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The GEM

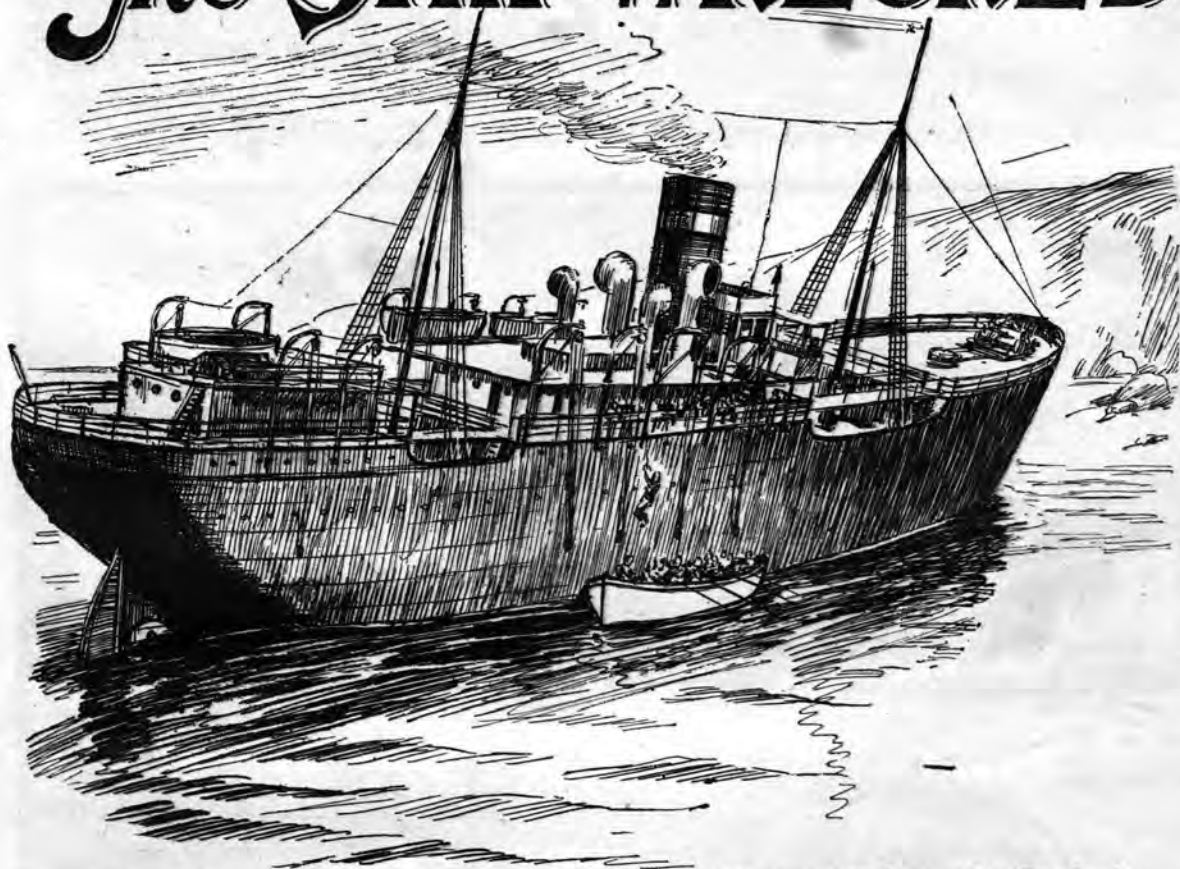
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SOMETHING REALLY NEW! Now ON SALE, PRICE 7⁶

TOM MERRY & CO. HAVE A HIGH OLD TIME AT HEADLAND—

The SHIPWRECKED



Skimpole experiments with gunpowder with disastrous results to the Condor!
But all's well that ends well and Tom Merry & Co. find plenty of fun ashore!

CHAPTER 1. Cricket on Deck!

"PLAY!"

"Bowl him out, Figgy!"

"Look out, Merry!"

Tom Merry smiled as he grasped the cane handle of his bat. He was looking out.

The wickets were set up on the deck of the Condor, the great steamer upon which the boys of St. Jim's were spending their Midsummer vacation.

There wasn't much room for cricket, as a matter of fact, but, as Jack Blake remarked, as they couldn't do without the cricket, they would have to do without the room.

A crowd of juniors were crammed back against the rails, or perched upon whatever coign of vantage they could find, to watch the game, and as much space as possible was left for the fieldsmen. Netting had been rigged up wherever practicable to keep as many balls as possible from going overboard.

Mr. Ratcliff, the senior master on board, was below in his cabin. He did not look with approving eye on any athletic sport, but he had not actually forbidden deck cricket. Mr. Railton had lent the juniors every assistance, at the same time cautioning them to be circumspect.

Of course, the juniors of St. Jim's intended to be circumspect. But it was quite probable that in the excitement of the game they would forget all about their circumspection.

It was a House match between School House and New House, and the School House were batting first.

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Tom Merry and Jack Blake opened the innings for the School House, and Tom had the honour of first receiving Figgins' bowling.

Figgins was a bowler of renown among the St. Jim's juniors. There were very few batsmen in the Lower Forms who could stand against his bowling. But Tom Merry was one of the few.

"Go it, Figgy!"

And Figgins did go it.

He took a little run on the deck, and turned himself into a sort of catherine-wheel, and the ball came down like a high-velocity shell.

Clack!

The ball was stopped, and on the ordinary crease it would have stopped as dead as a doornail. But on the deck of the steamer it was another matter.

The ball went skimming along the deck in an unexpected direction, and there was a howl of anguish from a junior who was seated on a deckchair, nursing his bat across his knees while he waited for his turn at the wicket.

"Ow! Bai Jove! Ow!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dropped his bat with a clump, and stood up on one leg, and clasped the ankle of the other with both hands.

"Ow! You uttah ass! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "What are you up to, D'Arcy? The batting side has no right to field that ball!"

"I wasn't fieldin' the wotten ball!" gasped D'Arcy.

"I—"

"The ball was fielding him!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Where's that giddy ball?" exclaimed Kerr, dashing

—SCHOOL FOLLOWING THE WRECK OF THE GOOD SHIP CONDOR!

SCHOOL!

By
Martin Clifford.

past, and shouldering Arthur Augustus aside. "Where's it got to?"

Tom Merry and Blake were crossing the pitch rapidly, and scoring runs.

D'Arcy turned half-round, and Kerr shoved him, and sat him down violently on the deck. Kerr fielded the ball, and was about to send it in when the injured junior bore down upon him.

"Get aside!" exclaimed Kerr. "You're in the way!"

"I wufuse to get aside! You have tweeked me with gwoos diswespect."

"Obstructing the field!" bawled Figgins. "I protest against those runs! Where's the umpire?"

"Get aside, Gussy!" howled Lowther.

"I wufuse!"

Monty Lowther jerked the swell of St. Jim's out of the way, and Kerr dashed in with the ball. Blake scudded back to the wicket, and Tom Merry clumped his bat on the crease. Kerr wrathfully tossed the ball to Figgins.

"It's all right," grinned Figgins. "They haven't run since you fielded the ball. Look here, Tom Merry, I protest against that dangerous maniac being allowed on the field!"

"I wufuse to be chawactewised as a dangewous maniac!"

"If you obstruct the field again, I shall order you off!" said Tom Merry severely. "What do you mean by getting in the way of a fieldsman?"

"He tweeked me with diswespect."

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Tom Mewwy——"

"Play!"

"Go it, Figgy! Get him out this time!"

D'Arcy sat down in the deckchair with a wrathful face, and nursed his ankle instead of his bat. Figgins bowled, and Tom Merry swiped the ball away, and it went into the net, and clumped back on deck, and bounced away.

There was a rush of the fieldsmen after the elusive leather, and Merry and Blake ran, and ran again. The third run, however, was a run too many, for Fatty Wynn of the New House had the ball in his hand, and it crashed right into Blake's wicket ere that junior's bat could reach the crease.

"How's that?" bawled the New House juniors, in one voice.

"Out!"

"Rotten!" said Blake, and he left the wicket. "Now then, Gussy, you're next man in!"

"I am afraid I am too injuathed to be able to play, Blake," said the swell of the School House, with great dignity.

"Next man in!", shouted Tom Merry. "Where's that ass D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"He says he is too injured to play."

"All right! Give his bat to Reilly!"

"D'Arcy jumped up, and grasped his bat.

"I wufuse to give my bat to Weilly! Upon second thoughts, I think I shall be able to play vewy well."

"Buck up, then!" grinned Blake.

And Arthur Augustus marched with great dignity to the vacant wicket. He was greeted with a cheer.

"Good old Gussy!"

"Where's your eyeglass?"

"Play up, Piccadilly!"

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and planted himself at the wicket as if he were going to defend it from the charge of a regiment of heavy dragoons. He could not understand why the onlookers began to laugh, and Figgins to shout.

"Get out of the way, ass!"

Arthur Augustus turned round in a leisurely way, and fixed his monocle upon the red and excited face of the New House junior captain.

"Did you address me, Figgins?"

"Yes, ass!"

"If you persist in applyin' that oppwobwious epithet to me, Figgins, I shall have no alternative but to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Will you get out of the way?"

"Certainly not! I wufuse to get out of the way! I am standin' here to defend my beastlay wicket!"

"You shrieking ass, I'm bowling to Tom Merry! Stand aside!"

"Oh, I comprehend! Why didn't you explain before?" said D'Arcy, quite composedly. "I was thinkin' I was goin' to have the beastlay bowlin', you know!"

Tom Merry was laughing almost too much to hold his bat straight. However, he stood on guard as Figgins prepared to deliver the ball, the School House swell having obligingly got out of the way.

Captain Bolsover was looking on, with interest, from the bridge of the steamer. Mr. Thropp, the sharp-tempered chief mate was standing at the door of the charthouse, looking on also with a sour expression. He would not have stood there if he had known what was going to happen.

Down went the ball, and smack went the bat, and the leather flew—too fast for the eye to follow it.

"Come on!" cried Tom Merry.

The School House batsmen started running.

The fieldsmen were looking round for the ball. Where was it? A yell from the bridge told them.

Mr. Thropp was suddenly seen to double up, as if he meant to fold himself up like a pocket-knife.

"Oh!"

He gave a gasp like escaping steam, and the captain turned round to look at him.

"What is the matter, Mr. Thropp?"

"Matter!" yelled the unfortunate mate. "Ow! I've been winded, sir; that's what's the matter! Ow! Ow! Ooo-oh!"

"What the——"

Kerr ran up the steps of the bridge.

"Please, sir, will you return us our ball?"

"Your ball!" exclaimed the captain. "I—— Oh, I understand! Ha, ha, ha! You must not send the ball over the bridge again, my lad!"

"Certainly not, sir! It was quite an accident!"

"Give him his ball, Mr. Thropp."

The chief mate glared.

"I've been winded!"

"Pooh! Quite an accident. You must not mind a trifle like that," said the good-natured captain. "I shouldn't myself. Here's your ball, my lad."

He tossed the leather back to Kerr, who caught it, and with a hasty word of thanks, darted away.

Mr. Thropp disappeared into the charthouse with both hands clasped to his chest. He would willingly have thrown the ball into the sea, and Kerr after it.

Meanwhile, D'Arcy and Tom Merry were scoring runs.

Arthur Augustus, blind to the fact that the ball was coming, started on a fourth run.

"No!" shouted Tom Merry. "Get back!"

D'Arcy hesitated—and was lost!

The crash at his wicket followed the next moment.

"How's that?" panted Kerr.

"Out!"

"Weally, you know, that's wathah wotten!" said D'Arcy, with a shake of the head. "I wasn't lookin', you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anythin' to cackle at!"

"You're out! Next man in!"

Manners of the Shell was the next man in. The over finished without further scoring, and then Kerr bowled from the other end against Tom Merry, who had changed ends with the odd run, and so had the bowling.

The over was uneventful, the leather falling back from the nets, and the fieldsmen allowing no chance of a run. With the last ball, Manners was caught out by Pratt for a duck's-egg.

Digby took his place. Now the batting woke up again. The School House score was at twenty when Dig was clean bowled, and Herries came in. Tom Merry had the bowling, and was making the fur fly.

"Go it, Figgy!" muttered Kerr. "We don't want Tom Merry playing first in, and not out!"

"Right-ho!" grunted Figgins. "Something is going to happen this time!"

Something did happen. But it was not Figgins who was responsible for it. He sent down the ball, a regular twister, but Tom Merry was equal to the occasion. He let himself go at that ball, and sent it whizzing with a mighty swipe.

At that same moment a yachting cap rose to view from the staircase amidships. The head of Mr. Ratcliff, the senior master, and his sour face and thin features, followed the yachting cap.

There was a gasp of warning from a dozen throats. Mr. Ratcliff was just in the line of fire, so to speak. But the warning came too late. The ball was whizzing through the air, and Mr. Ratcliff's yachting cap rose to meet it as if on purpose.

Biff!

The cap went one way, and the head the other. The yachting cap sailed away in the air, and the head disappeared below the level of the deck. The sound of a bump was heard on the stairs.

The juniors stood petrified for a moment.

"My only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "We've done it now!"

CHAPTER 2.

Gussy's Norman Castle!

THE yachting cap, knocked completely out of shape by the cricket ball, fell to the deck. The head of Mr. Ratcliff, bare now, rose to view a second time, and his face was pale with rage.

His little green-grey eyes glittered round as if in search of a victim.

"Who threw that ball?"

The juniors were silent. They had had many a rub with Mr. Ratcliff since the Condor started on her holiday voyage, and had seen him in a fury more than once, but they had never seen him quite so furious as this.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, came quickly forward.

"It was an accident, Mr. Ratcliff," he said hastily.

"Merry was batting."

"So it was Merry—"

"Yes; but I assure you—"

The senior master interrupted the Sixth-Former rudely.

"That will do, Kildare!"

Kildare turned red and stepped back. Mr. Ratcliff turned towards Tom Merry.

"So it was you, Merry?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, facing the infuriated master calmly, though with a beating heart. "I am sorry, sir; I was batting, and I did not know you were coming on deck, and so—"

"Don't tell untruths!"

Tom Merry's face went scarlet.

"I am not telling untruths," he exclaimed angrily, "and you have no right to accuse me of doing so."

"Be silent, Merry!" said Mr. Railton, the master of the School House. "You must not speak like that to Mr. Ratcliff!"

"He calls me a liar, and—"

"Silence! Mr. Ratcliff, I assure you that I saw the whole matter, that it was an accident. It was impossible for

Merry to know that you were coming up at the precise moment that he batted."

Mr. Ratcliff hesitated.

There was no love lost between the two Housemasters, and Mr. Ratcliff, who had the authority of senior master, would gladly have disregarded Mr. Railton entirely. But he knew that that gentleman was not to be lightly regarded. The senior master had already strained his authority to breaking-point, and had provoked resistance. In a contest between the two, Mr. Railton would have been backed up by everyone on board. And so the senior master swallowed his wrath, and climbed down as gracefully as he could.

"Very well, Mr. Railton, if you assure me of that—"

"I do assure you!"

"Then I must overlook the circumstances. But remember," went on the senior master harshly, looking round—"remember that this play is forbidden on the deck in future. There is to be no more cricket!"

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed a score of dismayed voices.

"Remember my orders, that is all!" said Mr. Ratcliff. And, taking up his damaged cap from French, who had picked it up, he went below.

He left dark faces on the deck behind him.

"The rotter!" growled Monty Lowther. "Just like him to come up and spoil our game!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard him as a feahful wottah, deah boys!"

"The beast!"

"The cad!"

"Bai Jove, suppose we take no notice of the wottah, and go on playing!" suggested Arthur Augustus.

Some of the juniors were in the mood for it. But there was Mr. Railton to be reckoned with. Although junior master, he had ten times the authority and influence of his senior.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry, putting his bat under his arm.

"I'm done!"

"So am I!" said Figgins.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Get the nets down!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir!"

"Never mind," murmured Blake. "If we can't play any more cricket, there's footer. The football season's just going to begin, and we can begin with it. Football at sea would be rather a novelty."

The disappointed cricketers put away stumps and bats and balls. It was a glorious September afternoon, and the sunshine lay in a sheet of golden light upon the waters of the North Sea. The steamer was throbbing on southward, after a cruise of some weeks, and on her starboard quarter could be seen the shores of England. She was on the return voyage to the great port of Southampton. A great headland rose to view against the sky, and on the headland an old grey building with a tower could be seen, and many of the St. Jim's juniors looked at it with curiosity.

"It looks like a castle or something," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, gazing at the headland over the steamer's rail. "I'll have a look at it through my telescope, if you'll fetch it up from below, Blake."

"You'll have to wait a long time if you wait till then," said Jack Blake, who had seated himself in D'Arcy's deck-chair, to rest after his arduous labours as a cricketer.

"Weally, Blake, I don't think you ought to be so feahfully lazy. I weally wish you would run down and fetch my telescope."

"Why can't you fetch it yourself?"

"It makes me so exhausted goin' up and down the beastly stairs, you know!"

"Well, don't you think it would make me exhausted, too, you ass?"

"I weally hadn't thought about it, Blake. And I wish you would not call me an ass. Will you fetch up my telescope, Dig?"

"I don't think!" said Digby.

"Will you fetch up my telescope, Hewwies?"

"Rats!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I can tell you what that building is, if you like," said Mellish of the Fourth, who always knew everything. "I just heard Mr. Lathom tell Kildare. It's a school."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I weally think you must be mistaken, Mellish. It looks to me more like an ancient Norman castle."

"Rats! It's not a bit like a Norman castle," said Digby.

"I suppose I ought to know, Dig, as I am descended from a Norman wace," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh, yes, you ought," agreed Digby. "But apparently you don't."

"Weally, Digby—"

"It's a school," said Mellish. "It's an old building—"

an abbey or something, that's turned into a school like St. Jim's. It's called Headland Abbey. I heard Mr. Lathom say so, and he said he was a master there before he came to St. Jim's."

"Mr. Lathom is p'robably mistaken. It is a Norman castle."

"You utter ass!"

"If you are lookin' for a feahful thwashin', Mellish, you have only to wepeat that oppwobwious wemark," said Arthur Augustus politely.

But Mellish put his hands into his pocket and walked away, whistling.

"Bai Jove, we are gettin' neawah to the headland!" D'Arcy remarked. "I should like to have a look at that

"If you are goin' down for your camewah, Mannahs, you might look into my cabin and bwing up my telescope."

"I'm not going down for it," said Manners coolly.

"I've got it!"

"Well, as I made the suggestion, I think you might go down and fetch—"

"No fear!"

"I say, Lowthah, will you go and fetch—"

"Rats, old chap, and many of 'em!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, I wegard you as a set of feahfully inconsiderate boundahs!" said D'Arcy. "You know how exhaustin' I find goin' up and downstairs. Howeveh, I must go."

And Arthur Augustus descended to the main deck, where the berths of the juniors were situated. He entered his



"Come on!" cried Tom Merry. The School House batmen started running. The fieldsmen were looking round for the ball. Where was it? A yell from the bridge told them. Mr. Thropp was suddenly seen to double up. "Oh!!" He gave a gasp like escaping steam!

Norman castle. Will you wun down and fetch up my telescope, Tom Mewwy?"

