

ALL-STAR STORY PROGRAMME and FREE GIFT PICTURES—WITHIN!

The GEM

2d

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EVERY WEDNESDAY.

Week Ending January 13th, 1934.



AN EXCITING INCIDENT FROM THE POWERFUL SCHOOL YARN INSIDE.

NOT WANTED



Little Joe Frayne, the waif from the underworld whom Tom Merry has befriended, meets with a hot reception from his Form-fellows. But Joe "takes it all on the chin"—and still comes up for more!

CHAPTER 1. Friendless in the Form!

JOE sat at his desk in the Third Form Room at St. Jim's. Joe was alone in the great room. The rows of desks were untenanted; the forms were empty. The Third Form of St. Jim's were out of doors in the bright, winter sunlight, and their merry voices could be heard floating in through the open windows of the class-room.

Merry enough they sounded, but they did not wake an echo in Joe's heart. Joe was not in a merry mood.

He sat at the desk with his head leaning on his hand, thinking.

There was a deep shadow upon Joe's rugged face, and a heavy shadow on his heart. St. Jim's was a pleasant place to many of its inhabitants—a tolerable place to all. But to the little stranger who had entered its gate, St. Jim's was not pleasant.

Joe Frayne was alone.

The kind friends who had taken him under their protection were in a higher Form. Tom Merry belonged to the Shell, and in the nature of things the Shell did not come much into contact with the Third.

Blake and D'Arcy were in the Fourth. But in the Third Frayne knew nobody.

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Nobody in the Third was inclined to know him.

The little ragamuffin, rescued from the streets of London by the kindness of Tom Merry, brought to the great school which was like a new world to him, was quite alone. He was with the other fellows, but not of them.

The lad heaved a heavy sigh as he sat at the desk.

"No class!" he murmured aloud. "No class! That's wot they call me—no class! I s'pose they're right, too. I ain't no class! It ain't likely that I'm going to grow up classy in Blucher's Buildings, with a convict for a father! Not 'arf!"

"Joe!"

It was a clear, ringing voice that came like a musical cadence through the empty silence of the Form-room.

Joe started and looked up eagerly.

Tom Merry of the Shell was looking in at the door.

Tom Merry's face was bright and cheerful, and his eyes were sparkling. He was evidently enjoying the sharp, winter afternoon. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's—first half-holiday since Tom Merry's return to school. Tom Merry had been through some dark days himself of late, and at one time it had looked as if he would have to bid adieu to the old school for ever. But adversity had not hardened Tom Merry's heart, as is so often the case. It had left him with a keen sympathy for any fellow who was down, and a determination never to neglect an opportunity of helping a lame dog over a stile.

—IS UP AGAINST IT IN THIS STIRRING LONG COMPLETE STORY.

AT ST JIM'S!

By
Martin
Clifford

"Hallo, Joe!"
"Uullo, Master Merry!" said Joe, working up a grin to hide the disconsolate expression of his face. "Ow good of you to look in on me!"

"What are you doing here, Joe?"

"Doing, Master Tom?" said Joe.

"Have you been kept in by your Form-master?" Tom Merry asked.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Mr. Selby hasn't been down on you?"

"No more'n usual," said Joe, with renewed caution. "I don't think 'e likes me in 'is class, Master Tom. But he ain't been worse'n usual this morning."

Tom Merry came into the Form-room, and put a hand on Joe's shoulder. His handsome, cheerful face was a little concerned now.

"Look here, Joe, you don't want to quarrel with me, do you?" he asked.

Joe looked utterly dismayed.

"Quarrel with you, Master Tom?" he gasped.

"Yes. You must stop calling me Master Tom and sir. I don't like it," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "I'm Merry to you, the same as the other fellows. Don't you understand that we're all on an equal footing here?"

Joe shook his head.

"I'll do as you like, Master Tom—"

"There you go again!"

"Crikey! It's 'ard to get hout of it," said Joe. "You see, sir, you'll always be Master Tom to me whatever I call you. There ain't nobody like you in the world, sir!"

"My dear kid, that's all rot!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Mind, you're to call me Merry in future! I want you to."

"Yes, sir—I mean Master Tom—I—I mean Merry, sir," stammered Joe.

Tom Merry laughed again.

"You must get into the habit, Joe. It makes me feel an ass to be called 'sir' by a chap at the school, you know. We don't call the prefects sir. Now if you're not detained by your Form-master, why have you stayed in, when it's a half-holiday and splendid weather?"

Joe did not answer.

"Go ahead, kid; I'm waiting!"

"Well, it's only a lark, I suppose," said Joe reluctantly. "But some of the young gentlemen are going for me."

Tom Merry's brows contracted.

"Going for you, are they? Can't you take your own part?"

"I'd stand up to any one of them, sir," said Joe. "But Mr. Selby caught me fighting Jameson, sir, and he says I'm not to fight. He says it's one of the low ways I've brought with me from my slum, Master Tom."

"The cad!" muttered Tom Merry.

"What did you say, sir?"

"Never mind. Look here, Joe! Who are the chaps who are going for you?"

"I—I won't tell you, Master Tom. I don't want to drag you into it. I'm trouble enough for you already without that."

"Stuff! Tell me at once!"

Joe never disobeyed an order of Tom Merry's. To the street arab, brought up without any knowledge of truth or honourable dealing, lying; and even stealing, came as if

by nature. He had only one gleam of light in his great darkness—his affection for Tom Merry. Tom Merry was his guide. What Tom Merry said was right, was right. What Tom Merry said was wrong, was wrong!

"They was 'Obbs, sir, and Picke, and Fane."

"Not young Wally?"

"No, sir."

"I thought Wally wouldn't have a hand in ragging you, kid," said Tom Merry. "Look here! You are rather a little shrimp of a chap, but I think you could stand up to Hobbs, or Picke, or Fane, couldn't you?"

Joe doubled up his fists.

"You watch me, sir, that's all!" he said.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Then you shall jolly well do it!" he said. "I'll see that you take them on one at a time, and—"

"But Mr. Selby said I wasn't—"

"Never mind Mr. Selby now."

"Yes, sir. But you told me always to obey my master, sir."

"Certainly, Joe! Always obey your master," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Only don't argue, old chap. Do as I tell you, and shut up!"

"Ye-es, Master Tom," said Joe, looking sorely puzzled.

There was a tramp of footsteps in the passage.

"I'll bet the young scoundrel's hiding in the Form-room!" said a voice, which Tom Merry recognised as that of Hobbs of the Third. "No good waiting for him in the quad any longer, anyway."

"We'll soon have him out if he's here, Hobby."

"Come on, then!"

Three fags ran into the Form-room.

They had evidently got tired of waiting for the new junior in the quad, and they had come to look for him.

"Here he is!" shouted Fane.

"Collar the cad!"

Tom Merry stepped back from Joe's desk for a moment. The three raggers did not see him as they rushed towards Joe.

Joe leaped to his feet.

"Ands off!" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the next moment Joe was struggling in the grasp of the three fags. They dragged him away from the desk and rolled him on the floor, Joe struggling and fighting furiously.

"Down him!" gasped Fane. "Oh! Ow! Who's that?"

A strong grasp on the collar dragged Fane from his victim. Tom Merry's strong hand had closed upon him, and he was dragged up as easily as if he had been a baby. Tom Merry grasped Hobbs by the collar and jerked him off Joe at the same moment. The two fags gasped and wriggled in the powerful grasp of the Shell fellow.

"Ow!" gasped Hobbs.

"Groooh!" gurgled Fane.

And Joe, finding himself left with only one foe to tackle, promptly rolled him over and sat upon him, pinning him to the floor, and Picke struggled in vain to shake off the tough little ragamuffin.

Tom Merry, grasping Fane and Hobbs tightly by the collar, brought their heads together with a crack, and there was a simultaneous yell.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

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CHAPTER 2.

Fair Play!

TOM MERRY, with a calm and cheerful face, like any fellow performing a bounden duty, knocked Fane's and Hobbs' heads together—twice, thrice, and four times. And at each crack the two unhappy fags let out a dismal howl.

Then he dropped them on the floor, and they sat there rubbing their heads and scowling furiously.

"Get this low beast off me!" panted Picke.

"Not 'arf!" grinned Joe.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Get off him, Joe!"

"Yes, sir!"

Joe left his victim panting. The three fags rose to their feet, regarding Tom Merry and his protegee with evil glances.

Tom Merry gave them a severe look.

"You came here to rag Joe, didn't you?" he demanded.

Fane gritted his teeth.

"Yes, we did!" he exclaimed angrily. "And we'll do it, too, some other time, if you stop us now, you Shell cad!"

"What are you ragging him for?" asked Tom Merry quietly.

"Because he's a rotten outsider!" said Fane.

"He's not wanted at St. Jim's!" said Picke.

"Dirty little toad!" said Hobbs.

Tom Merry compressed his lips.

"The cad doesn't know his own name!" said Hobbs viciously. "He doesn't even know who his father was!"

"Ow am I to know?" demanded Joe. "A chap who died was my father, so I supposed. Anyway, 'e used to send me hout to beg. Then comes old Frayne, and it seems as 'e was my father—leastways, he used to wallop me with his belt, so I suppose 'e was."

"Joe hasn't had much luck," said Tom Merry. "Don't you chaps think you might stand by him and help him a little and give him a chance?"

"We ain't going to be dictated to by a Shell rotter!" said Fane.

"Not much!"

"No fear!"

"So you're going to rag Joe, are you?" demanded Tom Merry, with a glitter in his eyes.

"Yes, we are!" said Fane defiantly. "We're jolly well going to rag him every day if we like! We'll rag Frayne till we get rid of him!"

"Look here," said Tom Merry, "you seem to be determined to go for Joe; but if you do, you'll do it one at a time!"

"We'll do it as we like!"

"Tom Merry!"

"Tom Mewwy!"

It was a ringing call from the corridor.

"All right!" called back Tom Merry. "I'm here!"

"Bai Jove! You're keepin' us waitin', deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, looking in at the doorway.

The swell of St. Jim's was clad with his usual elegance. He adjusted his eyeglass and looked in amazement at Tom Merry and the group of dusty fags.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I twust you are not, keepin' us waitin' while you have a wow with the fags!" he exclaimed. "My dear ass—"

"I decline to be called an ass, Tom Mewwy! I—"

"What's the row here?" asked Jack Blake, coming into the Form-room. He was followed by the rest of the party. There were Manners and Lowther, Tom Merry's chums in the Shell, and Digby and Herries of the Fourth, and Kangaroo. They all came in, dressed for going out, and looking cheerful.

Tom Merry explained.

"These kids are going to rag Joe—"

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as a caddish action."

"Horribly caddish," yawned Monty Lowther. "What can you expect of these Third Form scallywags, though?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bump the little bounders!" said Kangaroo.

"Good egg!"

Fane and Hobbs and Picke looked alarmed. They cast longing glances towards the door. But the chums of the School House were blocking up the doorway; there was no escape that way for the ragers.

"I've got a better idea than that," said Tom Merry. "Joe is going to take them on one at a time and lick them."

"Good!"

"Are you ready, Joe?"

Joe Frayne grinned.

"Wot to!" he said

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"Are you ready, Fane? You seem to be the leader, and you can begin," said Tom Merry.

Fane sniffed.

"I'm not going to fight that little ragamuffin!" he said.

"Why not?"

"He's not fit for me to touch!"

"You were touching him just now, and you were quite willing to touch him so long as you were three to one," said Tom Merry scornfully. "You can fight him, Fane, or you can have a licking from me! Take your choice!"

Tom Merry was in deadly earnest, and his look showed it. He made a step towards the leader of the Third Form ragers, and Fane backed away.

"Of course I'm not afraid of the kid!" he said. "I'll fight him!"

"Go ahead, then!"

"Step up, Joe!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy encouragingly. "Fire away, deah boy, and I'll look aifah you!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Joe cheerfully.

All Joe's despondency had vanished in the presence of Tom Merry & Co. And probably the prospect of a fight appealed to the unruly instinct of the street arab. Joe had done a great deal of rough-and-tumble fighting in his time.

Tom Merry had given the lad a few boxing lessons since his coming to St. Jim's. Joe was naturally quick and intelligent, and he had picked up knowledge wonderfully.

He faced Fane with his hands up, his eyes quick and alert.

Fane swaggered towards the street lad. Fane intended to squash him at the first charge and put him into his place, once and for all. But it did not work out exactly as Fane had intended.

His attack was wild and whirling, but Joe met it standing like a rock, and, although he received a great deal of punishment, he gave back more than he received.

A lightning uppercut sent Fane reeling, and he crashed down on the floor with a bump that rang through the Form-room.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Well hit!" roared the juniors.

Joe grinned a little breathlessly. He waited for his opponent to rise again. But Fane seemed in no hurry to do so.

"Get up!" exclaimed Blake.

Fane staggered to his feet.

"I'm done!" he said savagely, caressing his jaw. "I—I'm not going on. I'm not going to fight a filthy street arab!"

"You'll give him best, then?" said Tom Merry sternly.

"Oh, I don't care! I'll give him best!" snarled Fane.

"Get out, then! Now, Hobbs, your turn!"

"I think Picke wants to take him on next," said Hobbs, with a sickly smile.

But this was at once vigorously denied by Picke.

As a matter of fact, after seeing the way Joe had handled Fane, Picke was very much alarmed at the prospect of having to encounter him at all, and certainly didn't want to tackle him next.

"Your turn, Hobbs!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Look here—"

"Come on!" said Joe, prancing up to Hobbs.

Hobbs had no choice but to defend himself. He put up his hands and faced Joe, attacking the little outcast fiercely.

Joe received a good many hard knocks, but he did not seem to care for them. Joe had had a good many hard knocks in his time. So long as he succeeded in hitting his opponent, Joe seemed satisfied.

And he certainly did succeed in that. Hobbs was knocked right and left, with Joe's fists hammering on his face all the time.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The young boundah's as keen as mustard! Bai Jove!"

"Go it!" shouted the juniors.

Crash!

Hobbs dropped heavily on the floor, and declined to rise when called upon to do so.

Tom Merry & Co. patted Joe on the back.

"Good for you!" said Monty Lowther. "Blessed if I knew you could put up your fists like that! You're a giddy little champion!"

"Your turn, Picke!" said Blake.

"I—I say," stammered Picke, "I—I don't know that I want to touch the chap, you know!"

"Put up your dooks!" howled Joe, prancing towards Picke. "Put 'em hup! I'm a-going to slog you!"

"You must eithah fight or apologise, Picke," said Arthur Augustus. "I have no doubt my young fwicnd would be prepared to accept a suitable apology."

Picke grinned in a sickly way.

"I—I don't mind if I do!" he murmured.

"Put up your dooks!" roared Joe.

"I—I apologise!" stammered Picke. "I'm sorry!"



"Go it, Joe!" encouraged Tom Merry & Co. "On the ball!" Joe Frayne sang, and undoubtedly he was on the "bawl"! His song was weird and wonderful, and his voice wandered around several keys, but Joe kept it going.

"Come off, Joe! It's all over!"
 "Ain't I going to lick him?" demanded Joe, looking considerably aggrieved.

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"
 "Just as you say, Master Tom!"
 "As for you three young rotters," said Tom Merry, looking severely at the three sulky fags, "just you remember that Joe's a better chap than any of you, and let him alone! If there's any more ragging you'll hear of it!"

The fags snorted. In spite of that warning there was pretty certainly some more ragging to come. Joe was not out of the wood yet.

Arthur Augustus slipped his arm through that of the little ragamuffin.

"Come on, deah boy!" he remarked.

Joe stared at him.

"Come where, sir?" he asked.

"With me, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus led Frayne out of the Third Form Room, followed by Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 3.

Wally on the Warpath!

JOE walked along beside Arthur Augustus D'Arcy like a fellow in a dream.

Although his greatest admiration and affection was for Tom Merry, he had been still more deeply impressed by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in many ways.

To be walked along in the sight of all St. Jim's with his arm linked in Gussy's seemed like a dream to Joe.

The chums of the School House followed, grinning.

They liked the way Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had taken Joe under his wing. D'Arcy's manner of doing it was all his own. D'Arcy knew that Joe was a good little chap, and he was determined that Joe should succeed at St. Jim's. If D'Arcy took him up, no one else could possibly have any

excuse for dropping him. That was the way Arthur Augustus looked at it. Arthur Augustus would have smiled with genuine amusement at the idea that anything that was good enough for him was not good enough for anybody else.

D'Arcy's idea was to show the school that Joe was all right; the proof of that was he could be seen walking arm-in-arm with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!

The three dusty fags in the Form-room looked savagely after the departing juniors. Fane, Hobbs, and Picke had had a rough time. They had no desire to meet Joe Frayne on equal terms any more. But their desire to rag him was greatly increased.

"Never mind; let him wait till we get him in the dorm to-night," said Picke darkly.

Hobbs gritted his teeth.

"We'll make him squirm!" he agreed.

"Those chaps can't stand by him then. Rotten cheek, interfering with us in our own Form-room," said Fane wrathfully.

"Yes, and what a regular little cad that street arab is, too, chumming up with the Fourth and the Shell against his own Form!"

"Oh, what could you expect of him!"

"Quite right; he's rotten all through!"

"Hallo! What are you chaps mumbling about? Have you been dusting up the floor with one another?" demanded a cheerful voice.

Wally came into the Form-room.

Wally—otherwise Walter Adolphus D'Arcy, the younger brother of the great Arthur Augustus—was the acknowledged leader of the Third. There were many Fourth Formers who did not care to stand up to Wally, and had he been inclined to bully he would certainly have had a wide field for the exercise of the peculiar pleasure.

But Wally D'Arcy was the last fellow in the world to bully. Besides, as he sometimes remarked, he had plenty to do in keeping his chum Jameson from bullying fellows. Jameson had been leader of the Third before D'Arcy minor arrived on

the scene and brought him down from his high estate after a mighty battle that was still remembered in the Third.

