

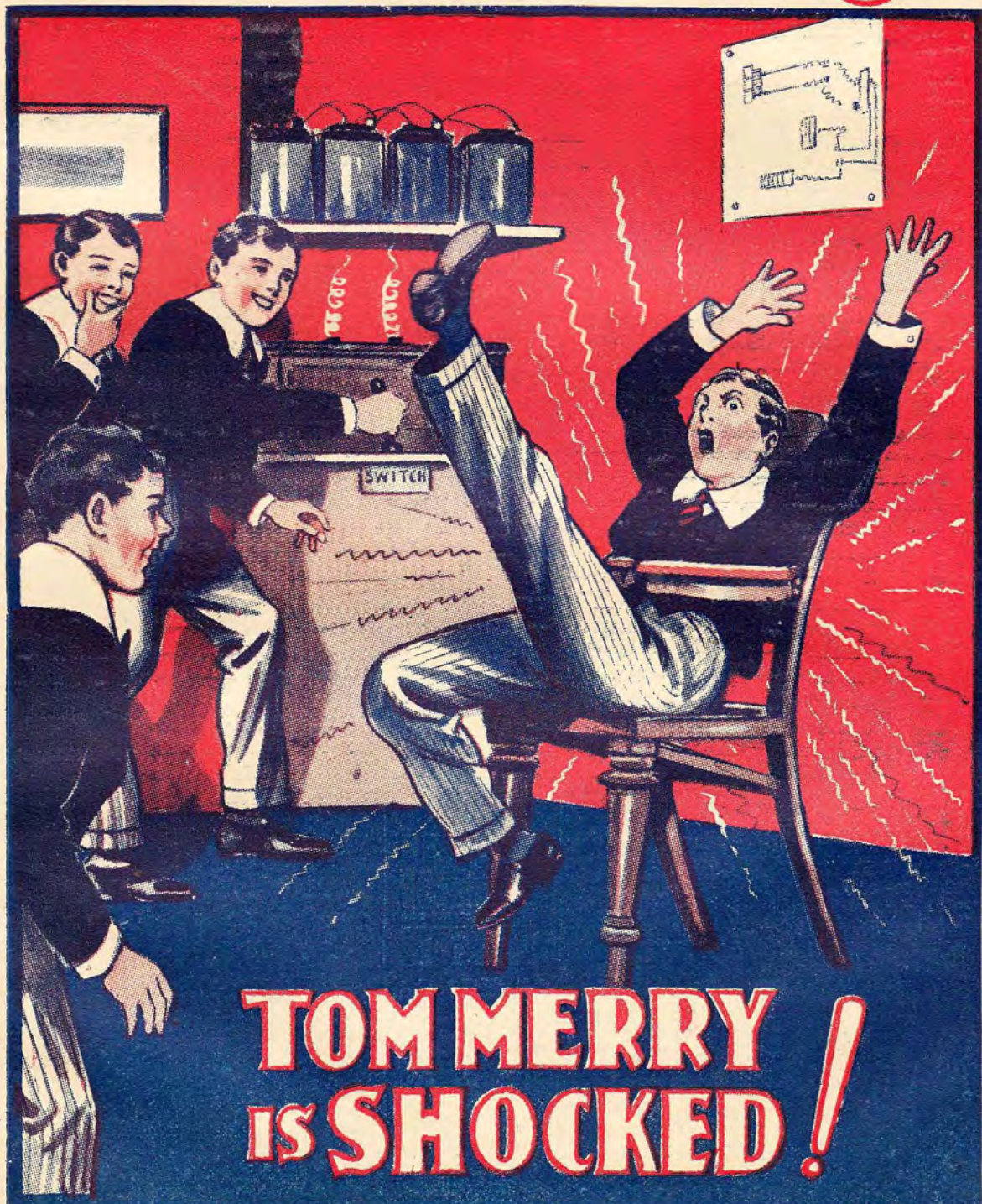
"THE BOY WITH TOO MANY FRIENDS!" RIPPING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN INSIDE!

GRAND
FREE GIFT

Coming in
TWO WEEKS'
TIME!

The GEM

2^d



**TOM MERRY
IS SHOCKED!**

The BOY WITH



Tom Merry has always been a popular boy at St. Jim's, but when his uncle invites him to Paris with a few of his friends, Tom finds that every boy in the school is his friend! He has a hard job selecting a party to take with him!

CHAPTER 1. Great News!

"TOM MERRY!"
No reply.
"Tom Merry!"
"Tom Mewwy!"

"Wake up, you ass!"
Tom Merry started.

He was sitting in the window of his study in the Shell passage of the School House of St. Jim's, with his legs dangling inside, and his shoulders resting in the ivy that clung round the window-frame. It wasn't a safe place to sit in, but Tom Merry apparently hadn't thought of that. He had a letter in his hand, and he was reading it, with close attention, when three or four juniors appeared at the door of the study and bombarded him with remarks.

They were Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form. They had looked in to speak to Tom Merry, but they found the hero of the Shell so absorbed in his letter that he was quite deaf to their remarks.

Hence their remarks rose crescendo till Tom Merry at last looked up.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon the junior in the window. "That is a wathah dangewous posish, deah boy, and any sudden shock might send you down into the quadwangle, you know."

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"Turn your face away, then," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"I wegard that remark as oppwobwious. I—"

"What's the matter with you, Merry?" demanded Jack Blake. "Here I've been—"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake—"

"I know that, Gussy. Here I've been shouting at you, Tom Merry, for five minutes—"

"Bai Jove! We haven't been heah a minute, you know."

"Well, one minute, then!" said Blake. "I'm not particular about a minute or two. Here I've been shouting at you for one minute, as Gussy is so exact—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"And you haven't answered a word. What's in that letter—tin?"

"No."

"Who is it from?"

"The chap who wrote it," said Tom Merry blandly.

"Look here, this is no time to be funny. We've called upon you on important business—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And we don't want any funny remarks. Is there any tin in that letter?"

"What-ho!"

"Much?"

"Yes."

"Jolly good!" said Blake, with keen satisfaction. "Fact is, we are stony in Study No. 6—Gussy has been wasting his money in the most reckless way possible—"

WANTS TO BE HIS FRIEND WHEN HIS UNCLE SENDS HIM AN INVITE!

TOO MANY FRIENDS!

By

Martin Clifford

"Weally, Blake—"
 "He lent a pound to Gore—"
 "Well, he wanted it, and I didn't know you were lookin'."
 "I'm always looking after you," said Blake severely.
 "Nice state you'd get into if I took my eye off you."
 "On the contwawy, it is I who—"
 "Don't interrupt! You see, Tom Merry, Gussy has blued the study funds in a reckless and riotous way, and we've got to raise the wind somehow till our allowances come. How much tin is there in that letter?"
 "Heaps."
 "Pound notes?" asked Blake, with great satisfaction.
 "No, banknotes."
 "Fivers?"
 "Yes."
 "How many?"
 "Five."
 "Oh, come off!" said Jack Blake incredulously. "Who's been sending you five fivers? Don't be funny, you know."
 "Honest Injun!"
 "My hat! Gussy's governor sometimes wastes fivers on him, but he has never sent him more than two at a time."
 "Wathah not! And he is cuttin' down the fivahs lately, you know. I am payin' the extwa taxes out of my pocket-money."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "It's not a laughin' mattah, Tom Mewwy. It is weally vewy hard cheese that a chap of fifteen should have to pay the extwa taxes out of his pocket-money."
 "Awfully rough," agreed Blake. "It comes rough on the whole study, for that matter. We are thinking of sending a round robin to D'Arcy's governor on this subject."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Meanwhile, we are stony. If you've got so many fivers knocking about, you can chuck one of them this way."
 "Tom Merry laughed.
 "Certainly."
 He extracted a flimsy oblong of paper from an envelope and flicked it across to Blake. The Fourth-Former caught it and stared at it in wonder.
 "For it was really a banknote."
 "My only hat! A fivah!"
 "By Jove!"
 "Oh hang!" said Digby. "We don't want all that, you know. Blake was joking. But is it a fact, Tom Merry? Have you got five fivers there?"
 "Solid fact."
 "Where on earth did they come from?" demanded Herries.
 "I suppose you haven't been robbing a bank?"
 "Oh, no!" laughed Tom Merry. "I've just had a letter."
 "With five fivers in it?" asked Blake.
 "Yes."
 "Sure it was for you?" said Blake anxiously. "It might have been delivered in your study by mistake. The post office people a asses, and Binks is always mixing up the letters. It might have been for me."
 "It was from my Uncle Frank."

"I've got an Uncle Frank," said Digby. "Sure the name on the envelope wasn't Arthur Digby, and not Tom Merry? The name's might look alike."

"Ha, ha, ha! No, it's for me. You remember Uncle Frank."

"I didn't know you had one."

"Well, I haven't, as a matter of fact."

"Eh? Then how do you get letters and collections of banknotes from him?" demanded Blake.

"It's Mr. Francis Fawcett, the brother of my old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett," Tom Merry explained.

"You remember him—we always called him Uncle Frank."

"Yaas, wathah! I wemembah he was a vewy decent sort."

"He's in Paris now," said Tom Merry. "He's there on business, and he has to stay there for some weeks. It's occurred to him that it would be a good opportunity for me to see something of Paris if I could get the Head's permission to join him there for a short time."

"Bai Jove!"

"Jolly thoughtful of Uncle Frank," said Blake, with a grunt. "I wish I had a few Uncle Franks in my family. I had an uncle going to Margate last vac, and when I hinted that I liked Margate he said—well, I won't tell you what he said. It wasn't polite, and didn't show a proper appreciation of his nephew. Look here, Tom Merry, I've got an Uncle George and an Aunt Selina—I'll swop for your Uncle Frank."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Are you goin', deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, polishing his eyeglass.

"What-ho!"

"Has the Head given his permish?"

"Yes. Uncle Frank obtained that before he mentioned the matter to me. He didn't want to risk my counting upon going and then being disappointed."

"Jolly thoughtful of him," said Herries. "Hallo! What are you screwing up that mug about, Gussy?"

"I wasn't awah that I was scowewin' up a mug, Hewwies," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "Pewwaps I was lookin' thoughtful. Of course, if Tom Mewwy is goin' to Pawis I shall have to go."

"Why?"

"Well, I don't like the ideah of twustin' Tom Mewwy in Pawis alone," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "You wemembah how he was always gettin' into

COMING IN TWO WEEKS' TIME!

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PIONEER AERO CAR.

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trouble in Liverpool, and how all you fellows got lost the time I took you to London. I should never expect to see Tom Merry again if I let him go abroad alone."

"Well, there's something in that," remarked Jack Blake. "Of course, you wouldn't be any use, but—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"But a chap like me would be wanted. Tom Merry couldn't very well get on without a chap with him speakin' French."

"I speak French all right!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Blake shook his head.

"It always surprised me that your Form master was satisfied with your French," he remarked. "Besides, it's a different thing speaking it in the country. I knew a chap who had French for six years at school, and when he went to Boulogne and asked for a cup of tea, they brought him a leg of mutton."

"Look here—"

"Have you arranged to take anybody with you?"

"My uncle says I had better have a few friends, if I can get the Head's permission. He will be busy a lot of the time, and he doesn't want me to be lonely."

"Good. As you will need an interpreter, you had better put my name down."

"Rats!"

"Now, look here, Tom Merry, je parle Francais jolly bien—I mean tres jolly—I mean—"

"You see, nobody will know what you mean," said Digby. "That's the point. Tom Merry wants a chap like me. Quand je parle le Francais, I—I mean je—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Herries. "What I think is—"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to shut up! I—"

"I say—"

"I insist upon goin' with Tom Merry! He will not be safe without me to keep an eye on him, and my French is first class. Je parle Francais extremely bien—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not see any reason for wibald laughtah. I—"

Tom Merry slipped off the window-sill.

"It's all right," he said. "I'll take you all if I can. Of course, Manners and Lowther come first!"

"Rats!"

"Manners and Lowther first. I expect Figgins & Co. will want to come, too. As a matter of fact, Kerr would be very useful as an interpreter."

"I am surprised at you settin' up a New House boundah ovah—"

"Rats! Kerr talks French like a real parley voo," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I'd like to take the whole blessed school—School House and New House. But it can't be did. I'll do the best I can. I should think it's jolly in Paris."

"Tres jolly," said Blake. "Certainement it is ripping! I simply must come!"

"Where are you going?" asked Digby, as Tom Merry made for the door.

"I'm going to see the Head."

"Good! Don't forget to ask him if I may come, deah boy."

"Rely on me!"

"Pewwaps I had better come with you," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I could explain mattahs bettah to Dr. Holmes."

"Oh rats!"

"I wefuse to—I mean, I wegard that wemark as wude. As a mattah of fact, you will probably fail to impress on Dr. Holmes the great necessity of my bein' in Pawis to look aftah you."

"Quite likely."

"It would be bettah for me to see the Head, and I could explain mattahs, and weally put it to him like an old sport, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will come—"

"Oh, chain him up!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"I'm off!"

Tom Merry, with the letter and the banknotes in his hand, quitted the study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made a motion to follow him, and was promptly grasped by Blake and Herries and Digby.

The swell of St. Jim's struggled in the muscular grasp of his chums.

"Pway welease me, deah boys!"

"Hold on!"

"I decline to wemain heah. I think I ought to see Dr. Holmes, and put it to him as a sportsman."

"Ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. I—"

"You'd only mess it up, you duffer."

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort, and I decline
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uttahly to be chawactewised as a duffah! If you do not immediately welease me, I shall no longah wegard you in the light of fwends!"

"Horrid!" said Blake. "But we'll risk it. Hang on to his ears, Digby!"

"Certainly!"

"Ow! I wefuse to have Dig hangin' on to my yahs!"

"Collar him by the hair, Herries!"

"Right-ho!"

"Ow! Welease me, Hewwies! If you exaspewate me I shall stwike you!"

"Go hon!"

"Look here, deah boys—"

"Bring him along to the study!"

"I wefuse—"

"Quick march!" said Blake.

And the chums of the Fourth quick-marched in the direction of Study No. 6, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, vainly resisting, quick-marched with them.

CHAPTER 2.

Affectionate Chums!

TOM MERRY seemed to be walking on air as he went along the passages towards the Head's study. He liked St. Jim's, and his life there was a happy one. But the prospect of a run abroad was naturally attractive and exciting to a junior of his age.

And Paris, too!

Tom Merry foresaw what he would have described as a really ripping time in the Gay City, especially if he could take a party of his chums with him.

That was the question. And that would require some diplomatic handling with the Head. Tom Merry would have liked to have taken a couple of dozen of the fellows, but that, of course, was impossible. The only thing was to take the greatest number that could be managed. How was he to put it to the Head?

Dr. Holmes was a very kind old gentleman. But he might fail to see why a crowd of juniors should absent themselves from their studies for a space.

The matter would require some diplomatic managing, and Tom Merry thought it out as he made his way along the School House passages.

He was so deep in thought that he did not observe three fellows belonging to the Shell, who were standing in the passage, and regarding him with considerable interest as he came up.

They were Kangaroo—otherwise Harry Noble, the Cornstalk chum—and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn, the chums of the end study.

Tom Merry, with his eyes on the ground and his brows corrugated in lines of deep thought, walked straight into them, and the three juniors made no movement to get out of the way.

Tom Merry was first aware of their presence when he cannoned right into Kangaroo, and staggered back from the shock with breathless exclamation.

"Oh!"

Kangaroo threw his arms around Tom Merry, and hugged him tight to his chest, under pretence of having saved him from falling.

"Just in time!" he exclaimed.

"Ow! Leggo!"

"I'm saving you from tumbling over."

"Yow! Chuck it!"

"Rats!" said Kangaroo, compressing his grasp until Tom Merry felt as if he were enclosed in tightening iron bands.

"I'm saving you!"

"You ass! Leggo!"

"Sure you're all right?"

"Ow! You're busting my ribs!" gasped Tom Merry, struggling in the grip of the Cornstalk. "Leggo! I'll dot you on the nose if you won't!"

He made a terrific wrench to get away, and at the same time Kangaroo opened his arms and released him. Tom went spinning with the force of his own efforts, biffed against the wall, and sat down with a bump on the linoleum.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Three.

"Ow! You ass!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Glyn. "Look here! Blessed if he isn't shedding banknotes on all sides!"

He picked up a rustling fiver. Dane picked up another, and Kangaroo collared one in each hand. Tom Merry still had one with the letter.

The chums of the end study stared at the banknotes in blank astonishment.

"Been robbing a bank?" demanded Kangaroo.

"No, ass!"

"Then where on earth did you get twenty-five pounds from?"



"Jump on him!" Bump! Figgins went crashing down on to the carpet. Fatty Wynn squatted on his chest, and when Fatty Wynn sat on anybody that body was pinned down quite safely! Kerr took Figgins by the hair and methodically bumped his head. "Ow!" yelled Figgins. "You asses!"

Tom Merry picked himself up, dusted his clothes, and set his collar straight.

"My uncle sent it to me," he said.

"Oh, my prophetic soul! My uncle!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "What on earth did you put in to raise twenty-five quid on? It wasn't your silver watch?"

"You ass!"

"Must have been the family plate," said Bernard Glyn. "How much interest will you have to pay your uncle on the twenty-five quid, Merry?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"I suppose you mean Uncle Solomons, three brass balls?" said Kangaroo.

"No, ass! It's my Uncle Frank."

"Where does he live?" asked Kangaroo anxiously. "Is he a bachelor, and looking for a nice boy to adopt?"

"Ass! He's in Paris, and he's sent me this cash to go over on a holiday there, and to take a few friends with me."

With one accord Cornstalk & Co. fell upon Tom Merry's neck and hugged him. They hugged him on all sides, dragging him hither and thither in the exuberance of their affectionate demonstration.

"Stop it!" roared Tom Merry. "Oh! Ow! You utter idiots! Chuck it!"

"He's going to take a few friends with him," murmured Kangaroo. "He came along here specially to ask me. I always loved Tom Merry."

"So did I," said Glyn affectionately. "The dear boy was always the apple of my eye. I'm fond of white rabbits and fried onions, but I love Tom Merry more than both of them put together."

"Just so!" said Dane. "We are really his best friends, and Lowther and Manners are only cheap imitations. We are going with him to Paris."

"Chuck it!"

"Rats! This is the scene where we love you."

"You utter asses!"

"I call that ungrateful; but, never mind, we love you all the same, if you're going to Paris."

Tom Merry jerked himself away at last.

The exuberant affection of Cornstalk & Co. had left its mark upon him. His collar was torn out, his necktie was streaming over his shoulder, and his hair strongly resembled a mop in appearance.

He glared wrathfully at the three.

"You silly chumps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You dangerous lunatics!"

"If that's not love, what is?" sighed Kangaroo. "Let's embrace him again."

"What-ho!"

