

"THE SPY-FLYERS!" THRILLING YARN OF WAR IN THE AIR, INSIDE!

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

The GEM

2^d

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Read and Enjoy "THE TAMING OF THE TYRANT!"

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THE TAMING of



When "Ratty" suddenly becomes good tempered and pats Figgins on the head, Tom Merry & Co. are amazed. But when they discover the reason for this amazing change in the tyrant of the New House—they roar with laughter! So will you!

CHAPTER 1.

Figgins & Co. Are Astonished!

"**B**LESSED if I can understand it!" said Figgins. He stood in the quadrangle at St. Jim's, looking after a spare figure that was crossing towards the New House. Figgins of the Fourth belonged to the New House, and that spare figure was Mr. Ratcliff's—Figgins' Housemaster.

Figgins stared after Mr. Ratcliff in blank amazement.

He was so bewildered that he was quite lost to his surroundings, and he did not see three cheerful-looking youths strolling over from the direction of the School House.

They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—otherwise known as the Terrible Three—and they looked at the amazed Figgins, and then at one another. They were quite close to him, but he evidently did not see them.

"Poor Figgy!" murmured Monty Lowther. "It's come THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,310.

at last! There have been signs of it for some time, but he's fairly off his rocker now!"

"Fairly babbling!" said Manners, with a shake of the head.

"Perhaps it's sunstroke," suggested Tom Merry charitably. "Let's wake him up and see. I say, Figgins!"

"Blessed if I can catch on at all!" said Figgins.

"I say, Figgins."

"It was Ratty right enough, but— My hat! I can't understand it!"

"I say, Figgins!" bawled Tom Merry in his ear.

Figgins started and looked round.

"Hallo! What do you want?"

"It isn't a question of what we want, but of what you want," said Tom Merry. "I think a strait-jacket would be about the thing."

"Eh? What are you talking about?"

"Better hold his wrists," suggested Monty Lowther. "He doesn't look safe; there's a wild look in his eyes."

—WHEN MR. RATCLIFF, HOUSEMASTER, FALLS IN LOVE!

the TYRANT!

By
Martin Clifford.

Figgins retreated a pace and doubled his fists.
"Hold on!" he said. "What's the little game? What are you getting at?"
"Look here," said Tom Merry, "if this isn't insanity, what is it? What do you mean by standing here in the broad daylight with a face like a—"

"Gargoyle," suggested Lowther.
"Like a gargoyle," said Tom Merry, "and muttering to yourself. What's the matter with you? If you're not off your rocker, and it's not sunstroke, what is it?"
Figgins grinned.

"Didn't you see it?" he asked.
"I saw nothing but a silly ass!"

"Well, a chap couldn't help being astounded. You know my Housemaster—Ratty? What do you think of his temper as a rule?"

"Rotten!"
"Beastly!" said Manners.

"Unspeakable!" said Lowther.
"Well, that's about right. Now, suppose a chap bolted right into Ratty without seeing him and nearly knocked him over, what would you expect him to do?"

"Serag him!"
"Play him alive," said Lowther.

"Exactly! Well, I just bolted into him and nearly knocked him over, and he—"

"Told you to come into his study?"
"Gave you five hundred of Virgil?"

"No," said Figgins slowly and impressively. "He patted me on the head and said, 'Never mind, my little man!'"

The Terrible Three chuckled.
"Very good, Figgins—very funny indeed! But you must try again. You can't expect old birds to take in a thing like that."

"Honest Injun!" said Figgins.
"Look here, what are you giving us?" demanded Lowther. "You biffed Ratty, the very worst-tempered master that ever mastered, and you tell us he patted you on the napper and said—"

"Never mind, my little man!" murmured Figgins.
"Solid fact!"

"Do I sleep? Do I dream?" murmured Manners. "Do I wonder and doubt? Are things what they seem? Or is visions about?"

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry. "If you say it was so, Figg, it was so. But—but you're sure you haven't gone to sleep standing up, like a horse, and dreamed it?"

"Look here," said Figgins, "it happened! I'm not trying to explain it. But it happened. I could swear to that before any society for psychical research. I don't pretend that I understand. You know, Shakespeare said, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in your philosophy—'"

"Yes, I think I know Shakespeare said that," assented Tom Merry; "I think I've heard it quoted about fifty million times, within a dozen or two. The only thing I can think of about Ratty is that he must be ill. Keep an eye on him. It's the duty of a good junior to look after his Housemaster."

"Blessed if I can understand it!" said Figgins.
The Terrible Three couldn't understand it, either. But the breakfast-bell rang just then, and they went in to discuss a more important matter—breakfast.

Tom Merry & Co. went into the School House, and Figgins slowly followed in Mr. Ratcliff's footsteps to the other House at St. Jim's—the New House. In the porch he met his chums Kerr and Wynn. They were standing with an expression of bewilderment upon their faces, which showed that they, too, had experienced a shock.

"Coming in to breakfast?" said Figgins.
"Breakfast!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

As a rule that was a word to conjure with with Fatty Wynn, but just now it seemed to have lost its force. He only stared at Figgins. Figgins shook him by the shoulder,

"What's the matter with you, Wynn?"
"I can't understand it."
"Can't understand what?"
"Old Ratty."

Figgins gave a whistle.
"Has he been starting on you?" he asked eagerly. "Has he tapped you on the top-knot and called you a little man?"

"No," said Fatty Wynn. "Tell him, Kerr."
"There's something wrong," said Kerr seriously. "Ratty came in just now, and he stopped as he was passing us and said—what do you think?"

"What on earth did he say that for?" said Figgins, mystified.

"Ass! I don't mean that he said that!" said Kerr testily.
"I mean what do you think he said?"

"Oh, I see! Blessed if I know! Did he call you a little man?"

"No. He said, 'Figgins ran into me just now. Tell him I hope he did not hurt himself.'"

"My hat! And what did you say?"
"I? I couldn't say anything. You could have knocked me down with a steam-hammer."

"It's not surprising," said Figgins slowly; "it's more than surprising. It's—it's astounding! Has anybody ever known Ratty to be in a good temper before?"

"Perhaps when he was very young," said Fatty Wynn.
"Not lately."

"And now—"

"Oh, it's past understanding!" said Kerr. "No good trying to work it out. Euclid is a joke to it."

"Let's get in to breakfast," said Fatty Wynn. "Now I come to think of it, I'm hungry, but I was so astounded I quite forgot it."

"By Jove! You must have been astonished!"
They went into the dining hall of the New House. The New House at St. Jim's was much smaller than the School House, and the Fifth Form and the Fourth breakfasted at the same table. Mr. Ratcliff was master of the Fifth, as well as Housemaster, and so he took the head of the table where Figgins & Co. sat. As a rule, Mr. Ratcliff was not liberal, and, though the diet at St. Jim's was generous, Mr. Ratcliff did his best to be sparing with it. It was an old grievance with Fatty Wynn, that sometimes whole rashers of bacon were sent off the table which he could very well have eaten, if Mr. Ratcliff had cared to recognise the fact that he had an excellent appetite.

But Mr. Ratcliff was not finished in his new line of surprising the New House fellows. He asked Fatty Wynn if he would like a third helping, and Wynn was so surprised that he almost forgot to say that he would.

"My word!" murmured Figgins. "This is all right. Either Ratty's ill, or he's got a screw loose; and, anyway, it's all right for us."

"Yes, rather!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "I say, Figg, do you think I could venture to ask him for some more?"

"What are you going to do with it if he gives it to you?" asked Figgins innocently. "Put it in your pocket?"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Figg! I'm going to eat it. You know I always get jolly hungry in this weather."

"Or any other weather," said Figgins. "But it's all

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right. Ask him, and let out another button in case of accidents."

"If you please, sir—"

Mr. Ratcliff looked at Fatty Wynn.

"Would you like another helping, Wynn?"

"Well, sir, if I may, sir?"

"Certainly, my boy. You should not be afraid to ask," said Mr. Ratcliff.

The whole table gasped. Was the man who was speaking in that kindly tone really Mr. Ratcliff, the crustiest the rustiest master at St. Jim's—or any other school?

What was the matter with Ratty?

Fatty Wynn passed up his plate and beamed like a full moon as he received a liberal helping.

Other juniors, encouraged by Fatty Wynn's success, followed his example, and there was nothing sent down from the table that morning.

Figgins & Co. looked at one another when they came out after breakfast. Figgins touched his forehead significantly.

"Absolutely off it!" he remarked. "But it's all right for us!"

And the Co. agreed that it was all right for them.

CHAPTER 2. The Sprinters!

"GET out of the way, there!"

Tom Merry looked round. He had just come out of the School House after breakfast with Manners and Lowther, and catching sight of Blake and D'Arcy of the Fourth in the distance, he was going over to speak to them when Figgins' voice fell upon his ears.

As he was on the School House side of the quad, of course, the dignity of a School House fellow wouldn't allow him to get out of the way.

Figgins & Co. were coming along in line at top speed.

Figgins' long legs covered the ground easily, and Kerr, the active and wiry Scotsman, kept easy pace with him, but Fatty Wynn, in the middle, was labouring like a heavy old ship in a rough sea.

Those extra rashes at breakfast were telling on Fatty Wynn, and as he kept up with Figgins and Kerr, he began to wish that Mr. Ratcliff hadn't been so generous. He was breathing laboriously, and his fat face was streaming with perspiration; but he could not stop, for Figgins and Kerr had a hold on either side.

"I say, stop a bit!" stammered Fatty. "I—I'm winded, Figgys!"

"Rats!" said Figgys. "If you were winded you wouldn't speak."

"I—I—I—"

"Why don't you save your breath for running, Fatty? You know jolly well you've got to get into form, and you're coming right round the quad before brekker."

"Oh, really! But—"

"Come on! Hi, there, you School House bounders, get aside!"

The Terrible Three had stopped, and they stood in line directly across the path of Figgins & Co. There were sweet smiles upon their faces as they waited for the New House trio to reach them.

"Are we going to get aside, my sons?" murmured Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather—I don't think!" said Monty Lowther.

"Same here, and many of 'em!" grinned Manners.

"Get out of the way!"

"Sweet voice, isn't it?" said Lowther. "I really think Figgins ought to be a coalman, or a bargeman, or something of that sort."

Blake and D'Arcy, being School House boys, of course, came over to stand in line with Tom Merry and bar the path of the New House sprinters, and Bernard Glyn of the Shell strolled up at the same moment.

"Oh, let's get round the beasts!" grunted Figgins. "We don't want a row now in the middle of a sprint."

"I—I say, Figgys, I—I'd rather have a row than keep on at this pace!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Suppose we stop and give 'em a licking?"

"Bosh! Keep on!"

And they kept on, changing their course so as to avoid the solemn row of School House boys.

But Tom Merry uttered a word of command, and the row of juniors moved along in line, and in a moment were planted firmly again in the path of Figgins & Co.

The trio had no choice but to charge or halt—and they halted.

Figgins was simply bristling with wrath.

"Do you think you look pretty standing there?" he bawled.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy put up his eyeglass and surveyed Figgins.

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"Yaas, wathah!" he replied. "Without bein' conceited, I weally think I look wathah neat, for one, deah boy!"

"Are you going to let us pass, or are you not going to let us pass?"

"Not!" said six voices cheerfully.

Figgins & Co. glared. Only Fatty Wynn was glad of the rest. He was pumping in air like the pump of a diving apparatus. The extra rashes were avenging themselves.

"Look here," said Figgins, "I dare say you are funny!"

"Not at all, deah boy. I wegard you as wathah funny!"

"We are sprinting," said Figgins.

"My hat!" said Jack Blake, in a tone of wonder. "They call that sprinting! I thought they were doing an easy stroll."

"Sorter saunter," said Monty Lowther.

"And taking their time about it," said Manners.

"Only one degree better than lying down, as far as I can see," Bernard Glyn remarked. "If you sprint like that, Figgys, you'll want an electric shock to make you go on the cinder-path!"

Figgins & Co. glared, and glared again. But glares had no effect whatever upon the School House fellows.

"I've heard before that these chaps think they can run," said Tom Merry, addressing his companions in a confidential tone.

"Amazing!"

"Of course, I've seen them run when there were School House chaps after them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But on other occasions amble would be nearer the mark."

"Rats!" howled Figgins. "We'd run against you any day in the week!"

"Oh, I've no doubt you could run against me! You ran against Ratty this morning."

"I don't mean that. I mean—"

"Oh, never mind what you mean! You can't run for toffee!"

"We'll run against you!"

"We're ready!"

"Ass! We'll run you on the cinder-path, or cross-country, for anything you like!" shouted Figgins. "We'll hare-and-hounds you till you haven't a leg left to stand on!"

"Now you're talking," said Tom Merry. "I've half a mind to give you a chance. It would be a gentle stroll for us."

"A quiet afternoon walk," said Lowther.

"Nuff said!" exclaimed Figgins, exasperated beyond all patience. "If you don't clear, we shall charge!"

"How much will you charge?" asked Lowther.

"I'll jolly soon show you! Go for 'em!"

And the New House trio charged. The School House fellows stood like rocks to stop them, but the impetus of the charge was great. Blake was bowled over, and he bumped against D'Arcy, who sat down in the quad, clutching at his hat. Figgins rolled across him, and there was a squelch from the hat as it bumped down under the weight of Figgins, and was transformed into a collapsible hat at one fell swoop.

"Bai Jove! My hat!"

Figgins scrambled up and dashed on. Kerr was at his heels, and Fatty Wynn labouring behind. Fatty certainly would have wanted rescuing if the School House fellows cared to pursue. But they were gathering round D'Arcy.

Not that they were sympathetic. They were laughing. D'Arcy was sitting on the ground, rumpled and dusty, with his silk hat in his hand. The expression on his face was quite enough, Blake declared, to make a cat smile audibly.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"What's that you've got there?" asked Lowther curiously. "Is it an opera-hat or a concertina?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Let me help you up," said Manners, taking a grip with both hands upon D'Arcy's hair.

"Owl! Leggo, you wottah! I can get up vewy well alone!"

D'Arcy staggered to his feet. He looked at his crushed hat, and he looked at his comrades. They were laughing hysterically.

"I wegard you as a set of wottahs!" said D'Arcy witheringly. "This hat was almost new—I only bought it in Livahpool the othah day. Now it is wuined!"

"Yes, it does look rather ruined," Tom Merry said thoughtfully. "You could still use it for the opera, when you go with your noble governor, or you could use it to keep white mice in, or something of that sort."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Or it would do for a plaque on the wall of the study," suggested Blake.

"I wufuse to continue this fivoleous discussion," said Arthur Augustus. "I call upon you to back me up in givin' those New House wottahs a feahful thwashin'!"

"Certainly!" said Blake. "Lead the way, and buck up!"

D'Arcy waved his hand.

"Follow me, deah boys!"

And he dashed off at top speed towards the New House on the track of Figgins & Co., who had already disappeared. It did not occur to him to look round and see whether the juniors were following him or not. He had nearly reached the New House, when he was struck by the fact that he could hear no footsteps behind him.

"Come on, deah boys!" he panted.

There was no reply.

D'Arcy turned his head.

CHAPTER 3.

Mr. Ratcliff Takes the Shell!

"IT'S not half a bad idea," Tom Merry remarked.

He made the remark in the Shell class-room, when the juniors had taken their places for morning lessons. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was not there yet, though he was usually prompt at his desk.

The juniors were filling in the time with chatter, which was likely soon to turn to horseplay.

Monty Lowther looked at his chums.



"Now, boys—" began Mr. Ratcliff. Crack! A loud report interrupted the New House master as the cracker went off. Ratty gave a jump and the lid of his desk came down with a disastrous bang! Crack, crack, crack! "What—what—what is that?" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

He was alone.

The juniors were standing in a group over by the School House, looking after him apparently very much interested in his progress.

"Go it!" called out Monty Lowther, waving his cap.

D'Arcy's feelings were too deep for words for a moment. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye and glared at the juniors.

"The—the wottahs! They're not followin' me at all!" He stopped and turned back. Tom Merry and his companions walked into the School House, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy arrived a minute later.

"Jolly good, Gussy!" said Tom Merry encouragingly.

D'Arcy surveyed him coldly.

"I fail to comprehend that remark, Tom Mewwy."

"I was alluding to your sprinting. It was jolly good, and if you keep it up you'll soon get into good form. You started it rather suddenly, didn't you?"

Arthur Augustus made no reply. He gave an expressive sniff instead, and stalked into the Fourth Form class-room.

"What isn't a bad idea?" he asked.

"About the running."

"What running?"

"You heard what Figgins said. He's willing to run against the School House—"

"Jolly well hurt his napper if he did!"

"Lowther, my son, don't be funny! There is a time for all things, except your jokes. They are barred."

"Then why are they like football boots?" asked Lowther, undisturbed.

"That's an old friend, too," said Tom Merry. "Joking apart, it's a good idea to get up some sprinting with the New House. We haven't licked them for some time, and it's high time they were put in their places. What?"

"Good wheeze!"

"I think a paper-chase would be about the thing. It's some time since we had one, and if Figgins & Co choose to be hares, I'll back up the School House to catch them. Next half-holiday would be ripping. What do you say?"

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"Right-ho! That's what I say!"

"We've got some runners in the Shell," Tom Merry went on. "Yourself, and Manners, and me, we can run; then there's Clifton Dane, and that new chap from Liverpool, Glyn—I think he can run. Can you run, Glyn?"

"I imagine so," said Glyn, with a smile. "I've done some. I have done the hundred yards in one-tenth seconds."

"Rats!"

"Fact!"

"When did it happen?"

"Last Saturday, at my dad's house down at the village. I made a new electric battery," explained Glyn, who was the inventor of the School House, and usually in trouble for some one or other of his contrivances. "I tried it on my sister Edith's pet dog. Of course, I wasn't going to hurt him, but you could have heard him yelp from one end of Rylcomb to the other. Edith took a tennis racket to argue with me, and I did the distance from the house to the gate in one-tenth of a second—at least, it seemed like that."

Tom Merry laughed. Lowther broke in eagerly—there was the chance for a pun, and Monty Lowther never missed a chance like that.

"I see," he remarked. "You couldn't stand the racket!"

"Oh, don't do it, Monty!" said Tom Merry imploringly.

"Blessed if I don't get my old governess to send you down medicine for it!"

"That was a jolly good pun!"

"It might have been once, but puns aren't like wine—they don't improve with the keep. But to go on with the washing. We can get a good pack in the Shell and the Fourth Form, and give old Figgins a run for his money."

"I wonder where Linton is?" said Manners, glancing at his watch. "He's not usually late, and now it's more'n five minutes."

"He was looking seedy last night," Tom Merry remarked. "I hope he isn't ill."

"My hat, I hope not! You remember last time he was ill, Ratty took his place, and we had a high old time."

The class-room door opened, and the buzz of voices died away at the sight of Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's.