Fane, Picke, and Hobbs looked doubtfully at D'Arcy minor. They never knew quite how to take him. Wally had a hot temper, and was given to taking sides hastily and hitting out when he was contradicted. But he had never been known to do anything caddish, and there was a lingering suspicion in Fane's mind that the persecution of the new boy was a little caddish.

Wally looked, grinning, at the three.

"Lost your voices?" he asked.

"No!" growled Fane.

"Then what's been the matter here?"

"Fourth Form cads and beastly Shellfish!" said Hobbs. Wally's eyes sparkled.

"They've been here rowing?"

"Yes."

"My hat! That means a Form row!" said Wally. "We're not going to have Upper Form fellows swanking in our Form-room, not if we know it."

"Quite right!" said Hobbs.

"But what were they doing?"

"Interfering with us!" said Picke. "We were talking to young Mudlarks—"

"Do you mean Frayne?"

"I don't believe his name's Frayne at all. I know jolly well that he's a rotten beggar's kid, and that he doesn't know who his father is. My opinion is that he's belonged to different people in turn, and as fast as one was sent to prison he was taken up by another and sent out to beg!"

And Hobbs and Fane grinned as if this was very funny.

"Hard cheese on the poor little beggar, then!" said Wally.

Fane snorted.

"What does he want to come here for, then?"

"What did you come for?"

"To be educated, I suppose," said Fane, looking puzzled. Wally nodded.

"Exactly! So did young Frayne. Well, then, it was jolly decent of him, and shows there's something in him, and so why can't you let him alone?"

"Rats! What does a fellow of his class want here?"

"I just told you!"

"Look here, D'Arcy minor, if you're going to chum up with that rotten, no-class ragamuffin, you'll jolly well get cut by the rest of the Form!" howled Picke.

Wally laughed.

"My dear chap, you can cut me if you like," he said.

A GENTLE HINT!



Footpad: "Scuse me, guv'nor, but 'ave you got something for a pore feller who ain't got anything in this cruel world but a loaded revolver?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to K. Ward, 557, Bromford Lane, Ward End, Birmingham, 8.

"I've been thinking whether I oughtn't to cut you, anyway!"

"You rotter—"

"What's that?" Wally pushed back his cuffs and advanced towards Picke.

Picke promptly dodged behind a desk.

"Hold on! I—"

"Come out from behind that desk!" roared Wally.

"Look here, I don't want to row with you."

"You should have thought of that a little earlier," said Wally. "I don't allow anybody to call me a rotter!"

"I—I—"

Wally ran round the desks.

Picke dodged out, and ran round Fane, and then round Hobbs; but neither of them showed any desire to shelter him. Wally's left-handers were well-known in the Third. Fane and Hobbs didn't want to stop one of them.

"Yow!" roared Picke, as Wally caught him by the shoulder and swung him round.

"Now then—"

"Lemme alone!"

"Put up your hands!"

"I w-w-won't!"

Wally proceeded to tap Picke on the nose, the cheek, and the chest. Picke had to put up his hands to defend himself. Then Wally sailed in. His knuckles came like lightning all

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over Picke's countenance, and Picke sat down with a bump, yelling.

"Yow! 'Nuff! I give in!"

"Am I a rotter?" demanded Wally truculently.

"Ow! Yow! Yes—I mean, no!"

"Am I a nice, handsome, gentle chap?" demanded D'Arcy minor, flourishing his fists over the dazed and breathless Picke.

"Yow! Yes!"

"Good!" said Wally, dropping his fists and changing his ferocious frown for a cheerful grin. "Then I'll let you off, Picky!"

"Yow!"

"So you're going to back up that ragamuffin Frayne, young D'Arcy?" demanded Fane, who had a great deal more pluck than Picke.

Wally turned upon him.

"Who says so?" he demanded.

"Well, I suppose you are, from—"

"I'll trouble you not to suppose things about me!" said Wally, in a very warlike way. "I'll get you to take that back, Fane!"

"Look here—"

"Put 'em up!"

Wally advanced upon Fane. Fane put up his fists fiercely. But they did not serve him well. In a minute, or less, he had been hammered out of breath, and was lying beside Picke, who deemed it prudent to remain on the floor.

"Shame!" exclaimed Hobbs.

Wally looked at him.

"Do you want some, too?" he asked.

"N-no."

"Were you speaking to me?"

"N-no."

"Whom were you speaking to?"

"Well, I—I—"

"Just passing remarks generally, I suppose?" suggested Wally genially.

"Ye-es!" stammered Hobbs.

"I can't allow that in the Form-room!" said Wally. "Put 'em up!"

"But—"

"Here goes!"

Hobbs had "to put them up," for Wally was hitting out. One of the Third Form scamp's famous left-handers laid him on the floor. He stayed there.

Wally grinned at the trio.

"That's enough for you!" he remarked. "Don't you cheek your uncle again, that's all! I can't stand cheek from fags!"

And Wally walked out of the Form-room, whistling.

The dusty trio sat on the floor and looked at one another. "What does the beast mean?" gasped Picke. "He slogged me for going for Frayne, and he slogged you for supposing he was Frayne's friend. What does he mean?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"He's a beast!"

"Yes, a rank rotter!"

"Let's go and collar the cad and rag him!"

"Some other time!" groaned Fane.

And it was extremely probable that that "other time" would be very long in coming. Wally was not a particularly promising subject for a ragging.

CHAPTER 4.

Wally's Chum!

TOM MERRY walked out into the quadrangle. It was a cold afternoon, but the sun was shining brightly.

Most of the fellows had turned out for footer, and several games were going on in different parts of the playing fields.

Joe turned a curious eye upon the players. He had never played football, and he was very keen to learn the game. But it was not likely that there would be room for him in the Third Form footer team. The other fellows would not have stood him there.

Bernard Glyn of the Shell came strolling over to meet the chums. Glyn glanced at Joe, and gave him a cheerful nod. Glyn was the son of a millionaire, and known in the school as the inventor of fearful and wonderful contrivances that cost him large sums of money, and generally caused trouble.

"You fellows coming with me?" he asked.

Tom Merry paused.

The chums had intended to have a run out that afternoon and to have tea at Glyn's place, which was close to St. Jim's. Glyn's sister Edith was very popular with the juniors. Tom Merry had looked into the Third Form Room for Joe, and taken him out; and it occurred to him, a little late, that Joe was not precisely the person to be taken to Glyn's.

Tom Merry was not in the least tainted with snobbishness. But Joe had not yet learned the rudiments of manners.

He was a good-hearted little chap, and for that reason could be trusted to do nothing really bad.

But the little graces of manner which distinguished D'Arcy, for instance, were quite unknown to the wail of the slums.

Joe was given to eating bacon with his fingers, guzzling tea with a reverberating noise, shuffling his feet at the table, and various other little manners and customs of which Tom Merry hoped to cure him in time, but which were certain to take a long time to eradicate.

Glyn looked at him with a grin. He understood what was passing in the Shell fellow's mind.

"We shall have a ripping tea, and a run back in dad's car," he said.

"Good! We're coming, then!" said Blake.

Joe turned red. The little street arab was very keen—almost unnaturally keen at reading the thoughts and feelings of others. His early way of life had made him so. He tugged at Tom Merry's sleeve.

"Master Tom!" he whispered.

Tom Merry looked down at him.

"Yes, Joe?"

"Look 'ere, you don't want me; lemme be off," said Joe. "I—I shall be in the way. I don't mind, Master Tom."

"Stuff, Joe!"

"I hope you'll all come," said Glyn, affecting not to hear Joe's stage whisper. "My dad particularly wants to see your young friend Joe, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry brightened up.

"Does he really, Glyn?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; I mentioned Joe to him, and he wants to meet him."

"You ain't gammoning?" asked Joe.

Bernard Glyn laughed.

"No, I'm not gammoning, young 'un!" he replied.

"You mustn't ask questions like that, Joe," said Tom Merry. "It's like doubting a chap's word, you know."

"I'm sorry, sir!" said Joe, realising that he had put his foot in it.

"All right, Joe."

"We'll come, by all means," said Kangaroo. "Come on!"

"Look 'ere, young gents," said Joe. "I ain't fit to go, and you'd better leave me 'ere. That's straight!"

"Come on, deah boy!"

"But, sir—"

"Shut up, Joe!"

"Yes, Master Tom."

And Joe walked away, with his arm still linked in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's.

A youth with his hands in his pockets, whistling shrilly, came out of the School House and ran after them.

"Gussy, old son—"

Arthur Augustus turned round and fixed his eyeglass upon his cheerful minor.

"Weally, Wally—" he began.

"Oh, no jaw, Gus!" said Wally. "Where are you going?"

"I am going to visit Glyn's place, Wally," said D'Arcy major, with a great deal of dignity.

"I'm coming with you," said Wally. "I've nothing particular to do."

"I am afraid I could not take you out to tea in that collah, Wally," said Arthur Augustus icily.

"What's the matter with my collar?" demanded Wally. "It is howbibly soiled."

"Rats!"

"You disrespeful young boundah—"

"Look here, I'm coming! You've got my special chum with you," said Wally, looking aggrieved. "What do you mean by walking him off without me?"

Joe gave Wally a look of astonishment.

D'Arcy minor had not spoken six words to him since he had entered the Third Form at St. Jim's, so he was naturally surprised to hear that he was Wally's best chum.

As a matter of fact, Wally had invented that chumminess on the spur of the moment. He wanted to go to Glyn's to tea.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "In that case, deah boy—"

"Exactly. I'm coming."

"I leave it to Glyn."

"Right-ho!" said Bernard, laughing. "Wally can come if he likes. The more the merrier."

"But look at his collah!"

"Oh, never mind his collar!"

"And his hands!"

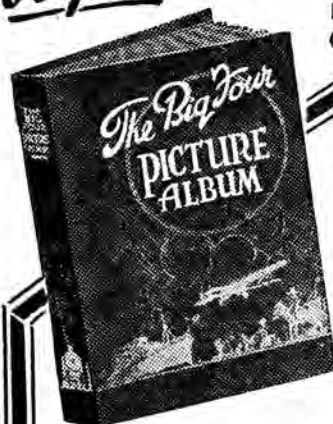
"I washed them twice this morning," said Wally. "I suppose a chap's hands are bound to get soiled knocking down fags."

"I twust you have not been fighting, Wally?"

"Well, I have—three chaps. They were speaking disrespectfully of my special chum Frayne."

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Arthur Augustus D'Arcy beamed.

"Bai Jove, Wally! Have you been standin' up for my young friend?"

"Of course I have! Don't I always do as you tell me, and try to guess your wishes in advance?" demanded Wally.

Arthur Augustus regarded him very doubtfully through his eyeglass. That was what Wally ought to do, according to D'Arcy's ideas; but he had never known Wally to do it.

"Well—" he began.

"Just so," said Wally. "I'm coming."

"Undah the cires—"

"Don't let's be late for tea."

"You are intewwuptin' me, Wally."

"Just so. Come on!"

"The young wascal—"

"This way!" said Wally.

He slipped his arm into Joe's disengaged arm, and marched on with him. Arthur Augustus gave him several doubtful glances, but finally seemed to come to the conclusion that it was all right, for he said no more, and the juniors walked down the lane to Glyn's place.

CHAPTER 5.

Real Friendship!

"BOW-WOW! Yap-p-p-p!" A ragged-looking mongrel dog came bounding after the juniors as they left the gates of St. Jim's and walked down the lane.

Wally paused a moment to give a shrill whistle, and

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Pongo came running up, prancing round his master in great spirits.

Arthur Augustus dropped Joe's arm, and backed away quickly, in fear that the dirty paws of Pongo might leave marks on his immaculate trousers.

"Wally, dwive that howwid beast away at once!" he exclaimed.

"Rats!"

"You—you howwid young boundah!"

"Good old Pongo!" grinned Wally. "Good old doggie! Come on!"

"My word!" said Digby. "You're not going to take that rotten mongrel to Glyn's, surely, young D'Arcy?"

Young D'Arcy snorted.

"Glyn doesn't object," he replied.

Bernard Glyn laughed.

"Oh, I don't mind!" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Wally, you are imposin' upon Glyn's politeness—"

"So are you, Gussy!"

"I—I—I—"

Indignation checked the swell of St. Jim's. He marched on speechlessly.

Wally grinned, and caressed the shaggy mongrel.

Joe also had a word for Pongo. Joe was fond of dogs, and knew a great deal about them. Pongo seemed to take to Joe, too.

Wally regarded Joe with an approving eye. He had taken Joe up as a chum simply for the purpose of insinuating himself into the tea-party. But Pongo's liking for the waif seemed to indicate that there might be something in the hero of Blucher's Buildings, after all.

Tom Merry & Co. walked on, looking very nice in their clean collars and neat ties; while the two fags brought up the rear with Pongo, looking a great deal less tidy, but certainly quite as cheerful.

"Fond of dogs?" asked Wally, looking at Joe Frayne.

Joe nodded eagerly.

"Yes, Master Wally."

Wally snorted.

"What are you calling me Master Wally for?" he demanded. "Stop it—none of your larks!"

"B-b-but—"

"I'm D'Arcy minor."

"Master Jameson said I was to call him 'Master Jameson.'"

Wally breathed hard through his nose. Carly Gibson and Jameson were his special friends in the Third Form. Wally had not been in the slightest degree inclined to throw them over for Joe. But there was one thing Wally wouldn't stand from his dearest friend, and that was snob-bishness.

"I'll speak to Jameson about that!" he exclaimed. "If I hear you call him Master Jameson, I'll dot you on the boko! Savvy?"

"Yes, Master Wally."

"And you'll get a dot on the boko if you call me Master Wally again."

"Yes, Master Wally."

Biff!

Wally's left came out like lightning, and Joe sat in the road. He sat there with his hand to his nose, gasping.

Tom Merry & Co. stopped and looked round. They stared at the sight of Joe sitting in the road and holding his nose; while Wally, with his hands in his pockets, regarded him, grinning.

"Ow!" said Joe.

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter there?" exclaimed Kangaroo. "You two young scamps quarrelling already?"

"Not at all."

"Then what have you punched him for?" asked Tom Merry.

"I'm educating him."

Joe scrambled to his feet.

"It's—it's orl right!" he gasped. "Master Wally—Ow!"

Biff!

Joe sat down again.

"Bai Jove, Wally, you young wascal—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He'll learn in time," said Wally. "Ain't I taken him on as a friend, and can't I dot him on the boko for playing the giddy goat if I like?"

"Gweat Scott!"

Joe scrambled to his feet again, taking care to keep out of arm's length of Wally. His nose was very red, but he was grinning good-temperedly.

"I don't mind," he said. "It's all right, Mister Tom—I mean, sir, Merry."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors walked on again. They felt that they could safely leave Joe in Wally's hands. It was under somewhat peculiar circumstances that Wally had come to take Joe up, but Wally was a fellow of his word. If he said Joe was his friend, Joe was his friend, and that was the end of it. And Wally, in the Third Form himself, would be of more use to Joe than any fellow in a higher Form could have been.

Wally grinned cheerfully at the waif.

"They're my left-handers!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, are they?" said Joe.

"Yes, I'll teach you the trick, if you like, in the gym. Jameson can't pick it up; he's too clumsy. Mind, Jameson, not 'Master Jameson.'"

"I remember, Mas—ahem—D'Arcy minor!"

Wally chuckled.

"Only just in time!" he grinned. "You've had a narrow escape. Mind your eye!"

They walked on. In spite of Joe's somewhat rough experience at the hands of D'Arcy minor, he liked that frank and breezy young person, and he understood clearly enough that life in the Third Form could be much more tolerable if Wally were his friend.

"Do you like dogs?" Wally went on.

"Yes, rather, M—m—m—D'Arcy minor."

"What breed would you think Pongo was?"

Joe looked very dubiously at the mongrel. It would have puzzled a professional breeder to tell what Pongo was.

"Bit of a collie in him, I think," said Joe.

"Good!"

"Bit of a terrier, too, p'r'aps."

"Quite right."

"Jolly good dog, anyway," said Joe, rubbing his fingers on the mongrel's shaggy head. "He knows something, that dorg do."

Wally looked distinctly pleased.

"Well, you're a decent sort," he said. "Any chap who is fond of dogs is bound to have some good in him. I know that."

"Thanks, M-m-m—D'Arcy minor."

"The chaps are saying your name ain't Frayne," went on Wally. "Is it?"

Joe's face clouded.

"I don't rightly know. I've belonged to different people," he said. "I don't rightly know that Mother Sal was my mother, either. My belief is, she took me to beg with."

Wally gave a commiserating whistle.

"Where did you get the name Frayne?" he asked.

"It was my father's name, if he was my father; but I never 'eard of him till 'e came out of—"

Joe paused in time. Tom Merry had cautioned him never to give away at St. Jim's the fact that his father, real or supposed, had been a convict. That fact could only more deeply prejudice the fellows against him, and Joe had a right to hold his tongue about his own affairs if he liked.

"Out of where?" asked Wally.

"Never mind."

"Why don't you answer?"

"Because I don't," said Joe.

Wally's hand clenched for a moment.

"I'm not used to that sort of talk," he said. "I don't want to know your blessed secrets! But I want a civil answer."

"I don't mean to be uncivil," exclaimed Joe eagerly.

"But—"

Wally burst into a laugh.

"Well, never mind; it's all right!" he exclaimed. "I don't want to know anything about it. You're Joe Frayne here, that's all. I'm treating you like a friend! It's a trouble, but I mean to stick to it!"

"Thank you, D'Arcy minor," said Joe.

CHAPTER 6

Joe Sings!

EDITH GLYN looked down the garden path as the crowd of juniors came in. The girl's clear, bright eyes discerned the figure of the little London waif at once.

