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"TREASURE ISLE!" Powerful Serial Story of Pacific Adventure
—Starring the ST. FRANK'S CHUMS— WITHIN!

The GEM

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A BLACK OUTLOOK FOR THE SAINTS' PRISONERS! See "WHAT PRICE VICTORY?" INSIDE.

WHAT PRICE VICTORY?



How to recover from the Grammarians a lost trophy provides a pretty problem for the Chums of St. Jim's—until Tom Merry hits on a daring dodge to diddle their rivals!

CHAPTER 1. Just Like Gussy!

"WHAT'S the matter with Gussy?"

Blake, the leader of the Fourth Form juniors at St. Jim's, asked the question of his chum, Herries, and Herries asked it of Blake. Both of them asked Digby, who couldn't answer. Then all three questioned Tom Merry, who shook his head and gave it up.

The chums of Study No. 6 were puzzled, and so were the Terrible Three—puzzled and somewhat exasperated.

The extraordinary behaviour of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's was worrying them at a time when they had sufficient to worry them already.

Warfare between the Saints and the neighbouring Grammar School in Rylcombe, always in the air, had recently broken out with redoubled energy, and the juniors of St. Jim's had enough to do to keep their end up against their rivals.

As a matter of fact, they had not succeeded in doing this very well, lately. They had formed an anti-Grammarian Co., consisting of Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. and Figgins & Co. of the New House. The latter Co. was reinforced at present by the presence of Marmaduke Smythe, the millionaire's son, who was a former member of the famous New House Co., but who had left St. Jim's and was now on a visit to his old school. The anti-Grammarian Co. had been working on the principle of the Macedonians of old—they elected a new leader every day from among their number, with full powers of chieftainship—for the time. So far, this system had not proved a success. Blake, Lowther, and Figgins had, in turn, led expeditions against the enemy, with results disastrous to the St. Jim's juniors.

The Grammarians were in high feather. Their success was unbroken and they had actually won back two-thirds of the precious document which had been wrung from them in the past by their rivals. This document, which was an acknowledgment from the leaders of the Grammar School that they had been thoroughly licked, had been divided into three parts by the victorious St. Jim's juniors, and one-third had been preserved for many a long day in the study of each of the three famous Co.'s. Now, but one

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

fragment remained to St. Jim's, and Frank Monk & Co., of the Grammar School, were confident of gaining that.

The juniors of the old college, on the other hand, were on fire to regain what they had lost, but the question was how this could best be accomplished?

This problem was exercising the minds of all the leading lights of St. Jim's—including D'Arcy—until one morning. Then Arthur Augustus had shown this strange pre-occupation which was so puzzling to his chums.

The Terrible Three observed it in time. They exchanged notes with Blake, Herries, and Digby, but none of the six could throw any light on the subject.

They were talking about it after early chapel, when Arthur Augustus passed them, walking alone with a pensive brow.

The swell of the School House evidently did not see them staring at him. He walked by with his nose in the air, a far-away expression in his eyes, and what Blake described as an idiotic smile upon his chivvy.

"What's the matter with him?" muttered Blake. "Can he have gone off his rocker in the night?"

"Perhaps he's thinking out some terrific wheeze for bringing the Grammar School cads on their marrow-bones!" suggested Tom Merry.

"Possibly. Let's ask him."

"If he is," said Digby, "he won't tell us what it is unless he is elected captain. You know what an obstinate mule he can be when he likes!"

"Well, let's ask him, anyway!" exclaimed Herries. "He looks as if he's got something on his chest, or was composing a poem, or something. He may be making up something for the next number of the 'Weekly,' you know. Poets often look like that."

The juniors approached D'Arcy, and so preoccupied was the swell of the School House with his mysterious reflections, that he did not see them until he had walked right into Tom Merry, and dropped his eyeglass with the shock.

Then he gave a sudden start.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, that is extremely wuff and wude of you!" he said crossly. "You ought not to get in my way, and make me wun into you!"

