

"THE COMING OF 'KANGAROO'!"

THIS WEEK'S RIPPING LONG COMPLETE
YARN OF TOM MERRY & CO. OF ST. JIM'S!

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

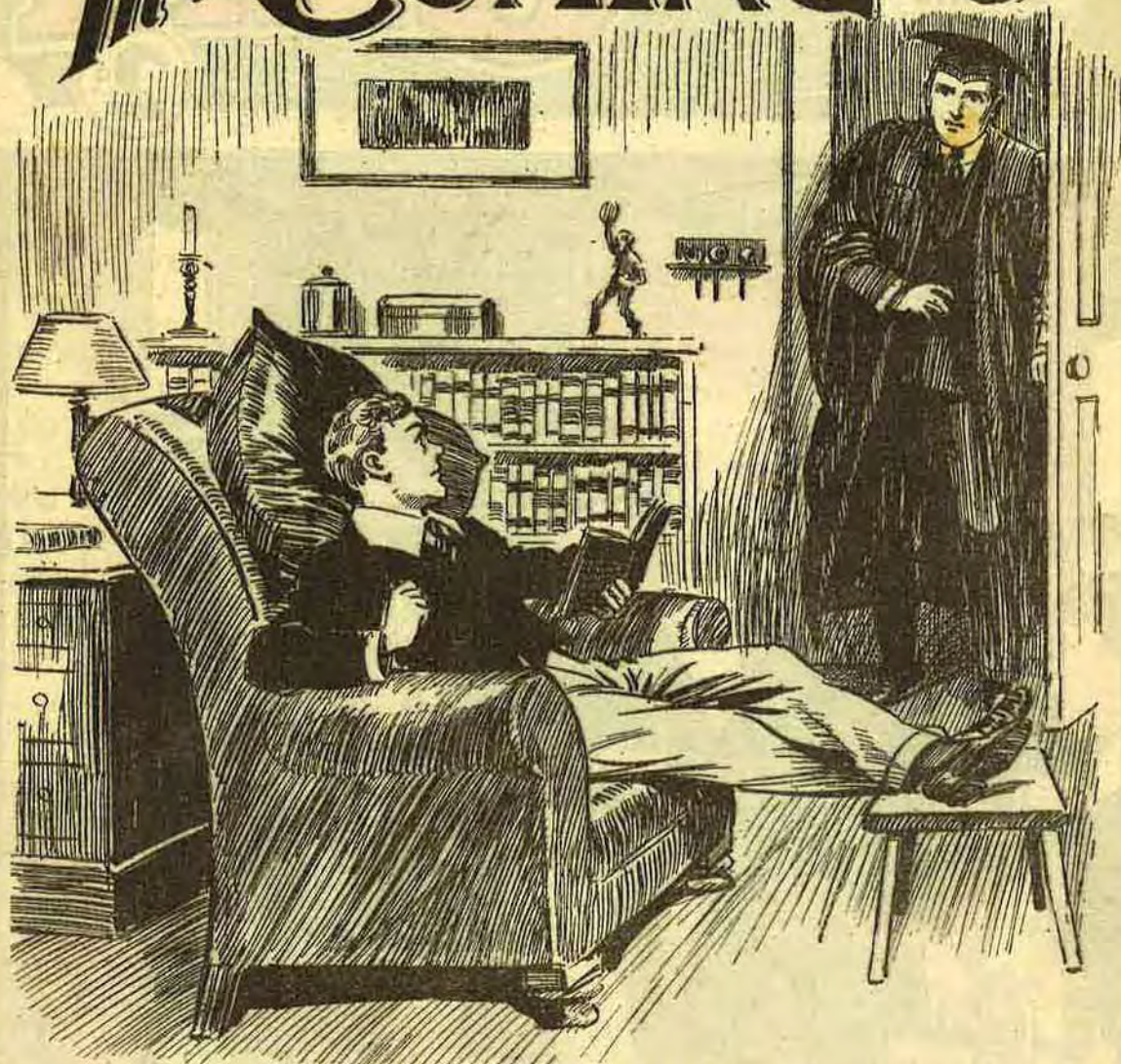
The GEM

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GREAT KANGAROOS! THE NEW BOY FROM AUSTRALIA IS HERE!

The COMING of



Harry Noble comes to St. Jim's from "down under"—but the Australian New Boy is very soon "one up" on Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 1. Planning a Welcome!

"**N**OBLE!"
"Yes, that's the new kid's name."

"Where does he come from?"

"Australia."

"I say, deah boys—"

"And he arrives this afternoon," went on Jack Blake of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's, ruthlessly interrupting Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I had it from Kildare, who had it from Mr. Railton, who had it from the Head."

"I say, deah boys—"

"His train gets in at the village station at three o'clock," said Blake. "As it's half-holiday to-day, kids, I was think-

ing—"

"Do you only do your thinking on half-holidays?" asked Tom Merry politely.

"Ass! As it's a half-holiday to-day, I was thinking that we might get up a party to meet the chap at the station, and give him a sort of welcome. He comes a long way."

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Will you ring off, Gussy?" demanded Blake, turning upon his insistent chum. "I tell you we're busy. This chap Noble—"

"But that's just what I was goin' to speak about, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form, "and, undah the cires, Blake, I uttably wefuse to wing off!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Let Gussy go ahead. I can see that he's got some scheme for giving the new kid an ovation."

"As a mattah of fact, that's just what I was thinkin' of,"

MEET HIM BELOW—YOU'LL LIKE HIM! HE'S FULL OF PEP!

KANGAROO!

By
Martin Clifford.

said D'Arcy. "You see, I have been thinkin' it out while you asses here have been talkin'—"

"Well, go on," said Blake resignedly. "Get it over!"
"I wufuse to get it ovah. Pway give me your attention, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, carefully polishing his eyeglass, and then jamming it into his right eye. "I wegard this as an important mattah. I twust that ewevy gentleman pwesent agwees with me?"

All the gentlemen present nodded. There were half a dozens of them—Tom Merry and Monty Lowther and Manners of the Shell Form, and Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries of the Fourth—D'Arcy's own Form. In spite of the occasional friction between the Shell and the Fourth the youngsters were on excellent terms, and just now they were putting their heads together upon an important subject—that of extending a fitting welcome to the new boy from over the sea.

"Undah the cires," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as an impewative duty on our part to give this new chap a welcome. We don't know him, and I admit that it is wathah difficult to meet and welcome a chap you haven't been intwoded to. But, under the cires, we have no othah wesource."

"It's a jolly good idea," said Blake meditatively. "We can go down to the station in a body to meet this chap Noble—"

"Hallo, here's Figgins! 'Ware New House cads!"

And Tom Merry & Co., all belonging to the School House at St. Jim's, were on their guard at once as Figgins & Co. of the New House came running up, for the warfare between the two Houses at St. Jim's seldom slept, and when it did it was liable to waken more lively than ever at any moment.

The School House fellows doubled their fists in a business-like way, and stood prepared to wipe Figgins & Co. off the face of the earth.

But the three juniors of the New House were not on the warpath.

Figgins waved his hand and grinned as he came up, and Fatty Wynn and Kerr, his chums, turned on friendly smiles.

"It's all right," said Figgins cheerfully. "Don't be afraid."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"We're not going to hurt you," said Kerr.

As there were seven of the School House fellows, and only three of the New House, this assurance was hardly needed, and it put the School House backs up at once.

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Here, collar the wasters, and wipe up the ground with them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hold on!" said Figgins. "Fax! We haven't come over here for a row."

"What do you want, then?" asked Blake suspiciously.

"You're jolly near getting a thick ear, anyway, my son."

"It's about the new chap."

"What new chap?"

"The kid from Australia," said Figgins, becoming serious.

"I suppose you know there's a new kid from Australia coming to school this afternoon? It's not settled yet whether he's going into the School House or the New House, I hear, or into the Fourth Form or the Shell, so it's really a thing we can unite upon the matter. I think a chap coming such a jolly long way ought to have some sort of welcome."

"Another case of great minds running in grooves," said Tom Merry. "That's just what we've been talking over."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good egg," said Figgins. "Then we'll go Co. over it. A lot of fellows meeting him at the station will make him feel home-like, you know, and—"

"And a big feed when he gets to St. Jim's," said Fatty Wynn. "That's the most important part of the programme. I was thinking of a whip round to raise the funds, and we could leave an order at the tuckshop before going to the station. He's bound to be hungry. I know I always get jolly hungry myself in this April weather."

"Trust Fatty to think of that," grinned Blake.

"Well, isn't it an important point?" demanded Fatty Wynn. "I believe in being hospitable to a chap coming from a great distance. And, besides, we can have a bit of a feed ourselves at the same time. It will do us good."

Tom Merry laughed.
"Fatty's idea isn't a bad one," he said. "Make it a whip round. Gussy is not allowed to contribute more than a thousand guineas."

"Weally, Tom Merry—"
"There's my little bit," said Blake, tossing two shillings into the Panama hat Figgins held out for contributions. "Go ahead, kids. No restrictions. Treasury notes preferred, silver accepted, coppers not refused. Anything smaller than a farthing will not be taken."

"I twust," said D'Arcy, looking round—"I twust that if I make a more considewable contwibution, you will undahstand that it is miewly fwom a desiah to have a weally fittin' weception awwanged for our fellow-citizen fwom ovah-seas. I twust you will not considah me capable of twyin' to throw othah contwibutions into the shade."

"Certainly not!" grinned Figgins. "The more you throw 'em into the shade the better we shall like it!"

"You can throw the other contributions into the shade, and your own into the hat," suggested Lowther.

"Thank you, deah boys! I was weally quite suah that you would not misundahstand me," said D'Arcy graciously, and he tossed a pound note into the hat. "I have had a fivah fwom my govannah to-day, and so I am weally quite wiah just at pwesent."

"Any more coming on?"

"I've only got ninenpence," said Herries, fishing out his worldly wealth, and looking at it doubtfully. "And I've got to get Towser some dog biscuits out of that. Young Wally's mongrel has been wolfing my biscuits. You can shove in half-a-crown for me, Gussy, if you like."

"Certainly, deah boy!"

There was quite a collection in the hat when it had passed round.

Fatty Wynn collected it up and counted it.

"One pound ninenet," he said. "Good! There'll be a ripping feed for this. If you chaps will excuse me, I'll cut off and see about the arrangements at once."

And he cut off without waiting for a reply.

CHAPTER 2. A Collision!

"Gussy!"

"Where's that ass?"

"Anybody seen Gussy?"

"We shall be late for the train."

"Gussy! Gussy!"

And still there was no reply.

The School House fellows had arranged to meet the New House trio at the school gates, to start for the village when they were ready. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came downstairs in good time, and they found Blake and Digby waiting on the steps of the School House. D'Arcy and Herries had not yet turned up. But Herries came racing up in a minute or two. He had only been to feed his bulldog, he explained. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still absent.

The half-hour had struck from the school clock, and it was time to meet Figgins & Co. at the gate, but still D'Arcy did not come. Jack Blake breathed hard through his nose.

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They had called him in the quad, and hallooed into the Common-room, and yelled up the stairs. And the voice of the swell of St. Jim's was not heard in reply.

"The young villain!" said Blake. "He's trying on a new coat, or a new hat, or something, and he's forgotten all about the train."

"Go and look for him," said Digby, sitting on the balustrade beside the steps and fanning himself. The afternoon was warm.

"Cut up to the study and see if he's there, Dig."

"H'm! Cut up to the study and see if he's there, Herries."

"I've just been to feed Towser."

"Now, don't be a slacker, old chap," said Blake admonishingly. "A little run upstairs isn't much for a chap."

"Then, why don't you go?"

"Oh, you see," said Blake, a little taken aback, "you see—er—you see— Well, if you come to that, I will go!"

"Then buzz off," said Tom Merry. "Hallo, Taggles, what are you going to do with that whitewash?"

Jack Blake ran into the House just as Taggles, the school porter, came up the steps with a pail of whitewash. The porter was not looking amiable. He never did when there was work in the air.

"Which I've got to wash over the ceiling of Master Knox's study," he growled. "The ink that was spilt in Master Merry's study has soaked through."

"Too bad," said Tom Merry sympathetically. "I'll tell you what it is, Taggy—you ought to have a tip."

Taggles brightened considerably.

"Which you was always a kind-hearted young gent, Master Merry."

"Yes, I cultivate that sort of thing," said Tom Merry blandly. "I think you ought to have a tip. Don't you chaps think that Taggles ought to have a tip?"

"Yes, rather!" said the chaps in chorus.

"You see, Taggles, it's unanimous. You ought to have a tip. If you meet anybody that's likely to give you a tip, we haven't any objection to your taking it. Good-bye!"

Taggles looked unutterable things. He moved on with the pail of whitewash on his shoulder, but as he went, Tom Merry slipped a shilling into his disengaged hand. And the face of Taggles was like an April day, sunshine after rain.

"Thank you kindly, Master Merry. You will have your little joke."

"Where's that ass Blake?" said Lowther. "We shall have Figgins & Co. coming to look for us."

Jack Blake was in Study No. 6, the famous apartment where the four chums of the Fourth lived and moved, and had their being. He had just entered it—on the run, rather breathless after dashing upstairs on a warm afternoon. Arthur Augustus was there, but too deeply preoccupied to notice Blake's entrance. And Jack Blake stared at him speechlessly for a moment.

The swell of St. Jim's was clad with even more than usual elegance. He was always, of course, elegant. The crease of his trousers, the set of his necktie, evoked envy even among the dandies of the Sixth. His fancy waistcoats were a dream, his dainty boots a vision. His gloves fitted as no other gloves in the School House did, and his collars were the highest and whitest in the Form. His silk hats were a poem in themselves.

The School House swell had donned his most ripping garments for the present occasion. Even Blake was dazzled a little, and he was accustomed to the elegance of his chum. D'Arcy was occupied now in trying on neckties; his garb was complete save for that. He had nine or ten neckties lying about him, and he was trying on a pink one as Blake stared at him.

He watched the effect out of his right eye, that being the optic that was assisted by the monocle, and shook his head slowly.

"Hardly the thing, bai Jove!"

Jack Blake burst out as D'Arcy laid the necktie down and selected another.

"Gussy! Ass! Duffer! Come on!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We're waiting for you, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Come on!" roared Blake, seizing him by the arm.

"You are keeping us waiting. Come on, I tell you!"

"Yaas; but I've forgotten my tie-pin."

"Leave it behind."

"Imposs, deah boy! I should nevah have forgotten it. It was entirely due to your huwyrin' me. I suppose you don't want me to meet a new chap without a tie-pin? Fway welaase me, Blake. I shan't be more than a few minutes puttin' in a tie-pin."

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"Come on!" said Blake, dragging D'Arcy towards the lower stairs.

"I wefuse to come on! I—"

"This way, duffer!"

"Welaase me, or I shall lose my tempah and stwike you, Blake. I—"

"Come on!"

Blake exerted his strength, and dragged his chum forcibly downstairs. D'Arcy struggled, but he had to go, and they went down with a run that was nearly a fall.

As ill-luck would have it, Taggles had just got half-way up with the pail of whitewash on his shoulder.

There was no possibility of avoiding the collision. Right into Taggles went the two rushing juniors, and the pail of whitewash toppled off his shoulder, and came in a great wave upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

There was a shriek that might have been heard across the quadrangle.

The empty pail clattered down the stairs. Blake had sprung aside in time to escape the flood; D'Arcy had had the full benefit of it.

The wonderful garments of the swell of St. Jim's had disappeared under the whitewash. He looked like a miller, only more so.

"My heye!" said Taggles, clinging to the banisters. "My heye! More of your tricks. I'll report yer!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'll report yer! 'Elp!"

"Come on!" whispered Blake.

He caught D'Arcy by the arm, and rushed him out of the School House, leaving Taggles to deal with the upset whitewash as best he could. And in the sunlight a roar of laughter greeted the swell of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 3.

Off to the Station.

"RIPPING!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bravo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! My clothes are ruined! I feel vewy uncomfy! Bai Jove, I weward this as absolutely wotten!"

"Ripping!" repeated Tom Merry enthusiastically. "Was this Gussy's own idea or yours, Blake?"

"Eh? What?"

"This idea of going to meet the new chap in fancy dress, I mean. Gussy's made up as a miller, isn't he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am not made up as a millah, Tom Mewwy. That beast Blake has wun me into that ass Taggles, and I am smothahed with howwid whitewash!"

"Well, come on!" said Blake. "There's no time to lose!"

"I twust you do not expect me to come like this, Blake."

"We shall miss Noble!"

"I should be sowwy to miss Noble, but I cannot come like this. I shall have to go and bath and change my beastlay clothes, you know. You chaps can wait!"

"Can we?" said Monty Lowther. "Come on!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Blake. "We can't miss the new chap, after getting ready to go and meet him. You can follow on your bike."

"Oh, vewy well!"

"I don't see why Gussy can't come as he is," said Manners. "The new chap would take it as a compliment if he came!"

"I should be vewy sowwy to disappoint the new chap, Mannahs, but I should uttaly wefuse to come as I am," said D'Arcy. "Fway go on, and I will follow as soon as I am weady."

And the swell of St. Jim's, dripping with whitewash, hurried into the House.

The juniors, chuckling, ran down to the gates, where Figgins & Co. were waiting, and growing impatient.

"Call this keeping an appointment?" demanded Figgins aggressively.

"Sorry! Gussy had an accident."

"Isn't he coming?"

"He's following on—perhaps! Let's get off!"

And they got off.

In Rycombe Lane they broke into a trot. It was a good walk to the village, and they had no time to spare. They took the short cut and arrived at the station five minutes before the train was due.

"Jolly good!" said Tom Merry, as they went into the shady station, red and warm from the trot in the sun. "We've done it all right—the train's not in yet." He turned to the porter. "Can we go on the platform, George? We've got a special friend we've never seen before coming from Australia this afternoon."

The porter, scenting a tip, gave the juniors permission.

They went on the platform. Jack Blake was looking thoughtful.

"Kildare said it was the three train," he remarked. "The kid must have come to Wayland by the express from London, and, according to the time-table, that could catch an earlier train when it gets in early. Still, I suppose the kid from Australia wouldn't know that. It's all right!"

"No sign of him here, anyway," said Lowther, looking round.

There was only one fellow on the platform beside themselves. He was a lad of about fifteen, of a sturdy frame which seemed to be cramped into very uncomfortable clothes.

He stood with his back to the juniors, negotiating with an automatic machine, and they only carelessly noted that he was in tight-fitting Eltons, and wore a silk hat on the back of his head.

Tom Merry looked up the line.

"H'm! Yes!"

The boy at the automatic machine looked round curiously as the juniors talked. He showed a handsome, strong-featured face, with keen, alert eyes that had a glow of good humour in their depths.

A slight smile flickered over his sunburnt face as he looked at the juniors from St. Jim's. Then he turned and walked away up the platform.

"His name's Noble," said Digby reflectively. "I've heard that name before—in connection with Australia, too."

Tom Merry laughed.

