

CONTINUOUS
VARIETY!
YOUR FAVOURITE
STARS -
TOM MERRY & Co
INSIDE!

THE GEM

2^d



FIGGY'S CELLO SOLO!

SMUGGLED to



Tom Merry & Co. scarcely realised what a job they had on when they smuggled 'Erbert, the ragamuffin, into St. Jim's! They knew he lacked knowledge, but even they were surprised when they found that he thought history and geography were something to eat!

CHAPTER 1.

The Return of the Travellers!

TOM MERRY of the Shell Form at St. Jim's started out of a doze. Lights were gleaming ahead through the spring dusk, and the train was slowing down. Tom rubbed his eyes.

"By Jove! I've been asleep!"

No one controverted that statement. The half-dozen juniors belonging to the famous school of St. Jim's who occupied the carriage were all busy just then.

Manners and Lowther, Tom Merry's chums in the Shell, were deeply engaged upon a never-ending game of chess. Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries were engaged in a warm argument on the subject of cricket, a subject that was taking up much of the attention of St. Jim's juniors at this time, in view of the coming season.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was polishing his silk hat with loving care and inexhaustible patience. Skimpole was busy with a pencil in his hand and a notebook on his knee.

From a youth leaning back in a corner of the carriage came an unmusical snore.

Tom Merry glanced at the sleeper, and smiled.

The slumbering lad was evidently of the party, yet not of them. He was of a diminutive but wiry frame, and his face—though that of a lad of thirteen—was curiously lined, as though he had most of the troubles of life even at that early age. As indeed he had, for the lad was a street arab of Liverpool, whom Tom Merry and his friends had taken

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from his old haunts, intending to look after him and provide for him in some manner not yet determined on.

It was a generous determination of the St. Jim's juniors; but the more Tom Merry thought about it, the more difficult the task seemed.

In an hour of excitement, in a Liverpool slum at the dead of night, when the little ragamuffin had saved the juniors from a terrible danger, it had seemed the most natural thing to do, to take him in hand and look after him. But now, on their return home, with St. Jim's close at hand, and probably some of the fellows at the station to meet them, the matter presented itself in a somewhat different light.

Not that Tom Merry repented for a moment!

It was not that. He was determined to stand by 'Erbert, as 'Erbert had stood by him. But what was to be done?

That was the question, and the juniors had put off finding an answer to it till the last moment. But the last moment was near at hand now! They would soon be at the school, and 'Erbert's presence in the party would have to be explained.

Tom Merry had been thinking the matter over when he fell asleep. The juniors had had a long journey, and they were fatigued. Wayland was looming up before them now; the last change before home. The train was slowing down, and Tom Merry had awakened from his doze, but 'Erbert slept on.

And—brave and honest lad as 'Erbert had proved himself—there were certainly some points about him which were not exactly up to the form of St. Jim's. He was dressed in ready-made clothes, the quickest change Tom Merry could

—ST. JIM'S, AND HOW TOM MERRY & CO. BROUGHT HIM THERE!

SCHOOL!

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

find for the old rags he had worn since a street boy. The "reach-me-downs" were a great improvement; but only by comparison with the former garments. They fitted the youth where they touched him, so to speak. And, in spite of great care and vigilance, 'Erbert's face had become grubby again, and his hands were decidedly soiled. And he was so keenly distressed by the necessity of wearing gloves, that Tom had not had the heart to insist upon it so far. And 'Erbert had not learned to keep his mouth closed while he was asleep.

He was leaning back now with that aperture wide open, and a loud snore proceeded from him that was distinctly audible through the carriage, and probably in the next one.

"Wake up, kid!" said Tom Merry.

But 'Erbert slept on.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave his silk hat a final polish, replaced it on his head, and looked up. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and took a survey of 'Erbert.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy, he is a sleepin' beauty, and no mistake."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I wish I knew what we were going to do with him," he remarked. "He's a fine little chap, and we've got to do our best for him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He saved our lives," said Jack Blake. "There's not much doubt on that point. No, I won't argue the point any further, Dig. You may call it a late cut, if you like, but what I say is—"

"Rubbish!" said Dig cheerfully.

"If you want to take a thick ear home to St. Jim's with you, Dig, you're going just the right way to work," said Blake darkly.

"Rats!" said Dig.

"Here, hold on!" said Tom Merry. "For goodness' sake don't you Fourth Form kids begin to row, now."

The Fourth-Formers fixed an aggressive glare upon Tom Merry.

"Whom are you calling kids?"

"Yaas, wathah, Tom Mewwy! I wegard the expression as distinctly derogatory to the dig of the leadahs of the School House juniars—"

"Now, you ring off, Gussy—"

"I wefuse to wing off. I—"

"Wayland!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The train stopped. The jerk of it was followed by a grunt from Monty Lowther as the chessmen danced on the board.

'Erbert started and awoke, and rubbed his eyes with his grimy knuckles, leaving dusty circles round them.

"Crikey!" he remarked. "I've bin asleep!"

"Change here!" said Tom Merry. "Put those toys away, Lowther—"

Monty Lowther glared.

"If you can't say anything more sensible than that, Tom Merry—"

"You don't want to go on to Southampton, I suppose? Put 'em away!"

Lowther grunted, and clicked the fastener on the pocket chessboard, to keep the pieces on the squares they belonged to, and then closed the board and slipped it into his overcoat pocket. He rose and stretched his long legs.

"I'm about tired of the railway," he remarked. "It will be all right to get a feed in the study at St. Jim's, after this beastly travelling. Jolly lucky we're getting back after last lesson, too!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry opened the carriage door, and the juniors tumbled out. 'Erbert took a bag in each hand off the rack and followed them. Jack Blake jerked one of them away from him on the platform.

"I can carry it, sir," said 'Erbert eagerly. "I've carried more'n this afore now."

"Rats!" said Blake. "You haven't come here to wait on us, kid. And if you call me 'Sir' again, I'll give you a thick ear!"

'Erbert grinned, and yielded the bag. The juniors crossed the platform to where the local train was waiting, which

was to take them to Rylcombe, the station for St. Jim's. There was a pattering of feet on the platform, and three youths in school caps came racing up.

"My hat! Here's Figgy!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn halted breathlessly.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Figgins. "We were over in Wayland, and we thought we'd meet you here, kids. Of course, we've been anxious about you. You School House kids are always getting into scrapes."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Hallo, here's Gussy, alive and kicking!" said Figgins genially. "Same old duffer! I was awfully alarmed about him after you went—"

"That is vewy kind of you, Figgins; but pway what was the cause of the alarm?"

"Why, I heard that they had a menagerie in Liverpool, and I thought you might go to see it," exclaimed Figgins, "and, of course, the keepers wouldn't have let you come away again, and so—"

"I wegard that as a wotten joke, Figgins. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' to laugh at in Figgins' wotten, diswespectful remarks, Tom Mewwy. Undah the cires—"

"Better get into the train," said Figgins. "I say, is this a friend of yours?"

And he stared blankly at 'Erbert.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy immediately. "He is a gwreat fwend of ours, and will have to be tweated with pwoper wespect, Figgins."

"Crikey!" said 'Erbert.

Figgins & Co. stared, as well they might. But there was no more time for talk just then. The juniors swarmed into a carriage in the local train, and the bags were stacked on the rack. The train glided out of the station. There were twelve lads in the carriage, so it was pretty full. And Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff of the New House, occupied enough room for any two of the others. But they squeezed in somehow, 'Erbert standing up.

And as the train started Fatty Wynn leaned over and tapped Digby on the knee.

"Got it?" he asked.

The returning traveller stared at him.

"Got what?" he demanded.

"Oh, come, you remember!"

"Eh?"

"Look here!" said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "Don't rot, you know, on a serious subject. Have you got it—the toffee? You jolly well know you promised to bring me a lot of Everton toffee from Liverpool."

"Oh," said Digby, with a grin, "that's all right! I've got it!"

And he opened one of the bags, and brought out a packet of toffee, the dimensions of which made even Fatty Wynn open his eyes.

"Good," said the New House junior—"good! I knew you wouldn't forget, Dig. That's awfully decent of you! I say, you chaps, have some toffee!"

And they all accepted chunks of the famous Everton toffee, and discussed it with great relish as the train glided through the spring dusk towards St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 2.

The Only Way!

THE thoughtful shade deepened upon Tom Merry's face as the train-dashed on towards St. Jim's.

The crisis was coming. Before long now the question of 'Erbert had to be definitely settled, and the solution seemed no nearer now than it had seemed twenty-four hours ago.

Figgins & Co. looked at 'Erbert with natural curiosity. When and how he had joined the party was a mystery to them. And what Tom Merry intended to do with him a greater puzzle still.

'Erbert was grinning a little uneasily. He had jumped at the offer to escape from slum life. But the meeting with new fellows from St. Jim's made him realise that he

was venturing into strange waters. The nerve and coolness which had been his in the Liverpool streets seemed likely to desert him in such a new and curious situation.

"Make room for the kid," said Tom Merry.

"It's all right, sir," said 'Erbert. "I kin stand."

"Bosh! You can't!"

"Certainly not, deah boy. Pway squeeze up a little, Wynn. You weally do take up too-much woom, you know. Pway sit down beside me, Wags!"

"Wags!" said Figgins, looking amazed. "You dqn't mean to say that chap's name is Wags?"

"Yaas, wathah! Herbert Wags!"

"My hat!"

"That's me name, sir," grinned 'Erbert. "'Erbert, sir—'Erbert Rags."

"Oh, Rags!" said Figgins, comprehending. "Jolly good name, too! Jolly glad to see you, Rags! Did you win him in a raffle, Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No. He saved our lives."

"Phew!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I will welaye the circs."

"Cut it short, then."

"Weally, I must wefuse to cut it short. This deservin' kid wisked his life, in the first place, to save my toppah from bein' wun ova."

"Young ass!"

"I wogard that wemark as wotten, Figgins. Then he stopped a wascally person, who was wobbin' me of my watch, and in return I went to his wescidence to wescue him from the same wuffian. Unfortunately we got into dangah, and should pwoably have been vewy much hurt if Wags hadn't come in the nick of time and helped us out of a weally wotten sewape."

"My hat! You talk like a book, Gussy."

"Yaas, I think I have wathah a good powah of desewip-tion," said D'Arcy modestly. "And I uttably fail to see anythin' to gwin at, Tom Mewwy. Have you enough woom to be comfy, Wags?"

"Snore!"

"Bai Jove, the young boundah's asleep again!"

'Erbert's head was leaning back on a cushion, and he was snoring. He was tired, and not in the habit of standing on ceremony when he was tired.

"Let him have his nap," said Tom Merry. "I'm blessed if I know how to arrange matters! You see, Figgy, we had to take him from the place he lived in, and I'd do a great deal to give him a chance in life. But the question is how are we going to do it?"

Skimpole looked up from his notebook, and blinked through his spectacles at the chums of St. Jim's. He had not been writing for some time, apparently having been engaged in thinking something out.

Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, was very strong on Determinism, and any other "ism." But Skimmy sometimes had good ideas.

"May I make a suggestion?" he asked mildly.

"Yes, certainly! Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—"

"I was thinking. Is Rags asleep, D'Arcy? It is better for him not to hear his future being discussed."

"Yaas; he's sleepin' like a top."

"Very well. Why not take him to St. Jim's?"

"Eh?"

"He could enter the school as a new boy."

"A—a new boy?"

"Certainly!" said Skimpole, beaming round through his spectacles upon the amazed juniors. "Enter him as a new boy. We could have a whip round to make up his fees. Unfortunately I have no money, but D'Arcy could get some from his governor, and you from Miss Fawcett, Merry. All of you could contribute. And, after all, the fees are not so very high."

"But—"

"Besides, as the term is so advanced, there would be only half-term fees to pay," said Skimpole. "I think the idea is a good one. If we keep Rags under our own eyes, we could look after him. In the intervals of the lessons, I could give him instructions in the great truths of Determinism."

"Wats! You won't be allowed to boah him to death, Skimmy."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"There's something in Skimmy's suggestion," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "We ought to keep him under our eyes, if possible."

"Yaas, wathah! I intend to be a fathah to him."

"He's of a good age to enter the Third Form," said Monty Lowther, looking at the young sleeping ragamuffin critically. "And he's not much dirtier than D'Arcy's young brother Wally."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

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"And he's more tidy in his ways than Wally, and a jolly sight more amenable to the authority of his elders."

"Yaas, I admit that much. Wally certainly nevah shows me the wespoot due to an eldah bwothah."

"But you could never work it," said Manners. "Dr. Holmes is a good old sort, but you couldn't expect him to take a ragamuffin in. Rags is a decent little chap, but—"

"It's impossible," said Herries. "We might get him a job about the school, perhaps. He could look after my bulldog Towser."

"Blow your bulldog Towsah! I should wefuse to allow Wags to entah the coll on an infewiah footin', and I am surprised at you suggestin' it, Hewwies."

"Oh, keep your wool on, Gussy! I was only suggestin' it for the kid's good. I expect he'd feel pretty uncomfy in the Third Form of St. Jim's. And if he didn't, the other fags would jolly soon make him."

"There's that to be considered," said Tom Merry gravely. "There would be—well, some prejudice against the kid, and—there are snobs at St. Jim's, as there are everywhere else; and we know the kid is decent, but the other fellows don't."

"Yaas, wathah! But I should ordah my young bwothah Wally to look aftah him."

"Wally obeys your orders, doesn't he?" grinned Digby.

"If he wefused to do so, I should give him a feaful 'lhwashin'!"

"That wouldn't help the kid much. Besides, Dr. Holmes would never admit him as a pupil. You couldn't expect it."

Jack Blake had been silent for some minutes. He now spoke.

"I think it's a good idea. But, of course, it's no good taking the kid openly to school and presenting him as a new boy. He would get the order of the push at once. Dr. Holmes wouldn't understand. Masters never do understand things as well as we do, and it's no good arguing with a master. The boulder always has a cane handy for juniors who want to argue, and that settles any dispute. If Rags is going to St. Jim's, we shall have to smuggle him in."

"Smuggle him?"

"Yes. Why not? We can march him in with us, without his being noticed, as it's after dark. We'll tell the fellows he's a new boy from Liverpool. So he is! We'll report him to the Housemaster as a new kid, and Mr. Railton will think Dr. Holmes knows all about it. We'll take the fees to Dr. Holmes, and Dr. Holmes will think Mr. Railton knows all about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, such a wheeze has never been worked before, and so there can't possibly be any suspicion."

"There'll be a row when it comes out."

"I don't see why it ever should come out."

"Well, Rags doesn't speak exactly—ahem!—he doesn't speak in the choicest English. And I don't know if he's ever been to school before."

"Still, he's a North Country chap," said Blake, who hailed from Yorkshire himself. "He will pick up things jolly sharp. You've only got to give a North Countryman half a chance, and he's on it like a bird. I know 'em!"

"Yes, there's something in that, perhaps; but—"

"Well, it isn't a choice between this idea and a better one, but between this and nothing at all."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, we'll try it!" exclaimed Tom Merry, making up his mind. "If we could plant the kid at St. Jim's, it would be the making of him, and it's worth some risk and trouble. If there's a row, we can stand it. It won't be the first."

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

"Good!" said Figgins. "We'll back you up, too. It's possible we shall be able to pull the thing off."

"Then I'll wake the kid up and tell him." Tom Merry shook 'Erbert by the shoulder, and the street arab woke up.

"Hallo, Rags! We're near the station."

"Crikey! I bin asleep!"

"Listen to me, kid," said Tom Merry. "Would you like to come to the school with us, to stay there?"

'Erbert's eyes glistened.

"Wouldn't I just!" he said emphatically.

"I think we might be able to work it," said Tom Merry.

"We don't want to part with you. Have you been to school before?"

Rags shook his head.

"Can you read and write?"

"I kin read a bit," said Rags brightly. "The print on the boards outside the news-shops, you know—'Orrible Murder! Shockin' Tragedy in 'Igh Life!'"

"H'm! I'm afraid we don't get much of that kind of reading at St. Jim's," said Tom Merry, a little hopelessly.

"Can you write?"

"I kin print a little," said 'Erbert.

"Do you know anything about geography, history, or anything?"

"That's 'cordin' to what they is," said 'Erbert cautiously. "I desay I does. Are they anythin' to eat?"

"My word!" said Digby. "Hardly up to the Third Form," grinned Figgins. "Even Wally would be able to teach the kid things."

'Erbert's face fell. He thought he had somehow offended his friends, and a curious expression came over his face, an expression that went straight to Tom Merry's heart. It was so curiously like that of a dog that knows he has unwittingly offended.

"You'd better let me go, sir," said 'Erbert, in a low voice. "I ain't fit to mix with you young gents. I don't know nothin'. I shan't never be able to understand 'arf the words this young gent uses."

And he nodded at Skimpole.

Tom Merry laughed, and the others joined in.

instructed as to how he should comport himself on his arrival. But as most of the juniors talked at once, and as they nearly all held divergent views, it is to be feared that 'Erbert did not benefit much by their instruction.

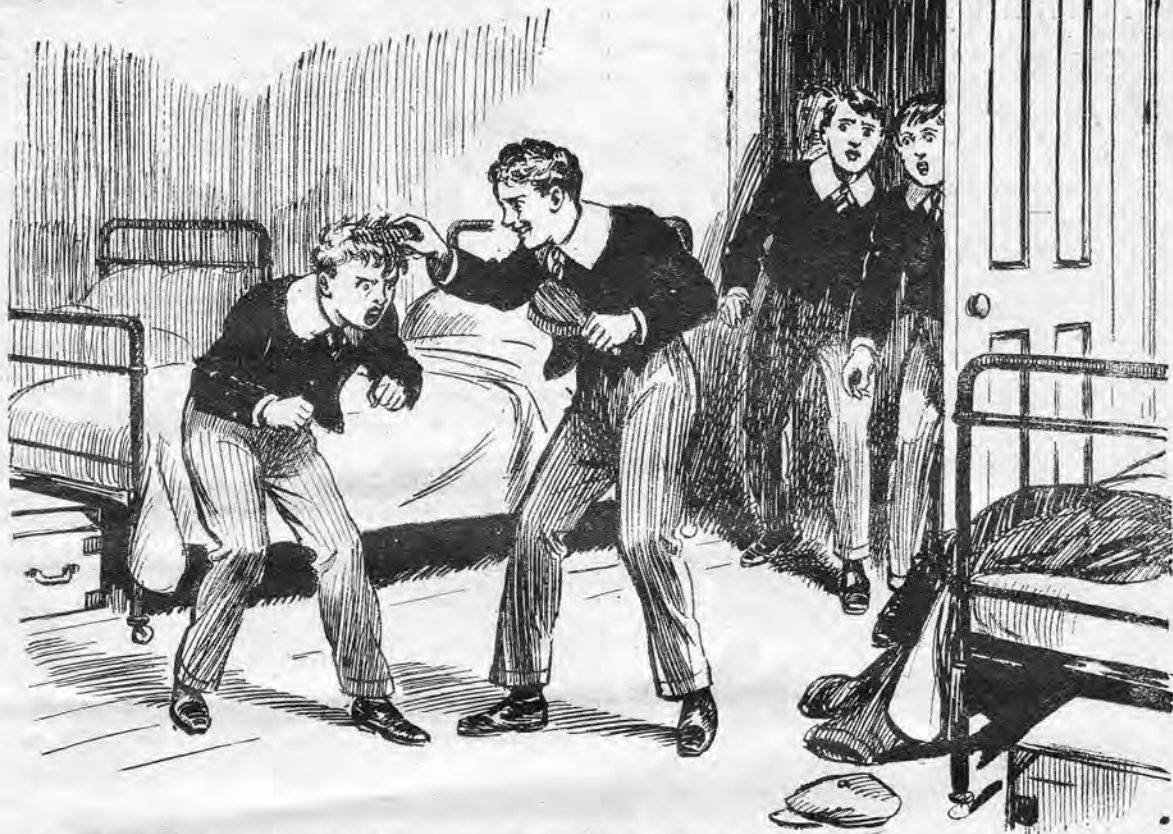
CHAPTER 3.