"Why don't you look where you are going, and not wander round like a giddy moon-calf?" demanded the hero of the Shell severely.

By Martin Clifford.

"Eh?" said D'Arcy vacantly.
 "Why don't you look where you are going?" bawled Tom Merry. "Are you deaf?"
 "Yaas, wathah! I mean, no, certainly not!"
 "That sounds rather mixed. Are you off your rocker?"
 "No—yes—pway don't bothah me!"
 The juniors looked at one another.
 It was certain that Arthur Augustus had something on his mind, or he would not have answered at random like that.
 "Are you thinking about the Grammar School?" asked Blake. "Thinking out some wheeze for knocking Monk & Co. into a cocked hat?"
 "Gwammah School?" said Arthur Augustus vaguely.
 "What Gwammah School?"
 The chums stared blankly at D'Arcy. They could scarcely believe their ears. Certainly D'Arcy must be right off his rocker.
 "My dear kid," said Blake kindly, "if there's anything the matter with you, just confide it to your uncle. What's the trouble?"
 "Twouble? I am twoubled by a set of inquisitive asses, you know!" said D'Arcy. "I haven't any othah twouble at pwsent!"
 "Look here," said Dig, "you're going to work the right way to get used as a duster. Algernon Adolphus. Do you want to be used to wipe up the quad?"
 "Certainly not. I distinctly wefuse. Pway don't wowwy me!"
 "Then tell us what's the matter with you. What are you mooning about?"
 "Nothin'. I do not wish to be bothahed."
 "There's to be a meeting of the Co. in the woodshed——"
 "I can't come!"
 "What!"
 Six voices howled out the word together.
 The juniors were simply astounded. Not come to the meeting!
 "Are you wandering in your mind, Gussy?" asked Lowther. "If you want a doctor, say so, and we'll wire for one."
 "Pway wetiah and leave me in peace."
 "We'll leave you in pieces if we have much more of your rotting!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What the dickens do you mean by——"
 A bell began to ring, and the hero of the Shell broke off. The juniors trooped into morning lessons. As they went into the Fourth Form Room, Blake acquainted Figgins with the strange mysteriousness which had haunted the swell of the School House that morning.
 Figgins grinned expressively.
 "I say, you don't know what's the matter, do you?" asked Blake, in astonishment. "We can't get on to it ourselves."
 "Ha, ha, ha! I think I can form a guess."
 "Well, what is your guess, then?"
 "Do you remember the time when the Head's niece was staying at the school?" grinned Figgins. "D'Arcy fell in love with her. He looked just like that, then."
 Blake gave a start.
 "My hat! Do you think, then——"
 "Well, it looks like it. You can see for yourself."
 Blake rubbed his nose thoughtfully.
 "I remember that time, of course. Gussy was mooning about like a calf. But who is there at St. Jim's for him to fall in love with? It can't be Mary, the housemaid, can it?"
 "Ha, ha, ha! Perhaps it's Mrs. Mimms, the House dame!"
 "Take your seats, boys," said little Mr. Lathom mildly. "You must not talk in the class-room. D'Arcy, you are late."
 "Yaas, wathah! I mean, I am sowwy, sir."
 Arthur Augustus took his place. Figgins watched him curiously. Under cover of his books the swell of St. Jim's drew a letter from the inside pocket of his jacket, and began to read it, evidently not for the first time.
 Figgins nudged Blake as he saw D'Arcy's action.
 "You see that, Blake?"
 "My word! Yes. I remember he had a letter this morning."