"You're thinking of Noble, the famous Test cricketer, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, that's it! Do you know what this chap's front name is, Blake?"

"Yes—Harry!"

"I dare say he's a relation of the cricketer," said Herries thoughtfully. "I'll ask him."



Right into Taggles rushed Blake and D'Arcy, and the pail of whitewash toppled off the porter's shoulder and came in a great wave over Arthur Augustus. "Yaroo! Wow!" D'Arcy let out a yell that might have been heard across the quadrangle. "My heye!" gasped Taggles. "I'll report yer!"

"Not in sight yet," he said, sitting down on the nearest seat. "That's all right! I suppose he's certain to come by this train?"

"I suppose so," said Blake. "Blessed if I shall know him, though, if there happened to be any other kids on board. Still, I suppose there'll be something distinctive about him."

"Of course, he'll have some sort of free-and-easy costume, I should say, with a sombrero hat or something," said Manners, rather vaguely.

"Do they wear sombreros in Australia?"

"Blessed if I know—I suppose they wear something. I imagine this kid Noble as a free-and-easy sort of chap, with a broad-brimmed hat and big boots—"

"And a belt," said Lowther.

"Yes, a belt certainly," agreed Tom Merry. "Leather trousers, very likely."

"I wonder if he will wear a collar?"

"Well, coming to the school, I suppose he would."

"Ha, ha, ha! You may get a dot on the nose if you do!"

"Hullo! Here comes the train!" exclaimed Figgins.

The train steamed into the station. There were a good many passengers apparently. But the juniors looked in vain for a sight of the Australian boy. The youth they had pictured to themselves did not get out of the train. There were several boys, but not one that could be imagined to be Noble.

Blake grunted with dissatisfaction.

"The silly ass has missed the train!"

"I suppose a Cornstalk would take some time to get used to our time-tables," grinned Lowther. "We've had our trot for nothing."

"Beastly!" said Kerr. "We can't wait for the next train!"

"May as well be off!" growled Blake. "These two trains come in close together, and then there isn't another for

three quarters of an hour. We could get over to Wayland on our bikes in the time, if we liked."

"Oh, let's get off! The chap's a silly ass!"

CHAPTER 4.

Some Reception!

HAD Tom Merry & Co. been aware that the lad who had been standing by the automatic machine on the platform was none other than Harry Noble himself, they would have been surprised, but they would have been even more surprised if they had followed him up the platform and been able to see what he was doing.

Harry Noble turned into the parcel's office, and went straight up to a man in gaiters and breeches who was talking to the clerk.

"Hallo, young sir!" said the man in gaiters. "Anything I can do for you?"

"Yes," said Noble, "there is. You know I got pretty friendly with that kangaroo which you are taking to the private zoo, on the journey down from London?"

"You certainly did, sir," replied the man. "He seemed to take to you somehow."

"Well, look here, I want you to lend him to me for a few minutes. There are some fellows outside I want to play a joke on. How about it?"

"Well, I don't know as I ought—" began the man; but stopped short as Noble slipped five shillings in his hand.

"All right, sir—I'm game. He's in here."

Noble followed the man into an inner room in which a large kangaroo was chained up. The animal seemed pleased to see Noble, who spoke to it encouragingly. Two minutes later Noble left the parcel's office arm-in-arm with the kangaroo, which was carrying his bag.

"By Jove!"

"My aunt!"

"My only pyjama hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. fairly gasped as they saw the young Australian coming towards them with his strange pet.

"Help!" yelled the ticket collector, leaping wildly backwards as Noble calmly walked past him.

"Are you kids from St. Jim's?" asked Noble, as if there was nothing strange in a fellow walking round with a kangaroo.

"Er—yes!" gasped Tom Merry, who was too flabbergasted to take exception to being addressed as a kid.

"Very nice of you to meet me! Let's get along, shall we?"

"You're not taking that thing to St. Jim's, are you?" asked Blake; but before the Australian new boy could answer Manners broke in:

"Look here, Tom, this is the fellow who was on the platform when we arrived! He hadn't got this animal with him then!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Noble.

"What are you cackling at, you dummy?" growled Lowther.

"Well, you see," said Noble quietly, "I heard you talking on the platform, and you seemed to expect something rather strange, so I thought I wouldn't disappoint you. I borrowed this animal from a fellow who is taking it to a private zoo near here. Now, if you're satisfied I'll take it back to him!"

"Well, no harm was meant," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've come here to meet you, kid. Sort of welcome to the homeland, you know."

"And it's jolly good of you!" said the new boy, holding out his hand. "I've found people treat me very decently since I landed on the old spot."

"The old what?"

"Spot," said Noble—"old country, you know. It's a nice little place, isn't it?" he added, looking round.

"The village, do you mean?"

"No—England."

The juniors of St. Jim's looked at one another curiously. It had never struck them before that their native land might be regarded as a spot. And to hear the new fellow speaking of England as they might have spoken of a field or a farm was decidedly curious. Noble spoke quite seriously; but Tom Merry had a slight suspicion that the lad from Victoria was "pulling his leg."

"Yes; it's a decent little show," said Monty Lowther sarcastically. "Of course, you've got backyards in Melbourne as big as England, haven't you?"

"Well, yes, roughly speaking," assented the new boy. "Do you find it at all difficult to breathe here?"

"Breathe!" said Tom Merry, staring. "Difficult to breathe?"

"Yes," said Noble seriously. "After Australia it seems a bit tight. But I dare say you get used to it."

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Yes; you'll get used to it in time," he said. "There's some more things you'll get used to in time. Come on, kid, and we'll get to the school. I suppose you came in by the earlier train, after all?"

"Yes; and I hung on here, as I understood there was to be somebody to meet me. Where is St. Jim's?" asked Noble, as they left the station, after returning the kangaroo to its keeper.

"It's a walk down the lane. Have you seen to your box?"

"Yes; I've given it to the porter to send up to the school."

"That's all right. Come on, then."

There was no sign of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy yet. The juniors strolled into the High Street, and the Australian lad chatted freely as they walked towards St. Jim's. There was a complete self-possession about the new fellow that was very taking and rather surprising to the St. Jim's juniors. He walked with a free and easy stride, and Tom Merry, a young athlete himself, noted the splendid development of his figure, and the width of his chest. The junior cricket captain of St. Jim's was already thinking that he had found a new recruit for the eleven.

Fatty Wynn slackened as they passed Mother Murphy's tuckshop.

"Hold on a minute, kids!" he exclaimed. "Here's—"

"Rats!" said Figgins. "There's a big feed ready at St. Jim's. Hold out for another ten minutes, Fatty!"

"I wasn't thinking of myself—"

"Of course not," said Lowther. "There's one thing about Fatty Wynn—he never does think much about grub. That's why he's so thin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wasn't thinking about myself," repeated Fatty Wynn obstinately. "I admit I do get jolly hungry in this April weather, somehow. But I was thinking of the new chap. He's had a jolly long journey, and he must be peckish."

"I had a lunch-basket in the train—thanks!" said Noble.

"Yes; but since then—"

"I had some chocolates on the station here—"

"Yes; but chocolates aren't much. Of course, it's your own business, but you can't be too careful. I believe in a fellow keeping himself fit, and there's only one way—by keeping up a good supply of grub. I know that from experience."

"Oh, let's go on, for goodness' sake!" said Manners. "You'll have plenty to eat when we get back to St. Jim's."

The party reached the gates of St. Jim's at last. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had not come into sight, and the juniors wondered where he was. Possibly he was still scraping off the whitewash. Gore of the Shell was standing just within the gates talking to Mellish of the Fourth.

Blake hailed him.

"Have you seen Gussy?" he asked.

Gore shook his head. Gore wasn't on good terms with the chums of Study No. 6, but that was no reason why he shouldn't give a civil answer to a civil question. But Gore thought otherwise.

"No, I haven't," he said. "I don't know where the dummy is. I heard he was going to the station to meet some new rotter."

"Oh, did you?" said Noble.

Gore glanced at him.

"Yes, I did," he replied. "Some cad from somewhere—Africa or Borneo, or somewhere at the end of the earth. Some nigger, I dare say."

Noble flushed a little.

He knew that Gore guessed that he was the new fellow, and was deliberately saying unpleasant things. That was Gore's way. He was the bully of the Shell, and he always made himself unpleasant to smaller boys.

Noble was a well-built lad, but he was not nearly as big as Gore, and did not look half so tough a customer as he really was.

"I hear that the new kid is from Australia," said Mellish, following Gore's lead, as he usually did. "His name's Noble—son of a bushranger or something."

"That's it," said Gore. "Fancy having a giddy bushranger at St. Jim's! You fellows had better lock up your trunks."

"And look out for your pockets," said Mellish, with a snigger.

Noble's eyes flashed.

"Oh, shut up, you cads!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in disgust.

"Rats! Have you bought up the quad yet, and issued an edict that people mustn't speak in it?" sneered Gore. "As for the new kid—"

Noble stepped quickly up to him.

"I'm the new kid," he said quietly.

Gore looked him up and down.

"Oh, then you know my opinion of you," he said, shrugging his shoulder. "I warn you not to begin any tricks!"

"I'm Harry Noble," said the new boy. "You're a rotten outsider, I think."
Gore stared at him, rather taken aback.
"Eh? What's that?"
"And a cad," said Noble calmly.
"Eh?"
"And a worm!"
"Why, you young rotter, I'll—"
"Rats!"

Gore said no more. He clenched his fists and simply leapt at the new junior.

Noble met him with a smile on his face and a gleam in his eyes. Where Gore's fists went the Shell buddy hardly knew—they were knocked away somewhere—and then Noble's right came out and upward. And then it seemed to Gore that a particularly big and powerful battering-ram had caught him on the chin, and he went on

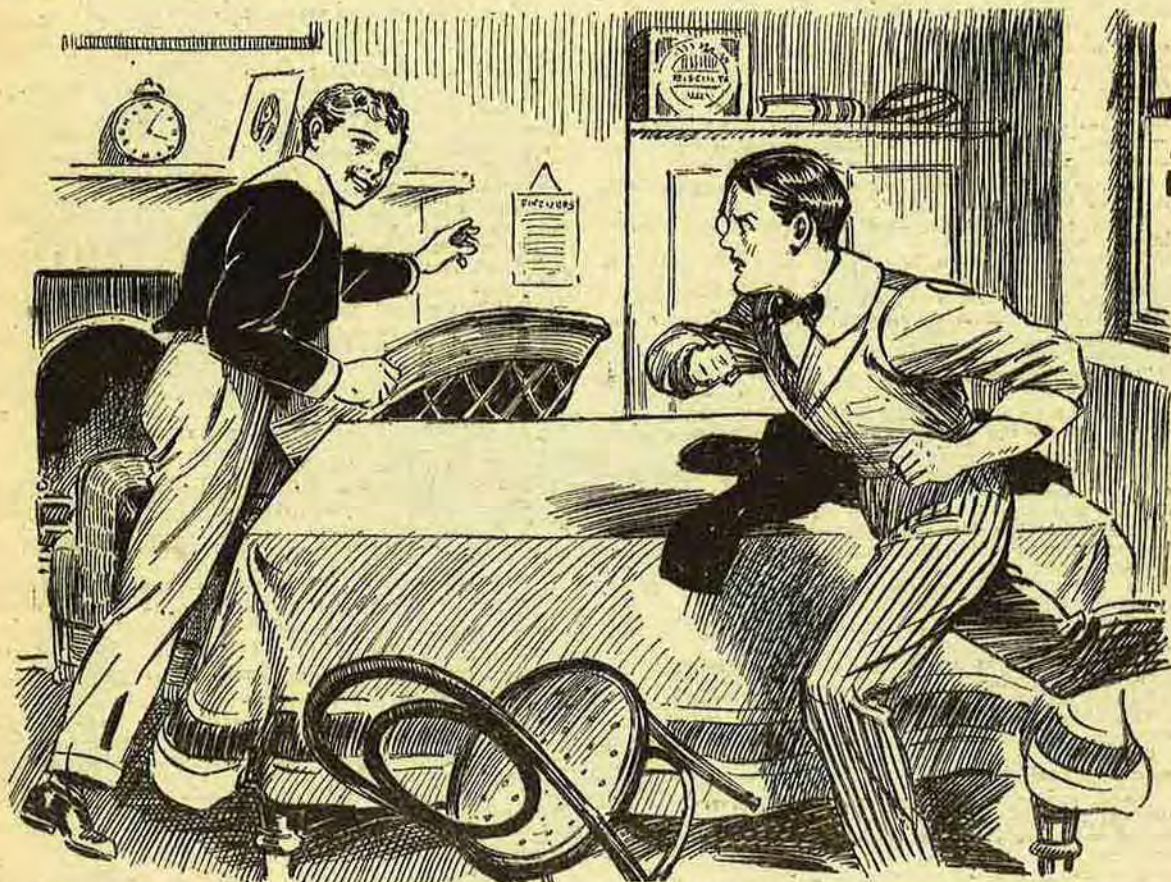
anger, and his glance was not pleasant as it turned upon Mellish.

"You seem to see something awfully funny about it," he remarked.

"Well, it was funny!" giggled Mellish. "You were going to walk over the new kid—and he only had to give you one lick! And then—Ha, ha, ha! His fist might have been a steamhammer by the way you went down."
"As it's so funny, you might like a taste yourself!" sniggered Gore unpleasantly.

And before Mellish could dodge, he let out his left, and the Fourth-Former rolled on the ground.

Gore, feeling somewhat relieved in his mind, walked away. He was still nursing his jaw with one hand. There was an ache there that was not likely to depart for some time. Gore felt vengeful, but he did not follow the Australian. He had had enough.



"Pway stop where you are, you wottah! How can I thwash you if you keep on wunnin' away?" exclaimed D'Arcy breathlessly. "Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Noble. "Bal Jove!" D'Arcy rushed on, determined to get to closer quarters, but the Cornstalk retreated round the table.

his back in the quad, gazing upward dizzily at the sky, and seeing more stars in broad daylight than anybody else ever saw by night.

CHAPTER 5.

A House Question!

GORE lay for a full minute on his back in the quadrangle, blinking dizzily up at the sunny sky. When his shattered wits collected again he sat up, still blinking.

He had an ache in his lower jaw as if a mule had kicked him there; and strange lights were still dancing before his eyes.

Noble was walking away with Tom Merry & Co., and was already at a distance. Only Mellish was left with the bully of the Shell, and Mellish was standing with his hands in his pockets looking down at him, and grinning.

"My—my hat!" gasped Gore. "What—what was that? I believe my jaw's broken!"

"It looks all right," said Mellish. "I dare say it feels rather busted. Ha, ha, ha!"

Gore staggered to his feet. His brow was dark with

Tom Merry & Co. were regarding their new friend with some surprise. Strong and well-built he certainly was. But he did not look as if he could put so much force into a blow. There was more, in fact, in the lad from Melbourne than met the eye.

"Who was that chap?" asked Noble.

"Name's Gore," said Tom Merry. "He's a rotter! I say, kid, I'm sorry you should have a reception like that; but there are black sheep everywhere, you know. There aren't many chaps at St. Jim's like Gore. Where is that feed, Fatty?"

"It's at Dame Taggles, so far," said Fatty Wynn. "It's all ordered and ready, and I'm going to fetch it from the shop."

"Then buzz off and bring it to my study."

"Hold on," said Figgins. "I understood that the idea was to give a representative of a great colony a fitting reception. In that case, the feed ought to be held in the Cock House at St. Jim's."

"Exactly," said Tom Merry. "That's why I proposed the School House."

"Oh, come off! I don't object to you School House kids

doing a bit of bragging among yourselves, but before the new fellow from Kangarooland—

"Just so," said Kerr. "Under the circumstances, as Gussy says, I think the feed had better be held in the New House."

"We'll put it to the vote," said Monty Lowther.

"Rats!" Figgins was not likely to agree to that, as there were six School House fellows to three from the New House. "You know what Ibsen says—'The majority is always in the wrong.' You asses—"

"Whom are you calling asses?"

"You donkeys! You see—"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Great Scott!" said Noble. "What's all the row about? What does it matter which House you have the feed in?"

"You see," exclaimed Tom Merry, "our House—the School House—is the old original House; but a few years back a New House was put up—"

"A hundred and eleven years ago," howled Figgins, jealous for the age of his House.

"Well, that's only the other day," said Blake, "compared with the age of the School House. Our House was standing in the time of the Wars of the Roses, and earlier. You're only a spurious imitation—Ow!"

To have his House called a spurious imitation was a little too much for Figgins. He went for Blake, and gave him a tap on the nose that cut his speech short, and then they seized each other and began a kind of waltz.

"My hat!" said Noble, looking on in amazement. "Go it! Two to one on long legs!"

"Who are you calling long legs?" demanded Figgins, looking round suddenly.

"You, my son. Go it!"

"If you want a thick ear—"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You can't fight everybody at once, Figgins! If you kids will stop rowing—"

"Kids!"

"Yes, kids—if you New House kids will behave yourselves—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Kerr, and he gave Tom Merry a gentle tap on the nose. "There are harder ones where that came from."

The next moment Tom Merry was clasping Kerr in an affectionate embrace. They reeled into Figgins and Blake, and the four juniors sprawled on the ground. They rolled over almost at the foot of the School House steps, and, as luck would have it, Mr. Railton came down the steps at the same moment.

The School House master paused and looked at the sprawling juniors in surprise.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "What are you boys doing?"

Tom Merry sat up and rubbed his nose ruefully.

"I—I—I'm sitting down, sir."

"I can see you are sitting down, Merry. Stand up."

Tom Merry stood up, and the others followed his example. A faint smile lurked round Mr. Railton's mouth.

"I suppose this is another of your absurd House disputes!" he said severely.

"Well, not exactly, sir," ventured Tom Merry. "You see, sir, these New House cads—ahem, I mean, kids—have joined us to give a welcome to the new chap from Australia and—"

"And this is the way you are doing it?"

"Well—er—we—"

"I suppose this is a kind of ju-jitsu entertainment arranged for his amusement?"

"N-n-no, not exactly, sir—"

"Well, it had better cease. The quadrangle is not the place for it!" Mr. Railton looked at Noble. "You are the new boy?"

"Yes, sir," said Noble, raising his hat.

"I am glad to see you. Will you go into my study and wait for me there? Merry will show you the way."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Railton walked on, and the juniors entered the School House. Figgins and Blake looked at one another rather ruefully. Blake quietly wiped away a thin stream of crimson from his upper lip.

"Blessed if I know why you kids are always rowing!" said Tom Merry severely. "What a bad impression you're making on this kid! If you'd take example by us—"

"More rats!" said Blake. "Look here, as Railton is seeing about this kid, and not Ratty, it looks as if he is going to be a School House chap—"

"And in that case the feed ought to be in the School House," said Manners.

"Exactly."

"Well," said Figgins, "if you like frankly to admit that the New House is Cock House, I don't mind about the feed."

"Rats!"

"And many of 'em!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Hallo, kids!"