The New Boy!

THE juniors, keeping 'Erbert in their midst, walked on without the stranger being even perceived by the school porter.

In the quadrangle Figgins & Co. stopped.

"You've got him past the dragon all right," he remarked.



'Erbert's hair, which apparently had never known a comb, was difficult to deal with, but Wally offered to do it for him. "Yow!" shrieked 'Erbert. But Wally kept on with it, and the new boy set his teeth and bore the pain grimly.

"That's all right," he said. "We don't understand what Skimmy says ourselves, and, as a matter of absolute fact, Skimmy doesn't understand, either."

"Really, Tom Merry—"

"As for other things," said Tom Merry, "we'll try to help you. We'll all lend a hand in our spare time, and if you're quick, and pick up things, you may get on. Anyway, we're going to try it, if you're agreeable."

"I'll do anythin' you tell me, sir."

"Good! Then you're going into St. Jim's as a new boy, and, first of all, you must stop calling me 'sir,' and call me 'Merry.'"

"Yes, sir—I mean Merry."

The train was slackening speed.

"Here we are at Rylcombe," said Tom Merry. "We walk to St. Jim's from here. Don't talk more than you can help at the school, kid, but keep your eyes open—eyes open, and mouth shut, you know."

'Erbert grinned intelligently. Although in matters of education he was hopelessly behind the St. Jim's boys, in other matters he was as far ahead of them. His life in the streets had taught him caution and cunning without spoiling his frank and honest nature.

The faults of his training, perhaps, were to come out more markedly later, when the juniors knew him better.

The train stopped, and the party alighted. They walked to the school in the thick dusk, and en route 'Erbert was

"I hope you'll have luck in the School House. Are you too tired after your journey to come to a feed?"

"Not much!"

"Then come along to the New House in about half an hour, and you'll find us ready," said Figgins.

"He looks lively enough," said Lowther, with a glance at Fatty Wynn.

"Eh? I was speaking figuratively."

"Oh, I thought you were speaking of Wynn!"

"Look here, Lowther—" began Fatty Wynn wrathfully. But Figgins chuckled, and pulled him away, and the New House trio went off towards their own House.

Tom Merry & Co. entered the School House. They had got 'Erbert past the school porter without remark, but getting him into the lighted House was another matter. And as the time of Tom Merry's train was known, there were a good many fellows expecting him.

As soon as the juniors came in there was a gathering of fellows at once to see and speak to them.

"Faith, and ye're back!" said Reilly. "Sure, and I'm glad to see ye! Who's that ye've brought with ye?"

"Where did you dig that up?" asked Gore of the Shell, staring at 'Erbert. "I say, what's your name, my buck?"

"'Erbert."

"Herbert! What else?"

"Rags."

"Ha, ha, ha! Herbert Rags! Where did you learn to speak? What kind of a critter have you been digging up, Tom Merry?"

"Mind your own business!" said Tom Merry gruffly. "He's a new boy."

"Come to take Binks' place? I didn't know Binks had the sack."

"Don't be a rotter, Gore!"

"Look here, Merry, you don't mean to say that that kid is coming to St. Jim's to mix with us?" exclaimed the cad of the Shell.

"Not to mix with you," said Lowther. "He's rather particular whom he mixes with."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"Bai Jove, Lowthah, I wogard that as wathah funny!"

"Look here," shouted Gore, "what are you getting at? The kid hasn't an 'h' in him. He can't be coming into a Form here!"

"He is coming into a Junior Form," said Blake. "You shut up! He's not coming into the Shell, so you needn't worry."

"But, I say—"

"You've said enough. Shut up!"

And Tom Merry & Co. pushed their way on, leaving Gore and the rest in amazement.

'Erbert was looking red and disquieted. It was dawning upon him that he would have a thorny path to follow at St. Jim's. But he was too grateful to Tom Merry & Co. to think of questioning their judgment.

"Come up to the study," said Lowther.

Tom Merry's study was soon reached. The new boy was watched by some dozen pairs of eyes till he was out of sight. Tom Merry looked a little worried.

"Of course, we might have expected that Gore and Mellish and their set would make trouble if they could," said Digby.

"I suppose so. We— Where are you going, Herries?"

"I'm going to feed my bulldog."

And Herries disappeared. He was uneasy about what might have happened to Towser in his absence, and no other matter was of quite as much importance to Herries.

"It's jolly good of Figgins to ask us to a feed on the evenin' of our return!" said D'Arcy. "I'll go and change my clothes."

And he followed Herries from the study.

"We've got the kid in here," said Tom Merry. "Those togs were all right for him to travel in, but they won't do for St. Jim's. He'll have to have a fresh rig-out. He is just about young Wally's size, and we shall have to have some of young Wally's clothes for him, that's all."

"Good wheeze!"

"Somebody go and find Wally, then. He's a good kid if he wasn't so cheeky. I think he'll do all he can."

And Digby went to look for the hero of the Third.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. consulted. As the highest Form 'Erbert could possibly think of getting into was the Third, it was necessary to make a friend of Wally, so that he would have help there. There was another point which the juniors had overlooked till it was too late.

"He can't go by the name of Rags here," said Blake.

'Erbert, unfortunately, had no surname—at least, he was not aware of having one. He was called 'Erbert, and he was nicknamed Rags, and as yet in his career he had not experienced any need for a more definite appellation. It was different at St. Jim's. A boy without a surname to answer to would be a very noticeable anomaly there. The unfortunate part of it was that 'Erbert had already given his name as Rags to the fellows downstairs.

"He must have a name," said Tom Merry. "He can't be called Herbert Rags."

"Well, it would excite remark," grinned Lowther.

"Suppose we name him after his native city?" suggested Manners.

"Hem! Herbert Liverpool would sound—well, curious."

"We could name him Everton, after the football club," said Blake. "He comes from Liverpool, and Everton's in Liverpool."

"That's better! But what part of Liverpool were you born in, kid?"

'Erbert shook his head. He did not know.

"I've lived in Kirkdale," he said.

"Kirkdale!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That's a jolly good name! We'll name him Kirkdale."

"Good!"

"Do you like that all right, kid?"

"Yes, sir—I mean, Merry."

"Good! Then you're Herbert Kirkdale from this moment. That's settled. Hallo! Here comes young Wally!"

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Digby re-entered the study, accompanied by a youth about 'Erbert's size, with a soiled collar and decidedly inky fingers. It was D'Arcy minor, the younger brother of the one and only Arthur Augustus—Wally, the scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4.

Under Wally's Wing!

WALLY looked suspiciously into the study.

Digby's assurance that Tom Merry wanted to speak to him upon an important subject had not quite satisfied him. There was something of the Ishmael about the scamp of the Third, and he was generally in a state of expecting trouble.

"Hallo, I see you're back!" Wally remarked cheerfully. "My word! Who's that? Where did he dig up those clothes?"

"It's the new kid," said Tom Merry.

"New kid!" said Wally, staring at 'Erbert. "I heard there was a new kid coming, but I understood he was going into the Shell—chap named Glyn, the son of a millionaire engineer or something in Liverpool. Is this the chap?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"No. This is—is another chap. The fact is, he's a chap under our protection, and we're smuggling him into the school."

Wally whistled expressively.

"My hat! What larks!"

Tom Merry was a little relieved. There was no telling how the scamp of the Third would take things. But Wally seemed to be taking this in the right spirit.

"We are trusting you with the secret, you see," he went on. "Of course, you'll keep it dark."

"Trust me!"

"Now, we want some of your togs. They'll about fit this kid. Of course, we'll stand the expense afterwards. Will you rig him out for us?"

Wally chuckled.

"You bet! My only Aunt Jane! What a lark on the Head! There'll be a jolly row when it comes out!"

"Never mind that. Get the togs."

"The kid can come along with me to the Third Form," said Wally. "I'll rig him out. Come on, kid! Follow your uncle."

'Erbert looked at Tom Merry. Tom gave him a nod, and he followed Wally. The juniors looked at one another with satisfaction.

"This is going all right," said Blake. "Wally's a cheeky little beast, but he's a decent kid at times. I'm going to have a wash before going to the feed over in the New House."

"I am exceedingly sorry," said Skimpole, "but I shall not be able to come, as I am making up my notes on the journey. I have collected a great deal of valuable information for the three hundredth chapter of my great book, and—"

But the juniors were gone, and Skimpole was talking to desert air.

The travellers had plenty of stains to remove after their long journey, and they were, as a matter of fact, fatigued, but a feed with Figgins was too good to be missed.

Considering that the juniors of the two Houses at St. Jim's were in a state of perpetual warfare, it was very good of Figgins to have provided a feed against the return of the School House youths.

Meanwhile, D'Arcy minor led his new charge upstairs. Wally was not much given to reflection, and at present he only saw in the whole matter a "lark" of the most gorgeous description. To introduce a fellow into the school and palm him off on the authorities as a new boy, seemed to Wally the very creamiest of all possible jokes, and a horn of plenty, so to speak, from which endless fun would flow.

And so Wally was inclined to be very good, at present, to his protegee.

But there were other fellows who had very different inclinations, and they watched the two boys going up to the dormitory with looks that meant mischief.

Gore, making a sign to Mellish and some more of his set, followed.

'Erbert looked round him in wonder as he accompanied Wally. He had never been in a building so large and imposing as the School House at St. Jim's, with the exception of a church. The great staircase, the long, wide passages, and endless studies, amazed and confused him. The crowds of boys, of all ages and sizes, most of them so well dressed, many elegant and dandified, interested and a little frightened him.

When he entered the long, lofty dormitory, with its rows of white beds, he looked round him with wide-open eyes.

His evident wonder rather gratified Wally. It made him feel the importance of his position as cicerone.

"This is the Third Form dorm," he explained.

"Crikey!" said 'Erbert.

He did not know what the Third Form was, nor what a dorm was. Had he known that dorm was short for dormitory he would still have been just as much in the dark as to what the word meant.

"You look as if you want a wash," said Wally, pouring out some water in his washbasin. "Here you are!"

"So do you," said 'Erbert.

Wally looked at him, reddening.

"What did you say, kid?"

"I said so do you," replied 'Erbert sturdily.

"Look here, kid, if you want a thick ear you'll get one jolly soon if you cheek me," said Wally impressively. "You

St. Jim's. His hair, which had never, apparently, known a comb or brush, was more difficult to deal with; but Wally offered to comb it out.

'Erbert shrieked as he did it, but Wally kept on without mercy, and the new boy set his teeth and bore the pain grimly.

Wally was still combing out the untidy locks when the dormitory door opened, and Gore & Co. looked in. They stared in silently for some seconds, in amazement, and then a loud laugh warned Wally that he was observed.

He turned his head.

"What do you rotters want in a Third Form Room?" he demanded. "Clear out!"

"We've come to see your young friend," said Gore, grinning. "My hat! Are you dressing him in your old clothes?"



'Erbert had been trained and hardened by the hard life of the streets. He did not shrink from Gore's attack. He gripped hold of the bully of the Shell and seemed to curl round him like a tiger. And the next moment Gore went to the floor with a crash. "My only Aunt Jane!" gasped Wally. "This beats cock-fighting!"

mustn't make remarks about your elders. Just you buckle to and wash."

"Right y'are!"

"My only Aunt Jane! Where did you learn to talk English?"

"In Green Alley."

"Where on earth's that?"

"Liverpool," said 'Erbert, somewhat nettled. "If my talk ain't good enough for you—"

"Oh, never mind! Get those togs off, and I'll get you some of mine!"

'Erbert obeyed, and Wally selected his oldest clothes. Wally's clothes never were in a good condition of repair, even his best ones; but they were princely in cut compared with the ready-made garments at present worn by 'Erbert. The latter were stripped off, and 'Erbert donned an Eton suit, rather baggy at the knees and shiny at the elbows. But that suit, with a clean shirt and a clean collar, with an extra wash for his face, worked wonders in his appearance.

Save for his thinness, due to want of food, 'Erbert's face was quite as good to look at as the average face at

"Mind your own business!"

"Look at his things!" said Mellish, pointing to the garments lying on the floor. "Did you ever see anything like that?"

Wally picked up the discarded clothes, put them into his box, and locked it. Then he glared defiance at the juniors.

"Get out, you rotters! Your chivvies get on my nerves!"

"No fear!" said Gore. "Come in, you chaps! This is a good opportunity for talking to the new chap. I don't know what little game Tom Merry is playing, but I know jolly well that this fellow isn't a new boy for St. Jim's!"

"I rather think not," said Crofton. "Rather too much of the duffer about him."

"He talks as if he had just been dug out of a kennel," said Mellish. "Blessed if I know where Tom Merry got him from!"

"We'll soon see!" exclaimed Sharp. "What's your name, kid?"

"'Erbert!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I suppose you mean Herbert?"

"No, I don't!" said 'Erbert steadily. "I mean 'Erbert!"

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"Ha, ha, ha! What's the rest of your name?"
 "Erbert was about to say 'Rags,' but he remembered the new name that had been bestowed upon him by the adopted parents in Tom Merry's study.

"Kirkdale!" he said.

"He told me his name was Rags!" exclaimed Gore.

"He's a young liar," said Mellish.

"Erbert's eyes flashed.

"'Oo yer callin' a liar?" he exclaimed. "If you call me that, you'll get a luffer under the ear, jolly quick, and don't you forget it!"

"Nice language," said Gore sarcastically.

"And you, too!" exclaimed 'Erbert. "You can't come it over me! You can't take me in! You ain't a gentleman like Tom Merry!"

Gore turned crimson, and he was not pleased, either, by the chuckle that escaped from his own followers.

Wally grinned.

"My only aunt!" he exclaimed. "He's got your character already, Gore. He knows you're a snob and a pig, you see."

"You shut up, young D'Arcy!"

"Rats! Get out of this dorm!"

"I'll jolly well give that guttersnipe a lesson!" exclaimed Gore, rushing towards 'Erbert. "Now, you whelp!"

And he laid his hands on the new boy. Gore was the biggest fellow in the Shell—bigger than many fellows in the Fifth. The little ragamuffin ought to have been sent flying on the instant. But 'Erbert had been trained and hardened by the hard life of the streets.

He did not shrink from Gore's attack. He gripped hold of the bully of the Shell, and seemed to curl round him like a tiger, and the next moment Gore went to the floor with a crash that seemed to shake the room.

CHAPTER 5.

An Interrupted Ragging!

WALLY stared for a moment, amazed, and then burst into a shout of laughter.

Gore lay on the floor, where he had fallen, looking stupefied. And the fellows who had followed him into the study could only stare.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally. "This beats cock-fighting! Where did you pick up that trick, you young boulder?"

'Erbert grinned.

George Gore slowly rose to his feet. The heavy bump on the floor had shaken him up, and he was aching in every bone, but he was not so much hurt as he was angry.

"You—you young hound!" he gasped. "I'll—I'll teach you!"

"You lemme alone!" said 'Erbert defiantly. "I ain't done nothin' to you! Why can't you leave a cove alone?"

"Yes, I'll leave you alone, when I've pulverised you!"

And Gore advanced upon the Liverpool lad, more cautiously this time. He hit out in earnest, and it would have fared hard with 'Erbert, who, of course, was no match for a fellow nearly twice his size. But D'Arcy minor rushed to his aid.

"You rotten bully!" said Wally, squaring up. "Let him alone, or else tackle the two of us!"

"Get out of the way, D'Arcy minor!"

"Rats!"

"Drag that young whelp away, Mellish!" howled Gore.

But Mellish didn't feel inclined to tackle the redoubtable Wally. Wally's left-handers were known and feared among the juniors. But Sharp and Crofton ran forward, and two pairs of hands grasped Wally. He struggled fiercely.

"Hallo! Haven't you finished yet?" asked Tom Merry, looking in at the door. "Why—Hallo! What's the matter here?"

He dashed upon the scene with blazing eyes. Gore received a right-hander on the side of the head that sent him spinning away from 'Erbert, and he crashed into a washstand and fell. There was another crash as the washstand reeled, and the basin went to the floor.

It was the basin 'Erbert had washed in, and it was still full of water.

Gore gave a fiendish yell as the flood of soapy water descended upon him, soaking his face and chest and blinding him for a moment.

"Crikey!" gasped 'Erbert. "He, he, he! Look at him!"

Tom Merry laughed, too. Gore, as he struggled up, streaming with soapy water, was a curious sight. He was spluttering furiously as he pressed his hand to his head, singing from Tom Merry's blow.

The other ragers promptly drew back. Ragging a

couple of fags was a very different matter from tackling Tom Merry when his blood was up.

"You cads!" cried Tom Merry. "I might have guessed you would be up to something of this sort! You cads!"

"Why did you bring a workhouse brat here, then?" sneered Mellish. "I suppose you didn't expect us to chum up with him?"

"I didn't expect you to; you're not likely to chum up with anybody decent!" said Tom Merry scornfully. "Look here, this kid is under my protection, and anybody who touches him will have to settle with me! You understand that?"

"Oh, take him under your wing, if you like! He'll have a pretty warm time, all the same, if he really stays at St. Jim's."

Tom Merry did not answer. He felt that Mellish's words were true. And for the moment he felt a great misgiving. He had meant to do his best for 'Erbert—but had he been right in setting the lad such a thorny path to follow?

But it was no use thinking of that now. Tom Merry put his hand through the boy's arm and led him from the dormitory. Wally followed, with his hands in his pockets, whistling, stopping at the door a moment to make an irritating grimace at Gore.