"I regret to have to tell you that your Form master is indisposed this morning, my boys," said Dr. Holmes. "Mr. Ratcliff will take the Form in his place."

And he went out, leaving a silence of dismay behind him. The juniors exchanged hopeless looks.

No master at St. Jim's had ever been anything like as unpopular as Horace Ratcliff. The School House boys, as a rule, were able to avoid him, except those among them who happened to be in the Fifth. On an occasion like this, however, there was no avoiding him. If he took the Shell the juniors would be fairly under his thumb—and Mr. Ratcliff was not a man to use his authority lightly. He always drove hard. And Tom Merry & Co. knew that they were especially obnoxious to the New House master. They had had their little difficulties before.

"Well, it can't be helped," said Tom Merry at last, in a tone of resignation. "I suppose it means a few lickings and a big 'crop of impots."

"And gatings for Wednesday, instead of hare and hounds," said Lowther grumpily. "I do think it's rather unreasonable of Linton to go about falling ill like this."

"Cave! Here's Ratty!"

Mr. Ratcliff entered the room. He was looking unusually cheerful. His Form was being taken by the Head, while he took the Shell that morning. He gave the juniors a nod, and walked up to the desk.

"There's trouble coming," said Lowther. "See how cheerful he looks. That always means he's going to be nasty."

"It's a curious thing," murmured Glyn.

Tom Merry looked at him.

"What's a curious thing?"

"Why Ratty is disliked by everybody here; but my sister thought he was rather a decent chap," said Glyn. "He knew my governor in Liverpool once, and he called at our house the other day. I must say he was more agreeable there than he is here, and he talked painting with my sister Edith till I nearly fell asleep. I was going to show him over my workshop, but he kept on talking to Edith, blessed if I know what for!"

"I suppose every sort of animal has its agreeable moments," said Lowther. "Look out, he's got his eagle eye on us!"

"Someone was talking," said Mr. Ratcliff.

His glance was on Manners.

Glyn looked up.

"It was I, sir," he said.

"You must not talk in class, Glyn!"

Glyn could only stare. Was it really Ratty who gave that gentle reply?

"He's laying for us," murmured Monty Lowther. "This

is some new game he's playing. He thinks he'll encourage us, and then catch us on the hop."

"Blessed if I understand it," said Glyn, unconsciously repeating the words of Figgins.

"I'm jolly well going to jape him, and chance it!" said Lowther. "May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. He's bound to pick on us!"

"Yes, rather! Only, be careful!"

"That's all right!"

While Mr. Ratcliff was looking into the master's desk, Lowther calmly scratched a vesta under the desk and lighted the fuse of a repeating cracker. It was a daring jape for the class-room, but Lowther, in the full conviction that he would soon be punished anyway, was reckless.

He slung the cracker into a corner by the blackboard, and was sitting up looking very demure when Mr. Ratcliff brought his nose out of the desk.

"Now, boys—" began Mr. Ratcliff.

Crack!

A loud report interrupted the New House master.

He gave a jump, and the lid of his desk came down with a bang.

Crack, crack, crack!

"What—what—that is that!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

Crack, crack, crack!

"I—I—I—"

The boys were on their feet, some amazed, some laughing. Mr. Ratcliff looked round him dazedly.

"What—what was that explosion?"

There was no reply. The smell of gunpowder, and the shell of the cracker on the floor, apprised Mr. Ratcliff of what had happened. His face grew very sour, and his brow very stern.

"Boys!"

"That's Ratty again!" murmured Tom Merry. "His old voice."

"Boys, who has dared to play this trick in the class-room?"

The Shell sat silent now.

Ratty in a temper was not to be trifled with, and every fellow was feeling glad that he hadn't played the trick, with the exception of Lowther, and he was beginning to wish that he hadn't.

Mr. Ratcliff glared at the class, and seemed about to break into an explosion himself, but he did not.

Some thought seemed to occur to him with a calming effect, and the thundercloud slowly dispersed from his countenance.

"This is very wrong," he said mildly. "Surely you must know better than to make a mock of discipline in this way!"

The Shell gasped.

Ratty might have taken the occurrence in many ways, anyway, except this. He might have gated the whole Form, or called in the Head, or caned every boy himself, or given the whole class enough impositions to keep them busy for a week.

And, instead of that, he was taking it lying down! Wonders apparently would never cease.

"We will proceed with the lesson," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I trust that the boy who played that foolish trick will reflect over his action, and feel sorry for it."

Monty Lowther flushed crimson. He would have stood any punishment like a Spartan, but this complete change in Ratty's methods took him off his guard. He stood up in his place with very red cheeks.

"If you please, sir, it was I!" he said. "I am sorry!"

Mr. Ratcliff looked at him.

"Very well, Lowther. As you have owned up to it, and you say you are sorry, I will allow the matter to drop. You may sit down."

Monty Lowther sat—or, rather, fell—into his seat. He wore a dazed look for the rest of the morning.

CHAPTER 4.

Glyn is in High Favour!

MR. RATCLIFF had apparently made up his mind to keep the juniors of St. Jim's in a perpetual state of astonishment.

His forgiveness of Monty Lowther—whom the best-tempered of masters might have punished with reason—was only the beginning. He went on from one surprise to another. Gibbons, the dunce of the Shell, had everything wrong, as usual, but Mr. Ratcliff did not rag him as was naturally expected. He spent a patient ten minutes explaining things to Gibbons which he had explained to him before that morning, and which his own Form master had explained to him a dozen times, at least.

And when Gibbons failed to understand, as usual, Mr. Ratcliff let him down quite gently.

Gibbons himself was surprised, and he thought that he must have done extra well, as he was not ragged or ragged.

He looked very pleased with himself when the ordeal was over.

Mr. Ratcliff did not look pleased, but he was patient, amazingly patient. Gore, the cad of the Shell, taking advantage of the Fifth Form master's unexpected placability, proceeded to work off a common enough jape by pretending not to understand the simplest things, at the same time assuming an air of patient and docile inquiry that would have deceived most masters.

Even that failed to "draw" Ratty. He was patient with Gore, and when Gore went a little too far, and it was quite clear that he was "rotting," even then Mr. Ratcliff only told him to sit down.

Then Bernard Glyn came into prominent notice. Glyn was a new boy at St. Jim's, the son of a famous engineer

which had caught in the cloth. Mr. Ratcliff stamped in alffright, and the rat clumped on the floor, and then the sound showed him that it was not a living rodent.

It lay on its back, with its legs still working, and Mr. Ratcliff looked down at it with an angry brow.

"Scandalous!" he exclaimed. "Whom does this belong to?"

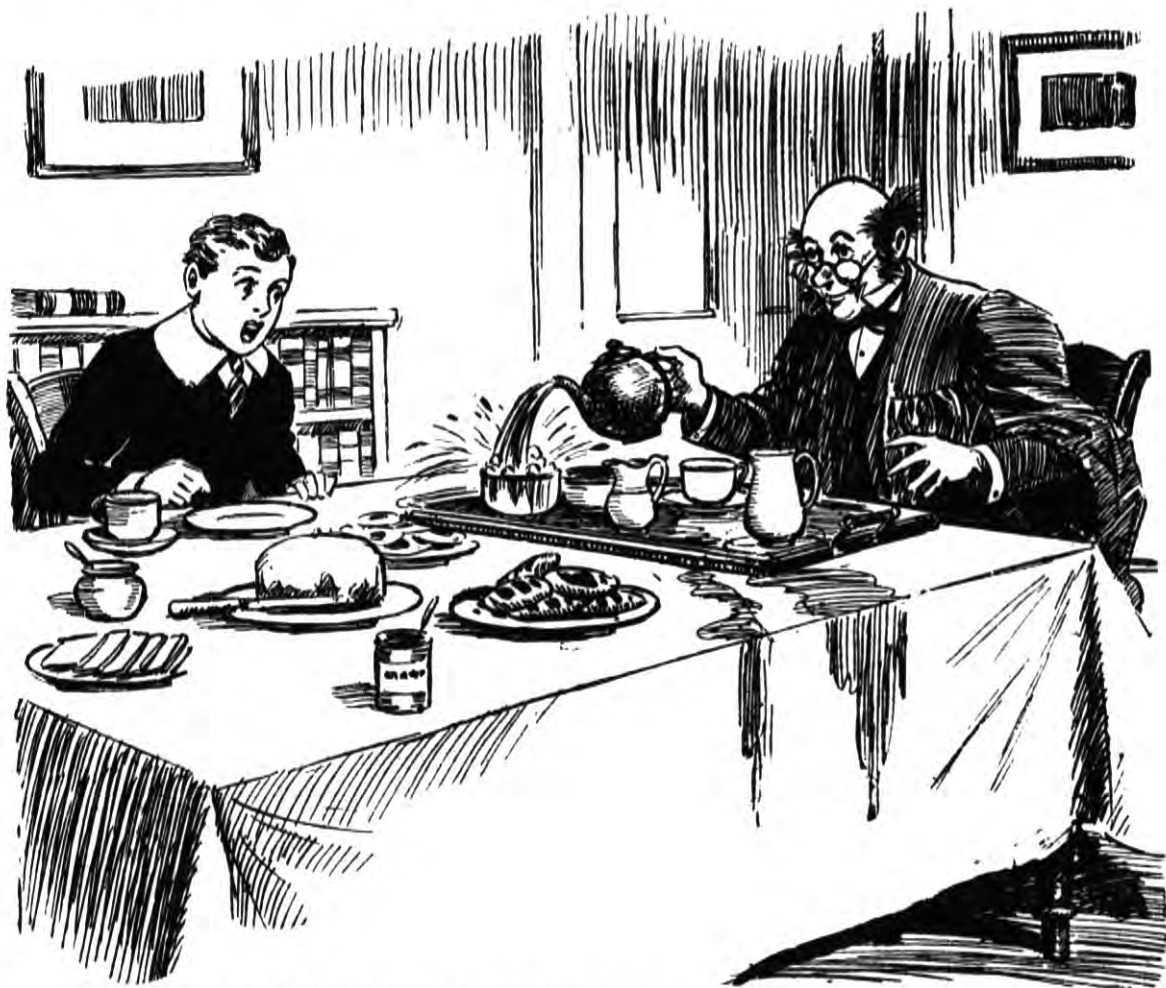
"If you please, sir, it is mine," said Glyn.

"Yours, Glyn? I am surprised—"

"I didn't mean to let it get away, sir. I was just showing it to Merry—"

That was not exactly a judicious confession to make in the class-room, and the juniors waited for the vials of wrath to be poured out.

But the vials did not pour.



"Excuse me, sir," said Glyn, "but you're pouring all the tea away into the tray!" Mr. Ratcliff started and sent a jet of tea into the sugar basin. "Dear me!" he exclaimed. "So I am!"

who lived near the school. He was following in his father's footsteps in many respects, and his inventive genius had already caused trouble in many quarters. His latest was a clockwork rat, surprisingly like the real thing, which he kept in his desk. He was showing it to Tom Merry when it slipped from his hand, and before he could recover it, it was scuttling along the floor in a very lifelike way.

Glyn whistled under his breath.

"Hang it! It's making straight for Ratty!"

And it was!

Ratty was pointing out something on the blackboard when he caught sight of the rat, and gave a start.

"Dear me! A rat in the class-room. Shush!"

That "shush" would have scared away a real rat, but Glyn's rat ran straight on. Mr. Ratcliff naturally was not prepared for that, and he gave a yelp as the thing ran over his feet, and caught in the leg of his trousers.

"Ow! Hooroo!"

He shook his leg violently, but the rat hung on—by its teeth, as the Housemaster supposed, in reality by the legs,

Mr. Ratcliff looked angry for a moment, but that was all. A benevolent smile chased away the frown upon his face.

"You must be more careful, Glyn," he said mildly.

"Yes, sir," said the delighted Glyn. "I will, sir."

"I commend your—er—predilection for—er—mechanical pursuits," said Mr. Ratcliff. "But they must be kept within limits."

"Oh, yes, certainly, sir!"

"You may sit down, Glyn."

After that, an earthquake might have happened without surprising the Shell very much.

During the remainder of the morning, Mr. Ratcliff seemed to select Glyn especially for little kind attentions, and though the Liverpool lad was somewhat slack in his work, through thinking of other things, Mr. Ratcliff never once found fault with him.

When the class was dismissed, they discussed the wonder as they went out, many explanations being offered, the most plausible being that Ratty was "off his rocker!"

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The master beckoned to Glyn to stay behind as the class went out, and the other juniors waited for him in the passage, wondering what the New House master could have specially to say to a School House boy.

Glyn was looking dazed when he came out.

"What is it?" asked Manners, tapping him on the shoulder. "Has he confided to you the secret cause of these sudden attacks?"

"No; he's asked me to tea."

"To which?"

"To tea in his study."

The Shell fellows stared at Glyn blankly.

Some of the masters had had very promising pupils to tea in their studies, certainly, but Ratty never did.

The New House master was turning over a new leaf with a vengeance.

"Tea in his study!" said Monty Lowther faintly.

"You're sure he hasn't told you to go there for a licking?"

Bernard Glyn grinned.

"Quite sure. Tea in his study was what he said."

"Ratty never has fellows to tea. Even the New House prefects don't get asked to his study."

"And if he wants to begin a new line, what on earth has he picked on Glyn for?" said Clifton Dane. "He might have asked someone nice—like myself, for instance."

"Or me," assented Tom Merry, with a nod. "But to ask a chap who might electrocute him for a joke any minute—"

The Liverpool lad laughed.

"Well, he's asked me," he said. "That settles it."

"But why?"

"Haven't the faintest idea."

"And are you going?" asked Gore.

"Yes, rather! I couldn't very well refuse."

"Not much!" said Tom Merry. "An invitation from a Housemaster is like a command from the King—it can't be declined with thanks. Bad form!"

"That's it. I shall go."

"Rather rough on you, old son!"

"Well, it can't be helped, and I dare say it will mean some decent grub," said Glyn. "I can stand it. It's no catch having tea with Form masters, of course. You have to be so jolly well-behaved. And then the tea's always lukewarm, and the bread-and-butter thick, and not much jam. You never like to take what you want. Still it's not the worst thing that can happen to a chap at school. I'd rather go there to tea than to be licked."

"Why, yes! Any sensible fellow would."

"I wonder if you could take in a few friends, as Dig did that time Lefevre of the Fifth invited him to tea?" said Lowther thoughtfully.

Tom Merry laughed.

"It wouldn't do with a Form master."

And Bernard Glyn shook his head.

"Can't jape a master like that."

And the inventor of St. Jim's put his hands in his pockets and walked away, wondering. Why was Ratty so nice to him?

Glyn racked his brain to find a solution to the problem, but it would not come. He simply could not understand it.

CHAPTER 5.

A Little Offering!

THE Shell did not see much of Mr. Ratcliff for the rest of that day, as Mr. Linton was well enough to take his class in the afternoon.

Mr. Ratcliff took the Fifth as usual, and proceeded to astonish the Fifth as he had astonished the Shell. It was seldom that the Fifth Form was dismissed without some of its members having impositions to write out; but on this occasion the imposts were conspicuous by their absence. And when Mr. Ratcliff found Lefevre talking to Hart under his very nose, he only gently reminded him that the class-room was not the place for general conversation—a gentle reproof that so surprised Lefevre that he sat for some minutes with his mouth open, just as it was when Mr. Ratcliff interrupted him, and looking comically like a fish just taken from the water.

The Fifth Form were dismissed that afternoon in unusually high spirits. No one had been caned, no one had been threatened with a report to the Head, no one had writhed under Ratty's bitterly sarcastic tongue; there was not even an impost to be done in the whole Form.

The fellows were almost too surprised to be pleased.

"He's laying for us," said Lefevre. "Ratty's got some awfully deep game on, though I can't quite see what it is." And the others agreed that it must be so, although they couldn't see what it was, either.

Mr. Ratcliff left the Form-room with a quiet and thoughtful air, and as he went into the quadrangle he met Mr. Railton of the School House. There had never been

much love lost between the two Housemasters at St. Jim's. The rivalry of the Houses seemed to some extent to extend to the Housemasters; though, as a matter of fact, Mr. Railton had always been willing to live on amicable terms. Mr. Ratcliff's sour and suspicious temper had prevented that. He had a great love of interfering with others, and, at the same time, he deeply resented the most trivial and fancied encroachment upon his own sphere. The Housemasters had gradually fallen upon merely nodding terms, and the politeness between them was sometimes almost painful. But Mr. Ratcliff had apparently added the School House master to the list of those who were to be astonished, for he stopped as he met Mr. Railton.

"What a pleasant afternoon!" he said.

"Pleasant indeed!" said Mr. Railton, somewhat surprised.

"It is a poetical time of the year," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"What is it the poet says: 'In the spring a young man's imagination—'"

"A young man's fancy," said Mr. Railton, with a smile.

"Lightly turns to thoughts of love."

"Ah, yes, that is it! What wonderful lines!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"They are good lines, certainly!"

"They express the feelings of the human breast at this season of the year, Mr. Railton. Have you not felt your heart expand under the influence of the—er—the vernal breezes?"

"I—I haven't noticed it," said Mr. Railton, wondering whether his colleague had been drinking. "I suppose we all feel a little cheered in the spring-time."

"The heart expands," said Mr. Ratcliff. "The frozen sources of—of—in fact, the frozen sources melt, and—er—and all is young again."

"I am glad you feel it so."

"I am afraid we have been somewhat on cold terms lately, Railton," said the New House master.

"Oh, not at all!"

"Yes, we have, and I fear it was my fault. We had disagreements during a certain vacation which was spent at sea. It was my fault."

"Oh, no, no!" said the School House master, utterly astounded. "I dare say I was as much to blame."

"I insist that it was my fault," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I was harsh. I hope we shall pull together better in the future, Mr. Railton. It would be better for the school. We should be able to help one another in many ways."

"That is very true. I am sincerely glad to hear you say so, Mr. Ratcliff, and I shall certainly not be backward."

Mr. Ratcliff held out his hand, and the School House master grasped it very heartily as they parted. Mr. Railton was pleased—but amazed. Such a change in Mr. Ratcliff was the last thing he had ever looked for. It was a pleasant change. But—but what on earth did it mean?

Mr. Ratcliff walked on to the New House. Taggles, the school porter, was coming from the direction of his lodge with a large cardboard box in his hand, carrying it by the string. It bore on the outside the name of a florist in Rylcombe.

"This 'ere is for you, sir," said Taggles, touching his hat surlily. "Shall I take it in, sir?"

Taggles saw no reason why Mr. Ratcliff shouldn't take the box into the House himself. Ratty never by any chance gave him a tip, and Taggles—like many other persons in this unreasonable world—didn't see why he should work for nothing, leaving his wages out of account in considering the matter.

Mr. Ratcliff's expression brightened as he saw the cardboard box.

"Thank you, Taggles!" he said. "I will take it."

He took the box, and began to fumble in his pocket.