A youth with a smear of ink across one cheek, and another upon his collar, came down the passage, and thus familiarly greeted the heroes of the Fourth and the Shell.

It was D'Arcy minor of the Third Form, Arthur Augustus' younger brother.

"Is that the new chap?"

"That's me," said Noble.

Wally D'Arcy looked him up and down.

"Well, you look a decent sort," he remarked, with the charming candour of the Third Form. "We've been thinking of getting up a sort of feed in honour of you, you know—a kind of welcome—and if you like to come along to the Third Form Room—"

Noble laughed.

"You're awfully good!" he said. "But I'm already booked. These chaps have been kind enough to ask me to a feed."

D'Arcy minor chuckled.

"I shouldn't depend too much on them," he remarked. "They're hardly up to our Form, and something generally goes wrong with their schemes. You'd better come along to the Third Form Room. Look here, we've timed it for half-past four, and if you look in about that time it will be all right. You can bring these chaps."

"Well, I'll remember," said Noble; and Wally nodded and walked off, whistling.

The lad from Melbourne looked after him, with a smile.

"Who's that young larrikin?" he asked.

"That's young Wally of the Third—Gussy's younger brother," said Tom Merry. "You haven't seen Gussy yet—he's the Beau Brummel of the Fourth. Blessed if I know where he's got to! He was coming down to the station with us, but he had an accident with some whitewash. Come along with me to Railton's study, kid—and you get the feed in my study, Wynn."

"To my study, Fatty," said Figgins.

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Oh, split the difference!" said Jack Blake. "Have it in the woodshed and stop arguing. My nose is simply pouring."

"Sorry!" said Figgins. "I didn't mean to hit you so hard—"

"It wasn't your fist, ass; it was the top of your fat head biffed it!" said Blake. "Never mind. Who says woodshed?"

"Woodshed!"

"Then that's settled."

And Tom Merry conducted the new boy to the House-master's study and left him there.

Juniors who had occasion to wait for a master in his study usually stood in respectful attitude, shifting from one leg to another if they became tired. That was apparently not the idea of the Cornstalk chum. He sat down in Mr. Railton's armchair and put his feet on a stool. Tom Merry surveyed him in mingled surprise and alarm.

"Will you have a cushion?" he asked sarcastically.

Noble nodded calmly.

"Yes, now you speak of it, it would be more comfy," he said. "Chuck one over!"

Tom Merry, dazed, tossed over a cushion, and the new boy put it behind his head. Then he fished a book out of his pocket and opened it.

"Well, you take the cake!" said Tom Merry, wondering what Mr. Railton would think when he came in and found the new boy in that extremely easy attitude. "When you're finished here, come to my study, will you?"

"Certainly! Where's your study?"

"In the Shell passage. Anybody will tell you. You'll find one or another of us there."

"Right you are."

And Tom Merry went out and closed the door. He went upstairs and found the other fellows in the corridor outside Study No. 6. Jack Blake was looking puzzled.

"Haven't you found Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake shook his head.

"No. The ass seems to have vanished."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. had gone to take the feed to the woodshed, and all of a sudden the three New House juniors were seen to come tearing up the stairs with wildly excited faces.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "Feed ready?"

"Ready?" howled Figgins. "No! It's gone!"

"Gone!"

"Yes!" said Fatty Wynn, almost in tears. "It's been raided!"

"Raided!" gasped Tom Merry.

"That's it! Mrs. Taggles had everything packed in the basket ready to be called for, as I instructed her. I told her somebody would call for it—"

"Well?"

"Well, somebody did, and she handed it to him—"

"Who was it?"

"Young Wally."

"Wally!" Tom Merry almost shouted the name. "Young Wally! Why, he's standing a feed in the Third Form Room!"

"Our feed!" shrieked Blake.

"Here, come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Let's get to

"Ahem!"

Noble lowered his book. He rose to his feet at once as he saw the Housemaster, with just a tinge of red in his sunburnt cheeks.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Railton again. "I trust you have made yourself quite comfortable, Noble?"

"Yes, sir, thank you."

"H'm!" Mr. Railton had not meant his remark to be taken exactly like that, but he passed it over. "It is not a custom here to make one's self quite at home in a master's study, Noble. However, let it pass. I am very glad to see you at St. Jim's. You do not look any the worse for your long voyage."

"I feel as fit as a fiddle, sir."

"Very good! Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, is not here at present, and until he returns I shall place you in



"Look out!" roared Lowther. But it was too late. Tom Merry's shoulder went through the glass of the bookcase, and there was a terrific smashing. The bookcase reeled under the shock and gave a wild lurch; a shower of books came shooting out. "My hat!" gasped Manners.

the Third Form Room before those young wasters scoff everything!"

And the juniors rushed off in hot haste. Only too well now they understood Wally's remarks when he gave his invitation to the Australian boy. He had calmly called at the tuckshop for the basket and carried it off. Fatty Wynn had been too late. But would Tom Merry & Co. be in time to save the feed?

CHAPTER 6.

Trouble!

"AHEM!"

Mr. Railton coughed slightly.

Noble was reclining in an easy attitude in the armchair. He had shifted his feet from the stool for additional comfort and placed them on the table. He had his book before his eyes, and so did not see Mr. Railton enter. The Housemaster stood regarding him for some moments before he coughed.

Tom Merry's study. You are already acquainted with Merry, I believe?"

"Yes, sir. A ripping chap."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"You are quite right, Noble. He is a very fine lad, and if you can gain his friendship it will be worth much to you in the school. Merry's study has already its full complement, but for the present you can be placed there. Dr. Holmes has not mentioned to me which House you will belong to, but you will know shortly. And now, please, if you are not too tired after your journey, we will have a little examination."

"Not at all, sir. I've had a rest."

Mr. Railton suppressed a smile, as he remembered the attitude of the new boy when he had entered the study. For the next half-hour Housemaster and junior were busy. Then Noble was dismissed, and he looked about for Tom Merry's study.

"In the Shell passage," he murmured. "The Shell seems THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,312.

to be a Form here, from what I can make out, so I suppose the Shell passage is where the Shell fellows hang out. Hallo, kid! Where's the Shell passage?"

It was Bernard Glyn of the Shell whom Noble called to Glyn, the lad from Liverpool, looked round.

"New kid?" he asked.

Noble nodded.

"Oh, you're Noble, of course!" said Glyn. "I've heard about you."

"My name's Harry Noble."

"Noble's good enough for me," grinned Glyn. "Come with me and I'll show you the way. I'm in the Shell. Which study do you want?"

"Tom Merry's."

"Here you are, then."

Glyn left the new boy at Tom Merry's door, and Noble tapped and entered. There was no one in the study. Noble looked round and crossed to the window. It gave a wide view of the old quadrangle, with its ancient elms glimmering in the sun, and the wide playing fields, where innumerable figures were busy at the summer game.

Noble's eyes gleamed at the sight. Like most Australians, he was keen on cricket, and a great player of the grand old game.

There was a Sixth Form practice match in progress, and Kildare was batting. Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, was bowling to him. Both bowling and batting were of the best, and the Cornstalk's look grew keenly appreciative. Eagerly watching the cricket, he did not turn from the window again until he heard a footstep in the study, then he looked round.

A junior had entered Tom Merry's study, and Noble looked at him with some surprise and great interest.

He had seen some well-dressed fellows already at St.

Jim's, but none quite like this junior. He did not know that it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, but it was.

The swell of St. Jim's had re-arranged himself in his best, in order to do full honour to the occasion. He was looking as spick-and-span as before the lamentable accident with the pail of whitewash, and he certainly was a picture. From the toes of his dainty, polished boots to the carefully parted hair on his head D'Arcy was really perfect.

As he saw the Australian he jammed his monocle into his eye and looked at him inquiringly. As he had not seen the Australian before he did not associate this fellow in his mind with the expected new boy. Like his chums, he expected to see some sort of a free-and-easy fellow in a broad hat.

"Pway can you tell me where Tom Mewwy is, deah boy?" he asked.

Noble shook his head.

"Nix. I came her to see him myself."

"Bai Jove! Where can he be?" said D'Arcy. "This is most annoyin'. Pewwaps you would like to wun away and look for him and tell him I am waitin' for him."

Noble grinned.

"And perhaps I wouldn't," he remarked. "You can do your own running about, I think."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Great Scott!" said Noble. "I wonder where it sprang from?"

"To what are you wewewin' as 'it'?" asked Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Yourself, my son. Are there any more at home like you?"

"I wegard that question as widiculous. I pwesume," said D'Arcy, his manner growing more stately. "I pwesume that you are some sort of a new boy?"

"Something of the sort," assented Noble.

"We are bein' simplay overwun by new boys this term," said D'Arcy. "I have been sewiously thinkin' of speakin' to the Head about it. I haven't done so yet, because—"

"Because he'd lick you?"

"Certainly not! I am turnin' it ovah in my mind. I twust you are not comin' into the Fourth Form. I don't like your looks vewy much."

"I am going into the Shell."

"Vewy good! Tom Mewwy is quite welcome to have you in his Form!" D'Arcy looked the Cornstalk up and down through his eyeglass. "I wegard you as wathah a wastah, deah boy! You lack the wespact that a new kid should natuwallly show to a seniah. I am vewy much your seniah in the length of time I have been at St. Jim's. You evidently do not know how to tweat your bettahs with pwopah wespact!"

"My-my hat!"

"I am afwaid you are a boundah, and I am vewy pleased you're not comin' into the Fourth. I am usually vewy select in my circle of acquaintances, not to say swaggah," explained D'Arcy.

"Have you ever been to the Zoo?" asked Noble, with an air of great interest.

D'Arcy looked surprised at the unexpected question.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then how did you get away again?"

The swell of St. Jim's turned pink.

"I wegard that as a wotten joke," he said. "I am not in the habit of accepitin' wotten wemarks fwom new kids. I should be sowwy to give you a feahful thwashin'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah in that wemark. I am sowwy to be compelled to give you a feahful thwashin', but I have no alternative. I should be greatly obliged if you would kindly wemove your jacket."

The Australian grinned.

In spite of D'Arcy's truculent manner there was something about him that Noble rather liked, and he didn't want trouble. But D'Arcy was in earnest. He took off his jacket, folded it carefully, and laid it on the table. Then he pushed back his cuffs.

"Are you weady, deah boy?"

"Ready for what?"

"To be feahfully thwashed."

"Ha ha, ha! No, I don't think I'm quite ready."

"Pway get weady, then, you duffah. I should be sowwy to take you unawares, deah boy. That would not be cwicket," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust you will not keep me waitin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, if you will not put up your fists, I shall have no wesome to do to stwike you on the nose."

And Arthur Augustus reached out to give the new boy a gentle tap there.



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To his surprise, his arms were wafted upward somehow, and hard knuckles rapped gently on his own nose.

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy started back. He rubbed his nose, with an expression of amazement that was comic to the extreme. The Cornstalk regarded him with a cheerful smile.

"Bai Jove!" repeated the swell of St. Jim's. "This is vewy surprisun'! Howevah, I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

Arthur Augustus had heaps of pluck, and as much self-confidence as courage. He came on again, hitting out scientifically, and the new fellow retreated backwards round the study table, warding off his blows.

Twice round the table D'Arcy followed him hotly, and then he began to gasp.

"Pway stop where you are, you wottah? How can I thwash you if you keep on wunnin' away?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy rushed on, determined to get to closer quarters. But the Cornstalk retreated round the table, dodging him successfully, and at last the swell of St. Jim's stopped, and leaned on the table, panting.

"I wegard you as a feahful poltween!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are afwaid to come to close quartahs! I should be sowwy to chawactewise anybody as a coward, but undah the ciros I wegard you as bein' afwaid to come to close quartahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you are a laughin' jackass," said D'Arcy. "If you are not afwaid, why don't you come within weach of my beashtay fists?"

"I am afraid of hurting you."

"Eh?"

"I don't want to hurt you," explained Noble.

"What?"

"You're an amusing little chap, and I wouldn't hurt you for anything."

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and glared. It was bad enough to have to chase the new boy round and round Tom Merry's table in such an undignified way; but to be described as an amusing little chap was too much.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, "You—you wank outsidah! Come on!"

He rushed on again.

Noble grinned, and stepped quickly out of the study, slamming the door after him.

D'Arcy caught hold of the door handle, and dragged at it fiercely, but it held fast. The new boy was holding it on the outside, and his grip was much stronger than that of the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy dragged and dragged, and then let go the handle and tapped at the door.

"Open this door, you wottah!"

There was no reply.

D'Arcy kicked furiously on the door. He was excited now, and the repose which stamps the caste of Vero de Vere was quite gone.

"Let me out, you beast!"

Still silence.

"Will you open this wotten door?"

And still the Cornstalk did not reply. D'Arcy fumed. Taking hold of the handle again, he turned it and gave a terrific wrench. The door flew open, and D'Arcy staggered back into the study. Noble was no longer there. It dawned upon the swell of St. Jim's that the new fellow had gone immediately he ceased to tug.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I nevah thought of that. Howevah, I will give him a feahful thwashin' now."

And he ran quickly out of the study. But the new fellow had clean gone, and there was no sign of him to be seen.

CHAPTER 7.

Wally's Win!

THE new fellow was gone, and vengeance had to be postponed for the time.

Arthur Augustus remained a few moments fanning himself with a cambric handkerchief, cooling down after his exertions.

Having wiped his brow and adjusted his necktie, he walked away to look for his chums, and met Gore and Mellish in the passage. He stopped to speak to them. He

(Continued on page 12.)



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THE RIGHT PLACE!

Magistrate: "And what did you do when you heard this man using such terrible language?"

Policeman: "I told him he was not fit to be in decent company, and brought him here!"

PETER BREACH, 281, Crystal Palace Road, East Dulwich, S.E.22.

WELL HIDDEN!

Waiter: "And how did you find your steak, sir?"

Customer: "Oh, I just looked under the potatoes, and there it was!"

G. STONE, 11, Dunmore Road, Gt. Gt. Cheshire.

NO HURRY!

Guard (angrily, to passenger who keeps on asking why the train doesn't go faster): "Look here, sir, if you don't like this train you can get out and walk!"

Passenger: "Oh no, thanks, I'm not in so much of a hurry as all that!"

W. L. NOTLEY, 62, Hale Grove Gardens, Mill Hill, N.W.7.

IT HAD TO BE WATCHED!

Sambo: "Say, Rastus, does your watch tell the time?"

Rastus: "No, Sambo, Ah has to look at it!"

H. BOOKMAN, 83, Petherton Road, Highbury, N.5.

REDUCING!

Johnny: "How's your dad getting on with his reducing exercises?"

Tommy: "Fine! Why, the battleship he had tattooed on his chest is only a rowing boat now!"

L. D. BYRON, 2/39, Freeman Road, Neshells, Birmingham, 7.

KEEPING DOWN!

Uncle: "Are you keeping your position in form, Thomas?"

Thomas: "Yes, uncle, I started at the bottom and no one has been able to get my place from me yet!"

CLAUDE FARLEY, 32, Winsford Street, Rugby, Warwickshire.

SHORT AND SHARP!

Teacher: "Now, boys, I want you to write a description of a cricket match, and when you have finished you may go home."

Two minutes later one boy rose, put on his cap and went home. On a piece of paper he had written: "Rain! No play!"

DONALD MARCHANT, New Cottages, Belmont, Faversham, Kent.

CANE-PROOF!

Father: "Which pair of trousers would you like, Jimmy?"

Jimmy: "These ones, father, which are marked, 'Cannot be beaten.'"

M. BROWNING, 38, Vicarage Lane, Humberstone, Leicester.

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wanted to know where Tom Merry & Co. were, as there was no sign of Tom coming to his study. In the summer afternoon the old college was deserted, and there was no one else to seek information from.

"Have you seen Tom Mewwy, deah boys?" he asked.

"Yes," said Gore. "Do you want him?"

"Yans, wathah!"

"Then go down to the gates."

"Bai Jove! What on earth is Tom Mewwy doin' at the gates?" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Thank you vewy much, Goah."

And he hurried on.

Mellish looked curiously at his chum.

"Tom Merry isn't there," he remarked.

"Did I say he was?" asked Gore.

"Well, no, you didn't! Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Gussy wasn't thinking so much about his neckties, he'd have heard the row from the Third Form Room, I should think," grinned Gore. "A little run down to the gates won't do him any harm."

And Arthur Augustus, all unsuspecting, went out to look for Tom Merry. Tom Merry, at that moment, as a matter of fact, was outside the door of the Third Form Room, hammering away on the thick oak panels.

The juniors had found the door of the Form-room locked against them, and their demands for admittance were only answered by jeers and catcalls from the fags within.

Wally & Co. were masters of the situation.

Wally, with his superb coolness, had bugged the feed, and it was safe within locked doors in the Form-room, and without a battering-ram it did not seem possible for the rightful owners to get at it.

They breathed all sorts of threats through the keyhole; but Wally replied with unabated cheerfulness, and with remarks upon the personal appearance of Tom Merry & Co. that were decidedly personal and unflattering.

Fatty Wynn was almost in tears.

At intervals, within the Third Form Room, could be heard the popping of corks, as the fags disposed of some of the liquid portion of the feast.

The Third Form had already started.

How much of the feed would be left by the time the juniors obtained entrance was a question that could only be answered in decimals, as Figgins remarked.

Tom Merry hammered furiously on the panels.

"Will you let us in, young Wally?"

"We've taken you in already once," replied Wally, through the keyhole. "Some duffers are never satisfied."

"We'll simply skin you!"

"Rats!"

"We'll give you the biggest licking you've ever had in your life!"

"More rats!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "This feed was a welcome for the new kid from Australia! Don't be a pig!"

"He's welcome to join us," said Wally. "We've invited him once. Send him along, and we'll let him in, and welcome."

"It's our feed!" roared Fatty Wynn. "Oh dear, I can hear them opening the pineapples!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled the Third-Formers.

"I'll tell you what!" called out Wally. "If you like to make it pax, we'll invite you to the feed."

The juniors glowered. To be coolly invited to their own feed was like insult added to injury.

But Fatty Wynn looked brighter.

"Well, after all, that's better than losing the lot," he remarked.

"Yah!" growled Herries. "Haven't you any regard for the dignity of your Form?"

"Oh, rot! I'm hungry!"

"Well, what do you say?" demanded Wally. "Time's going—and so is the grub."

"You won't have a chance soon!" said Gibson.

"Coo-oo-ey!"

Tom Merry turned his head.

The "Cooey!" came echoing down the passage, and it was easy for Tom Merry to guess that it was a signal from the Cornstalk, who wanted to know where they were. Tom suddenly remembered that he had instructed Noble to wait for him in his study, and it occurred to him that the new fellow must have been waiting there some time.

"My word," said Digby, "that's a bush-signal! Can any of you fellows cooey?"

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins. "Here you are. Cooey!"

"Coo-oo-ey!"

The Cornstalk came into sight round the corner of the passage, with a grin on his face. The return signal had reached his ears.