Tom Merry dashed down the passage at full speed. He had had enough of the embraces of Cornstalk & Co. They dashed after him, and overtook him at the corner, and the four of them rolled on the floor.

Tom Merry struggled violently. Two Shell fellows came along the passage, and Tom yelled to them:

"Manners! Lowther! Rescue!"

Manners and Lowther rushed to the rescue at once. They didn't know what the trouble was, but they weren't likely to let a call from a chum pass unheeded.

Their attack took Cornstalk & Co. by surprise.

Kangaroo, Dane, and Glyn were rolled off Tom Merry, and bumped along the linoleum before they knew what was happening, and Tom Merry was dragged to his feet.

"Now, what's the row?" demanded Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry gasped for breath.

"Nothing; only those duffers playing the giddy goat."

Kangaroo sat up, and rubbed a swollen nose.

"Ow! I was only showing Tom Merry how fond I was of him. I love him like a brother—when he's going to Paris."

"Paris!" exclaimed Manners and Lowther together.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry. "I'm going to see the Head about it."

He hurried off towards the Head's study, with Manners and Lowther at his heels, leaving Cornstalk & Co. dusting themselves down and chuckling.

"I say, is it honest Injun," exclaimed Lowther, "you're going to Paris?"

"Yes. Uncle Frank's there."

"Taking anybody?"

"A few friends—as many as the Head permits."

"My hat!" said Lowther. "I'm jolly glad I chummed with you now, Tom, though it has been a bit of a trial to my feelings at times."

"Same here!" said Manners. "It's a source of satisfaction to me that I've put up with Tom Merry patiently ever since we came to St. Jim's."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Of course, you come first," he remarked. "I shall manage as many of the others as possible. I shall have to put it diplomatically to the Head."

Lowther gave a whistle as they stopped at the Head's door.

"Are you going to see the Head in that state, Tom?"

Tom Merry started.

He had forgotten the state his tussle with Cornstalk & Co. had left him in. He looked down at his dusty and dishevelled attire, and groped for his collar and tie.

"Oh, hang! I shall have to go and get tidy, I suppose. Bless those silly asses!"

"I'll see the Head for you, if you like," suggested Lowther. "I dare say I could put it to him in—well, a more convincing manner."

To which Tom Merry's reply was contained in the ancient and classic monosyllable "Rats!" And he hurried away to the Shell dormitory to make himself tidy for the interview with the Head.

CHAPTER 3.

Figgins & Co. Want to Go!

FIGGINS of the Fourth burst into his study in the New House at St. Jim's with a wildly excited face and an air of excitement.

Kerr was sitting at the table engaged in a deep and exacting mathematical problem, and Fatty Wynn was at the grate, turning some sausages over in a frying-pan to give them a final artistic browning.

Figgins' sudden entrance, and the wild war whoop with which he accompanied it, had disastrous results.

Kerr gave a jump, and scattered a fine variety of all sorts and conditions of blots over his paper. Fatty Wynn twisted round suddenly in alarm, and shot the contents of the frying-pan into the fire.

There was a terrific sizzle instantly, and a wail of anguish from Fatty Wynn.

"The sosses!"

"You ass!" roared Kerr, jumping up. "Look at that!"

"I say—"

"Look at my paper!"

"Look at the sossingers!"

"Never mind!"

Sizzle, sizzle!

Kerr and Wynn glared speechlessly at Figgins.

After spoiling Kerr's paper and wrecking Wynn's sausages, he said, "Never mind!" And their feelings were too deep for words, but not too deep for actions. They exchanged a glance, and fastened on Figgins like two bulldogs.

"Bump him!" shrieked Kerr.

"Hold on—"

"Have him down!"

"Jump on him!"

"Look here—"

Bump!

Figgins went down, bumping on the carpet. Fatty Wynn squatted on his chest, and when Fatty Wynn sat on anybody that body was pinned down quite safely. Fatty Wynn was not a light-weight.

Kerr took Figgins by the hair, and methodically bumped his head on the carpet. Figgins squirmed and yelled, but with Fatty's weight on him he could do nothing more.

Meanwhile, the sausages were burning and sizzling in the fire, and the smell thereof was simply appalling.

It pervaded the study with the thickness almost of soup, and blackness settled in clouds upon everybody.

"Oh!" gasped Figgins. "You asses—"

"Bump him!"

"You dangerous lunatics, lemme gerrup! I've got news!"

"You've spoiled my paper!"

"My sossingers are messed up!"

"Look here—"

"Great Scott! What's the matter here?" exclaimed a

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voice, and Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, looked in at the open door. "Place on fire, or what?"

"Bump him!"

"You young asses!"

The prefect strode into the room and seized Kerr and Fatty each by the back of the collar, and jerked them off Figgins. Figgins sat up ruefully, and rubbed his head.

"Thanks, Monteith!"

"What's the matter?" demanded the senior. "Are you dotty?"

"Oh, we were only bumping Figgins for playing the giddy goat!" said Kerr. "It's all right."

"This smell is not all right. Open the window, you young sweeps, and clear that mess off the fire! Take fifty lines each!"

"Oh!"

And Monteith, nearly suffocated, stamped out of the study, and banged the door behind him to keep the blacks and the scent from following him into the passage.

Kerr ran to the window and opened it, and Fatty Wynn scraped the remains of the sausages off the glowing coals with a shovel, and pushed them to the back of the grate.

Figgins glared at his chums.

"You silly cuckoos—"

"You utter ass!" growled Kerr. "What's the matter with you? What do you mean by bursting in on a chap like the wild man from Borneo?"

"Those sossingers were beautifully done—"

"I've got news!"

"Blow your news!" growled Fatty Wynn discontentedly. "Look at those sosses! I had them done almost to a turn!"

"Never mind—"

"Never mind!" howled Fatty Wynn. "But I do mind! I'm hungry! I haven't had anything since dinner, except a mutton pie, and a beefsteak pudding, and some rice cake. I'm simply famished, and the sosses were just ready!"

"Never mind—"

At the repetition of these obnoxious words Fatty Wynn looked positively dangerous. He picked up the frying-pan, and made a step towards Figgins.

"Hold on, Fatty!" exclaimed Figgins, dodging round the table. "It's all right!"

"All right, you utter ass—"

"I mean, never mind!"

"My hat! I'll—I'll brain him!" gasped Fatty Wynn, rushing round the table after Figgins. "I'll—I'll—"

"Keep your wool on!"

"You—you long-legged ass—"

"It's all right—I mean, never mind the sosses! I've got news—great news! Keep your wool on, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn lowered the frying-pan, and glared over it wrathfully at Figgins.

"Well, don't say never mind again, or you'll get this on your napper!" he said. "It's bad enough to have one's sossingers ruined, without being told to never mind!"

"Of course! Never—ahem!—I mean, listen to me!" said Figgins. "I've got news. I've just had it from Blake of the School House."

"What's the news?" asked Fatty Wynn, showing some interest at last. "Are they getting up a feed?"

Figgins sniffed.

"Trust you to think of a feed!" he exclaimed.

"Well, you said it was great news."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr. "There's only one kind of great news for Fatty, and that's news of a feed."

"It's better than a feed, Fatty," grinned Figgins. "Tom Merry is going to Paris."

"Tom Merry—Paris!"

"Yes; and he's taking a few friends with him."

"Aha!" said Kerr.

"Number's limited, of course," said Figgins. "But it immediately occurred to me that we were jolly good friends of Tom Merry's, and that we were bound to go."

"What-ho!"

"It appears that nearly everybody in the School House has made up his mind to go," continued Figgins. "Of course, the number will be limited. The Head won't let a dozen chaps off, though I know he'd do a great deal to prevent Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's dear old friend, from coming here again. He respects her very much—at Laurel Villa—and likes her first-rate, so long as she stays at Huckleberry Heath. I believe he would let half the Shell and the Fourth Form come to Paris with us, rather than have Miss Fawcett come to St. Jim's to persuade him."

Kerr and Wynn chuckled.

They remembered clearly Miss Priscilla's last visit to the school. She had taken up her abode in the School House, and the New House fellows had not suffered much from her kind determination to better things all round; but they had heard of the dire trouble caused in the School

House, and Figgins had declared that Dr. Holmes' hair was whiter since the visit of Miss Fawcett.

"The question for us to settle is how to get permission to go with Tom Merry," said Figgins. "Of course, we must go!"

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr emphatically.

Fatty Wynn rolled his eyes.

"I've heard that Parisian cooks are simply marvellous," he remarked. "I've often studied menus, you know, when I've wanted something interesting to read. The ways they can turn a thing out are amazing. I shall very likely pick up a lot of tips from the restaurateurs. You chaps won't mind if I chum up with a waiter, will you—garsong, I think they call them?"

"You shall chum up with anybody you like, from the President to the newsboy on the Pont Neuf," said Figgins. "The only question is—how to get included in the party. Tom Merry is a reasonable chap in some ways, but he is almost certain to pick School House chaps to go with him."

Kerr shook his head gravely.

"I shouldn't wonder. We shall have to put it to him straight. Of course, the thing has got to be managed, somehow. If a School House party went to Paris, and the New House were left out, it would be one up against the House. They would send us picture postcards to rub it in, you know."

"Suppose we stand him a feed?" suggested Fatty Wynn. "It would put him in a good temper, and we could talk him over. It always makes me feel affable having a good feed."

"It mayn't have the same effect on Tom Merry, but we'll see," said Figgins, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "Let's go over and interview the chap, anyway. If we're first in the field we may get a promise from him, you know."

"Good egg!"

"But I say—" began Fatty Wynn.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked Kerr, who was putting on his cap.

"Why, you see—"

"Buck up!"

"We haven't had tea—"

"We can have tea afterwards."

"Yes; but I'm hungry," said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "You don't seem to understand that I haven't had anything since dinner, except a mutton pie and a beefsteak pud—"

"And everything else you could lay your hands on, I suppose," grunted Figgins. "You can gorge presently. Let's get out!"

"But—"

"Come on!" exclaimed Figgins, leaving the study.

Kerr followed him, and Fatty Wynn, after a moment or two of hesitation, did likewise.

CHAPTER 4. New Friends!

F IGGINS & Co. reached the School House in the growing dusk.

Several juniors were seated on the broad, stone balustrade of the School House steps, and they greeted the New House trio with grins and catcalls as they came up—that is to say, three of them did so. The fourth was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, and catcalls were far below his dignity. He simply jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and fixed a stare upon Figgins & Co.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked, as soon as they came within hearing. "It's the New House boundahs! I wondah what they want on the respectable side of the quadwangle?"

Jack Blake waved his hand.

"Sorry; but we haven't anything to give away," he remarked. "Try the kitchen door."

Figgins & Co. glared.

"We've come to see Tom Merry," said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, you know, I wegard this as wathah funnay!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The boundahs have come ovah to see Tom Mewwy. It's wemarkably funnay! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake and Herries and Digby.

"What on earth is the cackle about?" demanded Figgins, mystified. "Why shouldn't we see Tom Merry if we like?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has he gone out?"

"Oh, no; he's in, right enough."

"Where is he, then?"

"Up in the Shell dormitory, I believe. He went up there to get tidy, after Cornstalk & Co. had been showing their affection."

"Well, we're jolly well going in to see him!" said Figgins defiantly.

Blake waved his hands to the open portal of the School House.

"Go in, and welcome, my sons! The more the merrier!"

"Blessed if I know what you're driving at! But we're going in, anyway. Come on, kids!"

And Figgins & Co. marched into the School House, leaving the chums of Study No. 6 sitting in a row on the balustrade and laughing hysterically.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, met Figgins & Co. in the Hall and stopped them. The big, handsome Sixth-Former was smiling, as though there were some joke going on.

"What are you juniors doing out of your House?" he asked.

"We want to speak to Tom Merry," said Figgins meekly. "Rather important business."

Kildare chuckled. He had evidently heard of the projected trip to Paris, and guessed what was the important business of Figgins & Co.

"Can we go up?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"Oh, yes; only don't make a row."

"We haven't come here to make a row, Kildare."

Kildare laughed.

"Oh, these things happen," he remarked. "Be careful,

DON'T FORGET! A Grand Free Gift is Coming the Week after Next!

that's all. There's enough row going on now in the Shell quarters."

The chums of the New House went upstairs. They were feeling very mystified, but as soon as they entered the passage in which the Shell dormitory opened they understood.

The passage was crowded.

The dormitory door was apparently locked, for junior after junior tried it, and it did not open. Reilly of the Fourth was bawling through the keyhole as Figgins & Co. arrived, and a dozen or more other fellows were standing round, most of them with excited faces.

"Tom Merry! Alanna! Tom Merry, ye omadhaun!"

"Hallo!" came a voice from within the dormitory.

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

"Faith, and I'm wanting to speak to ye!"

"More rats!"

Reilly shook the handle of the door.

"Is it thrue that ye're going to Paris entoirely, Tom Merry?" he yelled through the keyhole.

"What-ho!"

"Ye're taking some friends?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Faith, and it's a bhoys like me you want wid ye!" called out Reilly. "Are you thinking of asking me to come?"

"Not half!"

"Do ye want me to come?"

"Of course I do! I'd be only too glad to have your chivvy in the train, but the Head won't let me take everybody. You can go to Belfast."

"Arrah, and I'll be licking ye soon, Tom Merry! Are ye going to give me first chance?"

"Not much."

"Faith, and I'll—"

"Oh, go and eat cokernuts!"

Reilly rattled the door and yelled through the keyhole, but elicited no further response. The sound of a chuckle was heard within, and that was all. Lowther and Manners and Tom Merry had locked the door at first sight of a junior on the track, and it was just as well, or Tom Merry would have been mobbed.

The idea of going to Paris had caught on in the School House, and everybody wanted to go. Fellows whom Tom Merry hardly knew had developed a suddenly strong and attached friendship for him; even chaps he had quarrelled with remembered that upon the whole they had always liked old Merry.

"Oh, get away with you!" said Kerruish of the Fourth.

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"He doesn't want a wild Irishman with him in Paris. It's a lad from Manxland he really wants."

"Faith, and I—"

"Let me speak to him."

"You can speak," grinned Gore of the Shell, "but it won't do you much good, I fancy."

Kerruish bawled through the keyhole of the dormitory door.

"I say, Tom Merry!"

"Oh, go on your travels!"

"Were you thinking of asking me to come to Paris?"

"Not this evening."

"Look here, if you ask me to come, I'll have you for a holiday in the Isle of Man and show you Douglas and Ramsey, and Port St. Mary, and the glens."

"I'll come if you like, with pleasure; but never mind Paris. I'll take you to the North Pole when I go there. Is it a bargain?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Kerruish.

Macgregor minor pushed Kerruish aside and yelled through the keyhole.

"Never mind all these duffers, Tom Merry. You'd better take me to Paris, you know, and I will be your interpreter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at?"

"You."

"You fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no good," said Mellish of the Fourth. "Tom Merry means to make up his party without consulting us! I vote that we rag him as he comes out. What do you say, Gore?"

Gore stared at the cad of the Fourth.

"I say shut up!" he replied curtly.

"Look here, Gore—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"My only hat!" said Figgins. "There are candidates enough for the trip to Paris. Tom Merry will want a special train and a double-size boat to take the lot!"

"Hallo! What are you New House bounders doing here?" exclaimed Hancock of the Fourth.

"We've come to see Tom Merry."

"Well, of all the cheek! Do you think you're going to Paris with him?"

"Don't you ask questions, my son, and I'll tell you no fabrications," said Figgins loftily. "I suppose Merry's not likely to take any of you noisy kids, anyway."

"Who are you calling kids?"

"You School House monkeys! Why—"

"Collar the bounders!" shouted Kerruish. "Kick them out!"

"Hold on!" muttered Mellish. "Kildare has just been up here, and he said he would come up again if there was any row."

Figgins chuckled. The threatened rush was stopped; nobody there wanted the captain of St. Jim's to come up with a cane.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole of the Shell, coming along the passage, blinking through his big glasses. "Has anybody seen Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Here's another chap wants Tom Merry!"

Skimpole blinked round in surprise. He did not understand why his inquiry after the hero of the Shell should evoke such a howl of merriment. He was not yet aware that Tom Merry was the most sought-after person at St. Jim's.

"I want to see him very much," he remarked. "I hear that he is going to Paris."

"Ha, ha, ha! Just heard it?"

"He is also going to take a few friends with him. It has occurred to me that he might like me to be of the party."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I really do not see any cause for merriment in that remark. I should like very much to go to Paris. Being a Determinist, I should like to study the movements in that city."

"Tom Merry is sure to take you—I don't think!" remarked Figgins.

"I should be of great use to him, for although I do not speak French very well, I should be the most intelligent member of the party, and should take the lead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Figgins—"

The door of the dormitory rattled, and there was a general turning of the juniors towards it. Tom Merry was coming out.

"Look out!" whispered Kerruish.

"He's coming!"

"Mind he doesn't get through."

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"Collar him the moment he comes out."

Skimpole blinked round in surprise.

"Is Tom Merry in there?"

"Yes, ass! Stand back!"

"But I want to speak to him."

"So do we all, duffer!"

"I want to go with him to Paris—"

"So do we all, ass!"

"Dear me!"

The dormitory door opened, and the Terrible Three came out. In a moment they were the centre of an excited throng.

CHAPTER 5.

The Rescuers!

TOM MERRY staggered back into the doorway of the dormitory, with three or four juniors grasping him. Manners reeled into the passage, in the grasp of as many more. Monty Lowther backed up against the wall, and put up his fists. He hit out right and left, and two or three candidates for the Paris trip rolled on the linoleum.

Round the chums of the Shell the juniors surged excitedly.

"Am I going to Paris with you, Merry?"

"Going to ask the Head to let me go?"

"Faith, and I'll come, and—"

"Look here—"

"Answer me!"

"Can't you speak, you image?"

"Bump him!"

Figgins grinned at his comrades:

"This is where we come in!" he whispered. "Heroic rescuers, you know—must be taken to Paris out of gratitude."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, and sock into them!"

And Figgins & Co. rushed into the fray.

The sudden rush sent the juniors whirling. For Figgins & Co., added to the Terrible Three, formed a formidable band, and the odds were nothing to them.

The candidates for Paris found the tables turned against them, and they were rushed along the passage, and half of them fled in various directions, and those who remained were bumped over mercilessly.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "This is getting exciting! Anybody hurt?"

"Faith, I'm kilt entirely!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kick them out!" said Monty Lowther.

"Good egg!"

And the Paris candidates were helped along with gentle shoves from heavy boots, and the passage was soon cleared of them.

"Many thanks, Figgy!" said Tom Merry. "You came just in the nick of time. I've only just cleaned up after the last row, and I don't want to be bumped again. I've got to see the Head."

"Quite welcome," said Figgins genially. "As a matter of fact, we had come over to see you, Merry."

"All right, wait in my study. I'm going to see the Head now."