"You've made an improvement in him, Wally" said Tom Merry approvingly, as he went downstairs. "He looks like any other kid in the Third now."

"Yes," grinned Wally. "He doesn't speak like the others, but that's only a detail. He's a decent kid, and he knows a trick in wrestling that I don't know. He'll have to teach it me, or I'll give him a thick ear."

"I'll show you, if you like," said 'Erbert simply.

"Here you are, then!" said Wally, stopping on the first landing. "Hold on a minute, Tom Merry! Come on, Kirkdale!"

Tom Merry stood aside and watched them with interest. The two lads gripped and closed, and the next moment Wally was lying on his back—even Tom Merry could not see how.

"My only Aunt Jane!"

Wally rose slowly, looking at 'Erbert with visibly increased respect.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Come on," he said, "or we shall be keeping Figgins waiting. You can leave further instructions till later."

"Right you are!" said Wally, who was rubbing a place that ached, and didn't feel inclined for any more instruction of the same sort just then.

And Tom Merry & Co. a few minutes later crossed the quadrangle to the New House, and with them went Wally and 'Erbert.

CHAPTER 6.

A Feed With Figgins!

FIGGINS & CO. were doing the thing in good style this time. When they were not at warfare with the School House juniors they knew how to be friendly, and the occasion of Tom Merry's return from an absence of some days was a very good one for an amicable feed.

And as Figgins & Co. happened to be in funds, they had laid in a supply that was likely to do their study credit.

Fatty Wynn, of course, was in his element. Fatty was a cock of renown in the Junior Form, and his greatest happiness was to have a supply of comestibles that gave him a really free and ample scope.

Figgins' study presented a very cheery aspect just now. The table was adorned by a spotless white cloth, obtained by coaxing from the House dame. There was an array of cutlery that was quite imposing. It had been borrowed on all sides up and down the Fourth Form passage in the New House.

Then there was a stack of plates, only a few of them cracked, and cups and saucers galore.

Fourth Form feeds usually showed a plentiful lack of crockery and cutlery, but the present occasion was a brilliant exception.

The arrangements for the feed showed that Figgins was a great man. There was not room at the table for more than half his guests, and there was not room in the study for a dozen chairs without uncomfortable crowding.

But Figgly had solved that difficulty. He had borrowed a long, narrow form, and set it along the wall in the study, the bookcase being placed temporarily outside in the corridor.

The form offered seating accommodation for seven or eight, and a small table was there to support the teacups and saucers, and the feasters could take their plates upon their knees.

In case trousers should be soiled or spoiled by this device, Figgins had provided serviettes—an utterly unknown and unprecedented detail in junior feeds. But there they were—eight of them—snowy white table-napkins of excellent quality. They had been borrowed from the House dame, without the formality of asking permission.

As Figgins said, they could be returned after the feed, and no one would be the wiser. Kerr had his doubts as to whether a Fourth Form feed mightn't leave some very plain traces on the serviettes, but he would not say a word to make Figgins dissatisfied with his scheme.

The door opened, and Tom Merry looked in. He wore a clean collar and a cheerful smile.

Figgins grinned at him amiably.

"Come in, you fellows; we're all ready!"

"Right-ho! I say, this is stunning!"

"Yaas, wathiah!"



Gore crashed into the washstand and fell. There was another crash as the washstand reeled and the basin went to the floor. "Yarough!" Gore gave a fiendish yell as the flood of soapy water descended upon him, soaking him and blinding him for a moment. "Crikey!" gasped 'Erbert. "Look at him!"

"This way, Kirkdale; you sit here with me," said Tom Merry, as Figgins grandly showed him to a seat of honour at the table.

"Yes, sir," said 'Erbert—"I mean, yes, Merry."

'Erbert was looking a little scared. If Figgins & Co. had taken special notice of him, he would have been discomfited utterly. But Figgins & Co. had too much tact to do that. They simply included him in the general greeting to the whole party, and addressed no especial remark to him.

'Erbert, finding that he was not taken notice of, began to recover his courage.

Tom Merry himself was a little uneasy about his protege. "Table manners" had been as much neglected in 'Erbert's education as geography and history. In the streets the little ragamuffin had been accustomed to eat and drink in an exceedingly free-and-easy way, and it was a delicate subject to approach in giving hints.

Tom intended to keep his protege under his own fatherly eye, and he sat down with the new boy at his side.

Arthur Augustus sat down on 'Erbert's other side, and the three filled up one side of the table. D'Arcy's idea was that 'Erbert could keep an eye on him, and by having such a perfect model before him could see exactly what to do, and avoid bringing remark upon himself.

It was possible, however, that 'Erbert did not understand what was expected of him.

Manners, Lowther, Digby, Herries, and Kerr occupied the form at the side of the room. Blake and Wally and Figgins sat down at the table opposite Tom Merry, 'Erbert, and

D'Arcy. Fatty Wynn did not sit down at all. He was too busy looking after the provisions to have time to eat any, and he had already disposed of enough for three ordinary persons by way of a snack.

"There's the tea, Figgy!"

And Wynn handed up a huge pot, borrowed from below stairs. It held a gallon, and Figgins had to be very careful with it. All the guests, of course, laboured to help, passing cups and saucers and comestibles round. Figgins poured out cup after cup till the huge teapot was nearly empty, and it was handed to Fatty Wynn to be refilled from the steaming kettle.

Fatty Wynn passed round the plates of hot sausages and

poached eggs, and Kerr backed him up with the bread-and-butter. The serviettes were spread over the knees of trousers, the guests making no remark on the subject, but evidently much impressed.

One of the serviettes was handed to 'Erbert by Kerr, who wanted the new boy to feel that he was being treated with as much care as the others; and as there was not enough to go all round, this was really a mark of distinction. It was a mark of distinction, however, that poor 'Erbert would have been happier without. For the street arab did not know the use of the square of shining cloth, and he took it and turned it over in his hands in dismay.

It was here that Tom Merry's fatherly care came quietly to the rescue. He unobtrusively took the serviette and spread it over 'Erbert's knees, everybody making it a point not to observe him doing so. And poor 'Erbert, unaccustomed to anything like breeding in his surroundings, imagined that they really did not observe anything.

Fatty Wynn placed a generously loaded plate before him, and as the feast was commencing on all sides, village, Co. started.

His method of starting was peculiar. In his right hand, jabbed it into the latter bodily from the plate, and—
"My word!" muttered Digby. "ES ARE WILD!"
Tom Merry turned pink. "that will keep you from sinking!"
This would never do at all. "buoy, eh?"
hall of the School House Street, Stapenhill, Burton-on-Trent.
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did not think of looking to see what Tom Merry was doing, and he munched away at his sausage with great contentment.

Then the silence, which was rather painful at that moment in the study, was broken by 'Erbert's appreciative voice.

"Golly! This 'ere is prime!"

The juniors would have given anything to laugh. At the same time, nothing would have induced them to do so.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was extremely nice, not to say fastidious, in his eating, replied to the remark without a quiver of a muscle.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I ain't never tasted anythin' so prime!" said 'Erbert confidentially. "This 'ere is better'n—"

He was going to say that it was better than the crusts and bones that had formed his habitual diet in the streets of Liverpool, but he remembered in time Tom Merry's caution to keep his eyes open and his mouth shut.

He left off in the middle of the remark, therefore, and used his eyes instead of his tongue.

Then the red burned in his cheeks for a moment, and the half-gnawed sausage was replaced upon the plate.

The little ragamuffin began to use his knife and fork.

Arthur Augustus smiled with satisfaction.

'Erbert travelled through the sausages and poached eggs without more mishaps. But when he had finished he pushed his plate away, and poured his tea into the saucer to cool it. He took the saucer in both hands, and swamped the tea into his mouth. It was hot, and 'Erbert gave a yell.

"Oh crikey!"

The saucer of hot tea was jerked away from his scalded mouth, and Arthur Augustus echoed the yell as it swamped over his beautiful trousers.

He leaped to his feet, and his elbow caught 'Erbert on the side of the head, and 'Erbert bumped against Tom Merry, on his other side, and Tom Merry, who was just raising his

cup to his lips, bestowed the contents upon his shirt-front instead of his mouth.

"Oh! Ow!"

"Crikey!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus mopped his knees with his handkerchief. His trousers were soaked, and for a moment he regretted that he had not left 'Erbert in Green Alley.

"Oh crumbs!" said 'Erbert. "I'm sorry! I'm awful sorry!"

"Bai Jove! My trowsahs are wuined!"

"I'm awful sorry!" The tears stood in 'Erbert's eyes.

"The tea was so 'ot, you know—"

"Never mind," said Tom Merry, mopping his chest with his serviette—a proceeding which was viewed with silent agony by Figgins, who wondered what Mrs. Kenwigg would think of that serviette when she saw it again. "Never mind, kid. Sit down!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's of—of no consequence whatevah," said Arthur Augustus.

"I ain't fit to be with you," said 'Erbert. "Look 'ere—"

"Shut up!" said Blake.

And 'Erbert shut up. The feed continued, and 'Erbert ate hardly anything more, though he could easily have done so, and drank no more tea. He was painfully on the alert not to transgress now, and so evidently so that his adopted fathers were discomfited more by that than by the spilt tea.

All the same, the guests made a very pleasant tea in Figgins' study, and the feed was voted a stunning success. Every face was contented, even D'Arcy's, when he had once made up his mind to the spoiling of his trousers. And when no one could be prevailed upon to have another bun, or another tart, or another cup of tea, the table was cleared by the simple process of stacking the remains of the eatables and all the cutlery and crockery into the cupboard, to be sorted and returned to the various owners later.

But the evening's entertainment was not over. Figgins & Co., as we have said, were doing the thing in style. Fatty Wynn produced chestnuts and proceeded to roast them, and Figgins, with a slight blush, proposed a "little music," and the School House chums gasped and assented.

CHAPTER 7.

A Little Music!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY beamed. If anything could have made him forget that a pair of his best trousers were "wuined," it was the proposal to have a little music. For Arthur Augustus had lately made the important discovery that he had a remarkably fine tenor voice, and his singing practice of late had been energetic and incessant.

Disrespectful fags had named him Caruso II., and fellows had sent him an old dog's muzzle by post, and others had offered to get up a subscription to buy him a gag.

But Arthur Augustus was not deterred by trifles like that. As there was no piano at the disposal of the juniors, he had armed himself with a tuning-fork, and with that and a knowledge of tonic sol-fa he was always able to get into his own key.

He was not always able to keep in it when he had once got there, but that was a detail. As D'Arcy said, even a remarkable tenor like himself could not expect to equal Caruso at first. And D'Arcy certainly didn't!

Most of the juniors could sing—or at all events were satisfied they could, regardless of grave doubts expressed upon the subject by their friends—and some of them could play various instruments.

Kerr, who was one of those youths who can do nearly everything, and do it well, was a great hand with the violin, and more like Kubelik than D'Arcy was like Caruso.

Figgins had recently invested in a 'cello, and he played the "Broken Melody" upon it—more broken than the composer had ever intended.

Herries had his cornet, but his hosts had unaccountably forgotten to ask him to bring it over with him. But that was only a trifle. Herries was quite willing to run over to the School House for his cornet.

"I've been thinking," said Figgins modestly, "of starting a musical society in the Fourth, and getting up an orchestra. It would be ripping for us all to play something, and learn to play in tune—"

"You'll have a hard row to hoe, old chap!" said Manners. "I wasn't speaking of myself," said Figgins, glaring at Manners. "I was speaking of us all. You chaps know how I play the 'cello."

"We do," said Blake, in a tone that might have meant anything.

Figgins went on hastily.

"Well, I think it's a good idea to begin with a musical evening. Suppose every chap does what he can, and—"

"Good!" said Herries. "I'll run over for my cornet."

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descended upon him for a moment.

"Crikey!" gasped 'Erbert.

Tom Merry laughed, streaming with soapy water, spluttering furiously as he sang from Tom Merry's blow.

The other ragers promptly

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"Your—your cornet," said Figgins, with a sickly smile. Herries' cornet was the worst-hated instrument in the school. Even the New House could hear its wild and whirling strains when Herries was practising in Study No. 6, with the window open.

"Certainly!" said Herries cheerfully. "You've never heard me play the Toreador song from 'Carmen' as a cornet solo, have you?"

"N-n-no."

"Then I'll give you that this evening. I shan't be a few minutes."

"Bring my mouth-organ with you, Herries!" called out Blake.

Herries paused.

"I don't know where it is," he said.

"It's in the cupboard beside the ink-bottle."

"Oh—er—all right! But perhaps Figgins—"

"Would you like Herries to bring my mouth-organ, Figgy?" asked Blake, looking directly at the chief of the New House juniors.

"Oh, yes, rather!" said Figgins, with a heartiness that was perhaps a little overdone.

"That's right," said Blake, as Herries disappeared. "We shall be able to do something to contribute to the harmony of the evening. That's what I like about Figgy—nothing mean about him. No getting fellows into his study for a musical evening, and then taking up the whole show himself."

Figgins & Co. exchanged uncomfortable glances.

"Certainly not," said D'Arcy unsuspiciously. "You could not suspect Figgins of acting in such a wotten way. Of course, every gentleman present will contribute an item to the pwogwamme."

"Of—of course!" said Figgins.

"That's the—the idea," said Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah! I shall be happy to contwibute a tenah solo. What are you goin' to give, Tom Mewvy?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"If you like, I will give a second tenah solo, and save you the trouble of singin'," suggested the swell of the School House.

"No, you won't," said Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Nough's as good as a feast. Tom Merry can give us a football song. It's a pity that Lowther can't sing, but—"

"Is it?" said Lowther, glaring. "I can sing better than some silly asses I know."

"I don't think you ought to speak of Figgins & Co. like that when they're—"

"You—you—I wasn't speaking of Figgins—"

"I don't mind giving you a solo," said Lowther.

"Manners has about as much ear for music as a guinea-pig. Are you going to give us anything, Figgins?"

Figgins turned pink.

"I was thinking of giving you the 'Broken Melody' on the 'cello."

"Oh—er—good! We shall—shall enjoy that."

"I think I play it pretty well," said Figgins modestly.

"I suppose we may as well start with the 'cello."

Figgins turned towards the huge case standing in the corner, and so did not see the looks that followed his remark.

Blake rose hastily.

"That duffer Herries is a long time finding the mouth-organ," he said. "I'll run across and help him look for it. Don't wait for me."

And he left the study.

Figgins opened the case and produced the violincello. The juniors placed themselves in attitudes of attention as he prepared to start. He was some time beginning, and exactly where the "Broken Melody" started the audience did not know. As for the end, for a long time it seemed as though it would have no end. The expressions on the faces of the audience were scarcely expressions of pleasure, and more than one junior slipped unnoticed from the room, to return later equally silently.

Whether the applause was for playing the piece, or for leaving off, we cannot say.

The applause had died away when Blake and Herries came in with the mouth-organ and the cornet. Kerr was ready with his violin, and Patty Wynn with his Welsh song; but they felt it would not be the correct thing to go straight ahead. One of the guests was politely requested to do a turn, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy accepted the invitation.

"I shall be vewy pleased, Figgins, deah boy—"

"More than we shall!" murmured Lowther.

"Did you speak, Lowthah?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Vewy good! As you are awah, Figgins, I am a tenah, and I can sing wippin' tenah songs from memowry. As there is no piano, you will excuse me if I use a tunin'-fork to get my note."

(Continued on next page.)



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His father replied, also by telegram: "How sad. 'Too bad. Your dad.'"

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* * *

TOO LARGE.

Visitor (to workman): "What's that you've got there? A shovel?"

Workman: "Yes."

Visitor: "Why, where I come from they have spoons as big as that!"

Workman: "Yes, and I should think they need 'em if they all have mouths as big as yours!"

ALFRED MARSH, Court-at-Street, Lympne, nr. Hythe, Kent

* * *

TOO WEAK.

Diner: "Waiter, this tea is very weak!"

Waiter: "Let it stand a little, sir."

Diner: "It's too weak to stand!"

H. CUTHBERT, 8, Kirkwall Place, Globe Road, Bethnal Green, N.E.2.

* * *

JUST A JOKE!

Judge: "Why did you take the parrot?"

Prisoner: "I took it for a lark, sir!"

S. C. JARVIS, 120, Wardo Avenue, Fulham, S.W.6.

* * *

STRANGE!

Boss: "It's very odd that whenever there is a cup-tie your grandmother is ill!"

Office Boy: "Yes, sir. It is, sir. I think she must be shamming!"

J. CULLEN, 70, Thomas Street, Merthyr Tydfil.

* * *

A QUICK RETORT!

Political Candidate (picking up cabbage thrown by one of the crowd): "I see that one of my audience has lost his head!"

ERIC TRESIZE, 9, Double Trees, St. Blazey Gate, Par, Cornwall.

* * *

ALL CORRECT!

Teacher: "Give me a sentence bringing in the three words, defence, defeat, and detail."

Sambo: "When de cat goes over de fence, de feet goes over before de tail."

ERIC SCOTT, 60, Darlington Road, Ferryhill Village, Co. Durham.

* * *

WHY THE WAVES ARE WILD!

Lifeguard: "I'm the man that will keep you from sinking!"

Swimmer: "You're some buoy, eh?"

JOHN COX, 23, Long Street, Stapenhill, Burton-on-Trent.
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"Oh, certainly!" said Figgins.

"I'll give you your note on the mouth-organ, if you like!" Blake offered.

But Arthur Augustus did not even deign to reply to this kind offer.

He extracted the tuning-fork—his inseparable companion—from his pocket, and struck it on the mantelpiece. It gave forth a sonorous A. D'Arcy listened to it with his head cocked a little on one side in a very businesslike way.

"Let me see. The thing begins on the dominant," he murmured. "As you don't undahstand these mattahs, Herbert Wags, I may explain that the dominant is the fifth note of the scale. The song is in B flat, and so the dominant would be F, wouldn't it?"

"Crikey!" said 'Erbert. "Blessed if I know!"

"Well, you may take my word for it. Now, aftah stwikin' A, I can get F by tweekin' the A as the 'Me' of the tonic-solla scale, and goin' down from 'Me' to 'Doh.' The 'Doh' in that case would be F, and that's the note I want. You undahstand?"

"Crikey!"

And Arthur Augustus sang F. Having now settled on his note—though Kerr said he was flat, and Digby that he was sharp—Arthur Augustus started on the solo.

The "Steersman's Song" was certainly a ripping song, and worthy of a tenor's best efforts, but it is doubtful if D'Arcy did it justice.