"Hallo!" he remarked. "I thought I'd come and look for you. I've been waiting in the study a jolly long time."

"Awfully sorry!" said Tom Merry. "I—I forgot! You see, the feed's been scoffed. These young bounders of the Third have scoffed it, and locked themselves in the Form-room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything funny in it!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'm really hungry! I always get extra peckish in this April weather."

"Well, what do you say?" demanded Wally from within. "You can bring the Kangaroo here, and come with him, if you like. 'Yes' or 'No'?"

"Hallo, that young larrikin again!" grinned Noble. "Let's accept his offer. I'm hungry myself, you know."

"Oh, all right, then! We'll come in, Wally."

"Is it pax?"

It cost the juniors an effort to say that it was. But there was clearly no alternative.

"Yes," grunted Tom Merry, "it's pax! Open the door!"

And the Third Form Room door was promptly opened. Wally required no more assurance than the word of Tom Merry.

The scamp of the Third greeted the juniors with a grin.

"Come in, my sons! All are welcome! This is Liberty Hall. Jameson, you young pig, leave some of the sardines. Easy with the jam-tarts, Gibson, or I'll jolly well give you a thick ear. Open the pineapple tins, Dudley, my son. You fellows can sit on the forms, or on the floor, just as you like, only don't stand on ceremony. Wire in!"

It was impossible not to be in a good humour with Wally. The fellows "wired in," and as the feast was really a very ample one, there was enough for all, and they enjoyed it exceedingly.

CHAPTER 8.

One Too Many!

TOM MERRY rose from his seat, and gave a sigh of contentment.

It had been a ripping feed, and even Fatty Wynn was satisfied.

"Well, we've had a good time," said Tom Merry. "We won't give Wally that assortment of thick ears, after all."

Potts, the Office Boy!



D'Arcy minor grinned.
 "No, I think you'd better not. But, I say, where's Gussy? Why hasn't he come to the feed?"
 "He's changing his clothes," said Blake. "He's been going about in a dressing-gown lately, shocking the ladies. He'll turn up in a few hours."
 "My hat!" said Tom Merry. "I should think he had finished by this time!" Tom looked at his watch. "Come on, you chaps; it's time we got to our prep!"
 Manners and Lowther rose. Tom Merry nodded to Noble.
 "See you again soon, kid," he remarked.
 "Here!" exclaimed Wally. "Hold on! What's the figure for this feed?"
 "Eh? Nought, my son."
 "Stuff! We only collared it to take a rise out of you duffers," said the scamp of the Third. "We're going to pay, of course!"
 "Not a bit of it! It was a whip round, and Gussy contributed most. You're welcome, as it can't be helped. So long!"
 And the Terrible Three left the Form-room.
 Tom Merry looked thoughtful as he walked away towards his study.
 "I like that kid Noble," he remarked. "There's something very fresh and taking about him. He looks something of an athlete, too. I may find him useful in the cricket. I'll give him a trial to-morrow."
 "Good! I rather hope he'll stay in the School House," Lowther observed. "If he goes over the way, he'll be a recruit for Figgins & Co., and I fancy we shall find him a tough customer in House rows."
 "He's got a lovely upper-cut, and no mistake," said Manners. "I fancy Gore is still feeling rather sore about the chin."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 The chums of the Shell entered their study, and brought out their books. As they sat down, Noble walked in. He had followed them from the Third Form Room without their knowing it. They were rather surprised to see him.
 "Hallo, come in, old chap!" said Tom Merry, looking round. "Can we do anything for you?"
 "No, thanks—nothing in particular," said Noble.
 "Like to take a rest in the easychair while we're working?"
 "Well, I'd rather get on with the work myself."
 Tom Merry laughed.
 "Have you any prep to do for to-morrow morning, then?"
 "Yes," Noble nodded. "Mr. Railton offered to excuse me, as it was the first day; but I said I'd rather begin."
 "Good for you! What Form are you in?"
 "Same as yours—the Shell, I think it is. Mr. Railton said I should be in the same Form as Tom Merry."
 "And we're jolly glad to have you," said Tom Merry cordially. "What study are you going into—do you know?"
 "Yes; this one!"
 "Eh?"
 The chums of the Shell uttered the exclamation simultaneously, and jumped up.
 Noble nodded affably.
 "I'm coming into this study," he said.
 "But—but there must be some mistake," said Tom Merry. "Mr. Railton cannot have told you to come and dig in this study."
 "He did."
 "But we're full up, you know!"
 "Then you'll be a little fuller."

"You see," said Lowther, "it's impossible."
 "How's that?"
 "We're three, and we haven't any room for more. We've always had this study. It won't do, you know!"
 The Cornstalk chuckled.
 "Looks to me as if it will have to do. I'm here!"
 "Oh, go farther along the passage, there's a good chap!"
 "Can't be did!"
 "You see," exclaimed Tom Merry, "we're awfully glad to have you in the Form, and to give you a hearty welcome to the Old Country, and all that; but a fellow's study is a different thing. You can't invade a fellow's digs in this way. It was very inconsiderate of Railton."
 "Shocking!" said Manners. "But if Noble appeals to him, and puts it to him strongly, he'd change his mind, I've no doubt."
 "Oh, come off!" said Noble cheerfully. "I like this study. It looks to me about the biggest I've seen."
 "Yes, that's so. But—"
 "It will suit me down to the ground."
 "It won't suit us to have a fourth in it!" said Tom Merry warmly. "We want to treat you well, but we can't have the family circle broken up in this way."
 "It's orders, you see!"
 "They'll have to be set aside somehow. Suppose you went to Railton and asked him, as a special favour, to put you into Study No. 6 with Blake & Co.? Say you feel lonely, and would rather be in a study with four than three."
 "But I don't feel lonely."
 "Well, you ought to!" snapped Lowther. "Blessed if I ever saw such an obstinate boulder in my life."
 "Make the best of it," said Noble. "I'm here, you know. Any room for my books on the table?"
 "Doesn't look like it," said Manners.
 It certainly did not look like it. The table was crowded. Where the chums of the Shell had no books, they had heaps of crockery.
 The Cornstalk looked over the table.
 "Suppose you make room?" he suggested.
 "Can't be did!"
 "But I've got to do my prep. Mr. Railton said that Tom Merry would lend me a hand, too, and show me the ropes."
 "So I will," said Tom Merry at once. "I'd lend a hand to any new chap. But, you see, we can't have four in this study. There's a law like the laws of the Medes and the Persians—it simply can't be altered."
 "Shall I make room?"
 "Rats! Go farther along the passage!"
 Noble lifted the tray of crockery off the table. He was perfectly good-tempered, but quite determined.
 Monty Lowther jumped up.
 "Shove that tray back!" he said.
 Noble looked at him.
 "I'm making room for my books."
 "Shove that tray back!"
 "Rats!"
 "Hold on, Monty!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as his chum clenched his fists, and started towards the new boy. "Draw it mild! I—"
 "He's going to put that tray back!" hooted Lowther.
 "Yes, but—"
 "Shove that tray back, you—you kangaroo!"
 "More rats!"
 Monty Lowther wasted no more breath in words. He ran right at Noble and caught him by the shoulder. Noble put

HE DIDN'T TWIG!



up his fists, with the natural result that the tray of crockery went to the floor. There was a terrific crash.

"You ass!" roared Tom Merry. "That's all our crocks gone!"

"I don't care!" snapped Lowther. "Let 'em go! If he doesn't pick up that tray and put it back, I'll smash him!"

"Smash away," said Noble coolly.

"Are you going to pick up that tray?"

"Not much!"

"Then out you go—on your neck!"

And Lowther closed with the boy from Melbourne, and the new boy closed with him, and then the fun began.

CHAPTER 9.

Not Out!

MONTY LOWTHER had set out to "chuck" the new fellow out of the study. Noble was to leave the room "on his neck."

But somehow or other the task grew more and more difficult as Monty Lowther proceeded with it.

He got a good grip on the new boy, and waltzed him towards the door. But near the door the new boy reversed, so to speak, and Lowther was waltzed back towards the fireplace.

Tom Merry and Manners were on their feet, looking on, greatly interested in the progress of the "chucking-out." Lowther was an athletic lad, and he knew something about boxing and wrestling; but he had his hands full now.

Again he brought the new fellow round towards the door with a terrific swing.

"Open the door, Tom!" he gasped.

"What ho!"

Tom Merry threw the door wide open. Nothing remained but to hurl the new boy through it, to roll ignominiously upon the linoleum in the passage.

Monty made a terrific effort.

"Out you go!"

And they parted.

But somehow it wasn't Noble who went out; it was the lengthy form of Monty Lowther that went flying through the doorway.

Tom Merry gasped.

"Monty! Ha, ha, ha!"

Noble stood in the study breathing rather hard, but otherwise none the worse for the tussle. Monty Lowther sat on the floor in the passage, staring into the open doorway with an expression of bewilderment amounting almost to idiocy.

Tom Merry roared. He could not help it. It was his best chum—or the best but one—who had gone down before the new fellow, but the expression on Lowther's face was so comic that he couldn't help it. He roared, and Manners roared, and Noble grinned.

"Ow!" gasped Lowther, finding his voice at last. "That was a fluke, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My foot slipped, just as I was going to—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop your cackling, do!" Lowther rose slowly and rather stagglingly to his feet. "That chap is going out of the study on his neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther came in, looking very grim. He stepped up to Noble, who eyed him calmly and warily, ready for a second bout.

"Are you going?" demanded Lowther.

"Nix!"

"You—you jumping kangaroo!" said Lowther. "I'll sling you out like—like a giddy boomerang!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "A boomerang always comes back, you know."

"Out you go!"

Lowther gripped hold of the Cornstalk again. The waltzing recommenced, and they went round the table in fine form. They came to the doorway again, and Lowther put all his force into a mighty hurl. This time the new fellow went into the passage; but he did not let go, and Lowther went with him. They rolled on the linoleum, Lowther underneath.

Noble calmly detached himself, and stepped into the study, and again Lowther sat up and blinked at the new boy.

"You know something about wrestling," he said, in a more subdued tone, as he came into the study again. "I'm done."

"No harm done," said Noble cheerfully. "I told you I wasn't going, you know."

"Oh, rats!" said Manners warmly. "This kangaroo isn't coming here to chuck us in our own study, I suppose. Have another try, Monty."

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"Try yourself, my son."

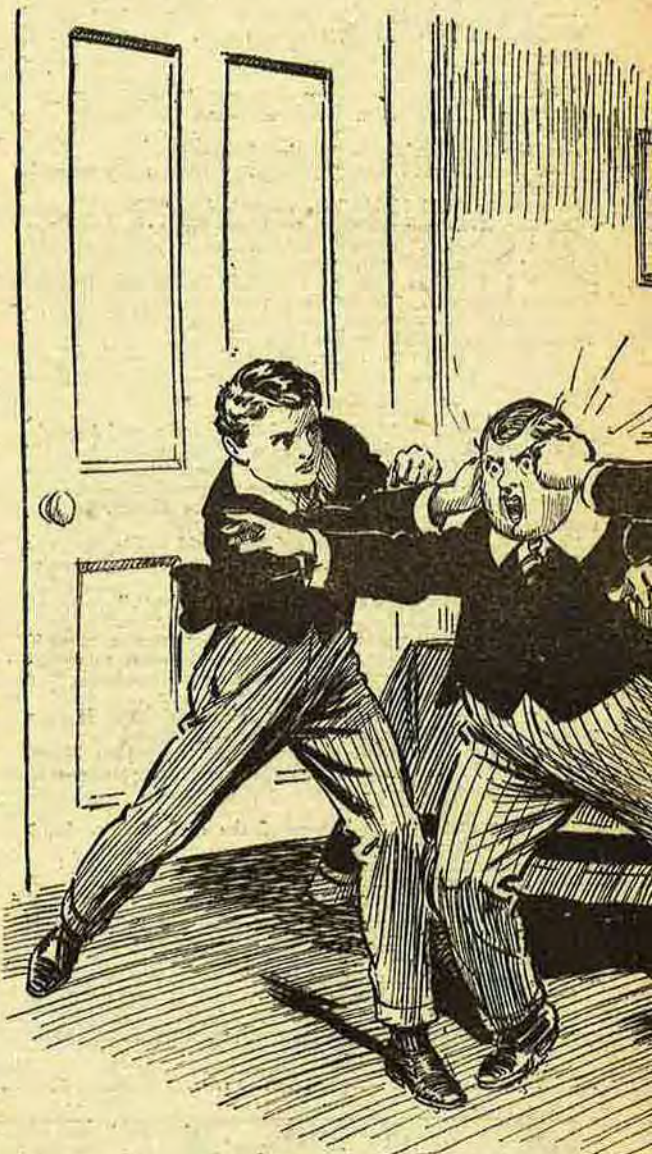
"I jolly well will," said Manners. "If I can't chuck that kid out you can use my head as a football."

"Do you play with wooden footballs in England?" asked Noble innocently.

Manners did not reply to this frivolous question. He just hurled himself upon the youth from the land of the Southern Cross.

"Go it!" gasped Lowther.

Manners went it. The two juniors mixed themselves up on the floor, and one of them was rolled bodily out of the



"Hold on! It's pax in this study! Stop it, you duffers!" on his right ear and Kerr's on his left. "Yow! Wow!"

study. But the rolled-out one was not Noble; it was Manners.

The tussle was furious, and Manners was a little dazed when he found himself sitting on the floor outside the study.

"My hat!" he said.

Tom Merry looked at the new boy in admiration.

"You've got some muscle," he remarked, "and you know how to make the best of it. Are there any more like you in the bush?"

Noble grinned.

"Heaps!" he said. "Now, am I to remain in the study or not?"

"Not!" said Tom Merry promptly.

"Do these merchants want any more?"

"You see, it's a question of dig, as our friend Gussy would say," explained Tom Merry. "You've got to go, or I shan't be head of the Shell any longer. If I allowed you to wade in here and run the show, the whole of the juniors of the School House would get their ears up on the spot."

"But you gave me no choice," said Noble. "I had to chuck or be chucked."

"Yes, it's very unfortunate, but such is life. You've got to hook it!"

"Isn't that a bit unreasonable?"

"Shouldn't wonder, but I haven't time to think about it now. I'd rather you went quietly," said Tom Merry.

"Well, I'm not going."

"Then I shall have to make you."

"Make away!"



nn rushed between the combatants. He caught Figgins' fist and the unfortunate peacemaker reeled and gasped. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a pity. I rather like you, and I was thinking of playing you in the cricket team, too."

"Yes, I dare say I could show you a few points in cricket."

"Oh, you do, do you? Perhaps a chucking out would do you good, upon the whole," said Tom Merry reflectively. "Have you finished, Manners?"

"Quite, thank you!"

"Then here goes!"

Tom Merry stepped up to the new boy.

"Won't you go?" he asked persuasively.

"Not much!"

"I warn you that you will very likely get hurt if I start."

"Thanks! And I warn you that you are absolutely certain to get hurt if you start."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Then here goes! We'll see!"

The next moment they were struggling.

Tom Merry was a tougher customer than either Manners or Lowther, there was no doubt upon that point; but there was no doubt, either, that Noble was the toughest opponent Tom Merry had ever laid hands on. He realised at once that he had to do with a fellow who was fully the equal of either Blake or Figgins, which was saying a great deal.

He swung Noble round towards the door, and was swung back himself towards the fireplace. They biffed into the armchair and fell over together. They scrambled up again, still together. They staggered towards the door once more, and Noble essayed to hurl Tom Merry as he had hurled Monty Lowther.

But that did not come off. Tom Merry hung on to him like a leech; but when he himself essayed to hurl forth the new fellow, he was equally unable to get rid of him.

They reeled away from the door again, and went waltzing clumsily round the study.

Manners and Lowther dodged out of the way. Either of them, by lending Tom Merry a hand, could have enabled him to fling the new fellow into the passage. But fair play was a golden rule in Tom Merry's study. Manners and Lowther never even thought of interfering.

"My hat!" murmured Lowther. "Tom's got his work cut out!"

"Looks like it. Hallo, there goes the table!"

Crash!

The excited combatants staggered against the table with all their weight. Study tables at St. Jim's weren't planned to meet attacks like that. The table staggered, too, and went over, and everything that was upon it was swept to the floor.

"Here, draw it mild!" exclaimed Lowther. "I'd rather you let the new kid stop, thanks. You don't want to wreck the place."

"Can't-be-did!" gasped Tom Merry. "He's-got-to-go!"

"Rats!" panted Noble.

They saved the rest of their breath for the struggle. They needed it. Both were equally determined, and they appeared to be pretty well matched. Their next fall was into the firegrate. Fortunately, the weather being warm, there was no fire. There was a fearful crash on the fender, and a clatter of a kettle, a saucepan, and a teapot, falling into the grate. They dragged themselves dizzily from the ruins, and separated for a moment.

Breathless, gasping, they looked at one another grimly.

"Are you going?"

"No."

They closed again. Manners and Lowther dragged the table into a corner and sat upon it, watching the struggle, as if it were a play. They cheered on the combatants alternately. They wanted Tom Merry to get the best of it, but they were sportsmen.

"Go it, Tommy!"

"Stick to it, Kangaroo!"

The combatants were sticking to it determinedly. Again Tom Merry brought Noble round with a mighty swing to the doorway, and the onlookers thought he was going; but he twisted round in time, and forced Tom Merry backwards with a crash into the bookcase.

"Look out!" roared Lowther.

But it was too late. Tom Merry's shoulder went through the glass of the bookcase, and there was a terrific smashing. The bookcase reeled under the shock and gave a wild lurch. Lowther sprang forward to catch it, and was in time to receive a shower of books. The bookcase went over, and the next moment the combatants stumbled upon it and went over, too.

"My hat!" gasped Manners.

The noise was terrific, but the juniors were too excited to notice that. But other ears had heard it. There was a quick footstep in the passage, and Mr. Railton looked in as the juniors extricated themselves from the wreckage.

"Merry!"

Tom Merry jumped up in dismay.

"Yes, sir!"

"What is—is all this about?" demanded Mr. Railton sternly, looking round the wrecked and disordered study with knitted brows.

"I—if you please, sir, we're doing out prep!" said Tom Merry.

"Indeed! Is this how you do your preparation?"

"You see, sir—"

"You were fighting with Noble."

"Not exactly fighting, sir," said Tom Merry cautiously.

"I shouldn't think of fighting with a new chap just come

from Australia, sir. It's up to us to make him feel at home at St. Jim's, sir, you know. I hope you don't think I would fight with a new chap who only came this afternoon."

"What? Then what were you doing?"

"Well, sir, I—I was just chucking him out, sir, that's all."

"I suppose there is a fine distinction between fighting and chucking out, as you call it," said Mr. Railton. "I do not perceive it myself, but I will take your word for it. You have been making a great disturbance, and your study is in a shocking mess. You will take two hundred lines each."

"Oh, sir!"

"You, Noble, will follow me. As you do not seem to get on very well in this study, I will find you fresh quarters."