"Some other evening, Gussy."

"I want to examine that wuined Norman castle."

"Norman grandmother! It's an old abbey."

"You are undah a misapprehension, deah boy. It is a wuined welic of the Norman Conquest. My ancestahts came ovah with William the Conquewah!"

"You shrieking ass! Did you ever see a Norman castle without a keep?"

"I weally do not wemembah; but I object vewy stwongly to bein' called a shwiekin' ass, Tom Mewwy! I say, Mannahs, why don't you take a photogwaph of that Norman castle? You are always wottin' about that wotten camewah of yours."

"By Jove, I may as well take it!" said Manners. "It's not a castle, but it will make a good picture. 'Headland Abbey College, seen from the sea.' Good!"

cabin, and ran against a youth in spectacles, who was just coming out.

The spectacled youth was carrying D'Arcy's electric torch in his hand, and in the shock he dropped it, and there was a crash of breaking glass.

"Dear me!" murmured the spectacled youth. "You startled me, D'Arcy. I am afraid that your torch is broken, and it is most annoying, for I wanted it very particularly."

CHAPTER 3.

Skimpole's Experiment!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY seized the spectacled junior by the collar, and jammed him against the bulkhead.

"Skimpole, you uttah wottah! What do you mean by burglin' my cabin like this?"

Skimpole, the brainy man of St. Jim's, blinked at Arthur Augustus through his spectacles.

"You are quite mistaken, D'Arcy. I was not burgling your cabin. I was merely borrowing your torch."

"Yaas, without askin' my permish."

"I thought that you would probably refuse your permission," explained Skimpole. "Otherwise, I should certainly have asked you."

"And now you have bwoken it."

"No. I must say that it was your fault for running into me. Please let go, D'Arcy, or I shall be compelled to proceed to violence. As a sincere Determinist, I am opposed to violence in every shape and form—especially when it is directed against myself; but if you—"

"You uttah ass!"

"Can you lend me a candle? The torch is unfortunately no use now," said Skimpole. "I should be very much obliged if you could lend me a candle."

D'Arcy jerked the freak of St. Jim's round to the door, and gave him a lift with his knee that sent Skimpole staggering into the passage.

"That's all I'm going to lend you, you wottah!" said the School House swell wrathfully. "And if I find you wummagin' about my cabin again, I shall give you a fearful thwashin'!"

"I want a candle—"

"Oh, pway get off!"

"You do not understand, D'Arcy. I am makin' an important experiment—"

"Go and make it, then!"

"I require a candle—"

"You uttah ass! What can you wequiah a candle for in bwoud daylight?" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, in astonishment.

"You see, I am conducting an experiment in the lower hold," explained Skimpole.

"We are not allowed down there, you duffah!"

"A sincere Determinist is not likely to pay any attention to arbitrary rules of that kind," said Skimpole. "I regard myself as having a right to go where I please. I have been down as far as the orlop deck."

"Bai Jove, I wish you had stayed there, you fearful boah! Pway cut off!"

"I have discovered a powder—"

"Eh?"

"I have discovered a keg of curious-looking powder in the store-room."

"What the dickens were you doin' in the store-room?"

"Making investigations. The steward is rather unreasonable on those points, and seems to be as particular about his quarters as the captain is about the bridge. Of course, I take no notice of his nonsense."

"When he is not there, I pwesume?" said D'Arcy witheringly.

"Exactly, when he is not there," assented Skimpole. "It was not in the steward's quarters that I discovered this powder, however. It is a coarse-grained powder, and has a slight smell, and I am curious to analyse it, and discover its constituents. Although I have never studied chemistry, I have no doubt that with my unusual brain power I shall be able to—"

"To make a silly ass of yourself, as usual," said D'Arcy. "I am not going to give you a candle. As a mattah of fact, I haven't one. Pway cut off!"

"I want to make the experiment at once, as somebody may discover me in the lower hold, and make a fuss."

"Then go and make it."

"I require a lamp, or, at least, a candle. Will you lend me a box of matches?"

D'Arcy jerked out a box of matches, and threw them to Skimpole, catching the freak of the Shell fairly on the nose with them.

"There you are, deah boy."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Now, cut off, you ass! I came here to get my telescope to get a view of an ancient Norman castle, not to jaw to a silly ass!"

And Arthur Augustus put his telescope under his arm, and went on deck again.

Skimpole blinked after him.

"It is very annoying that D'Arcy's torch is broken," he murmured. "I shall have to use a candle now. I dare say I shall find a candle in Kildare's cabin."

Skimpole visited the Sixth-Former's study and found one. He picked up the candlestick and scuttled off with it, and in a couple of minutes was in the lower hold again. It was a part of the ship to which the boys were not supposed to be admitted, but Skimpole had found his way there in the course of his investigations.

He had opened the end of the keg to see what it contained, and the dark powder within excited his curiosity.

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He had spread some of it on top of a chest, so that it formed a kind of train to the keg, and now he placed the candlestick with the lighted candle in it on the box close to the powder.

"I wonder what it is?" murmured Skimpole. "I am really curious to find out. Dear me, the motion of the ship makes the candle flicker very much. The light is very bad, and I really ought to have a lamp for my experiment."

Skimpole paused for some moments in thought, and then retraced his steps. Two or three engine-room hands looked at him curiously in the passage on the lower deck. The junior hurried up to the main deck. He had remembered that Mr. Railton had an electric glow-lamp, which was exactly the thing he required.

To the Determinist of St. Jim's asking permission was an unnecessary formula. Skimpole walked into Mr. Railton's cabin on the sheltered deck, and looked round for the electric lamp. It was not there, and Skimpole was still looking for it when Mr. Railton entered the cabin.

The School House master regarded the junior in amazement.

"Skimpole!"

His voice made the junior jump.

"Yes, sir."

"What are you doing in my cabin?"

"I—I—I—"

"Answer me at once!"

"I—I was looking for a lamp, sir."

"A lamp? How dare you look for a lamp in my cabin!"

"I wanted one to use, sir," said Skimpole innocently. "I am conducting an experiment, sir, and I—"

"You should not have entered my cabin without permission. If this occurs again, I shall cane you!"

"Yes, sir. I am sorry, sir. May I have the lamp, sir?"

Mr. Railton smiled grimly.

"Every part of the ship to which the juniors are allowed access, Skimpole, is open to the daylight."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"I must conclude that you have been exploring some place where the boys are not allowed to go."

"You see, sir—"

"In a word, Skimpole, where were you going if you had found the lamp?"

"To the lower hold, sir," said Skimpole reluctantly.

"Now, Skimpole, listen to me. You are not to go to the lower hold on any pretext whatever. You understand?"

"But, sir—"

"If I find that you have disobeyed me, I shall cane you severely. I shall cane you in any case," added Mr. Railton, "unless you promise me not to go below the lower deck."

"Really, sir—"

"Come, now," said Mr. Railton, taking down a cane.

"Under the circumstances, sir, I promise; but—"

"Very good. You may go!"

"If you please, sir—"

"You may go, Skimpole."

Skimpole left the master's cabin and went on deck with a gloomy brow, and joined the group of juniors who surrounded Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his telescope.

CHAPTER 4.

The Wreck of the Condor I

"BAI Jove, deah boys, I can make out the Norman castle awfully plainly now!" D'Arcy remarked.

"It's not a Norman castle."

"Oh, pway don't be obstinate about it, Blake! I'm looking at the beastly place through my telescope, and you're not, so I ought to know."

D'Arcy had the telescope resting on the rail, and had tied the end there with a piece of string, to keep it from rolling along as the steamer moved. The smaller end he had to his eye, and he had fallen on one knee to get the level.

The September afternoon was a fine one, but there was a swell off the Norfolk headland, and it made the steamer roll a little. The telescope in D'Arcy's hand shifted every second or two, and this rather interrupted the view.

"Bai Jove, it's awfully plain, you know," said D'Arcy. "I can see something that looks like a brown cloth, and there's a man holdin' a wope."

"Where?"

"In the Norman castle."

"You duffer, you've got the thing turned on that fishing-smack!" roared Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove, so I have!"

D'Arcy shifted the telescope again, and this time obtained a view of the old grey building on the headland. It bore about as much resemblance to a Norman castle as did the fishing-smack; but D'Arcy did not change his opinion.

"Bai Jove, it's a wipin' old castle," he remarked. "I should like to explore the wuins."

"They're not ruins," said Tom Merry. "Don't I keep on telling you that they're the buildings of Headland Abbey School?"

"Yaas; but I think you must be mistaken."

"Let's have a look," said Blake, getting up from the deckchair, and calmly pushing D'Arcy away, and taking his place at the telescope.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, don't jaw! Yes, it's an old abbey right enough, and there's a flagstaff, too, and, by Jove, I can see somebody on the tower with a telescope. He's looking at us."

"Bai Jove, weally?"

"One of the boys, I suppose," said Tom Merry—"that is, if they're back from the vac yet. They may be."

"Looks like a boy."

"Pway let me look," said Arthur Augustus. "I can tell you at once, Blake. Pway wetiah, and allow me to look through my telescope."

"Oh, rats! What's the good of your looking through a telescope when you make out an old Saxon abbey to be a Norman castle?"

"I bwrought up that telescope to—"

"Well, you brought it up, and I'm looking through it," said Blake. "That's an equal division of labour. What are you grumblin' at?"

"I'm not gwumblin', but I weally insist upon lookin' through my telescope."

"Oh, don't bother!" said Blake. "Yes, by Jove, it's a boy at a telescope, and now he's waving his hand. He can see me looking at him."

And Jack Blake waved his hand excitedly in response to the signal of the unknown boy on the abbey tower, and there was a yell from Arthur Augustus. Blake had unconsciously waved his hand in D'Arcy's face, and smitten the School House swell on the nose with it.

D'Arcy staggered back, fell over the deckchair, and rolled on the deck.

"Hallo, what's that?" exclaimed Blake, looking round.

"I knocked my hand against something."

"It was Gussy's chivvy, that's all!" grinned Tom Merry.

"By Jove! What a curious thing that Gussy is always putting his chivvy in the way of something!"

The swell of the School House sat up on the deck and rubbed his nose.

"You uttah ass!" he gasped. "You have caused me extreme pain in my nose, as well as throwin' me into a fluffah, you soweamin' idiot!"

"Well, you will keep on getting into the way. I've hurt my knuckles."

"I am not usually given to suspish, Blake, but I cannot help suspectin' that you did that on purpose. I shall wequiah an apology if our friendship is to wemain on its pwsent footin'."

"I can make out his face now," said Blake, who had his eye again to the end of the telescope. "He's got red hair."

"I am waitin' for my apology, Blake."

"Well, wait, then. Nobody's raised any objection to your waiting, that I know of."

"Undah the ciros—"

"He's got freckles."

"I insist—"

"I shall know the chap again if I see him. He's got red hair and freckles, and a lot of both," said Blake.

"You are not listening to me, Blake."

"Go hon!"

"I insist again—"

"He's shut up his telescope now," said Blake. "May as well shut up this. If Gussy would only shut up, too—"

"I wufuse to shut up! I absolutely wufuse to be tweated with disweward! Undah the ciros, I have no alternative but to punch your nose!"

"Punch Tom Merry's nose instead. I shan't mind."

Even this good nature on the part of Blake did not placate the incensed swell of St. Jim's. He carefully removed his gloves.

Blake watched him curiously.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Good! Then we may as well start now," said Blake cheerfully; and he hit out right and left.

D'Arcy jumped back, but the blows were not aimed at him, but at his hat—the last silk topper of the four he had brought to sea with him.

The hat went flying, and skimmed along the deck in the wind.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "You uttah beast! Where's my hat?"

"On the ball there!" roared Monty Lowther.

And kicks from all sides sent the hat forward in its wild career.

Arthur Augustus, forgetting all about the thrashing he had intended to inflict upon Blake, dashed after it. Reilly of the Fourth was rushing to stop it from going overboard, and that he did by making a long jump, and coming down with both feet on the hat.

"Faith, and I got it entiorely!" shouted Reilly.

The swell of the School House found his voice at last.

"You—you—you cwass idiot!"

"Faith, and I stopped it for you!" said Reilly.

D'Arcy gazed at Reilly, and then gazed at the wrecked hat. It was his last topper, and it was ruined. Human flesh and blood could not stand it. The swell of St. Jim's hurled himself at Reilly.

In another moment somebody would have been receiving a licking. But in that moment came a sudden and terrible interruption.

There was a terrific explosion below, a deafening roar that sounded like thunder through the length and breadth of the steamer, and in the shock that ran through the vessel everyone on deck was thrown off his feet.

CHAPTER 5.

Aground!

"WHAT the—" "Who the—" "How the—" "Bai Jove!"

"Crumbs!"

"My only aunt!"

These and various other ejaculations broke from the boys as the steamer trembled with the terrible concussion below.

Jack Blake sat up on deck, and Tom Merry sat up, too, and a grunt from underneath him apprised him that he was sitting on Monty Lowther. D'Arcy and Reilly had rolled to the side and bumped into Skimpole, who had fallen over them.

Captain Bolsover was grasping the rail of the bridge, his weather-beaten face the picture of amazement.

Mr. Railton ran to the bridge ladder.

"Captain Bolsover, what is it?"

The captain stared at him without replying for a moment. His hand was on the bridge telegraph.

"Is it the engines?"

"The engines, sir? Certainly not!"

"Then what is it?"

"I don't know."

"The ship's sinking!" said Mellish. "We're going down!"

And there was a general exclamation of alarm.

The Condor had given a very heavy lurch to starboard, and it was plain to everyone that there was a leak below, and a considerable one, through which the water was pouring in.

Captain Bolsover changed colour for a moment. What had happened he had not the faintest idea. But he knew that his ship was in danger, and he had signalled instantly to the engine-room.

The steam steering-gear acted instantly, and the engines continued to throb steadily as the steamer answered her helm.

Whatever was the cause of the explosion, it was nothing to do with the gear of the ship.

The Condor's head swung round towards the coast, and she tore through the water towards the headland which a few minutes before the juniors had been examining through the telescope, without any expectation of setting foot there.

Mr. Railton's voice rang out as a confused murmur of alarm rose on deck.

"Keep calm, my lads! We are in no danger!"

"I don't know about that," whispered Mellish. "The ship's sinking."

"Rats!" said Blake, though he was a little pale himself. "There are enough boats to take us all—at the worst."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Skimpole, you uttah ass, will you get off my legs?"

"Dear me, am I sitting on your legs, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, you are! Pway get off!"

"Certainly! I must have fallen on you."

"You shwiekin' ass, I think you must have!" growled D'Arcy, as he extricated himself, and dusted down his clothes. "What's become of my hat?"

"Pass the word for D'Arcy's hat," said Monty Lowther, who would have had his little joke if the sea had been closing in on the deck of the steamer. "D'Arcy particularly wants to be drowned in a silk topper."

"Oh, weally, Lowthah—"

"By Jove, the Condor's heeling over!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the steamer gave another lurch. "There's a hole in her somewhere! I can hear the water coming in!"

"Bai Jove, you know, something must have exploded somewhere!"

"Gussy has hit it," said Lowther gravely. "The cause of the explosion is that something has exploded somewhere."

"Oh, pway don't wot, Lowthah! We are all in dangah of a watery gwave, and I can't find my hat!"

The steamer was racing shoreward under full pressure. That there was a hole in the hull deep below the water-line was certain. The Condor was heeling over to one side, and for the time it seemed to be a question whether she would reach the low, sandy beach that was now becoming clear to the view.

The boys stood pale and spellbound. Most of them were intently watching the beach, growing nearer and nearer. Others looked at the captain standing like a statue on the bridge, iron-nerved, unshaken. Some of the smaller boys were whimpering a little, but most took their cue from Mr. Railton, who was perfectly calm.

Engineers and stewards were crowding on deck. Every man who was not wanted below came hurrying up, and Mr. Railton rapped out sharp orders to the prefects to see that all the boys were above decks.

A deadly pale face appeared above the stairs amidships, and Mr. Ratcliff came into view.

A wash of water into the room where he happened to be had apprised him of the danger, and he dashed up to the deck fully persuaded that the ship was going down like a plummet.

"The boats!" he gasped. "The boats! We are sinking!"

"Calm yourself, Mr. Ratcliff," said the School House master quietly.

Mr. Ratcliff looked at him wildly.

"We are sinking!"

"Calm yourself! The boys—"

"Where are the boats? Why are not the boats lowered?"

Without waiting for a reply, Mr. Ratcliff ran towards the bridge ladder. He called out in shaking tones to the captain:

"Captain Bolsover, lower the boats at once! The ship is sinking!"

Mr. Railton bit his lips. He did not like the senior master, but he liked still less to see his colleague so utterly unnerved before the boys, many of whom were beginning to exchange winks and grins.

"Mr. Ratcliff, we are in no immediate danger."

"But the ship is going down!" gasped the senior master.

"We shall be ashore in a few minutes."

Mr. Ratcliff gasped. Something of a flush crept into his cheeks as he caught a smile on Kildare's face, and intercepted a wink passing between Monty Lowther and Jack Blake.

He realised that he was showing less firmness than the boys of the Lower School mostly were, and he strove to master his uneasiness.

"I think that the boats should be lowered!" he muttered.

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"We shall be safe when the steamer is run upon the sand.

Captain Bolsover wishes to save his ship."

"But lives—"

"The lives are not in danger now."

It was true. The captain had signalled for steam to be shut off, and the firemen crowded up from below. There was a possibility of exploding boilers, but at the worst no lives would be lost.

There was a heavy grating under the keel of the steamer a few minutes later.

"We're aground!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

But the steamer was not aground yet. Borne along by the impetus of her rush, she tore through a sandbank, and rushed straight upon the steep sandy beach. She grated again—and again—and stopped, shivering, her bows buried deep in soft sand.

The escaping steam was hissing away. The fires were out. The steamer heeled over steeply, and the crowd on her decks clung to everything that could afford a hold.

Many of the boys rolled down the sloping decks, and bumped on to the rail and one another.

In the sandy stretch at the foot of the great headland, the Condor lay with her hull imbedded, fast aground.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, who was clinging to Blake's ankle, while Blake clung to a stanchion—"bai Jove, this has thwown me into quite a fluttah!"

"Leggo!"

"I am afwaid I can't let go, Blake, or I shall slip away and bump on the wail."

"You're pulling my beastly leg off!" grunted Blake.

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"If you don't let go I shall bump you in the eye with the other foot!"

"It is absolutely impos for me to let go!" gasped D'Arcy, who was sprawling on the sloping deck, with only his hold on Blake to keep him from slipping off and rolling into the water beside the tilted steamer.

"Well, hold on, then," grunted Blake. "I can't hold on long—"

"Pway don't let go, deah boy!"

"I can't help it!"

"Make an effort. You uttah ass, I— Oh!"

Blake's fingers slipped from their hold, and he slid down, and D'Arcy slid, too. The swell of St. Jim's bumped down upon Manners, who was trying to right himself by holding on to the sloping rail, and they rolled over together. In a moment more Blake bumped upon them both.

"Ow!" gasped Manners.

One by one the boats on the starboard side were filled with boys and lowered into the water. It was impossible to use the port boats owing to the angle at which the ship lay, and it was only with difficulty that the starboard boats got away.