D'Arcy, of course, sang it in the original. He was strong on German. Various expressions were visible on the faces of the juniors as he began:

"Mit Gewitter und Sturm aus fernem Meer,
Mein Madel, bin dir nah.
Über thurnhohe Fluth vom Suden her,
Mein Madel ich bin da!"

At this point Arthur Augustus forgot his German, and went on unconsciously in English:

"My maiden, were there no south wind,
I never could come to thee.
Oh, fair south wind, to me be kind,
My maiden she belongs to me."

So far, so good. The variation in the languages made the juniors grin, but no bones were broken yet, so to speak.

'Erbert looked on in open-mouthed admiration. A chap who could get up and sing in a foreign language was an amazing revelation to 'Erbert. D'Arcy's wonderful clothes and manners had greatly impressed 'Erbert from the beginning. Now his feeling amounted to hero worship.

But the chorus was to come yet.

Blake, who happened to know that there was a top B flat in it, waited with a lurking grin. Nothing would convince D'Arcy that he couldn't get a top B flat when he was in form. Nothing would convince him that his voice wasn't a tenor, and a first-class one.

He began the next "lap" with a smile of calm confidence.

"Ho-yo-ho, hallo-ho-ho, hallo-ho-ho-ho!
Ho-yo-ho, hallo-ho, ho, ho, ho, ho-o-o-o, ho-o!"

The last "O" was the top B flat. Arthur Augustus threw all his efforts into that top B flat, and it came out in a yell that ended in a quacking gasp.

Blake crammed his handkerchief into his mouth, Figgins

turned away his head, Lowther drowned a giggle by turning it into a cough. Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and looked round complacently.

"That's the first verse," he said. "The next—"

He was interrupted. The door was opened, and Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, put his head in. Monteith was looking angry.

"What the dickens is this row about?"

"Weally, Monteith—"

"I've no objection to you youngsters having some fun," said Monteith, "and I don't mind any singing practice, but you can't expect fellows in the same passage to stand that row. What was that yelling just now?"

The juniors sat and gasped.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the prefect with a glance that ought to have frozen him into an icicle, but didn't.

Monteith looked sharply from one to another.

"Well, why don't you answer?"

"Ger-r-rooo!" gurgled Blake.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally. "What a misunderstanding!"

"Whoever it was, he'd better ring off," said the prefect.

"If I hear any more yelling, I shall come and warm you, so look out!"

And Monteith withdrew his head, and closed the door with a bang.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy smiled in a sickly way.

"Upon reflection, deah boys, I won't give you the second verse."

"Oh, do!" said Figgins politely.

"No!" said D'Arcy firmly. "Music isn't appweciated in the seniah part of this House. I shall not finish the song. Let's have Kerr's violin. It will serve that wottah wight. I—I mean, we shall all be delighted!"

Kerr gave a violin solo that was voted a success. It was a short one, and the juniors, who had expected and dreaded one of those long-drawn agonies that sometimes go by the name of violin solos, applauded Kerr. They thought him a jolly good fellow for letting them off so lightly.

Then Figgins, with a faltering voice, requested something from Herries on the cornet, but at this everyone seemed to decide that it was time to leave, and the party broke up.

CHAPTER 8.

Crossing the Rubicon!

MR. RAILTON, the Housemaster of the School House, paused, and nursed his chin in his hand. A crowd of juniors were entering the House.

They were Tom Merry & Co. coming back from their visit to Figgins. Among them was 'Erbert, and Mr. Railton, who never forgot a face, knew that he had never seen 'Erbert before.

Tom Merry saw the Housemaster stop, and his gaze fell upon 'Erbert. He paused before the House notice-board, and, affecting to read it, he spoke in a low tone to 'Erbert.

"Kirkdale, listen to me, and don't jaw!"

"Yes, sir—I mean, Merry!"

"That chap yonder is our Housemaster, Mr. Railton. Don't look at him, or he'll guess something. He's going to speak to you."

"Wot-ho!" murmured 'Erbert.

"Don't say more than you can help when he questions

Potts, the Office Boy!



you. Your name is Kirkdale, and you're a new boy going into the Third. Say that, and nothing else, and he'll think it's been fixed with the other masters—see?"

"I twig!"

"Mind you don't say anything more than that, kid," said Tom Merry, in an agony of apprehension as to what 'Erbert might say now that the critical moment had come.

"You kin trust me, sir—I mean, Merry."

"It's all wight, Tom Mewwy. If Wags shows any signs of puttin' his foot into it, I will wush to the weecue."

"Don't you do anything of the sort, Gussy. You're pretty certain to make a muck of it if he doesn't."

"I wufuse to admit anythin' of the sort!"

"Hush! Here comes Railton!"

"Yaas, but—"

Blake jammed his boot down on D'Arcy's toe as a hint to postpone the rest of his remarks.

Arthur Augustus gave a wail of anguish.

"Blake! Weally, you bwutal beast—"

"Ahem!" said Mr. Railton. "I am glad to see you boys home again, looking all the better for your little excursion. Is this the new boy?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton looked curiously at 'Erbert, who remembered the commands he had received, and was silent. To hear everything and say "nowt" was not hard to a cute and keen North Country lad.

"Indeed! I had expected to see an older lad," said Mr. Railton. "I suppose he came back from Liverpool with you, Merry?"

"Ye-e-es!" said Tom Merry, almost gasping.

Mr. Railton seemed to know all about the matter.

"Good! I am glad to see you, Glyn—"

Then Tom Merry understood. A new fellow was expected into the Shell at St. Jim's—the son of a wealthy Liverpool engineer and shipowner, who was retiring to an estate in Sussex near the old school.

Mr. Railton had been informed that the boy was to come into the School House, and he evidently took 'Erbert for the new junior.

"This—this isn't Glyn, sir," stammered Tom Merry.

"This is Kirkdale, sir."

"Kirkdale! Another new boy?"

"Yes, sir. He's going into the Third."

"Ah! Dr. Holmes has not informed me of it," said Mr. Railton. "I did not know two new boys were expected. Is this the lad from Liverpool?"

"Yes, sir. He travelled down with us."

"Very good! I suppose Mr. Selby has made arrangements for him. I hope you will be comfortable in the School House, Kirkdale."

And Mr. Railton walked away.

Tom Merry could have hugged himself with glee. The dreaded interview had been got through without 'Erbert having to open his mouth at all, and Mr. Railton had not the faintest suspicion.

The Housemaster went into his study and closed the door. The juniors all looked satisfied except D'Arcy, who was hopping on one foot, the other having been considerably damaged by Jack Blake.

Blake slapped 'Erbert on the shoulder.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "If you mind to keep your head shut, and when you have to speak, only say what Merry's told you, all will go as straight as a string. You've got to have it out with Mr. Selby yet; but Selby will imagine

Mr. Railton has put you in the Third, so it will be all O.K.!"

"Who's Mr. Selby?" asked 'Erbert.

"The master of the Third. Look here, kids, we may as well take the bull by the horns in this matter. Kirkdale ought to go in and see Selby at once, and then he can take his place in the ordinary way in the Third to-morrow morning."

"Yaas, wathah! I will take him in to Mr. Selby's study. A fellow with tact and judgment is required in a matchah like this."

"I think I'd better do it," said Blake. "You see, you're bound to put your foot in it, and Selby's a suspicious beast."

"Wats! I shall manage it all wight!"

"I'll take him in," said Tom Merry. "I'm the oldest, and I ought to do it. Besides, I've got more sense than you Fourth Form kids—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"And you can come in and interrupt us, Blake, before Selby can ask questions," said Tom, struck by a brilliant idea. "I'll leave the door ajar so that you can hear us jaw, and seize the right moment."

"Bai Jove, that's a wippin' wheeze!"

"Good!" said Blake. "I'll do it!"

Tom Merry led 'Erbert away towards Mr. Selby's study. The master of the Third Form was not a pleasant gentleman, and nobody liked interviewing him in his study. He suffered from indigestion, and the redness of his nose was a danger signal well known in the Third Form Room. He did not look amiable when he snappishly bade the juniors come in, when Tom Merry tapped at his door.

"Who is this?" he asked sharply.

"The new boy, sir!"

"New boy! I don't know anything about a new boy. Is he in my Form?"

"Yes, sir; he's for the Third," said Tom Merry glibly.

"He's come with us from Liverpool to-day, sir. He's just seen Mr. Railton."

"Very good! If Mr. Railton says he is to go into the Third there is no need for me to examine him. What is your name, boy?"

"Kirkdale, sir."

"What was your Form at your last school?"

This question would have been a difficult one for 'Erbert to reply to, but he was not put to the test. Jack Blake bumped against the door from without, and fell into the study with a crash.

Mr. Selby jumped up.

"Blake, how dare you!"

"Sorry, sir!" said Blake, sitting up on the floor. "I—I must have fallen over, sir!"

"Take fifty lines!"

"Yes, sir. Where shall I take them, sir?"

Mr. Selby turned so crimson that his cheeks matched the tip of his nose. He made a stride to his desk, and caught up a cane.

"Blake! This is deliberate impertinence—deliberate, sir! Come here, boy! I will show you that I am not to be treated with deliberate impertinence!"

"If you please, sir," said Tom Merry, "Blake—"

"Silence, Merry! Leave the study! Blake, come here!"

Blake advanced—with reluctance that was not feigned. He had heroically thrown himself into the breach, as it

NOT A DOG'S CHANCE!



were, but he remembered with inward misgivings how hard Mr. Selby could swipe.

But it was too late to think of that now.

Tom Merry, chuckling inwardly over the success of Blake's stratagem, drew 'Erbert to the door, and hurried him away down the passage.

As they went they could hear the angry voice of Mr. Selby from the study:

"Hold out your hand, Blake!"

Jack Blake held out his hand. Three on each palm did the angry Third Form master give him with stinging force. Blake was almost doubled up with pain, but he bore it pluckily. The twist in the boy's features afforded a grim satisfaction to the exasperated master.

"There!" he exclaimed, throwing down the cane. "I hope that will be a lesson to you, Blake! I hope you will not be impertinent to a master again!"

"No, sir," murmured Blake.

"You may go, Blake!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Jack Blake went out and closed the door quietly. He went down the passage with his hands under his armpits, and twisting himself into all sorts of impossible attitudes. He grinned feebly as he met Tom Merry and 'Erbert.

"Did he lay it on?" asked Tom sympathetically.

"Ye-es, rather! But it's all right! We did him beautifully. He hasn't the faintest idea I tumbled into his study and cheeked him on purpose. Kirkdale goes into the Third Form to-morrow morning without question.

"It was plucky of you, kid! I know how Selby cuts. But it was a ripping wheeze! All's plain sailing now, Gussy and I are getting tin from home to pay the fees, and we can take it in to the Head to-morrow with what Dig can put towards it. It will only be fees for the half-term. If we can get through the interview with the Head, all's serene."

So far as the juniors could see, that was the chief difficulty that remained. There might be points they had not thought of, but that could not be helped. They had committed themselves to the task of smuggling 'Erbert to school, and they were going to carry it through at any risk. And they were sanguine; they would not allow themselves to think of failure now.

CHAPTER 9.

Kirkdale of the Third!

'ERBERT spent what remained of the evening in Tom Merry's study. His protectors did not consider it prudent yet for him to enter the Third Form Room.

Of course, it would do a Third-Former no good in his Form to be known as a protege of higher Form-fellows. But that could not be helped.

'Erbert had to be kept isolated as long as possible. The longer he was at St. Jim's before taking his place publicly among the rest, the more chances he had of picking up the ways of the fellows there.

After bedtime all, of course, depended on Wally. Kirkdale, as the chums now made it a point always to call 'Erbert, would have to go to the Third Form dormitory, and Wally had promised to look after him there. 'Erbert was to remain as silent as possible, and Wally was to keep the others off as much as he could.

As Wally was the champion fighting-man of the Third, and the acknowledged leader of the Form, his patronage was priceless to the new boy.

The juniors had provided 'Erbert with what he required, for some time at least, in the way of clothing. Wally's wardrobe had been drawn on liberally, and Arthur Augustus had provided the boy with beautiful pyjamas—a little too long for him, perhaps, but they could be turned up at the ankles. Tom Merry had subscribed comb and hair-brushes from the half dozen sets his loving governess had provided him with. For boots, D'Arcy's ample store was raided, and as Arthur Augustus had very small feet for a lad of his age, his boots almost exactly fitted the smaller youth, and the swell of St. Jim's had provided him with three pairs in excellent condition. Monty Lowther had found an old trunk in a box-room which was quite suited to 'Erbert's wants, and Manners, in a quite artistic way, had put the initials "H. K." on the lid in white paint.

'Erbert's brain was almost in a whirl when he saw the provision that had been made for him—the articles we have enumerated being only part of the collection. By the time his benefactors had finished, he was probably better supplied than any other fellow in the Third Form, and almost as well as the great Arthur Augustus himself.

Advice and instruction, too, were bestowed on the new boy in endless quantities. He promised to carry out all that was told him, but he did not remember one-tenth of it.

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so with the best intentions in the world, he was still likely to make some slips.

"Well, we've done all we can," said Tom Merry, when nine o'clock struck. "We must leave the rest to luck. It's bed-time now, kid. I told the House dame there's a new boy in the Third, and you'll find a bed made up in the dorm."

'Erbert stared a little.

"It's only nine," he reflected.

"That's the bed-time of the Third Form," said Tom Merry. "What on earth time are you accustomed to going to bed?"

'Erbert grinned.

"Not till after the theaters were closed," he said. "I often used to pick up coppers gettin' kebs."



"Oh crikey!" 'Erbert jerked the saucer of hot tea from his beautiful trousers. He leapt to his feet and his elbow caught who bestowed the contents of his cup on his shirt-front.

"My hat! Why, it's enough to muck up your constitution for life, staying up every night. You'll get used to early hours, though."

"I'll do anythin' you young gents tell me," said 'Erbert submissively. "This 'ere seems all like a dream to me. I can't 'elp thinkin' I shall wake up in Green Alley with Frau Hemling a naggin' at me."

"Bai Jove!"

"I ain't never 'ad nobody took no trouble about me," said 'Erbert. "I ain't belonged to nobody, you see. You young gents—"

"That's all right," said Tom Merry. "But you mustn't say 'young gents.' Say 'you chaps.'"

"It—it seems like puttin' myself on a footin' with you, sir."

"Well, you are on a footing with us, kid," said Tom kindly. "Besides, you must keep up the appearance of being one of us."

"I twig, sir—I mean, Merry!" said 'Erbert. "I suppose you don't mind if I smoke a fag afore I goes to snooze!"

"If you what?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Smoke a fag, sir."

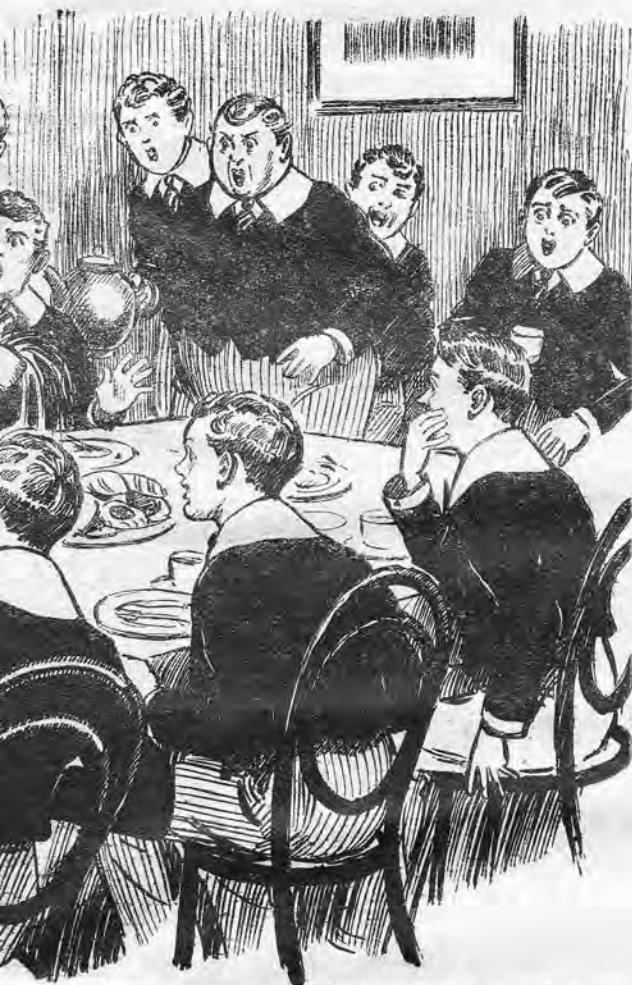
"You don't mean to say you smoke?"

It was 'Erbert's turn to look surprised.

"'Course I do!" he exclaimed. "I've smoked ever since I was a kid so 'igh! I used to git cigarette-ends out of the gutters, you know, and the bits of cigars that the swells chucked away outside the theaters."

"My poor kid!" said Tom Merry gently. "You musn't do that here. Boys are not allowed to smoke at St. Jim's; besides, it's a dirty habit for kids, and unhealthy. You're going to learn to play cricket, and you'll want your wind for that. Have you got any cigarettes about you?"

"Ye-es!"



mouth, and Arthur Augustus echoed the yell as it swamped over on the side of his head, and 'Erbert bumped against Tom Merry, "Crikey!" "Bai Jove!" gasped the unfortunate three.

"Shove 'em on the fire!"

'Erbert hesitated for a moment, and then meekly obeyed. He evidently did not understand, but he was learning to do exactly as he was told without troubling to understand. There were too many mysterious things at St. Jim's for him to hope to understand them all at once.

"That's wight!" said D'Arcy. "He's a good kid, you see, and it would be wotten to blame him for gettin' into beastly habits, consid'win'. While we're on the subject, Wags, you musn't say 'theater.' The accent in the word 'theatre' is on the first syllable."

"Yes, sir," said Rags humbly.

"Bed-time now," said Tom Merry, as Wally opened the door and beckoned to 'Erbert. "Cut along! Good-night!"

"Good-night, young gents—I mean chaps."

And 'Erbert left the study with Wally, and joined the Third Form as they went up to bed.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Well, the worst of it's over," he said. "The kid has

sense, and he's trying to learn, and I hope all will go well yet."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"One thing's jolly certain, he's a decent little chap, and whether he stays at St. Jim's or not, I'm going to stick to him, for one."

And the rest murmured assent.

CHAPTER 10.

'Erbert Looks After Himself!

WALLY had said that he would look after 'Erbert, and he meant it. Wally was a young rascal in many respects, but he was a sportsman, and he felt a strong sympathy for a fellow facing such difficulties as confronted 'Erbert. And the "lark" appealed to him very much.

To smuggle a new boy into the school and palm him off on the masters seemed to Wally a screaming joke, and one that called for his best efforts to make it a success.