Bernard Glyn had told his people about Tom Merry's protegee, and they had insisted upon his bringing the little fellow to Glyn House, Edith's kind heart at once going out in sympathy to Joe Frayne. She knew, more clearly than her young brother did, what Joe's early life must have been like, and what a struggle must lie before him at a school like St. Jim's. And she knew, too, how much kindness must mean to a fellow in his peculiar position. Nor did she forget the fact that his being received on a friendly footing at a millionaire's house would have a great effect with the more snobbish of the fellows, and it was the snobs that Joe had most to fear.



"You rotters!" raged Wally, spreadeagled and helpless on the bed. "Let Frayne alone!" "Rats!" yelled the fags. "Collar the slum cad! Bump him! Squash him!" In a moment the hapless Joe was grasped, flung to the floor, and promptly sat on.

The boys greeted Edith quite affectionately. She reminded them of Cousin Ethel in many ways. She was ten years older than Ethel, but still a girl, and had a bright and frank way that was very charming to the boys.

"This is Joe, Edie," said Bernard Glyn, presenting the only one of the party with whom Edie was not previously acquainted—"Joe Frayne, of the Third, D'Arcy minor's special chum. My sister, Joe."

Joe's rugged little face went crimson. He had not been accustomed to the ceremony of introduction, and the girl—a big woman to him—looked so beautiful, and so clean, and so well-dressed, that the little fellow was simply frightened. He stood mumbling, blinking at Edith with big round eyes.

Edith knew how to put him at his ease, however, as well as it could be done. She took his hand, and led him into the house.

"I'm very glad to meet you, Joe," she said, in a low and pleasant voice. "It is very kind of you to visit us so soon."

Joe could only mumble.

"So you are Wally's special friend?" said Edith.

Joe found his voice.

"So 'e says," he replied. "'E's punched my nose twice."

"Oh!"

"'E's all right!"

"Pure friendship," explained Wally, who was never put out of countenance by any happening whatever. "You see, I'm standing by Joe, and treating him like a friend. I'm punching him into shape."

Miss Glyn laughed.

"Perhaps your method is a little drastic, Wally," she suggested.

Wally shook his head.

"Not at all, Miss Glyn. It's the only way. Joe doesn't mind. He knows it's for his good. As Tennyson says, 'I must be cruel only to be kind.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what are you fellows cackling at?" demanded Wally, turning a wrathful glare upon the chums of the School House.

"Ha, ha, ha! I thought it was Shakespeare said that!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"I don't see that it makes much difference who said it!" sniffed Wally.

"Of course not," said Edith. "Tea is ready."

That announcement was like oil upon the troubled waters. The juniors went in to tea. Tea at Glyn House was a

function any boy might have been glad to attend. Miss Glyn knew what boys liked, and she always had plenty of it on such occasions. It was generally conceded at St. Jim's that Bernard Glyn was jolly lucky to have such a sister. His father, too, was a most genial old gentleman—at all events, at his own table—though it was suspected that he could be crusty at times.

There were cakes and biscuits, and candied fruits galore, to say nothing of more solid fare, such as ham and eggs, and bread-and-butter and watercress.

The juniors had sat down to tea with good appetites. The keen winter air had made them hungry, and they were fully prepared to do any amount of justice to Bernard Glyn's spread.

Mr. Glyn had received Joe politely, but the old gentleman could not help regarding the boy with some curiosity, and feeling a little uneasy as he regarded him.

Joe was thawing under the effect of the kindness he received from all quarters. All his confidence returned, and he became more like his old and natural self.

He helped himself to cake, and ate it by gnawing small chunks off a large chunk, while the juniors looked uncomfortable.

Then he stirred his tea, and took a gulp—and as the tea happened to be very hot, there was an explosion at once.

Joe dropped the cup into the saucer, and there was a crash, and a stream of hot tea shot across the knees of Manners, who was sitting next to him.

Manners gave a loud yelp.

The next moment he was distorting his features terribly in attempting to reduce them to their accustomed calm. Manners was a quiet fellow, and he rather took a pride in never being disturbed by anything. But that hot tea across his legs had disturbed him with a vengeance.

"Ow!" grunted Joe.

"Scalded, Manners?" asked Glyn sympathetically.

"Not at all," muttered Manners. "Just a splash!"

"You clumsy young ass!" said D'Arcy minor.

"Wally, dear boy—"

"Ow was I to 'elp it?" said Joe. "The tea was 'ot!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Glyn.

"I'm so sorry, Manners," said Edith softly.

Manners worked up an heroic smile.

"Not at all, Miss Glyn. It's all right."

"Which I'm sorry," said Joe. "It was a haccident. The tea was 'ot."

"Shut up, Joe!"

"Yes, D'Arcy minor."

Tom Merry passed the cake to Joe and whispered to him.

"Don't be an ass! Can't you try your tea before you gulp it? Watch me, and do as I do."

Joe faltered.

"Yes, Master Tom," he murmured.

"You'll be all right, Joe."

"Yes, Master Tom."

And from that moment Joe Frayne watched Tom Merry, with a dog-like fidelity, and did as Tom Merry did.

Tea finished at last without further trouble, and Miss Glyn, who was an excellent pianist, sat down upon the music-stool.

The juniors liked singing to Edith's accompaniment, and she had often taken some of them through their practice. Manners, who was in the choir, owed a great deal to Edith in that respect, and D'Arcy had taken some of his tenor solos to Glyn House for practice, an affliction that the young lady bore with great fortitude.

"The car will be round in an hour," said Mr. Glyn.

"Time for a little music," said Edith, with a smile.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You sing, Tom?"

"A little," said Tom Merry.

"And you, Joe?"

"A little, miss," said Joe.

He said that because Tom Merry had said it.

"Tom Merry sings 'On the Ball,'" said Herries. "Give a decent footer song, Tom, and none of your blessed cawauling about a moon in a garden."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I have a copy of the song here," said Edith.

And she touched the keys.

Tom Merry sang the famous football song with a strong,

His voice, like the bagpipe's playing of the celebrated Macfergus Clonglocketty Angus MacClan, was wild as the breeze, and wandered around into several keys.

But Joe stuck to his guns.

And the song he sang ran something like this:

"My old man 'as done a bunk!

Tooral-laddy! Tooral-laddy!

My old man 'as done a bunk!

Tooral-laddy-ho!

'E's a terror when 'e's hout!

You should see 'im on the batter!

See 'im knock the pleece about!

Tooral-laddy-ho!"

The juniors listened and roared.

Miss Glyn was laughing as she played. Certainly she had never heard a song like that before.

"There's another verse," said Joe.

"Bai Jove!"

"Go it, Joe!" roared Monty Lowther, the humorous.

"Orlright, sir!"

"Pile it on!"

"My old man's a regular guy!

Tooral-laddy, tooral-laddy;

When the young man lodger's by,

Tooral-laddy-ho!

One evening I—"

"Back pedal!" said Tom Merry. "Chuck it, Joe!"

"Suttinly, sir!"

Joe chuckled it.

The juniors were almost in convulsions. But they inwardly determined to be a little more careful about asking Joe to sing in company again.

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clear voice, the juniors joining in the chorus with great gusto. Their combined voices rang through Glyn House as they roared out:

"On the ball, on the ball!
Loud and clear it rings like a trumpet-call!
Hear the shouts that rise and roll:
'Buck up there! Look out in goal!
On the ball! On the ball!"

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther, as they finished. "It is on the bawl, and no mistake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, Joe!"

"What are you giving us?"

Joe coloured.

He had promised to sing, but what to sing was the question. The fact that he had no voice Joe quite overlooked. In the region Joe came from, having no voice was no bar to singing. But the song! He did not know a football song, and he had some doubts as to whether the ditties that had been popular in Blucher's Buildings would be any use at Glyn House.

But he evidently had to sing.

"Go it, Joe!"

"Buck up, deah boy!"

"Very well, gents," said Joe. "I'll sing, if Miss Edith will play. I ain't got no music."

"I dare say I could vamp an accompaniment," said Edith, with a smile. "Whistle a few bars, Joe, and let me hear it."

"Suttinly."

Joe was an adept at whistling, at least. That was an accomplishment much cultivated in Blucher's Buildings.

He whistled a few catchy bars, and Edith's slim fingers glided on the piano keys. She caught it up at once.

"Go it, kid!"

"On the ball!"

"Right-ho, young gents; here goes!"

And Joe sang.

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CHAPTER 7.

Ragged!

TOM MERRY & CO. came out of Glyn House to mount into Mr. Glyn's great car—the family car, which was big enough to hold the whole crowd of them.

Joe surveyed the magnificent vehicle in great admiration.

"Crikey!" was all he could say.

The juniors had taken leave of their kind entertainers. They crowded into the car, and the chauffeur tooted it down the long, broad drive, and out of the gates into the lane.

It was getting dark now, and the snow on the trees and the hedges glimmered up white through the dusk.

"We've had a ripping time," said Tom Merry. "Thanks, again, Glyn."

"Oh, rot!" said the Liverpool lad.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Crikey! It was orlright!" said Joe Frayne. "I've got some of the apples in my pocket."

"What!"

"Bai Jove!"

Joe turned out the apples with a great deal of satisfaction. The juniors looked at them and burst into a roar. Tom Merry tried to keep serious.

"Oh, Joe!"

Joe's face fell.

"What 'ave I done, Master Tom?" he asked.

"You shouldn't have done that."

"But missy told me to take all I wanted, Master Tom."

"Yes, but—"

"But I won't never do it no more," said Joe.

"Anyway, we've got the apples," said Kangaroo cheerfully. "Hand 'em over!"

"Certainly, Maser Noble."

Biff!

Joe suddenly disappeared among the legs in the bottom of the car.

Wally smiled serenely, and rubbed his knuckles.

"You've got a jolly bony chin!" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Look 'ere—" exclaimed Joe, struggling to his feet.
 "I ain't—"
 "Yes, you are."
 "I tell you—"
 "Rats! Ain't I standing your friend?" demanded Wally.
 "I'm bringing you up in the way you should go."
 "Wally, deah boy—"
 "Oh, don't you begin, Gus!"
 "You uttah young wascal—"
 "Apples this way! As Joe has boned them, we may as well eat them," said Wally cheerfully.

And he did.
 The car buzzed along to St. Jim's, and rolled in at the wide gates. Fellows gathered round from all sides to look at Glyn's governor's car. It was a handsome turn-out, and many of the Saints envied Glyn heartily enough.

Joe could be seen sitting in the car in the midst of Tom Merry & Co., and there was astonishment in many faces that looked at him. Fane and Hobbs and Picke of the Third could not contain their disgust. They had never been asked to ride in Glyn's governor's car.

"Look at that!" exclaimed Fane.
 "That outsider!"
 "That cad!"

"He's been to Glyn's place," said Mellish of the Fourth, who had fished in vain for a whole term for an invitation to Glyn's place. "Disgusting!"

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Jameson of the Third. "And there's Wally sitting next to him. I won't speak to Wally if Wally speaks to him!"

"Same here!" exclaimed Curly Gibson.
 "It's caddish of him."
 "Beastly!"
 "Mean!"

"Wally, you worm, get out of that!"
 Wally grinned at his old friends in the Third, and the car glided on up to the School House. A group of juniors from the New House came to watch the chums alight. Figgins & Co. of the New House were on good terms with Tom Merry & Co.—excepting when they happened to be spoiling for a fight. They happened to be spoiling for a fight now.

"Yah!" exclaimed Figgins & Co., with one voice. "School House worms!"

D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass, and looked at the New House crowd as he stepped from the car.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "What are these impertinent wastah's doin' on the wespectable side of the quadwangle?"

"Yah!"
 "Where did you get that chivvy?"
 "Get your hair cut!"
 The swell of St. Jim's turned pink.
 "It's up to us to cleah these wascals away, deah boys!" he exclaimed.

"What-ho!"
 "Go for 'em!"
 "Pile in!"
 "Lam the bounder!"

The School House juniors poured from the car. With a rush they went for the New House fellows. Glyn waved his hand to the chauffeur.

"You can cut!" he exclaimed.
 And the chauffeur grinned and departed with the big car. Before it was clear of the gates, School House and New House juniors were mingled in a wild and whirling combat.

But the odds were upon the side of Tom Merry & Co., and Figgins and his comrades were swept back across the quad-rangle, disputing every foot of the way.

Joe Frayne was left standing where he had alighted from the car.

The little waif was astonished, and did not know what to do. The suddenness of the conflict had taken him by surprise, and, without directions from Tom Merry, he did not know whether he ought to take part in the row.

The rush of the tussle swept away towards the New House, leaving Joe near the School House steps, alone, and looking after the combatants.

There was a shout from the fags of the Third, who had followed the car up to the House. Fane and Hobbs and Picke saw their opportunity.

"There's the cad!"
 "Now's the time!"
 "Go for him!"

And Joe suddenly found himself assailed by his old foes. But there was not only three of them now; a crowd of the Third Form had joined in, and Joe Frayne was surrounded by fags eager to rag him.

He backed away in alarm, putting up his fists, but he only backed into fresh foes.

A circle of grinning and merciless faces were round him.
 "Ere, you chuck it!" he exclaimed. "I ain't done nothin'. You lemme alone!"

(Continued on next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Fine footballs are awarded every week for the two best jokes received and a half-a-crown is paid for every other joke that appears in this column.

LIGHT-WEIGHT CHAMPION!

Shopkeeper: "Yes, ma'am, I used to be light-weight champion."
 Customer: "Having dealt here I can quite believe it!"
 A football has been awarded to J. Hewitt, 14, West Dyle Road, Redcar.

TOUGH.

Disgusted Diner: "This fowl ought not to have been killed."
 Restaurant Proprietor: "Why not, sir?"
 Disgusted Diner: "It has been robbed of the old age pension!"
 A football has been awarded to D. Parkinson, 14, Townley Street, Preston, Lancs.

UP-TO-DATE VERSION.

Master: "What did Ali Baba say when he wanted the door of the cave to open?"
 Boy: "Open, sez me!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Copson, Chelmer, Booth Road, Hendon, London, N.W.9.

SO NICE!

Fatty Wynn: "What is the difference between a cream bun and a sewing-machine?"
 Tom Merry: "Give it up."
 Fatty Wynn: "One seems so nice and the other sews nice seams!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," 36, Mulgrave Street, Liverpool, 8.

DIDN'T NEED TELLING!

Landlady: "I think you had better board elsewhere."
 Lodger: "Yes, I often had."
 Landlady: "Often had what?"
 Lodger: "Better board elsewhere!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Earley, Urcher, Bailieboro, Co. Cavan.

THE PLUMBER'S QUALIFICATION.

Plumber Boss: "Got any references?"
 Applicant for Job: "Yes, but I've left them at home."
 Plumber Boss: "O.K.—you'll do!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Hott, Buckhurst Garden, Wokingham, Berks.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Aristocratic Lady: "Can you tell me where to find my son-the Honourable Algernon Fitzgerald Percival Poppelwaite?"
 Schoolboy: "Hey, Mugface, your mother wants you!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to T. O'Farrell, 10, Puketaki Street, Greytown, West Coast, New Zealand.

NO RECOMMENDATION

Football Manager: "You say that you are a good goal-keeper?"
 Goalkeeper (modestly): "Oh—er—passable."
 Football Manager: "No good. I want one who isn't!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Boddy, 128, Battersea Bridge Road, London, S.W.11.

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"Collar him!" shouted Hobbs. And Joe was promptly collared. The lad hit out then, and hit hard, and Hobbs rolled over with an aching jaw, and Fane dropped with a bump. But then Joe was down, with five or six fags sprawling over him. Joe put up a good fight, but—

"Ow! 'Elp!" gasped Joe.

CHAPTER 8. Gussy is Kind!

HOBBS staggered to his feet. His jaw was aching as if a hammer had smitten him there, and his eyes were blazing with fury.

"Got him?" he gasped. "Hold the young cad! Pile on him!"

"We've got him!"
"Here the beast is!"
"Bump him!" hissed Hobbs, nursing his jaw with one hand. "Bump the cad! Knock the stuffing out of him! Bump him hard!"
"Good egg!"
"Go for the cad!"
"Bump him!"

Joe was seized in a dozen pairs of hands. The lad was helpless to resist, and rough shoves and punches soon stopped his feeble struggling.

Up he went, to come down again with a bump!

"Oh!" gasped Joe.

It was a hard, savage bumping—not the semi-serious bumping the juniors usually bestowed upon one another. Hobbs & Co. meant business. Every bone in Joe's body was jarred by the impact on the hard ground.

"He set his teeth hard to bear the pain."

"Bump him!"
"Give him another!"
"Smash the cad!"
"Slum cad! Yah!"
"Ere, you let go!" panted Joe. "This ain't fair play, this ain't! You play the game, you blokes, can't you? Ow! Leggo! You lemme alone!"

Bump, bump!
"Ow! Oh! Yow! 'Elp!"
Joe struggled furiously.

He succeeded in getting his hands free for a moment, and he hit out blindly and desperately at his tormentors.

Fane gave a fearful yell as Joe's fist crashed into his eye, and Jameson reeled back with a drive under the jaw that made him feel as if his head was coming off.

With a shout of rage, the fags closed in upon the "outsider" again.

Joe was grasped, and bumped, and bumped again, harder than ever!

He was not calling for help now.

He was past that. He was almost fainting from the rough ill-usage, and many of the fags, in their angry excitement, did not realise how severely they were handling him.

But help was at hand for Joe.

The New House juniors had been driven back into their own House, and there the appearance of an angry prefect on the scene had sent the School House fellows scuttling away—victorious, but in a hurry!

Tom Merry & Co. came marching home, as it were, just in time to see the fags wreaking their wrath upon the waif of Blucher's Buildings.

They did not stop to speak.

They simply rushed in upon the fags, knocking them to right and left.

There were twice or thrice their number of the fags, but the Third Formers were not likely to make a stand against the heroes of the Fourth and the Shell.

Yelling and panting, fags broke away and fled, rubbing ears and noses as they went, knocked out at the first charge by Tom Merry & Co.

Tom Merry bent over Joe.