Soon all the St. Jim's boys and masters had been landed on the wet sand, most of them wet about the feet as they had to wade the last yard or two.

"Bai Jove, this is wathah wotten!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

"This is a very unfortunate circumstance," said Skimpole, adjusting his spectacles and staring at the grounded steamer. "I have not been able to make my experiment."

"Your what?" demanded Tom Merry.

"My experiment. I had discovered a keg of curious-looking powder, and had taken it into the lower hold to analyse it—"

"Powder!" said Tom Merry suspiciously. "What sort of powder?"

"A blackish, coarse-grained powder."

"In a keg?"

"Yes; in a keg!"

"Did you leave a light near it?"

"Yes; I remember now that I left a lighted candle near it in the lower hold. Why do you ask?"

"You unutterable idiot!" said Tom Merry, in measured tones. "You ought to have a stone tied round your neck, and then be dropped into the deepest part of the North Sea!"

"Really, Merry, that is almost rude. Why—"

"No need to look much farther for the cause of the explosion!" growled Tom Merry. "It must have been gunpowder that Skimpole was fooling about with, and the lighted candle—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, no; nothing of the sort!" said Skimpole. "You see, I left the candle standing on the chest, and it wasn't within several inches of the powder, even if it was gunpowder—"

"The ship was rolling a little, and, of course, that upset the candle."

"Nonsense! Besides, it wasn't gunpowder!"

"How do you know it wasn't?"

"Really, I feel quite sure of it!"

"You shrieking ass! You've blown a hole in the steamer, and stopped our cruise for us. Hush!" added Tom Merry hastily. "Here comes Mr. Railton!"

"Don't give the howling lunatic away!"

"But really you are quite mistaken, Merry!"

"Shut up, ass!"

And Skimpole, seeing Mr. Railton close at hand, thought he had better do so. He was quite sure that he hadn't caused the explosion in the steamer, but he realised that Mr. Railton might take Tom Merry's view of the case.

"My lads," said the School House master, "our cruise is ended, but we have lost little, as it is almost time for us to return to St. Jim's. It is quite safe now to go aboard the steamer, as she will not shift her position till the next tide, and so you may get out as much of your personal property as possible."

"Yes, sir!"

And in the red glow of the sunset, working parties were formed to remove what they could from the Condor.

CHAPTER 6.

Salving D'Arcy's Props!

"TOM MEWWY!"

"Hallo!"

"Pway come and help me with this trunk!"

The juniors were working under difficulties. The steamer was on her side on the sand, her decks tilted at a

considerable angle, and, of course, the cabins and passages below had the same slant, and were exceedingly difficult to negotiate. Falls and slips were happening every moment, and most of the boys had given up the idea of getting out anything bulky, and were carrying out their property in armfuls. That, however, did not satisfy Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was dragging at a huge leather trunk which was jammed under his berth, and dragging in vain.

Blake, Herries, and Digby had cabin trunks of the regulation size, and they had rescued them. D'Arcy was in difficulties.

Tom Merry looked into the cabin, with a grin.

"You won't get that out, Gussy."

D'Arcy panted, and desisted from his exertions for a moment.

"Pway assist me, deah boy, instead of standin' there talkin' wot," he said. "I am wresolved to save this valuable twunk."

"Why not open it and take the things out?"

"I should vewy likely get the things wet. And I suppose

Figgins stopped himself by catching the doorpost, and looked in.

"What are you trying to do, Merry?"

"Trying to lug this trunk out."

"It's a wathah valuable twunk—"

"Bosh!" said Figgins. "Better get the things out of it, and leave the trunks for the salvage chaps to salve."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I am wresolved to save that twunk. Pway make anothah effort, Tom Mewwy."

"Well, make an effort yourself."

"I am feelin' wathah exhausted, and—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack Blake, sliding down the passage and bumping on Figgins. "Fancy meeting you! What's all this jaw about?"

"Get off my neck, you ass!"

"Certainly! What's the trouble here? Don't you know that the word's been passed for the kids to get ashore? The tide will be turning soon."

"Blow the tide! I'm twyin' to save my twunk."

"Blow your trunk! You're as particular about your



The sticky stream descended and dropped on Fatty Wynn's head. It began to flow over his red, perspiring face. Barker held the tin with a steady hand, "How do you like it?" he asked. "M-m-m-m!" stuttered Fatty Wynn. "Gr-r-r-r—mm-m-m-m-m!"

you don't want me to land in an unknown place without a single clean collah to put on?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally wish you would lend a hand instead of standing there cackling, Tom Mewwy."

"Oh, all right!" said the hero of the Shell good-naturedly; and he came into the cabin, sliding along the slanting floor. "By Jove, it's heavy!"

"Yaas, it is wathah heavy."

"Better get some more help. Where's Blake?"

"I have wequested Blake's assistance, and he told me vewy wudely to go and eat coke."

"I wish I'd told you the same!" gasped Tom Merry, tugging at the trunk till he was red in the face. "I can't move this. It's jammed, somehow."

"You have only to pull it up the slope and turn it wround towards the door, and then I can dwag it thwrough."

"Only!" said Tom Merry. "It would take a couple of horses to pull that trunk up a slant like this!"

"Oh, pway make an effort!"

"Figgins! Hallo, Figgins!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he saw the long-legged chief of the New House juniors sliding past the door. "Lend a hand here, will you?"

trunk as if you were a giddy elephant!" said Jack Blake severely. "I told you it can't be got out."

"Yaas, but—"

"If you yanked it out into the passage it would slide along like a cannon-ball, and bump into pieces."

"Yaas, but—"

"It was hard enough to get the thing into the cabin, as you remember, and it's simply impossible to get it out."

"I wefuse to wegard it as impos. It is a valuable twunk."

"Well, it won't be lost. The steamer will be salved, and your rotten trunk will be salved with the rest of the property on board."

"But I wequiah it on shore. We are a long way from St. Jim's, and I don't know where we shall pass the next few days. I uttahly wefuse to appeah among stwangahs without even a clean collah or a clean waistcoat to put on."

"Now, look here, Gussy, and listen to reason—"

"I uttahly wefuse to listen to weason. Pway make anothah effort, Tom Mewwy, and dwag out my twunk."

"Oh rats!" said Tom Merry. "I tell you it can't be done!"

"Pway lend me a hand, Blake."

"I'll lend you a hand and a foot, too, if you don't stop playing the giddy goat!" replied Blake, sliding into the cabin and clambering towards the swell of St. Jim's.

"Here, Dig, Herries, Reilly, come here!"

The School House juniors obeyed the voice of their leader. They scrambled into the cabin, with about as much room to spare as if they had been sardines in a tin.

Blake jammed the trunk open.

"We're going to salve D'Arcy's props," he exclaimed. "All these things have got to be carried up."

"Blake, you wottah—"

"Here's some fancy waistcoats for you to carry, Reilly. Take care of them and drop them in a soft place, and come back for some more."

"Faith, and I will entoirely!" grinned the boy from Belfast; and he scrambled out of the slanting cabin with half a dozen gorgeous waistcoats under his arm.

Arthur Augustus gave a whoop of wrath.

"Weilly, you wottah, bwing those waistcoats back! The feahful beast is owumplin' them feahfully! Blake, I no longah wegard you as a fwient!"

"Go hon! Dig, take these neckties."

"Certainly!"

"Blake, leave my twunk alone! I will get it out without your beastly assistance. Tom Mewwy, get out of the way!"

And Arthur Augustus scrambled towards Jack Blake, who was dragging out the further contents of the trunk. He slipped on the sloping floor, and rolled with a bump under the berth, and a gasp was heard.

"My word!" said Digby. "D'Arcy has some curious tastes. But fancy rolling into a place like that from choice! What are you under there for, Gussy?"



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"You wottah! I—"

"Take those things up, Dig. You take this collar-box, Herries, and the white shirt. Figgins, old man, catch hold of this giddy overcoat."

"Right you are!"

Blake gave the trunk a heave and turned it on its side, and the remainder of its contents poured out. Tom Merry and Figgins were loaded, and they left the cabin, laughing. D'Arcy scrambled up.

"Blake, I insist upon your leavin' off immediately!"

"I'm nearly finished," said Blake cheerfully. "I'm doing this as a favour to you, Gussy."

"I wefuse to wegard it as a favah, you uttah beast! Weilly, you wottah, what have you done with my waistcoats?"

"Faith, and I've dropped them in a safe place, D'Arcy darling."

"Where have you dwopped them, you uttah wottah?"

"In one of the boats. They're a bit wet."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "I hope they're fast colours, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He scrambled out of the cabin and dashed off to the rescue of his beloved waistcoats.

Blake finished emptying the trunk, and several juniors carried the remains of D'Arcy's extensive wardrobe to the slanting deck of the steamer, and slid down to the port rail with their baggage.

Gussy was busy sorting out his clothes in the boat.

"Here's the rest of your things, Gussy," said Blake, throwing a shower of socks and neckties and handkerchiefs at the swell of the School House.

They descended round him like a flock of birds in the boat.

"Blake, you beast!"

"Faith, and here's your pyjamas," said Reilly, throwing two pairs of the same, of extremely gorgeous pattern, so that they twined round D'Arcy's neck and hung there. "Sure, I've saved them for you entoirely."

"You howwid wottah—"

"And here's your collars," said Figgins.

"And your shirts."

"And your handkerchiefs."

"You feahful wottahs!" gasped D'Arcy. "I shall give you all a feahful thwashin' when I get time! I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were shouting with laughter at the absurd spectacle D'Arcy presented, standing in the midst of his property, trying to rescue the articles as they were showered upon him. Finally they rowed the boat to the shore, where Gussy set about the job of carrying his property up on to the beach.

For some minutes they did not observe a new arrival upon the scene—a youth with red hair and a freckled face, who stood with his hands in his trousers pockets, looking on, laughing as loud as any.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake turned, and looked at the laughing stranger.

"My only hat!"

The stranger looked at him.

"Hallo!" he said coolly.

"You're the chap!"

"Eh?"

"It's the red-headed freckled specimen I saw at the telescope on the tower," said Blake. "And it's alive!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said the red-headed youth. "If you've come ashore especially to look for a thick ear, young shaver—"

"Who are you calling a young shaver?"

The red-headed youth made a lofty gesture.

"You should use the accusative case there," he said severely. "Your education has been neglected, young shaver."

"Eh—what?"

"You should say: whom are you calling a young shaver?"

Jack Blake's eyes gleamed.

"Have you come here to teach lessons, or to learn one?" he inquired.

"My dear young shaver," said the red-headed youth, with irritating coolness, "it's a pleasure for me to give instructions to young shavers."

"If you call me a young shaver again, I'll bump you in the sand!" roared Blake, getting exasperated.

"Young shaver!" said the red-headed boy promptly.

And Blake was as good as his word. He seized the stranger on the spot, and the next moment they were rolling in the sand. But it could not be denied that Blake was getting as much of the bumping as his adversary.

CHAPTER 7.
The Last Feed!

“THERE you are!”
“And there you are!”
“Ow!”
“Oh!”

“You confounded cheeky young rotter—”
“You cheeky young shaver—”
“Go it!” said Tom Merry encouragingly. “I say, Blake, you said you were going to bump him in the sand!”
“Well, ain’t I doing it?” howled Blake.
“I suppose so, if you say so; but it looks as if he were bumping you instead. Never mind. Go it!”
“Yaas, wathah! Undah the circo, I should not be displeased to see Blake weceive a feahful thwashin’,” said Arthur Augustus. “Go it, you wed-headed wottah!”
“I’ll give you a jolly good licking!” said Blake.
“I’d like to see you do it, young shaver!”

The red-headed boy could not have been more than three months older than Blake, and so his assumption of elderliness was distinctly exasperating.

The juniors stood round in a circle encouraging the combatants. “Fair play” was the motto of the boys of St. Jim’s, and no one even thought of interfering.

But the eye of Mr. Ratcliff was on them from afar, and the senior Housemaster came towards the scene with rapid steps.

“Blake!”
The thin, acid voice of Mr. Ratcliff seemed to cut like a knife.

Blake let go his hold as if his adversary had suddenly become red-hot. The red-headed youth, not perceiving the cause for a moment, took advantage of the relaxation of Blake’s efforts to roll him over and bump his head in the sand.

“Here, hold on!” exclaimed Tom Merry. “Fair play!”
“Eh? Oh—I didn’t know—”

The red-headed youth sprang to his feet, looking very confused.

Mr. Ratcliff fixed a stony glance upon him.
“Who are you, boy?” he rapped out.
“If you please, sir, I’m Tompkinson Tertius.”
“Ah! I suppose you belong to Headland School?”
“Yes, sir,” said Tompkinson III meekly.

“Blake, get up immediately!”
Blake rose to his feet somewhat dazedly, and rubbed the sand from his face and hair.

“I say, I’m sorry,” murmured Tompkinson III. “I didn’t know when I bumped you that—”

Blake grinned.
“That’s all right.”
“Blake!” rapped out Mr. Ratcliff.
“Yes, sir?”

“I’m not surprised at this. It is a piece of your usual conduct, the moment you get ashore, to pick a quarrel with an inoffensive lad, who doubtless came down to render assistance.”

Blake turned red. He was at a loss for words for a moment.

But the youth from the school on the headland spoke immediately.

“It’s all right, sir; it was only fun.”
“Silence!”
“Besides,” said Tompkinson undaunted, “I began it.”

“Silence!” said Mr. Ratcliff. “Another word, and I shall report you to your headmaster. Blake, I shall remember this. You may consider yourself released from all the restraints of a school under these peculiar circumstances, but I warn you that you are mistaken.”

And Mr. Ratcliff stalked away.

“Nice sort of beast to have around, isn’t he?” said Blake.

“If that animal were my Housemaster, Figgins, I’d—I’d—”

“You’d put up with him the same as we do,” said Figgins cheerfully. “I say, young Ginger, it was very decent of you to speak up as you did.”

“Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as distinctly wippin’ of young Gingah.”

“Thank you,” said Tompkinson III cheerfully. “But perhaps I ought to warn you that I always tap fellows on the nose when they call me ‘Ginger.’ It may save trouble. I hear you chaps are coming up to the school.”

“First I’ve heard of it,” said Tom Merry. “But I suppose we’re going somewhere. It’s getting dark.”

“I don’t see why we couldn’t camp out in that Norman castle on the headland,” Arthur Augustus remarked.

“What Norman castle?” asked Tompkinson.

“The one on the headland, where you were standing on the towah.”
“You ass! That’s Headland Abbey School!”

“Wats! It may be a school, but it’s an old Norman castle, too.”

“It’s an old Saxon abbey.”

“Wats!”

“Well, of all the asses,” said Tompkinson, “not to know the difference between Saxon and Norman architecture! Why—”

“I am descended from a Norman wace—”

“Well, you’re coming to the abbey,” said the Headland junior. “Lathom came up to speak to the Head about it. He used to be a master of ours, but we made things too lively for him in the Fourth Form, I can tell you. We were jolly well surprised to see his old chivvy again. He brought a message asking the Head to put you chaps up at the school to-night. There’s no workhouse handy, and—”

“Bai Jove, you young wottah—”

“And no other place, either; so the Head couldn’t very well refuse,” said Tompkinson. “If he had seen what a scratch lot you are, though—”

“Oh, draw it, mild, Ginger!”

“I don’t know where they’ll pack you, either,” grinned Tompkinson III. “We’re only just back for the new term, and there are new boys, and the place is pretty well full up. I suppose we shall manage somehow. Joking aside, we shall be glad to have you, and I thought I’d run down to tell you so.”

“Good!” said Tom Merry heartily. “I hope we shall see you at St. Jim’s some day, but—”

“Yaas, wathah! I should be extremely pleased to return the hospitality of our young friend.”

“Who are you calling your young friend, young shaver?”

“Ha, ha, ha!” cackled Blake. “You should say ‘whom’—”

“If you allude to me as a young shavah, Tompkinson Tertius, I shall be obliged to break up the harmony of the present meetin’ by administering you a feahful thwashin’ for your cheek.”

“Come along, kids!” said Kildare, coming up. “We are going up to the school on the headland for the night, and to-morrow Mr. Ratcliff will decide what’s to be done. You will have to carry your things yourselves. The tide will be up soon, and we’ve got to get off the sands.”

“Bai Jove, I don’t know how I’m to cawwy all these things!” said D’Arcy, looking in some dismay at his numerous properties.

“Leave them there, then.”

“I am afraid that is quite imposs, Tom Mewwy.”

“I’ll carry some for you, if you like,” said Tompkinson Tertius good-naturedly. “My hat! What a lot of props! How many waistcoats do you wear at a time, young shaver?”

Arthur Augustus did not deign to reply to this question.

The boys of St. Jim’s, each carrying his own outfit, or as much as he could of it, formed up to march up the path over the headland. The tide was on the turn, and waves were creeping up the sands.

Mr. Railton called over the names in the growing dusk to make sure that all were there, and one junior failed to answer to his name.

“Wynn!”
No reply.

“Wynn!”
Fatty Wynn was missing from the ranks of the Fourth.

Figgins and Kerr looked about them anxiously.

“Is not Wynn there?” called out Mr. Railton.

“No, sir.”

The School House master finished the roll-call, but no one else was missing.

Tom Merry exchanged a whisper with Monty Lowther.

“The young ass must have stayed on the steamer for something, Monty.”

Lowther nodded.

“Yes; and it’s dangerous there now. She’ll turn over when the tide comes in.”

“Let’s go and look for him.”

“But Ratty—”

“They won’t notice in the dark.”

“Right you are!”

The chums of the Shell slipped away, keeping in the shadow of a mass of property taken off the grounded steamer, and in a minute more were rowing towards the steamer, where they quickly got aboard.

“You know where to look for him,” murmured Tom Merry, with a grin.

“The tuckshop,” grinned Lowther.

“Yes, rather!”

Amidships of the steamer was the buffet kept by Mrs. Price, the steward’s wife. It was the favourite resort of Fatty Wynn, and if he had lingered on board the steamer, there was little doubt that this was the spot he had lingered in.

The door was hanging open, and the chums of the Shell

scrambled into the dusky room. In the dusk a dim figure could be seen.

It was that of Fatty Wynn.

He had a tart in each hand, and a bottle of ginger-beer between his knees, and was hard at work.

And to judge by the shininess of his face, and the smears of jam on his mouth, he had been similarly occupied for some time.

"Fatty!"

The fat junior started.

"Hallo, Merry! You startled me!"

"You ass! You've been missed at roll-call!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Come along, or you'll have Ratty on your track!"

"All right; wait a second! The tide will fill the steamer, you know, and all this grub will be spoiled. It makes my heart ache to think of it. I've stuffed all my pockets full, and—"

"And yourself, too?" chuckled Lowther.

"Well, I've eaten a little. You never know what will happen, and it is as well to be prepared. Take some of these tarts—"

The steamer gave a roll, and there was a wash of water on the main deck. A roller from the North Sea had washed right over the hull. The tide was coming in with a vengeance now.

"Look out!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Come on! No time for tarts now! We may get out off by the sea!"

"Take some of the ginger-beer, then!"

"Come on, you young ass!"

"Well, just a cake!"

Tom Merry and Lowther seized the fat junior by the arms, and dragged him away. As they emerged on to the sloping upper deck there was a rush of water from seaward, and it smote them and hurled them blindly forward.