"Half a mo'!" said Figgins. "It's about Paris."

Tom Merry chuckled.

"What about Paris?"

"We were thinking that if you made up a party we'd like to come. Kerr can talk French like—a parrot—"

"I've never heard a parrot talk French," said Monty Lowther.

"There's lots of things you've never heard!" retorted Figgins. "I suppose parrots talk French in France. Anyway, Kerr can jabber away in French just as if he understood it—"

"I do understand it, you ass!" exclaimed Kerr indignantly.

"Ye-es, of course you do; I didn't mean that. You see, Kerr will do for the interpreting part of the job, and Fatty will give advice about the grub. I shall look after you generally, and take care of you if there are any rows."

"Thanks for nothing."

"Oh, come now—"

"It depends on the Head," explained Tom Merry. "I shall take Manners and Lowther, of course. That's understood. If the Head will let me take any more, I'll take you chaps with pleasure. I should be jolly glad to have you with me, of course."

"You'll try to fix it with the Head?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good!" exclaimed Figgins, giving Tom Merry a slap on



While Wynn gasped for breath Blake drew a cord from his pocket and the fat legs of the New House junior were fastened to the legs of the chair. Fatty Wynn was a helpless prisoner—a hostage for Figgins & Co.

the back that fairly made him stagger. "Jolly good of you, old son!"

"You utter ass! That's my backbone!"

"Excuse me—only a little exuberance," said Figgins.

"If there's any more exuberance, somebody will get a dot on the nose," said Tom Merry. "Better wait for me outside the Head's study, and I can let you know the verdict. This way."

And the whole party proceeded towards the Head's study. It was just as well that Tom Merry had an escort, for juniors were lurking in all sorts of unexpected places to pounce upon him.

There was a sudden yell as he entered the Fourth Form passage to go to the stairs.

"Here he is!"

And there was a rush of feet. A crew of Third Form fags, with D'Arcy minor—the younger brother of Arthur Augustus—at their head, rushed up.

"Line up!" exclaimed Figgins.

The fags halted at the sight of half a dozen juniors with their fists up. Even Wally D'Arcy hesitated.

"We want to speak to Tom Merry!" he exclaimed.

"Speak away, my son!"

"You're going to Paris?"

"What-ho!"

"I'm coming with you."

"Your mistake!" said Tom Merry blandly. "You're not, you know!"

"Look here—"

"Rag him!" yelled the fags.

"Forward!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "If any fags get in the way tread on them!"

There was a yell of wrath from the fags, but the half-dozen marched on steadily and pushed their way through.

Wally gazed after them with knitted brows.

"Hold on!" he said. "I'm going, all the same!"

"So am I!" said Jameson.

"Me, too!" said Curly Gibson, ungrammatically, but very emphatically.

"I don't know about you kids," said Wally, shaking his head, "but I'm going! My brother Gus is certain to go, and I'm jolly well not going to be left behind!"

"Look here, young D'Arcy—"

"Oh, cheese it! I'm going to think it out!" said D'Arcy minor, and he marched off with wrinkled brows.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. reached the door of the Head's study without further mishap. Tom Merry tapped and entered, while Monty Lowther and Manners, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn waited outside anxiously for the verdict.

CHAPTER 6.

Figgins & Co. Rejoice!

DR. HOLMES, the head of St. Jim's, wore a grave and thoughtful expression when Tom Merry entered the study.

One glance at the serious face, and Tom knew that the Head guessed beforehand the object of his call, and was prepared for it.

Tom Merry was just a trifle disconcerted, but he meant to do his best. The Head looked straight at him.

"Well, Merry?"

"You have heard from Mr. Fawcett, sir?"

"Yes, I had his letter some days ago. I have granted permission for you to join him in Paris for a week or two."

"Thank you very much, sir. My uncle—I mean, Mr. Fawcett—suggested that it would be a good wheeze—I—I mean—a good plan, sir, to—to take a few friends with me, if you would give your permission, sir."

The Head smiled grimly.

"Quite right, Merry. I have already spoken to your Form-master on the matter. I presume that you wish to take your study-mates—Manners and Lowther?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Linton thinks that they will not suffer materially by a short absence from classes, as they are both hard workers," said the Head. "You may take them."

"Oh, thank you, sir! And—"

"I think that is all, Merry."

"Oh, no, sir! I—"

"You will know when to start. You will leave St. Jim's to-morrow for home, and thence proceed to Dover. It appears that Miss Fawcett wishes to see you before you start, to say good-bye."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"You may start for Huckleberry Heath by the first train, Merry, and take Manners and Lowther with you. They will have to communicate with their people, of course, but you can receive the replies at Miss Fawcett's residence before leaving."

"Very good, sir, but—"

"I think that is all. You may go."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"Really, Merry—"

"There is—is another matter I wanted to speak about, sir," stammered Tom Merry hurriedly. "I—I—"

The Head made a gesture of resignation.

"You may go on, Merry."

"Thank you, sir. Don't you—er—think that it would be a good thing for some of the juniors, sir, to—to have a nice little trip to Paris? It would—er—open their minds, and teach them a lot of—of foreign geography that they can't learn from books, sir."

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"There is something in what you say, Merry. Foreign travel is an education in itself."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry encouraged. "That's exactly what I thought; and this seems a good opportunity of—of taking some of the fellows' abroad, sir."

"I suppose you mean that you wish to take a large party, Merry?"

GRAND FREE GIFT IN TWO WEEKS' TIME!

"Oh, no, sir, not a very large party. I always think large parties are a mistake. Say a dozen or fifteen chaps—"

"Really, Merry, I should call that a very large party indeed. Your uncle would hardly be obliged to you for bringing so much responsibility upon his hands."

"Oh, sir, Mr. Fawcett's as good as gold—he's the real thing, sir! He's fond of boys, and he'd like it."

"Ahem! I could hardly allow you to inflict a dozen juniors upon him, even if his goodness were equal to the strain."

"But, sir, if you please—"

"Come, Merry, does it not occur to you that you are asking a little too much?" said the Head quietly.

Tom Merry coloured.

"Perhaps so, sir. I'm sorry!"

"Not at all! It is very kind of you to think of your friends when you are going on a holiday, and to wish to take them, but I cannot allow you to take away so many from their lessons, nor would it be fair to Mr. Fawcett. You must consider, too, the expense."

"My uncle has sent me twenty-five pounds for expenses, sir."

"That would hardly pay the fare for so many, Merry."

"Oh, we should all club together, of course, sir."

"Ahem! Now, Merry, you are one of the best of my pupils, and I wish to make this little excursion of yours a success. You are one of the boys I can trust implicitly. There are boys in your Form to whom I should not dream of giving this freedom, as you know. Now, suppose we say that the party shall consist of six? I am sure you will agree that I am going a great way to meet your wishes."

"Yes, sir. It is very kind of you."

"Then we shall settle upon that number," said the Head. "You shall choose them as you please, subject to the consent, of course, of their Form masters."

"Very well, sir."

Tom Merry thanked the Head again and left the study. He was both contented and disappointed. He had hardly expected to get permission for five comrades to accompany him to Paris, while at the same time he had hoped for more; and his promise to Figgins & Co. occurred uneasily.

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to his mind. They would take it that they were to have first chance, and what about the chums of Study No. 6?

Lowther and Manners and the New House juniors met Tom with eager looks as he emerged from the study.

"Well?" said five voices in unison.

"Is it all right?" asked Figgins quickly.

Tom nodded.

"It's all right—in a way."

"How do you mean?"

"I've got permission to make the party up to six."

Figgins grinned gleefully.

"Jolly good! That makes it all right—we're six."

"Good egg!" said Kerr. "The Head's a brick!"

"Blessed if I wouldn't like to stand him a feed!" said Fatty Wynn enthusiastically.

"Phew!" said Manners and Lowther.

"Well, what are you phewing about?" demanded Figgins.

"I was thinking of Blake and the rest."

Figgins looked grave.

"Here, hang it, we had first chance!"

"That's all right," said Tom Merry quickly. "That's the compact. We must see what we can do about Blake and Gussy and Dig and Herries."

"And there's the Noble," said Manners. "I'd like him to come."

Figgins looked at the Co. and made a heroic effort.

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"What is it?"

"Look here—" Figgins hesitated. "Look here, if you'd rather take Blake's lot, we'll slide. I didn't mean to chisel you into taking us. I suppose you'd rather have School House chaps. It's all right. Take Blake."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Rot! You're coming."

"But, I say—"

"We'll fix it about Study No. 6 if we can," said Tom Merry; "but I said I'd give you first chance, and I stick to it."

"Well, if you think you will—"

"It's settled."

"Good, then," said Figgins. "We'd better wire to our people to-night and ask them to answer at once."

"Answer to Laurel Villa," said Tom Merry. "We're starting from there."

"Good! We'll go and see about it. We may as well cut down to the post office at once. What are you looking glum about, Fatty? I suppose you want to come to Paris?"

"Yes, rather!" said the fat Fourth-Former, with a start.

"Then wherefore that worried look, ass?"

"Well, I was thinking that—er—"

"If it's a question of tin, it's all right," said Tom Merry.

"My uncle has sent me the money for the expenses."

"It isn't that, but— Well, about those wires?"

"We're going to the post office at once," said Figgins.

"What the dickens is he bothering about?"

"Well, it's all very well for you to say that we're going to the post office at once," said Fatty Wynn, "but—"

"But what?"

"I'm hungry."

"You're hungry?" said Figgins in measured tones.

"Yes. I haven't had my tea yet, and I've had nothing to eat since dinner except a mutton-pie and a beef-steak pudding and a—"

"You fat fathead!"

"I'm hungry. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"I don't see anything funny in being hungry," grunted Fatty Wynn. "I think it's simply heartless of Figgins to suggest dragging me off to the post office now, before I've had my tea. I— Hallo! Leggo!"

But Figgins and Kerr had seized the fat Fourth-Former one by either arm, and were marching him off. The Terrible Three laughed heartily.

"I'm sorry about Blake & Co. though," Tom Merry remarked, as they walked away to their own quarters. "I wonder if I could fix it somehow?"

"Hallo! Look out!"

In the Fourth Form passage four juniors were waiting—and evidently waiting for the Terrible Three. They were the chums of Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 7.

Like a Lamb to the Slaughter!

JACK BLAKE nodded affably to the chums of the Shell. The four juniors were lining up across the passage, and so it was impossible for the Terrible Three to pass on without a tussle.

They halted.

"Been to the Head, Tom Merry?" asked Blake casually.

"Yes, I've just been."

"Got permission to take a party?"

"Yes, six."
 "Leaving out Manners and Lowther?"
 "Not much!"
 "Hum! Well, I suppose one can't object to your taking your own study-mates," said Blake, with an air of reflection.
 "That's really only fair."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "But it means one of us standing out," said Digby.
 "Yes, that's the worst of it."
 "You see—" began Tom Merry.
 Blake & Co. had jumped to the conclusion that they were to make up the party, and it was a little awkward to explain. Tom Merry was not allowed time, either.
 "All right," said Blake. "One of us stands out. It can't be helped. Hands up for volunteers!"
 "You see—" recommenced Tom Merry.
 There were no hands put up.
 "You are sure you want to go, Gussy?" asked Blake.
 "Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"
 "Sure you want to go, Dig?"
 "Yes, rather!"
 "You, Herries?"
 "What-ho!"
 "You wouldn't be able to take your bulldog," said Blake persuasively. "They wouldn't let a beast like that land in France, you know, and you'd have to pay a lot for him if they did. Now, the question is, do you think Towser will be properly looked after while you're away?"
 "Yaas, wathah! That's a vewy sewious question, Hewwies."
 Herries grunted.
 "I don't see why I shouldn't take Towser. He would like a run on the Continent."
 "Imposs. deah boy!"
 "Well, Taggles would look after him for me. He's done so before, and Towser's none the worse for it," said Herries. "Anyway, I'm going to Paris."
 "What about you, Dig? Do you think your father would be anxious about you?"
 "No, I don't."
 "What about your mother? I shouldn't like your mother to be anxious about you," said Blake, with great solicitude.
 Digby snorted.
 "Never mind my mother."
 "But I must mind your mother. If she would be anxious—"
 "She wouldn't."
 "Then I suppose it's Gussy who will have to stand out. I am sorry for it as I shall miss Gussy; but—"
 "I shall uttably wefuse to stand out!"
 "Now, be reasonable, Gussy."
 "I wefuse to be weasonable! I—I mean, I wegard you as a wank ass. I should like to know what will become of the party if I do not accompany it. You will get into some feafuhl twouble in Pawis. I have heard my governah say that there are all sorts of pewils there, though he did not specify what they were."
 "H'm!"
 "What Tom Mewwy wequahs with him is a fellah of tact and judgment. For Tom Mewwy's own sake I insist upon bein' in the partay."
 "You see—" said Tom Merry.
 "Undah the circe, the only thing is for Blake to wesign."
 "Now, don't be funny, Gussy!"
 "I am quite sewious. Of course, I shall miss you. But I will make it a point to send you a pictuah-postcard ewery day, so that you will, as a mattah of fact, see ewerythin' that we see."
 "You funny merchant!"
 "I wefuse to be chawactewised as a funny merchant! I—"
 "You see—" said Tom Merry.
 "I say, suppose we let Tom Merry decide!" exclaimed Digby. "After all, it's his party, and he ought to have a voice in the matter, perhaps."
 "Go hon!" said Monty Lowther.
 "Go ahead, Tom Merry, you're umpire!" said Blake tersely.
 "You see, you can't come!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It's unfortunate, but I have promised Figgins & Co. first, and as there are only to be six that makes up the number."
 "Bai Jove!"
 "What?"
 "Of all the cheek!"
 "I'm sorry," said Tom Merry. "It's unfortunate, but there you are. But I hope we shall be able to fix it up for you to come, too."
 "It is absolutely necessawy for me to come. You will get into some feafuhl mischaw if you go ovah there alone."
 "Well, this takes the bun!" said Blake. "Fancy picking

(Continued on next page.)



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NOT QUITE!

Boastful Tourist (in Scotland): "I'll have you know that I belong to London!"

Scot: "An' wha'd ha'e thoct it? Fra the way ye've been speakin' I thoct Lunnon belonged tae ye!"
 DICK BRADSHAW, 250, Victoria Street, Brunswick, N. 12,
 Melbourne, Australia.

THE THING THAT MATTERED.

Nervous Passenger (in lift): "What would happen if the lift fell from top to bottom?"

Lift Boy: "Gosh! I'd lose my job!"
 P. J. GWALK, 12, Montague Place, Worthing.

NOT YET!

Comic Artist: "Has the Editor seen the joke I left last week?"

Office Boy: "Not yet, sir, but he's been trying very hard!"
 H. G. GILLESPIE, 9, Pencarrow Avenue, Mount Eden,
 Auckland, N.Z.

A RECORD.

Airman (who has crashed into top of tree): "I was trying to make a new record."

Farmer: "You have, sir; you are the first man to climb down that tree without first climbing up it!"
 SELWYN LEWIS, 11, Clayton Street, Landore, Swansea.

THE WRONG ONE.

Diner: "Waiter, this lobster has only one claw."
 Waiter: "Yes, sir, it lost the other in a fight."
 Diner: "Then take it away and bring me the winner!"
 ERIC RAVEN, 141, Croyland Road, Lower Edmonton, N.9.

ONE WAY!

Tom: "I told the cook to prepare a chicken so that it would tickle my palate."

Dick: "Did she obey?"
 Tom: "Yes; she left half the feathers on!"
 RAYMOND EARLE, 95, Crossways Road, Knowle, Bristol, 4.

ENLIGHTENMENT!

Teacher: "Why was the period between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1200 known as the dark ages?"

James (brightly): "Because those were the days of knights, sir!"
 R. H. MANCHIP, 364, Downham Way, Bromley, Kent.

SURE!

Uncle: "Only fools are certain."
 Tommy: "Are you sure, uncle?"
 Uncle: "I'm certain."
 E. BANAGAN, Nordene, Chorley New Road, Lostock Park,
 Bolton.

out New House fellows before chaps in your own House! I'm surprised at you, Tom Merry!"

"Well, it can't be helped."

"Suppose we bump them?" suggested Herries.

"Well, that's not a bad idea for a start."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, paxi!" said Tom Merry. "There's been enough bumping. We've got to go and pack. If you chaps can think of any dodge for coming I'll help you with all my heart. You know I'd like to take you."

"That is vewy gwatifyin', Tom Mewwy, but——"

"Now, let's get on."

The Terrible Three went on to their study.

Blake & Co. looked very thoughtful.

"This is wathah wotten," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a frown of deep reflection. "It looks to me as if Tom Mewwy has been done by Figgins & Co. Suppose we have it out with those wottahs?"

Blake uttered an exclamation.

"Good egg! We'll make them resign in our favour."

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

"We'll get Figgins in the study and put him to the torture," said Blake. "That's a jolly good wheeze. The only thing is, how to rope them in."

The chums of the Fourth went into their study to talk it over and think it out. It seemed the only possible way of working the oracle, as Blake expressed it, and if sufficient pressure were brought to bear upon Figgins, he might be induced to resign in favour of Study No. 6.

But how was he to be "roped in"?

"Suppose I go ovah and pull the wool ovah his eyes?" said Arthur Augustus. "I could take him in, you know. I am awfully deep."

"Yes, I know how deep you are," said Blake. "You would give the whole party away at the start."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Suppose we invited them to tea?" suggested Digby.

"Oh, no; that would be playing it low down."

"H'm, yes! But how the dickens——"

"We might wite them a lettah," said D'Arcy. "Something in this style: 'If Figgins will call in at Study No. 6 in the School House, he may hear something to his advantage.' I've seen an advertisement or something worded like that."

Blake sniffed.

"Ass! Do you think he would come?"

"I fail to see why he should not come."

"What I think is——"

"Hallo! Who's that?" exclaimed Blake suddenly, as the door was pushed open. "My only hat! It's Fatty Wynn!"

The fat Fourth-Former looked into the study. There was a sheepish expression upon his face. He blushed guiltily as he met the eyes of the chums.

"Have you chaps had tea yet?" he asked.

"Tea! Bai Jove, I'd forgotten tea!"

"So has Figgins," said Fatty Wynn ruefully. "I dare say you know that we are going to Paris with Tom Merry? We haven't had tea yet, and I've had nothing since dinner except a mutton pie and a beefsteak pudding, and some cakes and jellies and things. I'm in a state of famine."

"Bai Jove, you must be!"

"I get so jolly hungry in this July weather," said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "I don't seem to feel it so much at other times of the year. Figgins was marching me off to the post office to send rotten telegrams home, you know,

but I dodged him in the lane and got in again. There's nothing to eat in the study, and I've run out of tin, and Mrs. Taggles won't give me any more tick. When I approached her on the subject she said I ought to settle my account there instead of spending money on a holiday in Paris. I thought it an awful cheek to poke her nose into a fellow's private affairs like that."