"That's it, then," chuckled Figgins, "and it's from some lady. My hat! There's going to be some more fun, I think. Gussy was a scream the last time he was in love, and if he's got another attack, it will be something to keep us cheerful in the evenings."
 The swell of the School House was so absent-minded during morning school that any master but Mr. Lathom would have been extremely exasperated. As it was, he escaped with an imposition, which he forgot before the class was dismissed.
 The chums watched him go out into the quad. He drew the letter from his pocket again, and read it under the elms. The idiotic smile Blake had remarked upon was seen to play once more over his face.
 "Hallo, look there!" exclaimed Digby suddenly.
 Gore of the Shell, whose lapses from the paths of decency were becoming sadly frequent of late, was approaching the swell of St. Jim's from behind with the creeping motion of a cat, and all of a sudden he reached out and snatched the letter.
 Arthur Augustus gave a shriek of rage.
 Gore tore off with the letter, and D'Arcy started in hot pursuit. Gore was giggling as he ran, and the chums could not help laughing, too.
 "Stop!" shouted D'Arcy. "Stop, you wascal! I say, stop him, deah boys! The wottah has stolen my beastly lettah, you know."
 Tom Merry ran into Gore's path.
 "Get out of the way!" shouted Gore.
 Tom Merry, without replying, caught him by the collar. D'Arcy came panting up, and he tore the letter from Gore's hand.
 "I have a good mind to give you a feahful thwashin'. Gore!" he exclaimed. "You are a weally wotten wascal, you know. I weally believe that you would have wead my lettah!"
 "Oh, go and eat coke!" said Gore, walking away ill-temperedly.
 He had intended to read that letter out to a select circle of juniors, and he was disappointed.
 D'Arcy put the letter into his pocket, with a great sigh of relief.
 "I am extwemely obliged to you, Tom Mewwy," he said. "That wascal would have wead the lettah out, and it would have been vewy compwomisin', you know."
 "What the dickens does it all mean?" asked Tom Merry.
 "Why can't you explain like a sensible, sane person? Who is that letter from?"
 "Fwom a lady," said D'Arcy—"a lady in gweat distwess. I cannot tell you more, as it would be bwreakin' the confidence the fair cweatuah weposes in me."
 "Ha, ha, ha! Beauty in distwess, and you're going to rescue the fair damsel from the wicked enemy!" exclaimed Lowther. "Gussy, you're too funny to live!"
 "I uttably fail to see anythin' at all funny in the mattah!" said D'Arcy frigidly. "There is nothin' funny in beauty in distwess."
 "What's it all about?" asked Blake, coming up. "Tell us who the letter is from, Gussy. Is it Mary, the housemaid?"
 "Pway do not make such fwivolous wemarks on such a sewious subject, Blake."
 "No, I know who it's from," said Lowther, shaking his head.
 Arthur Augustus gave a start.
 "Weally, Lowthah, I fail to see how you can possibly know——"
 "But I do. It's from the girl in the confectioner's shop in Rylcombe——"
 "Lowthah, I am uttably disgusted with the fwivolity of the suggestion!"
 "Then who is it?" asked Digby.
 "I cannot tell you."
 "Gussy, are you looking for trouble?" asked Blake. "Are you yearning to be used as a duster to clear up some of the mud in the quad?"
 "My deah chap, can you ask me to bwreak a confidence?"
 "No, of course not; but we know that's all rot."
 "I hope," said D'Arcy, with emphasis, "that no gentleman pwsent doubts my word?"
 "My dear lunatic——"
 "I stwongly object to bein' addresssed in that oppwobwious mannah!"
 "Never mind; you'll get used to it. We don't doubt your word, you know, but we think you are being hoaxed. In a word, the fair one is rotting."
 "I have no more to say to any of you on the mattah," said Arthur Augustus haughtily. "A suggestion that the lady who has witten to me is wottin' is simply unpardonable. I no longah wegard any of you as my fwienids!"
 THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

The Co. gasped in unison.

Arthur Augustus was riding the high horse with a vengeance now.

"Suppose we made you captain—"

"Another time, deah boys. At pwezent I am occupied with more important affairs. Pway wun away and play!" And D'Arcy walked off with his nose in the air.

The Co. stared after him, and at one another. There was nothing to be made of Arthur Augustus. That was clear.

CHAPTER 2.

Beauty in Distress!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS, having escaped from his inquisitive friends, proceeded to a quiet corner of the old quadrangle of St. Jim's, and proceeded to read the letter over again.