"Right-ho, sir!" said the Cornstalk cheerfully.

He grinned amiably at the Terrible Three, and adjusted his collar and tie as he followed Mr. Railton from the study. He was looking considerably dishevelled, as were all the juniors in the room.

Monty Lowther gave a low whistle.

"Well, he was not out," he remarked, "but it's ended well—and all's well that ends well. We've kept the study."

"And two hundred lines each," grunted Manners.

"Oh, never mind the lines, so long as we keep the study."

Tom Merry pursed his lips a little.

"I hope the new chap won't think us inhospitable," he said dubiously. "We ought really to have thought of that before."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "It's rather late in the day to think that."

"Ye-es, I suppose it is. I'll see him later and explain we didn't mean to be anything like inhospitable," said Tom Merry. "I should like to make that point clear, you know. Now let's clear up some of this muck and get the work started."

And the Terrible Three began what proved to be a long task. It was not easy to get the study to rights after the combat that had raged there.

CHAPTER 10.

A Surprise for Figgins!

MR. RAILTON was looking thoughtful as he walked away from Tom Merry's study. He was a little in doubt as to where to dispose of the Australian.

As a matter of fact, there had lately been an influx of new boys into the School House, and space was at a premium, so to speak.

A spare room at the end of the Shell passage was being turned into a study, and when finished it would serve for three or four boys; but in the meantime Noble would have to find room somewhere. A new idea occurred to Mr. Railton as he went downstairs, and Noble rather wondered to see the Housemaster go out into the quadrangle.

Mr. Railton crossed the quad to the New House, entered, and tapped at the door of Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster there. He signed to Noble to follow him into the room.

Mr. Ratcliff rose with an agreeable smile. Of late Mr. Ratcliff had shown a much more agreeable side to his nature, a change that was thankfully welcomed by all the fellows in the New House. He still had the same acid temper, but he kept it under better control, and he was more cordial than he had ever been before with the School House master. The fellows, who had divined Mr. Ratcliff's little secret, attributed the change to the beneficent influence of Bernard Glyn's sister, and they confided to one another that they were jolly glad the Liverpool lad had come to St. Jim's.

"I hope I do not interrupt you," said Mr. Railton politely.

"Not at all," said the New House master. "What can I do for you?" And he pushed forward a chair, a thing he had seldom done before on rare occasions when Mr. Railton had gone into his study.

"It's about this new boy, Noble. Dr. Holmes did not tell me into which House he was going, and as he is away now, the matter will remain in doubt till he returns. You are aware that we are very crowded on the other side. Would you have any objection to the boy taking up his quarters here for the present?"

"Not at all," said Mr. Ratcliff. "What Form does he belong to?"

"The Shell."

"Ah! The Shell studies are over-full now, but I can find room in the Fourth. That will do for the present, I suppose?"

"As a temporary arrangement, that would doubtless do perfectly well."

"Quite so. There is a rather large study in the Fourth Form which has only three boys in it," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Most of them have had four lately. Yes, Noble can be

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accommodated there without difficulty. You can leave him with me."

"Thank you; then I will tell Taggles to bring his things over here."

And Mr. Railton, relieved in his mind as to the disposal of the Cornstalk chum, left the room.

Mr. Ratcliff touched a bell, and told the House page to send Figgins to him. Noble waited demurely. He remembered Figgins of the New House among the fellows who had met him at the station, and he wondered how Figgins would take this addition to his study—for he guessed at once that he was to "dig" with Figgins.

The long-legged chief of the New House juniors presented himself in the study in a few minutes. He gave Noble a friendly grin.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Ah, yes, Figgins! You see here a new boy—a lad from a distant Dominion, whom I should be glad if you would do your best to make welcome to the school."

"Certainly, sir. I've met Noble already."

"Ah, yes, I am glad of that. He is coming into your study."

Figgins' jaw dropped.

"Into our study, sir?"

"Yes; since Marmaduke Smythe left you have, I think, had the study to three of you—yourself, Kerr, and Wynn."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"I am busy, Figgins."

That hint was enough. Figgins left the study, followed by the new boy. In the passage, after closing Mr. Ratcliff's door, he stopped and looked at Noble grimly.

"So you're coming into the New House?" he asked.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"And into our study?"

"That's the order."

"Ain't you in the Shell?"

"Yes. But, bless you, I don't mind," said Noble cheerfully, already detecting incipient hostility in Figgins' manner.

"You don't mind! You don't mind what?"

"I don't mind digging with Fourth-Formers. Of course, it's a bit below the dignity of a Shell fellow, I suppose," said Noble, who had never heard of the Shell before he came to St. Jim's, but already spoke as if he had been a whole term in that Form. He had a wonderful gift for making himself at home.

Figgins simply glared.

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"I'm going to be very decent to you," said Noble. "Of course, you won't interrupt me when I'm speaking, or anything of that sort. I shall expect a proper respect from fellows in the Lower Form."

"I don't know what you expect," said Figgins, "but you'll get something you don't expect if you're not jolly careful. I suppose I've got to take you into the study."

"I suppose you have," agreed Noble genially. "So suppose you get along instead of talking so much."

Figgins did not reply; words failed him. He led the way in silence to his study, where he had been called away from his prep by the summons to Mr. Ratcliff's presence.

Kerr and Wynn were both at work. They looked surprised when Noble came in with Figgins.

"Visitors?" asked Kerr. "Sorry I can't leave off my work."

"No," growled Figgins. "This kid is coming into the New House after all."

"Glad to hear it."

"You won't be glad to hear that he's coming into this study."

Kerr laid down his pen.

"Coming into this study!"

"Yes."

"Rats!"

"Fact!"

"That's rotten," said Kerr. "We were quite comfy by ourselves, and there was just room for three. Still, if Ratty says so, we've got to stand it. Don't think we're anything like grumpy towards you, Noble—it isn't that. But chaps like to keep their own study."

Noble nodded.

"I quite catch on," he said. "I'm sorry if I put you out at all."

"Can't be helped. We'll make room somehow," said Kerr, who was a canny Scotsman, and was never known to raise difficulties where no useful purpose could be served. "You're welcome."

"That's all very well—" began Figgins indignantly.

"Can't be cured, must be endured," said Kerr philosophically.

"We can't have four in this study."

"We've had four before."

"Yes, but that was Murmy—an old chum."

"Well, this is a new chum—and we didn't pull well

with Marmy at first, you know. We had heaps of trouble before we chummed with that chap. Noble's as decent any day in the week as Marmy."

"We can't have four in this study!" shouted Figgins.

Kerr grinned.

"Well, you can go and yell that at Ratty. It's no good yelling it at me."

"You are a cold-blooded beast, Kerr!"

"And you are a hot-headed ass!"

"We can't have four in this study."

"Oh, I don't know!" said Fatty Wynn, who had been thinking. "If the new chap stands a decent feed to pay his footing—"

"Oh, blow the feed! We can't have four in this study."

"Well, if you're going to make that into the refrain for a song, Figgy, I wish you'd hum it over to yourself, and not shout it," said Kerr, in a tone of remonstrance.

"I've got some work to do."

"We can't have four in this study!" roared Figgins.

"Oh dear! It's getting crescendo now! Take a five-bar rest!"

"We can't have four—"

"Rats!"

When Kerr was extra calm and judicious, it was frequent for Figgins to get exasperated. Kerr knew that, and he had a most irritating way of keeping his temper in all circumstances.

"Look here, Kerr, you ass!"

"Now keep cool, Figgy," said Kerr, wagging his forefinger at Figgins in a way that was calculated to make him keep anything but cool. "Don't lose your temper."

"Who's losing his temper?"

"And don't raise your voice, old chap!"

"Who's raising his voice?" roared Figgins.

"Well, unless there's something amiss with my ears, you are," said Kerr. "It sounds to me as if you were roaring like a barge."

"You—you irritating Scots beast—"

"Now don't be personal, either. I'm never personal when I'm excited."

"I'm not excited!" yelled Figgins, almost dancing with excitement. "If you say I'm excited, you're—you're telling whoppers, so there!"

"Keep cool—keep cool!"

"I'm perfectly cool! I—"

"Cool, old boy—cool! Ow!"

Kerr broke off as Figgins rushed at him, and gave him a tap on the nose. Figgins' patience was exhausted.

Kerr jumped up.

"By George, I—"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, as his two chums began to pommel one another. "Hold on! It's pax in this study! Stop it, you duffers!"

"If he says I'm excited—"

"So you are!"

"Then I'll jolly well—"

Fatty Wynn rushed between. He caught Figgins' fist on his right ear and Kerr's on his left. The unhappy peacemaker reeled and gasped.

Noble burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry, Wynn, but—"

"Sorry, Fatty, but—"

"You—silly asses!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "There's the new chap laughing at you like a hyena. Why don't you have some sense?"

"He tapped me on the nose."

"He said I was excited."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Noble.

"Oh, shut up!" said Figgins, beginning to realise that perhaps he had been, after all, a little excited. "Stop that cackling, you cackling kangaroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr rubbed his nose, and re-seated himself at the table.

"If you've finished not being excited, Figgy, I'll get on with my work."

"Get on, and be hanged!" growled Figgins.

"Any room for me?" asked Noble.

"Find some."

Noble found some, and placed himself at the table with his books. Figgins grunted, but raised no objection, and Fatty Wynn was too busy between his prep and some plans that were floating through his brain about a big feast to care for anything else. Kerr, always polite, helped the new boy with his work, and so the next hour passed peacefully and usefully enough.

Figgins rose from the table at last.

"Come along, you kids!" he grunted. "We've got to see Tom Merry about the cricket, and the House will be closing up soon."

"Right you are, Figgy!"

(Continued on page 19.)

Here she comes -



all out for
the
record!

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Nothing like the new 1933 Hornby Speed Boats has been known before in model speed boat construction. The beauty of their appearance and the efficiency of their performance are the talk of thousands of Hornby Speed Boat enthusiasts everywhere. Even the smallest model will travel over 160 ft. on one winding; the larger models travel over 500 ft.

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TIT-BITS FROM—



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

HALLO, chums!—Don't forget that the last Coupon in our Atlas Offer appears this week, so if you have collected the necessary eight coupons, read carefully the instructions on page 21, telling you how and where to apply for this wonderful thirty-two page Atlas of the World.

Did you enjoy this week's grand tale of St. Jim's? Of course! Well, I can promise you another treat in

"WELL HIT, WALLABY!"

By Marlin Clifford,

which is another long complete school story dealing further with the New Boy from Australia. Don't miss this treat, chums, whatever you do. The same advice applies to next Wednesday's chapters of

"THE SPY-FLYERS!"

By W. E. Johns,

which are packed with thrills and surprises. By way of lighter entertainment, look out for another Comic Strip featuring "Potts the Office Boy," also another column of readers' prize-winning jokes. If it's unusual news you want, a glance at next week's page from the "notebook" will satisfy you that you have not been overlooked. Next week's GEM is so good that you will want to say nasty things to yourself if you miss it. Don't miss it—order it now! 'Nuff said!

ALL THROUGH A CATAPULT.

Whiz! A stone flew from the catapult and, missing its mark, hit a boy in the eye instead. The sequel was the victim's father sued the boy who had used the catapult, and the result is an object lesson to those boys who will use a catapult carelessly. For thirty-three years this particular offender will be paying off "damages" to a total amount of one hundred pounds, in instalments of five shillings per month. As he is now sixteen years old he will reach the age of forty-nine before the punishment of his boyish prank is fully wiped out. Makes you think, what?

THE SMALLEST CITY IN THE WORLD?

This distinction goes to "The City," Christian Malford, in Wiltshire, which was built more than three hundred years ago. Behind the City runs a railway, but as there is no station the trains naturally do not stop there. In sympathy with the railway is a canal, which runs in front of the City, but as this canal packed up "work" ages ago, its usefulness is doubtful. But here's the titbit of news—The City consists of two cottages only! How did it get its name? Don't

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ask me. I wasn't hanging around this world as far back as three hundred years!

THE LIGHTHOUSE PRISONERS!

A lighthouse looks a pretty picture to us when we are visiting by the sea, but a lighthouse can be a very unpleasant place sometimes. Ask the two lighthouse keepers of Eddystone whose normal spell of duty away from the land is eight weeks. During the gales and storms recently conditions were so bad that the two lighthouse keepers saw their eight weeks' spell of duty come and go with no sign of relief. Came the ninth week and the tenth week and the hapless twain were still virtually prisoners. But at last they were relieved and taken ashore by means of life-lines; and weren't they glad to feel real earth under their feet again? You bet!

HOW IT'S DONE IN BUDAPEST!

Oh yes, they have their criminals in Budapest. What's more, these "pests" (joke) have original ideas. Not so very long ago they held a "criminals' ball" and everyone concerned enjoyed himself to the full—including a number of policemen who played the part of spectators. Apparently it is the custom in Budapest for the police to observe a traditional truce at this annual "criminals' ball," and what is more amazing the clever pickpockets in the assembly refrained from picking pockets, and the "violent" crooks whose methods usually include the painful use of a knife or a revolver leave their weapons at home. So for one night in the year at least the peaceful and law abiding inhabitants of Budapest can seek their justly earned repose without fear.

SLEEP-PROOF DRIVING!

Experience has taught motorists who go in for long distance journeys in the International Motor Rallies that one of the chief perils of the job is falling asleep at the wheel. To prevent this a brainy motorist has now devised an electric buzzer for the steering wheel. As long as a firm grip is kept on the steering-wheel the buzzer is effectively silenced, but the moment the driver begins to feel sleepy and his fingers relax, a terrific buzzing smites his ear drums and wakes him up with a jerk. It's a cute idea, and it is reckoned that a number of spills due to sleepiness on the part of the long distance driver will now be avoided.

EVEN FATTY WYNN COULDN'T BEAT THIS!

Two pounds was the prize offered in an eating contest in Jugo-Slavia recently, and the winner managed to consume the

following without bursting: a turkey, fifty sausages, ten pork chops, ten portions of veal, five apple dumplings and ten buns. After that, don't any of you fellows write in and tell me that the amount Fatty Wynn manages to eat is impossible!

THE ELECTRIC FARM!

They believe in speed and comfort in U.S.A.—yes, sir! Listen in to this account of the super-farmer. He is aroused in the morning by electricity, his poultry houses automatically swing open to the magic of electricity, and an electric eye counts the chickens, his breakfast starts to cook, his razor is electric—even visitors to his house are spotted by electric "eyes." His children play with electric toys, whilst underneath the pillow of the youngest is a radio which plays soft music until an electric clock switches it off. This particular go-ahead farmer owns fifty acres, and although everything connected with it is worked by electricity, the power bill is no more than two shillings and a penny daily. Can you beat that?

STRANGE!

Can you imagine an editor running a Chinese newspaper when he can neither speak, read nor write the language? Sounds a bit incredible, what? But for all that there is an American editor of a Chinese paper who has these three "qualifications"—and what's more he manages to hold down his job.

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN "NAUGHT"!

Some time ago features of a certain gentleman's will were made public, and it was discovered that he had left his housekeeper the puzzling sum of £,000. At least, that was how it read in the will. Imagine yourself in the role of legatee with that "amount" left to you. In the case mentioned above an agreement was reached between the parties concerned and a very useful "one" was added to the three naughts, thus turning £,000 into £1,000. What one figure will do!

"HARD LUCK" VICTOR!

Ill-luck seems to dog the plucky attempts of the nineteen-year-old Cape flyer, Victor Smith, who came within an ace of beating Miss Amy Johnson's record flight early last month. Time and again he has tried the long journey from England to the Cape and by way of a change from the Cape to England, but always some mishap has occurred. His greatest disappointment was to be within two hundred miles of his objective with plenty of time in hand to beat Miss Johnson's record of 4 days 8 hours 53 minutes when further ill-luck forced him to land and abandon the flight. But the "world's unluckiest flyer," as he has been called, is not down-hearted. He's full of determination to do great things in the air, and there's no holding back grit of that sort. Good luck, Victor Smith—and better luck next time!

THEN THE TREE FELL!

You all know the story of the last straw which broke the camel's back, but have you heard the modern version. Imagine a thirty-foot tree in the branches of which sixty monkeys are sheltering and sleeping peacefully. Then imagine another monkey climbing up the tree. Watch the tree sway, see it break and topple over, then you have a complete picture of what actually happened in Congella Park, South Africa, recently.

THE COMING OF "KANGAROO"!

(Continued from page 17.)

And Figgins & Co. left the room, and Noble, left alone, seated himself in the only easy chair, and pulled a book out of his pocket and began to read.

He had been reading for about ten minutes when there was a tap at the door, and it opened.

Noble looked up and smiled slightly as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in.

CHAPTER 11.

D'Arcy Gives His Parole!

D'ARCY glanced round the study, evidently in expectation of seeing Figgins & Co, and a peculiar expression came over his face as he saw Noble instead of the New House trio.

D'Arcy, of course, hadn't the faintest idea that it was the Australian junior. New boys at St. Jim's were not uncommon, and the normal attire and looks of this new fellow prevented D'Arcy from guessing that he was the Cornstalk. D'Arcy had not seen the new boy since the trouble in Tom Merry's study, but that trouble was very fresh in his memory. He had been, as he considered, treated without proper respect, and such a matter weighed very heavily with the swell of St. Jim's.

He turned his eyeglass upon Noble with a decidedly disparaging expression, which only caused the smile to broaden upon the sunburnt face of the Cornstalk.

"I wathah expected to see Figgins heah," said D'Arcy.

"Did you? He's gone."

"Is this your study?"

"Yes; I'm digging with Figgins."

"Oh! Then you are a New House wottah!"

"I'm a New House fellow, I suppose," said Noble, good humouredly.

"Yaas, I am not surprised at your diswepet and wotten behaviour," said Arthur Augustus, with a withering look. "If I had known you were a New House cad, I should have known what to expect."

"You're calling me some pretty names," said Noble. "Would it surprise you very much if I wiped up the carpet with you?"

"I should uttably wefuse to allow you to do anythin' of the sort!"

"You mightn't have any choice in the matter," suggested Noble. "Still, as I said before, you're an amusing little chap."

"I wefuse to be regarded as an amusin' little chap. I was prepared to let you off," said D'Arcy, "but I can see that it will be impewative for me to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Go hon!"

"Pway wise fwom that chair!" said D'Arcy, with growing anger. "Pway wise to your feet, and put up your fists, you wottah!"

Noble did not stir.

"Did you heah me?" demanded D'Arcy wrathfully.

"Yes."

"Then wise fwom that chair!"

"I'm very comfy where I am, thank you!"

"If you do not immediately wise fwom that chair, I shall dwag you fwom it by force," said the swell of St. Jim's coming over to the Australian with a very business-like look. "Now take your choice, deah boy."

"I think I shall remain here—thanks!"

"Then I shall dwag you out!"

"Drag away," said Noble cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus was as good as his word—or, at least, he tried to be. He stooped and grasped Noble by the shoulders, and strove to drag him from the chair.

