched the tail aside by a hefty kick on the rudder-bar.

The skid revealed the pirate plane, slightly behind, and less than 300 feet below. The gunner in the back seat had trained his barrel round to fire forward over the centre section. The pilot's cockpit was totally enclosed, and from the general design and behaviour of the machine Rex guessed that it was not armed with fixed guns synchronised with the propeller.

Even so, their plight was sufficiently desperate.

Another burst leapt up to smash the tail skid.

Wrist and arm muscles cracking, Rex plied a clawed steel lever specially built for clearing stoppages. It was useless. The two packed cartridges refused to budge from the breech. Like round shot dropping on a drum, bullets thudded through the elevator. A control cable snaked back, then trailed loosely.

"Nothing doing!" grunted Rex, throwing down the lever.

The gun knocked out, he hunted round for some other weapon.

The bombs!

His eyes fixed on them, flickered away, and returned.

Something could be done with those bombs. Not by merely dropping them, though. The chance of getting a direct hit, heaving a bomb from one moving machine at another, was about the same as that of stopping a swallow on the wing with a pellet from a catapult.

A different stunt must be worked out.

One of the undercarriage skis was split from end to end by a ploughing tracer. The stream-lined facing on the V-strut stopped another burst, opened along its trailing edge like a pea-pod, and was whirled away by the gale.

"This," muttered Rex, "is getting too hot by a half!"

His foot, as he searched the cockpit, was caught by something round and soft—a neat coil of fine, flexible manilla rope, used for mooring the machine either at sea or on land.

He kicked the coil aside, paused, swooped, and snatched it up with a whoop of triumph.

The problem was solved.

Out came one of the bombs from its clips, and, with a couple of half-hitches, the rope was made fast round its vanes.

"Jim!" bellowed Rex balefully, eyeing the port aileron king post which had just been knocked off the top plane. "Jim! Listen!"

For a second or so he snapped words into the speaking-tube. A low chortle came by way of reply. Silence fell like a sword stroke as Jim throttled his engine down.

The needle on the air-speed indicator jerked back from a hundred and twenty to eighty-five.

As an unwary rider is flung out of the saddle when his horse jibs at a fence, the pursuing two-seater, still racing on full power, shot up level with its prey.

The bomb and the rope were waiting.

Rex's plan had been to use the bomb as a weight and swing it, pendulum-wise, into the attacker's propeller. This stunt, however, did not turn out quite as he expected.

Air eddies round the rim of a spinning propeller play queer tricks. As the bomb on the end of its rope hurtled up to the prop tip it appeared to be pushed up, away, and over the centre section.

Then the two-seater's slipstream caught it.

The next half-minute was so crowded that Rex could hardly keep track of events.

One second the pirate gunner was standing up in his cockpit, doggedly squirting tracer. The next, a fathom or so of rope twirling a twenty-pound pear had wrapped itself lovingly round his middle and yanked him clean out of his plane.

Rex squeaked delightedly. No South American bolo wizard ever got his leaden weights and cord more snugly tied up in the legs of a galloping steer.

It was lucky for the astonished gunner that Rex had passed a loop of the rope round his Scarfe mounting. As it was he fetched up at the end of the slack with a jolt that squeezed all the breath from his body. Even the biplane jibbed at the shock.

"Ahoy there!" boomed Jim, banging open his throttle. "What's up?"

"A bite!" yowled Rex.

"What's aught?"

"Nothing's aught! I said we've got a bite! We've landed a fish! Go easy, Jim, while I haul him in."

"Caught a fish! What d'you mean? Attend to business, Rex. Strafe that two-seater!"

"No need to—he's buzzed off! An' I've got one of the two bright boys whizzing about on the end of a line. Cut off the gas, Jim. I can't pull him in against the slipstream, and he must be getting fed-up with pretending to be a fairy!"

(Rex has certainly beaten off the enemy, but how will he deal with the man on the rope? Don't miss next week's thrilling instalment!)

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