Fortunately they retained their mutual hold. Tom Merry found himself grasping a rail, and he clung to it desperately. The water receded, and there was a gasp of woe from Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"Are you hurt?" cried Tom Merry anxiously.

"Hurt? No. All the grub I've got in the pockets will be soaked."

"Come on, you shrieking ass! You'll be drowned if you hang about here!" cried Lowther.

And the chums of the Shell dragged the fat junior across the deck, and bumped him against the rail there.

"Hold on!" gasped Fatty. "Hold on! I'm out of breath! I've—I've just dropped a bottle of ginger-beer. I—"

"Collar him!" gasped Tom Merry.

The sea was breaking over the steamer in earnest now. The three juniors went bundling over into the boat, and the wave followed them, and nearly capsized them. They managed, however to get the boat under way, and in a few minutes it was grounding on the shore.

Tom Merry staggered to his feet.

"Run for it, Monty!"

"Right-ho!" panted Lowther.

They dashed forward up the sloping sand, dragging Fatty Wynn between them. After them, a moment later, came a rushing billow; but they just escaped it. They ran on beyond high-water mark, and stopped, panting.

"Merry! Lowther! Where have you been?"

It was Mr. Railton who asked the question, with a startled face.

"It's all right, sir!"

"Was Wynn on the steamer?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Fatty. "I didn't know the tide was coming in, sir, and I was saving some valuable things."

"You must have gone on board again without permission, Wynn."

"There were some valuable things, sir."

"You foolish boy; you have had a narrow escape! Fall in there! You will change your clothes at Headland School."

"You young ass!" muttered Figgins, pinching Fatty Wynn's ear as he joined them. "I hadn't any idea you were on the steamer, or I'd have fished you out. I've a good mind to give you a jolly good licking! What are you looking so down in the mouth about—cold?"

"Yes. It is r-r-rather c-c-cold and wet," said Fatty Wynn lugubriously. "But that isn't it. I—I—I—"

"What is it, then?"

"I've got a lot of grub crammed into my pockets, you know, and now—n-n-n—"

"Well, what now?"

"It's soaked with sea water, and spoiled."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"Silence there!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "March!"

And the boys of St. Jim's took their way in the September dusk up the steep path to Headland School.

CHAPTER 8.

The Chums of Headland School!

TOMPKINSON TERTIUS had joined Tom Merry, and was mounting the steep path with him, and chatting by the way to the chums of the Shell.

The Headland junior was very communicative.

He was very proud of his school, and rather inclined to patronise the boys of St. Jim's, but, of course, that was only to be expected.

"We're right up to date at Headland," he remarked.

"I'll show you over the new buildings if you stay long enough there. Ripping new place—all of red brick, latest thing in sanitation. Not a yard of wallpaper in the whole place, and everything as square as you like."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Don't you use the Norman castle for anythin', deah boy?"

"Norman castle be hanged! If you mean the old abbey, that rotten old fossil is only used for show," said Tompkinson Tertius. "The buildings we live in are of the newest design and modern construction. Ever since Headland was turned into a commercial college it's been right up to date."

"Oh, you're a commercial college, are you?" said Lowther.

"That's it. None of your rotten old Grammar schools!"

"Do you learn anything?" inquired Arthur Augustus innocently.

Tompkinson Tertius looked round to bestow a withering glance on the swell of St. Jim's.

"Are you looking for a thick ear?" he asked.

"Certainly not, deah boy! I'm asking for information."

"I'll lay a half-crown to a threepenny-bit," said Tompkinson Tertius, "that we can get ahead of you in French and German and mathematics, anyway. You can keep your old Greek!"

"Weally, Thompson—"

"Tompkinson, please!"

Potts, the Office Boy!



"Yes, my mistake. Weally, Tompkinson, please, I wegard you—"

"You're a funny merchant, aren't you?" said Tompkinson. "I think I shall have to give you a lesson at Headland if you're put into my dormitory."

"Weally, Gingah!"

"Cheese it!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Pax now, Gussy! I say, young Tertius, are there any more at home like you?"

"Two more," said Tompkinson. "My eldest brother, Tompkinson Primus, is the captain of Headland. The next, Tompkinson Secundus, is in the Fifth. I'm Tompkinson Tertius, and I'm in the Fourth."

"Monarch of all you survey, I suppose?" suggested Monty Lowther.

"Yes, except for Barker."

"Who's Barker?"

"The captain of the Form and the best boxer at Headland. I should advise this funny merchant not to be funny with him, or he'll get wiped off the earth! I'm good-tempered; Barker isn't."

"Weally, I'm not at all afraid of Barkah!"

"Wait till you see him."

"I twust that Barkah will possess sufficient good bweedn' to be polite to the swangah within his gates," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

Tompkinson chuckled.

"You see, you can't always trust Barker's good breeding," he remarked. "If you're shoved into our dormitory, better give him a wide berth, that's all."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus.

Tompkinson chuckled again. He evidently foresaw a high old time for the swell of St. Jim's if he came in contact with the terror of the Fourth Form at Headland.

The top of the path was reached, and the buildings of Headland School stood out to view in the growing dusk against a background of setting sun.

The old abbey was a picturesque ruin, and it contrasted strangely with the edifice erected near it.

Headland School was all that Tompkinson III had described it. The buildings were red brick, naked, and rectangular, and though eminently modern and useful, their aspect might have made an artist weep.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry.

He gazed at the rectangular buildings, a glaring and unpicturesque mass in the setting sun, and thought of St. Jim's, with its grey old buildings mellowed by centuries.

Tompkinson Tertius turned to him with a face glowing with pride.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked.

"Oh, ripping!" said Tom Merry.

"So picturesque!" said Monty Lowther.

"So haunted by the poetry of the past!" remarked Manners.

Tompkinson looked at the chums of the Shell suspiciously.

"I believe you chaps are rotting!" he remarked. "I don't care. This place beats any Public school I've ever seen! No filthy ivy clinging about it."

"Yes, I've noticed that."

"No trees growing close to the windows."

"Bai Jove, no!"

"No damp old grass plots in the quadrangle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at! I suppose St. Jim's, where you come from, isn't up to this?"

"Nothing like it," said Tom Merry blandly.

"More like that, I dare say?" suggested Tompkinson, jerking his head towards the ruined abbey on the headland.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Yes, more like that."

"Well, I dare say you'll get renovated and brought up to date some time," said Tompkinson comfortably.

"Hallo! The bell's ringing for tea!"

The boys of St. Jim's marched in at the great Portland stone gateway, with its bronze gates that had as offensive an air of newness as anything else about the place.

There were, as Tompkinson had said, no grass plots in the quadrangle. It was laid out with asphalt. The great square windows of the building were unrelieved by any flowers or creepers. A crowd of boys were waiting to see the strangers march in, and Tom Merry noted two of them who had brilliant red hair and freckles, and otherwise bore a strange resemblance to his new acquaintance. He had no doubt that they were Tompkinson Primus and Tompkinson Secundus.

"Tea's late," remarked Tompkinson III. "That's on account of you fellows, I suppose. All the better. I haven't missed mine, you see."

"Don't you have tea in your studies here?" asked Manners. "We do at St. Jim's."

Tompkinson III sniffed.

"We don't have studies here," he replied.

"Oh!"

"We prepare our lessons in the class-rooms, and we generally have a master with us. We always have tea in the hall. I say, wouldn't you fellows like to camp out here, eh, and not go back to your fossilised old quarters?"

"Immensely—I don't think!" said Monty Lowther.

"Come into the hall, and I'll find you places," said Tompkinson. "There seems to be about a hundred of you, and there's bound to be a bit of a scramble for seats. You chaps with the wet togs come up to the dorm with me and change first, though. You'll catch cold if you hang about like that!"

Tom Merry, Lowther, and Fatty Wynn were glad enough to change into dry garments. The changing did not take them many minutes, and then they followed the obliging Tompkinson III downstairs again, and joined the crowd of St. Jim's juniors who were going into the hall, into which most of the Headlanders were crowding.

The hall was long and unadorned, with high, plain windows, with long tables with forms ranged along the sides.

Tompkinson hurried to a table at which a number of youths of about his own age were seating themselves.

"Here you are!" he exclaimed. "This is our table. Take your seats before you get shifted."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There seemed to be no masters present. The Head was in the outer hall, speaking to Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Railton. The boys of St. Jim's were hungry, and Tom Merry & Co. were quite ready for tea. They swarmed into the seats at the table, and as huge plates of bread-and-butter and cake were there already, they lost no time in starting.

The Commercial juniors showed a considerable curiosity towards the visitors, and their curiosity was not restrained by any sort of formalities. They asked questions on every point that interested them, and it was easy to see that they agreed with Tompkinson Tertius in thinking that Headland Commercial College was the finest institution on the face

A BALD STATEMENT!



of the earth, and that they were the finest set of fellows that had ever been sheltered within its walls.

"We're alive here, you know!" Tompkinson remarked. "Ain't we, Punter?"

"We are, my pippins!" said Punter. "Where did you pick up this thing?"

The thing alluded to was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was just then screwing his monocle into his eye to take a survey of the room.

"Found it on the shore," said Tompkinson. "Lots of funny things are washed up on the beach, you know. I found that there."

Arthur Augustus turned the glimmer of his eyeglass upon Tompkinson Tertius.

"Are you alludin' to me, Thompson?" he asked.

"Tompkinson, ass!"

"Well, Tompkinson, ass! Are you alludin' to me?"

"Now then, Gussy, don't row!"

"Pway do not intahfeah, Blake! I have been alluded to in terms of gwoss diswespect."

"Where did he get his accent?" asked Punter.

"Dug it up somewhere, I expect."

And the Commercial youths roared.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass from one to another as if uncertain which to go for, and while he was hesitating Digby dragged him down into a seat.

"Have some cake, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah, Dig! I will have some cake. But I wegard these wottahs as a set of feahful boundahs."

"They are, and no mistake," agreed Digby.

"Hallo! What's that?" said Punter. "Who are you calling bounders?"

"I wegard you all as a feahful set of wank outsidahs!" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I wegard your coll as a wotten place, fit only for a bawwacks, or a convict pwison, and I wegard you fellows as wude wottahs!"

There was a howl from the Commercials.

"Bonnet him!"

"Jam him!"

"I wefuse to be jammed! If you appwoach me with that jam-jar, you wude wuffian, I shall pwobably lose my tempah and stwike you!"

"Hallo! Who's this in my place?" exclaimed a burly, thick-set fellow, coming suddenly up behind D'Arcy and seizing him by the shoulders. "Get up!"

D'Arcy twisted his head round.

"Pway welease me!" he said. "I am not accustomd to bein' handled in such an extweme wuff mannah!"

"Let him alone, Barker!" said Tompkinson Tertius. "Let him have his tea, can't you?"

Barker scowled at the red-headed junior.

"Mind your own business, Ginger!"

"Look here—"

"I'm going to have some tea, I suppose? And there's no room at the table. I'll turn this tailor's dummy out if I like."

"I wefuse to be alluded to as a tailah's dummay."

"Ha, ha, ha! Out you come!"

Arthur Augustus caught the edge of the table, and held on as the bully of Headland dragged at his shoulders.

"I wefuse to move! It is now a question of dig with me, and I uttably wefuse to give way! Welease me immediately, you wottah, or I shall give you a feahful thwashin'! You are wumplin' my beastlay collah!"

"Out you come!"

"I wefuse!"

Barker gave a tremendous wrench, and as Arthur Augustus clung to the table with all his strength, something was bound to happen.

Something did. The table tilted over sideways, and Arthur Augustus fell backwards over the form, followed by a shower of plates and bread-and-butter and cake.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

But it was not D'Arcy who suffered most. Barker had not expected the catastrophe, and he was not prepared for it. He went down in a heap, with D'Arcy on top of him, and he gave a breathless grunt as the weight of the swell of St. Jim's plumped upon him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tompkinson III. "You've got it now, Barker!"

"Gerroff my chest!"

"Wats!" said D'Arcy. He was a little startled and breathless himself, but finding that he was seated upon the terrible Barker, he showed no disposition to move in a hurry. "Wats, deah boy!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

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

"You—you—you— Will you let me get up?" howled Barker furiously.

"Wathah not! You were the cause of this disastah, which has thwown me into quite a fluttah. I am in no huwwy

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to move. Besides, it appeahs to me that you will be violent as soon as you get up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" giggled Punter. "I think so, too!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"Pway wemain where you are!" said D'Arcy calmly.

"If you stwuggle, I shall shove this pat of buttah in your face. There, I told you I would!"

"Grooch. Geroooch! Oooooch!"

"Your own fault, deah boy! Pway be quiet, and let us have a west!"

Barker, blind with rage—as much at the laughter of the whole table as at the discomfort of his position—made a tremendous effort. Arthur Augustus reeled, and Barker



The Commers bundled downstairs. There were a good many junior quartet were seen by all. There was a shout of amazement. "It's how did you

threw him off and jumped up. He gripped the swell of St. Jim's by the collar.

"Now I'll give you a jolly good licking!"

"No, you won't!"

It was Tom Merry's quiet voice that broke in. And Tom Merry's strong hand gripped the bully of Headland by the shoulder and swung him away.

CHAPTER 9.

The Rival Juniors!

BARKER glared at Tom Merry for a moment, his fists clenched, his eyes gleaming, his burly frame quivering with passion.

"Let me go, confound you!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

In a moment more Barker would have sprung upon the hero of the Shell, but just then a stern voice broke in.

"What is the matter here?"

"My word," muttered Tompkinson III., "it's the Head!"

Dr. Bosanquet, the Head of the Commercial College, looked severely at the red-faced, excited juniors.

"I am sorry to see you quarrelling!" he exclaimed. "I hoped my boys would extend a cordial welcome to the newcomers, and that the latter would try to keep the peace. I expect as much of both of you."

And Dr. Bosanquet turned away, without making any inquiries as to the origin of the little disturbance.

Barker glared at Tom Merry.



In the passage below, and in the brilliant electric light the unhappy Barker & Co. yelled Tompkinson III. "My only pyjama hat, Barky, like that?"

"I'll see you again about this later," he muttered.

Tom Merry laughed carelessly.

"Whenever you like," he said.

The matter could be carried no farther, then, as the masters had come in. The Hall was crowded for tea. The boys squeezed up to make room for the newcomers, and forms and chairs were brought in from all quarters. But there was not room for all, and the St. Jim's senior boys had their tea separately in a class-room.

It became evident, by many indications, that the boys belonging to the ancient seat of classical learning, known as St. Jim's, were not likely to pull well with the young Commercial collegians.

As Blake put it, their manners and customs were quite different, and it was useless to expect a couple of hundred fellows to get together without having a row. If anyone

had expected it on the present occasion, he would certainly have been disappointed.

There was nothing like ill-feeling displayed, except in the case of Barker, but, all the same, a good many "rows" were simmering.

"Classics" and "Commerce" naturally had different ways and different ideals, and there was bound to be disagreement in some quarters. Besides, the sudden raid of a hundred hungry boys had rather thrown the commissariat into confusion at Headland, and there were a good many fellows who did not get enough.

Tom Merry & Co. looked out for themselves pretty well, assisted by the good-natured scion of the house of Tompkinson.

Fatty Wynn, in particular, was on the warpath. His feed just before leaving the wrecked steamer ought to have kept him going for a time, but he explained to Figgins that the ducking had made him hungry.

In the effort to meet the sudden demands for supplies, the housekeeper had sent up all sorts and conditions of things to the tea-table, and a large steak pie came near Fatty Wynn. Fatty had his eye on that pie from the moment it appeared on the table, marking it out as his own peculiar property.

"I say, Merry, shove that pie over this way!" he murmured anxiously.

Tom Merry laughed, and gave the pie a shove which sent it sliding towards the fat junior, and just saved it from the clutch of Barker, who was reaching out for it.

"Thanks awfully!" said Fatty Wynn.

Barker glared at him across the table.

"Shove that pie over here, you fat cad!"

Fatty did not reply; he was helping himself liberally. He might have been laying provisions in for a siege, to judge by the quantity he ladled upon his plate. The crust was a beautifully crisp one, and Fatty allowed himself a large helping of it. About half the pie was transferred to Fatty Wynn's plate, Barker watching him across the table all the time with a wolfish eye.

"Shove that pie across here, you fat toad!" he muttered, not venturing to raise his voice, as there was now a master at the head of the table.

"Eh?" said Fatty Wynn. "Did you speak to me?"

"Shove that pie over!"

"Would you like some pie, Figgys?"

"Not half!" said Figgins, helping himself to half of what remained.

"Shove that pie over here!" snarled Barker.

A steak pie was a very uncommon treat on a junior table at Headland, and Barker did not see why he should be left out of it.

Fatty Wynn did not appear to hear.

"I say, Kerr, this is a jolly good pie! Will you have some?"

"Well, rather!" said Kerr.

"I say, I'm on in this scene!" said Pratt. "Fork over!"

"There you are," said Kerr, after helping himself.

"How much do you call that?" exclaimed Pratt, with wrath.

"My dear chap, if you don't want it, pass it over the table to someone that does."

Pratt grunted, and cleared out the dish.

"Will you shove that pie over here?" growled Barker.

"Certainly!" said Kerr.

He pushed the empty dish across to Barker.

The Headlander gazed into it, and then gazed at Figgins & Co., who were eating steak pie and grinning in a row.

"It's all gone, you rotters!" muttered Barker.

"Go hon!" said Figgins.

"You beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Barker kicked Tom Merry's leg viciously under the table. The hero of the Shell gave a startled jump.

"What the dickens are you up to?" he exclaimed.

"That's for shoving that pie over there, confound you!" growled Barker. "I hope you'll be shoved into our dorm to-night, that's all!"

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"I hope I shall," he replied.

"If you are, you can look out for a jolly good licking!"

"We shall see," said Tom Merry quietly; and he turned his back on the bully of the Headland Fourth.

Barker discontentedly made a meal of bread-and-butter, and even of this there was not sufficient. He was in an extremely bad temper when the tables were cleared.

Fatty Wynn was looking a little troubled.

"That was a jolly nice steak pie!" he remarked. "I shouldn't mind living at Headland if they have steak pies for tea every night. Of course, there wasn't enough of it. I could have done with a couple more helpings."

"You always can!" said Kerr.

"Well, that ducking made me peckish, and I get so hungry in this September weather, you know. The worst of it is that most of the grub I had in my pockets was spoiled by the sea water."

"There'll be some supper presently," said Figgins consolingly.

"Ye-o-es," said Fatty Wynn. "But that's a long way off, isn't it? Have either of you fellows got a tin-opener about you?"

"What on earth do you want a tin-opener for?"

"The only thing I saved from the wreck that wasn't spoiled was a tin of condensed milk. It's upstairs in my wet clothes. The sea couldn't spoil that, and it's awfully strengthening stuff, you know. If you've got a tin-opener—"

"Well, I haven't."

"Have you got one, Kerr?" asked Fatty Wynn anxiously.

"Yes," said Kerr.

"Hand it over, then, and—"

"I can't just now."

"Oh, don't rot! Why can't you?"

"Because I left it in my box on the Condor."

"You—you ass! Will you lend me your penknife, Figgins?"