It was written in a small and delicate hand, evidently that of a female, and it was couched in the most engaging terms.

No wonder it had made so deep an impression on the swell of the School House. It ran as follows:

"Dear Friend,—Will you pardon the boldness of one who admires and esteems you in thus venturing to address you without an introduction?"

"I am in great distress of mind, and need a brave and gallant friend to help me, and the moment I saw you I knew that an appeal would not be made in vain to your noble heart."

"You are so distinguished from your schoolfellows that my eye sought you out at once, and my heart told me that here was the friend I needed."

"Will you help me? Will you try to help me? What my trouble is I cannot tell you in writing, in case my persecutor should— But I must not say more. I dare not! Will you meet me and let me confide all to you?"

"I rely upon you. I know that you are courage and generosity personified. Take pity on an unhappy one who has no one but yourself to help her, and meet me at the stile in Rylcombe Lane at half-past three this afternoon."

"Yours imploringly,

"A PERSECUTED MAIDEN."

D'Arcy had read the letter through a dozen times already, but his eyes flashed and his fists clenched as he read it again.

"A persecuted maiden!" he muttered. "Howwible! I am just the wight fellow to help her. I will dwop on the persecutah like a sack of bwickis, and give him such a fearful thwashing that he won't be able to caww about for a week. Yaas, wathah!"

He put the letter in his pocket, and then he went into the School House with a slow step and a thoughtful brow.

He looked at his watch. It wanted an hour and a half to the time of the meeting, and as the walk might take half an hour it was time to dress.

D'Arcy snatched a hurried dinner, and repaired to his quarters to dress. The place was littered all over with shirts and ties, hats and spats, waistcoats and collars, before he had finished.

He was going to meet a lady in distress, and it was, of course, requisite to put on his very best gear, and D'Arcy did not fail to do it.

When he had finished dressing he certainly looked as neat as a new pin, and quite fit to win the heart of any lady, distressed or otherwise, in the United Kingdom.

He surveyed himself in the glass. The result was quite satisfactory.

From the summit of his high, shining topper to the soles of his shoes, from his beautifully set tie to his noble spats, from his diamond sleeve-links to his gold-rimmed eyeglass, from his fancy waistcoat to his lavender kid gloves, Arthur Augustus was a picture.

"Yaas, I weally think I look wathah nice," he murmured. "Distinguished fwom my schoolfellows! Yaas, wathah! What keen insight the girls have, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus picked up his gold-headed cane and walked out of the School House.

Many an admiring eye watched him as he passed out of the gates of St. Jim's. The clock in the tower boomed out the quarter past three.

Arthur Augustus gave a start.

"A quattah past!" he murmured. "Weally, it has taken me longah to dwess than I expected. I shall have to wun like anythin'!"

And he started to trot down the lane.

It wasn't possible to "wun like anythin'," however, as the wind showed a strong inclination to blow his silk hat off, and

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

it was impossible to look after it and to keep his eyeglass on at the same time, especially as he had to carefully avoid the mud in the lane for the sake of keeping his beautiful spats clean.

That run along Rylcombe Lane was, in fact, a torture to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, but he faced it manfully in the cause of chivalry.

The stile came in sight at last, and D'Arcy heard the village church clock chime out the half-hour.

He was just in time at the rendezvous. He stopped breathless at the stile, and was rather relieved to see that no one was there. The lady was not on the spot yet. It gave him time to look himself over and remove all traces of his hurry.

He rubbed two or three spots of mud from his trousers, and wiped his eyeglass and adjusted it. He settled his collar and tie to his satisfaction. Then, five minutes having elapsed, D'Arcy looked up and down the lane.

But there was no beauty in distress to be seen.

D'Arcy's heart sank a little. He remembered the immemorial privilege of the gentle sex, to be as late for any appointment as their humour might dictate. How long was he destined to wait at the stile in Rylcombe Lane?