"Stay a moment, Taggles! I wish to give you—er—a slight remuneration."

Taggles could not have walked away then if he had wanted to. He remained rooted to the spot in amazement.

Mr. Ratcliff fumbled under his gown, and extracted a coin from a pocket. It was a sixpence, and he placed it in Taggles' palm.

Then he walked on.

Taggles looked after him, and scratched his head. Then he bit the sixpence to make sure that it was a good one. It was good enough. The porter wore a half-awake look as he slowly departed.

Mr. Ratcliff entered the New House and went directly to his study. Then he opened the box, and found a really handsome bouquet packed carefully within. There was a florist's bill attached, which Mr. Ratcliff removed. He sat down at his desk, and spent the next quarter of an hour in writing the three words, "Dear Miss Glyn," upon eight sheets of notepaper in succession. This somewhat unaccountable performance finished, he rose and paced the study till the striking of the hour warned him that time was flying.

Then he sat down again, and started a fresh sheet of notepaper: "Dear Miss Glyn—"

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Ratcliff. "I am usually a very good letter-writer, yet I cannot think what to put next. It is surely a very harmless and a very civil thing to send flowers to a charming young lady; it is absurd that I should be at a loss for words in a letter to accompany the gift."

He rubbed his forehead and gnawed the handle of the pen. Neither operation afforded him relief. Finally, he made a desperate dash and wrote a few lines, and placed the note in the flowers, and then he carefully secured the box again. The next question was, how to get them to Glyn House.

"I cannot trust this to the page," murmured Ratcliff. "It would—er—also excite remark. The box would be indubitably broken if sent through the post. I will—er—take a little stroll in the direction of Glyn House this evening, and leave the box with the lodgekeeper."



Mr. Ratcliff picked up the box and left the study. In the passage a portly dame was coming along, and she stopped as she saw the Housemaster. It was Mrs. Kenwigg, the dame of the New House.

"Ah! I presume you were coming to my study, Mrs. Kenwigg?" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir. You asked me to come and speak to you when you came in after school," said Mrs. Kenwigg. "Is it anything wrong with the housekeeping, sir?"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Kenwigg; nothing of that sort!" said Mr. Ratcliff, colouring a little as he saw the House dame's surprised look turned upon the flower-box. He coughed, and set the box down against the wall. "Ahem! I shall have tea in my study this—this afternoon, Mrs. Kenwigg."

"Yes, sir."

"I have a young friend coming to tea with me, madam—a youth belonging to the—er—to the Shell Form."

Mrs. Kenwigg could only stare.

"I desire to have something palatable to a youth of tender years placed upon the table," said the Housemaster, wrinkling his brows thoughtfully. "I am not intimately acquainted with the habits of young persons in this—er—respect. I know they like a great deal to eat—at least, I believe that is the rule."

"Yes, sir, I think so."



D'Arcy came down to the bank like a champion of the cinder-path, and jumped. Splash! There was a roar of laughter as Gussy landed right in the middle of the stream, sending up a spout of water. "Owl! Grool!" yelled the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's.

"They are fond of sweet things, I believe, such as jam-pies."

"Jam what, sir?"

"Pies," said Mr. Ratcliff firmly. "Jam-pies and cream-puddings and ginger-beer. These things, and other—er—comestibles of a similar character, are generally devoured with great eagerness by youthful persons. I have observed this."

"Yes, sir!" murmured Mrs. Kenwigg.

"I desire to have a really well-spread table," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I wish the—er—the youth to feel at home. I think I can trust to your judgment, Mrs. Kenwigg."

"Certainly, sir!"

"One more point. Expense is no object—no object at all!" said Mr. Ratcliff impressively.

"Very well, sir," said Mrs. Kenwigg faintly.

"The youth who is coming to tea is Master Glyn of the Shell. He is coming at—er—half-past five. Will you have everything prepared?"

"Very good, sir!"

And Mrs. Kenwigg moved away in a dazed state. Mr. Ratcliff walked on, a faraway look upon his face, forgetting the box he had placed on the floor. A fat junior had just come downstairs in time to hear the concluding portion of the interview. He stood rooted to the stairs, too amazed to move, and when the Housemaster moved away Fatty Wynn scuttled off to Figgins' study to tell the news.

CHAPTER 6. Nothing for Fatty!

"RATS!" said Figgins. It wasn't a polite remark, but what it lacked in politeness it made up in emphasis. Figgins simply couldn't believe it. "It's a fact!" said Fatty Wynn. "I say rats! Ratty have a fellow in to tea?" "Fact!" "A junior, too!" "Solid fact!" "And a School House boy!" "I heard him say so." "Now, look here, Fatty, don't you start in business as a funny man!" said Figgins, wagging his forefinger warningly at the fat Fourth-Former. "It doesn't suit your style of beauty, and you can't take us in at any price!" "It's honest Injun!" said Fatty Wynn. "But it's impossible!" said Figgins argumentatively. "You must have gone to sleep on the stairs and dreamed it. It was the rabbit-pie you had a while ago; that must be the explanation." "I tell you Ratty's going to have Glyn of the Shell in to tea!" said Fatty Wynn obstinately. "It's a fact! And I think it rotten! There's no harm in a Housemaster having a chap in to tea—Railton, in the School House, simply swarms his study with prefects—but I think a Housemaster might be patriotic. He ought to have asked a New House chap. I don't say I like Ratty; but I'd have gone to tea with him if he had asked me!" "Jolly certain of that!" said Figgins. "You'd go to tea with anyone if you were asked! Where are you going off to now?"

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"I'm going to speak to Glyn," said Fatty Wynn, moving towards the door. "I dare say he will feel a bit strange in the New House, you know, especially as he's a new boy at St. Jim's, and I'm thinking of offering to go with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn affected not to hear the laughter, and he left the study and went in search of Glyn of the School House. Figgins rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I suppose it's a fact," he said; "Fatty was giving it to us straight. It's of a piece with Ratty's latest developments. It'll be a case of de-de—What do you call it?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Kerr. "Do you mean deuced?"

"Of course I don't! De-de-de lunatico inquiringendo," said Figgins. "That's it. Inquiry into whether Ratty's off his rocker, you know. Of course he is—right off! The thing's as plain as anything. When he began tapping a chap on the napper and calling him a little man, it showed which way the wind was blowing. Now he's asked a junior to tea. Blessed if I should feel safe in his study if I were Glyn. He might take a violent turn next. You never know with maniacs!"

Meanwhile, Fatty Wynn had discovered Glyn. He had ventured into the hostile precincts of the School House, and he found Glyn in his study. The inventor of St. Jim's was selecting the cleanest collar from a box. He had to put on the best appearance possible for the state visit to Ratty's study.

"I say, Glyn," said the fat Fourth-Former, looking in, "can I come in a minute? It's rather important!"

"Oh, certainly!" said Glyn. "Take a seat in that arm-chair."

"N-n-n-no, thank you!" said Wynn, edging away from the armchair. He had heard of the little surprises the inventor's study contained for unsuspecting visitors, including accidental electric shocks and collapsible armchairs. "I don't want to sit down. You are going to tea with my Housemaster, aren't you?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I dare say you'll feel a bit strange, going into the lion's den, as it were," said Fatty Wynn. "Ratty is a queer old bird, and you want to know him!"

"Shouldn't wonder."

"Well," said Fatty, coughing a little, "if you like I'll come with you. I know the ropes, so to speak, and I'll be your guide, philosopher, and friend, as it were, and see you safe through. I know Ratty like a book, and—and I know he'd be glad if you took in a friend with you."

"Did he tell you so?"

"Well, no; but I feel quite sure that—"

"That you'd like a feed in his study?"

"N-no; I wasn't going to say exactly that—"

"That's what you mean, I expect. Sorry; I can't take you. Ratty said nothing about bringing a friend, and if I took one I should take Tom Merry or Blake."

"Look here—"

"Sorry, I can't stop. I've got to go and have an extra wash."

And Bernard Glyn nodded cheerfully and walked out of the study, leaving Fatty Wynn alone and wrathful. The fat Fourth-Former looked after him, and then slowly followed him out, and in the passage he met the chums of Study No. 6—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy. They stopped him at once.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, putting up his eyeglass. "Here's a New House wottah! I am surprised at his cheek in comin' into a respectable House."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake. "I suggest rolling him down stairs. He would go down like a barrel!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here, hold on!" said Fatty Wynn, in alarm. "Pax! I came here to speak to Glyn. It's all right."

"I wefuse to wegard it as all wight. I weally considah it the wopah capah to woll this young wastah downstairs."

Fatty Wynn made a desperate rush for the stairs, and Blake gave a shout and clattered his boots on the linoleum to give him an impression that he was pursued. Fatty went down the stairs three at a time, and reached the ground floor before he discovered that he need not have hurried.

From above came a sound of laughter. The fat Fourth-Former gasped for breath.

"Beasts!" he murmured. "Fancy making a chap run for nothing on a warm afternoon! I'm quite out of breath."

And at a more moderate pace he returned to the New House. His look told Figgins and Kerr of the result of his mission.

"No go?" asked Figgins sympathetically.

"No," grunted Wynn. "I think it's about time we put those School House rotters into their place!"

Figgins chuckled.

"We've just got up a little jape for their especial benefit, Fatty, while you were thinking of grub."

"What's the idea?" asked Fatty, eagerly enough. He felt that he ought to be avenged, somehow, upon somebody, for his disappointment with regard to the feed and the breathless rush downstairs in the School House.

"I suppose you know that Dame Taggles' stock of pies and tarts is sometimes—well, sometimes a little—a little whiffy?" said Figgins.

"Yes, rather! She never works the whiffy ones off on me, though!" said Fatty. "If you want some shopping done, you can rely on me."

"I don't, my son. I only want to draw your attention to the fact. Mrs. Taggles' compositions have a long life—but even Dame Taggles draws the line somewhere, and at certain times she clears out the remnants—tarts that have gone whiffy and pies that would soon walk away if they weren't chucked. Now, I've bought up a choice selection of the last lot, that were just going to the dust-heap—the whiffiest tarts, the shriekiest pies, the fearfulest puddings, and—"

"What on earth for? If you think I'm going to eat—"
"Ha, ha, ha! I wasn't thinking of standing you a feed with them, Fatty! Look here—"

Figgins drew a brown-paper parcel from the cupboard, and opened it on the table. It contained a choice assortment of pies and tarts that could certainly never have been offered for sale with any success. They were the oldest of Dame Taggles' old stock. Fatty Wynn, in his hungriest moments, would have drawn a line there.

The fat Fourth-Former sniffed expressively.

"My hat! Why, they're talking! How much did you give for that lot?"

"A tanner," said Figgins; "and cheap at the price, considering. I'm going to jam them into a box and send them to Study No. 6 in the School House, with the compliments of the New House. They'll think it's a treat from home, you see; and I'd like to see their faces when they open the box and catch the whiff."

"My word! And it's whiffy!"

"It will be a good jape!" said Figgins, grinning. "Funds have been low, I hear, in Study No. 6 lately, and this lot will come in welcome—till they open it. We want a box of some sort. Have you got one?"

"I saw an old cardboard box in the passage," said Fatty Wynn. "Somebody had chucked it out of a study, I suppose. If it's still there I'll get it in."

"Back up, then!"

Fatty Wynn went to look for the box. The box he was thinking of was the one Mr. Ratcliff had left in the passage. The Housemaster, thinking of his young guest, almost due now, had quite forgotten the box, and it was still there. Fatty Wynn picked it up and carried it away to Figgins' study.

"Good!" said Figgins, looking at it. "It's a thick, strong box, and it will do rippingly. Seems to have come from the Rylcombe florist originally. Is there anything in it?"

"Only some old flowers," said Fatty Wynn, turning the box out into the study wastepaper-basket. "No good, I suppose. This box will do all right."

"It won't hold the lot," said Kerr.

"Never mind; it will hold enough for the purpose. We'll put in the lightest things, to save the postage."

And Figgins packed a quantity of tarts and puddings and other delicacies—all of an extremely ancient state—into the box, and put a rabbit pie on top—that rabbit pie being the most emphatic, so to speak, of the whole selection.

On top of the rabbit pie was placed a card bearing the inscription: "With the compliments of the New House."

"There," said Figgins, "I think that's all right!"

"Absolutely O.K.!" said Kerr. "I'll take it to the post, while you take Fatty round the quad for a sprint before tea."

"I—I think I'll take it to the post, Kerr," said Fatty Wynn. "I don't want you to have the trouble, and I don't feel quite up to a sprint. I'd like to—"

"Look here, you've got to get into running form."

"Yes; but there's plenty of time. I'll take it to the post."

"Oh, just as you like!"

Figgins put the lid on the box and tied it with the original string. Then he addressed it in pencil, to: "Jack Blake, School House, St. Jim's."

"Now, you take it," he said. "Come and get your running things on, Kerr. I hear that the School House are going to challenge us to a paper-chase, and you and I will have to be in form, anyway. Cut along, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn took the box by the string and left the study. But he had no intention of going immediately to the post. He walked away quietly to Mr. Ratcliff's study, and remained outside the door, waiting for Bernard Glyn. Fatty

(Continued on the next page.)



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POOR BIRD!

Sailor (home on leave): "Well, mother, did you like the parrot I sent you from Australia?"

Mother: "Yes, son; but it was rather tough!"

K. JACKSON, 17, Risely Road, Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs.

A FISHY STORY.

Waiter (dashing up to customer in a hurry): "Excuse me, sir, but are you a fried flounder?"

Diner: "No, I'm a poor lonely sole, with an empty place, waiting for something to fillet!"

HAROLD PHELPS, Bed 25, Grovelands Hospital, Bourne Hill, Southgate, N.14.

IT SUCCEEDED!

Officer: "And why did you join the Foreign Legion?"

Soldier: "To forget, sir."

Officer: "To forget what?"

Soldier: "I forget, sir!"

FRED FROSDICK, 12, Row 47, North Quay, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk.

QUITE SO!

Doctor (to burglar): "You must take things quietly for a bit."

Burglar: "I always do, doctor!"

A. G. RICHMOND, 8, Moorland Rise, Chapel Allerton, Leeds.

SOMETHING WRONG!

Dealer: "I'm sorry, sir, but I can't take back a gramophone that I sold you two years ago. Is anything wrong with it?"

Customer: "Yes, there certainly is! The needle's broken!"

HARRY BAYMAN, 397, Ormskirk Road, Pemberton, Wigan, Lancs.

NOT QUITE RIGHT!

Barber (to footballer whose hair he is about to brush): "Right back, sir?"

Footballer: "No, centre half!"

SYDNEY JONES, 16, Ribstone Street, Morning Lane, Hackney, E.9.

A GOOD NAME!

Visitor: "Why do you call that pig of yours 'Ink'?" It isn't black."

Farmer: "No; but it keeps on running out of the pen!"

LESLIE TAYLOR, 55, Tonsley Place, Wandsworth, S.W.18.

GONE AWAY!

Butler: "Excuse me, sir, but the new petrol stove has gone out!"

Master: "Well, James, can't you light it again?"

Butler: "The trouble is, sir, that it has gone out through the roof and hasn't come back again yet!"

PHYLLIS WOODTHORPE, 69, Mount Gold Road, Plymouth.

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THE TAMING OF THE TYRANT!

(Continued from page 11.)

Wynn was getting peckish, and he meant to pursue the subject once more with Bernard Glyn. After the instructions he had heard Mr. Ratcliff give Mrs. Kenwigg, tea in the Housemaster's study seemed enticing. Fatty Wynn did not mean to miss it over any trivial question of personal feeling in the matter.

He had affected to be greatly interested in a picture on the wall, as a pretext for lingering there, and he stood the box down, meanwhile, very near the place he had found it. In a few minutes Glyn came along, looking very bright with his newly washed face and well-brushed hair and his clean collar. He grinned at the sight of Fatty Wynn, guessing what he was there for.

"I say, Glyn—"

"Sorry, I can't stop," said Glyn, and he tapped at the Housemaster's door.

"But, look here—"

The door opened, opened by Mr. Ratcliff himself. He greeted Glyn with a gracious smile.

"I am glad to see you, my boy. Come in! Er—is that you, Wynn? Do you want anything here, Wynn?"

"N-n-no, sir," stammered Wynn.

"Then be off. What are you moving that box for? Let it alone."

"The—the box, sir!" stammered the junior, who had stooped to pick up the box containing the gifts for Study No. 6.

"Yes; give it to me."

There was no denying a Housemaster. Fatty Wynn handed over the box, and Mr. Ratcliff took it in and placed it on his desk. It occurred to him that it felt somewhat heavier than it had been before, but he did not pay any special attention to the fact. That it had been tampered with never occurred to him.

Fatty Wynn walked away in a state of considerable disgust. He met Figgins and Kerr just going out in their running clothes.

"Where's that box?" asked Figgins. "Aren't you going to post it now?"

"Ratty's got it!"

"Ratty! How?"

"He made me give it to him."

Fatty whistled.

"Then there'll be a row! You are a precious sort of an ass, too! The jape's done in. Ratty will growl when he opens that box! Come on!"

"I'm going to the tuckshop—"

"No, you're not! You're coming for a sprint!"

"But I'm hungry!"

"Never mind! A sprint will make you hungrier!"

"But—but look here, Figg—"

"Nuff said! Come on!"

And the fat Fourth-Former was dragged away. In a few minutes more he was puffing and blowing on a rapid sprint round the quad.

CHAPTER 7.

Tea With Mr. Ratcliff!

MR. RATCLIFF looked at his youthful guest, and coughed. He looked at the tea-table, and coughed again. He wished that he had identified himself a little more with the youthful life in his House. Entertaining a youngster was quite a simple matter to Mr. Railton, over the way. But to Mr. Ratcliff the task was new and strange, and decidedly difficult.

"Pray sit down," he said.

"Yes, sir."

Glyn was feeling as awkward as Mr. Ratcliff. He was not a shy boy as a rule, but to be shut up in a tete-a-tete with a master whom he had always regarded with awe and dread, and who was evidently constrained, was enough to make any fellow feel awkward. He sat down on the edge of a chair.

"The tea is prepared," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I trust—that you will find it—er—agreeable. Do you care for jam-pies?"

"Jam-pies, sir?"

"Ah! I see that the cook has, after all, neglected to send up the jam-pies! I will ring for them, also the tea!"

Mr. Ratcliff touched the bell. A trim maidservant brought in the tea in a minute or so, but there was no trace of the jam-pies—they were non-existent. Mr. Ratcliff was going to inquire for them, but he coughed instead, and the maid left the room. Mr. Ratcliff sat down at the table.

"Pray draw your chair up to the table—er—my young friend."

His young friend did so.

"Do you take your tea—er—strong—er—er—er—weak, Glyn?"

"Both, sir. I—I mean weak, sir."