"Yes, I'm likely to lend you a penknife to open a tin with!" grunted Figgins. "Look here, you ought to stop eating for a bit. Suppose you were to burst?"

"Oh, really, Figgins—"

Figgins and Kerr walked away, and Fatty Wynn looked disconsolate.

Tom Merry tapped him on the shoulder.

"Wherefore that pensive brow, Fatty?"

"Can you lend me a tin-opener, Tom Merry?"

"Well, I don't usually carry tin-openers about in my pockets, and the one I wear on my watch-chain is lost, and so—"

"Oh, don't rot!" said Fatty Wynn peevishly. "I want to open a tin of condensed milk. Your penknife would do."

"You'd break the blade."

"I'd be very careful."

"No fear!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "You could knock a couple of holes in the top, you know, with the end of a cricket stump, and let the condensed milk run out. Hold it over your mouth and let it run down your throat, and—"

"Well, that's not a bad idea about the stump. I dare say I shall find one upstairs."

And Fatty Wynn left the room and hurried upstairs to the dormitory, where he had left his damp clothes.

Barker, who had overheard part of the talk between the two St. Jim's juniors, whispered to two or three of his special chums, and followed the Falstaff of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 10. Fatty in a Fix!

FATTY WYNN switched on the electric light outside the dormitory door, as he had seen Tompkinson III do, and entered the long, bare apartment. His clothes were still where he had left them, the inside jacket pocket bulging with a large tin of condensed milk. The other comestibles saved from the wreck were in a sad state. Several bags of cake and tarts, reduced to pulp, lay near the clothes, and even Fatty Wynn did not feel inclined to tackle jam tart soaked with sea water.

Fatty Wynn extracted the tin of condensed milk from the pocket, and looked round for a means of opening it. There was no cricket stump to be seen; but a pegtop was lying on a box, and that was much more useful for the fat junior's purpose. To seize the pegtop and jam it into the end of the tin was the work of a moment. Another jab and the milk began to ooze out.

"Good!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "Not much good sharing a tin of milk with anyone else, and, besides, there's no spoons or anything. I had better go for it. I'm still hungry enough to manage the whole tin."

"My hat!"

It was a sudden exclamation from the doorway. Fatty Wynn swung round in alarm, and his alarm increased as he saw Barker and three other fellows come in.

"Shut the door," said Barker. "Hallo, porpoise!"

"Hallo!" said Fatty Wynn feebly.

He put his hand behind him, with the tin of condensed milk in it, hoping that the Commers had not seen it. But his hope was vain.

"My only pyjama hat!" ejaculated Barker. "Eating again! He wolfed my steak pie, and now he's scoffing condensed milk!"

"The gormandiser!" said Punter.

"I should say so! Where he stacks it all is a mystery to me! He ate enough steak pie to kill a navy!"

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"Look here," began Fatty Wynn warmly, "it's no business of yours, anyway. And you're not going to have any of this condensed milk, either!"

Barker chuckled.

"I fancy we're going to have it all, unless we give you some down the back of your neck!" he remarked. "Collar the young rotter!"

"Lemme alone! I—"

But Fatty Wynn's expostulations were unavailing. The Headlanders closed round him, and collared him without ceremony.

Barker made a grab at the tin of milk, but Fatty clung to it desperately.

"Hand that tin over, you rotten glutton!"

"Shan't! It's mine!"

"It's mine now," grinned Barker, getting a grip on the tin. "Now, let go!"

"I won't!"

"Then I'll jolly soon make you!"

Barker wrenched at the tin, but Fatty Wynn held on. There was a sudden yell of disgust from the Headland bully.

"Ow! Wow! Ah!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Punter.

"The stuff's running down my sleeve! There's a hole in the tin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Punter.

"Oh, shut up, you silly cuckoo! What is there to cackle at in that?"

Punter apparently saw something to cackle at. At all events, he cackled, and so did the others. Barker had let go of the tin, and was whipping his jacket off. The sticky fluid was creeping up his sleeve, and it was inside his shirt cuff. He growled savagely as he tore the cuff open and rolled up his sleeve.

"The young rotter! I shall never get this stuff off!" he growled. "It's as sticky as beastly glue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up! Give me that tin, you young cad!"

"Shan't!"

"Then I'll show you!" growled Barker.

And he collared Fatty Wynn round the neck and dragged him backwards to the floor.

With the other fellows grasping him, too, Fatty could make no resistance to the attack behind. He went down with a bump, with the Commers sprawling over him.

"You—you rotters! Lemme gerrup!"

"Sit on his chest!" said Barker, wrenching the tin of condensed milk from Fatty's hand with ease now. "Down with him! It doesn't matter if you squash him!"

"Ow!"

"Here, not too heavy!" said Punter. "Suppose he were to burst—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he looks as if he might, and it would make an awful muck in the dorm. Gently does it. If he wriggles, you can stamp on his legs."

"Ow! You rotters! Gimme that tin, you beasts!"

"Haven't you made me a present of this tin?" demanded Barker.

"No!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I haven't!"

"Can't I have it?"

"No, you can't!"

"Oh, very well, you can have it back!" said Barker. "Hold him tight, kids! He's going to have his condensed milk."

And Barker inverted the tin over the upturned face of Fatty Wynn. A thin, sticky stream descended from the holes in the tin. Fatty saw it coming, and wriggled desperately to escape it, and for a moment shook the Commers loose. But they fastened on again at once, and held him fast.

The sticky stream descended, and dropped on Fatty Wynn's head, and began to flow over his red, perspiring face.

Barker held the tin with a steady hand, and his grinning face looked down mockingly upon the helpless junior.

"How do you like it?" he asked.

"M-m-m-m!" stuttered Fatty Wynn, into whose mouth some of the sticky condensed milk was creeping, while some flowed over his ears and over his chin and down his neck.

"Gr-r-r! M-m-m-m!"

"What is he saying, Punter?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Punter.

"Gr-r-r! M-m-m-m!"

"Talk English!" said Barker. "Do you like it?"

"M-m-m-m-m!"

"I suppose he means that he likes it. I say, Fatty, you've had about half the tin now! Can I have the rest?"

"M-m-m-m!"

"Nod your head, if you mean. 'Yes,'" said Barker.

"Can I have the rest of the milk, my fat pippin?"

Wynn nodded his head violently. He would have given Barker a tin of milk or a tin of diamonds, or a tin of anything, to stop the flow of that sticky mess over his face and neck and ears.

“You make me a present of it?” asked Barker.

Another violent nod.

“Quite sure you don’t want it yourself?”

Fatty Wynn nodded again, and Barker righted the half-emptied tin.

“Very well,” he said, “since you press it on me, I accept the present, just to show that there’s no ill-feeling in the case.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” roared Punter.

“Mum-m-m-m!”

Barker opened his pocket-knife and sawed a larger hole in the tin top. Fatty Wynn looked at him wrathfully with one eye. The other was bunged with condensed milk. He made an effort to break loose, but the Commers held him down.

“Groogh! Lemme gerrup!”

“Sit on him!”

“We’ve got him!” said Punter cheerfully. “He won’t get up in a hurry! I say, suppose we tie his hands so that he can’t get this stuff off, and send him downstairs in this state? It will be funny!”

“Ripping wheeze!” exclaimed Barker heartily.

“Well, stop guzzling that condensed milk, and get a rope. There’s one in my box.”

“Right you are!”

“Lemme gerrup!”

“Rats! Sit on his legs, Hedges!”

“What-ho!” said Hedges.

“Here’s the rope,” said Barker, dragging a long cord from Punter’s box. “There’s enough here to tie him up a dozen times over. I’ll lend you a hand when I’ve finished this condensed milk.”

“Lend a hand now, and leave some of that milk for me!” growled Punter. “Here, Norris, hold the young demon’s wrists! He’s struggling again.”

“I’ve got him!” grinned Norris.

“It will be rather a surprise-packet for the others when he goes down like this,” chuckled Punter. “Now—”

“Rescue!” suddenly yelled Fatty Wynn.

For the door of the dormitory had opened, and Tom Merry & Co. appeared upon the scene.

CHAPTER 11.

Barker Gets Bitten!

TOM MERRY did not stop to ask questions. He came in with a run, and after him came six or seven juniors of St. Jim’s. In a twinkling the tables were turned.

Barker went sprawling across a bed, with Monty Lowther and Manners sprawling across him. Punter jumped up, only to be seized by Tom Merry, and sent sprawling. He whirled into the arms of Jack Blake, who promptly clasped him and bumped him on the floor, and sat on him.

Figgins and Kerr and Digby and Herries collared Hedges and Norris and pinioned them, and their struggles did not avail much.

Tom Merry gave the sticky and breathless Wynn a helping hand, and the fat junior rose to his feet.

“Th-th-thanks!” he gasped.

“Lemme go!” roared Barker. “I’ll break your necks for this! Get off! Let me go! I’ll lick you into little pieces!”

“Go hon!” said Monty Lowther, jamming the Headland bully’s face into the counterpane of the bed. “You’re too ferocious by half to be let go! Keep hold, Manners!”

“You bet!” said Manners.

“Keep still, kid,” said Jack Blake, as Punter made an effort to throw him off. “If you wriggle like that I shall very likely drive my elbow into your ribs. There, I told you it might happen!”

“You—you beast!”

“There it goes again! Why don’t you keep still?”

Punter kept still. Fatty Wynn wiped the condensed milk out of his eyes, and off his face, and twisted uncomfortably as he felt his collar sticking to his neck.

“The rotters!” he said. “They were going to tie me up with that rope, and march me downstairs with my face all sticky! Ugh! I feel horrible. And it’s not only the discomfort, you know, but to think of a tin of condensed milk being wasted when I’m so hungry—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“It’s no laughing matter, Tom Merry. There’s hardly any left in the tin.”

“Bai Jove!” said Arthur Augustus D’Arcy, who had remained in the doorway watching the scrimmage, monocle in eye, doubtless considering that there were enough to do the struggling without his assistance. “Bai Jove, you do

look a feahful sight, Fatty Wynn! It’s jolly lucky for you that we came to the rescue!”

“You haven’t done much rescuing, anyway!” grunted Fatty Wynn.

“Weally, deah boy—”

“We thought there was something up,” said Tom Merry. “We came up to see. It’s lucky we did! Of course, Wynn deserves all he’s got for being a glutton.”

“Oh, draw it mild, Tom Merry.”

“I quite agree with my honouwable fwient Tom Mewwy. Fatty Wynn deserves all he has weceived; but, all the same, it’s up to us to avenge the honah of St. Jim’s.”

“Exactly!” assented Tom Merry. “That is what I was going to say when Gussy started chattering. Now—”

“I wefuse to have my wemarks chawactewised as chawewin!”

“Jam those rotters together in a row,” said Tom Merry. “This rope will answer the purpose nicely. Close the door, D’Arcy, and lock it.”

“Yaas, wathah! I say, there isn’t a key!”

“Then don’t lock it. Tie these rotters up in a row, kids.”

“Let me go!” roared Barker.

“Rats! Now, then!”

The four Commercial Collegians were quite helpless against such odds. They were dragged together and placed in a row, and then Tom Merry fastened them up with the rope, so that it was impossible for them to separate.

Barker was black with rage. But Punter, Norris, and Hedges seemed to be taking the matter more good-humouredly. They looked nervous, however.

“Where’s the condensed milk?” asked Tom Merry, looking round.

“Ask Fatty,” said Blake, with a grin.

Fatty Wynn was just finishing the tin.

Tom Merry gave him a look of disgust.

“You—you horrid wolf!” he exclaimed. “I wanted that milk to anoint them with, and now you’ve been and scoffed it!”

“It would have been a sinful waste!” said Fatty Wynn indignantly. “Especially when I’m so hungry, too! I’m surprised at you, Tom Merry!”

“There’s the jam tarts,” said Figgins. “They’re soaked with sea-water, and even Fatty won’t eat them; but they’re all right for anointing purposes.”

“Ripping! Bring them here!”

“If you put any of that sticky stuff on my face,” began Barker, I’ll— Ow, wow! I’ll— Ow, wow, wow!”

“You can ow, wow, wow as much as you like,” said Tom Merry, plastering the bully’s face with sopping jam tarts. “I haven’t the slightest objection to your wow-wowing in moderation.”

“I’ll break your neck for this!”

“Go hon! Any more tarts, Figgins?”

“No; but there’s some cake, and it’s pretty sloppy.”

“Right-ho! That will do for the others.”

“I say,” said Punter, “you might draw it mild, you know. I don’t want any— Groogh! Any— Ow! Don’t! Groogh! Groogh!”

“I think they look very nice now,” said Tom Merry.

“Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!”

“Can you suggest any improvements, Barker?”

“I’ll—I’ll—I’ll—”

“We haven’t any oil,” said Monty Lowther. “I know it’s more usual to do anointing with oil, but—”

“Oh, don’t be funny, Lowther! They are rotters, but they don’t deserve that,” said Figgins. “Ring off, old chap, there’s a dear.”

“Look here, Figgins, I—”

“Bring them out,” said Tom Merry, interrupting the two juniors in time. “They’ll make quite a sensation in the Common-room downstairs, I think.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“You can’t take us down like this!” gasped Barker, turning almost pale. “You can’t! You shan’t! I tell you—”

“I think we can,” said Tom Merry coolly. “Anyway, we’re going to try. Bring them along, there!”

“We won’t go, hang you!”

“Get behind them, kids. All kick together when I give the word!”

Tom Merry did not find it necessary to give the word.

(Continued on page 19.)

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HALLO, chums! I think you will agree with me when I say that the special summer series of stories running in the GEM these days wants "some" beating. Have you enjoyed this week's yarn? Foolish question, because I know you have enjoyed every word of it. Well, next week's yarn of Tom Merry & Co. is just as good. It stars Herbert Skimpole. Look out for

"SKIMPOLE, THE DEEP-SEA DIVER," and stand by for laughs—and plenty of 'em! The next chapters of

"THE WORLD WRECKERS"

will supply you with unlimited adventure thrills and surprises, while Potts the Office Boy will be on view in another quick-laugh comic picture strip. Order next week's GEM today. Got that? Good!

A CANINE STAR!

It was fourteen years ago that some American troops entered a German dug-out and came across two frolicsome Alsatian puppies. On the spot these puppies were labelled Rin-Tin-Tin and Nanette. Since then millions of filmgoers have marvelled at the cleverness and sagacity of Rin-Tin-Tin. Now comes news that this canine star of the films has gone to his "happy hunting-ground" at the age of fourteen. Rin-Tin-Tin's earnings as a film actor amounted to something like twenty thousand pounds, and he figured in over forty films. But the good work for which he showed such aptitude is to be carried on by Rin-Tin-Tin junior, which has been specially trained to take his father's place.

ROW, ROW, ROW!

It was a very warm evening and three adventurous spirits had a great idea of rowing to France. Accordingly they entered a boat at Kingsdown, Deal, and pushed off into the darkness of the night. Through the small hours they pulled and pulled at their oars and then, when dawn broke, they caught a glimpse of land. With light hearts they pulled for shore. Was it the shore of France upon which their boat eventually grounded? No, sir! It was good old England, for the rowers landed at a spot very close to that from which they had started! Their explanation was that owing to the dense fog they must have rowed in circles the whole night long.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Teacher: "Now, Tommy, if I said I were handsome, what tense would that be?"

Tommy, promptly: "Pre-tence, sir!"
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SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR!

"What's the name of our nearest star," asks Fred Wilkinson, of Barnsley, "and just how near is it to this earth?" And the answer is "Alpha Centauri—about 25,000,000,000,000 miles away."

AN UNWANTED VISITOR!

The people near Poole Harbour had their big thrill the other day when fishermen brought to shore a huge whale measuring twelve to fifteen feet long. Actually the monster was caught by the trickery of the tides. It was tempted to enter the harbour on a flood tide on the track of a shoal of mackerel, and got stranded when the tide began to ebb. A fisherman with a double-barrelled gun put "paid" to this monster and now he can claim truthfully that he caught a fish weighing a ton!

THE ROBOT GIANT!

If you visited the National Radio Exhibition last month you would have seen an unusual-looking figure clad in armour standing by the main entrance. He goes by the name of Ronnie, but his full title is Ronnie the Radio Robot. Ronnie is an uncanny piece of machinery. He can speak in foreign languages, answer questions, read from books, and so on. His "features" include photo electric eyes, a loud speaker mouth, and ears of microphonic quality. Yes, Ronnie is one of the most startling exhibits seen for years, and crowds swarmed about him to test his powers.

WHEN THE BOMBS FELL!

It often falls to the lot of the Service airmen to assist a ground force, especially in such places as Africa where tribal chieftains on occasion get a trifle too big for their boots. Not long ago Union Air Force planes, acting in co-operation with armoured cars, bombed the kraal of a rebellious chief. The chief and his tribe promptly bolted for their lives, long before the bombs got among them. But those bombs stirred up hundreds of bees, who attacked the crew of the armoured cars and stung them severely!

THE TELL-TALE STREAMERS!

In certain Ethiopian tribes the men are mighty proud of their prowess in the killing line. To tell the world, therefore, how many men they have killed, these barbarians erect long poles outside their huts and attach white cloth streamers to them. Each strip of fluttering cloth denotes the number of men the occupant of the hut has "done in." Pretty idea, isn't it?

CONCERNING OUR COMPANION PAPERS!

Most of you fellows have at some time or another come across copies of our famous companion papers, the "Magnet," "Modern Boy," and "Ranger," and not a few of you, incidentally, are regular readers. Well, great things are happening in connection with these three papers—great things in the nature of Free Gifts. Without overdoing it I can honestly say that

THE BIG FREE GIFT SCHEME

now being prepared by "Magnet," "Modern Boy," and "Ranger" is a Record Breaker. If you are interested to know more, get a copy of one of these companion papers to-day.

RUPERT THE KANGAROO!

Rupert's a kangaroo and he likes to feel his feet occasionally. Not long ago Rupert was taken from London to Chessington and left to his own devices in a field bordered by a stout seven-foot-high hedge. Rupert sniffed at the hedge and cleared it easily in a single hop. Delighted at his freedom he tore down the nearest main road at a speed of thirty miles an hour, with a crowd of equally delighted children whooping after him. For some time he was lost to sight in a wood, and then the pangs of thirst tempted Rupert to come out from hiding. He made friends with a motor mechanic who promptly locked him in a garage and gave him a drink. The mechanic then phoned the police and told them he had captured a real live kangaroo. The police at first thought their majestic leg was being pulled. But there was Rupert in the flesh when they went along to investigate. Altogether the runaway kangaroo was at liberty for six hours and he must have covered miles in his break for freedom; but he was little the worse for his adventure when his owner finally took him home with an "outsize" in dog's collars round his neck.

ALWAYS REMEMBER THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER!

Yes, always remember it, for during that month the world's best Annuals appear. To take just one of them—the "Holiday Annual," for instance—where else can you find such a bumper budget of school stories? You can't, so don't waste your time. The "H. A.," which is now on sale everywhere, is better than ever. Yes, Tom Merry & Co. figure in it—very extensively, too. If you would like to purchase a copy of this Annual through a "Christmas Club," trot round to your nearest newsagent, and he'll be pleased to tell you all about it.

HOT AND COLD!