"Awful!" agreed Blake, gradually working his way round so as to get between Fatty Wynn and the door, without exciting the New House junior's suspicions.

"I looked in on Pratt," went on Fatty Wynn. "I had some words with Pratt this morning about his cricket, you know; but I'm not a fellow to bear malice, and I thought I'd make it up with Pratt. But the beast wouldn't make it up. He had the cheek to say that I only wanted to make it up because he had a good feed going on in his study."

"Rotten!" grinned Blake.

"I left the study at once," said Fatty Wynn. "As a—matter of fact, they shoved me out into the passage. Then I thought of you chaps."

"That was very thoughtful of you, deah boy!"

"You see, I—I thought——"

"You thought we'd be out of the study, and you could bone whatever grub there was in the cupboard," grinned Blake, as he suddenly shut the door and locked it. "I know you!"

"Well, you see, I—I thought——"

"Bai Jove! He's a pwisonah now!"

"Here, I say——" began Fatty Wynn, in alarm.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Open that door!"

"Rats!"

"I'm not going——"

"Right, you're not! You're staying!"

The four juniors closed round Fatty Wynn with a business-like air. The fat Fourth-Former looked very much alarmed.

"Here, hold on!" he exclaimed. "What's the little game?"

"You came in here to please yourself," said Blake kindly. "You'll go out when it pleases us. You're a giddy hostage!"

"A what?"

"A hostage. Figgins is going to resign in our favour for the Paris trip."

"That he jolly well won't!"

"Then we shall put you to the torture!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You asses! I——"

"Collar him!"

Fatty Wynn made a wild rush for the door.

In a moment four strong pairs of hands seized him, and he was yanked back into the middle of the study.

"Here, hold on——"

"We're holding on," grinned Herries. "What more do you want?"

"I—I mean leggo!"

"Rats! You're a giddy prisoner of war!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I—I came here to—to——"

"To raid the study," said Blake mercilessly. "Now you've been captured. Plank him down and tie him up!"

"Ow! Yow! I won't——"

"Ow! Yow! You will!" grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Fatty Wynn was plunged into the armchair with a heavy bump.

Potts, the Office Boy!



As he gasped for breath Blake drew a cord from his pocket, and the fat legs of the New House junior were fastened to the legs of the chair.

Fatty Wynn was a helpless prisoner.

A hostage for Figgins & Co.

CHAPTER 8.

A Shock for Tom Merry!

"BETTER get some packing done," said Tom Merry, as he reached his study. "We shan't have to do any prep this evening, as we're going away in the morning. We'd better get all the packing done to-night."

"Right you are!"

"Bags will do for us, as far as Laurel Villa, anyway," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to pack again there. Now—"

"Hallo, Merry! Like to have a look at this?"

Bernard Glyn was standing at the door of the end study. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane were in the study, and there were grins upon their faces, but they were invisible to the chums of the Shell.

Tom Merry glanced along the passage at the Liverpool lad.

"What is it?" he asked.

"A new dodge."

"Oh, all right!"

Bernard Glyn was an inventor, of great renown in the School House. He had a playful way of startling quiet people by making electric bells ring in all sorts of unexpected places and by giving them electric shocks at unexpected moments. He generally had a new "dodge" of some kind, and Tom Merry took a great interest in his mechanical contrivances.

Manners and Lowther went in to begin packing, and Tom Merry walked along to the end study to see the new dodge.

He looked into the room, and the faces of Noble and Dane became as grave as the countenances of magistrates upon the bench.

"Well, where's the dodge?" asked Tom.

"Look there!"

Glyn pointed to a large softly padded armchair, and Tom Merry instinctively took a step backwards. He had seen something of Glyn's contrivances in that line, and he had no desire to be made a prisoner in the chair.

"Look here—" he began.

Before he could get further, Kangaroo gave him a gentle push, and he was twisted round at the same moment by a pull on the shoulder. Before he knew what was happening he was sitting in the chair.

Then the expected happened.

The padded arms of the chair closed in, moved by a contrivance which was worked by a weight being thrown upon the seat. The arms closed upon Tom Merry's ribs, pinning him above the hips, so that he could not possibly rise from the chair.

Tom struggled in the grip of the padded arms, but the more he struggled the more tightly they closed upon his waist.

The three Shell fellows stood before him in a row and grinned.

"Find that chair comfy?" asked Clifton Dane.

"He seems to like it; he's sticking to it!" said Glyn.

"Or it's sticking to him!" grinned Kangaroo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry ceased his efforts. He turned a very red face upon the chums of the end study.

"Let me go, you bounders!"

"I don't think!"

"This is a trick—"

"Of course it is. You've walked into our little parlour like a giddy fly!" grinned Bernard Glyn. "But it's all right; we only want a little talk."

"What about?"

"About Paris."

Tom Merry had guessed it.

"You see, we shall feel anxious about you, out there in the cold world alone," explained Kangaroo. "You may be taken away by some naughty chap in Montmartre, to be trained up as an organ-grinder's monkey—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or you may lose your way in the Catacombs, and never see daylight again. Or you may overeat yourself with a fricassee of frogs, and expire in fearful agony. Now, you will admit that you ought to be looked after. Paris is a dangerous place for kids."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"So we're coming with you. I hear that Figgins & Co. are going—"

"Yes; and the Head's limited the number to six. It's impossible. I'd like to take you, but it can't be did! Now let me go!"

"H'm! Suppose you asked the Head to let you take three more!"

"He wouldn't."

"Suppose you take us instead of Figgins & Co.?"

"They wouldn't agree."

"H'm! It seems a serious matter," said Kangaroo, with a grave shake of the head. "We've got to go, and it will have to be fixed somehow. You can see that?"

"Rats!"

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Bernard Glyn. "Perhaps it's rather a big order to take the three of us. One of us shall go, and we'll toss up for it."

"That's fair," said Clifton Dane.

"Quite fair," said Kangaroo. "We don't want to be exacting. What do you say, Tommy? Will you agree to take one of us?"

"Can't be did!"

"Let's settle which one is to go, then," said Kangaroo, as if Tom Merry had answered in the affirmative instead of in the negative. "Got a penny?"

"Here you are!"

"Toss it up, and odd man out!"

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry wriggled in the chair.

"Look here, you asses," he exclaimed, "it's no good your tossing up. You can't come, and that settles it!"

"Heads!" said Kangaroo calmly, as the coin came down, and Clifton Dane placed his hand over it, without seeing it!

"Tail!" said Glyn.

"Head!" said Dane.

And head it was. Bernard Glyn made a grimace.

"Oh, rats! I'm out! Never mind, I'll electrify Merry all the same, out of pure friendship!"

Tom Merry gave a jump.

"You—you'll what?"

Dane tossed the penny again.



"Head!" said Kangaroo, again. And it proved to be head. Clifton Dane clinked the penny into the firegrate. "Hang! You're the man!" "It's all right, I'll send you chaps picture postcards, and—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Now, Merry, it's settled. I'm coming," said Noble. "Are you agreeable?"

"No. I—"

"I'm sorry you're disagreeable. Never mind, we'll persuade you. Turn it on, Glyn."

"You—you asses! What are you going to do?"

"Only give you a shock."

"Let me go!"

"Yes; when you come to terms."

"Rescue!" roared Tom Merry, at the top of his voice. Kangaroo promptly closed the door, and locked it. Bernard Glyn switched on the electric current, and coiled a wire round Tom Merry's leg.

The hero of the Shell twitched and wriggled.

The current was not very strong, so far, and it did not trouble him much; but he saw that the inventor of St. Jim's could turn on a more powerful current any moment he chose.

"Look here, chuck it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I—I—Ow—ow—ow!"

The current was stronger. Tom Merry began to do a sort of galvanic dance in the chair, scraping it along the floor in his spasmodic movements.

The three Shell fellows watched him with grinning faces. "Coming to terms, Merry?" asked Kangaroo cheerfully.

"Ow! Yow!"

"Turn it on a little stronger, Glyn."

"Right-ho!" grinned the Liverpool lad.

"Ow! stop it! Yow! Ow! Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Waroo!"

"Well, why don't you come to terms, old chap?" remonstrated Kangaroo. "I know electricity is a shocking thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But you've only got to say the word."

"Garroogh!"

"Blessed if I understand him! Is he talking Esperanto?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh! Yow! Stop it!"

"You've only got to—"

"All right!" gasped Tom Merry.

Bernard Glyn shut off the current. Tom Merry ceased to wriggle, and he lay back in the chair glaring at Cornstalk & Co., his face wet with perspiration.

"You—you rotters!"

"It was really for your own good!" exclaimed Cornstalk.

"You could never get on in Paris without me, you know."

"Groogh! I'm stuck all over with pins and needles."

"Well, you've come to terms, and that's the chief thing. You are going to manage somehow to make me one of the party."

"Yes; hang you!"

The Australian junior chuckled.

"Good! I should advise that you go to the Head, and put it to him that you might as well make it seven as six, and that a chap from a distant colony is specially entitled to a little run of this sort. When I get home to Melbourne, you know, I shall be too far from Paris for a week-end trip."

"I'll do my best," grunted Tom Merry. "Let me out of this confounded contrivance!"

Bernard Glyn touched a spring, and the arms of the chair flew back.

Tom Merry rose to his feet. He looked rather uncertain at Cornstalk & Co. He was strongly inclined to call in the aid of Manners and Lowther, and wreck the study. But pax had been implied in his compact with the Cornstalk, and he restrained his wrath.

"Better go and see the Head," grinned Kangaroo.

Tom Merry burst into a laugh. As the electric shocks were now over, he could begin to see the humour of the situation.

"All right," he said. "I'll do my best."

"Right you are!" said Kangaroo. "Cut off!"

And Tom Merry cut off.

CHAPTER 9.

Put to the Torture!

FATTY WYNN stared helplessly at the chums of Study No. 6.

Exactly what they were going to do he did not know; but it was pretty clear that it would be something unpleasant to himself.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,328.

"I say, this has gone far enough as a joke!" he said feebly, when he had been sitting in the chair for five minutes.

"Better chuck it."—

"Chuck what?" said Blake.

"This rotten joke!"

"Quite a mistake, my son. This isn't a joke. It's serious business."

"What are you going to do?"

"Put you to the torture."

"Don't be an ass!"

"Well, wait and see."

The chums of the Fourth busied themselves about the study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in anticipation of a trip to Paris, sorted out his silk hats, and began to polish them. Digby began to pack a bag with shirts and collars and other necessities, and Blake hunted an old guide-book out of the cupboard, and sat down on the window-seat to peruse it.



Blake poured out the tea and the chums sat down round the yearning. The sardines were finished, Fatty watching them let me have a bit of cake!" "Certainly," said Blake.

Herries had a thoughtful frown upon his brow. He appeared to be thinking something out, and at last he spoke.

"Just how long shall we be gone, Blake?"

Blake looked up from the guide-book.

"As long as we stay in Paris," he replied. "Add to that the time taken by the journey to and fro, and there you are."

"Oh, don't be funny! This is a serious matter. You see, I shall have to arrange with Taggles to look after Towser."

"Well, go and arrange with him, and don't worry."

"It's not so jolly easy," said Herries, with a snort. "Last time I was away I fixed it up with Taggles, and he ran out of Towser's biscuits, and gave him a rotten cheap kind till I came back. Towser was looking quite pale."

"Pale!" gurgled Blake.

"Well, he was looking off colour," said Herries. "I'm not going to have Towser neglected for the sake of a trip to Paris. Paris is all right, but Towser's got to be looked after. I want to know exactly how long we shall be gone, so that I can lay in a sufficient supply of biscuits for him."

"Better order a ton, in case we stay over Christmas."
 "Look here!" said Herries wrathfully. "There will be a row if you start being funny on this subject. It's a serious matter to trust one's dog into somebody else's hands."
 "A serious matter for the somebody else, I should imagine, when the dog's like Towser," remarked Digby.
 "Yaas, wathah! I don't want to say anythin' against Towser; but I must remark that he is an extremely wotten beast, and has no respect watevah for a fellow's twousahs."
 "There's a prejudice against Towser in this study," said Herries, with a sniff.
 "Yaas, wathah! I am far fwom denyin' that, deah boy. A dog that has no respect for a fellow's twousahs—"
 "Here, you chaps," said Fatty Wynn, "I'm getting tired of this."
 "Never mind, take it quietly."
 "I'm hungry."



commenced the meal while Fatty Wynn looked on with helpless one by one. "I say, you chaps," he broke out. "You might you have given your parole to resign in our favour."

"That's no news."
 "What's the little game?" demanded Wynn wrathfully. "I'm not going to stop here all the evening. Lemme go!"
 "Suppose we say a fortnight?" said Herries thoughtfully.
 "You see, I don't want to lay in too many biscuits, or Taggles may feed his beastly dog on them. I don't want to throw money away. Shall we say a fortnight?"
 "You can say anything you like, old chap."
 "Look here—"
 "Yes, look here!" said Fatty Wynn. "I've had enough of it. I'm starving. If anything serious happens to me, you chaps will be responsible."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "It's all very well for you to cackle. This is a serious matter. I haven't had my tea, and I've had nothing to eat since dinner but a mutton pie, and a beefsteak pudding, and a few odds and ends. I get jolly hungry in this July weather. If you're going to keep me here, give me some grub."
 "My dear chap, we're putting you to the torture," said Blake affably. "I know you're hungry. We're going to keep you sitting here to watch us have tea."

"You—you sweep!"
 "A sort of tortures of Tantalus, you know."
 "I'm not going to stand—"
 "No; you're going to sit just where you are," said Blake. "I wouldn't expect you to stand. Put the kettle on, Dig."
 "Right you are!"
 "Blessed if this guide-book's any good!" said Blake. "I brought it here for lighting the fire, and it doesn't say anything about Paris in it, either."
 "Why, it's a German guide-book!" exclaimed Digby, looking at it.
 Blake glanced at the cover.
 "By Jove, so it is! That accounts for there not being anything about Paris in it, I suppose. Seems to me jolly careless of the editor. He might have guessed that somebody who bought it might want to go to Paris. Never mind, it will do to light the fire with, and we can buy a new Baedeker. They're jolly expensive; but Gussy can buy one. It will always be useful to him when he goes to Paris."
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "Anybody want to put anything in this bag?" asked Digby.
 "Yes, rather!" said Blake and Herries together.
 "You, too, Gussy?"
 "No, thanks, deah boy. I shall take a couple of twunks and a hatbox."
 "You'll take a couple of thick ears and a flat nose if you start any of your giddy rot!" said Blake severely. "Do you think we're going to charter a special steamer to carry over your blessed hats and waistcoats?"
 "Weally, deah boy—"
 "Shove out the sardines, somebody. Let's have tea. I'm hungry; and, besides, it's time Fatty Wynn was put to the torture. Figgins and Kerr will be back from the post office presently, and they will begin making a fuss."
 "Look here, you School House rotters—"
 "Pour some milk down the back of his neck if he talks, Dig."
 "Certainly!"
 Fatty Wynn relapsed into wrathful silence.
 Blake and his chums proceeded to get tea in the study. The kettle was soon boiling, and the smell of the freshly made tea made Fatty Wynn's mouth water.
 The scent of the sardines, too, was very appetising to the famished junior.
 The tea was not a particularly ripping one, but it was enough to make Fatty Wynn suffer more than the tortures of Tantalus.
 The bread-and-butter alone would have been a great treat to him in his state of famine.
 Blake poured out the tea, and the chums sat down round the table and commenced the meal, while Fatty Wynn looked on in helpless yearning.
 He had an aching void within, as a novelist would say, and his feelings gradually worked up into a state of desperation as he watched the feasters.
 The sardines were finished, Fatty Wynn watching them, as they disappeared one by one, with the hungry gaze of a cormorant.
 Then Dig brought out the remains of a cake from the cupboard. It had been a huge cake, and there was still enough left to make a solid meal for three or four fellows.
 Fatty Wynn eyed it hungrily.
 "I say, you chaps," he broke out, "you might let me have a bit of cake."
 "Certainly," said Blake, "when you have given your parole to resign in our favour."
 "Look here—"
 "You will have to give your word for Figgins and Kerr, too, of course. If you promise us, honest Injun, they will have to stand by it."
 "Yaas, wathah! We should do the same, undah similah circes."
 "I can't! I won't! I'll see you hanged first!"
 "Then you jolly well won't have any cake, that's all!"
 "Beast!"
 "Weally, Wynn, I wegard that wemark as oppwobwious. I shall have to untie you and give you a feahful thwashin' if you wepeat it!"
 "Beast!"
 Arthur Augustus rolled back his cuffs.
 "Pway untie him, Blake, deah boy, while I give him a feahful thwashin', will you?"
 "Oh, sit down, Gussy!"
 "I decline to sit down! I have been insulted by a New House wottah!"
 "A prisoner of war is entitled to say what he likes!" said Blake severely. "I'm surprised that you don't know better than this, Gussy."
 "Oh, undah those circes—"
 "Sit down!"

"Look here!" said Wynn. "I've had enough—"
 "So have I," said Digby, rising from the table. "I've had enough, but I should hardly have thought that you've had enough, Fatty."
 "I've had enough of this foolery, I mean."
 "Ready to give your parole?"
 "No!" roared Fatty Wynn.
 Jack Blake yawned.
 "Very well. We'll take a stroll round, you chaps, as we haven't to do any prep to-night. No good doing prep when we're going on a journey."
 "We mayn't be going," suggested Herries. "I—"
 "Ass! We are going! Do you think we're going to be done by Figgins & Co.?"
 "Well, it's not only that."
 "Oh, the Head will agree if Figgins & Co. resign in our favour!"
 "I wasn't thinking of the Head."
 "What the dickens were you thinking of, then?" demanded Blake.
 "Towser. I shan't go unless it can be satisfactorily settled that Towser will be properly looked after while I am in Paris."
 Blake snorted.
 "Oh, I'm getting fed-up with Towser!"
 "That's all very well; but he had a bit of a cough this morning. Taggles believes in giving dogs medicine, and he may start shoving some of it down Towser's throat while I'm away. I can't help feeling anxious."
 "I have a wippin' suggestion to make, deah boy."
 "Go ahead!"
 "Suppose you have Towsah shot?"
 "What!" roared Herries.