"Ah, I am glad to hear you say so, Glyn. Strong tea is very bad for the nervous system, and a youth engaged in your—er—scientific pursuits needs to keep his nerves in a state of order. You are—eh—I believe—an amateur electrician, and—er—and so on?" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you take sugar?"

"If you please, sir."

"And milk?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff had unconsciously filled Glyn's teacup to overflowing, and it slopped over as he passed it to the boy. He passed him the milk jug and the sugar-basin, and Glyn was left to solve the problem of how to introduce sugar and milk into an already overflowing cup without making it overflow. Glyn was good at scientific problems, but this one baffled him, and he sat in doubt. His saucer was already pretty full, and would not hold much more.

There was bread-and-butter and watercress, and they began. Mr. Ratcliff had intended to grace the meal with light and entertaining conversation, but subjects seemed to be lacking.

Observations upon the peculiarities of the Greek language would have come easily to his lips, but were not likely to interest Glyn. He could have discussed painting, but he already knew that Glyn did not care much about that, and knew less than he cared. As for Glyn's scientific pursuits, they were a sealed book to Mr. Ratcliff. The New House master could not have told how a simple electric-bell was

Potts, the Office Boy!



fixed, and Glyn's talk on such subjects would have been Sanskrit to him.

Mr. Ratcliff cudgelled his brain for a topic, and meanwhile a chilling silence reigned in the room, broken only by the slight sounds of the tea-table.

Silence, as usual in such a state, became more oppressive the longer it lasted, until it seemed too venturesome an effort to think of breaking it.

Glyn masticated bread-and-butter and watercress, and looked at his tea, which he was not drinking. He liked plenty of sugar and milk, and there was no room for any, and he was far too constrained to venture to pour a portion of the superabundant tea into the slop basin.

If Mr. Ratcliff had ever cared to know anything about boyish pursuits, he would not have lacked a topic, and he was paying the penalty now for his long indifference upon those points.

"Will you have a little more tea, Glyn?" he asked.

In the aching silence of the study his voice seemed to come like thunder, and Glyn gave a start.

"Er—no, thank you, sir."

"Dear me! You have not started yet! Is the tea quite to your liking?"

"Er—it's all right, sir."

"Very good! I suppose," said Mr. Ratcliff desperately, and thinking that any remark on boyish sports would be as judicious as anything he could say—"I suppose you are playing a great deal of football now?"

Glyn grinned.

"Yes, sir. I do some practice."

"You will be playing in the—er—the House matches?"

"I don't know if I shall get into the First Eleven, sir—I mean the Junior First. It rests with Tom Merry."

"Ah, yes! No doubt!"

Football did not seem to pan out well. Mr. Ratcliff passed the cakes, and Glyn helped himself. His tea was getting cold, and at last, with a very wry face, he made an effort and swallowed some of it, and then milked and sugared the rest. The cake was certainly good, and the tarts that followed it were fresh and nice, and Glyn began to feel a little more comfortable.

"I—I hope you like that tart, Glyn," said Mr. Ratcliff, after another long interval of silence.

"Yes, sir, very much."

"I am sorry there are no jam-pies. Are you very fond of jam-pies?"

"I don't think I've ever had any, sir."

"Ah! The tarts, however, are good. There is also ginger-beer. Will you have some ginger-beer?"

"Not with my tea, sir, thank you!"

"Ah, yes, I forgot. I suppose you will be spending the next half-holiday at your father's house?" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Oh, no, sir! We're getting up a paper-chase."

Mr. Ratcliff drank his tea and thought. It was two or three minutes before another remark was made. Glyn had a good appetite, and the tea and tarts made him more at home. He felt less constrained now, and he ventured to ask for another cup of tea. There was a slightly vacant smile upon Mr. Ratcliff's face, as if he were thinking of beatific things, and he started out of a reverie to comply with Bernard Glyn's request.

"Tea—yes, certainly."

He emptied the contents of Glyn's tea absentmindedly into

the milk jug instead of the slop basin, and began to pour out fresh tea. Glyn watched him in astonishment.

"Of course, it is very pleasant for you, your father having taken up his residence so near the school," Mr. Ratcliff remarked.

"Very, sir."

"It enables you to enjoy many—er—many a little—er—run into the bosom of the family, so to speak," said the Housemaster. "It must be very pleasant for you to see your father so frequently, and your—er—sister."

Mr. Ratcliff unaccountably coloured over the last word. He was still pouring away at the tea, though both cup and saucer were running over into the tray. Glyn wondered what was the matter.

"It's very nice, indeed, sir, but—"

"Surely there is no 'but' in such a case," smiled Mr. Ratcliff.

"Oh, no, sir, I didn't mean that; but—but you're pouring all the tea away into the tray, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff started, and sent a jet of tea into the sugar-basin.

"Dear me, so I am!"

He stopped pouring. It was time, for the tray was simply swimming. The Housemaster looked somewhat confused, and Glyn could not suppress a grin. There was silence for some minutes.

"Your—er—sister is older than yourself, I believe?" said Mr. Ratcliff, who seemed determined to come back to that subject, whether he could think of an intelligent remark to make upon it or not.

Glyn stared, as well he might.

"Why, of course, sir—about ten years older."

"Ah, yes, of course! A—er—most charming girl, Glyn."

"Yes, sir; Edith's all right," said Glyn; and then he chuckled. "She's got a temper, though," he said confidentially.

"Dear me! Really?"

"Yes, rather, sir. You should have seen her when I gave her pet dog an electric shock. Of course, I didn't hurt him; but he made a row. Dogs always make a row if you give them electric shocks. Of course, it was only a mild one. I wouldn't hurt an animal. But women never understand anything, you know," said Glyn, with a masculine superiority natural to the ripe age of fifteen.

"Dear me! I should never have thought it! Is it not rather thoughtless of you to—er—to electrocute—"

"Electrify, sir."

"Ah, yes, to electrify your sister—I mean your sister's pet dog. By the way, did I hear that Miss Glyn was engaged to be married?"

"I don't think so, sir," said Glyn, wondering what business that was of Mr. Ratcliff's. "She isn't, anyway."

"Ah, I am glad of that! I—I—er—I mean to say, how—how surprising! That is to say, I—I really forget what I was going to say."

Glyn looked a little alarmed. Mr. Ratcliff's manner was so very strange. The New Housemaster drank his tea to cover his confusion, and some of it went the wrong way, and he began to cough. The coughing left him very red and flustered.

Glyn watched him, a strange idea dawning in his mind.

The mere thought was enough to send him into an explosion of laughter, but he controlled it.

Mr. Ratcliff's amazing change of ways during the past day or two—his kindness to Glyn in particular, and now

HELPFUL!



the invitation to tea in the Housemaster's study; Mr. Ratcliff's interest in the question whether Edith Glyn was engaged or not—all these circumstances, added to one or two others Glyn had observed during Mr. Ratcliff's visit to Glyn House, opened his eyes at last.

"My hat!" he murmured to himself.

"Will you—er—have a little more cake, Glyn?"

"No, thank you, sir!"

Glyn was anxious to get back to the School House and confide his new discovery to his friends there; and the tarts ceased to tempt him.

"Another tart, Glyn?"

"No, thank you!"

"Another cup of tea?"

"I am quite finished, sir—thanks!"

"Er—very good!" Mr. Ratcliff rose, and Bernard Glyn rose, too. His face was grave, but his eyes were dancing.

"I hope you have—er—made a good tea, Glyn?"

"Excellent, sir, thank you! It was very kind of you to ask me, sir."

"Not at all—not at all, my boy!"

"I think my sister will be so pleased, sir," said Glyn demurely, "when she hears how kind you have been to me."

It was a feeler to make sure that his surmise was correct, and the perfectly idiotic smile of gratification that came upon Mr. Ratcliff's face was proof enough for Glyn.

"He wants me to butter him up to Edie," murmured Glyn to himself. "Oh, my hat! My sides! How shall I hold out till I get away?"

"I—should—er—very—should be very glad to know that I have pleased Miss Glyn in any way," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Good-bye, Glyn! I hope I shall see you again."

"Thank you very much, sir!"

The Housemaster shook hands with the junior, and Glyn departed. He went across the quad as he might have gone down a running track. Mr. Ratcliff picked up his hat, and got into his coat. It was time for his little stroll down to Glyn House with the flowers.

"Dear me," he murmured, as he picked up the box, "it seems to be heavier, doubtless owing to some atmospheric action from the flowers. I trust that my little gift will prove acceptable to—er—to the charming young lady."

If Mr. Ratcliff had known what had taken the place of the flowers inside the box, he would not have felt very trustful about it. But he did not know, and he put on his hat, and left the school, feeling very well satisfied with himself and things generally.

CHAPTER 8.

A Case of Spoons!

GLYN burst into Tom Merry's study.

"I say, you chaps—Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three were at tea. Monty Lowther was pouring out the tea, when Glyn burst in like a thunderbolt, and Lowther jumped, and poured the tea over Manners. Needless to say, Manners jumped, too.

"You ass!" he roared, springing up, and knocking his chair flying backwards. "Ow! I'm scalded!"

"Oh, never mind!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes; you're not scalded! The ass—"

"It wasn't my fault," growled Lowther. "Do you think I was wasting the tea, scalding you on purpose? That dummy startled me, bolting into the study like that."

"Chuck the rest of the tea over him."

"Good! So I will!"

"Hold on!" gasped Glyn. "Pax! Don't! Chuck it! I mean, don't chuck it! I've got news—shrieking, amazing news. I know what's the matter with Ratty."

Monty Lowther set down the teapot, and Tom Merry jumped up. All three of the chums of the Shell stared at Glyn.

"You know what's the matter with Ratty?" demanded three voices in unison.

"Yes."

"And what is it?"

"He's spoons on my sister Edith."

"What!"

"Fact!"

There was silence in the study—the silence of blank astonishment.

That Mr. Ratcliff might be insane; that he might be playing a deep game; that he might be under the influence of hypnotism or drink; all these things were possible, and had occurred to the Terrible Three.

But that Mr. Ratcliff might be in love—

"Oh, tell that to the Marines!" said Monty Lowther, breaking the silence. "What's the good of bringing a yarn like that here?"

"It's the solid truth! Funny, ain't it?"

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"Funny isn't the word, if it's true," said Tom Merry. "How do you know?"

Glyn explained his reasons. The Terrible Three listened attentively, and they had to agree that it looked very probable.

"We ought to have guessed it," said Monty Lowther, at last. "You remember the symptoms Gussy shows when he's in love? Upon the whole, Ratty has been giving it away, if anybody had had the sense to see it."

"Looks like it. My hat! Ratty in love!"

"A case of spoons," chuckled Manners. "Your sister is a stunning girl, Glyn, but—but fancy Ratty having the



Edith Glyn raised the lid of the box, while Mr. Ratcliff smiled. Ratcliff!" gasped Edith in amazement as she caught sight of

cheek to fall in love with her. Surely she won't look at him?"

Glyn sniffed.

"I should say not! Why, the chap's off his chump, you know. I don't suppose Edith will ever marry at all, as she's got me to look after her; but, as for marrying Ratty—Ha, ha, ha! I wonder what she would say if she knew?"

"Suppose you enlighten her?" grinned Lowther.

Glyn shook his head decidedly.

"Not much! She might take the tennis racket to me again. I told Ratty she had a temper, you know, and he seemed surprised. He should have seen her the time I gave her dog an electric—"

"Poor old Ratty!" said Tom Merry. "It's the spring that does it, you know. In the spring a man's fancy—"

"Bai Jove, you chaps are lookin' excited!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking into the study. "Is there anythin' goin' on?"

"Yes. We've found out the secret."

"What secret?"

"What's the matter with Ratty?"

"Bai Jove! I should be vewy pleased to hear what's the mattah with Watty!"

"He's spoons on Glyn's sister."

The Terrible Three expected D'Arcy to burst into a roar

"Oh, rats!" said Monty Lowther. "We could get a lot of fun out of this—"

"I should wese to have a hand in it, and I twust that, on welflection, you will think bettah of the ideah," said D'Arcy. "Pway tweek the mattah with pwopah wesepect. Any fun on the subject would place Watty in a deucid awkward posish."

"Well, he's been rough enough on us, hasn't he?"

"Yaas, wathah! But it is the duty of a Chwistian to weturn good for evil. And, besides, Watty has been turnin' ovah a new leaf lately. I weward this as bein' pwobably the turnin' point in his caweeah. I know that—"

"Oh, of course, Gussy can give us points on this subject," grinned Lowther. "He's an old hand, so to speak. Gussy on love would make a good article for the 'Weekly.'"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Gussy's right," said Tom Merry. "We'll let Ratty alone."

"Yaas, wathah! I wish it to be distinctly undahstood that I am backin' up Watty in the mattah."

And D'Arcy gave Lowther a severe look through his monocle, and quitted the study. He looked in again in a moment.

"Bai Jove, I forgot to tell you what I came for! Will you chaps come along to Study No. 6 to awwange about the papah-chase?"

"Yes, when we've finished tea."

"Wight-ho!"

And the swell of St. Jim's departed, fully determined to back up Ratty, though what form the backing up was to take, and what good it was likely to do Ratty, did not seem very clear.

CHAPTER 9.

The Gift!

MR. RATCLIFF seemed to be walking on air as he left the gates of St. Jim's and turned into Rylcombe Lane. His usually sour face was very cheerful, and the smiles that occasionally wreathed it were a little vacant.

Sometimes he walked very fast, and then, again, he would drop into a slow walk, and once or twice he stopped altogether and looked at the sky.

An observer would certainly have surmised that Mr. Ratcliff was a little weak in the head, or else that he was under some influence that had thrown him entirely off his usual balance. The latter, as we know, was the case.

Near the village a private lane led to the gates of Glyn House—the dwelling-place of the adored, as Mr. Ratcliff would have termed it. Mr. Ratcliff came in sight of the gates. They were open, and on the lawn within he caught sight of a form, the mere glimpse of which made his heart beat faster.

A fast-beating heart is nothing novel to a young lover, but to a gentleman of Mr. Ratcliff's ripe years it was somewhat uncomfortable. It made him feel short of breath, and he was conscious of a damp perspiration all over his skin. However, he controlled a desire to walk very quickly away from the spot, and entered the gates of Glyn House.

Miss Glyn was seated upon a rustic bench under a wide-spreading tree, and she looked very charming in a light dress and a large hat. She was reading, and did not see Mr. Ratcliff.

The Housemaster was glad of it. The afternoon was warm, and the walk had been an unusually long one for Mr. Ratcliff, who was unaccustomed to exercise. He was feeling a little tired and hot, and he had become conscious of the existence of corns upon his feet. Shooting pains in the toes were ill companions for love in the heart, but so it was. His silk hat was glued to his forehead with perspiration, and his collar was damp and clinging.

In the circumstances, he was glad that Miss Glyn's eyes were not turned upon him as he came towards her.

In the shade of the tree, sheltered from the glare of the sun, he would feel more at ease to face her eyes.

He found himself hoping devoutly that she would not raise her eyes from her book till he had reached her; but, as a matter of fact, the girl had now become conscious of his presence, and she was looking at him under her lashes, without raising her head.

She smiled slightly, and wondered what Mr. Ratcliff wanted, and what could have happened to make him so flustered.

But she did not raise her head till his shadow fell across her book, and then she looked up with a little start.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "I hope I did not startle you?"

"Not at all!" said Edith.

Mr. Ratcliff was jerking at his hat. But dried perspiration

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wondering how the girl would like his flowers. "Mr. Ratcliff, please and tarts which the box contained. "Is this

of laughter. But he didn't. He jammed his monocle into his eye, and took a survey of the chums of the Shell.

"I do not weward that as a mattah for wibald mewwiment," he said. "Miss Glyn is a most charmin' gal, as you are all awah. It is not likely that she will evah look at a chap of Watty's type. There is a disappointment in store for Watty, and I am vewy sowwy for him."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "Here's Gussy giving us a lesson, as usual, and he's jolly well right. Good for you, Gussy!"

"I weally do not wish to appeah in the light of givin' anybody a lesson," said D'Arcy. "I have a gweat howwah of appeawin' pwiggish, deah boys. But I weally think it is wuff on Watty, and I am goin' to back him up, for one."

had fastened it to the skin, and for the moment it would not come off. The Housemaster grew very red, and he almost gasped with pain as he finally tore the hat away. Edith did not appear to notice anything of it.

"It is very warm," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, it has been a beautiful day."

"I dare say," remarked the Housemaster—"I dare say, Miss Glyn, that you are surprised to see me this afternoon."

"Oh, I am sure papa will always be glad to see you, Mr. Ratcliff!"

"Ye-es." Apparently papa's gladness was not exactly what Mr. Ratcliff had wanted, but he did not pursue the subject. "I—I have taken the liberty, Miss Glyn, to—to—"

to—in fact, to—to—"

"Yes," said Miss Glyn. "To—to—to bring you a slight—a slight—er—what may be termed a slight offering," said Mr. Ratcliff, placing the box on the seat beside the girl. "I—I trust that you will not be offended?"

"Certainly not!"

"You are—er—fond of— In short, I think you will like my little—er—gift," stammered Mr. Ratcliff.

"You are very kind!" said the girl, in wonder.

She read the florist's name on the box, and guessed that it contained flowers. She noticed, too, that the name of Blake of the School House was pencilled there, in the form of an address—a fact that had escaped Mr. Ratcliff's attention in his preoccupation. But that might only have meant that Blake had been to the florist's to order the flowers for Mr. Ratcliff, and the girl was far from suspecting anything like the real state of affairs. A gift of flowers from Mr. Ratcliff surprised her, and made her feel a little uncomfortable. She hardly knew why. She untied the string of the box.

Mr. Ratcliff was breathing more freely in the shade of the tree. He watched the girl as she unfastened the string.

There was a little more colour in Edith Glyn's cheeks than heretofore, and the Housemaster noted it.

After all, was not the present a favourable moment to speak?

Mr. Ratcliff, so far, had not given much thought to the practical aspect of the question—that a millionaire's daughter was not likely to marry a Housemaster in a Public school; that a charming girl like Edith Glyn was not at all likely to care for a man fifteen or twenty years her senior.

He had been too busy, like many lovers, with thinking about himself and his personal feelings to have any thought to give to that aspect of the affair.

He revolved the matter in his mind, and determined to put his fate to the touch while Miss Glyn still had the flowers in her hands.

The girl raised the lid of the box.

A curious smell came from within, and she looked surprised, and then she looked into the box and gave a violent start.

"Mr. Ratcliff!"

"Yes, my dear Miss Glyn, I—"

He broke off. There was no mistaking the girl's expression, and he recollected at that moment Bernard Glyn's declaration that the charming Edith had a temper. "You—you are not angry with me?"

"If this is meant as an insult—"

"A—a—an insult!"

"Or if it is a freak—"

"Miss Glyn!"