A week or two ago, while most of us were sweltering in the heat and consuming large amounts of ice-cream, there were two men who managed to keep cool, rather too cool, in fact. Professor Piccard and his assistant were ten and a half miles up in the air in the professor's balloon! At this height there are a hundred degrees of frost and the two occupants of the balloon were afraid that they might be frozen to death. When they eventually returned to earth they were almost overcome by the heat, which was about 97 in the shade on the shores of Lake Garda where they landed.

In this magnificent effort Professor Piccard broke the record height ever attained by man, which he himself set up eighteen months ago when he reached nine and three-quarter miles.

THE SHIPWRECKED SCHOOL!

(Continued from page 17.)

The four Commers started immediately, and fairly bolted towards the door, followed by the laughing juniors of St. Jim's.

"Now then, down you go!"

"I won't!" roared Barker, halting on the landing. "I won't—"

"Good! All kick together when I give the— Hallo, they're starting!"

The Commers bundled down the stairs. There were a good many juniors in the passage below, and in the brilliant electric light the unhappy quartette were seen by all.

There was a shout of amazement.

"Faith, and what is it entirely?" exclaimed Reilly.

"It's Barker!" yelled Tompkinson III. "My only pyjama hat, Barky! How did you get like that?"

"Help me to get loose, you idiot!"

"You can't expect much help from an idiot!"

"Get along there!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I won't! I—"

"Give him the end of your boot, Figgy. You've got the biggest feet—"

"You let my feet alone, Tom Merry."

"My dear chap, I wouldn't touch them with a barge-pole! Get along, Barker!"

"Did that hurt?" asked Tom Merry, giving the Headland bully a gentle lift with his toe.

"Ow!" roared Barker.

"Will you have another in the same place?"

"Stop it! I'll get along! Stop it!"

"March, then!"

The unhappy Commers marched. They marched into the Junior Common-room, which was pretty well filled with Headlanders and Saints. From every corner of the room came a yell of laughter. Even Barker's own friends could not help seeing the funny side of the matter, though it was quite lost on Barker himself.

"Come and let me loose, some of you!" yelled Barker.

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "allow me to present to you this curious animal, which I have captured in a wild state—an extremely wild state—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is a wild beast, very dangerous at close quarters unless kept tied up."

"Will you let me loose?"

"When tied up," said Monty Lowther, "it can only bark harmlessly, but in a free state it is a very dangerous Barker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I'll make you sit up for this!" howled Barker, almost beside himself at being exhibited in such a ridiculous state to the juniors of Headland, and foreseeing how much prestige he was certain to lose by it. "You wait a bit, you rotters!"

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry politely. "We— My hat!"

Mr. Skene, the master of the Headland Fourth, was looking in at the doorway. His eyes opened wide in surprise at what he saw.

"G-g-goodness gracious!" he exclaimed. "What is that? Who are those boys?"

"It's—a—a little joke, sir," stammered Tom Merry.

"Dear me! I see now that it is Barker. Barker, you should not play jokes of this sort. I should have thought that a boy of your age, the head of the Form, would have more—er—sense of personal dignity than to get himself up in such a ridiculous fashion to exhibit his folly to the Form!"

Barker was too furious to speak.

"If you please, sir," began Tom Merry, choking back his merriment, "we—"

"I fully understand. Barker has played this ridiculous trick with the idea of amusing you, and seems oblivious of the fact that he is lowering himself in the most ridiculous way!" exclaimed Mr. Skene. "I am surprised at you, Barker!"

"I didn't—"

"Not a word, sir. There can be no excuse. I am surprised and disgusted!"

"I tell you—"

"Silence!"

"If you please—" began Blake.

"Don't interrupt me! With you boys I have nothing to do, but I certainly must insist that the head boy of my Form shall act in a manner more worthy of a sensible human being," said Mr. Skene severely. "You will imme-

diately cease this absurd nonsense, Barker, and clean that sticky stuff off your face. And if I find you doing anything of the sort again I shall punish you severely!"

And Mr. Skene, with a warning shake of the head, passed on into the room, and sat down. In the presence of the master the juniors could not give full expression to the mirth that consumed them, but there were chuckles and cackles that could not be suppressed, and many of the fellows were crimson in the face from the efforts they made to keep down their laughter.

Tompkinson Tertius, almost choking, released Barker and his comrades, and the four, not venturing to attempt reprisals in the presence of the severe Mr. Skene, went off to get themselves cleaned, leaving Tom Merry & Co. in paroxysms of suppressed merriment.

CHAPTER 12.

Crowded Quarters.

THE adventure of Barker, though it had caused as much laughter among the Commers as among the Saints, left a good many of the Headlanders feeling a little sore. They felt that the newcomers had scored, as indeed they had. For this reason and for others, there was likely to be a lively time for all concerned when the master's eyes were withdrawn.

There was a great deal of whispering and muttering at the supper-table among the Headland fellows, quite enough to put the Saints on their guard.

"There's a good time coming," Figgins murmured to Tom Merry. "We shall have to look out for squalls after lights out to-night."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, I was noticing it."

"Barker seems dissatisfied," remarked Blake. "He must be awfully greedy if he wants more, after what he's had."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I shall keep some of my things on to-night, in case of accidents," Kerr remarked, in his cautious way. "Nothing like being prepared."

"Good idea! So shall I!"

"I say, Tompkinson, where are we going to snooze?" asked Monty Lowther, nudging the third Tompkinson in the ribs so suddenly that he spilled half his cup of cocoa on the knees of his trousers.

"Oh!" gasped Tompkinson the Third.

"Look out! You're spilling your cocoa!"

"You confounded ass, you made me spill it!"

"Oh, draw it mild, old chap! I didn't want you to spill it. I only asked you a question. Where are we going to sleep to-night?"

"I don't suppose you'll get much sleep," said Tompkinson, jerking D'Arcy's handkerchief out of his pocket and mopping up the cocoa with it. "You—"

"Give me my beastlay handkerchief!"

"Wait a minute, till I've finished with it."

"You uttah wottah, you are spoilin' my beastlay handkerchief!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's. "If you do not return it to me instantly, I shall give you a fearful thwashin'!"

"There you are!" said Tompkinson cheerfully, tossing the soppy handkerchief towards Arthur Augustus.

It alighted upon his handsome waistcoat, and D'Arcy shook it off as if it had been a snake. It left liberal traces of cocoa on the gorgeous waistcoat.

"Tompson, you beastlay wastah—"

"Tompkinson, please."

"You confounded wottah, you have ruined my handkerchief and stained my waistcoat!"

"Well, it was the fault of that ass for spilling my cocoa. As I was saying—"

"You have ruined my handkerchief—"

"As I was saying, you kids won't get much sleep to-night," continued Tompkinson III imperturbably. "You see, you've put on such airs since you've been here—"

"You mean, you Commercial kids have shown such fearful cheek—"

"Anyway, we've turned the matter over in our minds, and decided that what you really want is a thorough lesson."

"How curious!" said Tom Merry. "We've been thinking it out, and we've come to the conclusion that that's just what you fellows want."

"Oh, that's rot, you know! I expect you will get the lesson you want in the dorm to-night. Mind, I don't say so. But I think it's likely."

"Oh, we don't mind!"

"Bai Jove, wathah not! If those wottahs start any of their twicks, deah boys, we shall just wade in and give them a feahful lickin'!"

Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, came towards the group of juniors, whose argument was growing a little excited.

"You youngsters are going to turn in with the Fourth Form here," he said. "There is a great difficulty about accommodation. Forty of you will be in the dormitory, as there is that number of beds there."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry, beaming.

And the others grinned. If numbers were to be equal in the dormitory, the intended ragging of the newcomers might end in a way very unsatisfactory for the Headlanders.

"Mind," went on Kildare, "you're to keep the peace, and not have any rows."

Tom Merry looked injured.

"Really, Kildare, we're not the kind of fellows to need a warning of that sort," he said. "You know how quiet and orderly we are."

Kildare laughed.

"Yes. It's because I know how quiet and orderly you are that I give you the warning," he said. "Mind, no rows, or you will be warmed!"

"Weally, Kildare, undah the peculiah circes—"

"Remember what I say, that's all."

"Undah the circes, deah boy—"

Kildare walked away without waiting for the swell of St. Jim's to finish.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye, and cast an indignant glance after the captain of St. Jim's.

"Weally, I cannot help wegardin' Kildare as a wathah wude wottah."

Mr. Skene rose from the supper-table.

"Bedtime, my boys!"

There was a general movement. Mr. Railton and Kildare were sorting out the St. Jim's boys. Among the two score who were to share the beds in the Fourth Form dormitory, Tom Merry & Co. contrived to include themselves. They did not mean to be left out of any fun that might be going.

The juniors marched upstairs to the lofty, bare, colour-washed dormitory. It was in a blaze with electric light.

Mr. Skene peered at them with his glasses as they filed in. He was a short-sighted and unobservant little gentleman, and he saw nothing of the suppressed excitement among the boys.

"You will—er—sleep two in a bed to-night," he remarked.

"That is the only method of accommodating such an—er—an influx of newcomers. I trust that you will find yourselves very comfortable."

"They won't!" muttered Barker.

"Did you speak, Barker?"

"I was only saying to Punter that I'd do my best to give the kids a good time, sir."

"That is very right of you, Barker—very right and proper. I am very glad to see this cordial spirit in you—especially as you are not—er—the boy I should have expected it of."

"Thank you, sir!" said Barker, while his comrades suppressed a giggle with great difficulty.

"I hope the others will follow your excellent example, Barker," said Mr. Skene. "This is a spirit I am desirous of encouraging among my boys—this spirit of cordial hospitality. Sometimes it may lead you too far, as this evening when you appeared in the Common-room in a ridiculous state to afford amusement to the newcomers; but upon the whole it is a very commendable spirit."

"Yes, sir," murmured Barker.

"I trust that these boys belonging to another school will appreciate your kind attentions at their true value."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We do, sir," said Tom Merry. "We quite understand Barker, sir, and we shall do our best to make him as comfy as he makes us."

"Good—very good! You will now go to bed, my boys, and I shall be back in a quarter of an hour to—er—extinguish the illuminations."

And the worthy little gentleman quitted the dormitory and closed the door.

He was barely outside when a buzz of voices broke out.

"Catch me sleeping with any of you rotters!" said Barker.

"No fear!" said Punter.

"Blessed if I can see what you've got to grumble at!" said Monty Lowther. "You've only got to put up with us. We're the injured parties. We've got to put up with you."

"Ha, ha, ha! I wegard that as wathah funnay."

"You can get into bed if you like," said Barker. "But I shall jolly soon shove you out again."

"I should considah that wathah wude, Barkah."

"Oh, cheese it, ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Get to bed!" said Tompkinson Tertius. "These kids want a lesson, and a lesson they're going to have, but nothing can be done until after lights out."

"Good!" said Hedges. "We don't want Skeney coming in the middle to spoil the fun. I vote we turn in."

And the juniors undressed and got into bed. Very few of them, however, removed all their garments. Most kept on their trousers and socks. But when Mr. Skene looked into the dormitory again, they all seemed to be reposing in the calmest manner in the world. The lion and the lamb had lain down together, so to speak, and the little Form master blinked approvingly on the touching scene.

"I hope you are quite comfortable, boys?" he said.

"Oh, ripping, sir!" said Barker, who had Arthur Augustus for a bed-fellow, and was already debating in what part of the elegant junior's form he should plant his foot as soon as the master was gone.

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I can't say I exactly appreciate sleepin' in the same bed with a howwid wuffian like this chap Barkah, but I am aware that beggahs cannot be choosahs."

"It's all right, sir," said Tom Merry hastily. "Shut up, Gussy!"

"I was explainin' to Mr. Skene—"

"Cheese it! We're all right, sir."

"Famous!" said Jack Blake.

"Very good! Good-night, my boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Mr. Skene withdrew from the dormitory, and switched off the electric light in the passage without.

The great room was plunged in darkness.

The occupants waited quietly until the master's footsteps had died away down the passage; then the silence of the dormitory was broken in a startling way.

CHAPTER 13.

Barker Looks for Trouble!

"O W! You feahful beast!"

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

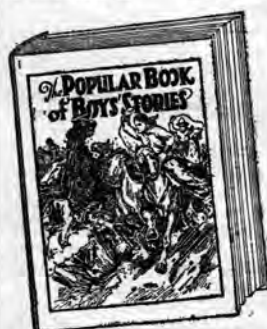
Barker had drawn up one leg, and planted his foot in the ribs of the swell of St. Jim's, and with a single mighty shove he sent Arthur Augustus out upon the floor.

D'Arcy bumped down upon the cold linoleum with most



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D'Arcy reached out for a jug and seized it with both hands. Barker was still sitting on the bed laughing, when a sudden sweep of cold water caught him in the face. "Oh!" he yelled. "O-o-o-oh!" "Ha, ha, ha! Do you wegard that as funnay, too, deah boy?"

of the bedclothes clinging round him, and Barker sat up in bed and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You extemely wuff beast!" gasped D'Arcy. "You have startled me considerably, and thwown me into quite a fluttah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I don't wegard this as funnay at all, but if you do, you shall have somethin' to cackle at yourself, deah boy," said D'Arcy, scrambling up.

There was a washstand next to each bed, and in each basin was a jug of water. D'Arcy had noticed that before getting into bed. He reached out for a jug, and seized it with both hands.

Barker was still sitting on the bed laughing, when a sudden sweep of cold water came from the darkness.

"Oh!" he yelled. "O-o-o-oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Do you wegard that as funnay, too, deah boy?"

"I'll—I'll break your neck for that, you young villain!" gasped Barker, scrambling off the bed. "I'll—I'll— Oh!"

He gave a howl as he barked his shin against the bed.

Tompkinson Tertius was striking a match. He lighted a bicycle lantern, which he had smuggled into the dormitory, and turned the light upon the infuriated Barker. Barker was sitting on the side of the bed, dripping with water, and nursing his shin. Most of the juniors were scrambling out now.

"My only aunt!" said Tompkinson III. "You look wet, Barky!"

"I am wet!" howled the bully of the Fourth. "That young ass has chucked a jug of cold water over me!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You look funnay, deah boy, and no mistake! I am extemely sowwy to use you wuffly, but you must remembah that it is your own fault."

"I'll wring your silly neck!"

"I should uttably wefuse to have my silly neck wung! I mean—"

Barker left off nursing his shin, jumped up, and rushed at D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's put up his fists at once. He did

not like fighting, because, as he said, he found it exhausting. But he had heaps of pluck.

Pluck, however, wasn't of much use against a fellow a head taller than himself, and nearly twice his weight.

Barker simply rushed him off his feet, and gave him left and right, and right and left, with such good will that D'Arcy went sprawling across a bed, without any very clear idea as to how he got there.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

He sat up on Tompkinson III's legs, and stared at Barker, who was dancing round him with brandished fists.

"Come on!" shouted Barker. "Come on!"

"Bai Jove! Wait a tick, deah boy, while I get my beastlay bweath, you know!"

"Go it, Barker!" said Punter. "You other fellows keep back!"

A dozen candle ends and lanterns were alight now, fully lighting the dormitory, and nearly everyone was out of bed.

"Keep back, there!" exclaimed Punter, as Jack Blake dashed forward.

Blake gave him a shove that sent him reeling out of the way.

"Rats!" he said cheerfully. "This is my affair! Look this way, Barker, you cad! I'm going for your nose!"

"Weally, Blake, this is my affaiah, you know!"

"Bosh! It's mine! Come on, Barker!"

Arthur Augustus sat on Tompkinson's bed and mopped his nose, from which a thin stream of "claret" was flowing.

"Well, you can tackle the wottah if you like, deah boy," he remarked. "As a mattah of fact, I find fightin' watah exhaustin'."

Barker turned savagely upon Jack Blake.

"I'll give you a hiding first, and that ass one afterwards!" he growled.

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "Begin with mine!"

He was half a head smaller than the overgrown bully of the Headland Fourth, but he did not care for that. But ere they could close in combat, Tom Merry pushed forward.

"Hold on, Blake! This is my affair, you know."

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"Rot!" said Blake warmly. "I'm fighting it out for Gussy. You can go and eat coke!"

"Look here, as leader of the School House juniors at St. Jim's—"

"You know jolly well I'm leader—"

"If you are going to start that bosh at a time like this—"

"Oh, go and eat coke! Come on, Barker!"

"Now, don't be an ass, Blake! You know I can lick you, therefore, I've got a better chance of licking that hulking rotter!"

"You can lick me?" said Blake, in measured tones.

"Of course I can!"

"I'll jolly well give you a chance to try as soon as we get back to St. Jim's. Just now I'm going to tackle that pig!"

"You're not! I am!"

"Oh, come on, somebody!" jeered Barker. "If this is a little game to get out of it, I warn you that I can see through it!"

"Oh, toss up for it!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "If somebody doesn't lick that chap soon, I shall wade in and do it myself."

"Better retire, both of you, and leave it to me," said Figgins. "I don't want to put myself forward, but as chief of the Cock House at St. Jim's—"

"Oh, cheese it, Figgy!" said Blake. "We don't want any New House kids mucking it up. Look here, Tom Merry, I'll leave it to you if you like, as—"

"Right-ho! Are you ready, Barker?"

"Yes, rather, and waiting!"

"Then come on!" said Tom Merry.

Barker came on. He came on with a rush, hitting out right and left, the same tactics that had answered so well with Arthur Augustus.

But it was not Arthur Augustus he had to deal with now. He had to deal with one who had as much pluck as Arthur Augustus, and plenty of science and coolness to back it up.

His savage drives could not reach the cool and smiling face that confronted him. But Tom Merry's counters came home with effect.

Tap, tap, tap!

Barker staggered back from the rapping on his features, and sat down upon the bed with a gasp.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Very neat! Very neat indeed! I couldn't have done it better myself, Merry!"

"Yaas, wathah! That is as neat as anythin' I have evah seen!" remarked D'Arcy. "Go it, Tom Mewwy, and give the wottah a feahful thwashin'!"

Barker sprang up and rushed to the attack again. The grinning of his own Form-fellows maddened him more than the pain, though that was considerable. Hitherto he had been monarch of all he surveyed in the Fourth Form at Headland. He knew that his prestige would receive a death blow if he should be defeated before the whole Form by a casual stranger.

His attack was swift and powerful. But he had met his match.

Tom Merry had had one or two fights at St. Jim's which had given his friends a pretty good idea of his powers, but he had never shown them anything quite like this.

Barker was several inches taller, and longer in his reach, and a good year older. But his advantages availed him nothing against skill and coolness and pluck.

Few of his savage blows reached Tom Merry, but Tom's steady drives came home again and again.

The juniors of St. Jim's grinned with glee as the combat progressed, and cheered their champion wildly.

And the Commers, truth to tell, did not seem to mind much the fact that their great fighting-man was receiving the licking of his life.

"Go it, Barky!" urged Tompkinson. "He's smaller than you are, you know, and it's mere rot to let him lick you!"

"Who's letting him kick me?" smiled Barker.

"Well, you are, I fancy, old chap. Why don't you go for his nose?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Well, why don't you go for his eye, then?"

The question was really superfluous, for Barker had all his work cut out to defend his own nose and eyes, and he was doing it very badly.

"Oh, buck up!" said Tompkinson III. "What are you hanging about for, Barky? Why don't you go for his chin, then?"