The Third Form had not seen much of 'Erbert so far. When they were in the dormitory, they naturally took some interest in him. In his new clothes 'Erbert was a nice-looking lad, though there were one or two points about him that required a change.

He had an irresistible tendency to get his hands dirty, to wipe his face on his sleeve, to breathe through his mouth instead of his nose, and so on; but he was really learning to do better quite as fast as could be expected. He was in a cheerful, if somewhat uneasy mood, and he was inclined to cling to Wally as his only friend in the big room with the crowd of strange and curious boys.

"Hallo!" said Curly Gibson. "That a new kid?"

"Yes," said Wally.

"Friend of yours?"

"Yes."

"What's his name?"

"Kirkdale."

"Oh!" said Gibson. He looked Kirkdale over as if he had been a pig for sale in a country market, and then asked him where he came from.

"Kim from Liverpool," said 'Erbert.

Curly Gibson stared at him.

"Oh! You kim from Liverpool, did you? When did you kim?"

"I kim with Master Merry to-day."

"Leave him alone," said Wally. "Look here! That's your bed, kid. Get into it."

"Hold on!" said Gibson, who was very curious. "Let him run on. I like his accent."

"Shut up, Curly!"

"Shan't! I say, chaps, here's a freak! Come and listen to him," said Gibson. "He says he kim from Liverpool. You shut up, D'Arcy minor."

"I'll jolly well give you a thick ear if you don't let him alone," said Wally belligerently. "Haven't I told you he's a friend of mine?"

"Well, why shouldn't I chum up with a friend of yours?" demanded Gibson. "Ain't I your friend myself? Now, kid, you have to give a good account of yourself when you come into a Form like the Third Form at St. Jim's. Who's your father?"

"I don't know," said 'Erbert simply.

Curly Gibson jumped.

"Eh? What did you say?"

"I don't know."

"You—you—you don't know who your father is?" exclaimed Curly, quite taken aback.

"No. I never saw him."

"Who—who's your mother?"

"I don't know."

"My only hat! Did you ever have one?"

"I—I suppose so," said 'Erbert cautiously. "I must have, you know."

"My word! Here's a chap who never had any parents!" said Gibson. "He growed, like Topsy in the story, I suppose. My word! This is something new!"

A good many of the fellows had gathered round curiously. Wally was chafing, as he removed his jacket. Yet he did not quite see how he was to save 'Erbert from the necessity of answering questions.

"What school have you been to before?" asked Norris.

"I ain't been to school before."

"My hat!"

"Well, he speaks as if he hadn't," said Kite. "Where on earth did the fellow come from?"

"He says he came with Tom Merry—"

"This is one of Merry's little jokes, then?"

"Look here!" said Wally. "Let the kid alone. I'm looking after him. Get into bed, Kirkdale. Don't jaw!"

"Right y'are!" said Kirkdale.

Kildare of the Sixth looked into the dormitory.

"Time you were in bed, kids!"

"It's all right, Kildare," said Curly Gibson. "We're just examining a new zoological specimen—a— Ow! You beast, Wally, you hacked my shin!"

"Serve you right!"

"I'll jolly well punch your head for that—"

"Come on, then!"

"Order, there!" exclaimed the captain of St. Jim's. "Stop that! If you're not in bed in one minute you'll hear from me, all of you!"

And the senior went out and slammed the door.

The Third-Formers tumbled into bed. 'Erbert among the rest, and when Kildare looked in again they were all disposed for slumber. The captain of the school said "Good-night!" and left the dormitory in darkness. But some of the fags had no intention of sleeping.

Curly Gibson sat up in bed as soon as the captain's footsteps had died away down the passage.

"Now, then, we'll talk to that new chap," he said. "Kirkdale—"

"Allo!" said 'Erbert.

"Get out of bed!"

"Shan't!"

"What's that?" exclaimed Gibson. "You won't—when I tell you! I'll-jolly well soon have you out!"

And Curly scrambled out of bed and yanked the bed-clothes off the new boy.

A bare foot lashed out in the dark, caught Gibson on the chest, and caused him to sit down with violent suddenness.

"Ow, ow!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Wally, peering through the darkness. "If you touch that new kid, Curly, I'll lather you!"

"I'll fough him!" howled Gibson. "I'll paste him! I'll make him ache in every separate bone in his body!"

Wally skipped out of bed.

"Will you? This way, then!"

"Look here! You keep out of it!"

"Rats!"

"It's all right, sir," said 'Erbert. "I can look arter myself. I don't mind puttin' up my dukes, if he wants to." Wally hesitated.

But 'Erbert was stepping out of bed. There was plenty of fight in the little street lad from the Northern city, and though he was grateful for protection, he was not at a loss to look after himself when it came to personal defence.

Two or three fags were out of bed now, and they lighted candle-ends to shed a light upon the scene.

'Erbert was squaring up to Curly Gibson in a more or less scientific attitude, his eyes gleaming.

Wally looked at him, and grinned, and stepped aside.

"Go it, then!" he said.

"Of course, I'm not going to fight that kid," said Curly loftily. "I'm just going to give him a licking for his cheek!"

"Kim on, then!" said 'Erbert.

"Go it, Curly!" said a dozen voices encouragingly.

And Gibson rushed to the attack. He knocked aside 'Erbert's defence, and landed him with a right-hander that sent the new boy sprawling across the bed. There was a yell of laughter from the fags.

'Erbert sat on the bed, looking dazed.

"Crikey!" he murmured.

"Had enough?" asked Curly Gibson, grinning.

'Erbert jumped up, with a shake of the head, and put up his fists again.

"No, I ain't," he said sturdily—"I ain't! Not by no means! Kim on!"

Curly rushed at him again, but not with the same success. 'Erbert dodged his rush, and whipped round him, and let out a left-hander that caught Gibson under the ear, and sent him staggering.

Curly Gibson brought up against a bed, and stood there unsteadily, amazed.

"My only Aunt Jane!" exclaimed Wally, in great admiration. "That's right! Give him a couple more like that, kid, and he's done in!"

This was rather rough on Gibson, as he was Wally's special chum. But in a matter like this Wally could not allow friendship to stand in the way of appreciation of really good hitting.

Curly, looking very angry, attacked again, more cautiously than before. But he found the Liverpool lad quite his match. 'Erbert hadn't much knowledge of boxing as a science, but he was quick, adroit, and had boundless pluck. He did not seem to care how much punishment he received. And he certainly gave more than he got in that respect.

After a few minutes he put in an upper-cut that lifted Curly Gibson off his feet, and sent him with a bump to the floor.

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"Bravo!" exclaimed Dudley.

Wally, with a grin, helped Curly to rise.

The aggressive fag did not continue to fight. He plunged into bed instead.

"Go for him again!" urged Norris. "You're not half licked, Curly!"

Curly grunted.

"I'll jolly well go for you if you don't shut up, Norris!" he said.

And Norris shut up. Wally gave the new boy a slap on the back that made him ache, in his enthusiasm forgetting that 'Erbert had only his night garments on.

"You'll do!" he exclaimed. "That's all right!"

"Thank'ee!" said 'Erbert.

And he went to bed, and in a few minutes a musical snore proceeding from his pillow told that he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER 11.

Making Himself at Home!

"CRIKEY! Where—where am I?"

That was 'Erbert's first exclamation as he woke on the following morning.

He sat up in bed and looked around him, doubting if he was not still dreaming. The clean, white bed, the orderly room, the soft pillows. What did it mean? To the boy, accustomed to waking in a filthy garret, or under the shelter of a wagon or an archway, the change was great enough.

But in a few seconds recollection returned.

He was at St. Jim's, and, as he realised it, an irresistible chuckle broke from the little ragamuffin. It was in some respects a serious matter to him, yet he could not help seeing a humorous side to it. The lad who had slept in the shadowy corners of a great city, who had lived on crusts, who had never known in the morning if he would have anything to eat before sunset—found himself in a great school, with everything around him in order, and in a state of cleanliness he had not known even in his dreams, with good meals awaiting him, as much as he could eat of good food, and friends to stand by him and help him in his difficulties!

The change was great enough to make him dizzy. But the street lad, his wits sharpened and his philosophy developed by the hard life he had led, took it with considerable coolness and humour.

Wally looked out of bed and yawned.

"Hallo, that's rising-bell! What are you cackling about, young Kirkdale?"

"It seems funny!" said 'Erbert.

"What seems funny?"

"Me bein' 'ere!"

"Never mind that. Get up and get into your togs, and don't jaw. Remember that's your motto—don't jaw!"

"Right 'yare!" said 'Erbert cheerfully. "I'll sa' now!"

And he jumped out of bed. He proceeded to make a primitive toilet—a smack of the sponge on the centre of his face. Then he turned to the towel.

Wally jerked it away.

"Gimme that, please!" said 'Erbert.

"I don't want to interfere with any of your personal manners and customs," said Wally, "but it's a habit here to wash first!"

"I've washed!"

"Good old cat-lick!" grinned Curly Gibson. "Where ever did that animal come from?"

"We wash a bit more than that here," said Wally. "The clean chaps sponge themselves down from head to foot. Wash the face and down to the waist, you see, and sponge over the rest roughly. That's enough. Chaps who like it can take their turn at the bath-rooms and soak themselves all over. But there isn't a rush on the bath-rooms on cold mornings. Go ahead!"

'Erbert looked at the cold water, and looked at the sponge, and looked at Wally. Then he proceeded to take a sponge-bath, and admitted cheerfully that he felt all the better for it, and Wally assured him that he looked all the better. Then he dressed himself, with a novel sensation of cleanliness and comfort.

The Third Form went down, and Curly Gibson and Jameson called on Wally to take a sprint round the quad. But Wally shook his head.

"I'm looking after my friend," he said.

"Oh, blow your friend!" exclaimed Jameson indignantly. "I suppose we come first, before a rotten new kid?"

"Go and eat coke!" said Wally politely.

And his chums went off in high dudgeon, and D'Arcy

(Continued on page 19.)

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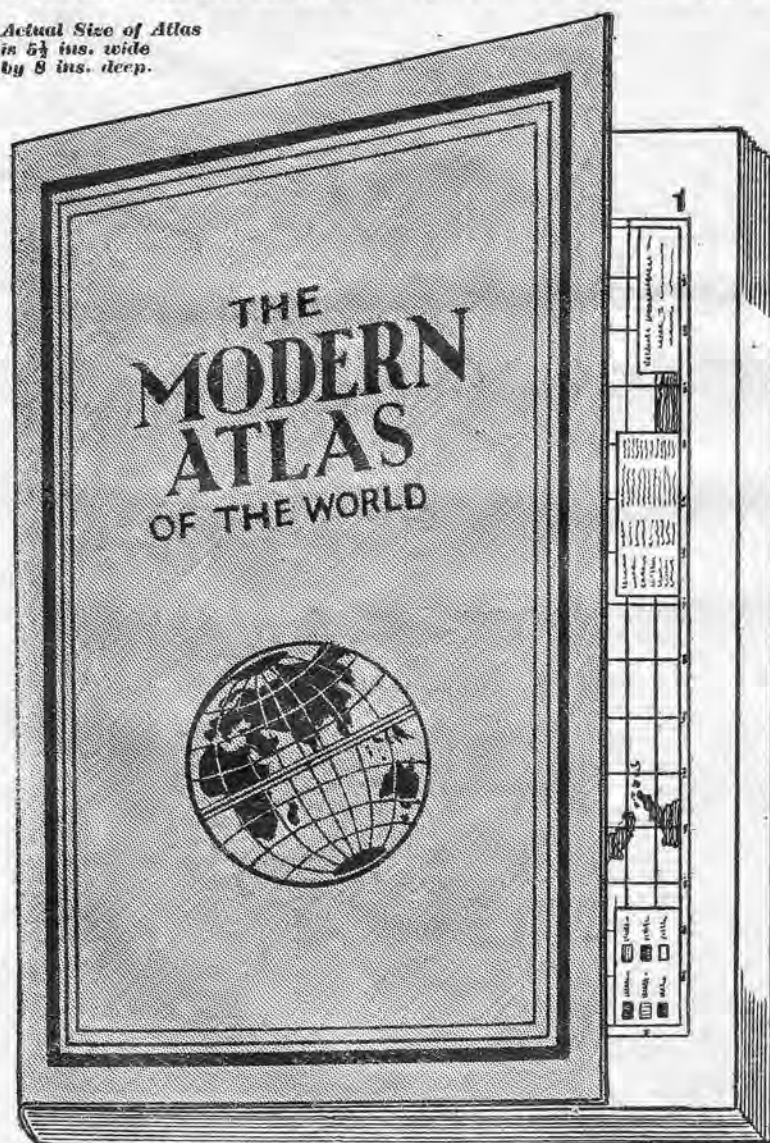
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THE EDITOR.

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PARS AND YARNS FROM—



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

HALLO, chums! I expect you are all looking forward to next week's GEM, for in its pages—as most of you know—will appear the opening chapters of the greatest thrill-story of the World War I have ever had the pleasure of reading.

"THE SPY-FLYERS!"

is the title of this super story, and the author, Flying Officer W. E. Johns, is already world-famous for his vivid yarns of war in the air. The coming serial in the GEM will add to his laurels, believe me. Make no mistake about it, boys,

"THE SPY-FLYERS!"

is the story of the year. Alongside another wonderful yarn of St. Jim's, which is entitled

"THE SCHOOLBOY INVENTOR!"

and which features the arrival of Bernard Glyn, the boy with a passion for inventing things, to say nothing of Potts, the Office Boy, in another "comic strip," and you have a real bumper number of the GEM, well worth the twopence you have to pay for it. And I'm forgetting another item—namely the column of jokes submitted by GEM readers. For all you know to the contrary your name might be among the list of prizewinners published in our next number. To each of these readers I shall have pleasure in awarding half-a-crown!

OUR GREAT ATLAS OFFER!

I expect most of you have seen the full-page announcement concerning the Wonderful Atlas of the World which I am offering to all readers who collect the necessary eight coupons. Cut out the coupon on page 19 of this issue and keep it by you, and remember you may also cut the coupons from "Modern Boy" and "Magnet," our two companion papers, which are also participating in this grand offer. The Atlas is in full colours and contains thirty-two plates offering information that will always be of use to you. It is strongly bound and just the right size to keep in your pocket, if you wish. But in any case I recommend you to read the full particulars which are given on page 17 of this week's GEM. If you don't decide there and then to collect the required eight coupons I shall be mighty surprised.

BRAVO, PAYNTER!

Well, boys, we've won the Ashes, despite all the chin-wag about body-line bowling, and that's that. But all of us interested in cricket and sport must feel like taking off our hats to Paynter, the famous

Lancashire man. Remember he was mighty seedy, undergoing treatment for tonsillitis, and going backwards and forwards to hospital; but he forgot all that when England needed runs, and came out to bat. Undoubtedly it was Paynter's courageous effort in the broiling heat that put England on the way to winning, for the story of our last innings might have been totally different without the jolly useful 83 runs he knocked up in our first innings. In the circumstances it was fitting that the winning hit of the match should come from this stalwart Lancashire man in England's second innings. A noble effort, indeed. The sight of Paynter actually taking his medicine and gargling his throat during his stay at the wickets in the Fourth Test match will surely live in the memory of those Brisbane folk who were present. Such a sight must be unprecedented in the long history of the Tests. Bravo, Paynter! England (and that, of course, includes Gemites) is proud of you!

WHAT A NECK?

Ted Marston, of Sheffield, wants me to tell him how many bones there are in the neck of a giraffe. 'Fraid that question beats me, Ted. But I do remember seeing somewhere that a sparrow has twice as many bones in its neck as a giraffe. Is that any help?

A MAN OF IRON—

Yes, and a man of tin and steel as well! You see, I'm referring to a fellow by the name of William who was X-rayed the other day. In his tummy were two teaspoons, six dessert spoons, a chunk of tin seven inches long, an electric bell-push and a length of chain. Don't ask me why William swallowed these indigestible articles; but it is reported that he prefers to keep his odd collection inside him rather than undergo an operation at the hands of a surgeon. He reckons that the surgeon's knife is dangerous. Well, well!

A MAMMOTH JIG-SAW PUZZLE!

You've never seen one like it—take it from me. For this puzzle consists of ten thousand parts which, when put together will prove to be a perfectly good gunboat. Fact! You see, it was not considered advisable for a brand new gunboat to travel from Southampton to Shanghai under its own power on account of its shallow draught, so the owners decided to take it to bits, pack it into crates and bundles and ship it across to Shanghai. When it arrives, an army of skilled workmen will start operations

on this super puzzle, and it is reckoned that three weeks of their labours will bring the gunboat to life, so to speak, complete with howitzer and a six-pounder quick-firing gun. Then this gunboat will be all ready for river service—and pirates! Terrible thing if the skilled workmen get the parts of this super puzzle mixed up, what?

THE BUSY BEE!

A keen GEM reader from Hampshire writes to tell me that he's mighty interested in bees. Personally I always keep clear of the blessed things. Now according to my correspondent a bee's wings flap two thousand five hundred times a second. I'll take his word for it!

THIS WEEK'S QUEER STORY!

Andrea Finn might have been a regular swell fellow, popular with the masses, if you could judge by the length of the funeral procession that followed his remains to the cemetery. Hundreds of people "joined up" for the occasion, and then it was explained that Andrea Finn had made provision in his will for the sum of twopence to be given to anyone who attended his funeral!

LUCKY BOYS!

When I was a boy at school the cane was in frequent use. Generally I deserved all we got and were none the worse for a licking or two. Nowadays, corporal punishment is on the wane. Recently the L.C.C. drew up a formidable list of regulations concerning the use of the cane. Among these regulations were two which will very likely be of interest to London GEM readers. "If the cane is used on the hands the number of strokes shall not exceed three on each hand. If used 'elsewhere' it shall be applied over a boy's ordinary cloth trousers and the number of strokes shall not exceed six." Oh, and here's another one that might comfort you. "Corporal punishment shall not in any case be inflicted (save for grave moral offences) until other methods have been tried and failed!"

FIREPROOF!

The day is coming when the danger of planes catching fire in the air will be eliminated completely. German scientists have invented a dope which is fireproof. Recently a model plane was coated with this dope and exposed to the burning glare of a blow-torch for twelve minutes. But nothing happened—the model plane was none the worse for this treatment. That's a step in the right direction, for man's conquest of the air is growing every day and soon we shall be speeding through the skies just as comfortably and fearlessly as we now travel in buses, trams, and trains. The horror of fire in the air, however, has always been a serious handicap to those whose interests lie in developing and making popular speedy air travel.

A SCHOOLBOY HOWLER!

A Cabinet Minister is a man who makes furniture and polishes it in French.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTERS.