The lad had fallen to the ground when his tormentors released him, and he was still lying there, gasping in pain.

Tom Merry raised him up. The Shell fellow's face was very concerned.

"I didn't know this was going on, Joe, kid," he said.

"Are you much hurt?"

Joe tried bravely to keep back his tears.

"No, sir," he said. "I—I—I'm orlright!"

"Come on, kid."

Tom Merry half-led, half-carried Joe into his own study. There the lad was placed in an armchair before the fire, and for some time he sat very quiet, too exhausted to speak.

Tom Merry's brow was very dark.

He realised what a hard row Joe would have to hoe, so to speak, to get on at all in the Third Form at St. Jim's, and he doubted whether it had been wise, after all, to bring the little waif to the school.

But there was Wally—he, at least, would be a friend to Joe in the Third.

Tom Merry looked round. Wally had not come to the study. As a matter of fact, Wally was, at that moment, in the midst of a heated argument with Jameson and Gibson in the Third Form Room.

Joe sat up and tried to smile, after a time.

"It's—it's all right, sir," he said.

"Feel better, Joe?"

"Yes, sir, much better. I'm all right!"

"You do not look all right, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his eyeglass and surveying the outcast of the Third. "You are in a vewy waggid state!"

Joe looked down disconsolately at his clothes. Those clothes, which had been provided for him by the kindness of his friends, were certainly in a terrible state.

The rough usage he had received from the fags had hurt him considerably, but it had had a still worse effect upon his clothes.

His jacket was split clean up the back, his waistcoat had every button gone, his trousers were rent in several places. He looked a wreck as far as clothing went. Even his boots looked ruined.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said.

"Wasn't your fault, Joe," said Tom Merry.

"I can't go about like this, sir, and I hain't got no other clothes," said Joe. "I know I'm too much trouble to you in hevery way, Master Tom."

"Stuff!"

"It's all wight, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I have a wathah libewal wardwobe myself, you know, and I can easily spare a suit of clothes."

"It would leave you about three dozen, wouldn't it, Gussy?" Monty Lowther remarked.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "If you've anything that would fit Joe, Gussy, you can shove it on to him. Better not let his Form-master see him in this state if it can be helped. Old Selby isn't a reasonable man."

"Yaas, watbah!"

"Run along with Gussy, Joe, and he'll rig you out!"

"Yes, sir," said Joe.

He followed the swell of St. Jim's from the study. Arthur Augustus threw open the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage. The room was dark and empty. Blake and Herries and Digby were downstairs.

Arthur Augustus lighted the gas.

"Wemain here, deah boy, while I fetch the things!"

"Suttigly, sir!"

Joe waited. The swell of St. Jim's re-entered the study in a few minutes. Joe looked curiously at the great quantity of clothes he brought. D'Arcy was very well provided with clothes, and when he discarded a suit it was often in as good condition as anything that was being worn in the School House.

There was no doubt that, as far as condition went, D'Arcy's things were quite good enough; but the fit was another matter.

Joe was more than a head shorter than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and was smaller in proportion all over.

Arthur Augustus, with his monocle screwed tightly into his eye, surveyed the fag carefully, and selected the least large of the clothes.

"Get into those, deah boy!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" said Joe obediently.

He quickly changed his torn and ragged attire for D'Arcy's clothes. The clothes were elegant and beautifully cut, and of first-class material. But they were a good many sizes too large for Joe.

The sleeves of the jacket came down over his fingertips with a good many inches to spare, and the tail of the jacket brushed against the back of his knees. The trousers trailed on the floor under his feet. The waistcoat came down half-way to the knees.

"Woll up your twousahs, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I do not, as a wule, approve of a new boy wollin' up his twousahs, but un-jah the exceptional circe of the case I think it will be all wight."

(Continued on page 14.)

TO READERS IN THE IRISH FREE STATE.

Readers in the Irish Free State are requested to note that when free gifts are offered with the GEM, they can only be supplied when the article is of a non-dutiable character.

STEP INTO THE OFFICE, CHUMS, FOR A CHAT!



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! With the addition of next week's sheet of coloured pictures—fifteen altogether—your albums will be complete, and every one of you will then possess a handsome keepsake that you can proudly show to your pals at any time. Not only is it always very interesting to glance through a picture album, but sometimes it comes in handy to refer to—when you are doing homework, for instance! Don't forget, then, chums, to see that there is no risk of missing the final fifteen pictures.

"ST. JIM'S IN THE SCRUM!"

With next week's ripping St. Jim's yarn Martin Clifford has once again "hit the high spots." As the title suggests, it is a story of the Rugger field, as well as school-boy adventure, and it will be sure to appeal to you all.

When St. Jim's are challenged to a Rugby match by a rival school, there are divided opinions among the juniors about accepting the challenge. St. Jim's is a Soccer school, and it is at once realised that it will be difficult to place a strong enough fifteen in the field to stand any chance of winning. The Tipton juniors, who play Rugby, know this—hence the challenge, for they think St. Jim's will funk it, and give them a chance to crow. But that's where the Tipton boys make a big mistake—and it's not the only mistake they make! Read all about it next week in this grand story of sport and adventure.

"THE WHITE GIANTS OF EL DORADO!"

For sheer thrills recommend me to the next nerve-tingling chapters of this great serial. En route for El Dorado, the St. Frank's party have had some exciting experiences, but none so exciting as to be found in next Wednesday's gripping instalment.

Finally, there will be another stirring adventure of "Mick o' the Mounted!" in our grand picture-story. The Jester has another batch of readers' prize-winning jokes, while your Editor will have some interesting news for you all concerning a new serial.

THIS WEEK'S HERO.

Captain Huysman, of the French lightship Dyck, gave his life in a very gallant attempt to save his crew from death. The lightship broke adrift in a terrific storm, and crashed on the rocks. The only hope of safety for the crew was to get a lifeline ashore. Captain Huysman launched a boat and set out for land, but unfortunately he never reached it alive. The next morning his body was found, half-encased

in ice, by the side of the broken boat. Three of the crew of six were saved by coastguards at dawn.

THE DUKE'S RUG.

William Stacey lost a foot in a colliery accident about five years ago. He was given an invalid's chair in which he used to propel himself about the countryside. One very cold day he was in a lane when a large car passed him and then almost immediately stopped. A door opened and out got a very old gentleman, carrying a rug. He walked across to Stacey, who had no rug, and was very cold, and asked him to take the rug as a present. Then he returned to his car and drove on. The old gentleman was the Duke of Portland, who had taken pity on the unfortunate miner and given him his own rug. William Stacey values that rug very highly.

THAT NAIL!

The class was in full swing. Suddenly the door opened and in walked Tommy's mother. She went straight to the teacher's desk and asked:

"Where's Tommy sitting?"

The teacher pointed out Tommy's seat and wondered what was going to happen, for she had just noticed that mother was carrying a large hammer in her hand. Tommy stood up as his mother approached. She took one look at the seat, landed two hefty blows with the hammer, and walked out.

A nail had torn a hole in Tommy's new trousers!

"SOME" EGG!

There are eggs and eggs. Not merely good eggs and bad eggs, but large eggs and small eggs. But apart from all those eggs there is also THE EGG. It was laid by a Rhode Island Red belonging to Mr. Skudder, of Laindon, Essex, and that hen is just the proudest bird in the world to-day, and with good reason. Her egg is four inches long, six and a half inches in circumference, and weighs a quarter of a pound! What do you know about that?

BRAVO, BENJAMIN!

Benjamin Bingley, of Leicester, was taking an examination for matriculation. At the end of the first day of the examination he was involved in a car accident and had the misfortune to break his leg. He was taken to hospital, but he pleaded hard to be allowed to carry on with the exam. In the end he got his way, and each day an ambulance took him to school and, after the day's work was over, took him back to the hospital. Benjamin

was rewarded for his determination. He passed the exam with two honours!

THE DRAGONS' MANICURE.

At the Zoo there are two dragons. They are called Komodo Dragons, or monitor lizards, and they come from Dutch East Indies. Their names are Sumba and Sumbawa, and the other day it was found necessary to cut their nails. In their normal surroundings their claws are sharpened and kept to the right length—about four inches, the same as a tiger's claws—by scraping on rocks. Having no rocks, Sumba's claws had grown very long; so with the aid of two keepers Dr. Burgess Barnett performed the operation with a pair of ordinary nail-clippers. Sumba had no objection whatsoever, for he is a very docile fellow and takes his morning walk on a dog lead. But the manicuring was nevertheless dangerous—and the trouble was Sumbawa's tail. This is about seven feet long, and she was so interested in the operation on her pal, Sumba, that she kept on wagging it! Just one playful flick from that tail—and where are you?

TOUGH STUFF!

A young man at an Oxford college, not liking his pudding, threw it out of the window. He threw the plate with it. Later, he appeared in court for his action, and it was solemnly stated by a car attendant that although the plate broke into a thousand pieces, the pudding was entirely unbroken! No wonder the young man wanted to dispose of it!

GOOD DOG!

Mr. and Mrs. Albertini, two Americans who live in this country, have a dog, and just at the moment they must be thinking what a very good dog he is. When they were away from their house near Windsor Forest, burglars tried to make an entry, but the dog soon put a stop to that. The burglars tried to get into Mrs. Albertini's room, but found that there was a steel grille over the window, so they got a ladder and tried another one. Immediately the dog heard them he barked furiously. This quickly brought the butler on the scene, and the burglars had to "beat" it. It was said that there was two hundred thousand pounds worth of jewellery in the house!

RAPID REWARD.

A porter at Bilbao got a very quick reward for a kind action the other day. A box was sent to the stationmaster there containing a live baby. All efforts to find the sender failed and it was decided that the baby would have to be handed over to an orphanage. At the last minute, however, the porter said he would adopt the child, remarking that one more in a family of seven would not make much difference! When the porter's wife undressed the baby she found—five hundred pounds in notes!

MIND THAT TOAD!

Mademoiselle Violette D'Argens is terrified of toads. Every time she sees one she runs for her life, so she says. But this young lady is far from being a coward, for her occupation requires no little nerve. She is a lion-tamer! She says that toads are the only animals that frighten her. Strange, isn't it, that she should be frightened of such a small creature, and yet she doesn't turn a hair when she is in a cage full of hefty lions! This amazing young lady is at present performing in the Circus at Olympia.

THE EDITOR.

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Not Wanted at St. Jim's!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

But even with the trousers rolled up at the bottom Joe's appearance was decidedly baggy.

D'Arcy surveyed him through his eyeglass.

"Bai Jove! They do look wathah big for you, deah boy!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"But they're better than nothing."

"Yes, sir."

"You can keep them on for the present, Joe, and I will have my tailah ova here to-morrow to wig you out afresh."

"Yes, sir."

And Joe departed from Study No. 6, very proud of his new clothes, but feeling very airy and spacy in them.

CHAPTER 9.

Another Change!

"PHEW!"

"My hat!"

"Look!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Joe stopped.

He was going downstairs in his new clothes when a crowd of juniors in the passage caught sight of him.

Their greeting was hilarious.

Joe turned very red.

"Crikey!" he muttered.

"Here he is!" roared Gore of the Shell. "Here he is in his grandfather's duds!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Joe stopped on the stairs. He didn't care to venture into that crowd. The juniors were doubled-up with merriment.

There were a good many Third Form fags among them, and their looks were more hostile than amused. But all were roaring.

Picke and Fane and Mellish and Croke rushed up the stairs and hustled Joe down into the passage.

"Here he is!" roared Croke. "Here's the giddy convict's son!"

"Oh, rats, Croke!" exclaimed Clifton Dane. "Who said his father was a convict?"

"Well, he's a burglar or something, isn't he, Frayne?"

"Mind your own business!" said Joe. Croke turned on him savagely.

"By George! I'll—"

"You won't touch him!" said Clifton Dane.

"Who'll stop me?"

"I will!"

Croke gave the Canadian junior a fierce look, and then receded a little. He was bigger than Clifton Dane, but he was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

"As for a chap's father who ought to be a convict, what about your own, Croke?" asked the Canadian icily.

Croke turned crimson.

"What do you mean?" he roared.

Dane shrugged his shoulders.

"You know very well what I mean," he said.

"I don't! My father's a gentleman!" howled Croke.

"Yes, a speculating gentleman!" said Clifton Dane. "We all know how Tom Merry's money was lost in a speculation, and we all know who induced a confiding old lady to trust the money into a rotten concern!"

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MICK O THE

OUR THRILLING PICTURE



"John Byrnes, the court finds you guilty of unlawfully supplying forbidden liquor to the Indians of Pine Gulch Reservation. The decision of the court is that you be dismissed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police!"

Slowly the president of the court read out the sentence, while Corporal Mick Ray glanced sadly at the man for whom he had pleaded in vain. "I am innocent!" cried Byrnes passionately, as he was led away.



Mick paddled ashore and was delighted to find that the Indian was his old friend, Eagle Eye. "Heap big trouble at Reservation," said the Indian gravely. "My tribe plenty scared by White Demon!"



At the Reservation, the Indians told Mick many strange stories of the mysterious White Demon, who had appeared two nights running. Mick decided to stay the night—a fact which displeased the witch-doctor.



Hearing Mick's entry, the White Demon released his victim and dived head-first at the Mountie. Mick had a fleeting glimpse of a black-masked face, as he was swept off his feet; then the White Demon vanished.



Next morning found Mick returning to headquarters to make his report. He was passing through some dangerous rapids when the noose of a rope suddenly snaked out from an overhanging tree and settled over his body.

HE MOUNTED!

STORY OF THE WILD WEST!



Ex-Sergeant Byrnes, dressed no longer in the uniform he loved, was ready to depart from the barracks. "What are you going to do now, Jack?" asked Mick. "I don't know—yet!" was the cryptic reply.



Two days later, Mick was paddling down the Big Bear River. "I'm sure Jack is innocent—" His thoughts were interrupted by a shout from the bank, and, looking, he saw an Indian signalling to him.



Midnight—and the Reservation slept. But Mick had remained awake, and the howling of the dogs caused him to peer through the flap of his tent. Outlined in the glow of the camp-fires was a weird figure in white.



"The White Demon!" hissed Mick. The mysterious intruder had vanished into the witch-doctor's wigwam, and Mick quickly followed, to find the witch-doctor struggling desperately with the white-robed figure.



"What the dickens—" muttered Mick; and then the rope tightened and he was jerked out of the canoe. There was no sign of the thrower; but now a hand appeared and began to cut the rope with a knife.



Splash! Mick plunged into the rapids as the rope was severed—and then he was fighting for his life! But unknown to him, a canoe suddenly shot into view—and in it was the mysterious White Demon.

(See next week's GEM for Mick's further adventures.)

"If you mean—" "Oh, hang it, we all know it! You were bragging about your father having brought off a big coup before we knew that Tom Merry's money had all been lost in the same concern," said the Canadian quietly. "I wouldn't have said a word, but if you throw Joe's father in his face, and without knowing anything about him, either, it's only fair to give you the same back—and now you've got it!"

"My father's a gentleman—" "There's a good many gentlemen like him doing time, that's all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The laugh had turned against Crooke. Crooke was given to swanking about his father's vast business dealings, and his gigantic speculations which always turned out well for him. They did not always turn out so well for others, as in the case of Tom Merry's fortune.

Crooke slunk away with a red face, muttering savagely.

Joe would gladly have escaped, but the fellows were all round him, and they were not disposed to let those clothes get away so easily.

"My hat! We ought to photograph him like this!" exclaimed Gore. "It's ripping!"

"There's room for two of you in those bags, Joseph."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lovely object, ain't he?" said Pickle, with a sneer.

"Oh, ripping!" grinned Fane. "Credit to the Form, I must say, dressing-up in a Fourth Former's old clothes."

"Yah!"

"Boooh!"

"But I 'ad no choice, sir," said Joe. "I was tore to pieces, and Master D'Arcy was kind enough to gimme these togs."

"Yah!"

"Rotter!"

"Hallo! What's the row here?" demanded Wally, coming upon the scene and pushing Pickle and Hobbs unceremoniously out of the way. "My only Aunt Jane! How did you get into these clothes, Joe?"

"Master D'Arcy lent 'em to me, sir—ow!"

Biff! Joe sat on the lowest stair. Wally rubbed his knuckles.

Pickle clucked with satisfaction.

"Oh! You're against the rotter, too, now, are you, young D'Arcy?" he exclaimed.

Wally turned upon him.

"Who are you calling a rotter?" he demanded.

"That ruffian!"

"That chap's my friend," said Wally. "I'll thank you not to call him names, unless you want a thick ear, Picky!"

"Oh!"

"I'm educating him," said Wally. "I biff him whenever he calls anybody sir. That's the start. See?"

"He's jolly well going to call me sir!" said Jameson fiercely.

"Oh, come off, Jimmy!"

"I tell you—"

"Don't begin being a snob, my son," said Wally. "Your dad wouldn't know you when you went home to the family grocery for the vacation."

There was a roar of laughter at Jameson's expense. Jameson stood speechless. Wally turned to Joe again.

"It was just like Gussy to bung those duds on you!" he exclaimed. "Just like you to take 'em, too. Fathead!"

"Oh, m-m-m-m— D'Arcy minor!"

"Come with me, and I'll lend you some of mine."

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"Thank you, s-s-s-s—D'Arcy minor."

"Yah!" roared the Third, as Wally walked away with the new junior. "Rags! Old clothes! Rags! Yah!"

Wally grinned.

"Let 'em yell!" he said. "It lets off steam. I shall have to do some hammering in the dorm to-night. Never mind—let 'em yell!"

And they did yell.

Wally took Joe up to the dorm and made him change into some articles of attire more suited to his size than the garb of Arthur Augustus.

When the lad had obediently changed, Wally surveyed him with considerable satisfaction.

"You look all right now!" he exclaimed.

"Thankee, Master—D'Arcy minor."

"Careful! Now come down with me and don't leave me. I'm keeping you under my wing for the present."