Biff, biff! went Tom Merry, left and right, and Barker staggered and went to the floor with a bump.

"Rotten!" said Tompkinson III. "I say, Barky, we expected something better than that, you know!"

"Oh!" gasped Barker. "Oh!"

"Finished?" said Punter.

"No—ye-e-es, I suppose so. I'm done!"

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Punter helped him up.

Tom Merry held out his hand.

"Shake!" he said. "It was a jolly good mill, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Barker scowled savagely, and half turned away. But a howl from the Headland fellows arrested him.

"Shake hands," said Tompkinson indignantly. "You hooligan! Shake hands!"

"Shake!" echoed Punter and a dozen more. "Shake!"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Barker hesitatingly. "I've had the worst of it, I suppose. I—I don't bear any malice. Give me your fist!"

And he shook hands with Tom Merry.

"Yaas, that's wight," said D'Arcy, with a nod of approval. "I wegard that as weally the pwopah thing to do, deah boy. I feel just as pleased as if I had thwashed you myself, bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 14.

Something Like a Battle!

THE defeated champion bathed his damaged face in cold water.

Arthur Augustus advised him in a friendly way to get beef steak for his eye; but as he did not specify where the steak was to be obtained, his advice was not of much value to the unfortunate Barker.

"But what are we going to do about these giddy beds?" exclaimed Tompkinson III. "You see, they're only intended for one apiece, and they're none too large for one. Two at a time is rotten!"

"Yaas, wathah! Suppose all you Commers sleep on the floor, you know? You can have one blanket each, and—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Punter. "As strangers here, you ought to sleep on the floor or on the roof!"

"As our hosts, deah boy, you ought to sacrifice yourselves to make us comfy!"

"Oh, rot!" was Punter's elegant reply.

"If you chawactewise my wemarks as wot, Puntah, I shall be undah the painful necessity of punchin' your head!"

"Now then, Gussy, don't you start rowing!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I am not wovin', but—"

"I've got a good idea!" exclaimed Figgins. "Let's take watch and watch. We'll sleep in the beds half the night while you chaps camp on the floor, and you can have them the second half!"

"Well, that's not a bad idea," assented Tompkinson III. "But we'll have them the first half, and you chaps can have them the second."

"Oh, that's rot, you know!"

"I don't see it. You—"

"Yes; but you—"

"Hold on!" said Blake. "We're not ready for bed yet, anyway. I've got an improvement of Figgy's plan. What price a pillow fight to decide which party has the beds?"

"Ripping!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"Well, that's hardly fair on you!" said Tompkinson Tertius. "You see, you haven't an earthly against us."

"Weally, Tomp—"

"Tompkinson, dummy!"

"Weally, Tompkinson, dummy—"

"I was just thinking the same," said Tom Merry. "We shall knock you Commers into a cocked hat, and then—"

"Well, if you do that you're welcome to the beds!" grinned Tompkinson. "That's settled. The victors have the beds, and the vanquished have a blanket each on the floor. It's a warm night, anyway, and won't hurt. Are you all agreed?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes. Good idea!" said Punter. "It's rough on those kids, that's all."

"Then get your pillows ready," said Tompkinson III. "I say, Barker, do you feel fit for a scrap?"

"Yes, in a minute," said Barker.

"Good! Now, look here, we're going to scrap till one side gives in, and that side's licked. Individual fellows who want to surrender can do so, and they become prisoners and stay at the end of the room without interfering any further in the fight, on their parole."

"That's right!"

"You'll send your prisoners up to the window end, and we'll send ours t'other end. We shall have a crowd up our end."

"I don't think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's not enough pillows to go round, but the bolsters just make up the numbers. Yank them off the beds and let's begin, kids. Twenty bolsters and twenty pillows on each side. That's fair."

"Quite fair," assented Tom Merry.

"And don't make too much row," said Tompkinson III.



Barker's savage drives did not reach the cool and smiling face that confronted him. But Tom Merry's counters came home with effect. Tap, tap, tap! Barker staggered back from the rapping on his features. He had met his match at last.

"We don't want little Skene to come up here and make a fuss."

"Bai Jove, no!"

"He's not likely to hear, as he's a bit deaf. Still, don't make a row. Are you ready, Barker?"

"Yes, rather!" said Barker, giving his face a rub with the towel. "My beastly eye is bunged up!"

"You should twy a beefsteak, deah boy."

"Where am I to get one, ass?" howled Barker.

"Bai Jove, you know, I neyah thought of that!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Form into line! Comrades of St. Jim's—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Comrades of St. Jim's, you are fighting for the honour of your school, and a bed apiece! Play up for St. Jim's!"

"Hurrah!"

"And don't make too much row. Are you ready, Tompkinson the Third?"

"Quite, ass!"

"Then kick off!"

And the next moment there was a rush from St. Jim's, and a rush from the Headland to meet it, and the pillow-fight commenced.

Seldom, or never, had the dormitory seen such a fray. There were two score of juniors on either side, and most of them plucky enough for anything, and determined to win.

A few, perhaps, on both sides, hung back a little at first, but the majority rushed into the combat with great ardour.

Tom Merry & Co., of course, were to the fore. Blake and Tom Merry and Figgins were all leading, but as they led in the same direction their rivalry did not matter. And the others backed them up splendidly.

At the first rush the Commers were driven back, and back, till it seemed that they would be penned up at the end of the dormitory.

But there they rallied and surged forward again, and St. Jim's receded, and lost the ground they had gained.

But they did not recede more than half-way. Their own half of the field, so to speak, was intact, and there they rallied again and once more advanced.

But now the two parties were broken up somewhat, and were separating into little groups, fighting and chasing one another among and over the beds.

Tom Merry found himself opposed to Tompkinson III, and never did two champions in knightly times close in combat with keener ardour.

Tom Merry was armed with a pillow, and Tompkinson III with a bolster, and they pounded at one another in splendid style.

The bolster caught Tom Merry across the chest, and he staggered, and another mighty swipe made him sit down with startling suddenness.

"Surrender!" yelled Tompkinson, brandishing the bolster over him.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry.

He was up again in a twinkling, catching two swipes of the bolster with his head as he scrambled up.

And then he replied with his pillow, and Tompkinson III had it on the side of his head, and went reeling and staggering blindly. Another swipe, and he was on his back, and Tom Merry, in his turn, was brandishing his weapon over a fallen foe.

"Surrender, kid!"

"Bosh!" gasped Tompkinson.

He attempted to rise, but each attempt was met by the pillow-swiping, and he went down every time.

"Better chuck it," grinned Tom Merry.

"Rats! I—I— Oh! Ow, ow, ow! I surrender!"

"Good!"

Tom Merry helped him up, and he walked rather disconsolately to the window end of the dormitory, a prisoner and a spectator from that moment. He was the first prisoner, but others soon followed.

Punter was captured by Blake, being driven into a corner, and pounded till he surrendered. And a minute later Barker yielded to the attack of Figgins, and joined Tompkinson III in limbo.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was distinguishing himself in excellent style until he dropped his eyeglass, and began to grope for it. He was still groping when a Commer swiped him with a bolster and sent him rolling, and swiped again and again till he gasped out "Surrender!"

Several more St. Jim's juniors joined him in captivity; but the number of Commers' prisoners was growing much faster.

In a row of this kind Tom Merry & Co. were quite at home, so to speak, and they made the fur fly. While the Commers, deprived of their leaders by the capture of Tompkinson III and Barker, were at a disadvantage.

And the number of captures having left the odds considerably on the side of St. Jim's, the end was really inevitable.

Tom Merry's voice rallied his followers:

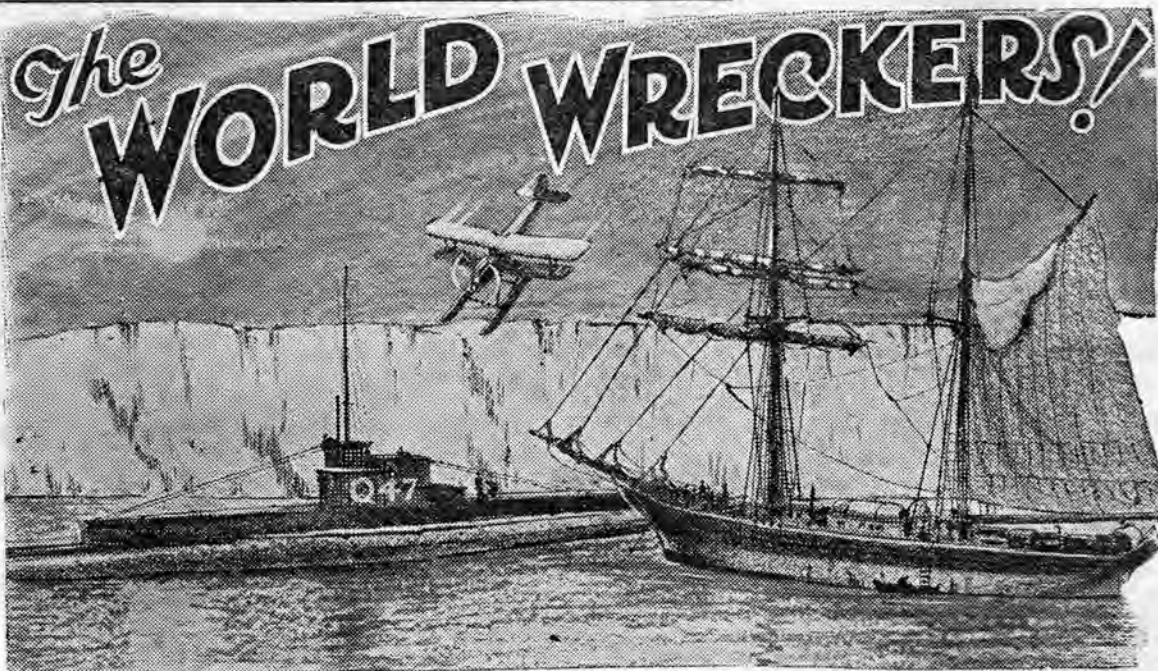
"Now then, kids! All together, and rush them!"

"Hurrah!"

(Continued on page 28.)

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A GRIPPING YARN OF ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE!



By J. E. GURDON.

The World Wreckers are a band of criminals who have discovered the secret of controlling the Earth's weather. Having concealed themselves somewhere in the Antarctic, they have threatened to wreck the British Empire by earthquakes and droughts if they are not paid a vast sum of money. The British Government have sent an expedition, consisting of a submarine, an aeroplane, and a base ship, to destroy the Wreckers. Sweetley, the cook of the expedition, turns traitor and dopes the crew of the ship. Rex Tempest, one of the airmen, arrives in time to stop an attack on the ship, by blowing her anchor away with a bomb, so that she drifts out to sea.

A Perilous Flight I

NOT daring to venture within range of Rex's high explosive, the boats' crews, with much bellowing and shaking of fists, hauled off and made for the shore.

Rex chuckled and turned his mind to the next question—how to get on board the drifting ship without losing his plane. Petrol, he knew, was running low, and he might have to alight at any moment.

The more he thought about it the more hopeless this task appeared, for it was obvious that the machine, with her ski landing gear, would not float more than a very few minutes, and also that it would need at least half a dozen prompt, hefty fellows to salvage her.

"Better get back to the berg and trust to old Jim's having had some luck," he mused. "Hallo! Gosh! Crikey! Hurrah! There's a couple of chaps coming up on deck. Three of 'em! The skipper himself!"

From the bridge of the brigantine two figures were waving vigorously. Others were collecting on the decks.

Rex switched off, judged his approach, and settled down neatly to the leeward, so that the ship should drift up to him.

Twenty minutes later he, Captain Bruce, and Morgan, the signals officer, were in the Fessenden sound-chamber, striving to get in touch with Q 47.

"I was just beginning to wake up and wonder what had happened," explained the captain, "when the racket of your bomb brought me round with a jolt. Same as most of the others. The drug's wearing off. Ah, Morgan! Got her?"

"Signals" nodded.

"Yes, sir. Q 47 reports she's up and the crew's recovering. None of 'em got badly gassed, 'cause the accumulators were drained as soon as the trouble started."

For several seconds none spoke. Each was content to let this news sink in. Also, Rex suddenly felt very tired.

"Lucky about those boats," he mumbled.

"What boats?"

"The ship's boats. That's why I came back. The blighters had taken 'em all, 'stead of just three. They wouldn't have done that if they hadn't meant to come back. So's soon as I spotted what made the ship look so run, I came back, too. Had to leave Jim— Good old Jim—"

His voice trailed off.

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"Don't wake him, Morgan," warned the skipper. "Fetch a pillow and a couple of blankets, and let him sleep here. He's earned a bit of rest."

"Good luck!" boomed Captain Bruce, holding out a mighty fist.

Jim grinned cheerfully as he shook the sailor's hand and climbed into the cockpit of his little seaplane scout. Inwardly, however, he was thinking grimly that more than mere good luck would be needed if he and Captain Bruce were ever to meet again.

He waved to Rex, who was already at the controls of a similar single-seater. Side by side then, engines thundering, and foam hissing from their floats, the two machines skimmed the Antarctic rollers and rose as though linked by invisible bonds.

From the bridge of his brigantine Captain Bruce watched them melt into the mists.

"A million to one chance!" he growled, and swung abruptly on his heel towards the chart-room.

Had Rex and Jim been asked to reckon the odds against their success they would have given ten million to one as being nearer the mark.

Alone and unaided now they had to fight the World Wreckers, the most formidable gang that ever threatened civilisation, and outwit the unknown but amazing scientific genius who led them.

Captain Bruce could not help. The Great Ice Barrier had called a halt to him and his ship.

Days ago Commander Sherwell had taken his submarine under the ice in the blind hope of groping a way to the enemy's distant base. Not a message had since come through. Almost certainly, therefore, that desperately gallant venture had ended in disaster.

Osborne, Stewart, and Musson, the three volunteer flyers whom Jim and Rex had trained, were all prisoners—or dead!

On the other hand, the Wreckers were still masters of the earth's weather, and at their will could inflict any catastrophe on any part of the globe; also they were amply provided with men, machines, and stores, all concentrated in an almost impregnable camp.

"So all we have to do," mused Jim, with bitter humour, as the two scouts soared up through the vapour into regions

of clear sunshine, "all our job consists of is simply this—to land in this pea-soup fog on the right spot and without breaking our necks, scuttle the unfortunate planes, sink to the bottom of the deep blue sea, and creep ashore without being seen. After which we've got to scotch these Wrecker blighters by some method as yet unknown, disable their weather control gadgets, collect Osborne & Co., and locate and raise the sub from anywhere underneath a few thousand square miles of ice!"

All of which was no crazy exaggeration but a plain, sober statement of what the two had set out to accomplish.

Beneath their flying helmets each was wearing the mouth-piece and mask of a Davis submarine life-saving apparatus, which would enable them to live under water until there was no more oxygen left in the high-pressure containers that were strapped to their chests.

So that they might sink at will they were also provided with leaden weights attached to an ordinary parachute harness. A quick release device made it possible to discard the weights and rise to the surface at any moment.

In theory the scheme seemed sound enough. In practice they might be paralysed by the cold, trapped and drowned through a faulty landing in the dense mist, caught by an offshore current, and drifted out to sea, there to await death by exposure and starvation, or merely shot by the enemy's sentries if they ever succeeded in reaching the shore.

"Huh!" grunted Jim, some moments later. "Brooding over the ghastly business won't help any. Wonder if Rex is as cold as I am?"

Actually at that moment Rex was debating glumly why he had ever been such an ass as to take up flying when there were so many nice, warm, safe, cushy jobs to be had for the asking—jobs like swimming the Channel in January, or trying to climb Mount Everest in a blizzard!

"G-g-gosh!" he chattered through clattering teeth. "W-w-what a f-f-foul afternoon! Wonder if Jim is as c-c-cold as I am? H-h-hope so!"

He tried flapping a friendly gauntlet at his brother, but the gale outside the cockpit cut through fur and leather like a razor through butter. After that one experiment he ducked behind the windscreen, crouched over his controls, and doily settled down to the task of keeping the wing tips of the two machines less than a yard apart.

Although they were flying at a height of seventeen thousand feet, not a trace of land or sea was visible. To the horizon in all directions there stretched a limitless ocean of clouds, glowing lemon yellow and orange in the light of the southern sun. The sky above was like a vast bowl of pale blue porcelain.

Jim was heartily thankful for the clouds, for at least they offered a chance of reaching their goal unseen, but those same clouds made it uncommonly hard to hold a true course since there was no means of judging the strength or direction of the wind. All he could do, therefore, was to watch the compass and hope for the best.

Unwaveringly the two flew on, alone in the universe except for the shadows of their machines, which glided over the misty floor beneath like phantoms surrounded by rainbow rings.

The Underground River I

AT the end of three and a half hours' flying Jim signalled to Rex and throttled back his engine.

Still close together, the little scouts dipped their cowlings and slid into a glide so gentle that the crooning of the wires sank to a sigh, and the propellers twirled slower and slower until each stopped abruptly on compression.

This was precisely what the flyers wanted, yet neither could repress a shiver and a tautening of muscles as he gazed at the motionless blades in front.

To land through impenetrable fog was in itself an ordeal to tax the best-trying nerves. To do so without even the comfort of engine power turned the adventure into a veritable nightmare.

But it was necessary. Rex kept telling himself that. By this method they could cover the last twenty miles almost soundlessly, and, with luck, ought to be able to alight somewhere in the gloom without attracting attention.

As the mists rose to meet them he fell back slightly to take up station so that his starboard wing tip was close to Jim's fuselage, between the main planes and tail.

Keeping that position without even the aid of a throttle called for the most difficult and delicate use of the controls, but Rex knew that he had to succeed, for if they got separated and lost each would most certainly perish.

The instant they sighted water he could safely turn away, knowing that the machines must alight within a few hundred yards of one another, but until then—

"Safety first!" muttered Rex, and edged in yet closer by six inches.

Dank and grey the clouds received them and closed above their heads.

Minutes passed, minutes that seemed like hours as each bent every sense to his task, Rex watching for the slightest movement of the two machines, while Jim stared down and ahead, striving to pierce the murk.

He saw the dull gleam of water when they were barely fifty feet above it. Up shot one arm to give the warning signal.

Rex saw, knew that the moment of landing was upon them, and swerved his plane away with one swift sweep of stick and rudder.

Scarcely within sight of one another, though less than sixty yards apart, the two scouts floated silently, their tails gradually sinking as they flattened out to skim the wave crests.

It was then that it happened.

Out of the mist a beam of blazing light leapt at Jim and Rex, stabbing into their eyes, blinding and searing.

No living creature could have withstood that paralysing shock. Instinctively nerves and muscles flinched.

Like frightened horses the scouts reared up as their pilots automatically tugged at the sticks, rocketed twenty feet into the air, stalled, and plunged.

When a big black speedboat roared up through the swirling haze, the wash and ripples of that twin headlong dive were already spread wide on a sea empty except for shattered fragments of wings, and two pairs of battered sea-plane floats which sullenly drifted bottom upwards.

Jerked clear of his cockpit by the leaden weights, Rex had sunk to a depth of more than twenty feet before the confusion of mind and body cleared sufficiently for him to find the switch of the electric lamp that was attached to his belt.