Noble had his hands on the chair arms with a firm grip. He did not appear to be exerting himself very much, but it was enough.

He did not stir, in spite of the tremendous efforts of Arthur Augustus. And Gussy's efforts were tremendous. He dragged and hauled and pulled till the big chair ran along on its castors, but still the Australian remained comfortably seated.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "You are wathah a stwong beast! However, I shall dwag you out of that chair, deah boy—I mean, you wottah!"

And he put all his beef, so to speak, into a final wrench.

This time he succeeded, because Noble let go the arms of the chair. He did so very suddenly—so suddenly that Arthur Augustus wasn't prepared for it. The swell of St. Jim's reeled backwards, dragging the Australian upon

himself, and he went down upon the hearthrug with a bump, with Noble sprawling upon him.

"Ow!" he gasped.

Noble rose to a sitting posture on D'Arcy's chest, and did not seem disposed to rise further. He sat there, apparently finding his seat quite comfortable. The swell of the School House gasped under him.

"Ow! Gerroff!"

"Eh?"

"Get off my beastlay, chest!"

"Did you speak?"

"Let me wise, you wottah!"

"What?"

"Pway let me get up! You are wumplin' my clothes feahfully and causin' me to become howwibly dustay," said Arthur Augustus faintly.

Noble laughed.

"But if I let you get up you're going to give me a fearful thrashing?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then I'll stay where I am till you change your mind!"

"Weally, you wottah—"

"It's all right—I'm not in a hurry."

D'Arcy gasped for breath. Noble was no light weight,

Cut This Out and Keep It By You!



and there was simply no getting him off. D'Arcy's wriggles and struggles only seemed to make the Cornstalk weigh heavier.

"On second thoughts, I will let you off that thwashin', you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for silly cacklin'! Pway get up and allow me to wise! I feel extwemely dustay!"

Noble rose to his feet, and D'Arcy staggered up. He certainly was rumpled and dusty. His trousers were not improved by some ink and cycle-oil that had lately been spilt on the rug. D'Arcy felt a greasy dampness there, and he screwed in his eyeglass and twisted his head round, trying to see the back of his legs to ascertain exactly how much damage was done. The sight was so utterly absurd that Noble burst into a shout of laughter.

The monacle was turned upon him.

"I wegard you as a beast!" said Arthur Augustus, in measured tones. "You have wunned my twousahs! Words fail to expvess my disgust for a chap who ruins a chap's twousahs. I wegard you as a wank outsider!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Havin' given my pawole, it is imposs for me to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I wish you to undahstand that I wegard you with uttah disgust!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you can considah yourself thwashed, and beaten almost to a jelly!" said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy turned to the door. The new fellow was laughing almost hysterically, though D'Arcy could not see where the joke came in. The swell of St. Jim's left the study and came very near slamming the door—a thing that was, of course, impossible for Arthur Augustus quite to do.

And as he went down the passage the ringing laugh of the Australian followed him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 12.

A Bone of Contention!

Noble took his place in the Shell the following morning with the rest of the Form. He came in with the New House fellows.

Mr. Linton was not yet in the Form-room, and Tom Merry took the opportunity of tapping the new boy on the shoulder and speaking to him.

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"I've got something to say to you," he began, a little awkwardly. "I chucked you out of my study yesterday."

"You didn't," said Noble promptly.

"Well, I was chucking you out when Railton came in."

"You were trying to."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, I was trying to. What I want to say is that—that wasn't meant to be anything like inhospitable, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha! It looked something like it, but I suppose it was only an accidental resemblance."

"You see, a chap's study is a chap's study," explained Tom Merry lucidly. "Apart from that, we should be jolly glad to have you. I'm sorry you're not in the School House. You're too good to join the New House."

"It's not settled yet. I'm with Figgins till the Head returns, and he will be here this morning. Then we shall see. But if I stick in the New House you chaps can look out for squalls. I'm getting into the hang of things now. As for that little row yesterday, bless you, I've forgotten that already! No malice on either side, I hope!"

"Good for you!" said Tom Merry heartily. "That's the right sort!"

Mr. Linton came in, and the talk had to cease. Tom Merry helped the Cornstalk chum considerably that morning, getting him into the way of things in a good-natured way that was really surprising, considering how they had battled in the Shell study the evening before. Noble was a keen lad, and though there was much that was new and strange to him, he succeeded in satisfying the master of the Shell. After lessons he went out with the Terrible Three. The three chums meant to look after him a little, as a sort of make-up for the reception they had given him in the study.

It was a fine, sunny day, and the thoughts of most of the fellows were turning to cricket as they left the classrooms.

Figgins came out with the Fourth Form, and Figgins looked round for the Australian. He found him in the quad talking to Tom Merry. He came up and jerked him by the arm.

"This way, kid!" he said.

Noble looked at him inquiringly.

"You belong to us!" exclaimed Figgins. "No good wasting time with these School House piffers. I'm going to try you for the junior House team. You ought to be able to play cricket considering where you came from."

The Cornstalk chuckled.

"I can play a little bit," he remarked. "I know a bat from a ball, and a short slip from a long field—and some other things."

"Then come and show us what you can do."

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I'm going to give Noble a trial to see whether he's any good for the Junior Eleven for the School!"

"Stuff! House teams come before School teams!" said Figgins.

"Now, you know that's rot, Figgy."

"Come on, Noble!"

"Stay here, Noble!"

"I'll jolly well yank him off if he doesn't come!"

"I'll jolly well yank him back, then!"

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

Figgins grasped the colonial by the shoulder, and Tom Merry seized him by the arm. They dragged at him together, and the astonished Noble staggered. Figgins dragged away determinedly, and Lowther and Manners came to Tom Merry's aid.

"Here, hold on!" shouted Noble. "I don't want to be pulled to pieces! You silly asses—leggo! Leggo!"

"Let go, Tom Merry!"

"Let go, Figgins!"

"I'm going to take him!"

"I'm going to keep him!"

"Wynn! Kerr! Lend a hand!"

"What-ho!" said Kerr; and the New House Co. promptly lent a hand.

Hands were laid on the amazed Noble on all sides. He struggled in vain in the grasp of so many. Tom Merry and Lowther grasped his ankles to get a good hold, while Figgins had him round the neck, and Kerr round the waist. Pratt and French seized his arms, aided by Fatty Wynn, who fixed a grip on his collar. But Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn, of the School House, rushed up and lent their aid to the Terrible Three.

In the midst of the struggle the muffled voice of Noble was heard threatening and expostulating, but the excited juniors took no notice of it.

"Will you let go, Figgins?"

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"No, I won't! Leggo yourself!"

"New House waster!"

"School House cad!"

"Hallo! What's the row here?" demanded Kildare, coming up. "What are you kids fighting about again? What have you got there?"

"It's the new kid, Noble!"

"You—you young asses! You'll damage him!" exclaimed the captain of St. Jim's. "All of you let go at once!"

The juniors obeyed.

The result was that Noble flopped on the ground with a bump, and lay there for some moments gasping for breath.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed as he sat up and rubbed his perspiring face. "Of all the silly asses!"

Kildare laughed and walked away. Tom Merry lent Noble a hand to rise. The Cornstalk was dishevelled and dusty, his collar was torn out, and his jacket split up the back, and half the buttons were missing from his clothes.

He glared at the juniors.

"You unspeakable duffers!" he said. "What sort of a way do you call this to treat a chap? You asses!"

"Here, draw it mild!" exclaimed Figgins. "I'm junior captain of your House, and you've got to treat me with respect!"

"Rats!"

"And I'm skipper of the cricket team for the Lower School," said Tom Merry. "You have to kow-tow to me, and don't you forget it!"

"More rats!"

"Now come and get some practice."

"I'm going to get a wash and brush-up, thank you," said Noble. "You can go and eat coke!"

And he walked away to the New House.

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"It was rather rough on the kid, when you come to think of it," he remarked. "You really ought to have had more sense, Figgins!"

"I! It was you!"

"Oh, don't begin to argue about it!" said Tom Merry, waving his hand loftily. "I don't want to argue with you!"

"I tell you—"

The Terrible Three walked off, leaving Figgins to glare. They had just caught sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's had come out of the School House, and was going towards the gym at a gentle trot. Tom Merry overtook him and tapped him on the shoulder, but D'Arcy did not stop.

"Pway don't intewrupt me, deah boy," he said, without looking round.

"What's the hurry?"

"There's no actual hurwy," said D'Arcy, slackening a little, "but I am taking a little wun for my health."

"Oh, I see! I've seen you bolting about like a scared rabbit several times lately, and I wondered whether you were off your rocker," said Tom Merry.

"I am not off my wookah, Tom Mewwy. I have lately developed a slight tendency to ongbongpong."

"To—to—to which?"

"Ongbongpong, and I am takin' gentle exercise to keep it down, you know. I am thinkin' of takin' up Indian clubs, but Blake says it would cause twouble if I do Indian clubs in the study. He says I shall have to stick to the gym, but I have informed him that I shall uttally wefuse to stick to the gym. I find it much more convenient to do little bits of exercises in the study, you know, for two or three minutes at a time. I am thinkin' of keepin' a set of dumb-bells and Indian clubs there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to gwin at in that wemark, deah boys. I am determined not to allow this tendency to ongbongpong to gwow upon me."

Tom Merry chuckled. The slim figure of Arthur Augustus showed very little tendency to embonpoint, as far as he could see, but the swell of St. Jim's was evidently alarmed about the fit of his beautiful waistcoats.

"And where are you going now?" demanded Lowther.

"Just a twot wound the gym before dinnah," said D'Arcy. "As a mattah of fact, I find this midday dinnah system at school wathah twoublesome. I am wathah inclined to attribute my ongbongpong to this system of feedin' in the middle of the day, instead of the natuhal hour of seven, or half-past. I have been thinkin' of a wound wobin to the Head on the subject, pointing out to him the bad results that accwue from bringin' up fellows to dine in the middle of the day. I attribute to that this howwid tendency to ongbongpong."

"You mean ang-bang-pang," said Monty Lowther, who was as great on French as D'Arcy was. They gave the language a different pronunciation, perhaps, but no doubt

one was as good as another. Both, probably, would have been rather puzzling to a Parisian.

"I mean nothin' of the sort," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "I mean ong-bong-pung!"

"Ang-bang-pang, my boy."

"Rats!" said Manners. "What you both really mean is ung-bung-pung!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"I suppose what you mean is oong-boong-poong!"

"I mean ong-bong-pung, Tom Mewwy."

"Ang-bang-pang, fathead!"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead, Lowthab."

"Hallo, there's the bell!" said Tom Merry. "I'm ready for my dinner. Come on, Gussy, and give your ong-bong-pung another chance!"

"You have pwevented me gettin' my little wun," said D'Arcy, as he turned back towards the School House. "I twust that it will have no marked effect upon my tendency to ong-bong-pung. By the way, Tom Mewwy, I have not seen the new chap yet—the Australian, you know. It is vewy unfortunate, as I wanted to give him a weally hearty welcome to the school. There has been a sewies of unfortunate accidents in this mattah. But I suppose I shall see him at dinnah."

"No, you won't; he's in the New House now."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's curious you haven't run across him, too," said Tom Merry. "If you like, I'll invite him to a feed in your study, and bring a few friends."

But Arthur Augustus did not jump at that generous offer.

CHAPTER 13.

The Bonds of Empire!

"WELL, of all the rotten—rotten, beastly plants!"

"What's that?"

"Of all the beastly sells!"

"Eh?"

"Of all the beastly bungles!"

"What are you jabbering about, Blake?"

"Oh, don't ask me; it's too rotten!"

Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy stared at Jack Blake. He had come into Study No. 6 after lessons that day, stamping on the floor, exclaiming at the top of his voice, and generally behaving, as Digby observed, more or less like a dangerous lunatic.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon Blake. "I twust the deah boy is not off his wockah!"

"It's too bad!" howled Blake.

"What's too bad?"

"What Railton has just told me."

"Oh!" said Digby. He knew that Blake had been called into the Housemaster's study. "What's the trouble—lines?"

"Lines! No, lines wouldn't matter."

"Not a licking?"

"Licking? Have I done anything to be licked for?" demanded Blake.

"Well, yes, I should say you have done a dozen things," said Digby coolly. "The question is, does Railton know?"

"Well," grunted Blake, "it isn't a licking, then?"

"Then what are you grousing about?"

"It's about that new chap."

"Noble—Harry Noble?"

"That's the animal. It seems that the Head destines him for the School House. Railton inquired about it when the Head came back to-day, and Noble is out of the New House again. He's going to belong to this side."

"Well, I'm blessed if I can see anything to grumble at in that," said Herries. "He's a decent chap."

"I don't say he isn't all right. He's right enough."

"And I'm jolly glad to have him in the School House," said Digby. "He'll help us to keep our end up against those New House rotters!"

"Yass, wathah!"

"I don't object to him in the House," grunted Blake. "Can't you understand?"

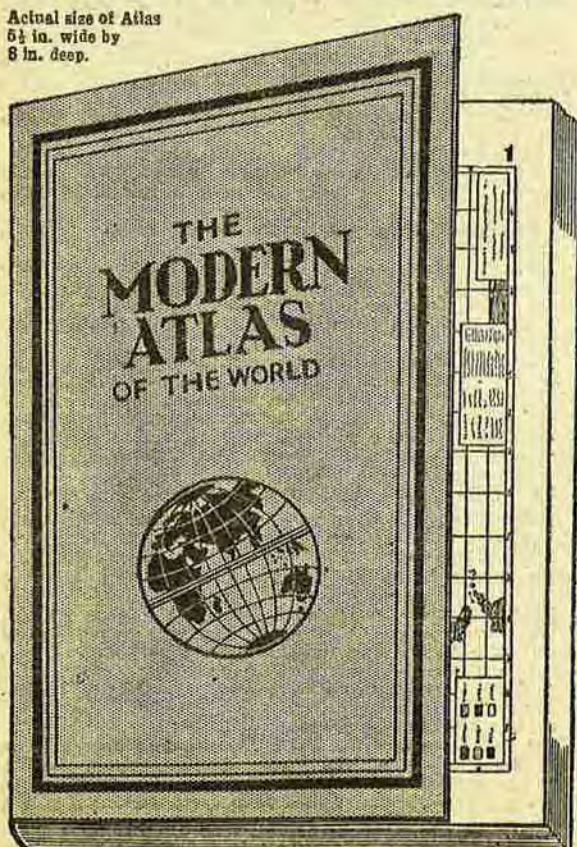
"I must weally confess that I fail to undahstand, Blake. I shall extend a hearty welcome—a wight hearty welcome—to this new kid. I have not seen him yet, but I am certain that I shall take a great likin' to him."

"Then you'll like him in the study!" snorted Blake.

"What!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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"That's what Railton's just told me. The new kid is coming into this study," said Blake, growling. "There's four of us already, and we haven't room to move when Herries has his feet in here."

"You let my feet alone!" growled Herries.

"Now we've got a fresh kid shoved in! They've tried the same game before!" said Blake excitedly. "Twice we've had new chaps shoved in here, but one left and the other was kicked out of the school. It was a narrow escape."

"But this Colonial will be a stayer," said Dig gloomily.

"I shouldn't wonder."

"But it can't be done!" exclaimed Herries indignantly. "He's in the Shell, that new kid, and this is a Fourth Form study."

"Well, they put a Fourth-Former in a Shell study when they were crowded," said Blake. "That chap Mellish, you know, in Goro's study. I suppose they think they can do as they like with the juniors. I'm jolly well inclined to go on strike. We can't have anybody in this study. Look here, they shoved him in with Tom Merry first, and the Shellfish ragged him out. That's our cue."

"Good!" said Herries. "I like the chap personally, but he can't dig here."

"Exactly!" assented Digby.

"Then we're agreed on that?"

"Wathah not, deah boy."

"Eh? Are you talking, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus decidedly. "I am talkin', and I will be glad if you will listen to me, deah boys. It will be quite impos for us to wag this new kid out of the study."

"Why?" demanded three threatening voices.

"Absolutely impos! I should uttally have to have a hand in it. As a mattah of fact, I don't like the ideah of new chaps boin' planted on us in this way, any more than you do. We haven't any too much woom as it is. At the same time, I cannot agree to anythin' that might be considahed diswepesful to a wopwesentative of Bwitin beyond the beastlay seas, you know."

"Look here—"

"It is quite useless to argue that point," said D'Arcy. "I am wresolved upon this. If the new kid is sent into this study he will have a polite weception. I shall give him a wight hearty welcome."

"You uttah ass!"

"I have wemarked before, Blake, that I wefuse to be chawactewised as an ass! I have quite made up my mind, and I hope you chaps will see weason. I am goin' to give the Colonial a wight hearty welcome to this study. Any little sacwifices of comfort we may make we can wegard as our contwibution towards dwawin' clesah the bonds of Empire, deah boys!"

Blake & Co. stared.

When Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke in that tone they knew that he had made up his mind, and that wild horses wouldn't drag him away from the path he had marked out for himself.

"Look here, Gussy," said Blake, "with a new chap and his belongings in here, there won't be any room for your latboxes."

"Yaas, it will be wathah wotten in that wespect, I know; but we are called upon to make sacwifices for our ideahs ewery day," said D'Arcy. "To dwaw clesah the bonds of Empire—"

Tap!

"Heah he is!"

The door opened, and the Australian came in.

"Hallo!" he said cheerily. "Please I've come! I—"

He broke off as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose to his feet, and fixed him with his eyeglass. The swell of St. Jim's seemed to be absolutely flabbergasted, so to speak. He looked at Noble, and Noble looked at him, and there was a grim silence.

CHAPTER 14.

A Noble Deed!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS found his voice at last,

"Bai Jovel! You?"

"Hallo, cocky!" said the Cornstalk cheerfully.

"Fancy meeting you!"

"You—you are the new kid Noble?"

"I'm Noble!"

"I have met you before, then! Bai Jove, deah boy, I hadn't the faintest ideah that this person was Noble. I was expectin' to see a vewy diffewent sort of chap. I met this wottah two or thwee times yestahday."

Noble laughed.

"And had one or two little difficulties, eh?" he remarked. "Never mind! As I told you, you are an amusing little chap, and I never bear malice. If you belong to this study, we'll bury the hatchet and get on swimmingly."

"Bai Jovel!"

"I'm being shifted about a lot," said Noble. "I hope you chaps won't mind my digging in this study."

"Well, you see—"

"Because if you do it won't make any difference. Where shall I put my books?"

"Look here—"

"Pway put your books on the table," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I will pitch these things off to make woom—"

"You'll let that bag of biscuits alone!" shouted Herries.

"Wats!"

D'Arcy dropped the bag of Towser's biscuits under the table, and the Cornstalk put down a packet of books. The swell of St. Jim's had been hesitating for some moments, but politeness and patriotism had outweighed other considerations.

"You are vewy welcome to this study, Noble," he said. "As a patwiotic Bwiton, I am vewy glad to welcome any wopwesentative of a gweat and loyal Dominion. I wegard it as an honah to have you in this study. I am vewy sowwy for any little twoubles we have had, while I was ignowant of your true identity, and I should be vewy pleased to give you the hand of fwiefndship."