"I fail to understand the humour of such a joke, Mr. Ratcliff! I must request you to take the horrid things away, and—"

"Horrid things!" Mr. Ratcliff remembered the price he had paid for the flowers to the extortionate florist, and felt a little indignant. "Horrid, Miss Glyn? Surely the flowers cannot have withered already?"

"Flowers! Did you think there were flowers in this box?"

"Certainly!"

"Look, then!"

Mr. Ratcliff looked, and jumped clear of the ground.

"With the compliments of the New House!"

That sentence, in Figgins' sprawling hand, met his eye first of all, and the rabbit-pie, and then the whiffy tarts and puffs.

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes almost started from his head as he looked at the unique collection of ancient stock from the school shop.

START COLLECTING, BOYS!

I was studying the other day a copy of the new Nestle's Free Gift Book which contains some marvellous gifts that would delight the heart of any boy. Clockwork Speed Boats, Cricket Bats and Sheath Knives are only three of the dozens of exciting things that you can get if you collect the Free Gift Coupons which are to be found in any wrapped variety of Nestle's Chocolates. If, however, you write to Nestle's (Gift Department), Silverthorne Road, Battersea, London, S.W.8, they will send you a copy of the new Nestle's Free Gift Book and a Voucher for five free coupons.

Miss Glyn looked at him. There was a smile stealing over her face now. She realised that it was the Housemaster, and not herself, who was the victim of a joke.

"Miss Glyn! How—how can this have happened? I—I trust you do not believe me capable of—of—of perpetrating such a—a brutal jest?" gasped the unfortunate Housemaster.

The girl laughed.

"I suppose you have been the victim of a joke, Mr. Ratcliff?"

"I—I—I suppose so! There were flowers in that box when I fastened it up, and now—now—now— Oh, it is incredible!"

"It is very curious."

"Someone must have tampered with it. Dear me, I know the handwriting! It is Figgins'. I will—"

"Pray do not punish Figgins! I should be very sorry!"

"But he deserves—"

"I should not like to be the cause of Figgins being punished. Pray let the matter rest where it is."

"For your sake, Miss Glyn, I will pardon him; but—but it is infamous!"

"It was certainly in very bad taste."

"The wretched boy! How can I apologise?"

"Pray do not trouble to do so. I should like you, however, to take the—the box away with you," said Miss Glyn demurely. "I thank you very much, but I cannot put these—er—these pastries to any use!"

Mr. Ratcliff was crimson as he fastened up the box. Miss Glyn rose to her feet, and closed her book.

It was evident that the interview was over, and Mr. Ratcliff's chance was gone.

"Good-bye!" he said despondently.

"Good-bye, Mr. Ratcliff! And—and you must not send me any more flowers!"

Miss Glyn disappeared towards the house. Mr. Ratcliff walked slowly away, carrying the offending box, which he pitched into the nearest ditch as soon as he was clear of the grounds of Glyn House. His visit could not be called a success.

CHAPTER 10.

Call to Account!

"RUN!" said Figgins disdainfully. "Of course, we'll run—with any rotten runner in the School House, and leave you miles away!"

"Done!" said Tom Merry. "You and Kerr will be the hares, then, and the School House will find the pack. Of course, the New House chaps can join the pack, and if one of them catches you, I give in. My idea is that I shall collar you!"

"And my idea," said Blake, "is that I shall collar him!"

"And my ideah, deah boys, is that I shall collah the wastahs!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wathah fancy myself as a wunnah, you know."

"We'll start tearing up the paper this evening, then," said Digby. "Here's some paper scribbled on in Gussy's scrawl; that will do for a start!"

"Hold on—pway hold on!"

"What's the matter?"

"That's my fashion article for the ewwent numbah of 'Tom Mewwy's Weekly.'"

"Yes; I know it is!"

"You—you uttah wotah! There is the fwuit of hours of wfection in that article!" said D'Arcy, snatching the precious papers from Digby. "I wegard you as a beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll find enough old exercise-books and newspapers," grinned Figgins. "When is the paper-chase to come off?"

"Wednesday afternoon."

"Right you are! I suppose all the Lower School will be running? We'll jolly well give you a run for your money, too!"

"Rely on us for that," said Kerr.

Jameson of the Third put his head in at the door.

"Figgins is wanted!"

Figgins looked round in a leisurely way.

"Did you address me, Jameson, my son?"

"Yes; you're wanted in the New House!"

"A doctor will be wanted in the New House, too, to attend to a cheeky kid named Jameson!" said Figgins darkly. "Cut off!"

Jameson grinned.

"But you're really wanted," he said. "It's Ratty."

"What does Ratty want?"

"You!"

And with that somewhat brief information Jameson cut off, dodging a Latin Grammar hurled at him by Digby.

Figgins rose from his graceful seat on the corner of the study table.

"If Ratty wants me, I'd better go," he remarked. "It's bad form to keep a Housemaster waiting."

"And jolly painful in its results, too!" said Blake.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Well, it's settled," said Figgins. "We run you on Wednesday afternoon, and you can tear up all your old rubbish for scent, including all your contributions to the 'Weekly.' Nighty-bye!"

And Figgins and Kerr left the study.
 Figgins was looking surprised as he crossed to the New House. He didn't really know what Ratty wanted. Besides the fact that Ratty had grown so soft and kind of late, Figgins could call nothing to mind that required punishment. He was not always in such a happy state, but just now he could not remember a single rule he had lately transgressed.

"Blessed if I know what Ratty wants," he said to Kerr. "Perhaps it's a new phase of his lunacy. He may be going to give me a tip."

"Not likely!"
 "Well, no, it's not likely," assented Figgins. "Ratty's changed a lot, but perhaps not to that extent. He may be uneasy in his conscience about having had a School House chap to tea, and cut his own House, and perhaps he wants to ask me to bring a few friends in."

Kerr shook his head; it did not seem at all probable to him. Figgins made his way at once to Mr. Ratcliff's study, and the look on Ratty's face showed him that he had not been sent for on a pleasant matter.

"Figgins, you have acted in a disgraceful manner!"
 Figgins turned red.

He had his faults, and was always prepared to be hauled over the coals for them, but he had never acted in a disgraceful manner in any way in his life, and he wasn't going to take such an accusation calmly.

"Indeed, sir, I haven't!" he exclaimed. "I don't know what you're alluding to, sir; but I certainly haven't done anything of the sort!"

"Don't dare to contradict, Figgins!"

"No, sir; only I haven't acted in a disgraceful manner!"

"What do you call this?" said Mr. Ratcliff, breathing hard, as he thrust under Figgins' nose that fatal slip: "With the compliments of the New House!"

"That, sir? I wrote that!"

"I know you did. I knew your hand at once! How dare you?"

"It was only a joke, sir!"

"You call it a joke? I have promised not to punish you," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I shall, however, endeavour to point out to you in suitable words the enormity of your action!"

"But—but it was only a joke, sir! I didn't mean any harm. We are always japing one another."

Mr. Ratcliff stared.
 "Figgins! You and the—the person that it was sent to, are always japing one another?"

"Yes, sir; nearly every day in one way or other. It's only a joke! It was a little surprise for the bounder when he opened the box, sir!"

"Boulder! He! Whom? Are you alluding to Miss Glyn as a bounder?"

Figgins' jaw dropped.

"Miss Glyn, sir?"

"Yes. It was Miss Glyn that box was sent to!"

Figgins' face was a study.

"I left it out of my sight for a time," said Mr. Ratcliff, "and this trick was played. The flowers intended for a lady were replaced with a—a—a foul assortment of stale and exceedingly unpleasant comestibles!"

"Great Scott! Did Miss Glyn open it?"

"Yes, certainly she did!"

"I—I—I'm awfully sorry, sir," said Figgins sincerely enough. "We found the box, and there were only some old flowers in it—"

"Old flowers! I paid half-a-guinea for those flowers to-day."

"I'm awfully sorry, sir. I didn't know they were any good. The box was kicking about the passage, and—"

"I happened to leave it in the passage."

"We—we thought we might use it, sir, as it was kicking about. We chucked the flowers away, and put the things in the box for Blake, sir. When you took it away from Fatty Wynn we thought you knew we were going to jape Blake, sir, and were confiscating the box. We never dreamed it belonged to you, sir. I hope you don't think we played a trick like that on a lady, sir?"

Figgins' tone was too sincere for him to be doubted, even by the suspicious Housemaster.

"Very well, Figgins; I believe you."

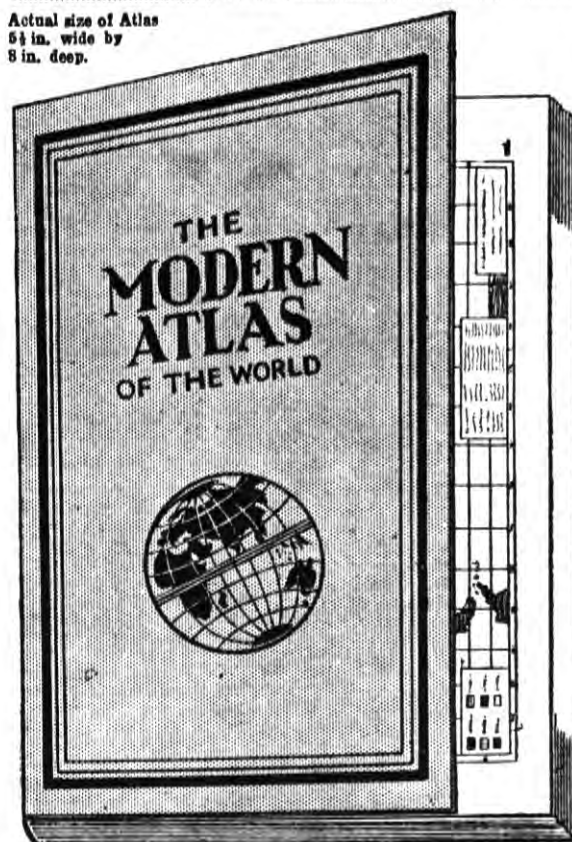
"Thank you, sir."

"Did you find a little note in the flowers?"

"We didn't look for one, sir. We really did not look

(Continued on page 19.)

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THE EDITOR.

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM—



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

HALLO, chums! I've got another really tip-top programme of stories for you in next week's number, so (let me get this in early) order your copy of the GEM in good time. To kick off with, Mr. Martin Clifford has been excelling himself. The result is

"THE MYSTERY OF EASTWOOD HOUSE!"

which is a combined thrill-and-fun-adventure story. Don't miss it, whatever you do! For more thrills I recommend the next chapters of W. E. Johns' magnificent War story,

"THE SPY-FLYERS!"

Please do me the favour of telling your pals about this super yarn now, so that they can start to read it before too many instalments have appeared. The story gets more enthralling with every chapter, and it is indeed a real scoop for your favourite paper.

POTTS, THE OFFICE BOY,

is again "on parade" in next week's GEM, and the "duster," in merry mood, passes on to you more readers' jokes, which, incidentally, earn half-a-crown apiece for the senders. That little lot, with another page of news pars and replies to readers' questions from yours truly, completes a "twopennyworth" you will never equal anywhere else. Honest!

THIS WEEK'S HOWLER!

Another name for the *Invisible Armada*, by an East Grinstead scholar: *The Invisible Banana!*

WHAT THE 'FLU DID!

Amongst other things, it attacked and put on their backs thirty per cent of the Finnish military forces. (Is this a germ of an idea for putting a stop to future wars?)

THE FIVE POUND HIT!

A certain schoolmaster thought he would encourage his lads at cricket, so he offered to present five pounds to any batsman who lifted a ball out of the ground and smashed a window of the school buildings. It is recorded that only one fellow earned the five—for the distance between the wickets and the nearest window was pretty hefty—and he, being a bowler and not considered anything of a batsman, was sent in last! The first ball sent down to him broke a window; the second ball broke his stumps!

RATS!

This is not being rude: it's a reply to John Waters, of Sydenham, who wants to know whether rats breed quickly. They do, John. It has been proved that a pair of rats will increase to a family of sixty-eight in a year. Hope you're not thinking of breeding them as a hobby!

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THE UNLUCKY NUMBER!

Thirteen has been the "unlucky" number for some people for time immemorial, and every coincidence around that number adds to the superstition. Here's the latest: A young fellow on a sailing ship fell overboard on the thirteenth day of the month; the ship was thirteen days out from port, was doing thirteen miles an hour (if you reckon in land speed), and the tragedy was entered on the thirteenth page of the ship's log. As against that dismal picture of ill-luck ascribed to the influence of thirteen, let me tell you of a GEM reader's experience in Australia. For twelve years he has been trying to knock up a century in cricket matches, and failed. Now in his thirteenth year of cricket, with his thirteenth club, and with his thirteenth bat he has reached the coveted figure. *Congrats!*

THE OLDEST REGIMENT?

That's a query from George Duncan, of Glasgow, and I'm not going to disappoint him, for he's quite right—namely, that the Royal Scots is the oldest regiment in the British Army. But he's wrong about the date, for this famous regiment was formed as far back as 1633.

MODERN GOLD MINERS!

Strange sights are to be witnessed these days in the newly-discovered goldfields in Kenya. Clerks, who have packed up their jobs in the hope of getting rich quickly, are toiling under a blazing sun with scanty mining kit, are ridden with fever and have little prospect of striking the precious metal; while alongside them is the "millionaire" miner. He is doing the job in style, with full regard to comfort. His camp is as well as money can make it. His meals are of the best, whilst electricity lights up his hours of darkness. And, to keep cool, he has installed a special ice-making plant.

THIS WEEK'S STRANGE STORY.

The snow lay heavy on the ground, and a certain resident of Horncastle lost a ring somewhere under the white "carpet" which covered his garden. But his loss was not of long duration, for a little while afterwards his tame magpie appeared in the house, and the magpie was "cawing" loudly. With good reason, for the little fellow had found the ring and triumphantly carried it to its owner in its beak!

IS IT TRUE—

That the distance between London and New York varies every twenty-four hours? asks Ted Logan, of Deptford. It is true, Ted, and it is due to the attraction of the moon, which makes the distance between these two points "expand" sixty odd feet.

FOR SERVICES RENDERED!

It's all in the day's work, thought the philosophical railway porter in Dorset when, having carried a lady's luggage, he received exactly nothing for the service! But round about five months later he received by post a sixpenny tip which, apparently, the sendor had forgotten to give him at the time. Better late than never!

THE OSTRICH STRIDE!

"Will I settle the argument?" asks "Regular Reader," of Southport. "Is the stride of a full-grown ostrich as big as the average room?" That depends, "Regular Reader," whether in your argument with a pal the stride referred to was a "walking" stride or a "running" stride. It is stated on good authority that when walking an ostrich's stride is something like a couple of feet in extent (that's not a joke!), but when it is running an ostrich covers a dozen feet or more in one stride!

"THE HOUSEMASTER'S PERIL!"

A message of mystery threatening the life of a member of St. Frank's. Who is the secret avenger? Whose life does he seek? The second question is answered when a message comes direct to Nelson Lee, the Housemaster-detective, telling him that he is doomed to die! Attempts on his life by the would-be assassin are thwarted until—Nelson Lee falls into his hands!

Here is a thrilling mystery story of school adventure, starring the popular chums of St. Frank's, that is much too good to miss. It appears in the current number of the "Nelson Lee Library." Gemites are recommended to get it to-day and be thrilled!

NAVY FOR SALE!

The world's smallest navy is for sale! This navy belongs to Panama, and consists of a steam yacht manned by two caretakers! Other miniature navies are those of Ecuador, which consists of one gunboat manned by 53 officers and 264 ratings; Mexico, with 6 gun-boats; Peru, three cruisers, one destroyer, four gunboats and six submarines; Holland, with twenty-four submarines. And here's another thing. You have probably heard the joke about the Swiss navy; it has been a joke for years, because most people think that there isn't such a thing—but there is! It consists of several boats which patrol Lake Geneva.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Tom: "That dog of yours has got very long legs, hasn't he?"

Ted: "Yes, he has. But he needs them."

Tom: "Why so?"

Ted: "So's he can reach the ground!"

THE PHANTOM HORSE!

The people of Exmoor are very superstitious, and recently they became terrified of a new phantom which made its appearance. It was a phantom horse. Every time the Exmoor stag hounds turned out, this riderless horse was always to be found pounding along in the rear. Everyone wondered just where the horse came from and how it got there, but the locals were quite convinced that it was a ghost. One day a farmer near Lynton went out to see to his horses in a violent snowstorm, and found one too many in his stables. The "phantom" had come in to shelter! But just where it came from the farmer didn't know.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE TAMING OF THE TYRANT!

(Continued from page 17.)

at the flowers at all. We just shoved them into the wastepaper basket in the study.

"Very well, Figgins. You may go."

Figgins went.

Mr. Ratcliff went at once to Figgins' study, and in the wastepaper-basket he found the crumpled flowers, and his note still in the midst of them. It was proof, if he wanted it, that Figgins had told the truth. Innocent as Figgins had been, that would not have saved him from severe punishment if Mr. Ratcliff had been in his old mood. But the softening influence of Cupid had had a wonderful effect upon the Housemaster, and it really seemed as if punishment was to become a thing of the past in the New House at St. Jim's.

"My only summer hat!" said Kerr, when Figgins explained to him. "It was a ghastly mess, and no mistake! Some of us ought to explain to Miss Glyn."

Figgins nodded.

"I shall apologise to her first chance I get," he said. "I don't want her to think I could do a caddish thing like that on purpose."

"Rather not!"

And Figgins, wondering what Miss Glyn must think of him, was rather worried about the matter. It was likely to weigh upon his mind till he found an opportunity of explaining and apologising. Meanwhile, Figgins & Co., like the chums of the School House, were busied with preparations for the big paper-chase.

CHAPTER 11.

The Paper-Chase I

"A!! You are perhaps—er—going home this afternoon, Glyn?" said Mr. Ratcliff, after school on Wednesday, as he met Bernard Glyn in the passage.

The meeting was not accidental on Mr. Ratcliff's part.

"No, sir," said Glyn.

"I—I was—er—thinking that I would walk with you as far as Glyn House," went on Mr. Ratcliff, unheeding. "I find that a stroll in this charming spring weather is an excellent thing for—ah—indigestion."

"I'm not going home, sir," said Glyn, his heart sinking at the thought of being compelled by politeness to walk home that afternoon with Mr. Ratcliff, instead of going with Tom Merry & Co. in the paper-chase. "You see, sir, my sister is over at Wayland this afternoon, and so I—"

"Oh, Miss Glyn is not at home?"

"No, sir; and my gov—my father's in Liverpool, just now, and I haven't anything to go home for."

"Very good!" said Mr. Ratcliff, glad to have made the discovery before he took the trouble of walking to Glyn House. "Miss—er—Glyn is at Wayland?"

"Yes, sir. She's gone to visit some giddy cottager who has a pain in the back or something or other."

"How very charitable of Miss Glyn!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir, ain't it?"