"Yes, D'Arcy minor."

Arthur Augustus met them as they came downstairs. The swell of St. Jim's surveyed Joe through his monocle.

"Well, pewwaps the fit is a little bettah, though the cut is not so good," he remarked. "I'm glad to see you takin' an interest in my young friend like this, Wally."

"Rats!"

"It is wathah good of you."

"More rats!"

And Wally walked away, whistling.

CHAPTER 10.

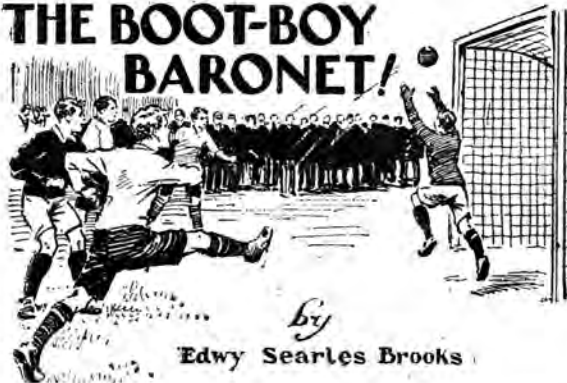
The Biter Bit!

JAMESON and nearly all the rest of the Form looked forward eagerly, keenly, to bed-time that night.

The Third Form were on the warpath.

Wally, usually acknowledged leader of the Form, monarch of all he surveyed in the Form-room, was likely to find a fierce rebellion going on that evening.

THE BOOT-BOY BARONET!



Edwy Searles Brooks

A couple of newcomers to St. Frank's stir up a lot of excitement and thrills. One's a wealthy junior; the other's a new kind of boot-boy—in reality he's a baronet! But all that is kept dark, and Nipper & Co., the famous chums of St. Frank's, have no idea of the truth, until. . . Well, read for yourself how these two new boys make footer history, and fight to the bitter end with the rascally millionaire who ruined the Boot-boy Baronet.

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**SCHOOLBOYS' OWN
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Wally was rather given to being high-handed, and to hitting out when he was opposed. But never had any conduct of Wally's provoked such resentment as his chumming-up with the new junior—the outcast of the Third. It was too rotten of D'Arcy minor—that was the general opinion.

The question was—were the Third going to stand it? That was the question that Jameson asked fiercely in the Form-room.

The reply was a general negative.

"The beast's going to be ragged!" said Fane. "We're going to rag him till he's sick of St. Jim's and goes back to the workhouse he belongs to."

"And Wally's not going to stop us!"

"No fear!"

"Not half!"

"We're going to rag the cad, and bump Wally for his cheek!" said Curly Gibson.

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah!"

The whole of the Third Form yelled approval.

Wally came into the Form-room while the din was proceeding. He gave the Third Formers an inquiring stare.

"Well, what are you yapping about now?" he demanded.

"Mind your own bisney!"

"Find out!"

"You'll see to-night!" said Jameson darkly.

Wally snorted.

"If there's any rot to-night some of you fellows will get it in the neck, that's all!" he replied.

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

Wally's eyes blazed.

"Who's captain of this Form?" he shouted, clenching his fists.

"Boo!"

"Yah!"

"We're going to have another election!" exclaimed Jameson. "Somebody else is going to put up for Form captain!"

"Chap about your size, I suppose?" suggested Wally, with bitter sarcasm.

Jameson turned rather red.

"That's for the fellows to decide," he replied.

"This what you call chummy?" asked Wally.

Jameson gave a shrug of the shoulders.

"I ain't chumming with a fellow who sides with gutter-snipes," he replied. "I stand by the Form, and the Form will stand by me."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the fags, applauding this sentiment heartily.

"We don't want to hurt your new friend," went on Jameson viciously. "Let him go back to the workhouse, that's all!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Wally. "You-ain't fit to chum with him—that's what's the matter with you! Bah! You ain't fit to chum up with my dog Pongo!"

"What!" roared the Third.

"As for a new Form captain, you can jolly well do as you like!" said Wally. "Do you think I want to be captain of a set of howling fags, anyway?"

The Third Form could only glare. As a matter of fact, Wally had been very keen to be Form captain at the time, but it suited him to forget that just now.

"Form captain!" went on Wally, with a sniff. "What do you blessed fags want with a Form captain at all? You're only imitating the Fourth and the Shell!"

There was a yell of wrath.

"Collar the cad!"

"Bump him!"

"Oh, rats!" said Wally. "You couldn't bump one half of me! Pooh! Look here—if you get a new Form captain he'd better be a chap who can use his hands, for I promise you that I'll hammer him black and blue as soon as he's elected!"

"Yah!"

"If it's you, Jimmy, you'd better look after your boxing!"

"Bosh!" said Jameson uneasily.

"If you're the man, Curly—"

"I'm not!" said Curly Gibson promptly.

"Oh, let's bump the swanking beast!" exclaimed Fane. "I tell you—"

"Cave!"

"Shush!"

Mr Selby, the master of the Third, entered the Form-room. The clamour among the Third died away at once. Mr. Selby was a very ill-tempered master, and much given to caning and to rapping knuckles.

He glanced over the Form with a frown. Mr. Selby had dined with the Head, and Mr. Selby had indigestion. He was subject to indigestion. Indigestion always had a

very embittering effect upon the master of the Third. He had been on sick leave for a time with it, and now he was back it did not seem to be much better.

It led him to look upon the darker side of things, and to imagine all sorts of offence where none was meant, and to suspect disrespect and carelessness where they did not exist.

Mr. Selby's nose was red, and a red nose on Mr. Selby was always a danger signal to the Third Form.

The Form-master had come to take the Third in evening preparation, and he was evidently in a mood to visit the least transgression very heavily.

"Take your places, boys!" he snapped.

The fags took their places at the desks.

The Third Form had to do their prep in the Form-room, under the eye of a master, not having the privilege of the higher Forms of doing it at their leisure in their studies.

Mr. Selby glanced over the Form.

"Where is Frayne?" he exclaimed harshly.

Joe came in as he asked the question. Mr. Selby's eye turned upon him balefully.

Mr. Selby didn't like Joe. Undoubtedly the little waif was a trouble to him, and Mr. Selby didn't like trouble. The boy was so much behind the others in every department of knowledge, that the Head had asked Mr. Selby as a special favour to take him separately in hand. Mr. Selby could not refuse the Head, from whom he had received many favours, and expected many more.

But he did not like the extra work. He was disgusted, too, by some of Joe's ways, and irritated by his ungrammatical speech, not being a sufficiently kind-hearted man to reflect upon the fact that the poor lad had had no chance of learning anything better.

Mr. Selby knew how his Form regarded their new Form-fellow, and he was not slow to let them see that he looked upon Joe in the same light as an intruder and an outsider.

"You are late, Frayne!" he said harshly.

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry, sir."

"Go to your place!"

"Yes, sir."

Joe's manner was so respectful, or, rather, humble, that even the bad-tempered Form-master could say no more to him.

Joe took his place with the rest.

Hobbs was sitting on one side of him, and Picke on the other. The two young rascals exchanged glances, and Hobbs almost went into an explosion of mirth as Picke produced a pin and showed it to him behind Joe's back.

Picke suddenly stretched his hand beside Joe, and stuck the pin into him. Then he slid his hand into his pocket, and sat looking very innocent.

There was a fearful yell from Joe, and he leaped to his feet.

Mr. Selby glanced at him angrily.

"Frayne!"

"Ow!"

"Frayne! How dare you?"

"Yow!"

"Boy!" thundered the master of the Third.

"Sorry, sir! I beg your pardon, sir! Something stung me, sir!"

"Nonsense, Frayne! Take fifty lines!"

"Yes, sir!" said poor Joe.

"And sit down instantly!"

"Yes, sir!"

Joe sat down. The weary preparation—wearily enough, with a bad-tempered, impatient master and careless pupils—dragged on. Picke leaned a little behind Joe when he thought that a sufficient time had elapsed to make it safe.

He was about to drive the pin cruelly into Joe again, when Wally leaned over from the desk behind, caught his wrist, turned it by main force, and jerked his hand so sharply that the pin stuck into his own shoulder.

Picke uttered an agonised yell.

Wally grinned, and dropped back into his seat instantly.

Mr. Selby strode towards the class and fixed his eyes upon the unhappy Picke.

"Picke, you seem to consider it humorous to imitate Frayne in disturbing the class. Stand out here immediately!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Instantly!"

Picke stood out before the class. Mr. Selby's cane whistled in the air.

"Hold out your hand, Picke! Now the other! Now the other again! Now go back to your place, and learn to be a little more orderly during preparation."

Picke sank back into his seat, twisting up horrible faces as he squeezed his hand under his arm. Picke's peculiar

sense of humour did not find any further expression during the hour and a half devoted to preparation by the Third Form.

CHAPTER 11.

Trouble in the Dormitory.

"BED!" said Wally, with a yawn.

He had been sitting in a corner of the junior Common-room with Joe. He was helping Joe to read the latest number of the "Magnet." Joe's abilities were hardly cultivated, so far, to the extent of reading even a simple story with ease, and Mr. Selby was quite right in thinking that he was not in a fit state to enter the Third Form at St. Jim's.

Mr. Selby had accepted him under protest, and was in hopes that something would happen to relieve him of the troublesome little waif.

The Third Form, as a rule, congregated in their Form-room and did not patronise the Junior Common-room. There they were under the shadow of the Fourth and the Shell, while in their own Form-room they were monarchs of all they surveyed. But on this particular evening Wally had chosen to pass his last hour before bed in the Common-room. He knew very well that things would be made warm both for himself and for his protegee in the Form-room. Even at that moment he knew Jameson & Co. would be plotting "ructions" for the dorm that night. But the danger of the dormitory could not be avoided.

"Yes, sir. I—I mean, D'Arcy minor," said Joe.

"Come on!" said Wally.

"Yes."

"Good-night, Joe!" called out Tom Merry.

"Good-night, Master Tom!"

Wally piloted his protegee out of the room. Why he had taken up the lad Wally hardly knew, but now that he had taken him up, wild horses would not have dragged away Wally from the plain path of his duty to his friend.

"Don't take all your things off to-night!" he whispered.

Joe stared at him.

"Master Tom said I was always to take off everything, and put on my pyjamas," he said.

"Yes, as a rule. I suppose you weren't in the habit of sleeping in your clothes before you came here, were you?"

"I never had nothing else to sleep in."

"Well, never mind that," said Wally. "To-night you're to keep on your things, and put on your pyjamas over them, because there will be trouble in the dorm."

"Oh, I see!" said Joe.

"You may get a ragging to-night, you see."

"Yes, D'Arcy minor."

"I shall stand by you, and they'll have to rag me, too," said Wally. "Mind, if you're touched, you're to hit out. Whenever a chap goes for you, go for him, and hit your hardest. That's the way to get on in the world."

"Yes, D'Arcy minor."

They met the Third Form on the stairs, marching up to bed under the eye of Knox, the prefect. The fags gave both Joe and Wally savage looks, and there were murmurs of what was going to happen later.

It was pretty certain that Knox heard some of the murmurs, and understood them; but Knox took no notice. Knox did not intend to notice anything. He had been roughly handled by the Terrible Three on one occasion for bullying Joe. From that moment he had intensely disliked the little waif. What ever happened to Joe, there was certainly not likely to be any interference from the prefect.

The Third Form tumbled into bed with unusual quietness and order. That alone should have warned Knox that something unusual was toward. But the prefect seemed to be aware of nothing. He put out the light and left the dormitory.

For some minutes there was silence. Wally did not hope, however, that the Third had given up their plans. He knew that they were only waiting for the prefect to get clear before they started.

Five minutes elapsed.

Then there was a sound of somebody moving.

Jameson's voice was heard in the gloom of the dormitory.

"Tumble up, you fellows!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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"What-ho!"

"You bet!"

A match scratched out, and a candle-end was lighted. Two or three more candles were quickly produced and lighted up, and a bicycle lantern added its illumination to the scene.

Jameson was out of bed with Gibson and Picke and Fane and Hobbs and Higgs, and a dozen more of the Third Form. Most of the other fellows were sitting up in bed to look on at the expected fun.

Wally sat up in bed in his turn.

"What's the little game, Jimmy?" he demanded.

Jameson snorted.

"Mind your own bisney!" he replied.

"Is this going to be your giddy new election for Form captain?"

"No, it isn't!"

"We're going to put that new cad through it!" said Fane.

"That's the programme!"

"He's going through it, rather!"

"And if you interfere, young D'Arcy, you'll get it in the neck!"

"So put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"We mean bisney!"

Wally made no reply. He simply stepped out of bed and waited for the ragging to start. The fags watched him with angry and uneasy glances.

"Well, what are you going to do?" demanded Hobbs.

"I'm going to stick to Frayne!"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Rotter!"

"If you'll walk along here one at a time, I'll make you eat all those pretty names," said Wally genially.

The fags did not accept the invitation.

"Have that street arab out!" roared Gibson.

"Have him out!"

"Yank him out!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a rush towards Joe Frayne's bed. The little waif of the London streets was sitting up there, looking at the fags with dilated eyes.

"Ere, you lemme alone!" he said. "Wot ave I done?"

"Have him out!"

"Kick him out!"

Wally ran to the new junior's aid as he was dragged out of bed.

"Put 'em up, Joe!" he shouted.

"Wot to!" said Joe.

"Hit out, my son!"

"I'm out, Master Wally!" said Joe.

They stood shoulder to shoulder, and they did hit out. Two or three of the fags dropped at their feet, and the rest surged fiercely back.

"Wally, chuck it!" shouted Jameson.

"Rats!"

"You'll get hurt!"

"More rats!"

"Rush 'em!" yelled Picke from the rear.

"Down with the cads!"

Jameson gritted his teeth.

"Collar young D'Arcy!" he shouted. "We'll tie him up to the bed, and then we can rag the young pickpocket as much as we like!"

"Good egg!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Sock it to 'em!" shouted Wally.

He hit out right and left as the fags rushed furiously upon him. But the odds were too great.

Fighting desperately, Wally was borne back over the bed, and a dozen fags sprawled over him there and held him down by sheer weight.

Joe fought hard to help his chum, but Gibson and Fane and Hobbs had hold of him, and he was dragged away. The little waif was bumped down, and the fags sat on him to keep him there while the rest were dealing with Wally.

Wally was raging.

In spite of his struggles he had no chance against the overwhelming enemy, and he was held down firmly on the bed, spreadeagled there, and some of the fags proceeded to tie his ankles and wrists to the bedpost.

Jameson grinned, and twisted up Wally's own handkerchief and tied up one of his wrists. Curly tied the other to the head of the bed. Two lengths of whipcord secured his ankles to the foot of the bed.

The knots once secured, the fags released him. He was helpless now, and could only glare at his captors.

They gathered round the bed laughing and jeering.

"You rotters!" raged Wally. "I'll smash you one—two—three at a time, if you like! You cowards—rats—rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"I'll make you smart for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll be sorry to-morrow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, not quite so much row!" exclaimed Jameson. "We shall have a prefect here!"

"Oh, Knox won't come and stop us from ragging that slum cad!" said Picke with a grin.

"Selby might come in if there's too much row. Easy does it. We can put the slummer through it without raising Cain in this way!" said Hobbs.

"Good!"

"Come on! Collar the guttersnipe!"

"Let him alone!" roared Wally.

"Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar the slum cad!"

And leaving Wally raging and threatening, but quite helpless in his bonds, the fags collared the hapless Joe.

CHAPTER 12.

Put Through It!

JOE was lying on the floor of the dormitory, gasping for breath. He had done his best to get loose to go to the aid of his chum; but in vain. He was pinned down by numbers.

As soon as Wally was secured, the fags were able to give all their attention to the waif of Blucher's Buildings.

Joe was dragged to his feet, still being held by several pairs of hands. He was blinking helplessly at his captors.

"Old 'ard, young gents!" he said. "I ain't done nothin', you know! No offence, young gents! 'Old 'ard!"

The appeal was quite lost on the fags. As a matter of fact, the bad English in which it was couched only made them feel the worse disposed towards poor Joe.

"Collar the cad!"

"Bump him!"

"Squash him!"

Jameson pushed the too eager fags back.

"Hold on!" he said. "Bumping won't meet the case, my sons! He's going to be put through it properly."

"Good egg!"

"Hear, hear!"

"In the first place," said Jameson, "form a circle round the beast so that he can't bolt. Bring him near Wally's bed, so that Wally can look on! It's a shame for Wally to be left out of the proceedings. He's Form captain, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fags yelled with laughter as they hustled Joe Frayne over towards the bed where Wally was spreadeagled and tied down.

Wally's eyes were gleaming with rage.

Never had he been treated with such disrespect in his career in the Third Form at St. Jim's; and the leaders against him were his own two chums.

Wally simply wriggled with the desire to get at his enemies, and treat them to a fine assortment of his famous left-handers, but he could not get loose.

He could only wriggle and glare, and promise the Third Form generally all sorts of dire things in the near future.

Of which the Third Form took no notice. Wally, for the time being, was a negligible quantity.

Joe was planted beside Wally's bed, with the fags standing round ready to grasp him at the first attempt he might make to bolt.

But Joe did not make the attempt.

He knew that he had to go through with the thing now, and he was mustering up his courage to stand it.

The fags formed up round him in a grinning circle, and Joe looked from face to face in the vain hope of finding a gleam of sympathy.

But he found none.

In the dormitory he had no friend, save the lad who was spreadeagled on the bed, and could not help him.

"Now, then," said Jameson, wagging an accusing forefinger at Joe. "Now, then, you unspeakable young toad!"

"Don't you go calling me names," said Joe.

"Oh, listen to the beautiful language!" said Fane.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What ripping English!"

"What a tone!"

"What an accent!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Unspeakable young toad!" pursued Jameson, who seemed rather pleased with his own mental fertility in inventing that expression. "Unspeakable young toad! What have you got to say for yourself?"