Harold Witway, Lanes; C. Gravely, London, W.; W. Thompson, Blackpool; B. Macfarland, Glasgow; "Regular Reader," Stafford; "Critical," Watford. If you enclose your full address next time you write I'll reply to you all by post.

YOUR EDITOR.

SMUGGLED TO SCHOOL!

(Continued from page 16.)

minor showed the new boy round the school until breakfast-time.

'Erbert was greatly impressed. The size and evident age of the buildings awed him. Wally's idea was partly to keep him away from the other boys as long as possible, and in this he succeeded.

'Erbert's open-mouthed admiration was gratifying to his cicerone. But the ignorance he displayed on some subjects was astounding, and it made Wally feel something like terror as to what would happen when he appeared in Mr. Selby's class.

When Wally pointed out the old tower, which had been held by a hot-headed partisan of King Charles against the Parliamentary troops, and had been half battered down by the cannon of Cromwell, 'Erbert asked who King Charles was, who Cromwell was, and what they were fighting about, and whether Wally had seen it happen himself.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally. "What will he say in the history class?"

They met Tom Merry & Co. as they came in to breakfast. 'Erbert was looking very clean and neat and cheerful, and they looked at him with great approval.

"Bai Jove, this is weally decent of you, Wally!" said Arthur Augustus. "I like to see you in the wole of wprotectah to the stwangan."

"Yes, jolly decent, isn't it?" said Wally cheerfully. "Can you lend me five bob, Gus?"

"Weally, Wally—" Arthur Augustus sorted out five shillings, and handed them over. "There you are, deah boy!"

"Thanks! That will do for the present!" said Wally. "Upon the whole, I'm glad you've come back to school, Gus!"

Tom Merry laughed as Wally walked away with his protege.

"I'm jolly glad Wally's taken him up!" he said. "It would be against him in the Lower Form if he were too openly backed up by Shell fellows. What he wanted was a staunch friend in his own Form. If Wally sticks to him he'll pull through all right."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What about the tin?" asked Monty Lowther. "You haven't paid the fees yet, Tommy."

"I'm waiting for the remittance. It's bound to come this morning, because I made a point of it."

"And I am certain that my govannah will pay up on this occasion," said Arthur Augustus. "I told him I wanted the tin to help a chap who couldn't pay his fees, without goin' into particulahs, so he's bound to send it."

"Good! The post ought to be in now. Let's go and look!"

The juniors entered the School House. Sure enough there was a letter for Tom Merry, with the postmark "Huckleberry Heath"; and another, with a crest on the outside, for Arthur Augustus. The juniors drew aside into a secluded spot to open them. There was a rustle of crisp banknotes.

"Bai Jove, the govannah is playin' up, and no mistake! I shall have to write to him and tell him I weally considah he is playing the game!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "Miss Priscilla has sent me twice the amount I asked for, as she feels that I want the money for a good purpose."

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther. "I'd give something for an old governess like that. Will you change her for my bicycle, Tommy?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"This is all right. We've got more between us than we need. I'll get the fees paid at once, in case any difficulties arise. After the fees have been accepted, I don't know whether it's possible for the new kid to be refused as a pupil. Anyway, it makes it safer."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I won't go in to the Head. He's got such a way of looking right through a chap like a beastly grmlet," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I'll catch Mr. Railton just before he goes into breakfast, when he won't have any time to jaw."

"Good! And he can take the cash to the Head. Even if Dr. Holmes doesn't like it, when he finds what the new kid is like, I don't see how he can send him away," said D'Arcy. "He would be in a doocid awkward posish, anyway."

"I hope Kirkdale will be improved by the time the Head sees him," said Tom Merry anxiously. "You must have noticed that he's improved a great deal already."

"Yaas, indeed. As far as poss, I am settin' him a good example, and—"

"And if you can teach him to pick up your beautiful accent," said Monty Lowther gravely, "they'll take him for a chap from Oxford or Colney Hatch."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Tom Merry counted out the required sum from the two remittances, and as it was close on breakfast time he walked away to Mr. Railton's study. With the money in a sealed, new envelope he tapped at the door, just as the Housemaster opened it to come out to go to the dining-room.

Mr. Railton looked down at the junior, glancing at the envelope.

"Yes, Merry—what is it?"

"It's the new boy's fees, sir, for the half-term. I'm to give them to you. I ought to have done so last night, only—"

"Very well, Merry."

Mr. Railton took the envelope, and slipped it into an inner pocket. Tom Merry scuttled off, glad to escape unquestioned. Mr. Railton naturally assumed that the fees had been sent by the new boy's people or guardians, per Tom Merry, which was, indeed, the case, though not exactly in the way the Housemaster imagined.

Cut This Out and Keep it by You!



Mr. Railton stepped into the Head's study before going into the dining-room, and laid the envelope on his desk.

"Merry has just handed me the fees for the new boy, sir," he said.

"Ah, yes!" said the Head, looking up abstractedly from an examination paper he was busy upon. "The—er—new boy. I did not know he had arrived."

"Yes, sir. He came with Merry from Liverpool."

"Ah, yes, a very good arrangement! Thank you, Mr. Railton!"

And the Head slipped the envelope into a drawer of his desk, and turned to his work again. The Housemaster left the study. Fate seemed to be playing into Tom Merry's hands. That a new boy was coming from Liverpool Dr. Holmes knew, and he had assumed without thinking much about the matter that it was this boy Mr. Railton was referring to. As the new boy was to go into the School House, the matter was wholly in the hands of the School House master, and the Head had nothing to do with it, except to send the receipt for the fees.

Mr. Railton walked into the dining-room. He took the head of the Sixth Form table there, and he noticed as he sat down that there was a suppressed chuckle proceeding from the fags' table. Mr. Selby was in charge of that, and he was looking red and annoyed.

The Third Form master was not a good-tempered man, and anything like a disturbance irritated his weak nerves.

"Silence at the table!" he said sharply. "What do you mean by laughing, Gibson?"

"If you please, sir, I couldn't help it."

"Take fifty lines!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

And Curly Gibson left off laughing. But chuckles broke out the next moment from other fags, and Mr. Selby glared along the table in search of the cause of merriment. His eyes fell upon 'Erbert.

The fags had fried sausages for breakfast, as a change from the usual breakfast. 'Erbert had absent-mindedly taken up his sausage in his fingers, and was eating it from the end. A mischievous fag had abstracted his knife and fork, and poor 'Erbert, seeing none there, had fallen at once into his old habits.

The sight of the new boy munching the sausage, and a perfectly contented look upon his face, was too much for the gravity of the Third Form.

Wally, unfortunately, happened to be two or three seats away from 'Erbert, and could not whisper to him.

Mr. Selby could hardly believe his eyes for the moment. He rose to his feet, and stared at 'Erbert. The chuckles of the Third-Formers died away as they saw the angry glow at the tip of Mr. Selby's nose. Only 'Erbert seemed to be unconscious of anything amiss. He munched away in huge enjoyment.

"Boy!"

Mr. Selby seemed hardly able to articulate the word. Even then 'Erbert did not look towards the Form master. It was not till Curly Gibson gave him a friendly nudge that he started and looked up. Then, catching Mr. Selby's angry stare, he remained struck with dismay, the half-eaten sausage in his fingers, half-way to his mouth, and his mouth wide open.

"Boy! You—you are the new boy, I think?"

"Yes, sir," said 'Erbert.

"You—you—I do not know where you were trained," said Mr. Selby, "but you must know better than to eat in that disgusting way. Put down that sausage at once!"

'Erbert laid it on his plate.

"Now go and wash your hands and face, and then wait in the Hall till the first lesson," said Mr. Selby. "Not a word, sir! Go!"

And poor 'Erbert, greatly dismayed at losing the rest of that enjoyable breakfast, went slowly from the dining-room.

At the Shell table Tom Merry looked glumly at Manners and Lowther.

"He's in Selby's black book already," he murmured. "That's rotten!"

They agreed that it was rotten. But there was worse to come for 'Erbert when he took his place in the Third Form class-room.

CHAPTER 12.

'Erbert in Trouble!

TOM MERRY looked for 'Erbert before going into lessons.

He found the lad waiting in the passage outside the Third Form Room, looking troubled and dismayed.

Tom gave him a tap on the shoulder.

**TRIED
BY HIS
FORM!**



Accused of a brutal attack on a new boy! It's a serious offence that Nipper, the captain of the Remove at St. Frank's, is charged with, and he is tried by his Form-fellows. He strongly protests his innocence, but the evidence is against him, and he is found guilty! You simply must read this dramatic, long complete yarn of the chums of St. Frank's School. You'll enjoy every line of it. Ask your Newsagent for

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"Cheer up, kid!"

'Erbert's eyes were moist as he looked at the hero of the Shell.

"Thank 'ee, sir—I mean, Merry! I'm going to do my best, and I 'ope I shan't get you into a row, that's all."

"That's all right. Do your best, and don't talk too much, and do keep on your guard. You mustn't lose a point, you know."

"I'll be careful, sir. I did act the giddy ox this morning," said 'Erbert ruefully. "A bloke can't learn everythink at once, I suppose."

Tom Merry was thoughtful as he joined the Shell going in. He felt uneasy about 'Erbert, but he had done all he could.

Wally had promised to sit next to the new boy and help him in any way he could, and Tom Merry could only trust to fortune, and hope for the best.

'Erbert went in with the Third Form, and Wally drew him to a seat. In the few minutes that elapsed before the Form master came in Wally did his best to initiate 'Erbert into the routine of the place.

Mr. Selby was not looking amiable as he came in. He had a hopelessly weak digestion which could not stand the British bacon and eggs for breakfast, and yet he persisted in the bacon and eggs. The result was that almost every morning he was in a state of peevish irritation that kept his class on tenterhooks. It was never known upon whom Mr. Selby would come down, but it was pretty certain that a morning would never pass without his "coming down" upon somebody.

The Form master's nose was very red—a warning of danger the Third Form knew well. Even Wally was quite meek, and the rest of the class might have been taken for tame mice, as far as their looks went.

Mr. Selby sniffed as he went up to his desk. He would have preferred to see some reckless fag throwing ink-balls, or slipping a comic paper under his desk. This good behaviour was a trial to his nerves.

However, with a Form like the Third at St. Jim's he was not likely to be long in want of a victim. His eye roamed over the class and lighted upon 'Erbert, and glittered. He had not forgotten the incident of the gnawed sausage.

There was keen attention on the part of the class, and a snappishness on the part of the master for some time. Then Jameson was caught napping. Jameson was the biggest fellow in the Third, but he was far from being the cleverest. Wally could make rings round him on any subject. For that reason Mr. Selby let Wally alone, and picked on Jameson. He was out for scalps that morning.

He dissected Jameson, so to speak, for the delectation of the class. He ruthlessly probed into all Jameson's confused views on the subject of English grammar. He exposed all his little weaknesses, frightened him so much that he continually contradicted himself, and made him feel ten times the dunce he really was, and finally denounced him as being the most backward boy in a backward class, and gave him an imposition which was likely to account for most of Jameson's evening.

Then, his appetite whetted, he looked round for fresh victims. The Third Form, with heavy hearts, realised that their Form master was in rare form this morning. Jameson sat in a cold perspiration, wondering whether he really was the unexampled booby Mr. Selby had made him out to be, and feeling utterly miserable and dejected. And yet Mr. Selby was far from being a bad-hearted man. But when he was suffering from indigestion he had a rigid sense of duty that admitted of no appeal, and offenders who might have escaped at other times had no chance then.

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally, in dismay. "He's looking for trouble! And if he starts on Rags now—"

He dared not finish the thought. But his worst forebodings were realised. Mr. Selby turned from Jameson to 'Erbert. Mr. Selby had a bitter tongue, and he did not realise himself how bitter it was, or he would have kept it under better control.

"Kirkdale!"

He rapped the name out, and 'Erbert who was hardly used to it yet, and who was surreptitiously trying to make some glimmer of meaning out of the Third Form grammar, did not look up.

Mr. Selby's nose grew more crimson.

"Kirkdale!"

Wally nudged the new boy, and 'Erbert started.

"Yes, sir?"

"Stand up!"

'Erbert rose to his feet. Some of the class turned their heads to look at him, and he went very red.

"Why did you not answer to your name?" said Mr. Selby harshly. "I presume I have your name correctly. What is your name, boy?"

"'Erbert, sir," said the new boy, much flustered.



Erbert certainly gave more punishment than he received. After a few minutes he put in an upper-cut that lifted Curly Gibson off his feet, and sent him with a bump to the floor. "Bravo!" exclaimed Dudley.

Mr. Selby jumped.

"What?"

"Erbert, sir."

"I presume," said Mr. Selby, in a tone of the heaviest, most crushing sarcasm—"I presume you mean Herbert?"

"No, sir, I mean 'Erbert,'" said the lad, his obstinacy roused by the Form master's manner, and speaking, too, in all good faith. For the aspirate had not entered very much into the experience of the little ragamuffin. "My name's 'Erbert, sir."

"Boy! How dare you be impertinent! How dare you deliberately drop an aspirate in speaking to me!" exclaimed the Form master.

'Erbert looked puzzled. He glanced at the desk, and he glanced at the floor, and then he gazed at Mr. Selby again.

"Do you hear me, boy?"

"Yes, sir. I ain't dropped nothin'!"

"Eh?"

"I ain't dropped nothin'," said 'Erbert in a tone of growing resentment.

The class could not repress a giggle. It was clear that 'Erbert did not know that the harmless and necessary "h" was termed an aspirate. The class wondered, and Mr. Selby was astounded.

"Kirkdale, I hardly understand you. You dropped an aspirate—"

"I didn't, sir!" said 'Erbert, much distressed. "I ain't dropped nothin'!"

"Is it possible that you do not understand me? Come out here!"

'Erbert went out slowly before the class. Every eye was upon him, and his face was as red as Mr. Selby's nose. The class-room door had been left open to admit the fresh spring air, and 'Erbert was tempted to make a bolt for it and shake the dust of St. Jim's from his feet. But the thought of Tom Merry and his other kind friends restrained him. The untaught, untrained lad was capable of a gratitude and devotion to his benefactors that would have put many an educated fellow to the blush.

The lad stood out before the class, and Mr. Selby advanced within a few paces of him and looked him over as he might have looked over a strange animal.

"Now, Kirkdale, kindly repeat your Christian name."

"'Erbert, sir."

Mr. Selby clicked his teeth hard. Yet it seemed hardly possible that the small, scared-looking boy could be deliberately intending to cheek him.

"Do you mean to say, Kirkdale, that you were christened 'Erbert, and not Herbert?" he added.

'Erbert looked hopelessly bewildered.

"Answer me!" thundered Mr. Selby.

"I—I don't know, sir."

"You—you don't know? What do you know?"

The Form master looked at him searchingly.

"I suppose you have been christened, Kirkdale?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Enough!" said Mr. Selby. "I don't know where you have been trained, Kirkdale, but you will find that this deliberate insolence will not answer at this school. Go to my desk and fetch my cane!"

'Erbert obeyed. Mr. Selby took the cane.

"Hold out your hand!"

"What for?" said 'Erbert sullenly. "I ain't done nothin'!"

"You—you what?" gasped Mr. Selby. "What do you mean by using such expressions? Is it possible that you were taught to speak so?" He lowered the cane. "Listen to me, Kirkdale. I hardly know what to make of you. What school did you attend before you came here?"

'Erbert was silent.

It was a difficult situation. Tom Merry had cautioned him, under any circumstances whatever, not to speak an untruth, and at the same time not to give himself away to any questioner. Silence was safest for him if he could not elude the question. He could not dodge this one, so he remained silent.

Mr. Selby, of course, could not know what was passing in the boy's mind, and he was amazed.

"Kirkdale!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Why do you not answer me?"

'Erbert was silent. The class was silent, too. There was a feeling of painful tension. The Third Form were as puzzled as their master, with the exception of Wally. And Wally could not help his protege then.

"Kirkdale, answer me! What was the name of your previous school?"

Still 'Erbert did not speak.

"Very well," said Mr. Selby, in a grinding voice, "as you persist in deliberate insolence, I shall punish you. Hold your hand out!"

'Erbert hesitated. But he remembered that Tom Merry had cautioned him to take any punishment without complaint. He winced at the vicious cut he received. But it did not end there. Mr. Selby gave him six, and 'Erbert was tingling with pain as he went back to his place.

Mr. Selby, considerably ruffled, went on snappishly with the lesson, and for the rest of that morning he did not address another remark to 'Erbert.

CHAPTER 13.

Tom Merry's Pupil!

ERBERT breathed more freely when the time to dismiss came and the Third Form left the room. A weight was lifted from his heart and his mind as he went out into the fresh spring air in the quadrangle.

There was perspiration on his brow, and almost a hunted look in his eyes.

Wally slipped his arm through 'Erbert's, and Jameson and Gibson sniffed and walked another way.

When the Shell came out, Tom Merry looked for 'Erbert, and hurried towards him. He was anxious to know how his protegee had fared under the ordeal of the first morning's lessons.

"How did it go?" he asked.

Wally made a grimace.

"Rotten!" he said.

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"How do you like it, Kirkdale?"

"I—I like it all right," said 'Erbert, with an effort. "I'll do my best, Master Merry, because you want me to."

"It's for your own good, you know," said Wally.

"Yes, I know it is," said 'Erbert. "I dessey I'll git used to it in time, if I stay 'ere. And I'll stay if I can fix it, Master Merry."

Tom Merry did not feel wholly satisfied. He had a dim conception of the ordeal the lad must have been through that morning, with a sharp-tempered master, amid strange and incomprehensible surroundings. Had he, after all, done the best possible thing for 'Erbert in bringing him to St. Jim's?

The lad would be happier in the Liverpool streets than he was at present, there was no doubt on that point. Yet what must starvation, and dirt, and homeless wandering inevitably lead to? Loafing, or crime, when 'Erbert grew up! That was certain. No, there was no doubt that if 'Erbert could remain at St. Jim's, at St. Jim's he ought to remain.

"Look here, we'll all lend a hand, and help!" said Tom. "Would you like to have some lessons now—something that would help you out this afternoon?"

'Erbert brightened up at once.

"Yes, sir, I would; that would be spiffin'. But—"

"But what?"

"Ain't you goin' to play football?"

"I was going to, kid, but that doesn't matter. Never mind the football; this is more important. Come up to my study."

'Erbert went upstairs with Tom Merry. They passed Gore in the passage, talking to several fellows in his own set. They all stared at Tom Merry and his protegee, and laughed scoffingly.

"Here comes Merry and his workhouse friend," said Gore.

"Queer taste, picking up a chum in the gutter," remarked Mellish.

Tom Merry's eyes burned, and he came very near "pitching into" the cad of the Lower School on the spot. But he restrained himself and went on.