The Housemaster would have liked to ask more questions, but he did not care to do so; but Glyn, who was distinctly amused by the fact that Mr. Ratcliff could not see that he guessed anything, went on glibly:

"You may have heard of the old person, sir—a Dame Carter, the widow of a soldier killed in the War. She lives in a cottage on the edge of the wood."

"Ah, yes, just so," said Mr. Ratcliff, greatly delighted.

He walked on, and ten minutes afterwards he was quitting the gates of St. Jim's. His silk hat had had an extra brush, and he had new gloves on, and—wonder of wonders—a flower in his coat. Taggles looked at him as he went out, and wondered. Glyn looked at him and grinned. He was still grinning when Tom Merry tapped him on the shoulder.

"Time for the meet," said Tom Merry. "What's the joke?"

"Ratty."

"Oh! What's the latest from Ratty?"

"He's just got out of me that my sister's visiting Dame Carter in her cottage near Wayland, and he's gone off there to try to see her," grinned Glyn. "My only hat! I shall have to tell Edith next Saturday. It's too good to keep!"

"Well, never mind Ratty. Come and get into your things."

It was a cheery crowd that gathered on the edge of the common. Quite three score of juniors were there for the start, looking very fit and well in their running clothes. Jack Blake sported a bugle, with which he was already making the welkin ring by way of practice.

Figgins and Kerr were in red shirts, to distinguish them from the pack, and they carried big bags of scent slung over their shoulders. Figgins' long, slim legs attracted much attention and many comments, to which he replied only with disdainful sniffing.

Fatty Wynn had joined the pack, but how much running he would do was a question. He had lately demolished a very substantial dinner, and he had crammed his pockets with sandwiches to be prepared for a possible attack of hunger en route.

"Five minutes' start," said Tom Merry. "Who's going to start you?"

"I am quite willin'—"

"Ass! You belong to the pack!"

"I refuse to be called an ass. I—"

"Here's Kildare; he'll do it. Kildare, old chap, will you start us?"

The captain of St. Jim's looked round, with a smile. He was passing along on his bicycle. But Kildare was always obliging. He jumped off the machine, and leaned it against a bush.

"Certainly!" he said.

"Thanks awfully! Long-legs is to have five minutes."

"Look here—" said Figgins.

"Off you go!"

"If the School House kids catch us," said Figgins,

"I'll eat—I'll eat what's left of the scent. I'm ready."

"Same here," said Kerr.

"Off!" said Kildare, taking out his watch.

The two hares started off. The pack gave them a cheer

Out This Out and Keep It By You!



as they started. They went off at an easy trot, and disappeared among the furze of Rylcombe Common.

"Time's up, isn't it, Kildare?" asked Wally, the younger brother of the great Augustus, when two minutes had elapsed.

Kildare laughed.

"Not yet."

"Sure your watch isn't slow?"

"Weally, Wally, I wegard your impatience as bad form, and I should not object to Kildare inflictin' a slight chastisement—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!"

"Jolly ripping day for a run, isn't it?" said Tom Merry. "Lemme see. It's across the common, through the wood, and round the old castle, and then back round Wayland and Rylcombe. Jolly good run!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am afwaid there won't be many of you chaps in at the finish with me, deah boys."

"If you're in at the finish, Gussy, we'll subscribe and get you a tin medal."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We've got to catch Figgins, if only to put the New House in their place. You fellows buck up, and keep close to me," said Jack Blake.

"I'd rather get close to Figgins, if you don't mind," remarked Monty Lowther urbanely.

Blake, who was raising his bugle to his lips, lowered it, and glared at the jester of the Shell.

"Look here!" he said. "If Lowther's going to be funny, there will be trouble on this paper-chase. We've got a hard run before us, and we can't be expected to put up with Lowther's funny business as well."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Time!" said Kildare.

"Bai Jove, it's time, deah boys!"

The bugle rang out, and the pack started. Kildare watched them off, and then remounted his bicycle and rode

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away. The pack streamed across the common in fine style, the bugle waking the echoes every second or two.

Lowther tapped Blake on the shoulder. Blake shook off his hand.

"Here, you hold on to Tom Merry!" he exclaimed. "You can't expect me to help you along. I expect I shall have to carry Gussy presently."

"Weally, Blake—"

"I wasn't holding on!" exclaimed Lowther warmly. "Don't be as ass! I want to speak to you. Shut up with that bugle. You ought to sound it when you sight the hares, and not shove in obligatos all the time."

"If you know more about paper-chases than I do, Lowther—"

"If I knew less, I'd—"

"Hurrah! There they are!"

A patch of scarlet showed among the green bushes. The hares were sighted. Blake rang a long, long call on the bugle, and bestowed a glare of defiance upon Monty Lowther.

The pack broke into a faster run. They were keeping well together so far, and there were no laggards. The run was pretty certain, however, to thin down before long.

The red shirts disappeared into the wood, and the pack went trampling along the footpath in a stream, following the trail of torn paper.

"Bai Jove, I'm glad to be out of the sun!" said Arthur Augustus, gasping. "It is weally a vewy warm aftabnoon for wunnin'!"

"I warned you not to come," said Lowther. "I told you you weren't up to it."

"Yaas, I wemembah you makin' that impertinent wemark, Lowthah!"

"Faith, and they're making for the Feeder!" said Reilly. "They're going to jump it, me lardings, and that will thin us down."

"Never mind; come on!"

"Ta-at-ra-ra-ra-ta-tara!"

"Blake can see them!"

"This way, my sons!"

The trail of paper had left the path, and trickled through the bushes. The hares had taken the most surprising turns. Figgins, who had done training as a Boy Scout in that wood, knew every turn of it, and he was leading the hounds a dance,

The way led towards a stream that flowed through the heart of the wood, called the Feeder—a feeder of the Rhyl. On its banks the St. Jim's juniors had once encamped when they were "playing Indians," and the ground was well known to them.

The hounds streamed out of the trees upon the rugged, grassy banks of the little stream, that reflected the sunlight glimmering through the tree-tops overhead.

There was a fresh shout.

"There they are!"

Down the stream ran the trail of paper, and at the end of it the hares could be seen. It was a wide part of the stream, and Figgins was in the act of jumping it. Figgins' long legs, which had caused so many remarks, stood him in good stead now. He cleared the stream like a buck, and landed safely on the other side, and stood ready to give a hand to Kerr.

Kerr slung over his bag of scent first, and then took a little run, and sprang. He landed in shallow water on the other side, and it came up to his calves, and Figgins grasped him by the shoulder as he reeled, and dragged him into safety.

"Bai Jove! They've done it!"

Figgins and Kerr looked back at the hounds, and waved their hands derisively, and disappeared into the trees on the farther side of the stream.

The pack streamed down to the point where they had jumped, and stopped there. The jump was a big one.

"I'm going round," said Fatty Wynn.

"I weward it as somewhat dowogatory to our dig to go wound," said D'Arcy. "I wathah fancy myself as a jumpah, too."

"Jump it, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! I have no objection to showin' you fellows a good example."

"Go it!"

"Way for Gussy! Make room!"

"Take a little run, old dear!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway stand back, you fellows. I want woom to get a wun. I shall have to wun like anythin' you know."

"Room for Gussy!"

"Stand back, there!"

"Go it, Gussy! Don't be all day!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and receded from the bank of the stream to get a good run for the jump.

The other fellows stood round, grinning. They had had a sharp run, and they wanted a "breather" before taking the jump, but nobody believed that D'Arcy would succeed in clearing the water.

"Pway keep the coast cleah, deah boys! I'm just goin' to wun!"

Arthur Augustus started. He gathered speed as he ran, and came down the bank in fine style—and stopped!

"Jump!" roared a score of voices.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Jump, you beggar!"

"I wefuse to jump! I shall wequiah anothah wun!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for wibald mewwiment. I had not exactly calculated the distance, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy backed away to his previous starting-point, and calculated carefully. Then he broke into a trot, and charged down the bank, and again came to a dead halt in the rushes instead of jumping.

"Yah! Jump!"

"Undah the cires—"

"Jump! You can't do it!"

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort. I will twy again, and this time I will show you boundahs how to jump a little stream like this!"

"You can't do it!"

"Bai Jove! I will demonstware to you!"

And D'Arcy, determined this time to jump, started on a run, and came down to the bank like a champion of the cinder-path—and jumped.

Splash!

There was a roar of laughter as the swell of St. Jim's dropped exactly into the middle of the stream, sending up a mighty spout of water.

"Owl! Groo!"

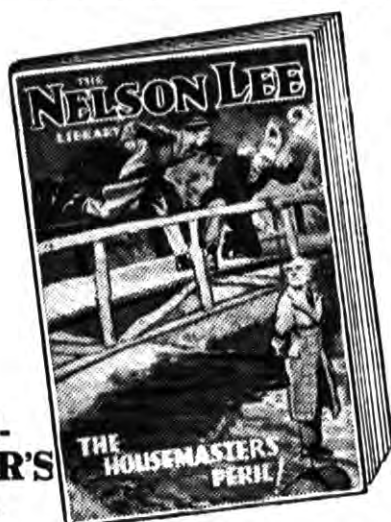
D'Arcy disappeared for a moment, and came up puffing and gasping. He struck out and gained the opposite bank. The juniors were doubled up with laughter. Arthur Augustus shook the water out of his clothes like a Newfoundland dog.

"Bai Jove! I'm wet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Tom Merry hysterically. "Didn't you know the water was wet?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a full minute before the pack could control their



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Manners panted up with Tom Merry. "Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Your shoulders, Dane!" "Here you are gasped Dane!" Tom Merry scrambled over Clifton Dane's strong shoulders on to the top of the wall and jumped down the other side.

merriment sufficiently to follow D'Arcy. The best jumpers sprang across, and several floundered in the water, and had to be dragged ashore. Others went down the stream to find an easier crossing. The chase was taken up again; but, meanwhile, the hares had gained ground, and they were well out of sight when the pack went streaming through the wood again.

CHAPTER 12. Figgins Explains!

FIGGINS chuckled as he ran, and Kerr joined in the chuckle. From behind, they heard the echoes of splashing and laughter, and they knew that some, at least, of the hounds had come to grief at the stream.

"Sorry we couldn't stop to see 'em!" grinned Figgins. "Hallo! Look there! The Grammar School cads! We don't want a row now."

Figgins and Kerr had come out of the wood, upon the slope leading up to the old castle—a favourite spot for picnics on half-holidays, both with the St. Jim's fellows and the boys of the Grammar School. Three youths had just appeared in sight ahead of them, and Figgins knew them at a glance—Monk, Lane, and Carboy, the chiefs of the Grammar School juniors in their rows with the "Saints."

It was not an opportune moment for a meeting, for a row with the Grammarian trio might mean capture by the pursuing pack.

Monk, Lane, and Carboy looked round, and grinned at the sight of the hares, and stopped in a line across the path. Figgins halted, panting.

"Get out of the way!"

"Rats!"

"Look here, it's a paper-chase!" gasped Figgins. "Don't be a cad! Let's get on!"

"Say 'please' pretty," said Frank Monk, relenting.

Figgins snorted.

"I won't!"

"Then you shan't pass!"

"We'll jolly well knock you flying if you don't clear!"

"Right-ho! We're ready to be knocked flying!"

Figgins hesitated. The fact that the Grammarians were three to two did not make him pause. But a fight just then might mean failure in the big run, and that was to be avoided at any price.

"Look here," he said, "don't be a cad!"

"Say 'please' pretty, and—"

"Please pretty!" gasped Figgins.

Monk chuckled.

"Let 'em pass, chaps!"

The Grammarians, grinning, drew aside, and Figgins and Kerr went pounding on up the rugged path to the ruined castle. They were in among the ruins in a few moments more, but they did not pause there. Figgins had intended to make a couple of minutes' rest at that point, but the halt on the path had served the purpose. Without pausing in the old castle, therefore, the hares left a trail of paper fragments amongst the time-worn masonry, and ran out through a yawning gap in the castle wall and continued on down the hill towards Wayland.

There was neither sight nor sound of the hounds, and the bugle was silent. Figgins and Kerr were evidently well ahead.

"This is ripping!" said Figgins, slackening down to an easier pace as they came into the dusty Wayland road. "We shall have time to stop for a drink of milk at Dame Carter's cottage."

"Yes, rather! And that's just what we want now. I feel as if I could drink a couple of gallons without stopping."

The dust of the country road was in their noses as they ran. A passing motor had churned it up into clouds. They left the road as soon as they could, and, skirting the market town, they followed green paths towards the cottage where Mrs. Carter lived.

Dame Carter turned an honest penny in the summer by supplying cooling drinks to pedestrians who passed her cottage. It was out of the track of cyclists, but fellows who rambled in the woods often turned up there for light refreshments, as well as artists who came down in the summer to sketch. It was a spot well known to the juniors of St. Jim's, and, as Dame Carter combined cleanliness with cheapness, the juniors often dropped in there.

Figgins and Kerr were glad enough when they came in sight of the little cottage. The fresh milk sold by Dame Carter was really what it was supposed to be, and a more refreshing drink could not be desired.

"Here we are, kid!" said Figgins.

The juniors halted at the door, which opened directly into the little sitting-room, paved with red bricks. The change from the glare of the sunshine to the cool shade of the little room was blinding, and for a few moments the boys did not see that the room had any other occupant beside Dame Carter. The old lady, with her white hair fastened straight back from her forehead, made a charming figure, but not quite so charming as another that was there.

"By Jove!" murmured Figgins, as he caught sight of the second figure.

It was Edith Glyn.

The girl, who had seen Figgins before, recognised him, and a very cold look came over her face. She looked straight before her, and did not appear to be aware of the presence of the juniors after the first moment.

"Milk, please, Mrs. Carter," said Kerr, "and as quick as you like! It's a paper-chase, you know, and we've got to buzz off!"

"Yes, my dears," said Dame Carter, bobbling from her chair. "Won't you sit down a moment?"

"Thank you, I will."

Kerr sat down; but Figgins remained standing, twisting his cap in his hands. He had wanted to see Miss Glyn, to apologise to her for the affair of the flowers; but he hadn't

wanted to run into her presence like this—in such extremely scanty attire, blazing with the heat of the run, and with the perspiration running down his cheeks. But he took the plunge, all the same.

"G-g-good-afternoon, Miss Glyn!" he stammered.

The girl looked at him.

"Good-afternoon!" she said.

"I—I am sorry!" stammered Figgins. "I—I ought to explain—about that box, you know. It was a joke—"

"Indeed!"

"Please listen to me, Miss Glyn!" said Figgins earnestly. "It was a joke on the chaps in the School House. I was going to send that whiffy rubbish to Blake—make him think he'd got a feed, you know, till he opened the box—and—somehow Ratty—I mean, Mr. Ratcliff—got it mixed up, and—and—"

The girl's face cleared.

"Oh, I think I understand!"

"I—I was afraid you'd think I meant it disrespectfully to you, Miss Glyn. I—I wouldn't have done anything of the sort for worlds!"

"Not for worlds!" said Kerr.

"I hope it's all right now, Miss Glyn?" said Figgins anxiously.

The girl laughed.

"Yes, Figgins; it is all right now. I am sorry I believed that you had done it on purpose. It was not like you."

Figgins was greatly relieved in his mind. The juniors drank their milk, chatting cheerily with Miss Glyn the while, and left in a few minutes. The girl looked after them, with a smile. She was not sorry for the interruption. She was spending an hour in Mrs. Carter's cottage to talk to the old dame, and the subject was chiefly Dame Carter's rheumatism and certain mysterious pains the old lady had had in her back, which she was doubtful whether to trace to rheumatism or lumbago. Miss Glyn was not an authority upon either rheumatism or lumbago, and probably she would have welcomed some more interruptions.

Figgins and Kerr, feeling all the better for their brief rest, left the cottage, and Figgins looked back the way he had come. The hounds were not yet in sight. But another figure was in sight—that of Mr. Ratcliff.

The New House master was coming directly towards the cottage. He looked warm and tired, and had apparently taken a good time to walk through the wood to Wayland. He saw the juniors, and they raised their caps respectfully. Mr. Ratcliff signed to them to stop.

"Ah, you are—er—enjoying a little run, I see!" he observed.

"Yes, sir; it's a paper-chase," said Figgins. "We're the hares!"

He meant that as a hint that they hadn't any time to waste, but Mr. Ratcliff did not appear to see it.

"You have just been to the cottage?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. Now we're bucking up."

"Dame Carter is at home, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, sir! We didn't stay long, as we are in a hurry."

"Ah, I think I will call in at the cottage for some—some light refreshments after my long walk!" murmured Mr. Ratcliff. "I presume that—that Mrs. Carter is alone?"

"No, sir. Miss Glyn's there."

"Ah, indeed!"

Mr. Ratcliff walked on, and the juniors broke into a run again.

Figgins was chuckling.

"It's a case of spoons, and no mistake!" he said. "Young Glyn's right about that! Fancy Ratty spooning!"

"The funny thing is, he doesn't think anybody can see it!" said Kerr, a little scornfully. "What on earth does he take us for?"

"Well, we didn't see at first. I suppose it will be all over St. Jim's before long. Not very pleasant for Miss Glyn, either. Ratty really ought to have a little more sense!"

"Can't see anything of the hounds," said Kerr, looking back.

"No; we're well ahead. We can take it easier for a bit."

And the hares ran on at an easier pace through the deep, scented woods, listening every moment for some sound of pursuit behind, and ready to put on a spurt at the sound of a bugle.

CHAPTER 13.

Rough on Ratty!

MR. RATCLIFF walked nervously towards the cottage, and paused outside for a full minute before he found the courage to enter.

There was a murmur of voices from the open door, and he distinguished the soft tones of Edith Glyn. The voices paused, and Mr. Ratcliff stepped in.

Result of Our "WORD-MAKING" COMPETITION.

Owing to the fact that thirteen competitors sent in Correct Solutions in this popular contest, in which a HOME CINEMA was offered as FIRST PRIZE, I am faced with the difficulty of dividing the Home Cinema into thirteen equal parts. It just can't be done—not unless I take a hatchet and do it! And if I did that, the thirteen prize-winners would want to look for me with a hatchet! As the cost of the Home Cinema is £3 6s., the best and fairest way out of the difficulty is for me to divide that amount equally among the thirteen competitors. This I have done, and accordingly postal orders for five shillings have been forwarded to each of the following competitors:

- W. D. Anderson, Greystoke, Penrith, Cumberland.
- P. Arnold, 76, Constantine Road, London, N.W.3.
- J. Clephane, 8, West Claremont Street, Edinburgh.
- F. M. Cudlip, 4, Balloch Road, Catford, S.E.6.
- R. Everest, 30, Oliver Crescent, Farnham, Kent.
- J. Foster, 61, Bentley Bar, near Atherstone, Warwick.
- R. Haslam, Barwood Mount, Ramsbottom, Manchester.
- S. Johnson, Gleneak, Avenue Road, West Hartlepool.
- A. Matfield, 23, Mendip Road, Bedminster, Bristol, 3.
- K. Ranger, 189, Twickenham Road, Leytonstone, E.11.
- T. H. Smith, 5, Woodcote Village, Purley, Surrey.
- E. Snowden, 12, Retford Place, Bradford.
- W. L. Vinton, 93, Spring Grove Crescent, Hounslow, Middlesex.