"Nuffin!" said Joe.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I ain't got nuffin' to say," said Joe. "Wot are you goin' for me for? You wouldn't dare do it if Master Tom were 'ere!"

There was a howl from the Third.

"Oh, bump him!" shouted Picke.

"Squash him!"

"Duck him!"

Jameson held up his hand.

"Hold on! Now, you unspeakable young toad, understand this—we don't allow the Fourth or the Shell to interfere with us in this dorm! They're nothing—nobody!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What have you got to say for yourself? How dare you come to a respectable school, and mix with the sons of gentlemen?" demanded Jameson. "Do you consider that you are the sort of person to mix with gentlemen?"

"I ain't," said Joe.

"Oh! Well, he admits it!" grinned Hobbs.

"Were you going to say prison?"

"Find out!"

"Or the workhouse?"

Joe set his lips.

"My hat!" said Hobbs. "What a splendid specimen to have at St. Jim's. The young beggar has been sent out to beg, you see, by whatever relation happened to be out of prison at the time. Who was your mother, you young toad?"

"I don't know."

"Never had one, perhaps?" Higgs suggested.

"There was old Sal, at Blucher's Buildings," said Joe. "She called 'erself my mother, but I ain't sure of that, some'ow."

"What do you fellows think?" said Jameson, looking round. "Is this the kind of chap to associate with us at St. Jim's?"

"No fear!"

"The Head must have been off his rocker to let him



"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Selby as he looked upon the scene in the dormitory. The Third Formers gave an appearance of slumber, but Wally was tied spreadeagled on the bed, while Joe Frayne was standing shivering, drenched to the skin. "Frayne!" thundered the Form-master. "What is the meaning of this?"

"I don't admit nothing," said Joe. "I says I ain't mixing with gentlemen. Gentlemen wouldn't treat a pore lad like this."

"What!"

"The only gentleman 'ere," said Joe sturdily, "is Master Wally—D'Arcy minor."

The Third glared at Joe.

"Well," said Jameson, "for cool cheek this chap takes the bun. What do you know about gentlemen, anyway, you unspeakable young toad!"

"I ain't likely to learn much 'ere, anyway," said Joe.

"Bump him!"

"Jump on him!"

"Hold on! Frayne—if your name's Frayne—by the way, is your name Frayne?"

"I dessay!"

"He doesn't know! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow am I to know?" said Joe.

"What was your father's name?"

"I've belonged to three or four," said Joe. "Old Bill Frayne was my father, I believe. But I used to be sent out by Sal Rags before Bill came out of—"

He stopped.

"Out of what?"

"Never mind."

into the school," said Curly Gibson.

"I'm blessed if I can understand it!"

"Oh, it was Tom Merry's rich uncle who worked that."

"Like his cheek!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Why wasn't the shum cad put in the New House?" asked Fane. "It would have suited him!"

But here Jameson turned on his own supporters. Jameson was a New House fellow, and he had succeeded in changing into the School House dormitory that night, for the special purpose of ragging Joe Frayne. It was a risky proceeding for Jameson, as he had, of course, done it without asking his Housemaster, who would have allowed nothing of the sort. The School House fellow who had taken his place in the New House for the night ran an equal risk, if Mr. Ratcliff should happen to spot him. Jameson was the only New House fellow there, but he was not inclined to have his House alluded to disparagingly.

"What's that?" he exclaimed. "You can shut up on that, Fane, unless you want a prize thick ear to show round in the morning."

"Rats!" said Fane.

Jameson doubled up his fists.

"Then I'll jolly well——"

"Order!"

"No House rows now!"

"Stop it!"

Jameson was pushed back in one direction, and Fane in another.

"Well, anyway, the chap's more fit for the School House than the New House!" Jameson exclaimed. "But that's neither here nor there. The question is—how we're to get rid of him out of St. Jim's?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, you young toad, are you willing to go?"

Joe stared.

"Go—where? To bed?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No; back to the workhouse!"

"I ain't never been to the workus."

"Well, back to your slum, wherever it is—I'm not particular!" said Jameson, with a grin. "Are you willing to leave St. Jim's and go back there?"

"If Master Tom says so."

"Tom Merry has nothing whatever to do with it."

"Rot!" said Joe.

"What!"

"Rot!"

Jameson's face was scarlet.

"My hat! I shan't be able to keep my hands off him long!" he exclaimed. "Look here, young shaver, we don't want you at St. Jim's!"

"I know that!" said Joe doggedly.

"Are you willing to leave?"

"Not unless Master Tom says so."

"Otherwise, you won't go?"

"No, I won't!"

"You're going to stick here, eh, whether we like you or not?"

"I ain't doin' no 'arm."

"That's not the question. We can't stand you. Are you going to leave?"

"No, I ain't!"

"Now, I warn you that we won't have you in the Third," said Jameson. "If you won't go we're going to rag you till you do go. Savvy that?"

"I understand."

"Now will you go?"

"No!"

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"Nuff said!" exclaimed Hobbs. "Rag the rotter!"

"Hurrah! Rag him!"

"Right!" said Jameson. "He shall run the gauntlet first, the young rotter! Form up, there!"

And the Third Form lined up gleefully for Joe Frayne to run the gauntlet.

CHAPTER 13.

Running the Gauntlet!

JOE FRAYNE stood undecided, dogged, defiant. He hardly knew what was expected of him as he stood there, with lowering brows, and watched the fags form up in a double line.

Jameson beckoned to him.

"Come on, toad!"

"Wot do you want?"

"You're to run the gauntlet!"

"Wot's that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jameson laboriously explained.

"You're to run between these two lines," he said. "Every chap will get a lick at you. The sooner you get through the line the better. See?"

Joe's face set doggedly.

"I won't!" he replied.

"Don't do it, Joe!" shouted Wally from his bed.

"I won't, Master Wally!"

Jameson chuckled.

"Won't you?" he said. "We'll soon see about that! Take hold of him and start him."

Four or five fellows laid hands upon Joe Frayne.

Joe struggled fiercely.

The fags, standing in line, grinned anticipatively. Every fellow had taken up some weapon—pillow or bolster or stocking or stuffed sock—and all were waiting eagerly for the chance of "getting in a lick" at the little wail.

Joe, struggling, was propelled towards the fags.

They hurled him in, and then the blows began to descend. Joe had no choice about running after that. Running through was the easiest way of escaping the showers of blows.

He staggered blindly forward.

The arms rose and fell. Blows showered upon the lad, and he reeled to right and left as he dashed onward through the lines.

"Go it!"

"Lay it on!"

"Lemme get at him!"

"Go for the cad!"

Joe staggered and ran, and ran and reeled till he reached the end of the line, and there he rolled over and sank, exhausted, on the floor.

The fags closed round him again. He lay and gasped.

"Make him run back!" exclaimed Hobbs.

Jameson shook his head.

"Stand him up!" he said.

Joe was dragged to his feet.

"Now, then," said Jameson, "how do you like it?"

"Oh!"

"Answer me, you young toad!"

"Oh! Ow! I don't like it!" gasped Joe.

"Had enough?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"You wouldn't like it over again?"

"Ow! No!"

"Then will you get out of St. Jim's if we let you off?" asked Jameson.

"No, I won't!"

There was a howl of rage from the fags.

"Bump the cad!"

"Bump him for his cheek!"

"Hold on!" said Jameson. "Bumping's too good for him! Now, Frayne, if your name's Frayne, look here! We've had enough of you!"

"I've 'ad enough of you for that matter!" said Joe doggedly. "I wouldn't stay 'ere, only for Master Tom. I think you're a set of beasts!"

"My hat!"

"The cheeky blackguard!"

"You've been calling me a lot of names," said Joe.

"That's different, you young sweep!"

"So you're going to stop, eh?" said Jameson, with a grin. "Well, well, we'll see if there's a further lesson we can give you!"

"Let him alone!" roared Wally.

"Shut up, young D'Arcy."

"I'll smash you to-morrow, Jameson, you New House waster!"

"Rats!"

"You wait till I get you in the gym to-morrow, Curly!"

"Rats!"

"You don't dare to let me loose!" bellowed Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, then, if Wally's done, we'll get on!" said Jameson. "Do shut up, Wally! You talk like a gramophone, or like your blessed major!"

"Jameson, you cad—"

"Dry up, old chap! Now, look here, we'll give this chap a ducking next!" said Jameson. "We'll duck him with the water in the jugs! I should think that will bring him to his senses if he's got any!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You savvy, Frayne? If you don't promise to get out of St. Jim's we're going to souse you with cold water! What do you say?"

"Nuffin'!"

"Will you go?"

"No!"

"Then you're booked for a ducking!"

Jameson and several more of the fags grasped the water-jugs from the washstands. Joe, held by several of the fellows, could not get away.

He shivered as his tormentors came upon him again. It was a cold night, and the prospect of a drenching in cold water was the reverse of pleasant.

There was danger to the health, too—though the fags were too excited to think of that; and so, indeed, was Joe.

"Now, then, young workhouse—"

"Lemme alone!"

"Give it him!" sang out Gibson.

"Hurrah!"

"Here goes!"

Swoosh!

The fags who were holding Joe let go and started away

CAUGHT!



It was the visitors' day at the asylum, and a lady approached a lunatic holding a fishing-line over a flower-bed.

"How many have you caught, my man?" she asked.

"Madam," the lunatic replied, "you're the twentieth!"

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as the water swooshed. Some of them were not quick enough, and they yelled as they were splashed.

"Ow!" gasped Joe, catching his breath. "Y-o-o-o-o-o-p!"

He was drenched from head to foot and standing in a pool of water. There was a yell from D'Arcy minor.

"You cowards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The handle of the door turned. The fags, in their excitement, had forgotten that the din in the dormitory must attract attention. Even if Knox, the prefect, did not choose to come, one of the masters might.

At the sound of the turning handle there was a hurried alarm.

"Cave!"

With wonderful quickness the fags knocked over the candle-ends, and the dormitory was plunged into darkness.

Then, as the door opened, the fags stumbled and tumbled into bed, dragging the bedclothes over them, leaving Joe standing as they had left him, dazed and bewildered, in the midst of dripping water.

CHAPTER 14. No Sneak!

DARKNESS reigned in the Third Form dormitory in the School House as the newcomer entered.

He paused on the threshold.

"Boys, I know you are awake. I saw a light under the door and heard a most disgraceful disturbance!"

It was the rasping voice of Mr. Selby, the master of the Third.

The fags chilled with dismay. It was not Knox—not even Kildare—but their own Form-master; and they could guess the mood he would be in when the light should reveal what had been going forward.

They lay silent and palpitating.

"Very well," said Mr. Selby. "You choose to remain silent. You affect to be asleep. We will see!"

He fumbled for the switch of the electric light, and turned it on.

The dormitory was flooded with light in a moment.

Fags were industriously snoring, with a great appearance

of slumber. But nothing could disguise the fact that Wally was spreadeagled upon his bed, and tied there, and that Joe Frayne was shivering in his pyjamas, drenched to the skin.

Mr. Selby's eyes seemed to be starting from his head as he looked upon the scene.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

Joe's teeth were chattering. He went to his washstand for his towel and began to mop his hair dry.

"Frayne!" thundered the Form-master. "What is the meaning of this?"

"I—I—I'm wet, sir."

"I can see you are wet, Frayne. What are you doing out of your bed at this hour?"

Joe did not reply.

Mr. Selby glared at him, and then turned to D'Arcy minor. Wally had made a desperate effort to get loose from his bonds, but in vain. He had to lie there and meet the angry gaze of the Third Form-master.

"D'Arcy minor! What does this mean?"

"I'm tied, sir!"

"Who tied you?"

"I was tied, sir."

"Is this what you call a rag?" said Mr. Selby. "I presume that is the case. You have turned the dormitory into a bear garden."

"Yes, sir."

"D'Arcy minor, I presume you were tied there by somebody?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Was it Frayne?"

"Frayne, sir? Oh, no, sir."

"Then, who was it?"

"Could you let them undo me, sir?" said Wally snavely.

"Gibson, untie D'Arcy minor at once!" snapped the Form-master.

"Yes, sir," said Carly.

Mr. Selby turned towards Frayne again. The waif was mopping himself dry as well as he could. He certainly looked a somewhat miserable object, and Mr. Selby's glances at him were angry and contemptuous.

"You seem to be the centre of all this, Frayne, as you have been the cause and centre of nearly all the trouble in the Form since you came here," he exclaimed.

"I'm sorry, sir."

"You have been ducked, I presume?"

"Yes, sir."

"By whom?"

Joe was silent.

Above all things, Tom Merry had impressed upon him that he must never, under any circumstances, play the sneak or tell-tale. And Joe would have been cut in pieces before he would have disregarded a wish of Tom Merry's.

Mr. Selby raised his voice.

"Did you hear my question, Frayne?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then answer it."

Joe was silent.

Mr. Selby's narrow eyes glittered. He could hardly believe that the new junior meant to disregard his order. He would not have been surprised at it in Wally D'Arcy; but that this new boy—this slum denizen—this guttersnipe—should venture to disregard his authority was astounding.

It was also somewhat gratifying to the Form-master; it gratified his unjustifiable dislike for the new boy—it made him feel that his snobbish aversion was well-founded, and that in persecuting poor Joe he would be merely upholding his proper authority as Form-master.

"Frayne!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir."

"I have asked you to name the persons responsible for this ragging!"

"Yes, sir."

"Please do so at once."

The Third Form hung breathless. All the Form, as a matter of fact, had taken part in the ragging, with very few exceptions—that is to say, all the Form that occupied the School House dormitory. The New House portion of the Third, of course, had been out of it, though they had been equally active in ragging Joe in the quadrangle on a previous occasion.

Mr. Selby's eyes glittered like emeralds. There was a peculiar green, unpleasant light in his eyes when he was very spiteful, and it was gleaming there now.

"Now, Frayne," he said impressively, "I can see that there has been a most disgraceful ragging scene here. I call upon you to give me the names of the parties concerned. The ringleaders will be severely caned in the Form-room to-morrow morning, and the rest of the offenders will be deprived of two half-holidays."

The punishment was a severe one—if it reached the offenders. And it certainly would reach them if Joe gave

their names. If the Form received that punishment through Joe there was no doubt that their dislike of him would be turned into bitterest hatred. Mr. Selby must have known that. But perhaps it did not ill-suit with his wishes that it should be so. He waited for Joe's reply.

The waif was silent. There was revenge, if he had wanted it, within his grasp. He had only to say that Jameson and Gibson and Hobbs were the ringleaders and they would be booked for a severe caning. He had only to say that the others, with the exception of Wally, had taken part in the ragging to get them gated for two halves. And the Third Form had little doubt that he would do so.

Why should he spare them? They had not spared him. What allegiance did he owe to the Form that had treated him like an outcast and a pariah? Surely he would speak! It was no light matter to disobey the Form-master.

But Joe Frayne was still silent.

"I am waiting for your reply, Frayne," said Mr. Selby in ominous tones.

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

"Will you give me the names I demand?"

"It would be sneaking, sir, wouldn't it?"

"Boy, do you dare to argue with me?" thundered Mr. Selby. "I order you to give me the names at once!"

"I can't, sir!"

"You—can't, Frayne?"

"Master Tom told me never to 'sneak, sir.'"

"Frayne!"

"Yes, sir."

"Get to bed," gasped Mr. Selby. "I shall repeat my question to you to-morrow in the Form-room. If you do not give me a satisfactory answer, I shall cane you more severely than I have ever caned any boy before."

"Yes, sir," said Joe quietly.

He tumbled into bed, half-dried. Mr. Selby turned off the light and left the dormitory, closing the door with a concussion that showed how angry he was.

Jameson gave a low whistle.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wally. "There'll be a row now—and all the fault of you silly asses! Serve you right!"

"That rotten outsider will sneak, of course!" sneered Pickle.

"Hold your tongue," said Jameson.

Pickle snorted. This was a surprise from his own leader. "What do you mean, Jameson?" he exclaimed.

"He hasn't sneaked yet," said Jameson. "He could have told Mr. Selby there was a New House fellow in here, but he didn't. I should have been licked."

"Serve you right!" said Wally.

"Oh, go to sleep!"

There was no more disturbance in the Third Form dormitory in the School House that night.

CHAPTER 15.

True Blue!

TOM MERRY met Joe as he came down the next morning. Tom Merry had been a little anxious about his protegee, though he had trusted to Wally to look after him in the Third Form dormitory.

"How did you get on last night, Joe?" he asked.

"Oh, it was alright, Master Merry!" said Joe sturdily.

"Did they rag you?"

"It really didn't amount to nuffin', Master Tom."

"We were going to give you a look in," said Tom Merry, "but that beast Knox was on the watch, and we got fifty lines each for just putting our noses outside the dorm door. I suppose young Wally stood by you?"

"Yes; he's a corfdrop, 'e is!" said Joe.

"Good!"

Joe did not confide the affair of Mr. Selby to Tom Merry. He knew it would only worry the hero of the Shell, and that Tom could not help him. Tom could only have advised him not to sneak—and upon that Joe was already determined.

The waif went into the Form-room that morning with the rest of the fellows. The New House portion of the Third had already heard the story, and the whole of the Third was in a curious and anxious frame of mind.

That the waif of the slums would have firmness enough and sense of honour enough to withstand the anger of the Form-master rather than sneak was hardly to be expected. After his treatment at the hands of the Third, too, it would have been folly to expect such devotion on his part.

Yet he had, so far, refused to reply, and so the Third could not be sure. And the fellows who were faced with the certainty of a caning if Joe opened his lips were very anxious to know how the affair was to turn out.

Mr. Selby came into the Form-room looking decidedly sour. He was still suffering from indigestion, which a hearty

breakfast of eggs and bacon did not improve. Mr. Selby's nose was red, and his eyes were watery. There was no doubt that if Mr. Selby did any caning that morning the cane would be well laid on.