Monty Lowther and Manners were just leaving the study, and they stared at Tom.

"Aren't you coming down to footer, Tom?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"But we want you," said Manners. "It's a ripping day, and we can get in half an hour before dinner. Why aren't you coming?"

"Busy!"

"'Ere," said 'Erbert, "I don't wante—"

"You shut up, kid, and do as you're told," said Tom Merry. "Buzz off, you chaps, and don't bother! Take a seat, kid."

Manners and Lowther went out. Tom Merry drew up books and paper, and pens and ink, and sat down beside 'Erbert. Exactly where the instruction was to begin he could hardly tell; every question he put to 'Erbert seemed to reveal a deeper maze of ignorance than the last.

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It was not only that 'Erbert had not the faintest knowledge of grammar, history, or geography, but he could barely write his name, and that in characters that would have earned him a sound caning from any master; and he could not read anything but the simplest stuff. That was not surprising, for he had never been taught to read; he had picked up what little he did know by spelling out words on newsgent's notice-boards, and the titles of books in shop windows. He confided to Tom Merry that when he was "flush" he used to buy a copy of a boy's paper and get an acquaintance to read it for him, and sometimes a friend would explain to him what the words meant.

Tom Merry's heart was very heavy. The lad was so bright, so intelligent and honest, and yet he had been neglected in this way. Exactly who or what to blame for that Tom Merry did not know, and he did not try to think it out; but one determination was fixed in his mind, that he would help the lad by every means in his power, at any cost to himself.

And so he commenced the task of enlightening 'Erbert. It was Tom Merry's first essay as a teacher, and the role came awkwardly enough. He hardly knew where to begin and where to leave off. And, like many boys of his age, he had half forgotten his earlier knowledge, and it came to him as a surprise that, although he was the top of the Shell, he was not fitted, without preparation, for becoming top of the Third. And poor 'Erbert's ignorance was so abysmal! There were things a Third-Former was supposed to know, of which 'Erbert had never even heard of the existence. But Tom Merry laboured manfully through this slough of despond, manfully doing his best, like a brave and true-hearted British lad.

'Erbert was quick and willing, but he could not learn as much in an hour as other boys take a year or two years to learn. It was a beginning, a breaking-up of the ground—that was all.

Tom Merry realised that much—very much—more was required before 'Erbert could take his place in the Third Form without suspicion. And meanwhile— But it was useless to think of that.

CHAPTER 14.

Brought to Light!

"DEAR me!" said Dr. Holmes.

The Head of St. Jim's stood in his study, and stared at a letter in his hand. He had just opened it, and a cheque had fallen from it upon his desk.

Dr. Holmes stared at the letter, and then at the cheque, and then at the letter again in blank amazement.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "This is most extraordinary!"

He touched the bell, and Binks appeared. Dr. Holmes looked up from the letter, which he was reading for the third time.

"Go to the Sixth Form Room and request Mr. Railton to step here," he said.

And he read the letter through again. Then he picked up the cheque and read it. He laid it down as Mr. Railton entered the study.

"You sent for me, sir?" said the Housemaster, who had been taking the Sixth Form, and was considerably surprised at the summons.

"Yes, Railton. I have had a most curious letter. It is from Mr. Glyn, the father of the new boy who is coming to the school. He has sent a cheque for the half term's fees, and states that his son will arrive here to-day."

"Well, sir?"

"But he has already come," said the Head, in amazement, "and the fees are paid. Do you not remember handing me the money yourself?"

It was Mr. Railton's turn to look surprised.

"The fees I handed you were not Glyn's, sir."

"Indeed! Did you not tell me they were for the new boy who had arrived at St. Jim's?"

"Yes, certainly! But—"

"All other fees have been paid, I think, with the exception of Skimpole's, which are delayed as usual."

"Yes; but this money was handed to me by Tom Merry, for the new boy, Kirkdale—"

"Kirkdale?"

"Yes, sir; the new boy in the Third Form."

Dr. Holmes laid down the letter, and stared blankly at Mr. Railton.

"This is—is most extraordinary!" he gasped. "Is it possible that a new boy has come to this school without my knowledge?"

"My dear sir—"

"Kirkdale! I have never heard the name before."

"But—but he came from Liverpool with Tom Merry," said Mr. Railton, in surprise. "I—I certainly understood that you knew all about it."

"The only new boy I was expecting was young Glyn, and he will go, I think, into the Shell," said Dr. Holmes. "No

new boy was expected for the Third Form. What made you decide upon the Third Form for this boy?"

"I—I did not decide. I understood from—from Merry, I think—that it had been decided, and I naturally thought you—"

"Perhaps Mr. Selby can throw some light on the subject?" said Dr. Holmes thoughtfully. "He could hardly admit a new boy to his Form without knowing something about him. I think we had better go and see Mr. Selby."

"A good idea, sir! I have no doubt he can clear it up. It is most surprising!"

And the Head and the Housemaster proceeded to the Third Form Room. The door was half-open, and as they came down the passage they could see the Third Form in their seats following Mr. Selby in a far from delightful investigation into the early history of their native country.

Dr. Holmes entered the room. He gave 'Erbert a peculiar glance.

"I was coming to see you about this lad, Mr. Selby," he said. "Please come to my study, and bring him with you. I will send a prefect to take the class."

"Certainly, sir!" said Mr. Selby.

Wally whistled under his breath. "The game's up!" he murmured. "Well, it was a lark; and I'm jolly sorry for Rags!"

Rags was feeling sorry for himself as he followed the Third Form master to the Head's study. These grave and dignified gentlemen were very terrible to 'Erbert, and he had no knowledge of what punishment might or might not await him in the Head's presence.

A flogging was the least he expected, but whatever came to him, he was determined upon one thing—so far as possible, he would save Tom Merry from blame.

In the Head's study the little ragamuffin stood with downcast eyes, with three separate pairs of eyes fixed upon him.

"Kirkdale!" said the Head gravely. "Kirkdale, I think, is your name?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did you come to this school?"

"I kim in a train from Liverpool, sir."

The Head coughed slightly.

"I did not mean that, Kirkdale. How was it you came to be a new boy here. Did your parents send you?"

"I ain't got any, sir."

"Then who sent you?"

'Erbert was silent.

"Answer me, my lad," said the Head kindly enough. "I do not intend to punish you. I only want this matter cleared up and set right."

"I ain't nothin' to say, sir."

"Very well. You say you can throw no light upon the matter, Mr. Selby?"

"None, sir. The boy was presented to me as coming into the Third Form, and I understood that Mr. Railton had so decided."

"You were misled, as I was," said Mr. Railton. "I understood that it had been decided by Dr. Holmes or yourself."

"There has been some deception," said the Head, frowning. "We need not detain you from your class any longer, Mr. Selby. Will you send Tom Merry here as you return?"

There was a cry from 'Erbert:

"Oh, sir! If you please, sir!"

"Have you anything to say, Kirkdale?"

"It—it wasn't Tom Merry's fault, sir, or Master D'Arcy's, neither. They was both very kind. They was good to me, and they—"

"Send both Merry and D'Arcy here, Mr. Selby!"

"Certainly, sir."

The Third Form master left the study, and 'Erbert looked the picture of misery.

"You seem to be troubled for these boys," said the Head. "Unless they have acted wrongly they will not be punished. Surely you understand that this matter must be cleared up!"

"They ain't done nothin', sir. It was only their kindness; and how was they to know I couldn't stick it? You can lick me if you like, sir. It was all my fault—I know I oughtn't to have kim 'ere."

The Head glanced helplessly at Mr. Railton. There was a silence in the study after 'Erbert's words, till a tap came at the door. In response to the Head's "Come in" two juniors entered—Tom Merry of the Shell and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth.

Both the juniors looked very grave, and at the sight of 'Erbert in the Head's study their worst forebodings were realised. They had felt that something was wrong when they were called away in the middle of afternoon lessons to the Head's presence, and now, of course, they knew that the trouble had come.

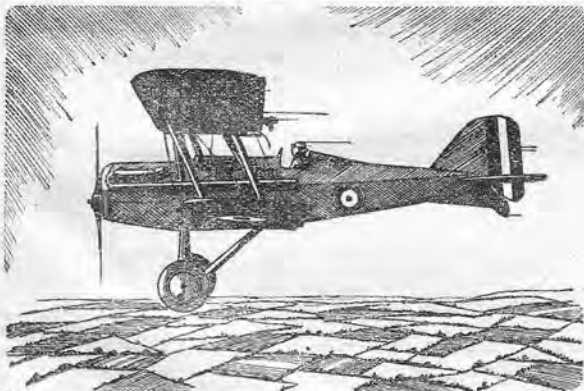
'Erbert's presence explained everything.

Tom Merry's cheek became a shade paler. He knew very well that the matter was serious, that it might be very serious for him. D'Arcy did not turn a hair, however. Perhaps he did not realise the gravity of the case so keenly as Tom Merry; or perhaps his inward misgivings were unable to disturb the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

The Head adjusted his gold-rimmed pince-nez and looked at the juniors with a stern brow.

"Merry, I have sent for you to give me an explanation. This lad, Kirkdale, has been introduced into the school—I may say smuggled into the school—in what appears to be a surreptitious manner. You know about it?"

(Continued on page 28.)

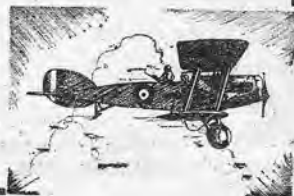


STARTING NEXT WEEK! THE SPY-FLYERS!

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BATTLER'S LUCK HOLDS GOOD WHEN HIS SCHOONER IS—

SAVED BY AN APE!



By
CECIL FANSHAW.

When Battler started on an ape-catching expedition he scarcely thought that one of his animal captives would come to the rescue when he was in a tight corner!

CHAPTER 1.

The Catching of Ginger Sam!

"**H**URRAH! Hang on tight there! Got him!"
 "No, we haven't!"
 "Hey! What the thump are you all at? Hang on, I said! He'll be out in a jiffy!"
 "My word, masters! Plenty strong fella!"
 "Pull, lads! Pull, Dick, old son! Got him!"
 "Crums! He's got me!"

The hot air rang with the sounds of a violent struggle. Shouts and yells, mingled with beast-like roars, rose to the blinding tropical sky.

Big Bart Crewison—known through the South Seas as "Battler"—uttered a roar of dismay. He saw that the huge red orang-utan, although cleverly trapped in a net, had in fact seized his young brother Dick.

A muscular hairy red arm had shot through the net's meshes, and a powerful black paw had gripped the lad by the scruff of his neck.

In vain Dick struggled. The lad felt helpless in that terrible grasp, felt talon-like fingers squeezing, heard a roaring in his ears. He choked and spluttered, saw the green jungle swim and quiver before his eyes, felt his senses leaving him.

With a shout, Battler launched himself to seize the ape's hairy wrist to try to break its grip. Battler was strong as ten ordinary men, but even his mighty strength seemed nothing to that of the monster orang-utan, which he wanted to capture alive, if possible.

But he couldn't shoot, anyway, for the two brothers, their five Kanaka "boys," and the great red ape, were all mixed up in one whirling dog-fight.

Only an hour since had Battler and Dick, with their Kanaka crew, landed from the Radio Ray, their trading schooner, on Tamarang Island, in Polynesia. The brothers wanted to catch four full-grown orang-utans, alive and unhurt, for the agent of a European Zoo had offered big Battler two hundred pounds for each specimen.

Gleefully had Battler and young Dick taken on the risky job.

Pearl-fishers, traders, orchid-hunters, recruiters of black

labour on cannibal South Sea Islands, the two brothers were always game for any adventure.

But this ape-catching trip seemed likely to end in disaster.

And that after cleverly trailing a fine specimen to his nest up a tree in a glade, luring him down with fruit, then skilfully dropping a great strong net over the monster.

All five Kanakas heaved mightily on the net to prevent its escape. They were encouraged by the bellows of Tokelau Jim, the stalwart brown-skinned bos'un.

Battler, meanwhile, tried his utmost to break its grip on his brother's neck.

Teeth clenched, he wrestled, muscles cracking, sweat raining down his sun-bronzed face. But the grip tightened, and young Dick fought wildly for breath, struggled frantically, felt as though his head was bursting.

Roars of fury burst from the netted red ape, as all struggled on the ground, crashing amongst shrubs. It was a real wild man of the woods, astoundingly powerful, and its eyes blazed in its black face.

Suddenly, however, Battler uttered a whoop.

Wrenching frantically, the herculean Battler managed to force open the hand of the orang-utan, and young Dick fell sideways, free, gasping for air. But, somehow, that moment the mouth of the net was dragged open in the struggle, and the red monster was out like a flash of lightning.

Yells and shouts rose on all sides.

"Look out, master!" boomed Tokelau Jim. "Red fella wild man walk about too much!"

"Plenty cross!" shouted the other Kanakas, grabbing blindly at the net in panic.

The orang-utan was, in fact, in the deuce of a rage. He made a snake-like rush through his would-be captors, flailing at them with his terrible paws, then sprang for the hanging creepers with a blood-chilling roar.

Even as he leapt at the tangle of vines the monster grabbed young Dick about the waist with his feet.

Another pair of hands were those black feet. A shout of dismay burst from the exhausted lad as he found himself caught up and swung off the ground, struggling wildly. Dismayed yells from the Kanakas made the hot air quiver.

Dick seemed done for now. All saw the lad seized by the

massive red arms, snatched up into the dense foliage above, saw talon-like paws tearing his clothes to shreds.

The roaring monster was just about to vanish with his prisoner, but that instant Battler leapt upwards and gripped. He seized the orang-utan by one foot, and swung on it with all his weight.

Followed a moment of nightmare struggling, while the foliage was lashed as though by a hurricane, and hideous roars resounded. Then—

Crash!

Under the combined weight the tough vines and creepers tore loose, and down crashed the orang-utan together with both brothers in a dreadful mix-up.

"The net, you chumps! The net! Bang um head belong him!"

It was Battler shouting above the racket. And brawny Tokelau Jim managed to stun the great ape with his rifle-butt in the nick of time. A moment later the Kanakas had got the net over the monster once more, and this time they mightily quickly drew it tight.

Up scrambled Battler and young Dick, dust-grimed, covered with deep gashes, their tropical clothing in rags, and their sun-helmets bashed over their eyes. Each of the Kanakas looked considerably mauled, too, but no one was badly hurt.

Dick spluttered his gratitude, realising that only Battler's amazing strength and prompt action had saved him from a dreadful death; then all whooped joyfully.

They also kept mighty clear of his terrible hands, his ferocious dog-teeth, and his amazing feet. The delighted Battler named the captive "Ginger Sam," and somehow they got him on board after much persuasion.

But no time yet had the brothers had to rig up a strong cage on the deck of their schooner to house their unwilling guests. It was young Dick's suggestion that they should put Ginger Sam temporarily down in the hold, for they wanted to catch some of his relations before leaving Tamarang Island, and had no time to lose, with the monsoon season at hand.

"Good idea, old lad!" beamed Battler, puffing at a big black cheroot.

So they turned Ginger Sam loose in the hold, and battered him down. Then muffled roars of rage rose to their ears, mingled with thuds and crashes, and a fearful racket of iron things being thrown around.

"He'll get tired, then we'll give him supper," beamed Battler. "Meanwhile, we want three of his pals to keep him company, if possible. Come on, my lads!"

Leaving two Kanakas on board, the brothers hurried ashore again in search of more orang-utans. It was no kid-glove job. After many hours in the stifling jungle, however, thanks mainly to the wiles of Tokelau Jim, they contrived to snare two more of the red demons.

Neither was so large or powerful as Ginger Sam; but both were full of fight, and as strong as half a dozen men.

Battler and Dick were delighted. They now only needed one more of the dangerous creatures, and Tokelau Jim spotted the trail of a monster, which promised to be almost as big as Ginger Sam.

"Right-ho!" said Battler. "We'll camp in yonder, my lads, if you're all game. But we may be attacked." He frowned. "We'll have to take rifles, and sticks of dynamite, and set guards—"

"We shan't need sentries, old scout!" Dick cried, with flashing eyes. "I've got a stunning notion."

CHAPTER 2.

Trapped!

"LET'S have it, old lad!" beamed Battler, puffing out a cloud of blue cigar smoke.

"The schooner's wireless!" Young Dick cried excitedly. "Let's pull down the aerial, pack some batteries ashore—then we can rig up a live-wire all round our camp. I bet those blacks'll yowl if they touch it. Then they'll look on us as wizards or something, and steer mighty clear."

Battler beamed.

"Great boilers! That's a wheeze!" He chuckled, and clapped his young brother on the back.

It didn't take the brothers long to haul down their wireless aerial and pack a couple of their powerful accumulators into boxes. Shortly, leaving two Kanakas in charge of the orang-utans below deck, they went ashore into the jungle, with a tough net for the big "wild man of the woods," and electrical apparatus for the reception of the hostile savages if they attacked.

Far into the dark, reeking jungle tramped the party, the two adventurous brothers, with three of their Kanakas, including hefty Tokelau Jim. The latter had noted hills, to give him the direction of the spot where he thought the

monster ape lived. At last he led the party to a glade which he reckoned a good spot to camp.

It was near the ape's probable haunt, he said. They would be in the right spot at dawn to set about trapping the monster.

"Bigger even than Ginger Sam?" Battler beamed with flashing eyes. "Good enough! Up with your live-wire gadgets, Dick, old lad, then we're ready for night visitors."

In no time, young Dick fixed up his live-wire booby-trap. The cute lad hammered short stakes into the ground all round their camp, to form a circle, and on to these he fastened the schooner's aerial, taking care to insulate the wire with rubber from the schooner's wireless apparatus.

Finally he connected up with the accumulators, and with the message-sending key, which he had brought from the Radio Ray's wireless cabin.

"Now let 'em come, Battler, if they want to!" he grinned.

In fact, all was ready for the savages. And Dick's booby-trap was quite invisible in the darkness, for his wire was only a few inches above ground, and concealed amongst grass and bushes.

"White fellah magic, master?" gasped Tokelau Jim, his eyes rolling in perplexity.

Dick laughed and nodded, and the little party camped inside the magic circle, making a small cooking fire, finally stretching out in the grass, with their weapons near their hands.

Time passed, and no sound broke the silence of the warm tropical night, except the twittering of night birds and the croaking of bull-frogs in the swamps.

But suddenly both brothers were awake at a warning whisper, and stared into the gloom, whither Tokelau Jim was pointing. From all sides shadowy black shapes were stealthily crawling towards the little camp.

An attack was coming after all.

There showed the flash of shell ornaments and spear-heads. Battler could make out the figure of the lanky chief, with his necklace of pigs' tusks and iron headgear.