"Suppose you have Towsah shot?" repeated D'Arcy innocently. "That would put him out of his misewy, and save all furthah wowwy about the mattah. It would save a good many pairs of twousahs, too, as a mattah of fact."
 "You unspeakable ass!"
 "Weally, Hewwies—"
 Blake dragged his elegant chum from the study. D'Arcy looked round over his shoulder at the wrathful Herries.
 "Have I said anythin' to make Hewwies angwy, Blake?" he asked.
 "Ha, ha, ha! Of course not. Only your suggestion doesn't seem so ripping to Herries as to the rest of us."
 "I wegard it as a good suggestion."
 "So it is."
 "Here, I say!" shouted Fatty Wynn, as the gas was turned out. "You're not going to leave me here, you rotters!"
 "This is the torture scene," said Blake. "We'll give you a look in presently, to see how you are getting on."
 "Beasts!"
 "Thanks!"
 And the study door closed, and Fatty Wynn was left alone. For several minutes Fatty Wynn filled up the time by saying things. The things he said we need not insert here; they were all uncomplimentary to the School House in general, and the chums of Study No. 6 in particular.
 Having expended his available stock of breath in saying things, Fatty Wynn began to wriggle with his bonds.
 He remembered that some of the knots had been tied by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and that gave him some hope that they were not so tight as they seemed.
 And after he had been struggling with the cord for a few minutes, a grin overspread his fat face in the darkness.
 The cord was getting loose.

CHAPTER 10.

Packing!

TOM MERRY came out of the Head's study with a look of relief upon his face. He had told Cornstalk & Co. that he would do his best with the Head, and he had done so.

He had found the Head very reasonable. Kangaroo's argument that a chap from Australia ought to be included in the party, because it might be his only chance of ever seeing the Continent, seemed to have some weight with Dr. Holmes. He had given his consent to Kangaroo accompanying the party, and so the number was increased to seven already.

Tom Merry met Blake & Co. as he returned. Blake stopped him in the passage. Tom doubled up his fists, but the chums of Study No. 6 were not on a warlike foray.

"Pax!" said Blake. "I told you I was coming to Paris, with you, I think."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes; and I told you you weren't."

"I suppose if Figgins & Co. resigned in our favour it would be all right?"

"They're not likely to."

"No; but if they did?"

"Oh, if they did, it would be all right, of course," said Tom Merry, considerably puzzled. "I should be glad to have you, of course."

"I wegard that as puttin' it vewy handsomely, Tom Mewwy."

"Thank you, Gussy!" said Tom Merry gravely.

"Not at all, deah boy."

"The fact is," said Blake in a mysterious whisper, "we've got Fatty Wynn shut up in our study, and we're putting him to the torture to make him give his parole for Figgins & Co. See?"

"Ha, ha, ha! What kind of torture?"

"Keeping him late for tea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, I wegard it as wathah funnany; but Wynn seems to be takin' it sewiously. I have no doubt that he will give in."

"I expect Figgins will be along to the rescue soon," grinned Tom Merry.

"Door's locked, key in my pocket," said Blake sententiously. "That's all right. Come and have a turn in the gym, you chaps."

"I'm going to look after Towser," said Herries.

"Oh, blow Towser!"

And Herries went to look after Towser, while his chums went to the gym.

Tom Merry looked into the end study in the Shell passage to tell the news, and the Cornstalk chum executed a war dance round the table in his glee. He knocked over a chair, and sent one of Bernard Glyn's batteries crashing to the floor, and there was a roar from the Liverpool lad.

They were arguing over the matter with raised voices when Tom Merry left them and went into his own study to help with the packing.



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by
**JOHN
ALLAN**

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Lowther and Manners had selected two big bags, and had been cramming things into them for some time. There were still more things to cram. Manners had just come downstairs with an armful of shirts and collars and under-clothing, and it looked as if the largest size in trunks would be wanted instead of a couple of bags.

Lowther looked up with a grunt as Tom Merry came in. "Nice ass you are, to leave us all the packing."

"Well, I suppose I must be an ass to leave it to you, considering the way you're doing it," agreed Tom Merry.

"If you think I can't pack—"

"My dear chap, I don't think—I know you can't! Better turn those bags out on the floor and start afresh."

"I jolly well shan't!"

"But I will show you how to pack them properly."

Lowther snorted.

"I've put the camera in," said Manners, rather hopelessly. "Do you remember which bag I put it in, Monty?"

"No: don't you remember?"

"Well, it's one of them," said Manners. "I want to know, because it would be better not to put the boot-trees and boots into the same bag. The camera might get a knock."

"It's pretty certain to get a knock," said Tom Merry. "Better turn the bags out and start afresh."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"By the way, Kangaroo's coming; the Head's consented."

"Blow Kangaroo! Which camera did I put that bag in? I—I mean, which bag did I put that camera in?" exclaimed Manners.

"Shove your paw in and grope for it!"

"I suppose I'd better."

Manners thrust his hand into the mass of conglomerated shirts and socks and undervests, and waistcoats and slippers and collar-boxes, and dressing-bags. He gave a yell and dragged it out again.

"Ow! Ow!"

"My hat! What's the matter?"

"Ow! Ow!" Manners left off, to suck his fingers, and then started again. "Ow! Ow! I've pricked my beastly fingers! What silly ass put a fork in the bag?"

"I did," said Lowther, "I thought we might want one."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Oh, you frabjous ass!" groaned Manners.

"Well, I told you I had put one in, at the time."

"You didn't tell me you had shoved it all ready for me to shove my beastly fingers on, you fathead!"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Ass!"

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Manners—"

"Oh, hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "This is a packing competition, not a dogfight. Let's turn the bags out on the floor and start again."

"If you touch those bags—"

"But, my dear chap—"

"Look here—"

"Ass!"

The door opened, and a big, bumpy forehead and a pair of large spectacles glimmered in.

The Terrible Three ceased the argument, which was growing warm, and turned three separate and threatening stares upon Skimpole.

Skimpole blinked at them amiably.

"Ah, I have found you at last!" he remarked.

"Yes; good-bye!" said Tom Merry.

"I am not going yet—"

"Your mistake; you are! Get out!"

"I hear you are going to Paris—"

"Go hon!"

"I am coming with you—"

"Rats!"

"You won't be needed there," said Monty Lowther.

"Really, Lowther—"

"Good-bye!"

"I really must come, Merry, because I want to, and—"

"Jolly good reason," agreed Tom Merry. "You are a harmless ass, Skimmy, and I'd like to take you. Go and ask the Head. Put it to him that you want to go, and if he agrees, I'll agree like a shot."

"As a sincere Determinist I claim the right to go where I like, how I like, when I like, and as I like. If I choose to go to Paris, why should I be stopped?"

"There's no stopping you when it comes to jawing, anyway," groaned Tom Merry. "Go and put it to the Head."

And he gently pushed Skimpole into the passage.

"My hat!" he remarked, as he closed the door. "That chap—why, here he is again!"

Skimpole opened the door, and blinked into the study.

"Really, Tom Merry—"

"Get out!"

"If the Head consents, I suppose you will be glad of my company in Paris?"

"Overjoyed, dear boy! Now bunk! We're packing!"

"Then I will ask the Head, but I regard it as a matter of form. However, I will ask him."

"Buck up, then!"

"If you would like me to edit 'Tom Merry's Weekly' while you are seeing sights in Paris, I shall be very pleased to do so. I can do it in the train. I have an article here I want inserted in the next number. It will fill about half the number—"

"Good-bye!"

"Yes, but—"

The Terrible Three rushed at Skimpole and rolled him into the passage. They jerked the manuscript out of his hand, jammed it down the back of his neck, and left him sitting on the linoleum in a very dazed and bewildered state as they slammed the door of the study.

Skimpole slowly collected his wits and drifted away, and the Terrible Three were left in peace to tackle the problem of the packing once more.

CHAPTER 11.

Fatty Wynn Gets His Own Back!

FIGGINS and Kerr were worried looks.

They had returned from the post office, pretty sharp set, for they had had no tea, and the hour was growing late.

Figgins had brought in a little parcel with him, for he knew that provisions in the study had run very low, and that if any fragment remained in the cupboard, Fatty Wynn would have bolted it to the last crumb.

To their surprise, they did not find Fatty Wynn in the New House.

The study was drawn blank, and so was the Common-room, and then they looked through the studies in vain along the passage. The only fragment of information they received was in Pratt's study. There were several

A SUPER GIFT for all
GEM Readers
the Week after Next!

fellows having tea with Pratt, and they cheerfully told all they knew in reply to the question as to whether they had seen anything of Fatty Wynn.

"He came mooching in here after some grub, while we were having tea," said Pratt. "We slung him out!"

"Oh, you did, did you?" said Figgins wrathfully.

"Yes. The last I saw of him he was rolling like a barrel along the passage," said Pratt. "I— Oh!"

Figgins picked up a pat of butter that remained on the tea-table, and gently jammed it into Pratt's eye, and left the study with Kerr.

"I suppose he's gone over to the School House," said Kerr.

Figgins nodded.

"Ye-es. But it's late—the House ought to be closed up. I don't see how he can be there now. He must be hungry, too. He was hungry when we went out, an hour ago, and he dodged us in the lane to get some grub."

"Perhaps he's getting it in the School House."

"Well, we'll go and look!"

Figgins had looked into the gym, where a good many fellows were congregated, but Fatty Wynn was not among them. The chums of the New House walked over to the rival House, and glanced up at the window of Study No. 6 in passing.

A low whistle from the dark window caught their ears.

Figgins gave a jump.

It was the signal whistle of Figgins & Co.

"He's there!"

The two juniors halted under the window. In the gloom they slowly made out the fat face of Fatty Wynn looking down upon them.

"Hallo!" called out Figgins.

"Quiet!" came a whispering voice from above. "I'm all right! I'm going to get out of the window. The door's locked."

"What's the row?"

"They made me a prisoner, and kept me looking on while they had tea. They left me tied to an armchair, but I've got loose, see?"

(Continued on page 19.)

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM—



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

HALLO, chums! First and foremost, let me tell you about that splendid FREE GIFT that is coming along in a couple of weeks. Believe me, it's a wow! It's a really first-class gift that will be appreciated by every reader. What is it? It's a real working model Pioneer AERO-CAR! Full particulars of this grand gift will be published next week, so order your copy now. And talking of next week reminds me that next week's GEM will also contain the result of the "OUTLINES" competition for which I offered five James' cycles. Well, that's two good reasons for not missing next week's issue, and here are some more. Martin Clifford contributes another ripping long complete yarn of St. Jim's entitled

"SKIMPOLE'S THREE!"

You remember Glyn's mechanical Skimpole, don't you? It comes to life again next week with certain improvements and—but that would be telling you! Then there will be the first half of a grand Foreign Legion yarn called

"LOST IN THE LEGION!"

which is packed with thrills and adventure. Potts, the ever-ready office boy, will be on parade as usual, and there will be another column of readers' jokes, for each of which I pay half-a-crown. Finally, there will be another page from my notebook.

THE CATERPILLAR TRAIN.

The very latest thing in trains is said to resemble a huge caterpillar, but there is no suggestion of the caterpillar when it comes to speed, for this new train has a maximum speed of 110 miles an hour, though while it is in service it will only travel at 90 m.p.h. The train has three cars hinged together as if they were all in one piece, and all windows and fittings are recessed so as to reduce wind resistance to a minimum. The complete train will only weigh about 120 tons, which is about as much as a single Pullman coach, as it is built entirely of aluminium alloys. One hundred and sixteen passengers can be carried in this wonder train, which is driven by electricity generated by an oil engine. Built for the Union Pacific Railway of America, the object of the train is to compete against air and fast road transport, and it is expected that it will run from Omaha to Los Angeles, 1,200 miles, in thirty hours instead of the forty-eight taken by the steam trains.

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CHOCOLATE FREE!

Don't forget, all you Gemites who go to the sea this summer (or perhaps already live there) that Messrs. Cadbury Bros. are contributing no less than a quarter of a million bars of their celebrated Dairy Milk Chocolate, for the consumption of readers who buy their copies of the GEM from beach sellers, kiosks, and other such places at most of our well-known seaside resorts. In addition they are also contributing pound boxes of their delicious assorted chocolates for prizes at our Concert Party, Gala and Cinema competitions. What a chance for all you fellows! Don't forget to take advantage of it!

A PRACTICAL JOKER!

Practical jokers, such as Monty Lovether, are not always popular, and I think it is fairly certain that a hen recently made herself pretty unpopular about the house! This hen walked into a house, and finding a woman's hat that was easily accessible, she laid an egg in it! Now you would have thought that that would have satisfied most practical jokers, but not so with this hen, for she calmly walked upstairs and laid an egg in somebody's bed!

ODDS AND ENDS.

His name is Kamakshi Satyanarayana Varaprasada Veera Venkata Lakshmarashimha Rao Pantalu Garu—his wife calls him "K" for short!

Two boys were charged with releasing polar bears from their cage in an Australian zoo. The magistrate said that he blamed the zoo authorities—they should have made the cage boy-proof!

While a detective was discussing arrangements with the gaoler to whom he was to hand over his prisoner, the prisoner got up and calmly walked out of the police court—and no one could find him!

FATTY WYNN BEATEN!

Mr. Joseph Raggio, of Philadelphia, claims to be the fattest man in the world and is proud of it. He weighs sixty-four stone and is so fat that he can't put his shoes on! Bit of a nuisance that, you would think, wouldn't you? But it doesn't matter to him; he doesn't need any shoes, for he's so fat that he can't get out of the house!

THE UNHAPPY BURGLAR!

The burglar was pleased with himself when he found the gate of Tupperts Hotel, Ashvale, was open. It seemed that his luck was in. But there he was wrong,

quite wrong. You see, once upon a time, Tupperts Hotel was a hotbed of cock-fighting, so they built a maze round it to prevent anyone reaching it in a hurry when there was a fight going on. The burglar, however, was not aware of this, and it was some time before he realised that he was not only in a maze, but that he was hopelessly lost in it! He couldn't get nearer the hotel and he couldn't escape, either. Then he heard voices and footsteps and knew that people were looking for him. This way and that he went, but he couldn't find a way out. Then, just as his searchers were upon him, he hurled himself against the stout hedge—and plunged into the Basingstoke Canal! He got away.

THE YELLING GIPSIES!

At La Porte, Texas, a gipsy band was arrested and lodged in gaol. So far so good. But among the band were five babies, and these babies apparently resented being locked up in prison as much as their parents did, and so they started to yell! And they yelled and yelled, and let it be said that they had very lusty voices. The authorities did not like the yelling, but they obviously could not punish the babies, so they had to put up with it. After a bit, however, they could stand the row no longer, so they let the whole band go free on condition that they left the town!

AN UNCONSCIOUS RIDER.

Clapton and West Ham Speedways have ever been great rivals, and whenever they meet a thrilling and close-fought match is assured, with every rider doing his utmost for his team. For all that no one ever expected to see quite such an amazing and thrilling finish as there was the last time the two teams met on Clapton's track. Phil Bishop, one of the Clapton riders, took a very nasty toss in one heat of the match and was advised by the doctor not to ride again that night, but when the time came for Bishop to ride again he insisted on doing so, as his side needed every possible point. On the last lap of the race Bishop fell forward across his handlebars, obviously in a dazed condition, but still managed to keep his machine going. Eventually he finished third, gaining a point which allowed Clapton to draw the match, but after he had crossed the line he did not know what he was doing, and he kept on round the track, despite the signals of officials. Eventually Bishop was brought to a stop by a line of officials across the track, whereupon he collapsed and was removed on a stretcher. He was unconscious for half an hour!

CHINA BOUND!

All aboard for China! Embark with the popular chums of St. Frank's on a grand holiday adventure by reading to-day's tip-top number of "The Nelson Lee."

When Yung Ching, the Chinese school-boy, is kidnapped and carried away in the steam yacht of the all-powerful Dr. Foo Chow, Nelson Lee, the Housemaster-detective, decides to give chase, taking with him many St. Frank's juniors. The party set sail in the magnificent steam yacht of Lord Dorrmore, the millionaire world-rover, and their thrilling adventures en route for China will grip and hold your interest throughout this first grand long yarn of a super series. Ask your news-agent to-day for "The Nelson Lee"—it's much too good to miss.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE BOY WITH TOO MANY FRIENDS!

(Continued from page 17.)

Figgins chuckled.

"Poor old Fatty! How you must have suffered!"

"Well, Blake called it putting me to the torture. It was rough, and no mistake. They wanted to make me promise for all of us to resign the trip to Paris in their favour."

"My hat!"

"Of course, I wouldn't, though if I had gone hungry much longer I don't know but what I mightn't have done," said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "But I held out!"

"Bravo!"

"My word!" said Kerr. "How hungry you must be now, Fatty."

There was the sound of a satisfied chuckle above.

"Not so very, Kerr. You see, I've finished up all the grub there was in the study. There was a ripping cake and some other things. I've made a clean sweep."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've taken down the curtains and twisted them up, and used a lot of straps and braces and neckties to make a rope," said Fatty Wynn. "I've tested it, and it's strong enough. Catch the end when I let it down."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good!"

The end of the improvised rope came floating down. Figgins caught it and held it fast. The plump form of Fatty Wynn worked itself out of the window.

"Careful, Fatty!"

"What-ho!"

"You'd burst if you fell, you know."

Fatty Wynn only grunted in response to that remark.

With one hand upon a rainpipe, and the other clutching the rope, he slowly and steadily worked his way downwards.

He was gasping by the time he came within reach of Figgins, and they grasped him and helped him upon his feet.

"Good!" panted Fatty Wynn. "Blake will snort when he gets in and finds me gone—and all the grub gone, too. This is where we smile."

"Quiet!" whispered Figgins. "Here they come!"

Three forms loomed up in the gloom from the direction of the gym. They belonged to Blake, Digby, and D'Arcy, returning to the School House.

"Follow me," muttered Figgins. "Let's rush them and bump them over—it will be a joyful surprise for them."

"Good egg!"

The New House chums waited close in the shadow of the wall till the School House three were near, and then, with a sudden whoop, rushed upon them.

Before they knew what was happening, Blake and Dig and D'Arcy were rolling on the ground, and Figgins & Co., with a yell of laughter, were disappearing in the direction of the New House.

"Bai Jove!"

"My word! What was that?"

"My only hat!"

The School House chums sat up and blinked round them. From the distance came back a yell of laughter. Blake uttered an exclamation.

"Figgins & Co.!"

"Phew! They've rescued Fatty!"

"Bai Jove! This is extremely careless of you, Blake!"

"Here, let's get in and see!"

Blake rushed into the School House, with the others at his heels. In a few seconds he was at the door of Study No. 6.

"It's still locked!" he exclaimed, in great relief, as he tried the door. "I couldn't see how Figgins could get a key to it, anyway."

"Bai Jove! It was not careless of you, aftah all, deah boy!"

Blake unlocked the door.

"Hallo, Fatty!" he exclaimed, as he entered. "Sorry to have left you so long, but—"

He broke off suddenly as he switched on the light.

The chair was empty, and Fatty Wynn was gone.

The open window and the rope tied to the leg of the table and floating over the sill, showed the way the fat junior had gone.

"Bai Jove! You are an awfully careless ass, Blake!"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Fatty's gone," said Digby, "and we needn't look to see if the grub's gone. It's gone inside Fatty!"