And that he would do some caning was certain. Either the ringleaders in the ragging would be caned, or Joe would be caned for refusing to betray them. One or the other was certain to happen.

"Oh, it's rotten!" growled Hobbs. "We're in for it, Jimmy!"

"I don't know," said Jameson.

Hobbs sniffed scornfully.

"You don't think that young cad will hold his tongue, do you?"

"I don't know," repeated Jameson.

"Do you think he's likely to stand a licking for our sakes?"

"He wouldn't speak last night."

"That was because he knew we'd rag him after Selby went," said Hobbs. "He'll give us away now fast enough." Jameson nodded.

"I suppose you're right," he said.

"Of course I am! Why doesn't Selby come to the point, I wonder? The beast!"

"Leaving it till after lessons, I suppose."

"May have forgotten it," whispered Faue.

"Catch Selby forgetting!"

It was soon clear that the Form-master was leaving the matter till after lessons. He made no reference whatever to the scene in the dormitory during the morning. Joe was beginning to hope that it had all blown over. He did not know Mr. Selby yet so well as the rest of the Third Form knew him.

Last lesson over, and the time for dismissal arrived. Mr. Selby did not dismiss them. He was evidently coming to business now. He stood before the waiting class, surveying the juniors with an unpleasantly gleaming eye.

"Last night," said Mr. Selby, "there was a disgraceful scene in the Third Form dormitory in the School House. Some—or all—of the School House boys in this Form were concerned in it."

He paused. There was a deep silence in the class-room. Joe furtively licked the palms of his hands and rubbed them together to be ready for what was coming.

"There was a ragging," said Mr. Selby, "of which Frayne appears to have been the victim. Whether I approve of this boy being placed in my Form does not matter. Scenes of disorder cannot be allowed in the dormitory. I call upon Frayne to give me the names of the offenders. I shall severely cane the ringleaders and punish the rest with detention. Frayne, stand up!"

Joe stood up in his place.

"I asked you last night, Frayne, for the names of the offenders in this incident," said Mr. Selby.

"Yes, sir," said Joe quietly.

"You refused to give the names."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Kindly give me the names now."

Joe was silent.

"Do you refuse to give the names, Frayne?"

"It would be sneaking, sir."

"Do you refuse to give the names, Frayne?" asked Mr. Selby in a cold, steely voice, as if Joe had not spoken.

"Yes, sir," said Joe desperately.

"Very well, Frayne," said Mr. Selby, compressing his lips. "Stand out before the class."

Joe came out. He shivered a little and held his hands tightly clenched. He knew that he had to "go through" it now, but he tried to keep his courage up.

"My hat!" muttered Jameson. "He's going to stick it, after all."

Mr. Selby surveyed Frayne with an icy glance.

"I shall cane you, and then question you again, Frayne," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Hold out your hand."

Joe Frayne held out his hand. He winced as the cane came down with a spiteful swish. His face went pale with the pain of the cut.

But he did not falter. Thrice again the cane rose and fell with more and more force, and Joe's little face was twisted with pain. But he did not speak.

Mr. Selby paused. The Third Form were motionless, silent.

"Will you give me the names now, Frayne?"

"I can't, sir," said Joe, through his trembling lips—"not if you were to cut me to pieces, sir."

Mr. Selby snapped his teeth.

"I shall not ask you again, Frayne, but I shall punish you severely for your disobedience."

(Continued on page 28.)

E. O. HANDFORTH IN PERIL! ATTACKED BY MONSTER CROCODILE!

THE WHITE GIANTS OF EL DORADO!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

In a super airship, the *Sky Wanderer*, a big party of St. Frank's fellows, under Nelson Lee and three other masters, set off on an educational tour of the world. With the party also are Lord Dorrimore and his black friend, Umlosi. The airship is brought down in Arzac-land by a powerful ray, and the whole party fall into the hands of Professor Cyrus Zingrave, ruler of a race of White Giants. The St. Frank's boys escape, however, and take refuge in an Arzac city preparing for war against Zingrave. When a storm breaks, the St. Frank's party go to the *Sky Wanderer*. No sooner do they get aboard than the airship is swept away by a hurricane! Fortunately it lands safely; but in the night a giant fungus springs up around it, threatening to suffocate everyone aboard!

Saved by the Sun!

AS Nelson Lee saw how they were trapped, his heart sank. He was acutely conscious of his own helplessness. Against this monstrous growth of pulpy fungus nothing could be done. Weapons were useless. The foe was impervious to bullets and explosives.

Overhead the sky was as black as ever; immense raindrops occasionally splashed down, and the moist humidity was well-nigh insufferable. Only the searchlight's beam revealed the absolute horror of the situation. The experience was like a ghastly nightmare.

Lee was proud of the boys. They were keeping a stiff upper lip. Only one or two showed signs of giving way to panic.

The growth had reached the level of the *Sky Wanderer's* top deck now; it was showing all round. Many feet in height it had risen, and it was still growing.

"It won't be long now," said Dorrie, who was standing by Lee's side, some little distance from the boys. "What a filthy business, Lee! After all we've been through—to end up like this!"

"We can do nothing," said Lee, in a hard voice.

"That's just what I'm kickin' about," growled Dorrie. "It wouldn't be so bad if we could fight—if we could go

under like men! But to stand here, watchin' this infernal devil's growth creepin' in upon us!"

"Wau! Thou hast spoken, N'Kose," rumbled Umlosi. "All my life have I been a warrior—all my life have I hoped that when my time came, I would die spear in hand, fighting as a warrior should. Is there naught to be done, Umtagati?" he went on, turning to Nelson Lee. "Many times have I regarded thee as a wizard."

"I'm afraid my wizardry is useless in this situation, old friend," said Lee regretfully. "I can do nothing."

He was watching the insidious growth of the fungus: calculating how long it would be before the hideous stuff crept forward to overwhelm them.

There was a stir amongst the boys; some of them were pointing and raising their voices; excitement was growing. Mr. Wilkes and Mr. Stokes were talking earnestly. Nelson Lee glanced at Lord Dorrimore, and then, with his jaw grimly set, he moved forward across the deck.

"What is the excitement?" he asked bluntly.

"Look at the fungus, sir!" yelled Handforth. "It's not sweeping over the decks as we first thought. Having reached the top of the airship, it's now growing straight upwards."

Nelson Lee had already observed this. Great walls of greyish yellow were rising all round the airship's top deck. It was the tendency of the fungus to grow straight up, and having swept past the *Sky Wanderer's* side, it was now continuing the upward thrust, leaving the top of the airship in a kind of cup. The growth could be observed quite plainly.

"Don't you see, guv'nor?" asked Nipper. "We might escape, after all! If the horrid stuff continues to grow straight upwards, we shall be left—"

Nipper broke off with a gasp of dismay. He was staring forward, where the searchlight glare was clearer than elsewhere. Lee was looking in that direction, too. All eyes were turned.

"Good gad!" muttered Archie Glenthorne, screwing his monocle into his eye with all his old sangfroid. "What a poisonously frightful business! The bally stuff is meetin' overhead!"

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"Crumbs!" muttered Handforth soberly.

He, like all the others, realised, then, that their fate was likely to be far worse than they had imagined. They would not die fighting against the in-growing fungus—but they would die a dreadful, lingering death of suffocation!

Forward, where the airship narrowed, the fungus walls, after gaining a certain height, were leaning towards one another, and joining up. It was just the same aft.

In less than an hour the great walls which were rising to starboard and to port, would meet in the same way. Thus, the doomed party would not come into close contact with the fungus; they would be hermetically sealed up in a vast chamber. Not only would the air be excluded, but the very air which remained would be poisoned by the emanations from the horrible growth.

In the tense silence Umlosi thrust a black arm upwards.

"The dawn, N'Kose!" he boomed.

His voice, rather than his words, caused all the boys to stare up—and, for some reason, they were suddenly hopeful. The solid blackness overhead had changed; the sky was growing faintly grey, and the difference could be clearly seen against the towering walls.

"Will daylight help us, sir?" asked Fenton of the Sixth.

"It might—although we must not be too sure," replied Nelson Lee, glad enough of any excuse to give the boys hope. "With daylight, the fungus might check its course. And if that happens we have a chance—for during the daylight hours we may devise some method of escape."

"Hurrah!"

It was a shrill, crackling cheer, for the boys were ready enough to grasp at any straw of hope.

Nelson Lee was not fooling them, either; he did, indeed, believe that daylight would bring a respite. But in his heart of hearts, he saw no means by which they could escape from this hideous trap. For the airship was surrounded on all sides, for many hundreds of yards, by a solid mass of the fungus—a mass which extended hundreds of feet upwards from the ground. To force a way through it would be quite impossible; to walk over it would be equally impossible, for it was spongy and soft. Anybody who attempted to walk on it would sink straight down—down to certain death by suffocation.

But—there was a hope.

It seemed ages to the boys before the daylight strengthened. Yet, actually the dawn came quickly. In the growing light, filmy mists could be seen rising and wreathing upwards.

The boys were standing in groups, staring eagerly upwards, beyond the fungus rim; they were watching the gradual but certain changes in the sky.

"I may be fanciful, Lee, old man," murmured Dorrie, "but it seems to me that the growth is slowing up already. What do you think? The walls are scarcely any higher than they were five minutes ago."

"I have been watching them, and you are right," replied Lee. "I do believe that the dawn has saved us. Another half-hour of darkness, and—"

He left his sentence unfinished, but Lord Dorrimore understood.

"The sun!" shouted somebody.

Brilliant golden rays were streaking across the sky, and the steady beam of the airship's searchlight looked like the feeble gleam of a candle by comparison. Owing to the overhead mists, there was a rainbow effect. Red, green, blue, orange—every gorgeous colour, growing vividly in strength, hung overhead, forming a dazzling canopy.

As the sun rose higher, and its strength increased, the brilliant colours faded. The mists, in fact, were being driven away by the sun's power, and as the air cleared, the rainbow effect lessened—until, soon afterwards, it had vanished altogether. Now the air was as clear as crystal overhead, and the sky was of a deep, glorious blue.

"We're saved, you chaps!" sang out Handforth boisterously.

"Hurrah!"

"Don't be too sure," muttered Forrest. "How do we know that we can get out of this rotten mess?"

"Dry up, you!" roared Handforth, suddenly becoming his

old aggressive self. "We don't want any croaks! Look at the fungus! It's stopped growing! Isn't that enough for now?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Handy!"

Others were shouting and pointing. There was no longer any room for doubt. The fungus, having grown so high, was stationary. The stuff had done its worst and that, in all conscience, was bad enough!

Now that everything was so clearly visible, the scene was an extraordinary one. It was difficult for the party to realise that they stood upon the deck of an airship, many hundreds of feet above the ground. For the walls of fungus rose sheer from the deck's edge, extending upwards for seventy or eighty feet.

"Forgive me, Brother Horace, if I appear to be unduly imaginative," said Browne suddenly, "but do I, or do I not, observe a curious happening?"

"Talk in plain English!" said Stevens bluntly. "What are you getting at?"

"Kindly keep your eye on the top of that wall," said Browne, pointing.

Stevens did so; they both stood perfectly still, staring hard.

"Great Scott!" burst out Stevens, his face flushing. "The wall is getting lower as we watch."

William Napoleon Browne sighed.

"Thank you, Brother Horace," he said gratefully. "For a moment I thought I was going nuts!"

Others had seen it now, and they were pointing and shouting. Incredible as it seemed, the fungus walls were reducing their height; the top edges, as far as the eye could see, were dwindling, withering.

The magic of the sun had saved the trapped party from a doom which had seemed inevitable.

The Advance Begins!

At first, the astounding effect of the sun was gradual; but as the sun rose higher in the sky, gaining greater power, the effect was accelerated.

The fungus walls, shrinking almost imperceptibly at first, soon diminished so rapidly that the sight was startling to behold.

"Our problem is solved, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Nature, having produced this horror, is now destroying it."

But if the detective's voice was quiet, his eyes were glowing with thankfulness. No longer was it necessary to puzzle over the possible methods of escape.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" ejaculated Dorrie. "You don't absolutely mean to say that the beastly stuff will dry up?"

"Look at it!" retorted Lee.

Not only was the wall-top shrivelling, but the walls were dropping perceptibly.

"But what's becoming of it?" asked Church, staring in bewilderment. "Where is it going to?"

"It's drying up—under the sun's heat," replied Nipper. "This stuff is spongy, you know. Most of it is going away in vapour, leaving nothing but shrivelled shreds behind."

It seemed incredible that that colossal bulk could so dwindle away. But there was a greater surprise to come.

An hour passed, during which the helpless party watched with eager fascination. Lower and lower dropped the walls, until, at last, they had gone completely. They were flush with the deck now, and dropping lower still. The top surface was seen to be a shrivelled, leathery mass.

"Amazin'!" said Dorrie, with a deep breath.

They could see right across that great field of fungus, to the very limits of the forest. There was a shimmering haze over the surface, caused, no doubt, by the vapourisation of the growth. But the sun was so blazingly hot that the vapour, or steam, was immediately dissipated.

Suddenly, everybody on the deck felt the airship give a quiver, and her nose sank perceptibly; then the stern went down, too.

"Hi! What's happening?" asked Handforth, in alarm.

"When the fungus grew during the night, it lifted the Sky Wanderer with it," said Fenton, who was near by.

"Now that it is shrivelling, the ship is sinking. By Jove! It's wonderful! I don't think she's damaged at all!"

"That's just as well, because she was pretty badly damaged beforehand," remarked Biggleswade. "Phew! This heat is stifling!"

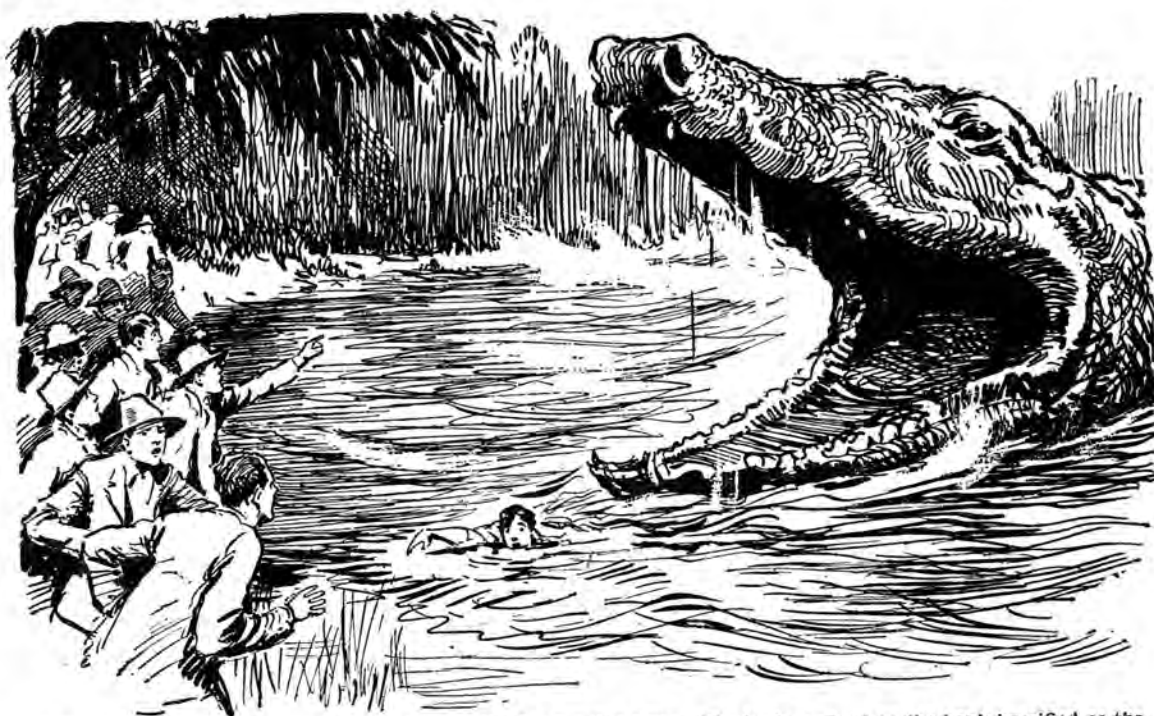
But nobody cared. The tropical blaze was infinitely preferable to the moist, humid heat of the night. Presently, it was safe enough for them all to go below into the airship's interior.

For the ventilation shafts were freed; windows and port-holes were opened, and the fresh air was allowed to circulate throughout the various quarters.

**St.
Franks
STAMP
WHO'S
WHO**



R. Chambers. R. Fullwood. A. Gulliver.
(Three more portraits next week.)



"It's coming—it's coming!" shrieked one of the St. Frank's boys. The juniors stood on the bank horrified as the monster crocodile, with wide-open jaws, swept down on Handforth, who was swimming for dear life! Yet it was clear to all that Handy could not reach safety in time!

Now that the excitement was over—and the danger, too—the boys naturally thought of food. Many of them went below to the airship's kitchen, and they busied themselves with preparing a substantial meal—in which Nelson Lee and the other men joined.

The vessel was now securely anchored again; for her grapple claws had obtained a firm hold. And Lee and Dorrie were delighted to see, when they went down to the entrance deck after the meal, that the claws had not sunk deeply as they had overnight.

The growth had practically gone; there was nothing but a shrivelled, leathery carpet over the ground—and this, too, appeared to be diminishing.

"What about to-night?" asked Dorrie. "Think the stuff will grow again?"

"It might, but we shall not be here," replied Lee. "We'll take no such chances, Dorrie."

At his suggestion, the boys went to bed and had five hours' solid sleep. They needed it. The men slept, too, in turn.

By mid-afternoon, when the sun was beginning to lose some of its power, the boys awoke, to find that the fungus had completely gone, leaving no trace. All around the airship was the moss-like ground.

"I can't believe it really happened, you know," said Tommy Watson, as he stood at the rail of the promenade deck with Nipper and Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "Talk about nightmares! I shall dream of that awful stuff for weeks."