And D'Arcy held out the hand of friendship.

Noble grinned a little as he took it. He gave Arthur Augustus a grip that made him wriggle a little.

"Good!" he said. "Let bygones be bygones! I shall make myself at home all right, never fear. I generally do!"

"I think you're about right there!" said Blake grimly. "What they mean by sticking a rotten Shellfish in a respectable Fourth Form study, I don't pretend to know, but I do think—"

"Never mind what you think, kid," said Noble. "What about tea?"

Jack Blake simply gasped.

He had never had the words taken out of his mouth in that study in that manner before, and he did not like the new experience. He thumped the table, and made the ink spurt out over the cover, but he was too excited to notice that.

"Look here, kid, you're too fresh! Mind, I don't want to cut up rusty, but you're too fresh, and you'll have to

RIVALS OF ST. FRANK'S!

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sing in a lower key if you remain in this study! I'm head cook and bottle-washer here, and—"

"Weally, Blake, you will make a vewy bad impwession upon the new fellow," said Arthur Augustus, in a tone of remonstrance. "I have already pointed out to you that, as a patwiotic Bwiton, you are bound to extend the hand of frienship to this wepwesentative fwom New South Victowiah—"

"Victoria," corrected Noble, with a grin. "It's next to New South Wales. What sort of geography do you learn in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's?"

"I can show you what sort of boxing we learn, if you like!" said Blake darkly.

"Right-ho! Go ahead!"

"Come on, then—"

Arthur Augustus stepped between them.

"Pway hold on! Weally, Blake, I cannot stand by and see a wepwesentative of a gweat Bwitish dominion wagged in this mannah. If you do not tweek the new kid fwom Austwaliah with pwopah respect, I shall have no alterna-tive but to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

Blake dropped his hands to his sides at once.

"Behold I tremble!" he said sarcastically.

"Pway don't wot, deah boy! Suppose we get the tea, while I ask Noble about my welations in Austwaliah."

"Well, it's a comfort to think they're in Australia!" said Blake. "If we had any more of you here, life wouldn't be worth living."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, ring off, and let's get tea!"

"I'm going to feed Towser," said Herries, extracting the bag of dog-biscuits from under the table. "Oh, you asses, you've been spilling ink on these!"

"Never mind; it will be a bit of a flavour for Towser. I've often thought that dog-biscuits must be wanting in flavour."

"Towser won't eat 'em now."

"Towser can go and eat coke. Bring in a pot of jam and some sardines and ham from Dame Taggles as you come back," said Blake, fishing a half-crown out of his waistcoat pocket. "That will be about all, as funds are low. And be quick."

Herries grunted, and left the study with the inky dog-biscuits.

Blake laid the table, and Digby broke up a box to light a fire under the kettle.

Arthur Augustus, in the meantime, was inquiring after his Australian relations. D'Arcy was a little in the dark on the subject of Australian geography, and his ideas about it made the Cornstalk chum chuckle.

"You see, my uncle went out a long time ago," explained D'Arcy. "He was a wastah, I believe, and a lot of wastahs go out to Austwaliah."

"Yes, and a good many stay here," said Noble.

"Yaas, vewy pwob," agreed D'Arcy, without seeing any latent meaning in Noble's remarks. "My uncle was weally a sort of wastah, and if he were in England it would be wathah a pwoblem how to tweek him. The last we heard of him he was at Perth, which is eithah in Austwaliah, or New Zealand, or somewhere else, I think."

Noble looked at him admiringly.

"Pewwaps you may have seen him when he was in Perth?" said Arthur Augustus. "There is a town in Austwaliah called Perth, atfah Perth in Scotland, you know."

"Yes, I think I know," grinned Noble.

"He was there before he went to Bwisbane," said D'Arcy.

"You may have seen him—"

"Oh, it's quite an afternoon's stroll to Perth from Melbourne. You see, you have to get across a continent. I think I'll get a map of Australia and hang it up in this study," said Noble, "with all the distances marked in plain figures. Then you won't expect a chap who lives in Melbourne to be on nodding terms with a man in Brisbane."

"Howevah, I should have been vewy glad to have news of my uncle," said Arthur Augustus. "By the way, his name isn't the same as mine—his name is—"

"Hallo, here's Herries! Got the stuff? Why, what on earth do you mean?" almost shouted Blake, as Herries came in empty-handed. "Where's the grub?"

Herries looked obstinate.

"There isn't any."

"Isn't any! Why, you—you—"

"It was all the fault of the silly ass who spilt the ink over the dog-biscuits. Towser wouldn't touch 'em!"

"Blow Towser! Where's our grub?"

"I suppose I couldn't let Towser miss a meal?" said Herries aggressively. "Is that the way you were brought up to treat dogs? Of course, as Towser couldn't touch the dog-biscuits, I had to get him something else. I happened to notice the butcher's cart in the lane at the back, and I—"

"And you—you—"

"I bought him a joint," said Herries. "It came to exactly half-a-crown. There will be some left over for to-morrow, and I've given some to young Wally's mongrel, too. I don't believe in giving old bits to dogs. Dogs like good meat, same as their masters. I'm jolly well not going to starve Towser to please a lot of greedy wasters in this study!"

"You—you've blued all the tin on Towser?" said Blake, scarcely able to believe his ears. "We're to miss our tea—for Towser?"

"I suppose you don't want my bulldog to starve, do you?"

"Blow your old bulldog!" roared Blake. "Here, lay hold of him, and bump him into the grate! Knock his fat head into the ashes!"

"Here, hold on—"

"WELL HIT, WALLABY!"



Some funny things happen at St. Jim's in next week's ripping yarn. You can see one of them happening in the cover picture here—everyone thinks it's funny except Fatty Wynn! But that's nothing to what happens when Harry Noble sends a cricket ball through the Head's window! Read all about it in next Wednesday's GEM!

"Undah the cires, I considah that Hewwies ought to be wagged. I am gettin' wathah hungwy myself."

"I'm jolly well not going to let Towser starve—"

"Chuck it!" said Noble. "Don't row. Look here! I haven't paid my footing in the study yet, and I'm in funds. Let me stand the feed."

Jack Blake calmed down considerably.

"Now you're talking!" he remarked. "No objection on my part. Gentlemen, hands up for the suggestion of our respected friend from Borriobwoolah-Gha."

The hands all went up.

"Passed unanimously," said Blake. "Come along, Kangaroo, and you shall help us to do the shopping. Gussy, bring your biggest silk hat to carry the things in."

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

"Then I'll take a cricket bag. Come on!"

And peace having been restored by the Cornstalk's coming to the rescue, the chums of Study No. 6 went forth shopping, and a quarter of an hour later they were enjoying a feast in the study, amid the reign of the most perfect good humour and good fellowship.

CHAPTER 15.

Something Like Cricket!

"GOOD!"

Tom Merry made that remark, as he looked in at the door of Study No. 6. Monty Lowther and Manners looked over his shoulders and said, "Good!" likewise.

It was indeed a good sight to see. Harry Noble had laid out his money royally, and certainly there was nothing mean about the Cornstalk's chum.

The table groaned, as a novelist would say, under the good things. The chums of the Fourth were busy with them, but without greatly diminishing the piles. No wonder the chums of the Shell said it was good. They were coming in hungry from cricket practice.

Jack Blake looked up with a genial grin.

"Come in!" he said. "If you haven't had tea, cut into somebody's study, and get some plates and cups and saucers, and come in. There's plenty."

"Anybody left you a fortune?" asked Tom Merry. "Or has Gussy had another fiver?"

"No; this is Harry Noble's treat."

"Good old Wallaby! We'll come in."

And they came in. They found room to sit down, and commenced operations.

The feast was indeed a merry one, and when it was all over they one and all adjourned to the junior cricket ground.

In the bright sunshine there were a good many fellows congregated there when Tom Merry & Co. arrived. Several games were in progress. Kildare and some of the Sixth were practising at the nets, and Figgins & Co., on the junior ground, were very busy with a New House side.

Noble looked over the scene with a keenly appreciative eye. He had the true Cornstalk love for the great summer game, and the merry click of the bat and ball were music to his ears.

"The chap has wathah the cut of a ewicketah," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, looking Noble up and down through his eyeglass. "I should like to try him on the pitch."

"I'll bowl to you, if you like, Blake," said Noble.

Jack Blake took the bat, and faced the bowling. Twice he stopped the ball, and he looked a little worried. The third ball knocked his middle stump out of the ground.

Tom Merry gave a chuckle.

"Jolly good! Why, this chap bowls as well as Fatty Wynn!"

Blake grunted.

"He does—or better! I shouldn't wonder if you could bowl Kildare. Here, you try the kid, Dig!"

Digby stood up to the bowling. He did not get a single chance of hitting out, and the fourth ball knocked down his balls.

Tom Merry clapped his hands.

"Good! Good! This chap is going into the junior House team, if I have to get out myself to make room for him!"

"Yaas, wathah! You certainly should give him his junior House cap, Tom Merry—and you have my permish to leave out anybody—exceptin', of course, myself!"

"Try him yourself," said Digby, slinging the bat to Tom Merry.

And Tom Merry went on to play the Australian's bowling. Tom Merry was the finest junior batsman the School House boasted, and Noble found him better stuff to deal with.

Tom twice swiped away the ball, and it was sent in from THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,312.

a distance. Noble's look became grimmer; his jaw seemed to set hard, and a glint came into his eyes. He took the ball in hand again, and this time he threw all he knew into the bowling. And Tom Merry played a shade late that time—the leather curled in under his bat, and there was a click of falling balls.

Tom Merry gave a whistle.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "That was vewy neat! I weenly couldn't have done that bettah myself, you know, though I wathah fancy myself as a bowlah!"

Blake slapped him on the shoulder.

"I quite agree with you, kid," he said, "you couldn't!"

"I am vewy glad you agree with me, Blake, but pway don't stwike me on the shoudlah with such feahful violence. It throws me into a fluttah."

Noble was strolling up the pitch. Tom Merry handed him the bat.

"If you bat as well as you bowl, you go into the junior House team—yes, and into the junior School team, too, he said. "Let's see what you can do!"

"Right-ho!" said Noble cheerily.

He walked to the wicket, and Tom Merry went down the pitch to bowl. The Australian's attitude was very easy, but his eyes were as keen as a hawk's as he looked for the coming ball.

Tom Merry sent it down with all the skill he could throw into it. There was a click, and willow met leather, and the latter went on its journey.

There was a shout from the New House ground.

"Hallo, there! Look out!"

Crash!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the School House juniors.

Figgins was at the wicket, and he had just batted when his wicket went down. For the moment he did not know what it meant, and he stared down at the stumps. The ball from Noble's bat had knocked his wicket to pieces.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Figg's out!"

"Here, keep your rotten ball off our ground!" said Figgins, picking up the ball and flinging it back with all the force of his arm, for it was a goodly distance. "I'm here for practice, not for fun!"

"It was an accident, old chap! We've got a new batsman here who swipes!" called out Tom Merry. "If you're not using your porpoise, send him over here to see if he can get Noble out!"

"I'll bet you he can," said Figgins, for Fatty Wynn, as a bowler, was the terror of the Lower School.

"Well, let him come and try, then!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The School House fellows all admitted that they had no bowler quite up to the form of the Welsh junior, and they looked on eagerly as Fatty Wynn strolled over. Figgins & Co. came with him to see what happened. A crowd was gathering round the junior ground, watching the Australian with great interest. Fatty Wynn looked confident enough, and he handled the ball with the air of a past-master.

Tom Merry slapped him on the back.

"Go on, and do your best, kid!"

Wynn sniffed.

"I think I shall jolly soon shift him," he said.

"Well, try!" grinned Tom Merry, who had an idea that the task wasn't so easy as Fatty Wynn anticipated. "Let's see!"

And Fatty Wynn went out to bowl.

Noble waited for the bowling, standing in his easy attitude. Fatty Wynn took his curious little run, and folded himself up, and the ball went down like a bullet.

Crack!

The ball went flying away to the boundary.

Again Wynn sent the ball down, but once more Noble sent it away to the boundary.

Tom Merry clapped the Australian on the shoulder.

"You'll do!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wathah fancy myself, but I weally could not have done better myself!"

"Quite right, Gussy—you couldn't—or half done it!" agreed Tom Merry. "And the Cornstalk is going into the junior eleven. And—look here, Noble, you can come into my study if you like—to stay!"

The Cornstalk laughed.

"They're getting a new study ready, and I shall be in that to-morrow," he said. "I shall be jolly glad to get into the junior eleven—if you really think I'm fit."

Tom Merry laughed.

"You're as fit as I am," he said. "You're going in!"

And Arthur Augustus chimed in:

"Yaas, wathah!"

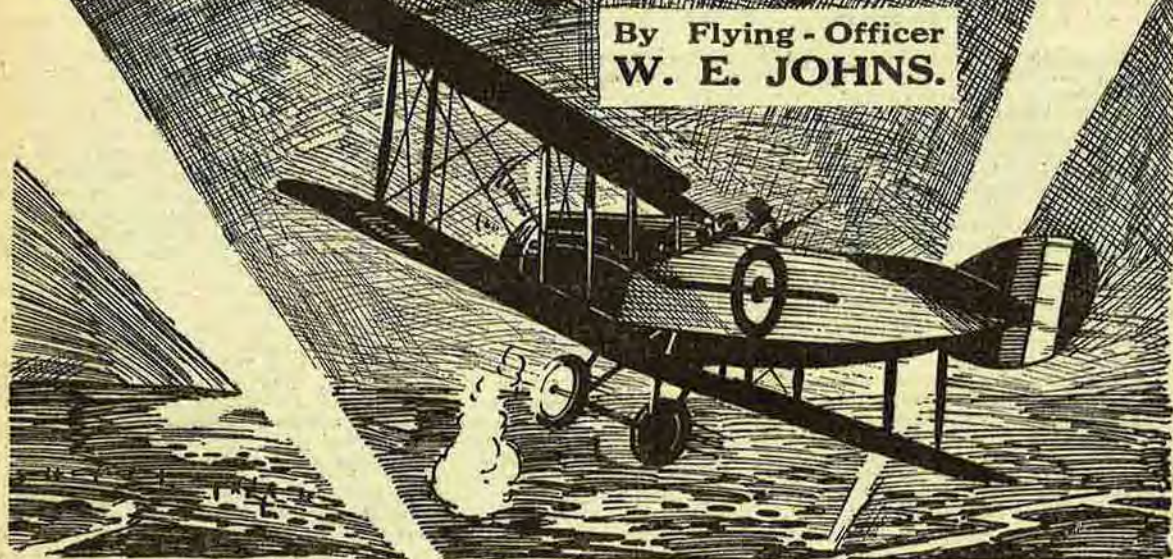
THE END.

(Martin Clifford contributes another ripping long complete school yarn in next week's GEM! See page 23.)

NERVE-TINGLING THRILLS WITH SECRET SERVICE AIRMEN!

The Spyflyers

By Flying-Officer
W. E. JOHNS.



WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

REX LOVELL and TONY FOSTER are chosen for Secret Service work by MAJOR TREVOR. On the trail of a mysterious British machine they land on a German aerodrome at Varne, flying a German machine and wearing German uniforms. There they see a man wearing the uniform of the British R.F.C. Shortly afterwards Major Trevor introduces them to CAPTAIN FAIRFAX, and Rex is amazed to recognise him as the man he saw at Varne. Trevor tells Rex that he must be mistaken, as Fairfax is above suspicion. Later, Trevor asks Rex and Tony if they will undertake the job of landing at Lille, behind the German lines, and taking a message to a house in the town. "We will go, sir!" they answer.

(Now read on.)

In German Territory I

"**T**HEN you had better see about your disguises," said the major, rising and unlocking a cupboard and disclosing several suits of dirty clothes. "These are typical peasants' rig-outs. You will attract less attention walking about Lille in these than you would in your own uniforms," he added humorously.

Ten minutes sufficed for them to make their selection, while the major wrote rapidly at his desk. He sealed the letter and handed it to Rex. "Be careful with that," he warned him, "and obey the instructions I am now going to give you to the very letter. You will go to No. 11, Rue de la Concorde. It is a small side-turning off the Place de Ville, opposite a small church. You will find the door open. Enter, and ring the bell which you will see on the table in the hall. Whoever comes to you will say: 'What brings you here at this hour?' and you will reply: 'Fritz asked me to leave a message to say that he will soon be home.' He will say: 'When shall I expect him?' And you will reply: 'At ten o'clock.' Ten is the password. It is the day of the month, and to-morrow will be the tenth. He will ask you inside, and you will give him the letter and wait for a reply. That is all. Any questions you would like to ask?"

"No, sir," replied Rex. "I think that is all quite clear." As he rose to his feet he thought he saw a shadow cross the window, and he glanced up quickly. It was slightly open. He frowned and made as if to speak, but changed his mind. "I'm getting jumpy already, he thought to himself half angrily.

"Good-bye, and the best of luck!" said the major.

"Good-bye, sir!"

When the boys reached the front of the building an officer was standing on the running-board of a staff Crossley touring-car outside. It was Captain Fairfax. An exclamation rose to Rex's lips, but he forced it back. Instead:

"Hallo, Fairfax!" he sang out. "What are you doing here?"

"Hallo, Lovell! 'Morning, Fraser!" cried Fairfax. "Oh, I've just brought D.D.R.O.'s (Divisional Daily Routine Orders) over. Can I give you a lift back?"

"No, thanks," replied Rex. "We are flying."

"As you like," replied Fairfax, with a parting wave. "I'm afraid I've gone off flying these days! Cheerio!"

"Did you hear that?" said Rex, as they walked down to the machine. "He's gone off flying! Does he think he can take us in like that? Bah! I should like to know if it was he standing outside that window, though," he added reflectively.

"Well, it wouldn't be much use asking him," observed Tony tritely.

It was lunch-time when they returned to Maranique.

"What had we better do now, do you think?" asked Tony, stirring his coffee reflectively.

"I think the best thing we can do is to have a look over the Bristol, get her refuelled, and then get some sleep," answered Rex. "I can't sleep in the middle of the day, but we had better rest, anyway—we shall need all our wits about us to-night if I know anything about it."

"I think that's a sound idea," acknowledged Tony. "We will ask to be called at six—that will just give us time to settle details before taking off."

A watery sun was sinking in the western sky as the two airmen, with their flying kit over their peasant garb, made their way along the tarmac to the shed which housed their machine. The last patrol of the day was already home, and the aerodrome was deserted except for a few mechanics who had been left to finish off odd jobs. Rex bent down and rubbed his hands on the muddy ground, and put a smear or two on his face.

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"It isn't much use wearing these rags if our faces look as if we have just stepped out of a bath," he observed. "We might as well do the job properly."

"Have you filled her up, Smythe?" he called to a mechanic, referring to the fuel tanks of the Bristol Fighter.