100 "RIGBY" MODEL PLANES were also promised to runners-up, but in the checking it was found that no less than one hundred and thirty-nine readers, whose efforts each contained one error, tied for them. Therefore, to avoid disappointment to any of these entrants, the number of prizes has been increased by thirty-nine so that every one of them shall have a model plane. Owing to lack of space we are unable to print such a long list here, but the winners' names may be seen on application at our offices, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.—THE EDITOR.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,310.

He blinked in the dusk at the young lady, who looked surprised to see him, and not wholly pleased.

"Dear me, Miss Glyn!"

He raised his hat. The girl rose and bowed, and did not sit down again. She glanced at her watch.

"I am afraid I must be leaving you now, Mrs. Carter. I shall come again next week, and—"

"But sure it isn't half-past four yet?" said Dame Carter innocently.

"N-n-no; but—"

"You were going to stay till half-past four, you said," said the old lady in wonder. "And I haven't finished telling you about the lumbago, miss."

Miss Glyn, with a helpless expression, sat down. Mr. Ratcliff fanned his warm brow. He was too tired from his long walk to take any especial note of what was being said, only he was very glad that Miss Glyn was not going.

"What can I get you, sir?" said Mrs. Carter, congratulating herself that her custom was extending from the boys of St. Jim's to the masters of the big school. "It's a great honour to me to see you under my roof, sir."

"Oh, not a' all!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir. A little milk, sir—fresh from the cow—and some of the home-made cake, sir, that the young gentlemen are very fond of."

"Ye-e-es," stammered Mr. Ratcliff, who was looking at Edith Glyn, and not thinking of refreshments at all. "I—I will have a little of—the home-made milk, and—and a cake."

"Home-made cake, sir, and milk fresh from the cow," said Dame Carter, somewhat surprised.

"Yes, exactly. Some home-made cow, and a cake fresh from the milk."

Dame Carter went to get out the milk and the cake. She could only conclude that the New House master had been drinking, or that the sun had been too much for him. Miss Glyn was smiling slightly.

"A beautiful day, Miss Glyn," said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Very beautiful."

"I—I presume that the—er—beautiful weather has tempted you to taking a little walk?" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"I am paying a visit to Mrs. Carter."

"Ah! I trust that my presence is not—not—incommoding you, Miss Glyn, in your—er—visit to Mrs. Carter?"

"Oh, no!"

The girl's tone meant "Oh, yes!" but Mr. Ratcliff was far too obtuse to see that. He sipped the milk Mrs. Carter placed before him, and found it refreshing. He nibbled the cake. Dame Carter placed tea and cake before Miss Glyn, and as she would have been hurt if they had not been partaken of, the girl had no choice but to eat. As a matter of fact, she usually had tea in Mrs. Carter's cottage when she called. But she was not pleased to find herself taking tea *tete-a-tete* with Mr. Ratcliff. She was beginning to understand, and what she was beginning to understand did not please her.

Miss Glyn nibbled her cake in silence. Mr. Ratcliff nibbled cake, and strove to find something to say. Before he could think of anything there came an interruption.

Three youthful forms loomed up in the doorway, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther called out in one voice:

"Milk—ho!"

Then they saw the Housemaster and Miss Glyn, and coloured.

"I—I beg your pardon," said Tom Merry, raising his cap. "We didn't know there was anybody here but Mrs. Carter."

"Come in, young gentlemen!" said Mrs. Carter.

Tom Merry hesitated.

"Pray come in!" said Miss Glyn.

They came in and sat down. The pack was streaming up, and they all wanted milk and cake. Mr. Ratcliff bit his lip. The cottage was overrun, and the garden outside was swarmed. Some of the pack had dropped off in the run, but there were still forty juniors in the running, and most of them were in or around Dame Carter's cottage.

Miss Glyn was smiling demurely. She was glad of the interruption, and the expression of Mr. Ratcliff's face amused her.

She insisted upon helping Dame Carter serve her customers. She laughed gaily as she carried out milk and cake and ginger-beer to the juniors. The whole place was in an uproar with voices and the popping of corks and the gurgling of liquids.

Mr. Ratcliff sat still. He wished the juniors at the ends of the earth or farther. But he was helpless.

Fortunately, from his point of view, the pack had not many minutes to spare. The rest at Dame Carter's cottage was to be brief.

"Good-bye, Miss Glyn!" said Tom Merry, raising his cap. "Thank you very much!"

"Good luck!" said Edith Glyn.

"It was jolly ripping of you, Edie!" said Bernard Glyn admiringly. "I never knew you could be so useful."

And he dodged out of the cottage in time to escape a box on the ear.

The pack streamed away after the hares. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had asked for a cup of tea, and it was not yet made, but he said he would wait. Blake dragged him by the collar.

"Come on, Gussy!"

"I haven't had my tea yet, deah boy!"

"No time for tea. Come on!"

"It's all wight! I shall ovahtake you!"

"You couldn't overtake a mouse. Come on!"

"I must wemain till I have had my tea. I wegard it as a most wefreshin' and coolin' dwink, and when I have had it I shall wun like anythin'."

Blake snorted. But for Miss Glyn's presence, he would have bundled D'Arcy out of the cottage in no time. As it was, he gave him a shake and left him. The hounds rushed on, leaving Arthur Augustus in the cottage. The swell of St. Jim's fanned himself with a cambric handkerchief.

"Bai Jove, it's warm!" he observed. "I trust that my pwesence is not disagweeable to you, Miss Glyn, if I wemain till my tea is weady."

"I shall be very pleased," said Miss Glyn, sincerely enough.

"I trust, Mr. Watchiff, that you do not object to my wemainin'?"

"Oh—er—certainly not!" muttered Mr. Ratcliff.

"Thank you vewy much. I weally find wunnin' wathah exhaustin'," said D'Arcy, sinking into a chair. "As a mattah of fact, the wun ova the hill has thwown me into quite a fluttah."

"Dear me," said Miss Glyn sympathetically.

"Yaas, wathah! And I shall have to wun like anythin' to catch those fellows up, too. Upon the whole, I don't think that a papah-chase is a weally sensible form of exahseise. It is weally too much like work."

"Are you the last of the pack?" asked Miss Glyn.

"Oh, no! There are a lot of fellows dwopped off, and some are still comin' on. Fatty Wynn is stickin' to it. I think he will stick to it till he gets here, and won't go any farthah. The last thing I heard him say was that he was hungwy. Is that my tea, Mrs. Cartah? Thank you vewy much!"

"I will pour it out for you," said Edith Glyn.

"You are vewy kind, deah boy—I mean, deah gal."

Edith laughed and poured out the tea. Arthur Augustus sipped it slowly. He was very comfortable where he was, and in no hurry to move. Mr. Ratcliff was gnawing his lips with impatience. He had looked forward to that meeting with Miss Glyn, and it was too bad for it to be endlessly interrupted in this way.

Arthur Augustus rose at last.

"I weally think I had bettah be goin'," he remarked. "Hallo, Wynn! I'm just startin'. Are you comin' with me? The fellows have all gone on."

Fatty Wynn came in, gasping like a fish, and flopped into a chair.

"I'm not going on."

"Bettah stick to it, deah boy. 'I'll give you a hand.'"

"I don't want a hand. I want some grub."

"Pway don't be a slackah," said Arthur Augustus, apparently forgetful of the fact that he had been resting himself for the last ten minutes. "I should be sowwy to have to wegard you as a slackah, Wynn."

"Rats!" said Wynn. "Hallo! I didn't see you, sir. And—and you, Miss Glyn! I—I hope you don't mind my havin' tea here?"

"Certainly not!" said Miss Glyn. "Why should I mind?"

"Well, I shall have to be goin'," said D'Arcy. "I am sowwy to see you slackin' like this, Wynn. Good-afthnoon!"

And the swell of St. Jim's departed on the track of the hounds.

Fatty Wynn was breathing hard. He did not particularly want the hares to be caught, as they were his own chums, and he certainly didn't want to catch them if it involved taking a single step more without a solid meal first.

"What can I get for you, sir?" asked Dame Carter, who was beaming all over her face. Her confidential chat on the interesting subjects of rheumatism and lumbago were hopelessly interrupted and ruined. But she was doing a splendid trade, and that was more than a consolation. The profits of this afternoon alone would be enough to pay her rent for the month.

"Let me see," said Fatty Wynn meditatively. "I suppose you couldn't cook eggs and bacon, could you?"

"Yes, certainly—with pleasure!"

"Then I'll have eggs and bacon to begin with—six rashers and a dozen eggs for a start," said Fatty. "I'll have a go

at the bread-and-butter while you're cooking them, so as not to waste time, and you may as well give me some ham. Put the cheese here, too, and then I shan't have to interrupt you. If you've got any sausages, you may as well cook them along with the bacon. I get awfully peckish at this time of the year. It's the weather, I suppose."

Miss Glyn rose to her feet.

"I will say good-bye to you now, Mrs. Carter. I hope to find you quite well when I call again."

"Good-bye, miss, and Heaven bless you!" said Dame Carter.

Mr. Ratcliff also rose.

"Perhaps I may see you to the station, Miss Glyn?" he remarked.

"I am not going to the station, thank you," said Miss Glyn; "I have a call to make at Wayland."

"That is on my way."

"Very good."

Mr. Ratcliff walked with Miss Glyn to the door of a milliner's in Wayland, and there he had to leave her. He would willingly have waited for her and conducted her elsewhere, but Miss Glyn evidently did not wish him to do so. Mr. Ratcliff, in spite of his obtuseness, was beginning to dimly realise that Miss Glyn was not likely ever to reciprocate his affection.

Miss Glyn entered the milliner's, and the Housemaster walked slowly down the street towards the station.

When he reached the school he entered the sunny old quadrangle, walking with slow and heavy steps, and with a sombre shade on his brow.

He was thinking of the unmistakable manner of Miss Glyn, and of what he could not help deducing from it. He went towards the New House slowly. The quad was very quiet, and the Houses had a deserted look. The New House echoed to his footsteps as he went in and went straight to his study. There he locked himself in, and threw himself down into an armchair to think.

His thoughts were not pleasant ones.

Mr. Ratcliff was taking himself severely to task, and looking at the matter quietly and practically, as he would have been wise to do earlier.

What chance had he? The salary of a Housemaster at a school like St. Jim's was a liberal one, but it would seem abject poverty to a millionaire's daughter. He was growing middle-aged and slow and testy, and Edith Glyn was a bright and happy girl. He realised that he had allowed a mere dream, a vision of impossibility, to throw him off his balance.

He rose at last, a determined expression upon his face.

"I have been a fool!" he muttered. "A fool—a fool! But it is over!"

He sat down at the writing-table, drew paper and pen towards him, and began to work with a steady concentration that drove other matters from his mind.

CHAPTER 14.

Still Running!

F IGGINS paused and looked back.

The hares had been going strong, and they were already a third of the way home on that great run, when the blast of the bugle came faintly from afar.

"Hallo! That's Blake again!" said Figgins.

Kerr halted, panting.

"They can't be near."

The hares looked back. Behind them lay Rylcombe Wood, thick and dark. There were fields before them, green, glinting in the sunshine.

To the branch of a high tree a form, diminutive in the distance, clung, and Figgins knew that it was Jack Blake.

Blake had climbed a tree to sight them, and the note of the bugle told his comrades below that he had caught a glimpse of the hares.

Figgins chuckled as he resumed the run.

"It's all right! I wonder how many there are in the pack now? They won't be in at the death!"

"No need to lose time, though," said the cautious Kerr.

"Keep it up!"

Sixty or more juniors had broken away at the signal from Kildare, but not more than forty had passed Dame Carter's cottage. Of these more than half had dropped out of the race from that point. Less than a score followed Tom Merry's lead now.

"No scent here!" explained Tom Merry as he stepped ashore.

Blake gave a grunt.

"They've gone up or down the stream, then."

"Did you work that out in your head?" asked Lowther pleasantly.

Blake did not answer that question, but went downstream to look for the scent. Manners went upstream, and

the rest waited. Lowther followed Blake to help him, and Herries followed Manners. Manners plunged into the bushes and stooped to look to and fro for the fragments of paper, and Herries walked right into him and nearly fell over him.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, have you caught them?"

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's was, as a matter of fact, no mean runner, and the delay at the stream had given him a chance to come up. He did not look very red or flustered, either. The juniors stared at him.

"Hallo! Where have you sprung from?" demanded Digby.

"I told you I should ovahtake you, deah boys!"

Manners gave a shout.

"Look! The hares!"

"Bwavo!"

Blake's bugle rang out, calling the hounds together. The pack rushed off through Codicote Wood, and now Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was with the foremost.

"Bai Jove, you know, I weally think I shall be in at the death," he remarked. "I always wathah fancied myself as a wunnah!"

But no one replied. The juniors wanted their breath for running.

The pack swept on as fast as the wood allowed, and as they came out of the trees again into the Rylcombe Road there was a shout:

"There they are!"

"Tally-ho!"

"Tara-ra-tara!"

"Bai Jove! There the boundahs are! Wun like any-thin'!"

The hounds burst out into the road, and ran hard. The hares had taken things just a little too easily, and they were sighted—and closer this time than at any previous point in the run.

Arthur Augustus led the pack; but the pack was very small now. The hedge and the ditch had stopped more of them. There were now only seven pursuers in all on the track of Figgins and Kerr. The hounds had thinned down with a vengeance.

Figgins had intended to follow the road to St. Jim's, but he had been so closely pressed. And now he led the last lap through a terrible country for the runners. There was a feeble note from Blake's bugle as the clock tower of St. Jim's came in sight in the far distance.

Home was in view, but the way to it was still devious.

Figgins and Kerr, running on steadily side by side, came to a high stone wall, and Figgins stopped.

"Up you go, kid!" he gasped.

Kerr scrambled over his chum's shoulders, and reached the top of the wall. Then, with his chest on the stone, he held down both hands for Figgins. Figgins scrambled up and ten seconds later Blake was springing up, missing him!

Blake tried to clutch at the wall, but he could not do it.

He shouted to his comrades:

"Buck up!"

Manners panted up with Tom Merry. Dane and D'Arcy reeled against the wall. The rest were hopelessly behind.

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Your shoulders, Dane!"

"Here you are!"

Tom Merry scrambled over Clifton Dane's strong shoulders up on to the wall. Arthur Augustus followed, and then Manners. The latter stopped to help Dane over. Jack Blake had made a jump, and caught the wall in his hands. But he was spent, and he could not drag himself over. He dropped back into the field. Three of them were out of it.

Of all the resolute pack that had followed the hares so far only two were still in the running—Tom Merry and Arthur D'Arcy.

Tom Merry glanced for a second over his shoulder.

"It's between us now, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins and Kerr were winding back to the road, and after them went the hounds hotly. A broad and flowing ditch barred the course of the fugitives, and Figgins, without stopping, cleared it at a bound. Kerr sprang after him, and fell short, splashing heavily into the ditch. The water splashed into the faces of the hounds, so near now were they.

Figgins turned back.

His grasp was on Kerr, and he dragged him from the water.

"I—I'm done!" gasped Kerr, as Figgins dragged him out.

"Rats!"

"I—I'm done, old chap!"

"Stuff!"

(Continued on page 25.)

THRILLS IN THE AIR!

The Spyflyers

By Flying - Officer
W. E. JOHNS.



Rex and Tony fly a German machine, bound on a secret mission behind the German lines, and are attacked in the air by a British pilot!

The Mysterious SE 5!

FROM eighteen thousand feet above No Man's Land, Tony, leaning against the Scarff mounting of his twin Lewis guns, surveyed the sky slowly in every direction. Inch by inch, section by section, above and below, his eyes probed the atmosphere for a hidden menace. He knew that death, sudden and swift, might be the penalty for one moment's carelessness.

Far to the east a squadron of DH 4's were making heavy weather against a head wind and a furious bombardment of anti-aircraft fire as they returned from a bomb raid. He turned again to the west, and squinted long and carefully between his outstretched fingers into the glare of the evening sun. The sky was empty of hostile machines.

It was nearly a week since they had begun their new duties, and they had found absolutely nothing that could possibly be construed into a suspicious action. Except for a few unavoidable dog-fights the days had been uneventful. They had been told to avoid combat, if possible, and Rex, in particular, was beginning to resent the enforced absence of action.

"Hallo! What's that?" Rex had wobbled his plane slightly, and was pointing with outstretched finger, and Tony crouched low as he peered at a tiny speck that had become visible high over enemy territory. It was still too far off for its nationality to be distinguished, and Rex altered his course a trifle towards it, ready for anything that might arise. A cloud of black smoke blossomed out in front of the Bristol, another, and another. They were over the German lines now, and salvo after salvo of arches screamed up to them as they edged still further in, with their eyes on the stranger. The speck rapidly grew larger, and Rex turned to Tony with a grimace of disappointment as it revealed itself to be a British machine—an SE 5.

He's got a bit of a nerve cruising about by himself so far over the line. What does he think he's playing at, anyway? thought Rex. Twice since they had first seen it the SE 5 had done a tight spiral turn, coming out on its original course. Rex flew closer, turning as he did so, and presently the SE 5 and the Bristol were flying side by side back

towards the British lines, the pilots waving light-heartedly to each other from time to time.

Reaching the lines, the SE 5, after a parting wave, turned away on a new course, and was soon lost to sight in the distance. Rex resumed his solitary patrol. For a few minutes he flew aimlessly up and down the line, and then, after making a sudden signal to Tony, cut off his engine and dived steeply in the direction of their home aerodrome at Maranique.

"What's the idea?" exclaimed Tony, as the machine ran to a standstill. "I thought you said you were going to cruise until it was dark?"

Leaving his engine ticking over, Rex leaned far back out of his cockpit and nodded.

"Yes," he said, with a puzzled expression, "so did I. But did you see that SE 5?"

"Of course!"

"Did you get his markings?"

"Yes, two eccentric white bars aft the ring markings. That's 91 Squadron at Tourville, about twelve miles farther north," replied Tony.

"Did you spot his number?" asked Rex.

"Yes, F 1743."

"I thought that was it, but I wasn't certain," answered Rex. "I think I'd like to go to Tourville," he went on, with a mysterious smile. "Hold tight!" He pushed the throttle open, and took off again into the evening sky, much to the surprise of the mechanics, who had run out to guide the machine into the hangar.

They were not long in reaching Tourville. Several officers were standing on the tarmac, and they watched their unusual visitor with interest. Rex taxied in, switched off his engine and climbed out of his cockpit, Tony following.