It was cold, and a keen wind was blowing from the wood. D'Arcy was warmly clad, but it was cold standing still. He looked this way and that way, hoping that the fair damsel whose wrongs he had come to right would soon appear on the horizon. He was so engaged when a sudden sound of sobbing broke on his ears.

It came from the other side of the stile, and in a moment D'Arcy whirled round and glanced along the footpath which led into the wood.

Under the trees, half-hidden from view, he could see a form, and the garb showed that it was a member of the fair sex. D'Arcy could have kicked himself. Of course, the persecuted maiden was waiting under the trees to escape general view from the passers-by; just the thing a modest and retiring persecuted maiden would do!

Arthur Augustus crossed the stile and approached the female form under the tree. The persecuted maiden was wearing a long coat, which covered her to her feet, and a hat well over her eyes. Her handkerchief was held to her face, so D'Arcy could not see it, and the sound of sobbing increased as she heard the footsteps of the swell of St. Jim's. Although her face was covered, she had doubtless had a peep at the junior from behind the handkerchief.

"My deah young lady—" said D'Arcy, raising his topper in the most graceful way—a salute which was quite lost on the lady, as she did not look up.

The sobbing increased in violence, and Arthur Augustus, who fully understood how his voice must have made the lady's heart beat, was quite concerned.

"My deah young lady," he said, "I—I weally wish you would try to calm yourself! You are in no dangah now. If your persecutah should come along, I will give him a fearful thwashin'!"

A gurgling sound came from underneath the handkerchief.

But for the fact that the fair unknown was stricken with grief, D'Arcy would have imagined that she was laughing. But that, of course, was impossible.

"You are quite safe now with me," said Arthur Augustus, approaching nearer. "Pway calm yourself! I weceived your lettah at the school. It was you who wote that charmin' lettah, of course?"

"Yes," came in a faint whisper from underneath the handkerchief.

"I was weally extwemely honahed by your confidance," said D'Arcy. "I made up my mind at once to wush to the wescue, and I huwried away like anythin'. But I do not think I know your charmin' name."

"I—I will tell you later."

The words were murmured in broken tones.

"Pway do not cwyl!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway wemove that handkerchief, so that I may see your beautiful face, my deah fwient!"

Again that gurgling sound.

"No, no; I cannot! I must remain unknown," said the maiden, in a hurried whisper. "If you should see my face all would be lost."

"I weally do not compwehend."

"I will explain afterwards. Even now my enemies may be on the track, and they may find me here at any moment. Suppose they should find me with you?"

And the fair unknown trembled violently.

The swell of St. Jim's grasped his gold-headed cane, and looked decidedly warlike.

"Let them all come!" he exclaimed. "I do not care if they come, my fair fwient. You are quite safe with me. I will pwotect you. I should weally and twuly like to meet



As the fair damsel's handkerchief was lowered from her face, D'Arcy jumped in amazement. For it was not a grief-stricken female face he saw; it was the grinning countenance of the chief of the Grammar School juniors! "Fwank Monk!" gasped Gussy. "Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell of laughter from the wood.

your base persecutah at this moment. I would give him a feahful thwashin'—"

"Yes, yes; but I am afraid—I am afraid—"

"There is absolutely nothin' to be afwaid of," said Arthur Augustus reassuringly.

"Oh, come farther into the wood, where I may tell you my terrible story unseem!"

"With gweat pleasuah!"

With a handkerchief still held to her eyes, its folds quite concealing her face, the persecuted maiden led the way farther into Rylcombe Wood.

D'Arcy followed, feeling rather nonplussed. He had come there to rescue a distressed beauty from some terrible danger, and how was he to do it unless he knew what was the matter?

The persecuted maiden stopped under the thick trees, some twenty yards from the lane. There was a sound of sobbing again.

"How brave, how noble of you to come to my aid!" she murmured. "But I knew the appeal would not be made in vain—I knew that you would come! Are you not distinguished from all your schoolfellows by your courage and your noble bearing?"