"A mob of 'em!" breathed Battler. "If your gadgets conk down Dick, old son, we'll be wiped off the map!"

All realised their peril. But Dick whispered to the Kanakas to keep still, and thrilled in every nerve as he watched the savages crawling closer, wriggling and snaking through the grass on their stomachs.

Anxiously Dick gripped his message-key. A short circuit or similar defect in the booby-trap would spell disaster.

Of a sudden the leading wave of savages came squirming up to the hidden wire. Instantly Dick jammed down his key.

The effect was electrical in both senses of the word, and Dick's wheeze proved a howling success.

Roars and howls of pain and surprise made the jungle ring. Up sprang the startled savages, as fearful shocks ran through their bodies. Scores of savages made contact at the wire at the same moment, as they came wriggling up to it.

There sounded a fierce crackling, and darting blue flames snapped and fizzed all round the circle.

"Woi!" thundered the attackers, leaping up frantically. "Demon too much! These white masters boss along demons!" And they broke and fled.

Roars of delighted laughter burst from Battler's party. Up they sprang, even as the boldest of the attackers stopped to hurl spears and throwing-stones, then fled howling after their vanished comrades.

A nasty shock had the savages received. Battler, Dick, and the Kanakas completed their rout by throwing after them a few sticks of dynamite, which burst thunderously.

"Bully for you, Dick, old son!" Battler grinned delightedly. "I bet your stunt has settled 'em. Those blighters won't butt in again in a hurry, and we'll get after Ginger Sam's pal at dawn."

At dawn, however, a surprising thing happened.

Just as the orang-utan hunters were about to break camp, the jungle parted, and out stepped the savage chief in the iron hat with six of his followers. But now the black chieftain was quite friendly and very humble, and had plainly been taught a lesson.

"Me come speak um you, masters, big fella boss along demons!" He saluted Battler with his throwing-stone.

Then he went on swiftly. Plainly terrified of the brothers' magic, and knowing that they wanted to trap another monster orang-utan, he offered to lead them to one, on condition that they quitted Tamarang Island directly they were successful.

Battler readily agreed. And all missed the sinister gleam in the chief's eye as he bade them follow him at once.

Away into the jungle depths the chief led Battler's party, along leafy tunnels, and up and down steep jungle-clad hills, then into a region of gloomy marshes.

Young Dick began to get suspicious. It was lucky he did, for suddenly the savage guides dashed away into a tangle of aquatic plants and vanished.

In vain the brothers and their Kanakas plunged roaring after the scoundrels. They quickly got bogged. But obviously the savages knew the marsh region well—knew secret ways out of the swamp, and could be heard whooping and hooting away into the distance.

"White fella wizards stuck too much!" the chief in the iron hat could be heard whooping. "Leave um! Beat it plenty fast!"

At the moment Battler hardly noticed that the chief's last words were an unusual sort of "beche-de-mer" English. Later he did, however, recall them. At the moment he was too furious at the trick, and all plunged vainly but furiously after the vanished guides.

It was no use, and the party seemed utterly lost in the huge jungle swamp. In fact, it might have taken them days to find their way back to the lagoon and their schooner. Fortunately, however, when he got a bit suspicious of their guides, young Dick had plucked a handful of red berries from the plants they passed, cautiously dropping one at intervals.

With a grin, he told his Herculean brother. "There's nothing wrong with your think-tank, old lad!" Battler gasped admiringly. "Now we'll get out of this mess in a jiffy, after all, and won't I wallop that chief if I get a chance! But what the deuce was his game? Why did he ditch us here? If he didn't want us to trap any more orang-outans, why on earth didn't he say so?"

But there was no guessing the reason why the savages had led Battler's party up the garden, then ditching them. The reason was not apparent yet, any way.

And Battler was furious at thought of wasting so much time. By now, if they hadn't been tricked, they might have netted the monster ape, whose tracks Tokelau Jim had spotted.

But they were able to get out of the swamp, thanks to the trail of red berries left by Dick. Then, however, the party found themselves in a dense jungle maze, and not even their Kanaka "boys" could now guess where they were, nor the direction of the sea.

For hours, it seemed, they wandered about leafy tunnels and wild-pig runs. Battler did not fear any more attacks, for it was quite plain the savages had been terrified by the live-wire booby-trap, reckoned the brothers could call demons to their aid, and feared to molest them.

But the party were quite lost for a long time in the gloomy, reeking jungle. Suddenly, however, they burst out on to the edge of a weed-choked swamp, which ran down to a narrow lagoon.

For a moment they thought they had got back to the lagoon where lay the Radio Ray. Then they realised it was a different lagoon, and suddenly gasps of astonishment burst from all.

CHAPTER 3. The Galleon!

"LOOK! What the thump's that?" gasped Dick, wide-eyed. In fact, an astonishing sight met the party's eyes.

Lying in the weed-choked swamp, almost covered with tropical vines and creepers, was a strange-looking ship.

Its huge stern, wonderfully carved, and pierced with many square windows, towered above the brothers. Obviously it was a sailing-ship of great age; its wooden sides and carved bulwarks looked black and moss-grown, and from bows to high poop it was covered with rank vegetation. Festooned with creepers were its two masts and its ancient-looking lanterns, and all over the deck showed a luxuriant growth of flowering plants, ferns, and straggly moss.

Battler found his voice, as all gaped at the sight.

"Great boilers!" he roared. "It's a seventeenth-century galleon, probably an old pirate ship! Goodness knows when it got stranded up here—maybe two hundred years ago!"

"Tracks, master!" broke in Tokelau Jim, with bulging eyes, as he pointed to the ground. "Tracks along boots! White fella tracks. Six white masters done go aboard him ship to-day!"

Gasps burst from Battler and Dick.

Amazed they were actually to see the tracks of white men proceeding to the old-time ship and leaving it. After a hurried consultation, Battler led his party aboard to investigate.

Silence greeted them.

But quickly Battler spotted that the rank vegetation on the deck had been cut away recently, and then all found that the galleon's hold had been smashed open with axes.

"I've got it!" cried Battler. "This is on old treasure ship, Dick, m'lad, an old rover forsooth! I bet six white fellows have been carting treasure off her to-day!"

"But they've got no schooner anywhere to ship the stuff away in!" Dick gasped.

"What about the Radio Ray, old son?" Battler barked grimly.

"Our schooner! You mean, old scout—"

"That six stiff's may be pinching our schooner, in which to get away with this treasure, m'lad!" Battler nodded swiftly. "My notion is that some white fellows got wrecked on this island fairly recently, discovered this treasure ship, but didn't know how to get away with the stuff. They've been lying low, waiting to pinch some schooner—"

"But the savages?" Dick broke in.

"Exactly!" came a bark from Battler. "These whites pulled up with the blighters somehow, and set them on to attack our camp. That wheeze failed—yes. So what do our modern buccaneers do next? They get Tin-Hat & Co. to lure us away into that swamp, to give 'em time to shift the treasure to the Radio Ray, and de a bunk. Come on! Not a minute to lose!"

And Battler rushed for the ship's side, his sunburnt face grim.

After him leapt young Dick and the three Kanakas.

All realised they might find themselves marooned on Tamarang Island!

Rage and dismay gripped the brothers.

If Battler's conjectures were right they would probably find they had been robbed of their schooner, and were stranded. If the schooner had already sailed they would be done for.

That thought sent the brothers racing ahead of their Kanakas, jaws squared, rifles tightly gripped.

And all at once a roar of fury burst from Battler. He pointed out to the sunlit Pacific.

Out there was a small, trim schooner forging away across the blue water under the power of its gasoline engine. It was the Radio Ray!

The worst had happened.

And it seemed the brothers were spotted that moment from their own vessel's deck, for derisive hoots came faintly across to their ears.

"Great boilers! That's done it!" Battler gasped, his rugged face red with rage. "Just what I feared!"

But Dick was thinking rapidly, and his face suddenly broke into a grim smile.

"What price the stiff's won't get far, old scout?" the lad whooped. "They'll soon need more petrol for the engine—then they'll go to the hold, and meet Ginger Sam and his mates! What-ho! They don't know yet what sort o' stow-aways they've got aboard!"

Dick fairly capered with glee. And Battler uttered one great roar of delight, for he now remembered the monster, Ginger Sam, and the other orang-outans, which the brothers had turned loose in the Radio Ray's hold. It seemed indeed the six up-to-date pirates were in for a shock sooner or later.

"And then some!" Battler roared heartily.

But how were the departing scoundrels to be chased? Battler's party had no boat, could not hope to find the savage islanders' village quickly and scrounge canoes.

The old pirate ship itself offered the only solution.

"That's the ticket!" Battler thundered. "We'll hunt 'em in the treasure ship, and if only Ginger Sam and party get out—"

He broke off as a pleasing vision of the angry orang-outans loose amongst the white thieves flashed to his mind, and pell-mell back to the old-time galleon he led his party.

Soon all were working frantically on the desperate task of refloating the old vessel. Her timbers looked sound, anyway, for she had been built in a day when wooden ships were built to last, and built for a rough trade.

Floating her proved a deuce of a job, however. But at last the brothers, aided by their Kanakas, managed it by using all the dynamite they had with them. With axes they hacked away the vegetation, and they blew great holes in the swamp, which allowed the water from the lagoon to flow in round the old derelict.

At last, for the first time in two hundred years, she floated.

Incredibly, the brothers found themselves in pursuit of their stolen schooner.

They sailed out of the lagoon in that amazing old galleon, festooned with creepers, with vines trailing from her old carved bulwarks.

A stiff breeze sent them curtsying across the sunlit waves, wallowing in pursuit. Eagerly they searched for the Radio Ray. Not a hope had they of seeing her again, unless the six white scoundrels soon had reason to visit the hold.

Anxious moments passed, then came a roar of glee from Battler:

"There she is, m'lad!"

And, rounding a bend of the island coast, all saw the Radio Ray, about a mile out to sea, apparently in difficulties. She was wallowing in the trough of the waves, seeming to have no one at her helm.

"I believe they have let Ginger Sam & Co. out!" Dick breathed excitedly.

Soon they saw that such was, in fact, the case.

In their old galleon they bore down on their stolen schooner to see an almost incredible sight.



Even as he sprang at the tangle of vines, the monster ape grabbed young Dick round the waist with his feet. A shout of dismay broke from the exhausted lad, as he found himself caught up and swung off the ground.

They saw three white men up in the rigging, and could hear shouts of rage and panic. They glimpsed a red, hairy demon leaping nimbly up the rigging, intent on easy prey; they saw another monster dashing furiously after two men on the deck.

They could see Ginger Sam himself on the schooner's bridge. Ginger Sam, a gigantic, uncouth, red shape, had somehow got hold of a bottle, and was playing hide-and-seek with a hefty, white man in tattered ducks all around the chart-house.

"My stars!" whooped Battler. "Our jolly old pets have taken command. Hurrah for the rascals! Where's that net? We'll need it, by ginger!"

A moment later Battler brought the old galleon alongside the stolen schooner, and all Battler's party leapt whooping aboard.

But, meanwhile, things were happening aboard the Radio Ray at racing speed.

Crash! Bang! As the brothers boarded, Ginger Sam hurled his bottle at his quarry. It burst to flashing fragments on the chart-house door. Howling, the big white man raced towards the brothers, brandishing a spanner.

"You doggone tricksters!" he yelled in rage and fear, with a Yankee accent. "You shipped these darned apes aboard a-purpose to— Help! Help!"

His voice ended in a scream. With a roar, Ginger Sam got him, tucked him under one mighty arm, then went swinging away up the rigging with his captive before Battler could do anything. Meanwhile, one of Ginger Sam's pals had collared the two stiff on deck.

There sounded a scream, then one of the two whites flew overboard. His comrade found himself gripped by a red, black-faced monster with blazing eyes, then hurled against the donkey-engine with stunning force and—

Crash! From above a white man came hurtling down, to land on the deck with a dull thud and lie motionless. It was Ginger Sam's other pal who threw the scoundrel down like a rag doll, then went chasing the other from mast to rigging and back again.

Followed a nightmare scene on the Radio Ray as the delighted brothers and their Kanakas tried to catch the flying orang-outangs with nets hastily brought from Battler's cabin.

There sounded crashes, howls, and there was a wild scurry of flying men and red demons up and down the decks and aloft. It was impossible to realise just what was happening in every part of the schooner at once.

Amidst a deafening uproar chases and scrimmages raged on all sides.

Somehow the brothers and their Kanakas at last managed to net two of the monster apes and batten them down below. By that time two Kanakas were injured, Tokelau Jim lay stunned, and four of the white stiff had vanished utterly.

And suddenly Battler found himself face to face with the big leader of the Yankee gang, who brandished a belying-pin.

"You shan't have this treasure if we can't, anyway!" howled the ragged, blood-grimed villain, and hurled himself on Battler.

The latter dodged the belying-pin, then knocked out his ruffianly assailant with one pile-driving blow of his mighty fist. Sounded a yell of warning from Dick, however.

The last remaining Yankee was leaping on Battler from behind with a spanner. Luckily, the ruffians had no firearms.

But there sounded a roar.

Battler whirled, to see Ginger Sam pounce on his cowardly assailant. And Ginger Sam crushed the scoundrel's head with one appalling swipe. But then, rage-crazed, the monster flew at Battler.

Battler found himself engaged in the struggle of his life. Strong as ten men though he was, he found Ginger Sam the most terrible opponent he had ever encountered. Locked together, the big man and the huge red demon raged about the deck, amidst roars and crashing.

Battler got a throat grip and hung on for his life, squeezing, with muscles cracking. But his clothes were torn to shreds, and blood ran from gashes. It seemed not even Battler could survive that grim encounter. Anyone else would have been torn to pieces in a few moments. In the nick of time, however, Dick and two Kanakas got a net over Ginger Sam from behind, and at last they got the roaring monster down in the hold once more, with his furious mates.

The grim fight was over at last. The Radio Ray was recaptured, and all the white stiff had vanished, except their mauled leader, who was prisoner. Moreover, the brothers soon found what treasure the thieving ruffians had brought aboard their schooner from the old galleon. They found four great chests stuffed with old-time gold coins and priceless jewels.

"Great boilers! We're rich for life!" roared the tattered Battler. "And it's all thanks to Ginger Sam and his pals. If it hadn't been for them we'd have even lost the Radio Ray and been stranded on Tamarah Island. Dick, old son, we'll take our 'wild men' back to yonder jungle and set 'em loose as a reward!"

"Rather!" whooped young Dick. "We couldn't keep 'em captive after this!"

So Battler turned the Radio Ray back to the island. They then set free the orang-outangs, and all cheered loudly as the three monsters went bounding up the sand, to vanish into the jungle for ever.

(Next Wednesday's GEM contains the opening chapters of our great new flying yarn "THE SPYFLYERS!" See special announcement on page 23.)

SMUGGLED TO SCHOOL!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry firmly.

"Then kindly explain. The boy came with you from Liverpool?"

"Yes, sir."

"You paid his fees to Mr. Railton. Where did you obtain the money?"

"D'Arcy and I raised it between us, sir."

"Yaas, wathah, sir. My governah played up on this occasion in a weally decent mannah, and—"

"That will do, D'Arcy. How did this boy come to be with you at all, Merry?"

"We met him in Liverpool, sir."

"Ah! Did his parents place him in your charge, or his people, or whoever was caring for him?"

"No one was caring for him, sir. He was alone in the world, and living in the streets. He saved my life, and Blake's, and D'Arcy's life, too, when we were beset in a slum by a gang of ruffians."

"I had not heard of this."

"We—we thought we could do some good for him, sir. His life was in danger if he remained in the place he belonged to, so we brought him away from Liverpool, so that Choker Bill couldn't find him again."

"Dear me! You amaze me!"

"And then, sir," went on Tom Merry, encouraged, "we—we had the idea of bringing him to St. Jim's. He had nothing to do with it himself, he only did what we told him."

"Upon my soul!"

"We thought that if we paid the fees, sir, and gave him some extra tuition in our spare time, he'd be all right."

"They was kind to me, sir," faltered Herbert, mistaking the frown on Dr. Holmes' brow. "They didn't mean any harm, sir. But I knows I ain't suitable to be here, sir. I'm ready to go. I don't want to give no trouble. I can go back, and I'll never forget wot these young gents 'ave done for me!"

"I should wegard it as wotten, sir, if Wags was sent away from St. Jim's. If you could give him a chance, sir—"

The Head's brow was wrinkled in deep thought.

Mr. Railton's face was curious in its expression, but he was certainly not angry.

"Merry," said Dr. Holmes at last, "you must realise that you have acted very wrongly. You have attempted to impose a strange lad upon us, and you do not appear to have realised that the affair was bound to come to light sooner or later."

"I—I hoped that Wags—I mean, Kirkdale—would have got upon a better footing here by the time it came out, sir, and—that you'd be easy with him," faltered Tom Merry. "If—if you knew what an awfully decent little chap he is, sir—"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! He wan a gweat wisk to wescone my toppah from bein' wun ovah in Livahpool, to say nothin' of savin' our lives."

"But, surely, my boys, you must see that Kirkdale, however worthy he is, is not in a fit state to take his place in the Third Form."

"I—I'd rather have had him in the Shell with me, sir, but that would have been still more difficult to manage."

The Head could not help smiling.

"Come, Merry! You have acted in a thoughtless manner. But as your motives were undoubtedly of the best, I shall forgive you. But, of course, it will be impossible for Kirkdale to remain in the Third Form. The fees you have paid for him will be returned to you."

Tom Merry's face fell.

"I—I suppose you know best, sir," he faltered. "But—but if you'd give him a chance—"

"I am going to give him a chance," said the Head gently, "but in a more suitable manner. I shall not send the poor lad away—that would be harsh. I shall, at all events, give him a trial here, but at present he will not be attached to any Form. He will be given separate instruction until he is sufficiently advanced to study with the Second Form. As for the future, I can say no more at present. But of this you can be assured, the lad will have his chance to make the best he can of it."

The tears started to Tom Merry's eyes.

"Oh, sir! Thank you! I—I—"

He broke off.

"Bai Jove, sir! That's weally wippin'! I wegard you as a sport, sir, if I may say so!"

"D'Arcy!"

"Sowwy, sir; but weally—"

"You may go," said the Head, smiling.

The juniors left the study.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy each took an arm of Herbert and marched him down the passage in a sort of triumphal progress.

Herbert hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels.

"It's all right," grinned Tom Merry. "What a ripping old sport the Head is! It's all right, Herbert, my boy."

"Yaas, wathah! It's all wright, Wags!"

And it was indeed all right for the little ragamuffin who had been smuggled to school.

THE END.

(Bernard Glyn causes plenty of fun when he arrives at St. Jim's in next week's ripping yarn, "THE SCHOOL-BOY INVENTOR!")



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