As he snapped it on, and the surrounding water flared bright and yellow, his pulse quickened to a sense of sudden, overwhelming relief.

Slowly sinking and drawing nearer through the gloom was a dull star, which he knew must be Jim's light.

There followed a tense spell of battling towards one another in currents that seemed malevolently set upon keeping them apart. At last, however, lungs bursting and limbs agonised by the biting cold, their hands gripped, and, in the same instant, something solid touched their feet.

They had reached the bottom.

Automatically, each struggled to stand upright, only to be beaten down and carried helplessly forward, as though by the blast of a hurricane.

Battered, breathless, bleeding from a score of cuts, they were dragged over fields of jagged rocks, drawn through beds of clinging mud, and hurried like feathers in the wind across patches of firmer sand; onwards, ever onwards in the same unknown direction, and ever with increasing speed as the mighty force that gripped them gathered strength.

Blinded by the stinging water that crept behind their goggles, all but suffocated because of the heavy masks, deafened and stunned by the pressure, every conscious thought and effort was bent upon the task of keeping together.

Dimly, each was aware that he was in the grasp of a submarine stream against whose irresistible power they were as impotent as kittens in a mill race. But whether that stream were bearing them out towards the open sea and death, or towards land and safety, neither knew—nor, in the bewildering tumult of the moment, did either care.

Long since had their lamps been smashed and ground to atoms. The darkness that surrounded them was like the crushing darkness of a tomb deep buried.

It was a growing sense of dizziness which warned Jim that his oxygen supply was running low, and that, no matter what might await them on the surface, they must rise.

Grimly summoning his last reserves of waning strength, he groped for, found, turned the release dial on Rex's harness, and, as the boy shot upwards, discarded his own weights.

Ten feet, perhaps, they rose. No more.

For the first time in his life, then, Jim Tempest knew the full dreadful meaning of panic and despair.

Grazing and scraping past overhead was a roof of solid rock.

They were imprisoned.

Blow after blow beat down upon their defenceless bodies as the rushing water dashed them against unseen buttresses and crags, yet soon none of the blows was felt, for the two, still holding with frozen fingers, drifted beyond all feeling into the blank land of insensibility.

Rex recovered first.

Slowly he became aware of a sensation of freedom and gentle movement. Feebly he raised one arm, expecting to meet the weight of water. Unaccountably, so it seemed to him, there was no weight.

For a second he could not understand. Then, flooding and tingling through his veins there rushed realisation and hope.

He staggered upright, to find that the water barely reached his waist. Also there was light about him—faint, it is true, but as comforting as midday sunshine.

Something floated in the water close by, something immensely heavy that dragged at his right hand and arm.

He tried to release his fingers, but found them stiff, clenched, and powerless. Left-handed, he tore off the suffocating mask and goggles.

"Jim!" he croaked, straining to lift his brother's unconscious form. "We're through, Jim! We've got ashore!"

Fighting off a faintness that threatened to overwhelm him, he half towed, half dragged Jim through the shallows and up a gently shelving beach of gritty sand, where he collapsed, utterly exhausted, shuddering and gasping for air.

But iron constitutions and rigorous training had given them both vast funds of endurance and strength to draw upon.

An hour later, aided by a thermos of hot coffee, which had miraculously survived the journey, each had recovered sufficiently to sit up and take stock of his surroundings.

"Well," remarked Jim, gazing around, "we seem to have dropped into a pretty deep hole this time! I've often heard of these whacking great caverns, buried miles under mountains, and linked with the sea by a subterranean tunnel—but I never expected to pop up inside one! Gosh! You could build St. Paul's Cathedral down here, and still have plenty of room!"

He paused for a moment, eyes fixed on a dim and distant angle of wall.

"That's where the light's coming from," he went on slowly. "You can see the line of that rocky buttress pretty nearly up to the roof. There must be an opening or something round that corner. Come on. Let's explore."

"Just a moment," demurred Rex. "Doesn't it seem to you that there's a sort of faint droning or throbbing going on—like—like machinery at work?"

While Jim listened intently, then whistled.

"You've hit it!" he exclaimed softly. "It is machinery! We've landed at the right address, young fella, or I'll eat my hat! This is where we collect some genuine inside information about our weather wizards. Gang warily, Rex. There's no knowing what we shall find round that corner!"

Moving with the utmost caution, they crept to the dimly illumined edge of rock, peered round it, then lay as though turned to stone by amazement at what they saw.

The Tanks!

IT was another cavern into which they looked, as immense as the one with the water-hole, but brilliantly lit up.

Ranked on either side down the centre of the cave, were two rows of gigantic machines, each as large as an express locomotive.

Forty of them, they counted, and around each monster was clustered a little group of busy men.

"Tanks!" hissed Jim. "And, by gosh, what whoppers!" Between the two rows of tanks was a line of massive lathes, drills, hammers, and colossal cutting tools of strange design. Overhead was a horizontal jungle of shafts, pulleys, and belting.

One end of the cavern, Rex noticed, was shut in by a gleaming cliff of metal.

He was wondering what this huge barrier might be when a narrow thread of light appeared against it, stretching from roof to floor.

"Look, Jim!" he whispered, seizing his brother's arm. "It's a door—two doors—and they're sliding apart!"

Slowly the thread widened to form a vertical band, through which could be seen a panel of blue sky and snowy landscape.

With a clattering of caterpillar tracks, and a thunderous snorting of exhausts, another tank surged cumbrously in through the opening, which closed behind it.

"The main entrance," muttered Jim thoughtfully. "Did you notice, Rex, that it only took two men on each of those thumping great doors to roll 'em apart? They must be extraordinarily light—probably duralumin, or something of the sort—as tough as steel and as thin as cardboard!"

There was a tinge of excitement in Jim's voice that made Rex glance at him curiously, but before the boy could ask questions, he continued:

FOR THE HIKER.

Hiking has its charms and customs, too. The chewing habit is fast becoming a custom which no self-respecting hiker will ever disregard. Whether walking or cycling a piece of Wrigley's every now and then keeps the mouth cool and fresh as the miles mount up. Workers find chewing gum good for digestion, too, after meals. People in every walk of life are finding satisfaction in this delicious sweetmeat.

"And there's a very interesting looking door let into the rock over there. See it? The one with two glass windows and a sort of greenish light shining through. If we keep to the shadow, we can get there without being spotted. It might turn out to be a convenient sort of cubby-hole to use as an observation-post."

As Jim had expected, they reached the door without difficulty or danger. All that could be seen through the glass windows was a strange, flickering, green glare.

"Seems empty," breathed Jim. "We'd better slip in and risk it. Someone's bound to see us if we hang about outside here."

The door yielded to a gentle pull, and a moment later, they were behind its shelter, groping cautiously forward.

"All O.K.," murmured Jim. "If this isn't luck, I'm—"

The sentence died on his lips as his blood curdled coldly. From somewhere out of the surrounding flood of green there issued a low, fat, satisfied chuckle.

"Krughanger," rumbled an amused voice. "Close the door behind our visitors, lock it, and turn up the lights."

A switch clicked.

At first it was difficult for the two to see in the dazzle of white light, but as sight cleared the two found themselves staring at an immensely fat, bald-headed man who was sitting in an invalid's wheeled chair and watching them with little twinkling eyes as black as boot buttons.

Looking round Jim saw that the door was guarded by another man—a cadaverous giant with sunken eyes and a shaggy mane of white hair.

The room itself was long, narrow, and high, and packed with electrical apparatus. One wall consisted of black vulcanite, and was studded with countless switches, dials, and valves. On the opposite side was a blank surface of similar design. This surface resembled frosted glass minutely ribbed horizontally and vertically.

"Captain Tempest and the junior partner, I presume?" pursued the fat man amiably.

Jim nodded. There was nothing to be gained by denial.

"You are welcome. I must, however, apologise for not rising to greet you more courteously. Unfortunately, I am a cripple and confined to this chair. I can, however, at least introduce myself and my colleague. I am Professor Ockley Toreor, and my lean friend is Mr. Wilmot S. Krughanger. I supply the scientific brains of our campaign, while Mr. Krughanger—who, fortunately, happens to be a multi-millionaire—supplies the sinews of war—in other words, cash. Between us, therefore, we shall indubitably conquer the world—which means, I should point out, that by opposing us you have all been wasting your time in a singularly ill-advised enterprise!"

To this boast Jim made no direct response. "You don't seem particularly surprised to see us," he observed reflectively.

The scientist rippled and shook with laughter. "In a sense I am surprised," he admitted, "because I never credited you with sufficient imagination to use Davis' apparatus, and I never counted on your having the astonishing good luck to be drawn through the tunnel from the sea and cast up on the shores of our very interesting subterranean lake round the corner."

"Otherwise—no, I am not surprised, for I saw you coming and I saw our men pull you up with their dazzle beams."

"Saw us!" echoed Jim incredulously.

"Yes—saw you—with my own eyes! What is the good of claiming to be a scientist if one cannot solve a simple little problem like television? I solved it years ago. All around here, at a distance of fifty miles, there is an electromagnetic barrage thrown out by our power plant. As soon as any moving object, such as an aeroplane, cuts across that barrage our instruments pick it out, and we can observe its progress as easily as though it were visible in the field of a telescope."

While speaking the cripple had been busy among the switches and maze of electrical controls.

"I will demonstrate," he concluded, with all the pride of a child about to perform a trick. "Watch the screen, please—that glass wall there!"

The ever-present drumming and throbbing of machinery deepened to an angry drone. The lights dimmed, and the screen glowed phosphorescently.

Gradually emerging against the greenish background, like an image on a photographic plate, a dark, cigar-shaped object detached itself, motionless, and with one end buried in a mud-coloured strip at the bottom of the screen.

Jim and Rex stared aghast as a dreadful realisation came to them.

"The submarine!" they gasped together.

A switch snapped, the image faded, and the lights rose.

"Exactly!" chuckled Professor Ockley Toreor. "The Q 47 herself, complete with Commander Sherwell and his gallant men, gripped fast in a magnetic field so intense that

her machinery is jammed and she has no more freedom of movement than a compass needle!"

"How long has she been like that?" demanded Jim tensely.

"Only twelve hours. Her crew will still be alive—but not for long!"

A rasping voice broke in. It was Krughanger, the millionaire.

"I deplore their deaths," he declared passionately, "and I do not consider it necessary!"

In a flash the professor turned on him, his round face livid, his lips drawn back in a snarl that exposed yellow teeth.

"Still full of sugary sentiment!" he hissed. "Your soft heart would ruin us all if you had your way! Let the rats drown—and the more there are of them the better!"

That scene told Jim a lot. He guessed now that Krughanger was only a crazy idealist, probably with wildcat schemes for reforming the world against its will—knew also that Ockley Toreor, for all his mask of obese geniality, was a ruthless maniac who loved killing for its own sake.

In the Wreckers' Camp!

BUT at the moment the characters of the World Wrecker chiefs held only a passing interest for Jim. His mind was busy with a more pressing problem.

Two objects had caught his attention.

One was an immense switch and a row of fuse boxes set into the wall facing the door. The other was a slight but significant bulge in Krughanger's hip pocket.

He knew well enough what the bulge meant, but he was not so certain about the switch and fuse boxes.

If he was wrong in his conjecture concerning them, then the plan that he had conceived could only end disastrously; if he was right, then their original million-to-one chance still held good.

Only a second did he hesitate, weighing the odds. The image of Q 47, helpless at the bottom of the sea, flashed through his memory.

That settled it.

His eyes caught Rex's and flickered downwards to Krughanger's knees.

"Collar him low!" he howled, and sprang like a panther upon a buck.

What followed was scarcely a fight.

Krughanger was lying stunned, and Jim had whipped the revolver from his hip pocket almost before Ockley Toreor could follow their lightning movements.

But the moment that he did understand what was hap-

pening his mouth opened like a frog's and from it there issued a screech of fury so diabolical that Rex felt his blood run cold.

Fighting down a wild impulse to silence the wretch with a bullet, Jim aimed at the topmost fuse box and fired.

Crack!

Glass tinkled, a spark blazed, acrid smoke gushed forth. That was all.

Crack!

The second box burst into a thousand fragments.

Still the lights shone and the distant machinery throbbed. From outside in the great cavern came shouts and the sound of running feet.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The fifth shot told.

A thousand lightning flashes filled the air with their glare and crackle. Then for an impalpable fraction of time all was dark and still, as though the very world had died.

Jim's conjecture had been right. He had found and shattered the main fuse that was the key to all the Wreckers' power plant.

Not long did the stupefied silence endure. From out of the black emptiness then there rang again the echoing screams and curses of the man in the chair, merged with the low dreadful roar of a mob gathering in fury.

Through the glass panels in the door could be seen innumerable small lights, sparkling and weaving to and fro—the emergency handlamps of the workers in the cavern.

Jim groped on the floor, found the unconscious form of Krughanger, and hoisted the limp body across his shoulders.

In the flickering gleams Rex saw and wondered.

"Why bring him?" he yelled.

"To tell us where Osborne and the rest are! Leave him to me! Slogh one of the lads outside and grab his lamp. Follow the wall round to the tank nearest the big doors. Collar one of the crew and hold him up with this gun till I come—I shan't be long! Now shoulder open the door and scoot!"

Using every ounce of his weight Rex sprang at the door.

With a snapping of metal and splintering of wood it slammed back on its hinges so suddenly that he stumbled staggering into the nearest of the lamp bearers.

His fist shot into the darkness and cracked against the angle of a jaw. A heavy body sagged to the ground.

Snatching up the precious lamp, the boy darted to the left, crashed into the wall with a violence that all but knocked him out, and zigzagged blindly in the direction where he guessed the great metal barrier must be.

All around dancing lights cast writhing shadows, or revealed, as by lightning flashes, groping fingers and set, grim faces.

He dared not leave the guiding wall. Once in the open and he would be lost.

This fact the pursuers soon realised. From all sides their lights converged upon his path, while close behind him there pounded one fast runner who was gaining steadily.

At first the expectancy of capture came perilously near to panic, but he fought down the horror and by that conquering effort found the idea that brought escape.

Without pausing in his stride, he hurled himself flat, face downwards, waited until the pursuer stumbled between his legs, and whirled over on to his back.

Caught by the lashing limbs, his enemy toppled sideways like a falling tree. A squirm, a wrench, and Rex had him pinned against the wall, winded and croaking dismally.

"Got 'im!" yelled the boy. "Here! Help! Here!"

So as always to have dry headgear, to change into after flying through snow, he invariably carried a spare helmet and face mask in the thigh pocket of his flying suit.

In furious haste as he shouted he whipped them out, forced the helmet over his victim's head, and slipped the mask into position, tightening the elastic band to its limit.

"Here!" he howled. "Help! Here!"

As the lights swooped eagerly down the wall from each direction he rolled away into the shadow of a neighbouring tank, lay still while the hunters pounced upon the masked and struggling figure, doubled round the front of his sheltering mammoth, regained the wall, and sped upon his way.

The tumult of the fight was far behind when he reached the last of the tanks. Fumbling along its mighty sides, he was suddenly blinded by a light that blazed full in his face.

"Steady!" came Jim's cool voice, as the boy crouched back to spring. "All's well, and a quiet night! Krughanger's already inside, and I've ju-jitsu'd a little blighter here who knows the gadgets. Shin up this ladder and drop through the manhole in the roof. I'll follow with our new recruit."

(Will Jim and Rex succeed in getting away with the tank? Look out for super-thrills in next week's great instalment.)

Skimpole, the Deep Sea Diver!



Skimpole and Gussy have a shot at salving Skimmy's microscope from the Condor! Boys, next week's yarn is a wow!

THE SHIPWRECKED SCHOOL!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Give 'em socks!" shouted Blake.

And the St. Jim's juniors drew together and rushed on in a body, and the Commers, fewer in number, and growing breathless, broke before the rush.

They went scattering among the beds, and a dozen of them were penned up in a corner, and assailed with incessant swipes till they surrendered.

This surrender was the finish for Headland. The remaining Commers were only twenty against thirty, and they were chased and run down and captured one by one.

Tompkinson III made a grimace of disgust as prisoner after prisoner was sent to swell the crowd under the window.

"We're done!" he remarked.

"We're not bound to stick here," Barker suggested.

"Suppose we—"

"Oh, don't be a cad!"

The last of the valiant Commers was Norris, and he made a stand between two beds for several minutes, till the swipes of a dozen pillows laid him low, and he was sent to join the rest.

"My-hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "This is rather warm work! But we've done them!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "We've done them, deah boys!"

"A lot you've done!" sniffed Blake. "You've been a giddy prisoner all the time!"

"I was taken at wathah a disadvantage. I dropped my beastly eyeglass, and while I was lookin' for it a wottah swiped me."

"Game's up," said Tompkinson, coming forward with a pink face. "Of course, we ought to have had the best of it, but you can never account for these flukes."

"Just what I was thinking," remarked Punter.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, if you're satisfied, we are. And we don't mind you calling it a fluke, either. But look here, we're not going to turn you out of your beds. Suppose we pack in and share them, after all?"

The prospect of sleeping on the floor, now that it was certain they would have to do it, was not enticing to the Headlanders, so Tom Merry's suggestion was received very cordially.

"Well," said Tompkinson III, "if all you chaps say the same—"

"Of course we do!" said Blake heartily.

"Here, I say—" began Mellish.

"Of course we do!" said Tom Merry hastily. "And if any fellow on my side raised the slightest objection, I should give him such a hiding that his own mother wouldn't know him. Did you speak, Mellish?"

"No!" snapped Mellish.

"It's a good idea," said Figgins. "I don't mind for one, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, it's jolly decent of you!" said Tompkinson III.

"Let's turn in, then. I'm jolly well tired, to tell the truth."

And the rival-juniors turned in very amicably.

And soundly they did sleep, and did not awake till the clang of the rising-bell was borne through the morning air.

The St. Jim's boys breakfasted at Headland, and then they took their leave of the Commercial Collegians. They parted with much good will on both sides.

"See you again some time," said Tompkinson III cheerily, as he shook hands with Tom Merry. "We may be able to fix up a footer match."

"Good!" exclaimed Tom Merry heartily. "We'd like nothing better!"

"And it would be a real pleasure for us to teach you chaps how to play footer," said Tompkinson.

"We're willing to learn," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"But perhaps it will turn out like the pillow-fight, you know."

The crowded train bore the juniors of St. Jim's homeward. Their travels were over—for the present, at least—and the new term was before them. Their holiday had been chequered, yet, upon the whole, they had greatly enjoyed it. All the same, they were not sorry to see the familiar faces again.

A large and dusty party arrived in the September sunshine at the gates of St. Jim's, and Taggles, the porter, stared at them as he opened the gates.

"Here we are again!" said Figgins affably.

Taggles grunted.

"Dear old chap!" said Tom Merry affectionately. "He's so overjoyed to see us again that he can't even speak. He is speechless."

"He often is," grinned Monty Lowther. "Taggles, while you are yet young, learn to discard the tempting cup!"

Taggles snorted, and retreated into his lodge. And the boys of St. Jim's marched in, and joyfully enough entered into their own quarters.

THE END.

(Tom Merry and Co. are back at St. Jim's now, but they haven't seen the last of the Condor yet! Next week's yarn, "SKIMPOLE, THE DEEP-SEA DIVER!" is a scream.)

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