"I suppose so," said Blake glumly. "How did the

bounder get loose? This is what comes of letting Gussy tie some of the knots. I might have known he would make a mess of it somehow."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Where the dickens did he get that rope? Phew! Blessed if he hasn't twisted up our curtains—they'll be torn into rags."

"Phew! The sweep!"

"And my braces—and—phew!—Gussy's neckties!"

"Bai Jove! What?"

"Here they are, dozens of them, all knotted together."

"Gweat Scott! They will be ruined."

"That's what comes of your idea of putting a chap to the torture, and making him give his parole," said Blake.

They stared at him.

"Well, of all the nerve!" gasped Digby. "It was your idea!"

"Yaas, wathah! It was Blake's ideah, and a wotten ideah it was!"

"Oh, don't you chaps begin to argue at a time like this!" said Blake crossly. "The worry is, how are we to get to Paris now?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"My neckties are ruined!"

"Blow your neckties! I wish you would tie all your neckties round Towser's neck, and then drop him into the river."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And if you would put on all your silk hats, and jump in after him, it would be simply ripping," growled Blake.

"I wogard that remark as—"

"Blessed if it doesn't begin to look as if we shan't get to Paris," grunted Digby.

"Bai Jove! And we haven't done our pwep, as we were startin' in the mornin'."

"I'd forgotten that. Better do some now—"

"Too late, deah boy! Bedtime in ten minutes."

The chums of Study No. 6 looked at one another grimly. Paris seemed farther off than ever, and the prospect of trouble with the Form master in the morning was added to their other pleasures.

"Well, the only thing is, we've got to go," grunted Blake.

"But how?"

"Oh, don't ask me!"

Herries came into the study. He was looking somewhat discontented and decidedly bothered.

"I'm afraid I shan't be able to come to Paris," he remarked.

Blake grinned.

"That's the conclusion we've all just come to, as Fatty Wynn's got away. But what's the matter?"

"Towser's looking very queer. He had an up-and-downer with young Wally's Pongo yesterday, and bit him pretty hard. It may be a case of poisoning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! You'd better tell my minah that!"

"It might be through biting that mongrel. Anyway, Towser's looking very rotten," said Herries. "I don't like to leave him."

"I expect we shall have to give it up, too!" growled Digby. "We've got such a blessed jolly good leader in this study."

"Oh, rats! I'll think of a way," said Blake.

He was still thinking of a way when the Fourth Form went to bed, and he thought over it till he went to sleep; but he had not found the way.

CHAPTER 12.

Good-bye to St. Jim's!

TOM MERRY was up bright and early in the morning. He was in a very cheerful mood, as if he already tasted the bright sunlight and the bracing air of Paris.

Manners and Lowther turned out with equal cheerfulness. Kangaroo jumped out of bed with the activity of the animal he derived his nickname from. Four cheerier faces were not to be found in the school.

"Fine morning," said Kangaroo. "I hear that about now is considered the best time for visiting Paris, so it suits us down to the ground."

"Good!"

Skimpole sat up in bed.

"There will be some slight difficulty about my expenses, Merry," he remarked. "Can I rely upon you to take my ticket, you to be reimbursed from the profit of my book which is to be published shortly?"

"Oh, rather!" grinned Tom Merry. "Has the Head given his consent?"

"I have not asked him yet. He had gone to his own

house last evening, and I was refused admittance there. The Head did not apparently consider that I had anything of sufficient importance to speak to him about. These old gentlemen are very trying sometimes."

"I've known young gentlemen to be trying at times, too," said Monty Lowther. "Never mind, Skimmy! Collar him before breakfast this morning, and put it to him straight."

"That is exactly what I intend to do, Lowther."

The Shell went down, and Tom Merry found Blake and his chums in the Hall. Blake had his brow screwed up into a thoughtful frown. He was doubtless still thinking of a way to get to Paris—without success.

Tom Merry tapped him on the shoulder, with a smile. "How did it work?" he said.

"Eh?" said Blake, with a start. "How did what work?"

"The scheme with Figgins & Co. Your idea of—"

"Oh, it wasn't exactly my idea!" said Blake hastily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"I suppose that means that it went wrong, eh?"

"Well, it didn't work out exactly as Dig expected," confessed Blake. "You see—"

"Here, I like that!" exclaimed Digby warmly. "It was your scheme—"

"Oh, do let a chap finish, Dig! The idea didn't work out exactly as D'Arcy expected—"

"Bai Jove, Blake—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy, for a minute!"

"I refuse to wing off! It was your wotten ideah, and—"

"Well, it went rocky," said Blake. "Fatty Wynn got away. He bolted, and bolted all the grub, too. Dig and Gussy were simply done."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here—"

"So you haven't come to terms with Figgins & Co.?"

"Well, you see—"

"As a matter of fact, the whole ideah was a wank failure," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's no good disguising the facts. I wegard Blake as an ass."

"And I regard him as another ass," said Digby. "I—I mean as the same ass—that is to say, I regard him as an ass, too."

"You duffers!"

Tom Merry chuckled and walked away, leaving them to

argue it out. Skimpole passed him on his way to the Head's study, bolting along very quickly, as he usually did when he had a scheme to work out. Tom Merry spoke to him, but Skimpole did not answer; he was too busy with his plans.

Tom Merry went out into the quad and punted a footer about with Manners and Lowther and Glyn and Kangaroo till the bell rang for breakfast. Then he came in, and the first person he saw was Skimpole. Skimpole was slowly and methodically rubbing the palms of his hands together, and his face was twisted up into an extraordinary expression.

The Shell fellows stopped to look at him in great surprise. "What on earth's the matter?" demanded Kangaroo.

"Ow!"

"He seems to be hurt," said Lowther. "Where do you feel the pain, Skimmy?"

"Wow!"

"He's been arguing with the Head!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Is that it, Skimmy?"

"Wow! I regard Dr. Holmes as being an utterly unreasonable man, and dead to the perception of the first principles of logic. Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! I asked him in the politest manner possible if I could go to Paris with you. I said it was really only a matter of form to ask him, as, a sincere Determinist, I had a right to do as I liked."

"And, of course, he saw it?"

"Ow! No, he did not appear to see it. He seemed to get quite excited about something. I added that there would be no difficulty about expenses, as some of you would pay any expenses I might incur."

"Jolly good! Of course, we should all rush to do that," said Manners humorously. "I was thinking of wiring my pater for an extra twopence for that very purpose."

"Ow! My hands are smarting! Yow! The Head seemed to be annoyed—perhaps somebody had been cheeking him or something—and he wreaked it upon me. He told me to leave his study in a very loud voice—what would be described in a novel as a voice of thunder."

"Good! And did you?"

"I had not finished explaining, so I could not very well do so. I went on to tell him that I had quite decided to go to Paris, and that I was sorry he was acting foolishly in the matter; and then he—it seems incredible, but it is true—he caned me and turned me out of his study."

"Now, I wonder what could have been his reason for that?" said Kangaroo solemnly, while the others roared.

Skimpole blinked at them.

"I have been wondering, too," he said. "I can only conclude that the Head was annoyed about something, and that he was wreaking it upon me. It was very unjust. My hands are smarting very much. I regard the Head as an extraordinary man. Ow!"

And Skimpole ejaculated "Ow!" about a hundred times during the course of breakfast.

After breakfast Tom Merry & Co. were to start for Rylcombe, to take the train for Huckleberry Heath. Figgins & Co. came over with cheerful grins, and bags packed to bursting point. The Terrible Three and Kangaroo met them on the School House steps with genial greetings. Blake & Co. were there, too, and they were looking decidedly glum.

Blake had not yet thought of a way.

Figgins gave Blake a sympathetic look.

"I'm jolly sorry you're not coming," he remarked. "I've been trying to think of a dodge, but I can't."

Blake nodded.

"Can't be helped, old man. I suppose it was too much to expect. I should have gone instead of you if Fatty Wynn hadn't got away last night."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally D'Arcy came up with his hands in his pockets and a smear of ink on one cheek. He had a very businesslike expression on his face. He gave his major a dig in the ribs that made him gasp.

"Hullo, Gus, old cock!"

"Ow! Weally, Wally, you young wuffian, you have taken my bweath away, and thwown me into quite a fluttah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"I'm coming with you," said Wally.

"Eh—where?"

"To Paris, of course."

"Bai Jove! But we're not goin' to Pawis, aftah all, Wally."

"Not going!" ejaculated D'Arcy minor.

"No; we can't work it."

Wally gave the chums of the Fourth a look of the most unmitigated disgust.

"Well, of all the frabjous chumps!" he exclaimed. "Of course, I thought you'd have sense enough to work it."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Well, I suppose it wouldn't be safe for you to get

China Bound!

by
Edwy
Searles
Brooks



THIS is the first of a series of great holiday-adventure yarns about the chums of St. Frank's, in which the kidnapping of a Chinese boy starts an amazing chain of thrilling adventures in which Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrmore, a millionaire sportsman, play leading parts. Read and enjoy this grand thrill-packed story which appears in to-day's splendid number of

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too near the Jardong des Plong," said Wally, probably meaning the Jardin des Plantes. "They might keep you as specimens."

"I wegard that remark as uttably wantin' in pwopah wespect to your majah."

"Rats! I'm ashamed of you. Yah!"

And the hero of the Third Form walked away in high dudgeon. Blake & Co. hadn't a word to say. They felt that they ought to have "worked it" somehow, and Wally's sniffs at their expense were justified.

Mr. Railton came out of the School House to say good-bye to the juniors before going to the class-room. The School House master glanced at Blake & Co., and noted their doleful visages.

Blake took a desperate resolution, and approached the Housemaster.

"Oh, thank you, sir! You're a brick, sir. I—I mean, you're very kind, sir. That would be ever so much better than nothing."

"Then I will see."

And Mr. Railton did see; and the result was that when the party for Paris left St. Jim's, Blake, Digby and D'Arcy went with them in the vehicle to the station to go to Laurel Villa to see the last of Tom Merry & Co.

It did not seem a very great concession, but Blake was extremely gleeful about it.

"We've got out of school," he explained. "It gives us time to think of a dodge—see? Depend upon it we'll work it somehow."

"We'll all put our heads together over it," said Figgins. And the juniors thought it out as the train rolled on to Huckleberry Heath.

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JIM'S.



MONTY LOWTHER.

Monty Lowther, one of the Terrible Three, is chiefly known for his humour and love of practical jokes. Really, it speaks well for Monty's general character that he remains so popular despite his humour! His practical jokes are seldom enjoyed by the victim and his puns are said to be the worst ever made! A staunch pal and a worthy fighting man in times of House or Form rows, Lowther is not quite so athletic as his study-mate, Tom Merry, though he usually appears for the junior teams at cricket and football.

"If you, please, sir—"
"Well, Blake?"
"We want to go with Tom Merry awfully, sir," said Blake, colouring. "We—"
"We are afraid he will get into mischief without us, sir," exclaimed D'Arcy.

"If you would speak a word for us, sir—"
"I am afraid it would be impossible for four more juniors to get leave," said Mr. Railton, shaking his head. "I am sorry you are disappointed, but—"

"Only three, sir," said Blake. "Herries doesn't want to come."

"I should like to go," said Herries. "But my bulldog's ill, and I feel that I oughtn't to leave him. That's how it is."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Well, three, then. I am afraid it would be impossible. But if you would like to see Tom Merry off at Laurel Villa, I think I could get you a permit for a day off."

Blake brightened up.

CHAPTER 13.

Blake's Dodge!

MISS FAWCETT greeted the juniors affectionately when they arrived at Laurel Villa. Most of them had been down there only the week before, after Miss Fawcett's stay at St. Jim's; but the kind old lady was very pleased to see them again.

It was impossible from Miss Priscilla's point of view for Tom Merry to take a run aboard without going home first, to have all his personal belongings sorted over, and carefully packed, and his health examined, and all sorts of arrangements made for his personal comfort and well-being.

Miss Fawcett hugged him affectionately as he entered Laurel Villa. He was looking the picture of health, but nothing would ever get the idea out of his old governess' mind that he was a delicate little fellow.

"You have a very high colour, Tommy," she remarked, "The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,328.

with loving solicitude, as she held him at armslength and looked at him.

"Walking from the station," said Tom Merry.

"But I sent a conveyance for you."

"We shoved the bags and the slackers into that, and walked."

"Dear me!"

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I decline to be described as a slackah! I did not walk because—"

"Because you rode. Exactly!"

"Yaas, but—"

"I am afraid this colour is a little hectic," said Miss Priscilla. "I hope you are not catching a cold, Tommy darling."

"Oh, no; not a bit of it!"

"If you had a cold I would keep you here and nurse you, instead of letting you go to Paris, my dear," said Miss Fawcett affectionately.

"I am perfectly well, dear," said Tom Merry hurriedly. "I've never felt so ripping in all my life."

"How is your cough?"

"I haven't a cough."

"Oh, my darling child! You remember when you were here—"

"That was only because some silly ass put some pepper on my coconut ice," said Tom Merry. "It wasn't a cough."

"Your chest is so delicate. You are sure you always wear your—"

"Yes—yes!" said Tom hastily. "I say, Fatty Wynn is frightfully hungry, and he has been talking about nothing but dinner all the way down."

And Miss Fawcett, thus reminded of her duties as a hostess, ceased her inquiries after Tom Merry's health, and bustled about to look after her guests.

Fatty Wynn was indeed hungry; but he was in a satisfied mood. He knew what the "tuck" was like at Huckleberry Heath. He confided to Figgins that he had a hunger he wouldn't have taken a sovereign for, under the circumstances.

The remainder of that day was spent in packing and discussing plans. All the juniors put their heads together on the subject of a "dodge" for enabling Blake & Co. to join in the expedition.

But a plan was not easily found.

The Head had been asked, and he had made one concession in the case of Kangaroo. It would not have been form to ask him again, and it would have been useless. But what kind of a dodge could be devised?

Digby desperately proposed taking a bit in their teeth, so to speak, and bolting. But the suggestion was impracticable.

By giving them leave to come to Laurel Villa, Mr. Railton had really placed them upon their honour, and they were bound to return to St. Jim's.

"Besides, it would cause a feahful wow," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully. "The Head would send aftah us."

"Yes," said Blake, with a gloomy nod, "it would be no good. We should find a couple of prefects turning up at Dover to yank us back again."

"That would be extremly humiliatin', and would make us look widiculous."

"It seems rotten that you can't come, though," said Tom Merry. "Suppose we consult Miss Fawcett? She might be able to help."

Blake nodded despondently.

He was quite willing to consult anybody, but he did not think that Miss Priscilla was likely to be able to let in any light on the subject.

The juniors had talked it over in the garden, and it having been decided to ask Miss Priscilla's advice, they trooped in through the french windows.

Miss Fawcett was resting in an easy-chair, after having been through the arduous task of arranging Tom Merry's linen for the journey.

She smiled sweetly at her ward.

"I hope you have had a good rest, Tommy darling."

"Well, I have," said Tom Merry. "I didn't need one, but I've had it. I—"

"Pray sit down, my darling boy. I want to give you some advice on your journey to Paris," said Miss Fawcett.

"Yes; but—"

"Pray listen to me carefully!"

"Certainly, dear!" said Tom Merry, resigning himself to his fate, and giving Miss Priscilla her head, so to speak.

"Paris is a very dangerous place," said Miss Fawcett, while the juniors all sat down and listened with great interest. "I have often heard say that Paris is full of pitfalls for the unwary. I suppose that these pitfalls are in some connection with the catacombs that exist under the

city. I want you to be particularly careful not to fall into any of them."

Tom Merry suppressed a laugh.

"I will be very careful, dear."

"You will probably ascend the Eiffel Tower," went on Miss Fawcett. "You must be very careful not to fall off."

"I will hold him," said Figgins.

"Thank you, Figgins! You are a very careful boy."

There was a chuckle from somewhere, immediately suppressed, however, and Miss Fawcett went on:

"You will, of course, keep with your Uncle Frank as much as possible, and take his advice in everything, my dear boy. He will look after you, and I am sorry he will not be able to be with you all the time. I wish there was some reliable person who would be able to keep with you every moment of the day."

"Bai Jove!"

"Did you speak, Augustus?"

"Yaas, wathah! I was thinkin' the same thing, madam. What Tom Mewwy weally wequiah is a fellow of tact and judgment to look aftah him all the time."

"Yes, indeed, I should feel very much more at ease in my mind, then."

"Then it must be awwanged somehow for me to go with him."

"Eh?"

"I am accustomed to lookin' aftah these youngstahs," said D'Arcy. "I have taken them about to vawious places—London and Livahpool and Coventwy, you know; and we had a twip to Amewicah, and I bwought them back quite safely. You can always wely on me, Miss Fawcett."

"I was thinking of someone much older—"

"These old persons are not always vewiable, Miss Fawcett," said D'Arcy, with a shake of his head. "There's my eldah bwothah, Lord Conway; I have had a gweat deal of twouble with him. He nevah will take my advice, you know. It must be put staight to the Head, that you won't feel safe about Tom Mewwy unless I am with him; and then I am sure Dr. Holmes will see weason."

"Oh, cheese it, you ass!" murmured Blake.

"I decline to cheese it, Blake. I—"

"That's what we are going to ask you, dear," said Tom Merry. "I want Blake and D'Arcy and Dig to come with me, and we can't think of a wheeze for getting them off. We should really be—be much safer in a larger party, of course."

"What-ho!" said Lowther. "We could hold each other's hands in climbing up the Arch of Triumph."

Kangaroo tramped on his toe, and Lowther ceased.

"Dear me!" said Miss Fawcett. "I should like all your friends to go with you, Tommy darling. I wonder if I could persuade Dr. Holmes?"

"I wish you could, dear."

"I believe it could be worked," said Blake. "Suppose Miss Fawcett writes to the Head—"

"I would do that willingly, my dear."

"And tell him that, unless he can see his way to letting us go, she will go to the school and talk it over with him!"

Blake made the suggestion with the most innocent face in the world. After the havoc Miss Fawcett had caused in the School House on the occasion of her last visit there, he knew that Dr. Holmes would have given much to avoid another one. At the news that Miss Fawcett was coming to St. Jim's to talk it over, it was extremely probable that Dr. Holmes would wire permission to the three young rascals to go abroad with Tom Merry.

Miss Priscilla nodded thoughtfully.

"I consider that a good suggestion," she said. "I will write the letter at once."

And the juniors of St. Jim's cleared out into the garden while the dear old lady wrote the letter, and then Tom Merry walked down to the post office and sent it off by express.

And then they waited anxiously for the answer.

CHAPTER 14.

OFF!

"IT is not often that I feel called upon to pwaize Blake for anythin' like forethought or sagacity," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, pausing as he was taking off his boots that night in the big bed-room at Laurel Villa. "In fact, more often than not Blake's best friends must admit that he is weally an ass. But on this occasion I must weally wemark that Blake has played up in a weally exceptional mannah."