"You weally flattah me!"

"Not at all. Could I fail to see how you stand in every respect head and shoulders above any other fellow at St. Jim's?"

"Well, no, pewwaps not," said D'Arcy.

Then he looked round quickly.

A sound had come from under the trees, and it sounded so remarkably like a suppressed chuckle that D'Arcy was alarmed. But there was no one in sight.

"Could I," went on the persecuted damsel enthusiastically—"could I mistake that noble bearing, that haughty glance, that fiery eye, which seemed to tell me that a Paladin had revisited the earth in—in an Eton suit?"

"You are vevy flattewin'," said D'Arcy. "I weally—" Then he swung round again.

This time he was certain he had heard a chuckle behind him. He screwed his eyeglass into his eye and stared among the trees. The colour mounted to his face as he distinctly saw a foot showing from behind the trunk of a big oak.

And a terrible suspicion shot into his mind. Was it all a hoax? The persecuted damsel—was she a humbug, and had she led him into a trap? It was curious that she should have persisted in keeping her face covered all this time.

"No," went on the maiden—"no, I could not be mistaken. When I saw your gallant form and imposing brow, I knew that I was saved, and that I had only to—to write you a note, to make you 'wun like anythin' to the wescue.'"

D'Arcy gave a jump.

It was certainly not in keeping with a persecuted maiden's character to parody his exquisite style of speech in this way.

"Weally—" began D'Arcy haughtily.

There was a shout of laughter from behind the tree. The spectators could contain it no longer. D'Arcy turned crimson.

"I am afwaid that a deception has been pwactised on me," he said "I am weally surprised at your conduct, madam!"

"Oh, say not so!" said the persecuted damsel, in great distress. "If you will look upon my face you will know why I have led you hither."

"Then pway let me see your face!" said D'Arcy, relenting a little.

The handkerchief was lowered at last. D'Arcy looked at the face under it, and nearly jumped off the ground.

It was not a grief-stricken female face he saw; it was the grinning countenance of Frank Monk, the chief of the Grammar School juniors!

"Fwank Monk!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

CHAPTER 3. The Ransom!

"H A, ha, ha!"

It was a yell of laughter from the wood. "Fwank Monk!" repeated Arthur Augustus dazedly. He could only stare hopelessly at the persecuted maiden, who had turned out in such an unexpected manner to be the Grammarian leader.

Monk was nearly hysterical with laughter, long suppressed. "Fwank Monk, you are a beastly cad!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "So you wote this wotten, beastly lettah, did you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gurgled Monk. "I got my sister to write it for me!"

"And you brougnt me here for nothin', did you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a cad—as a beastly wottah! I considah you a wank outsidah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I despise you feahfully!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I would give you a feahful thwashin', but you are not worth it!" said D'Arcy; and he turned to stalk away majestically.

But half a dozen Grammarians were crowding out from their ambush, and Carboy and Lane blocked the path of the indignant swell of St. Jim's.

Frank Monk, yelling with laughter, threw aside the cloak and hat, and stood revealed in his proper clothes.

"Stand aside!" exclaimed D'Arcy, as the Grammarians stopped him. "Stand aside, or I shall pwobably lose my tempah and stwike you with violence!"

"Collar him!" shouted Frank Monk.

"We've got him!" grinned Carboy, and he laid his hand on D'Arcy's shoulder.

But Arthur Augustus was in earnest, and his fist crashed on Carboy's nose with a force that split D'Arcy's glove, and made the Grammarian roll over on the ground.

"Ow!" roared Carboy. "He's nearly busted my boko! Hold him!"

Lane was already holding him. Several other Grammarians came to his aid, and Arthur Augustus was secured.

He did not resist very much—a rough-and-tumble scramble would have spoiled his clothes.

"Pway do not lay your unpleasant paws on my collar!" said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "I am your beastly pwisoner, but I stwongly object to havin' my collar soiled!"