"Full right up, sir," replied the ack-emma.

"Good! Get her out." Half a dozen willing hands seized the machine and wheeled it out on to the deserted field. Rex and Tony took their places. "Switches off!" called the pilot.

The mechanic turned the big prop round several revolutions, and then, "Contact!" he called. There was a roar as the Rolls-Royce engine burst into sudden, palpitating life; little tongues of flame shot out of the exhaust. Slowly the machine swung round as the mechanic hung on to a wing tip, and Rex opened the throttle in little, short, sharp bursts.

Tony raised his hand above his head. The mechanic released the wing, glanced up, saluted, and the Bristol roared away into the silent sunset.

Up and up they climbed in wide circles in order to have plenty of height before they passed over into enemy sky. Once or twice the searchlights flashed their gleaming challenge, but Tony replied with the "colour of the night," and the Bristol proceeded on its way unmolested. At twelve thousand feet, still climbing, Rex headed for No Man's Land. Their dangerous mission had begun.

The German searchlights sprang up to meet them, but the pilot had little difficulty in avoiding them; little, dull red, twinkling fireflies in the distance showed where the German archie gunners were making poor shooting. For a quarter of an hour they flew thus, each busy with his own thoughts, and then Rex throttled back into an easy glide, peering ahead for his landmarks.

It was now quite dark, and the earth appeared as a vast black shadow beneath them, a shadow only broken by tiny points of light behind them, where bursting shells marked the position of the lines. Almost silently they crept through the night, a sinister shadow in the lonely sky. Tony felt the nose of the machine tip down and swerve slightly, and he knew that Rex had spotted the field which they had chosen for their landing ground.

Ahead of them, the landscape was shrouded in darkness, except where, in the far distance, a few twinkling lights began to appear, marking the position of the occupied town of Lille; a tiny, glowing, moving spark showed where a train was feeling its way into the zone of war. Lower and lower they sank, almost at stalling point, and Tony, leaning over the side, began to pick out details in the darkness below. The details became clearer; roads, trees, and woods were easily distinguishable.

The machine tilted, and a gust of air striking Tony on the side of the face told him that his pilot was slipping off the last two or three hundred feet of height. The machine swung up on an even keel again, and seemed to brush the tree-tops.

Rex, every fibre of his body tense, was watching the ground. The joystick came back, back, a fraction more, as he held the machine off. The wheels touched, the tail skid dragged, and, as they ran slowly to a standstill, he switched off the engine, and sat perfectly still, listening intently. All was silent as the grave.

Tony felt the same prickly sensation underneath his skin as he had the last time they landed in Germany after dark; with parted lips and straining eyes he stood in his cockpit staring into this gloom around him.

"I think this is the most trying part of all," he said, as they climbed quietly from their seats and dragged the machine to the hedge by the side of the field. Flying-coats, helmets, and goggles were thrown over the lower plane in readiness for their return; greasy caps replaced the flying-helmets on their heads.

"Come on!" said Rex, starting off at a steady pace along the hedge. "There is only one way to do a job like this if we are to be back before dawn!" he muttered quietly in guttural German as they walked. "We've got to behave as if we were afraid of nothing or nobody. If we start dodging about, or lying doggo at every sound, we shall be here all night, besides attracting attention to ourselves if anybody sees us."

Climbing a stile, they reached the main Lille road, and set off in the direction of the town.

A car overtook and passed them without even checking its speed. Once or twice they passed small parties of German soldiers, and once an old woman muttered something unintelligible at them as she passed with a heavy shopping-basket in her hand. A lorry trundled down the road from behind. As it drew level Rex looked quickly up and down the road. No one was in sight.

"Come on!" he said tersely, and took a flying leap at the tailboard. The lorry rumbled on with the two boys swinging their legs over the back. "I never walk when I can

ride," observed Rex sagely, as they bumped along over the ruts made by heavy transport wagons and guns.

In less than ten minutes they were on the outskirts of the town, and, seizing a suitable moment, they dropped off and fell in line on the pavement. German troops were everywhere; batteries of guns, ambulances, wagons, and other signs of the German occupation were parked in gardens and squares. A number of civilians were about, and Rex remarked several military police; but they might have lived in the town all their lives for all the notice that was taken of them.

"This should be it," said Rex at last, stopping at a narrow side-street off the main square. He glanced up at the name plate nailed on to the wall of a house opposite him. "Rue de la Concorde," he said softly.

It was one of those squalid streets so often found leading into a main thoroughfare. Dirty and rusty signs hung out over the pavement. Most of the shutters were closed, some hanging crazily on their hinges. The street was in darkness except for one or two widely separated lamp-posts, and, as far as they could see, deserted. The smell of stale food and unwashed clothes greeted them as they turned into it, their footsteps echoing noisily on the flagstones. A few drops of rain had started to fall, and the road shone dismally where the feeble light of the street-lamps fell on it.

Rex was counting the numbers on the doors. A sound of rattling crocks and laughter came from somewhere just ahead, and Tony nudged Rex as they passed a vile-looking, semi-basement bar packed with German troops to whom a slatternly looking woman was serving mugs of beer. At the next house beyond it Rex stopped.

"This is it," he said, in a low voice. He turned an eye on the villainous-looking grog-shop, and grinned. "I wish it was a bit farther away from that!" he muttered, as they turned into the doorway. The door was ajar, and through the crack they could see a dirty hall lighted by a single flickering gas-jet with a broken globe. A greasy deal table leaned crookedly against the wall; on it was a small iron bell with a spring attached, the sort one still sometimes sees behind shop doors.

Rex pushed the door open, entered, and, without any hesitation, picked up the bell and shook it. Tony bit his lip as the harsh jangle echoed noisily along the empty hall. As the echoes died away a door at the end opened, and an uncouth figure with long hair and a shade over one eye shuffled towards them.

"What brings you here at this hour of night?" it said, in a high, quavering voice.

"Fritz asked me to leave a message to say he would soon be home," replied Rex instantly.

"When am I to expect him?" almost snarled the man.

"At ten o'clock."

Without another word the man opened a door which led into a room off the hall and beckoned them to follow.

They found themselves in a dingy room which was even more depressing than the hall. The man lit an incandescent gasjet, but the burner was broken, and a streak of flame danced crookedly up and down the side, throwing flickering shadows into the corners of the room. The venetian blind was lowered, but the slats hung at all angles in the last stages of dilapidation; two chairs and an old stained table comprised the entire furniture.

"Well, where is it?" said the man curtly, with such a change of tone that Rex started; he handed him the letter without a word.

Their ill-visaged host tore open the flap impatiently and read in silence. He looked up when he had finished and eyed Rex narrowly with his one good eye.

"Wait!" he said, folding the letter and placing it in his pocket. He went out and shut the door.

"Lord! I hope he won't be long," whispered Tony; "this place gives me the creeps."

"It isn't exactly cheerful, I must admit," answered Rex in a low voice. "I wonder what's in here?" he added, opening a cupboard which was let into the wall. It was packed with clothes—some civilian, not unlike the ones they wore, but most of them were old German uniforms. "Ugh!" muttered Rex. "I don't like the look of those." He crossed over to the window and peered into the street through the slats of the broken blind. The next moment he was back in the room, white-faced and agitated. "Quick!" he gasped. "That man over there—the man under the lamp-post!"

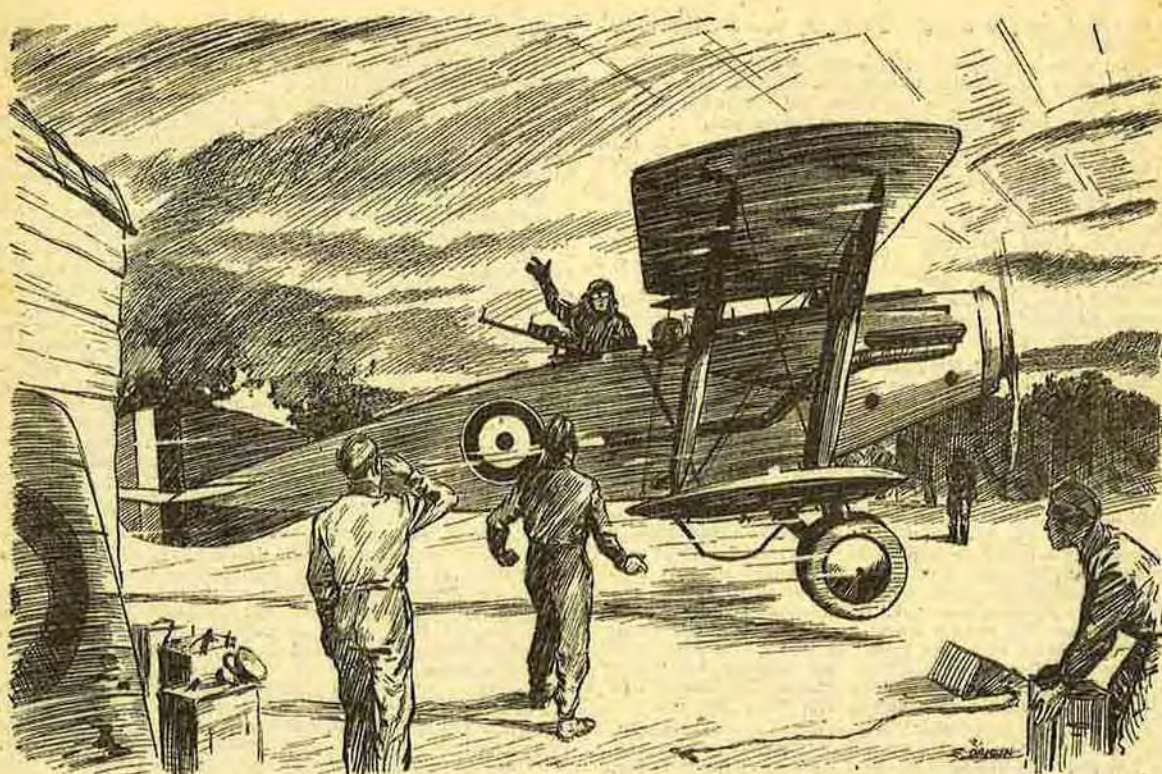
Tony sprang to the window and looked. Standing in the rain under the feeble light of the lamp was a man wearing a long macintosh. A Homburg hat was pulled down over his eyes, concealing his face; and even as Tony watched he turned his back and walked slowly up the street.

"I don't know who it is," he said. "He's gone now. Who did you think it was?"

"I thought it was Fairfax."

"Fairfax!"

"He looked up as I looked out, and the light fell on his



Slowly the machine swung round and Rex opened the throttle in little short, sharp bursts. Tony raised his hand above his head as the Bristol roared away into the silent sunset.

face just for an instant. I could have sworn it was Fairfax."

"It couldn't be! I think we are getting nervous," said Tony, in a voice that was not quite steady, peering again out of the window. "Look!" he said in a strained voice. "Those two German soldiers over there—what are they doing?"

Before Rex could reply their host had burst into the room. "The house is being surrounded!" he snapped. "It is every man for himself!"—and was gone.

The two boys heard the front door slam, and a figure darted quickly along the path. Before he had gone five yards two other figures had leapt from the shadow of a doorway and seized him. There was a short, sharp struggle, and the three disappeared into the darkness.

Rex felt his lips turn oddly dry. "Let's try the back," he muttered grimly; "we've no time to lose." The light in the hall had been extinguished, but with the aid of matches they groped their way to the kitchen at the rear. "Too late!" cried Rex in dismay. "We are trapped!" In the small courtyard stood four dark figures; the spiked helmets on their heads left no doubt as to who they were. "Quick!" cried Rex. "The roof—it's our only chance! No; wait!"

With Tony at his heels, he hurried back to the room near the front door, turned down the light to a glimmer, flung open the cupboard, and dragged the contents out on to the floor with one sweep of his arm.

"Get yourself a uniform!" he hissed in Tony's ear. It was the work of a moment to rip off their dark coats and trousers and replace them with the German field-grey. Rex turned out the light and groped his way to the door. At the foot of the stairs he paused.

"They must be waiting for us to come out," he whispered. "But I expect they'll rush the house at any moment."

They felt their way up the stairs as fast as they could, their heavy boots making a terrific noise on the uncarpeted boards. Two flights brought them to an attic, which was evidently the top of the house, and Rex strode to a small gable window which showed as a small pale square a shade less dark than their surroundings. He turned the latch and opened it.

"It's as black as pitch outside," he whispered, "and if we can get out, they may not see us."

As so often happens with the ornately decorated French houses, even of the poorer class, a cornice ran along the side of the building just below the windows.

"If it breaks we're sunk," whispered Rex. "But we're

that anyhow, so we might as well try it," he muttered, as he swung himself out, and, with his feet on the narrow ledge and his hands gripping the spouting, he started edging along the side of the wall. Tony followed. They reached another window like the one they had just left. With his heart in his mouth, Rex released his hold on the spouting with one hand, groped for the window, inserted his nails at the edge, and pulled. It opened easily.

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered as he slipped inside. For a full minute they stood trembling and panting in the darkness as they recovered from their nerve-racking ordeal.

"We are in the house on the left," breathed Rex. "Let me see, that's— Good heavens! We are in the house with the bar on the ground floor. Well, it's our only chance," he went on, after a long pause. "We've got to risk it; we can't go back."

They crossed the room quietly and opened the door. All was darkness outside. Rex struck a match, and they felt their way down a flight of rickety stairs. A gasjet was burning on the next landing below. As they reached it a door opened in the corridor, and an untidy-looking woman appeared on the threshold.

"What are you doing up there?" she chided them. "You know, you've no business up there!"

"Sorry!" said Rex. "I was looking—"

But the woman had passed on and entered another room.

They descended another flight of stairs and stood before a door, through which came the clink of glasses, coarse guttural voices, and laughter. Rex looked round in despair; there was no other way out except through the door.

"We've got to do it," he muttered hoarsely. "Pretend you're drunk; watch me, and do as I do."

He opened the door, blinked for a moment in the sudden flood of light that met their eyes, and swayed unsteadily into the room. Except for a few jeers directed at them, no one appeared to pay much attention as they lurched their way across the sawdust-strewn floor in the direction of the street door. Rex caught a gleam of a bayonet outside and turned back into the room, hiccupping.

"Nothing doing!" he whispered to his companion between the biceps.

An unter-offizier, wearing the Iron Cross, was leaning on the bar, boasting loudly of the number of Englishmen he had killed. A mug of beer stood near his elbow. Rex thrust his way unceremoniously through the group of listeners, picked up the beer, and drank it at a gulp.

"Hi, what are you doing? That's my beer!" roared the N.C.O. in a fury.

"Your beer—your beer? Thash my beer!" hiccuped Rex stupidly, drinking slightly to and fro, with an insane grin on his face. "Geroff, you ugly—hie, hie!—schwine!" He made a futile jab at the bristling face before him.

"Yes, thash his beer!" protested Tony, joining in the argument. "You're the s-short o' feller take a sholdier's beer!" he snorted aggressively.

A hush had fallen on the room; the N.C.O. glared at the pair with a baleful gleam in his eyes.

"You're drunk, you two!" he snarled. "I'll put you somewhere where you can cool your heels until the morning, and then I'll deal with you!"

He walked to the door and blew a whistle. Two soldiers wearing the black-and-white armlets of the military police came up at the double.

"Take those two to the guard-room!" roared the unter-offizier. "They're drunk! Don't stand any nonsense!"

"Me drunksh!" cried Rex with an incredulous giggle. "You're drunksh!"

There was a snigger of laughter; out of the corner of his eye Rex saw the two men on guard at the door peering into the room.

"Take 'em away!" roared the irate N.C.O.

Struggling and protesting, the two boys were dragged to the door. The two guards on duty grinned as they passed, and made no attempt to stop them. Out into the night and down the dripping pavement they were marched, each held by the scruff of the neck with no light grip. They had gone about a hundred yards and had reached a narrow alley when Rex heard a whistle blown in the street behind them. There was a crash of a door being forced open, and he knew that the house from which they had escaped was being rushed. He gave a hoarse gurgle, clutched his throat, and sagged limply into the arms of the man who held him.

"Here, hold up you—what's the matter?" cried the policeman, and then, "Karl, give me a hand, this pig's fainted." For a moment he released his hold on his prisoner's collar, and as he did so Rex stiffened into lightning-like activity. His arm jerked forward with all the strength and weight of his body behind it. His fist took the burly German in the pit of the stomach. The man gave a gasping grunt of agony and fell flat on his face. Whirling like a flash, Rex leapt at the second policeman, but Tony had already tackled his man; one arm was round his throat, and the other hand was over his mouth. Rex bent down and jerked his legs

from under him, and he crashed to the pavement. Tony seized the German by the collar, pulled up his head, and banged it down on the stone flags with all his force. The struggling body went limp.

There was a shrill whistle and a shout of alarm from higher up the street. "This way!" snapped Rex, and together they raced down the alley. It was raining steadily, and the water squelched from under their feet as they ran; fortunately, not a soul was in sight. The alley grew darker as they left the region of lamp-posts, and Rex ran with his eyes straining anxiously ahead. Suddenly he pulled up with a cry of dismay; facing them was a high brick wall.

"My goodness, it's a cul-de-sac!" he gasped, and at the same instant there was a loud outcry of voices from the corner of the street, and the sound of running footsteps.

"Here's a door!" cried Tony breathlessly. He turned the handle and flung himself against it. It was locked. Rex put his shoulder to it, but it was of heavy oak, and would not budge. The footsteps were close now, and rapidly drawing nearer. "Over the top," grunted Rex, and took a flying leap at the wall. His hands clutched the coping, he pulled himself up, sat astride for a moment to see that Tony managed it, and then dropped into the inky blackness over the other side. Tony landed with a thud beside him.

"Where the dickens are we?" gasped Tony, and then staggered back with his hand over his eyes. A flashlamp had split the darkness like a sword, and the light was directed on them.

"I've got you at last, you devils, have I?" snarled a malevolent voice. "I'll teach you to steal my eggs."

Rex mentally cursed the soldiers, who had evidently been robbing the man's hen-roost. Dimly, behind the light, he could see the bulky form of the man pointing a double-barrelled sporting gun at them. Outside, the footsteps were nearly opposite.

"It wasn't us, it was them!" yelled Rex despairingly, pointing over the man's shoulder. The trick was as old as the hills, but it worked. With an oath the man swung round, and as he turned Rex sprang at him like a tiger. With a sharp twist, he tore the gun from his hands, and with his shoulder sent him reeling. The torch flew across the ground and lay pointing in the direction of the wall, from which came hoarse cries and a thunder of rifle-butts hammering on the door. As Rex turned it burst open with a crash.

(Whatever you do, don't miss next week's thrilling instalment of "The Spy-Flyers!" It tells of how Rex and Tony make a thrilling escape from German territory!)



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Printed and published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement office: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by post as Periodical. Subscription rates: Inland and Abroad, 12s. per annum; 6s. 6d. for six months. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.,—Saturday, April 6th, 1933.

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