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I must weally make the wemark because I considah it your due, deah boy. This wheeze of spwingin' our wespected fwend, Miss Fawcett, upon the Head is somethin' absolutely unequalled in wheezes. Of

course, no disrespects is intended to Miss Fawcett. I twust that Tom Mewwy fully undahstands that?"

"Fully," grinned Tom Merry.

"I should be vewy sowwy indeed to be supposed capable of anythin' like disrespects towards a charmin' and estimable old lady," said D'Arcy. "But I do not think disrespects is implied in spwinging her on the Head."

"Certainly not."

"Dr. Holmes will have to give in. We can count upon a twip to Pawis as a certainty, deah boys."

"I hope so, at all events," said Blake. "The only worry is, what are we to do with you? I suppose you will be willing to stay indoors at the hotel all the time we are sight-seeing?"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and regarded Blake with a fixed and stony stare.

"I pwesume you are jokin', Blake?" he remarked frigidly.

"Not at all."

"It will be necessary for me to accompany you all the time, as othahwise you will certainly get into some sort of mischief!"

"Are you going to look after us all?" asked Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But suppose we separate into two parties? How will you accompany both?" asked the Cornstalk. "You can't keep one eye on the Arc de Triomphe and the others on the Jardin des Plantes, you know."

"And another on the Pont Neuf and another on the Rue de Rivoli, and another on the Luxembourg," grinned Blake.

"There's a great deal of 'I' about D'Arcy, but he hasn't so many eyes as all that," agreed Lowther. "As Herries' bulldog is off his feed, and won't be going out, Herries won't want his chain. I vote that we wire to Herries for Towser's chain, and keep it on Gussy. We can chain him to the banisters every time we go out."

"Jolly good idea!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah. I should uttably wufuse to be chained to the banistahs. And I twust you will not cause me anxiety in Pawis by sepawatin'. I shall have enough trouble to look aftah you without that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to perceive any cause for wibald laughtah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus sniffed and went to bed.

The juniors were up early in the morning. They felt pretty confident about the result of Miss Fawcett's letter to the Head, but they were still a little anxious. Blake predicted a wire in the morning, and the general expectation was that the Head would telegraph in time to prevent Miss Fawcett from paying the threatened visit to the school.

After breakfast the juniors watched the garden path for the telegraph boy.

It was Kangaroo who first spotted him, and he gave a yell that brought all the other juniors flocking to the window.

"Coo-ey!"

"Hallo! What's the row?" demanded Tom Merry.

"A wire, my son!"

"Hurrah!"

The telegraph-boy came up to the house, and the telegram was duly placed in the hands of Miss Fawcett.

The old lady opened it with a slowness that was tantalising to the eager juniors. Then she called Hannah to bring her glasses, and Hannah could not find them for the moment.

"My hat!" said Blake, in an undertone. "This is like waiting for an execution! Buck up, Hannah, there's an old dear!"

"Shall I read it for you, dear?" said Tom Merry.

Miss Priscilla smiled at him affectionately.

"Yes, Tommy darling. How kind and thoughtful you always are!"

Tom Merry took the envelope, and read:

"Full permission granted Blake, Digby, D'Arcy accompany Merry.—HOLMES."

Tom Merry read it aloud, and the juniors gave a cheer that made Miss Fawcett tremble for the pictures and the plaques on the walls.

"Hurrah!"

"Hip-hip-hurrah!"

"Dear me!" said Miss Fawcett. "I am so glad. It is such a pleasure to me to see you young people made happy, and, to tell you the truth, dears, I am glad not to have to undertake a journey to the school. I do not feel quite equal to a journey by rail now, and I am very glad indeed it is not necessary."

Tom Merry kissed her on both cheeks.

"You are a darling!" he exclaimed. "This is ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah! Miss Fawcett has played the game in a

(Continued on next page.)

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weally noble mannah," said Gussy. "The Head is an old twump, too!"

"Come to my arms!" sobbed Blake, clasping D'Arcy to his breast, and waiting round the room with him. The swell of St. Jim's struggled frantically.

"Ow! Wow! Welease me, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Welease me! You are wumplin' my waistcoat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are wufflin' my hair and upsetting my necktie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me!"

Jack Blake released his ruffled chum so suddenly that Arthur Augustus sat down upon the carpet with a bump.

"Ow! Bai Jove! Gweat Scott! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy struggled to his feet.

"Blake, I have no wesource but to give you a feahful thwashin'. Kindly step out into the garden with me."

"Hold him, somebody! He's getting dangerous!"

"I insist—"

"Augustus dear!" said Miss Fawcett gently.

Arthur Augustus calmed down at once. He made Miss Fawcett a graceful bow.

"Pway excuse me, deah madam. I apologise most sincerely for havin' displayed any excitement in the pwesence of a lady. Blake, undah the circe, I will let you off that thwashin'."

"Oh! I breathe again!" gasped Blake.

"Pway don't wot, deah boy!"

"Perhaps you'd better see to your packing," suggested Miss Fawcett. "You will have to start early to catch the afternoon boat."

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

An expression of dismay came over D'Arcy's face.

"Well, what's the matter, image?"

"I wefuse to be called an image."

"What's the matter, duffer?"

"I considah—"

"What's the matter?" roared Blake, shaking him. "Do you mean to say you've got some difficulty to start at the last moment?"

"It is not my fault, deah boy. I suppose it will be all wight if we catch the night boat, or go to-morrow mornin' instead?"

"But why?" demanded Tom Merry. "What's the matter?" "You see, I'm in a doocid awkward posish," explained D'Arcy. "I came away from St. Jim's just for a wun down here to see you off, and did practically no packin'. I have only one change of clothes and two changes of linen with me, and only the hat I stand up in."

"Ha, ha, ha! I should like to see you standing up in it!"

"I was speakin' figuratively, Tom Mewwy. I mean I have absolutely no change of headgear except a cap and a toppah I came down in."

"Well, surely a cap and a topper are enough for any chap to wear at the same time?" exclaimed Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall wequiah at least two extwa toppahs. I shall wequiah several suits of clothes. I suppose a chap can't go to Pawis without evening clothes? Suppose we are invited to a soiwee at the Elysee?"

"Well, it's not likely to happen."

"I don't know. The Pwesident may hear that there are distinguished visitahs in Pawis, and may send wound for us."

"Yes, I think I can see him doing it."

"It would be wathah wotten to have to turn up at a pwesidential soiwee in a Norfolk jacket. Besides, there is the opewah. They have opewah all the year wound in Pawis, instead of a short season like the silly asses in London, and we shall probably go to the opewah a good many times. I should absolutely wefuse to go to the opewah in a Norfolk jacket."

"Well, you could go in your shirtsleeves at a pinch."

"I wegard that wemark as widiculous, Lowthah. I shall certainly wequiah some evenin' clothes, and I must at least take one spare suit."

"Better get them in Paris," said Blake gravely.

"I may wequiah them in a huvwyy."

"You can get them jolly quick. Chaps who have been in Paris told me that you can get evening clothes on hire in Montmartre, either to go to a ball, or to get a job as a waiter!"

D'Arcy gave Blake a look that made the juniors shriek.

"If you think I could wear evening clothes on hiah, Blake—"

"Well, if you like you can pay ten francs a week, you know, and make it hire-purchase," said Blake.

"I wegard you as an ass!"

"Well, I'm going to pack," said Kangaroo.

"But my clothes are at St. Jim's—"

"You'd better go and fetch them, then," suggested Tom Merry.

Merry. "It's quite possible the Head may change his mind when you get there, and keep you at the school."

"Bai Jove!"

"But that won't matter, as we will send you picture-post-cards of the places we see, and then—"

"Pway don't work that off on me, deah boy. On second thoughts I will not return to St. Jim's for my clothes."

"Good! You'll find the hired evening clothes all right," said Blake. "They fit where they touch, you know, and there will be plenty of room to grow in them."

"I shall wish to a Pawis tailah to call on me at the hotel the moment we awwive there, and to put the work in hand at once."

"Good! What about a hatter?"

"Yaas, I'll wish to a hattah, too."

"And a bootmaker?" suggested Blake gravely.

"Bai Jove, yaas I have only two pairs of shoes with me."

"And a shirtmaker?"

"I think I could wisk buyin' the shirts weady-made in the Wue de Wivoli."

"Oh, I don't know! They might be a fraction of an inch out of gear, and might come loose round the muzzle, or tight round the carburettor," said Lowther, with a grave shake of the head. "Why not send a wire to the Mayor of Paris, instructing him to have all the tradesmen of the city waiting at the hotel for you?"

"Pway don't wot, deah boy. I will awwange with the tailah and the hattah and the bootmakah by wiah. I shall have to look out their addresses. Meanwhile, I shall have to twavel with a single twunk."

And D'Arcy, with a despondent face, proceeded to pack a single trunk. He was somewhat comforted, however, by sending off telegrams to Paris instructing various individuals to attend him when he arrived there, for the purpose of replenishing his wardrobe.

The juniors were to catch an early train, and had to change twice on the journey. They were driven down to the station with their baggage, Miss Fawcett bidding them farewell at the gate of Laurel Villa.

She impressed upon Tom Merry the dire necessity of keeping his feet dry, and of never going out in the rain, or staying up after nine o'clock, except on special occasions, and, above all, she cautioned him to beware of the pitfalls with which she had heard that Paris abounded, and which she believed might let an unwary pedestrian through into the catacombs without a moment's warning.

Tom Merry promised to be awfully careful, and he left his old friend feeling reassured, as he drove off to the station.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking thoughtful during the drive, but as the coach neared the station he burst into a sudden chuckle.

The other fellows looked at him.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked Tom Merry. "Anything gone wrong with the works?"

"Nothing, Tom Mewwy. I was thinkin'. Young Wally said he was comin' with us if we went. Of course, I couldn't take young Wally to Pawis. The wesponsibility of havin' you fellows on my hands is gweat enough, without havin' a Third Form fag wowwyyin'."

"Well, he won't come now," grinned Blake.

"No. I am sowwy for Wally, you know—"

"Hallo! There's that telegraph kid again."

The telegraph-boy was coming down the lane towards Laurel Villa. As he saw the party for the station he stopped, and waved his hand, with a buff-coloured envelope in it.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Blake. "That wire is for one of us, I expect!"

The driver stopped, and the telegraph-boy came up, grinning. He held the telegram out to Tom Merry.

"Master Merry, it's for you," he said.

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry, taking the envelope carefully.

As he opened it, however, he gave a low whistle.

"What's up?" said Blake anxiously.

"It's from Uncle Frank!"

"Bai Jove! What does he say, deah boy?"

"Listen!" said Tom Merry dramatically.

The coachload of juniors, as well as the driver and the telegraph-boy, listened with breathless intensity.

"Regret forced to cancel visit temporarily. Urgent business. Sorry short notice."

"FAWCETT."

The juniors looked at one another blankly and in silence.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Harry Noble at last, with slow emphasis. Then, as nobody spoke, he added: "I'm blessed if I'm not!"

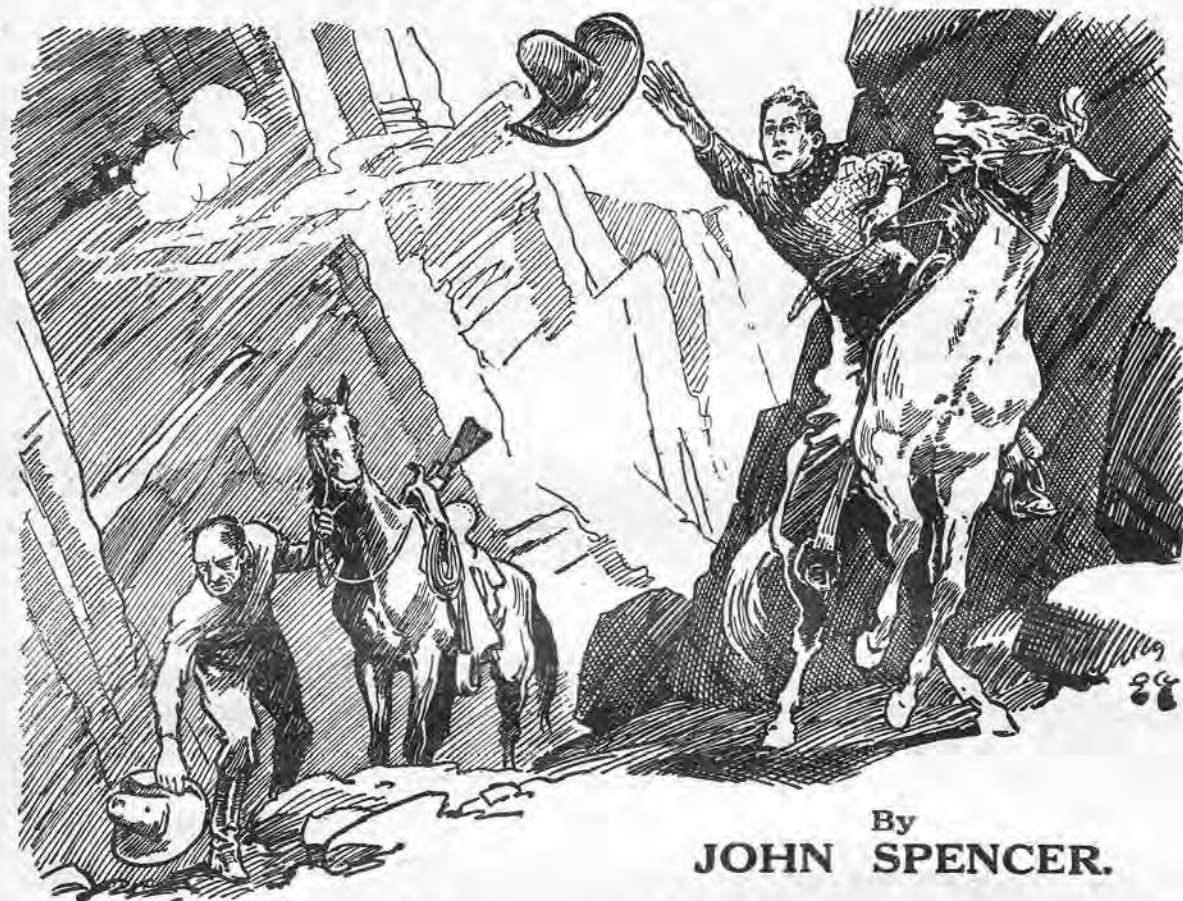
There was nothing for it but to return to St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Bernard Glyn's mechanical Skimpole comes to life again in "SKIMPOLES THREE!" next week's ripping yarn of St. Jim's!)

CLOSING CHAPTERS OF OUR GREAT ADVENTURE YARN!

RED STAR RANGER!



By
JOHN SPENCER.

The End of the Hunt!

THE Red Star Ranger and his pal Fusty had been a week up in the Blue Mountains, in pursuit of Jasper Privett and his bandit gang, moving from one almost inaccessible place to another, and sleeping out at night with the frost on the ground, glad of the comfort of their sleeping-bags.

Lately they had found shoeprints, and lost them because of the hardness of the trail.

They were climbing a steep, winding trail, not much wider than a goat-track, Jerry Garrison, on Paintbox, in the lead, when a gun barked higher up on the mountains, and a bullet plugged clean through Fusty Joe McKraw's brand-new Stetson. The shot must have been aimed at Jerry, for he was in front, but, being a little out, Joe had got it.

"Huh!" barked Joe as he scrambled out of the saddle, fetched his hat, and tugged it down over his lank hair.

"Didn't I advise you to cut holes in that new tile of yores, Joe?" laughed Jerry. "The reason why you've lost so much of yore hair is lack of ventilation."

Braang!

A second shot rang out, and this time it was Jerry's own hat that went sailing from his head, with a hole drilled through each side of it.

Jerry swung Paintbox about, and caught his hat as it was falling. Then he glared back over his shoulder at a point of rock, hundreds of feet above them, from which white puffs of burnt powder-smoke were drifting.

Braang! Braang! Braang!

Bullets began to whistle uncomfortably close, and Jerry yelled out to Fusty:

"Beat it, sheriff! Make old Jenny go! Pretend to panic!"

Fusty whirled his pony about, and down the trail he and Jerry went galloping, sliding, jumping, until jutting rocks sheltered them from the hail of bullets. There they drew rein. Jerry Garrison pointed to a dangerous track which

wound round and in and out a rocky wall, with death a thousand feet down in a sheer drop on the left.

"Let's go along there, old timer," he said. "A mile or two along there's a branch trail leads up above where those shots kem from. Didn't I tell you those hoss-tracks we were follerin' led to Jasper's hiding-place? Quite a few sharpshooters are lurking up there. They never got there the way we were workin' up, but the way I'm going to take."

"Me, too," said Fusty, with a grim smile.

"No, sir," answered Jerry, with a shake of his sun-tanned head; "you're going to lead Paint and Jenny down the trail, leaving plenty of shoe-marks."

"What for?" asked Fusty.

"Shouldn't be surprised," grinned Jerry, "if they wuz to send a party hunting us. If they do, said party, seeing two tracks, will reckon I'm with you. Somewhere below, where you'll be headin', Sheriff Hugo Ennis, of Mongoose, and his vigilants are camped. Mebbe, you can lead the bandits slap into ambush, and then what a haul you'll grab!"

"An' what about you, Ranger?" growled Fusty, eyeing Jerry doubtfully.

"Me? Why, the gang, thinking I've gone down the mountains with you, will never guess I'm up on the rocks above, an' I may be able to do some snipin'!"

Jerry led the way, and for a long distance they rode the perilous path within one short step from death. Fusty felt relieved when the track widened and he saw a well-defined trail, leading both downward and up. The peaks of the Blue Mountains were lost in cloud.

Jerry now dismounted, and, taking a pack on his back and a rifle in each hand, carrying enough provisions to last him several days, began to climb the upward trail.

"Fusty," he called back, "it's no use lookin' glum. You can't bring hosses up whar I'm going to. Ride 'em down. Fool Jasper Privett's gang. Try and meet Ennis, and bring

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him and his boys along. I gonna try and capture the gang on my own. You ride and lead Paintbox, leaving a double trail. Fool the gang into believing I've rid off in panic along of you."

Fusty choked.

"Ain't it marvellous?" he gasped. "I'm sheriff, but all I gets is orders!"

"Yeah!" grinned Jerry, as he trudged onward. "An', like a good sheriff, you'll obey 'em!"

Jerry turned off the main trail, climbed rocks and spurs, sometimes looking like a fly sprawled on a window-pane. Once he turned his head and looked down. And then, with a gasp, he drew himself into a hollow among the rocks and hid, for he saw a line of six horsemen making their way down the trail after Joe McKraw.