"Hallo, chaps!" he greeted the lounging officers as he unstrapped his helmet. "Have you got a fellow here named Treeves—Bill Treeves?"

A youth wearing the three stars of a captain came forward and shook his head.

"Never heard of him," he said.

"Oh, I just wondered!" replied Rex casually. "He is an
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How the Story Opened.

REX LOVELL and TONY FOSTER of the British Royal Flying Corps, are selected by MAJOR TREVOR for Secret Service work. Their first job is to fly over the German lines at night, land, and mine a railway tunnel. They are successful and Major Trevor then appoints them to the job of watching for German spies flying British machines.

(Now read on.)

old pal of mine, and I know he is in an S E squadron somewhere about. Well, how's things?"

"Oh, so, so!" responded the other. For a few minutes they talked of dog-fights, the new German circus opposite, the British high performance scout that was always coming out, but never did, and other trivialities of professional interest, but while they were talking Tony noticed that Rex was carefully taking stock of every S E on the tarmac.

"By the way, is your E.O. (Equipment Officer) about?" asked Rex suddenly.

"Yes; I think he's in the squadron office," was the reply.

"Thanks, I'll go and have a word with him," nodded Rex, with a beckoning gesture to Tony, and together they walked briskly to the group of buildings at the end of the hangars. As he expected, Rex found the Equipment Officer in the squadron office, talking to the C.O.

"Pardon my butting in, sir," he began, "but have you a machine on your strength numbered F 1743?"

The Equipment Officer raised his eyebrows.

"No," he said slowly; "but we had until about a month ago. That was the number of Hooston's machine, sir," he said, turning to the C.O. "He went west on a balloon straffing show, and is reported 'failed to return' in the records. What made you ask that?" he said suddenly, turning again to Rex.

Rex hesitated for a moment.

"Oh, an S E with that number on, and with your squadron markings, got me out of a tight corner. Just about a month ago it would be, and I thought I'd drop in and thank him. I'm sorry to hear he's gone west—bad show. Sorry to have troubled you. Thanks very much. Good-bye—good-bye, sir!"

The two boys saluted, and returned to the Bristol.

"Come on, laddie, let's get a move on," said Rex briskly.

"It will be dark before we are home if you don't hurry."

"Wait a minute. I don't get the hang of all this," protested Tony.

"Wait till we get back, and I'll tell you," replied Rex crisply, as he climbed into his cockpit. A mechanic sprang to the propeller, and a few seconds later they were in the air again on the return journey to Maranque.

Back in their quarters, after some hot tea and toast, Rex proceeded to explain his action.

"Now, listen, Tony," he began. "You remember seeing that S E? It must have been five miles over the line when we first saw it."

Tony nodded.

"Did you notice anything funny about it?"

"No, I can't say I did."

"Neither did I until after he had gone, and then I remembered that we didn't see any archie near him, which was a very odd thing. We were being archied like stink at the time. Why wasn't he being archied, that's what I want to know? And did you notice that, as soon as he joined us, archie faded out completely?"

Tony looked at Rex with an expression of enlightenment creeping over his face.

"Great Scott, you're right," he said, "and I never noticed it!"

"Well, I didn't realise it at the time; but after we turned away, they started arching us again, and then it suddenly struck me. It was a bit queer, to say the least of it," went on Rex. "And then, did you see him doing those turns for no apparent reason? Thinking it over, it occurred to me that it might be some sort of signal to the gunners not to shoot. But why should a British machine signal to German gunners? I decided to slip home and have another look at that bird if I could find him!" concluded Rex grimly.

"Who is Bill Treeves—the chap you asked for when we landed on the S E aerodrome?" asked Tony.

Rex made an impatient gesture.

"Goodness knows, I don't!" he grinned. "I've never heard of him in my life. But I had to make some sort of an excuse for landing, hadn't I? I couldn't just land on somebody else's aerodrome and pry about without so much as a 'by your leave.' You were right about the squadron markings, but 1743 wasn't there, as you saw, and I had a shrewd idea that it wouldn't be, either. You heard the rest. That machine went down in Germany a month ago. Who is flying it now? Tony, it begins to look to me as if we are on the track of something fishy at last."

"Where is that machine now, do you think?" asked Tony, a trifle pale.

"That's what I should like to know," replied Rex. "It's down over this side of the line somewhere, but it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack this time of night. We may know something more about it to-morrow morning. The fellow who flew it, whoever he is, Hun or Englishman, is not likely to try a night landing in an S E unless he's pretty desperate. It's my experience that people stick to a

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course they know. We know pretty well where he crossed over, and it is a thousand to one that he will go back the same way sooner or later. It may be to-morrow morning, and we shall be there to see if I'm right."

"Suppose he does come, what are we going to do?" asked Tony. "We daren't risk shooting down a British machine, anyway, not on the mere suspicion of fishy behaviour."

"Good heavens, of course not! Besides, what good would that do? We want a word with this pilot alive—dead men can't talk. We'll keep an eye on his movements, and our actions will depend on what he does. Well, laddie, let's get some sleep. Four-thirty in the morning suit you?"

"Suits me. Good-night, old boy!"

In the Hannoverana!

THE first streak of dawn found the Bristol fighter high in a sky of pale turquoise blue, heading for the scene of their encounter with the mysterious S E 5.

Below them the earth lay like a vast well of indigo and purple shadows. To the east the rim of the rising sun showed just above the horizon, tinging their wings and struts with brilliant orange glow.

It was bitterly cold. Tony crouched low in the icy blast of the slipstream of the propeller as he searched the sky around for the machine they sought. Eighteen thousand feet ticked up on the altimeter, and Rex snuggled a little lower in his cockpit. Once a high patrol of Sopwith Camels passed just below them, the leader waving a cheery good-morning with his gauntleted hand as he scoured the sky for hostile aircraft.

A blossom of black smoke stained the turquoise blue sky not far away, and warned them that they were on the edge of enemy country.

Rex climbed until the machine reached its ceiling, and then began casting around in wide circles.

"Here he comes!"

The words rose involuntarily to Tony's lips as his eyes suddenly fell on a gleaming speck far below. From their altitude it appeared to be crawling along the ground, but he knew from experience that it was not less than ten thousand feet above the desolate shell-torn No Man's Land that lay below.

A quick touch on the shoulder was sufficient to warn Rex that the quarry had perhaps been sighted, and the Bristol changed its course to watch the stranger. Was it the machine they sought, or was it not?

Rex had no means of knowing, and a close approach would certainly be sufficient to warn the pilot of the other machine, if he was the man they were after, to be wary in his actions. Still, it was unlikely that a scout would be heading out alone into enemy sky as the one below appeared to be doing. His actions would soon tell them if their surmise was correct.

Rex caught his breath sharply as a salvo of archie bracketed the lone machine.

Instantly the pilot did a complete turn and continued on his original course. The archie faded away, and no more took its place. Rex throttled back and commenced a flat glide in the wake of the other machine, hoping that he had not been seen. He had no desire to call attention to himself, though it was unlikely that they would be spotted at the height at which they were flying, unless archie got busy, when the bursts would certainly attract the other pilot's attention.

They were down to fifteen thousand feet now, well over the enemy's side of the line, and Rex was beginning to feel anxious as he scanned the sky for hostile machines, while Tony continued to watch the S E as they had planned. An aerodrome loomed up ahead, and Tony grabbed his map as he saw the other machine sinking rapidly towards it with the obvious intention of landing.

"He's going down!" yelled Tony in Rex's ear, and the pilot nodded.

"Keep your eye on him!" he bawled, and turning, headed back towards the British lines at full throttle.

"Did he land?" yelled Rex presently, as they crossed into the comparative security of their own line.

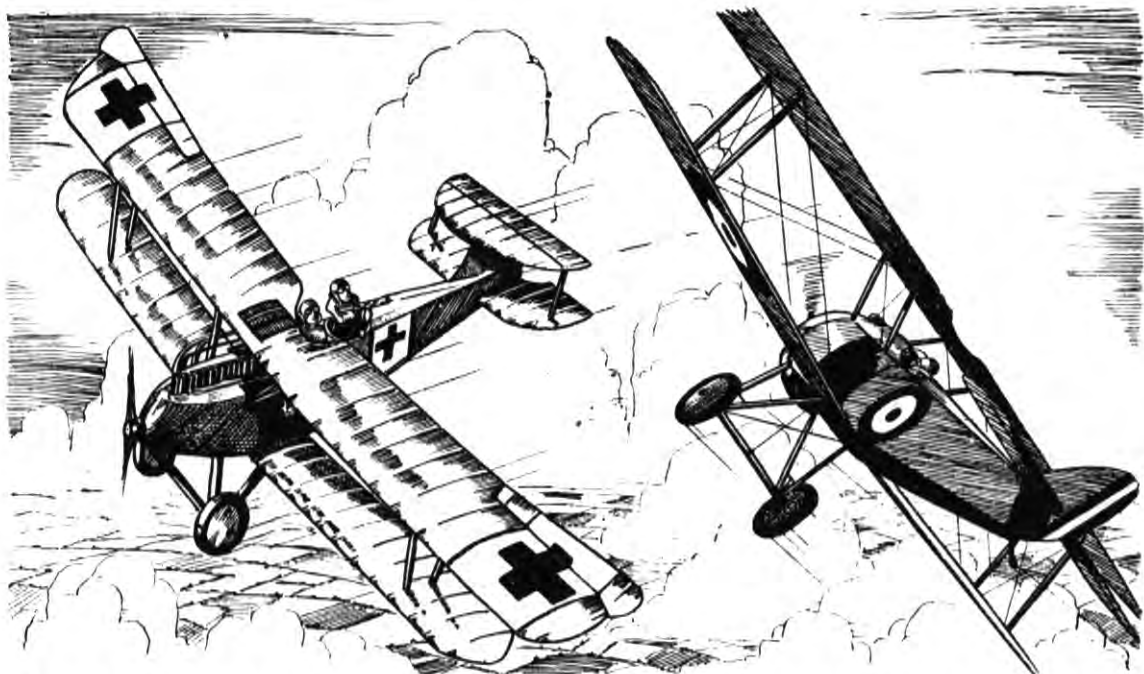
Tony nodded, and then crouched lower in his cockpit as Rex nosed down in a deep dive.

"What are you going to do?" he shouted, as their wheels touched ground on the aerodrome at Neuville.

"Come on, I'll show you!" snapped Rex tersely, as he switched off and climbed stiffly from his seat. "We'll beat this chap at his own game. I am going to fly over there in the Hannoverana."

Together they hurried to Major Trevor's office.

"No, sir; I've nothing to report," said Rex quickly, as the major rose to his feet. "It's just a hunch, that's all. I want to use the Hannoverana."



A Camel came zooming up at Rex and Tony in their German Hannoverana. They were being attacked and they could not fight back! Tony poured stream after stream of lead before and behind the British machine in the hope of scaring it off. Once, indeed, he actually hit it as the Camel made its famous right hand turn, and dived straight through his line of fire before he could release the triggers.

"It is in No. 3 shed," replied the major. "For goodness' sake be careful," he went on anxiously, "and don't get shot down by our own people."

"We shall have to chance that," replied Rex. On the threshold he paused, and then slowly came back into the room. "We might as well do the job properly," he announced. "Where are those Boche uniforms, sir?"

Major Trevor handed him a black suitcase without a word. As Rex reached the door the major called out to him, as if it was an afterthought.

"Whatever happens," he said, "your lips must be sealed as to where you got those uniforms. That is part of our code."

"Right, sir!" returned Rex crisply. "Come on, Tony!"

"My word, the major is no fool!" said Rex, as they took off their British uniforms and donned the others. "Have you noticed how he has had these uniforms altered to fit us—I expect he got copies of our clothing cards from the squadron. That's what I call foresight; but that is why he is where he is, I expect. He seems to have thought of everything—papers, and even identity discs. Flying coats, caps, goggles, the whole bag of tricks ready beside the machine. That's pretty good. Our greatest danger lies in getting to the lines," said Rex, as they walked over to the black-crossed machine. "By James, it would be no joke to be shot down by our own archie. Now, this is our plan."

As the two airmen faced themselves a faint smile crossed their faces.

"It is funny what a difference uniform makes," observed Rex. "It gave me quite a shock when I looked at you then—you look exactly like a Hun!"

"I'm not sure that you aren't one," replied Tony, grinning. "But, seriously, what are we going to do?"

"I am going to fly low down over that German aerodrome," answered Rex slowly. "I might even land."

"Land?"

Rex nodded.

"It is taking a desperate risk, I know, but we are playing a desperate game. If we do go down this is our story. You are Ernst Koepler; I am Adolf Wistmann. Those are the names on the papers in our pockets. We are of the 97th Army Corps Squadron. We have got off our course and have landed to ask the way. Get that firmly fixed in your head. That's all."

"It sounds a feasible tale," admitted Tony. "But I'll tell you straight that this idea of landing gives me a funny feeling in the tummy."

"I expect we shall get used to that," said Rex, in a matter-of-fact voice. "If there is any talking to be done

you'd better leave it to me, although the less we say the better."

Under the Double Eagle.

THE Hannoverana was not a difficult machine to fly, as Rex soon discovered when they were in the air. He did not head straight towards the lines, because he knew that archie would be particularly bad there, but climbed to the limit of the machine's performance, ready to dive for the line at a moment's notice.

Groups of white archie bursts soon began to gather around them. At five thousand feet they were getting dangerously near, and Rex waited no longer.

Turning towards the lines, he roared across, still followed by the persistent gunners. He looked around to make sure that Tony was unhurt, and smiled as the archie smoke died away behind them.

Suddenly the smile gave way to an expression of puzzled surprise. Tony had grabbed his guns, but released them again with a gesture of utter helplessness. The rattle of a machine-gun reached his ears, and he whirled sharply to ascertain the cause. A Camel was zooming up at them, its twin guns belching streams of orange flame. He understood Tony's action at once. They were being attacked and they dare not shoot back. An ominous flack-flack told him that the Camel's bullets were ripping through the wood and canvas of the fuselage behind him. He flung the stick over and kicked out his foot in a vertical bank, and then sent a stream of tracer across the nose of their aggressor. The Camel swerved so violently that Rex suspected that the pilot was a new man to the game and prayed that he would not press the attack right home.

His hopes were without foundation, for the Camel pilot had evidently made up his mind that this was an opportunity not to be missed. Bullet holes through his planes showed Rex that the Camel pilot was making good shooting, and he knew that unless something happened soon a bullet would hit one or the other of them. Tony was pouring burst after burst before and behind the scout. Once, indeed, he actually hit him as the Camel made its famous right hand turn and dived straight through his line of fire before he could release the triggers. The Camel dropped a little farther behind, but did not relax the ferocity of its attack.

(Rex and Tony are in a pretty tight corner—they are attacked but they can't shoot back! Look out for thrills in next week's gripping instalment of this splendid story.)

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THE TAMING OF THE TYRANT!

(Continued from page 24.)

And Figgins, who seemed made of iron, took a firm grip on Kerr's arm, and ran along helping him. Aided by the grip of Figgins, Kerr put on another spurt, running with teeth clenched hard, and lights dancing before his eyes.

D'Arcy lost his footing for a moment in the slippery mud, and reeled, pushing against Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell staggered and flopped bodily into the water.

"Bai Jove, I'm sowwy!"

Tom Merry's head came up, his face disfigured with mud. "Go it!" he managed to grasp. "Never mind me—catch them! Run!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And D'Arcy, scrambling from the water, broke into a rapid run on the track of the New House hares.

Tom Merry, who was half choked and blinded with water and mud, dragged himself out of the ditch, and reeled exhausted against a tree. After a moment or two he resumed the run, but he knew that he was out of it now. At the finish, all depended upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The honour of the School House was in the hands of the swell of St. Jim's.

The pack, as they came running up hopelessly behind, could see what passed. Figgins and Kerr were in the road now, running for the gates of St. Jim's. There was a crowd of fellows there, watching them come. Kildare and Darrell and Monteith and other Sixth Formers in the crowd shouted encouragement. It had been a splendid run, and it was a fine finish.

But even yet the end was uncertain.

Arthur Augustus, with his monocle flying behind him and an extremely determined expression upon his features, was running his hardest. And the swell of the School House, when he chose, was a fine runner.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Put it on, Figgins!"

"Dear me, Figgins appears to be running away from someone!" said a youth with a big forehead and a large pair of spectacles. "What is the matter?"

But nobody answered Skimpole. They were all greatly interested in the close finish of that great run.

Skimpole blinked at the crowd in the gates, and blinked at the runners. He did not know that a paper chase was on and he was too short-sighted to see how matters stood. But Skimpole, the freak of St. Jim's, was good-natured to a fault. It was clear to him that Figgins was running away from somebody, and he thought at once of the Grammarians.

He wondered why the other fellows did not go to the rescue; but that did not prevent him from going to the rescue himself. He ran out of the crowd at the gate.

There was a roar.

"Clear the way!"

"Get aside!"

Skimpole blinked round in amazement. Figgins and Kerr ran right into him, and, too utterly fagged to sustain the impact, they rolled in the dust of the road. The next moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was sprawling over them. Skimpole sat in the road and blinked.

"Dear me! What has happened?"

"Bai Jove, I've caught you!"

"Caught us!" spluttered Figgins, through a mouthful of dust. "You couldn't catch one half of us! It was that ass!"

"Really, Figgins—"

"You—you—"

"I trust I have not inconvenienced you in any way, Figgins," said Skimpole, blinking at him. "I saw you running, and came to the rescue."

"Oh, jump on him somebody!"

"Bai Jove, you are an awful ass, Skimmy! You have mucked up the win at the vevy finish! Of course, I should have caught him, anyway!"

"Rats!" said Figgins.

Tom Merry came panting up.

"Well done, Gussy! It wasn't your fault that Skimmy was the only one in at the death. Will somebody kindly take Skimpole into a quiet corner and suffocate him?"

"Bai Jove, the uthah ass ought to be suffocated, or something! Of course, I had pwactically caught these boundahs."

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Figgins—"

"Well, I do—whole tribes of 'em!"

"Then if I were not so exhausted I should certainly admintah a feahful thwashin'. Undah the cires—"

"If you call this a win, Tom Merry—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"It's all right, we don't. We'll call it a draw."

"Well, that's only fair," said Figgins. "I admit that it was a near thing, and we'll run it over again with you with pleasure."

"Bai Jove, I'm wendy, any time!" said D'Arcy.

"I'm jolly well going to get a wash and a feed!" said Tom Merry, going into the gateway. "If you chaps turn up in my study in a quarter of an hour you will hear of something to your advantage."

And they turned up; and they enjoyed a feed that made Fatty Wynn, when he heard of it, wish he had stayed in to the finish of Tom Merry's paper-chase.

THE END.

(There's a big surprise in store for Tom Merry & Co. when Harry Noble comes to St. Jim's in next week's ripping yarn, "THE COMING OF 'KINGAROO'!")

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