"Begad! You mustn't let it get hold of you like that, old boy!" said Montie. "The danger is over, and everything is all serene."

Nelson Lee gave the boys plenty to do before darkness came. Some thousands of yards of strong rope were used, and mooring lines were thrown out from all parts of the ship, drawn taut, and fastened to great stakes which were driven into the ground. Fore and aft, the Sky Wanderer was made secure; she was pinned down in a very business-like way. For the ground, by the afternoon, had become hard, and the stakes held firmly.

Nelson Lee made preparations for a camp in the forest, and stores of all kinds were carried down from the airship. The boys were eager enough to work, and they did so with a will. But in the middle of these preparations an interruption came.

A number of giant men, hairy and half-clothed, suddenly appeared from the forest in the distance. They stood looking at the airship, and at the general scene, gesticulating and shouting. Then they went running back into the trees.

"Recall the boys, Dorrie!" said Lee sharply. "We don't know whether these Ciri-ok-Baks are friends or foes!"

But he knew a moment later: for before any attempt could be made to gather the St. Frank's fellows in, another figure came into sight, and it was running hard towards the airship, followed by a mob of Ciri-ok-Baks.

"Jumpin' glory!" yelled Dorrie. "Look! It's Captain Hurricane!"

The boys, dropping anything they happened to be holding, went rushing towards the newcomers.

"Hurrah!"

"Rescue!"

It was, in fact, a rescue party. Not that Nelson Lee and his companions now needed any rescuing. Captain Cane's face was expressive of relief and amazement as the boys came crowding round him and his escort. Nelson Lee and Dorrie were there, too.

"Well, this beats it!" ejaculated the famous airman. "We never expected to see you alive again."

"It's almost a miracle that we are alive," said Nelson Lee, as they shook hands.

"Almost?" retorted Captain Cane. "It is a miracle! Do you know that half the city of Az is in ruins? For miles, the forest has been laid flat, too. When that blast struck us we thought the end of the world had come." He stared upwards at the majestic bulk of the Sky Wanderer. "What kind of an airship is this, anyway? Why isn't it smashed to a million fragments?"

"That's a question I cannot answer," replied Lee. "Just a freak of the storm, I suppose. The vessel was picked up like a feather, whirled over the forest, and set down here intact."

Captain Cane was told of the events which had followed, and rather to the surprise of Lee and Dorrie, he nodded.

"I've never seen that fungus, but I've heard of it," he said. "So you were right in the thick of it? Well, it's nothing to worry about. It won't happen again to-night."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Ask any of these natives," replied Captain Harry Cane, indicating the hundreds of Ciri-ok-Baks who were standing by. "The phenomenon only occurs very rarely—in fact, only after a violent storm with much rain. It might not happen again for ten years. We've been pushing through the forest all day, and I tell you honestly, we expected to find every one of you dead."

"What of the army of Suruum Mentius?" asked Nelson Lee.

"It's on the march already," replied Cane. "Believing you to be dead, I was in command. But it's your job now, Mr. Lee. My plan was to make a search of the forest, and then join the main army to-morrow."

It was decided, then and there, that nothing should be

done that night. Everybody would be asleep aboard the Sky Wanderer, and to-night they would have a long, sound, undisturbed sleep. Thus, they would be fresh for the great march on the morrow. Furthermore, there were many preparations to make.

Cane declared that there could be no better anchorage for the Sky Wanderer; for here, in this dense patch of forest, she was completely hidden, and a small army of Ciri-ok-Baks could mount guard. They knew this country well, and there was very little chance that any of Zingrave's Arzacs would come within miles of the vicinity.

Lee made good use of the Ciri-ok-Baks. He pressed many of them into service, and all the necessary stores were carried from the airship and made up into packs. A plentiful food supply was to be taken along, to say nothing of tents, cooking utensils, and all the necessary equipment for a long march. If possible, Lee wanted the boys to live normally on food to which they were accustomed.

Everything went as planned.

A long, sound sleep found everybody fresh and eager at dawn on the morrow. As Captain Cane had said, there had been no recurrence of the fungoid growth, and the night had passed peacefully.

When the march commenced, many men were carrying packs which contained machine-guns, bombs, hand grenades, and ammunition. All the white men, and all the St. Franks' seniors, carried rifles.

The forest, hereabouts, was less difficult than Lee had feared; and by midday, after a long and arduous march, the main Arzac army was encountered. There were thousands of men, all armed, all grimly determined to march straight through to El Dorado—to give battle to the forces of King Yoga—otherwise the villainous Professor Zingrave.

The Island Which Moved!

NELSON LEE felt quite comfortable about the Sky Wanderer. She was as safe in that forest recess as anywhere, and the men who had been left on guard could be trusted. They were under the command of a dozen staunch Arzac officers.

The detective did not hesitate to take part in this rebellion; he was as eager as any of the men of Surnum Mentius to come to grips with the wily Zingrave. For he and Zingrave were old foes, and Lee knew what an evil influence the cunning crook was wielding over the White Giants. The only way to leave this isolated country in peace was to shatter Zingrave's power.

Moreover, there were Zingrave's prisoners to be released—the most important factor of all. Without Sir Hobart Manners and the airship's officers and crew, the Sky Wanderer could never take the air again. It was because of this fact that Nelson Lee did not hesitate to take the St. Frank's boys with him on this warlike expedition. Their return to their own civilisation depended upon the success of Surnum Mentius' rebellion. Lee considered it better to take the boys with him than to leave them behind. For here they were under his eye—under his personal protection.

For the rest of the day the march went on in comparatively open country, under a blazing sun. The great

column stretched mile upon mile—a solid mass of moving men. There were many chariot-like vehicles, too, filled with food, with the implements of war, and with all the other necessities for an army on the march. The organisation was good; but when a halt was made that night, Lee had many suggestions to make.

When the march was continued at dawn, Nelson Lee kept with the boys. Dorrmore had gone on ahead with Captain Harry Cane and some hundreds of picked White Giants. The rest of the great column followed, with a veritable army of Ciri-ok-Baks bringing up the rear. At many places during the previous day, other contingents had joined the main force, swelling its numbers considerably.

But now a stretch of dense forest had to be traversed, and for hours on end the marchers saw no sign of the sun.

They were forcing their way through thick undergrowth, cutting a path through reeking creepers and tangled grasses. All around them rose the mighty trees of the forest, growing so densely that the foliage met overhead in an unbroken canopy.

The heat was almost unbearable, and insects were innumerable. Time after time, enormous snakes were seen, and the tree branches were full of monkeys and highly coloured tropical birds.

There was little or no danger of wild animals, but a constant guard had to be kept against snakes and venomous lizards.

Furthermore, there was talk of giant monstrosities, such as the "prehistoric" animals which the airship party had encountered earlier in their adventures. But even the Ciri-ok-Baks themselves, who lived in these forests, could not say where the creatures were likely to be encountered. They only knew that such monsters existed. Apparently they were very rare.

The boys marched well, in spite of the suffocating heat. Nelson Lee regularly dosed them with quinine, as a safeguard against fever. Antiseptics, too, were much in demand, for arms and ankles and legs were constantly being scratched by the many treacherous thorns which grew in unsuspecting places.

"We shall be making camp within a couple of hours, thank goodness," said Nipper, in the afternoon of the second day. "Phew! The heat's getting worse than ever."

"I hear we shall be out of this forest by to-morrow," said Handforth. "A jolly good thing, too. We shall have open country after that—in fact, we shall be within sight of the great wall which protects Zingrave's inner territory. By George! That'll be the time! Storming that wall will be great fun!"

"Some people have queer ideas of fun," grunted Church. "I reckon Mr. Lee will let the Arzacs do all the storming that's necessary. Hallo! They seem to be calling a halt somewhere ahead."

The column was slowing up. For some time past, the boys had been marching on the bank of a wide, sullen-looking river. The opposite bank had been densely packed with undergrowth; but now it was clearing, and more open country could be seen. In places, here and there, the sunshine was blazing down with welcome brilliance.

Word came along that the boys could take a rest, and they were glad enough to sprawl down in the thick grass which grew profusely on the river banks.

"They're making preparations to cross the river, I understand," said Nelson Lee. "I'd better go forward and help Dorrie. A bridge of tree-trunks must be constructed."

He went off almost at once, and Handforth, who had been looking out across the river, grunted.

"Why make a bridge of tree-trunks?" he asked. "Why not cross here?"

He pointed. At this particular spot, the river was just as wide, and, apparently, very deep. But ten feet from the river's bank, there was an island with a bare, parched surface, innocent of any vegetation. It stretched diagonally across the river for over forty feet, and at its broadest part it was nearly twenty feet wide.

"Why make a bridge?" repeated Handforth, standing up. "We've only got to jump to this island, and we're as good as over."

"We might jump across this end, but what about the other side?" asked McClure. "It's about twelve feet from the end of the island to the river's bank. We can't possibly jump such a distance."

"Well, let's go and look," said Handforth. "The water may be shallow there."

He took a flying leap, and Church and McClure, who generally accompanied Handforth everywhere, followed him. They landed safely enough, and at the same moment the rest of the boys on the bank were aware of a great commotion which was taking place amongst a number of Ciri-ok-Baks who were over a hundred yards farther down the river. These native giants were pointing and gesticulating wildly.

"What's the matter with those men?" asked Nipper,



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staring. "They're pointing to those chaps on the island, aren't they?"

"Hey, you fellows!" shouted Fenton. "You'd better come back! It might not be safe there!"

"Cheese it!" protested Handforth. "How can there be any danger? We're going to cross to the other side. By George! What the dickens is this island made of? It's rummy to walk on. Whoa! What the dickens—"

"It's moving!" yelled Church, in alarm.

Without the slightest warning the island had altered its position in the river. The native giants were shouting harder than ever. Nelson Lee himself came running back from the head of the column.

"Jump!" gasped McClure. "There's something funny—Look out!"

The entire forepart of the island was rising into the air, as though on a hinge. The island rose farther out of the water, and that forepart on which Handforth was standing gave a sudden upward jerk which sent the burly Removite spinning through the air like a stone from a catapult.

Splash!

He fell into the water almost in mid-stream, and Church and McClure, knowing nothing of what had happened to their leader, had made wild jumps for the bank, and luckily they were grasped by some of the other fellows who reached out for them.

Wild shouts were going up.

"Look! It's a giant crocodile!"

"Great Scott!"

"Handy will be killed!"

That such a giant crocodile as this could exist seemed impossible. But the boys remembered the fungus; they remember the brontosaurus and the pterodactyls.

"It's going for Handy! He's doomed!"

Handforth was swimming as he had never swum in his life. For he, too, had suddenly realised the dreadful danger.

The head of the monster crocodile came farther out of the water, and the startled boys, watching from the bank, saw the great eyes. They were glittering evilly, and suddenly the tail came out of the water, lashing it madly. It was difficult to believe that that moving mass belonged to the same reptile. In a moment the river was lashed into a foaming fury.

"Throw a rope to him!" yelled somebody.

But no rope was available at the moment, and seconds were precious. Handforth was not a great distance from the river bank, but to him it seemed miles. Nipper and some of the other fellows were on the point of diving in when they were pulled up short by a commanding shout from Nelson Lee.

"No, no!" called the detective. "Do you all want to get yourselves killed? Keep back!"

They were transfixed with horror, for the crocodile's mouth was open. It was like a vast cavern, and they could see the long rows of teeth—horrible, gigantic fangs, which, if they caught Handforth in their grip, would kill him on the instant.

"It's coming—it's coming!" shrieked one fellow.

With a sudden mighty lunge, the monster crocodile altered its position, and moved forward in all its bulk. With open jaws it swept down upon Handforth, and he was yet many feet from the bank. It is impossible for him to reach safety in time.

"Dive, Handforth!" shouted Lee urgently. "Quickly! Dive, I tell you!"

And Handforth plunged straight under, obeying without question.

Something shot from Nelson Lee's hand. It was a Mills bomb. In the previous second Lee had removed the safety-pin.

Unerringly the bomb entered the giant crocodile's mouth. Many of the onlookers guessed the truth; many others were still bewildered. But it was clear why Nelson Lee had urged Handforth to dive. It was little use to destroy the crocodile, if Handforth was destroyed by the same explosion.

Craaaaaaash!

An ear-splitting detonation, accompanied by a blinding flash, rent the air.

The upper part of the monster's head was shattered into a thousand fragments, and scattered in all directions. That which followed was terrible to witness.

The gargantuan body lashed about from one side of the river to the other, and the entire surface was churned into foam.

Everybody who stood on the bank was drenched, for the water was splashing ashore, and a tidal wave swept right up the bank.

"Handy!" gurgled McClure.

On that tidal wave, swept helplessly, came a bedraggled figure. It was on the point of being drawn back amid the foam—back to where the stricken monster was lashing in

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its death throes. But eager hands clutched, and Handforth was grasped. He was pulled clear.

"My only sainted aunt!" he gasped. "Was there an earthquake?"

Nelson Lee saw at a glance that Handforth was unharmed. The great crocodile was now quietening down, and presently it became quite still, and went drifting down the river, again resembling an island.

"By jingo, guv'nor, that was quick work of yours," said Nipper breathlessly.

"It was the only way of saving Handforth's life," replied Nelson Lee. "It was a desperate chance, for he might have been killed by the bomb. Very sensibly he ducked when I told him."

Handforth struggled to his feet, dripping wet, but looking cheerful enough.

"Thanks awfully, sir," he said. "By George! It takes a lot to scare me, but I was scared when I saw those open jaws coming at me."

"I hope it'll be a lesson to you, young man, and to all you other chaps, too, not to take chances," said Nelson Lee. "At the same time, I'll admit that I never dreamed that there could be such a crocodile in existence."

From the Ciri-ok-Baks it was learned that there were many such monsters in the hidden rivers of the forest.

A crude, but strong bridge was constructed by the Arzacs, and by nightfall the entire army had been marched safely across. On the other side camp was made, and the tropical night descended to find the rebellious force of Surnum Mentius within striking distance of their objective.

From rising ground, some distance from the river, it was possible to see, far, far away, the great protective wall.

Beyond that lay the civilised, cultivated land of the Arzacs—the men who were under the sway of Professor Zingrave.

On the morrow the real excitement would begin. It was virtually the eve of battle, for none could say what warlike events the next day would bring. No longer would it be possible to advance in secret, for the country was more or less open. The enemy would know.

"I can't credit that we have come thus far undiscovered,"

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said Nelson Lee, as he sat over a final pipe with Dorrie. "True, we've seen no indication of the enemy, but I'm taking nothing for granted. Zingrave is as wily as a fox." "He may be," replied Captain Cane, who was also sitting by the camp-fire. "But the Arzaacs aren't wily. They're slow moving and slow thinking. I doubt if they'll take the slightest notice of the glare which our camp-fires are causing. They know this region is inhabited, and they won't be the least inquisitive."

"What do you propose to do with regard to the big wall?" asked Dorrie. "It can't be stormed in the ordinary way. It's too high. The Arzaacs, slow as they are, will certainly close the gates when they see us comin'."

"We shall have to adopt strategy," replied Lee thoughtfully. "I doubt if Zingrave and his men can be beaten by brute force. I have an uncomfortable feeling, too, that he is already aware of our movements—that he is deliberately giving no sign."

They were sitting beneath one of the forest giants, the

foliage of which was as dense as the night itself. In places strong lianas hung down almost to the ground, and round about the fire moths and other insects flitted. Umlosi, impassive, silent, squatted on the ground near by, his trusty spear within arm's reach.

With a suddenness which startled even Lee, the Kutana chief leapt to his feet. In the same movement he grasped at a hanging liana, and with one bound he went flying through the air like a pendulum. The other men started to their feet and stared.

"What's the old beggar up to?" asked Dorrie sharply.

They saw Umlosi release his grip; they saw him hurtle to the ground, and they heard the gasping cry of a captive. The ever-watchful Umlosi had heard the lurking spy, and with characteristic activity he had made a capture.

(Thrill follows thrill throughout next Wednesday's powerful chapters of this popular serial. Order your copy well in advance.)

NOT WANTED AT ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 22.)

"Yes, sir," said poor Joe. "Jest as you like, sir."

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Mr. Selby.

The Third Form gazed in spellbound silence while Joe was caned. They seemed fascinated by the sight. It was a terrible caning. In spite of Joe's nerve, in spite of all his courage, a cry of pain was wrung from him by the lashes of the cane. His face was deadly white now, his lips set over his teeth. He bore his punishment like a Spartan.

Mr. Selby ceased at last. Even the spiteful and hard-hearted man felt a glimmer of admiration for the lad's courage.

"The class is dismissed," he said harshly, and strode from the Form-room.

Joe put his hands under his arms and squeezed them silently. The pain was too great for words. Wally was at the wail's side in a moment. There were tears in Wally's eyes, though there were no tears in Joe's.

"You're splendid, kid!" said Wally, with a shake in his voice. "Just splendid! Those cads aren't fit to clean your boots! Oh, you're splendid!"

The door opened and the Terrible Three came in. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had called in for Joe. They looked at him in surprise, and Tom Merry ran forward with an exclamation.

"What's the matter, Joe? You're hurt!"

"It's alright, Master Tom," said Joe. "I'm alright. I've bin caned, that's all."

"Joe, what have you been doing?"

"He's been a giddy hero!" exclaimed Wally, with a glare at the fags. "He wouldn't give the names of the rotters who ragged him last night, and Selby has been taking it out of him—the beast!"

"Oh, Joe!"

"You told me I wasn't never to sneak, Master Tom."

"Joe, you're a little hero! Oh, Joe!"

"I ain't," said Joe. "You told me—"

"Are you hurt much, Joe?"

"Oh, it's alright!"

THE END.

(Watch out for next week's ripping yarn of the Chums of St. Jim's, entitled "ST. JIM'S IN THE SCUM!" Sport and adventure are the star features of this tip-top tale.)

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