Joe could no longer be seen, but he left fresh shoe-prints. Jerry caught the glint of the sun on moving gun barrels. Some of Jasper's bandits were after Fusty. Well, Jerry reckoned, Fusty would soon know they were trailing him, and he was clever enough to trick them with the led pony and lead them on to where Sheriff Hugo Ennis' vigilants were camped. Ennis could be trusted not to advertise his whereabouts, and would have scouts out. No other two ponies in the State could keep pace with Paintbox and Jenny.

Jerry watched the six riders turn and twist along the trail till they vanished from view, and then continued his perilous climb.

And as the sun began to sink, from a spur of rock on to which he wriggled, lying flat, Jerry found himself looking down at a place where a dozen men were sprawled upon a plateau. He saw a flicker of flame where a portable stove was burning. Rifles were tilted against the rocks. Jerry drew back satisfied. The men were Jasper Privett, Squint Lane, and the gang, he reckoned, beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Scarcely had he wriggled back to a safe place and selected his bed, than night fell like a closing shutter. Jerry was up there among the eagles, and might easily fumble to his death if he moved.

Fusty, a little disgruntled, for he hated leaving Jerry, peering backward up the steep trail, soon discovered that men were after him.

He urged Jenny on at speed, holding on to Paintbox's rein.

"Ger-rup, gees!" he chirped. "Gotta move some. Can't let 'em know I've got a led hoss."

The pace he made was too hot for the half-starved, jaded beasts behind, who had been too long cooped up in the barren hills.

Towards the sinking of the sun Fusty swung round a towering rock, Paintbox trailing a little behind. And instantly he pulled up sharp and short, because a crowd of armed men were there. Their ponies were standing near the wall face. The rifles were stacked. The men blocked the way.

"Good job for you we reckernized you by yore hosses, Joe," grinned Hugo Ennis, in friendly greeting, "or you might hev bin lead drilled. What's become of Jerry Garrison? Don't say—"

"He's up the Blues. We found out where Jasper's hiding. I've got a bunch of bad hombres follerin' me," growled Fusty. "Aimed to try to bring 'em home to you, brother sheriff."

In a few minutes the coming of the six gunmen was duly reported, and the vigilants split up into two parties, which lined each side of the road. Fusty walked Paintbox, Jerry's horse, out of danger, then returned on foot.

He was just in time to see the six men come riding boldly round the wall of rock in the dim twilight. Too late the men saw that they were trapped. The man in front drew his gun and shot at Fusty, who ducked the bullet.

Braang! Braang!

The answering shot came from Sheriff Hugo Ennis' gun, and the man who had aimed at Fusty tumbled out of the saddle and crashed to the ground. The other five, seeing rifles levelled at them from both sides of the trail, lifted up their hands.

Fusty walked over to the crumpled figure, turned it over. "Why, Hugo," he said, "blow me if he ain't Squint Lane!"

"The traitor who tried to sell me back in Mongoose!" growled the sheriff of that flourishing town. "An' I got him. Seems to me that's fair." He gave the dead bank robber a long look, then turned to the dejected five who were dismounting. "Boys," he said, "you'll be trailed back to Mongoose for fair trial. Can't promise you won't hang. Whar's Jasper Privett?"

"Up thar," replied one of the prisoners sulkily, as he pointed up the mountains. "And I hope you get him, for

the skunk is yaller, yaller'n a guinea, and we've him to thank for gettin' us into this mess!"

The first inkling of danger came to Jasper Privett very early the following morning, when, just as he was bemoaning the non return of the six members of his gang, who had gone in pursuit of the Red Star Ranger and Fusty, a shot rang out from the heights above the hidden camp.

Clank!

The marksman's aim was so good that he shot the pannikin, out of which Privett was drinking, clean from his lips and out of his hand.

Jerry could just as easily have drilled Jasper Privett, but he found it impossible to shoot the man in cold blood.

With a howl of fright, Jasper Privett sprang to his feet and stood glaring at the spot from which the powder smoke was drifting.

Braang! Braang!

Jerry Garrison chipped the rock at Jasper's feet with two more bullets, and the gang scuttled like rabbits for safe cover.

Then Jerry arose, and standing on a point of rock, rifle in one hand and hat in the other, he waved to Privett, yelling: "The game's up, Jasper. Better hoist the white flag. I'm Jerry Garrison, the Red Star Ranger."

The mountain boomed the words in resounding echoes, and Jasper Privett, with a curse, reached for his rifle.

Then a man came running up to him,

"Boss," he howled, "there's an army climbing up the trail. They've got us stone cold!"

Jasper Privett's jaws clashed, and into his scared eyes crept a wicked gleam.

"I'll see you guys through," he said. "They won't dare burn us. I can pull the strings. Mebbe we'll be gaoled a while. But before we surrender I'm gonna get the Ranger."

Privett began his climb with surprising agility, moving from cover to cover so skilfully that Jerry, watching the plateau below, had no idea that he was in danger.

Just when Hugo Ennis, Fusty, and the vigilants came within gunshot of the hiding-place, and the bandits hoisted a white handkerchief tied to the end of a rifle as a signal of surrender, Jasper Privett reached a point from which he could see Jerry crouching down behind a boulder, watching.

Privett took careful aim, intending to kill.

Braang!

As the report echoed loudly, Jerry felt a dull stinging in the shoulder where the bullet hit him. Jasper missed the head by a fraction, but Jerry was hurt. Turning where he knelt, he gripped his rifle, looking for the killer.

Jasper Privett dodged, began to work his way round the rock-face, gripping a dangerous, narrow ledge with his toes, holding on to the rock, the rifle hanging from his right hand. He had about sixty feet of the narrow ledge to cross to reach a track which led upward to the point where the Red Star Ranger was concealed.

Privett, with set teeth, determined that come what might he would kill Jerry Garrison, the Ranger, who had ruined all his plans.

Privett had nearly made the crossing, when Fusty caught sight of him as his body came into view. Fusty had heard that shot, had seen Jerry show himself for a moment after he was hit.

Gol darn it, Jasper Privett had plugged Jerry. Fusty vowed as he unslung his rifle that he would plug Jasper Privett.

Carefully he took his aim, and then, just as he pulled the trigger, he saw Jasper Privett stumble. The bank robber and crook Mayor of Red Rock had unintentionally swung the butt of the rifle between his moving legs and tripped himself. The slip was fatal. The ledge on which he was moving was not more than two feet wide. Privett's body swayed outward, and, losing his rifle, he threw up his hands and plunged sheer down the mountain side, dropping full three hundred feet before his great, fat body struck the first jutting point of rock.

A chip in the rock-face showed where Fusty's bullet had hit.

Fusty found Jerry leaning against a boulder with his coat off trying to tend his wound.

"Hurt, Jerry?" asked Fusty.

"Just a scratch in the shoulder," said Jerry, wincing as he smiled.

Then Fusty had his arm around him.

"Kem on, Ranger," he said, "let's collect yore traps an' I'll help you down. Ennis shot Squint Lane. Privett's gone to his death down the mountain, and all the other guys are prisoners. I've got a nice little cabin back in Red Rock. An' yo're not an outlaw now, yo're a sober, honest citizen; and yo're gonna stay a long time with me."

The Red Star Ranger grinned as he grabbed his rifle in his right hand, and with Fusty's help, began the treacherous downward climb.

"That is, sheriff," he provided, "if I ken stand it."

THE END.

ST. JIM'S SPOTLIGHT

HOBBIES OF THE SAINTS!

INTERESTING AND UNUSUAL PASTIMES OF WELL-KNOWN FIGURES!

THEY say a fellow's character is indicated by his hobby, and according to a series of tactful inquiries which I made recently, there are some very remarkable characters in the junior school at St. Jim's!

My first victim was Harry Manners, whom I found tinkering with his big reflex camera in Study No. 10 on a half holiday. He was loading it with plates preparatory to taking a few "snaps" of the cricket on Little Side. Manners is gifted with a very quick eye, and his "action" photographs of various St. Jim's men are much in demand. Manners told me that his camera has a Zeiss lens, and can take good photographs even in the poorest light. As he had a few minutes to spare, he showed me a few prints which he had made on gaslight paper in the study, developing them with an ordinary threepenny packet of M.Q. Developer, and fixing in an acid fixing bath. Those he showed me were as bright and glossy as those supplied by a professional, but I understand Manners has a special process of "squeezing" them which puts on the gloss.

While I was chatting with Manners, Tom Merry poked his head round the study door to ask how long the photographer would be, as Gussy in particular was anxious to be "snapped" in his elegant cricket rig before play! I seized the opportunity to ask Merry about his favourite hobby, and he replied unhesitatingly that it is, was, and always will be football. So now we know!

Monty Lowther the same evening admitted that his one desire is to become a brilliant humorist, though he agreed that some of his puns are on the painful side. Monty studies humour, however, and would like a career as a stage comedian, but he wouldn't mind going on the B.B.C., or writing for the humorous weeklies. Anything so long as he can be funny!

Calling in at Study No. 6, I found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fuming over a "toppah" which had the appearance of a concertina. Some "feahful wottah," as Gussy put it, had carelessly knocked that beautiful silk hat on the floor and trodden on it! The damage was irreparable, and Gussy refused to be comforted. It was not so much the actual loss, but the destruction of a work of art, that hit Gussy on the raw, so to speak. He found some solace, however, in confiding to me that his interest in clothes is a very serious matter, quite a life study, in fact. He believes in maintaining a good personal appearance, even if one's wardrobe is limited. We can't all afford a lot of new apparel, but there is no need to neglect tidiness and go around in what Gussy would describe as "wags and tattahs." To some extent, I agreed. Without being a dandy, one can avoid slovenliness.

George Herries came in while we were talking, and Gussy gave a gasp of alarm. Herries carried under his arm a bulky article—his beloved bulldog, Towser! In spite of Gussy's frenzied protests, Herries dumped Towser on the study table, restraining him by the collar as he showed signs of interest in Gussy's trousers.

"You know you are not allowed to bring that wicked dog into the study, Hewwies!" said D'Arcy severely. "Towser's not feeling well," explained

Herries, "I thought it would do him good to come here and sit in here."

"If that animal is goin' to sit in here, I am goin' to see Tom Mewwy!" said D'Arcy decidedly. "I am vewy fond of dogs, as you know, Hewwies, but Towser has no wespsect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs!"

"Oh, he's only playful!" urged Herries, regarding Towser thoughtfully with a bottle of castor oil in his hand.

Gussy sniffed and left the study. I left, too—while Towser growled ominously as Herries poured out a spoonful of castor oil!

On the way to the New House I bumped into Herbert Skimpole, and Skimpole was only too ready to tell me all about his hobby.

"My hobby is the elevation of the mind," said Skimpole solemnly. "Fellows live in darkness when they could with a little effort become initiated into the mysteries of Determinism, Futurism, and—"

"Haven't you any relaxation?" I demanded.

"I do crossword puzzles when I feel the need of light amusement," answered Skimpole. "I am quite good at them, too. But I think they ought to make them harder—by using no words of less than ten letters."

I gasped, and vended my way to Figgins' study in the New House.

Apparently there was trouble in the happy home, for the sounds of strife echoed from the study along the corridor, and as I arrived at the study door, it flew open in my face, and Kerr staggered fairly into my arms, holding his nose, which ran crimson.

"Sorry, old chap!" gasped Figgins, inside. "I didn't mean to let fly like that!"

"Only a friendly bout, you know!" gasped Kerr, mopping his nose and grinning at me.

Figgins and Kerr and Wynn welcomed me freely, Fatty offering me a huge slice of cake.

"It only came this morning," said Fatty Wynn, beaming with pride. "My Aunt Matilda makes them specially for me. You try it."

I did, and it was good. I didn't need to ask Fatty Wynn's hobby, either. He told me in one word—eating. But Figgins chimed in to say that Fatty is the best bowler in the Junior School, so perhaps his gargantuan appetite is justified by results!

Figgins meanwhile peeled off his gloves, and helped Kerr to stem the flow of crimson which had been caused by inadvertently "letting fly."

I learned that Figgins' hobby is boxing, and he is always ready for a bout in the study or the gym or anywhere else. Certainly it is a healthy and manly pastime, and keeps a fellow fighting fit, in fact. Only at the moment Kerr had lost a little of his enthusiasm!

After a while, however, Kerr felt better, and told me that although he enjoys sport of all kinds, he has a fondness for chess, and though he did not say so himself, I happen to know that he can beat all comers in the junior school. He is also very interested in amateur theatricals, and is a "dab" at make-up. Figgins hastened to tell me of the time Kerr made himself up as a new master,

glasses, side-whiskers and everything, and actually managed to come one or two School House men—lightly, of course—getting clear away before the real new master turned up!

In the quad I met Eric Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, and asked him if he could recommend a good hobby for a junior to take up. Kildare answered without hesitation.

"Keeping fit," said Kildare. "Keeping fit is the finest hobby any fellow can have, take it from me. Do it any way you like—follow your own bent in choosing a sport—but do it with all your might. And it pays good dividends in health, too!"

And as Kildare is a strapping specimen himself, I took that to be pretty good advice!

THE SEEKERS.

The first meeting of a new school society, the "Seekers," took place this week in the Junior Common-room.

The Seekers After Knowledge, to give them their full title, were started by Harry Manners of the Shell, the object being to provide a series of interesting lectures to which all are welcome.

The lectures, Manners hastened to explain, were to be given entirely by juniors, each fellow writing a paper on his own pet subject, and reading it before the assembled Seekers. In this way fellows could exchange useful "tips" on hobbies, etc., and also acquire the art of public speaking.

Manners led off with a well-written and succinct paper on Amateur Photography, on which subject there is no fellow better fitted to speak at St. Jim's.

Manners illustrated his lecture with a number of "snaps" and enlargements, which were handed round, a special feature being his "action" photographs of St. Jim's cricketers. A graphic picture of Tom Merry's winning hit against the New House was received with applause.

We were told how to load a camera, expose the film or plate, develop it, print by gaslight or daylight, and finally how to enlarge small snaps to suitable size. Much of Manners' technical information went over his audience's heads, but they received it in respectful silence, and everybody appreciated the tit-bit at the finish, when Manners took a flashlight photograph of the first assembly of the Seekers.

Floral!

AUTOMATIC INTERVIEWS.

JACK BLAKE SPEAKING.

"Yes, I'm Yorkshire, and proud of it," agreed Jack Blake, lacing his footer boots.

"Not that I go around ejaculating 'Ba goom!' or saying everything is 'gradely.' I've got out of that since I've been at St. Jim's. As a matter of fact, Yorkshire people are very adaptable. Look at myself, for instance. I have to combine the jobs of keeping Tom Merry in order, looking after a tame ass like Gussy, giving Herries tips on playing the cornet, and helping Digby with his stamp collecting."

"People in the South need looking after, you know. You're a quiet, easy-going lot, if you don't mind my saying so. You need pepping up. The whole of St. Jim's

(Continued on next page.)

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needs pepping up, and I've made up my mind to do it. So far I'm only Form captain, but Tom Merry will have to look sharp or I shall be junior captain before he knows it!

"Don't think I dislike Merry. I've never met a nicer fellow. And he's a good footballer, too. I must say that."

"I couldn't help laughing."

"You're frank, anyway," I said.

"I like plain speaking," said Blake, picking up a football. "We do know something about footer in the North, you know. All the best teams are in the North. Aston Villa, Newcastle United—"

"What about the Arsenal?" I asked, smiling.

"Never mind about the Arsenal," answered Blake. "Come down to Little Side, and I'll show you how a Yorkshireman plays cricket. That's better than arguing!"

I went down with Blake—and judging by his form, Yorkshiremen certainly do know something about cricket.

WALLY D'ARCY SPEAKING :

"Do you actually like your herrings cooked that way?" I asked incredulously.

"Of course we do!" answered Wally D'Arcy indignantly, pausing in the act of roasting a herring on a pen-holder before the fire in the Third Form Room.

"I suppose you've never tasted a herring cooked like this?"

I had to admit that I hadn't.

"Hang on a while, and you can have a bit of this," said Wally generously. "You won't get much, mind you, because there's a good many hungry mouths to feed. Gibson and Hobbs, and young Jam-face—"

"Wouldn't it be better to let the matron cook them for you?" I inquired.

"I'm a jolly good cook myself," retorted Wally cheerfully. "A job like this would horrify my brother Gus—but you've no idea how nice they taste when they've been cooked in rough and ready style. If you ask me, some fellows—I

don't mean Gus in particular—want mollycoddling. Why, none of the chaps in the Third could cook a herring properly until I showed them how! Fellows don't think for themselves—they want everything done for them. They don't want to soil their hands!"

"My brother Gus wouldn't soil his hands for the world—but he's not so helpless as he looks. He could rough it if he had to—though he'd probably keep that window-pane in his eye to the last! Every fellow ought to learn to rough it—don't you think so? Here, hold this a minute, while I get the next one ready!"

Wally proffered the herring on the pen-holder, but I fled. "Roughing it" in the Third is a rather too strenuous a programme!

TOM MERRY SPEAKING :

"Yes, there is a certain amount of responsibility in being junior captain," agreed Tom Merry, swinging his legs from the study table.

"Not that I let it turn my hair grey or anything silly like that. A fellow can only do his best, after all, and leave the rest. Naturally I try to satisfy everybody, even when picking a football team—perhaps my most difficult job. It is really hard to drop a friend in favour of a better player, you know. But it has to be done sometimes. And most fellows are very sporting when it comes to it."

"Do you get much criticism?" I asked.

"Oh, lots!" grinned Tom Merry. "But I let it roll off me like water off a duck's back. If I listened to all the critics I should never make a decision on my own at all. If I fail to please the majority, they soon call for a fresh election, and depose me, you know."

"That would be a bit disappointing," I remarked.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Merry, quite seriously. "A junior captain isn't a little tin god. He should do all he can for the fellows who have elected him, keeping his head and giving a strong lead,

but if he is superseded by a better man, there's no need to put on sackcloth and ashes. On the other hand, while he is captain he should put all he has into the job, I think. Personally, I don't set out to curry favour in any way. But I do insist on justice. And not too many orders. Nobody likes being ordered about. That's a rather important point."

And, on reflection, I believe it to be one of the cardinal reasons for Tom Merry's popularity!

RADIOGRAMS.

Tom Merry & Co. are regular readers of the "Magnet."

Herbert Skimpole starts a new "ism" every few days. His latest is Metabolism.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is the only St. Jib's man who wears a monocle, but he feels other fellows might copy him with advantage!

Eric Kildare is sports champion of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry, leader of the "Curlew" patrol, has passed every Scout test.

Fatty Wynn, like most Welsh people, has a remarkably good singing voice, and is a star performer in the chapel choir.

George Figgins has the largest and boniest hands in the junior school. Perhaps that explains why he is so fond of boxing!

Philip Lefevre, captain of the Fifth, is a crack oarsman.

For bad temper among the masters, Mr. Selby beats Mr. Ratcliff by a short head!

Mr. Railton follows the sporting activities of the school with great keenness, and coaches both senior and junior elevens.

George Figgins has the longest legs in the junior school!



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