"I'm afraid you're going to get the collar and the rest of you soiled," said Frank Monk. "What price rolling him in the pool in the wood?"

"Good!" said every voice at once.

Arthur Augustus shuddered.

"Pway do not do anythin' so extwemely beastly!" he exclaimed. "You are a beastly set of ruffians, I know, but you should dwaw a line somewhere."

"Lemme see," Frank Monk said, considering. "Of course, you know what we've played this little jape off on you for, Gussy Adolphus?"

"My name is not Adolphus!"

"Well, Algernon, then. You know what we want?"

"Yaas, wathah! You want a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I don't mean that. We want the remainin' part of the surrender document which you fellows have in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's!"

Arthur Augustus gave a start.

"Ah, is that the reason of this wascally pwocceedin'?" he said. "Well, I assuah you that you will be disappointed, you know."

"I don't think so. We haven't taken all this trouble for nothing."

"Let's souse him in the pool!" said Lane impatiently.

"I wefuse to be soused in the pool!"

"Wait a bit!" said Frank Monk. "Where's that letter? He's got it about him, I expect. Yes, here it is! Gussy, how would you like that touching epistle made public property at St. Jim's—and the story of this pathetic meeting in the wood told to all the chaps?"

D'Arcy turned pale at the thought.

He stood a great deal of chipping from the juniors at St. Jim's with great serenity. But this would be a different matter. If the whole school knew how he had been taken in he felt that he would never face the fellows again.

"Now, make up your mind," said Monk. "We're after the document, and we're going to have it. We've got two-thirds of it, and we want the other third. Then we're going to paste it up together, with an inscription on it to the effect that we licked St. Jim's hollow, and got it from them as a trophy of victory, and we shall keep it hanging up in the Common-room. See the idea? We've got to have that document. If you don't let us have it, Gussy, you'll get chipped to death!"

"I should wegard it a bweach of confidence to tell any of the cires to the fellows at St. Jim's!"

"Rats! Pay up your ransom and we'll keep mum, of course."

"It is weally not my pwoperty—it belongs to the whole study, and there are four of us."

"Yes, I know; but the word of one binds the lot," said Monk. "I know your rules. If you promised to give up the document Blake would let you do it."

"Yaas, wathah; but they might give me a study lickin' for pwomisin'."

"I shouldn't wonder. That's your look-out. Are you going to send us the document, or are you going to be shown up at St. Jim's and rolled in the pool into the bargain?"

"I'm in your hands!"

"You agree?" demanded Monk.

"Yaas, wathah!" said the swell of the School House, with a sigh. "But I considah—"

"Nevah mind what you considah—you promise?"

"Yaas, wathah! Honah bwight!"

"Good!" said Monk, with much satisfaction. "Let him go!"

The Grammarians escorted Arthur Augustus to the stile and saw him down the lane to St. Jim's. The swell of the School House walked away looking very crestfallen. The Grammarians howled with laughter as he went, and that sound was the last D'Arcy heard of them.

In a dejected mood the swell of St. Jim's entered the old gates. Then he ran right into the Co. They stared at him, noting his changed demeanour instantly. They surrounded him and asked questions, and there was no escape for Arthur Augustus.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Have you rescued the damsel in distress already? You haven't been long gone."

"Gussy has established a record for rescuing damsels in distress," said Lowther. "Have you restored her to the arms of her sobbing parents, Gussy?"

"Oh, pway don't wot! Let me pass!"

"Nonsense!" said Blake. "Haven't you any thrilling adventure to tell us about?"

"Certainly not."

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THE 7 STAR-STORY PAPER

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"No hairsbreadth escapes in the imminent deadly breeches—I mean breach?"

"Pway don't make such fivolous wemarks!"

"Haven't you slew the traitor? Haven't you slain the jabberwock?"

"I wufuse to discuss the mattah at all," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway let me pass, or I shall pwobably lose my tempah and stwike you!"

"Rats!" said Marmaduke Smythe. "Explain instantly what deadly perils you have been in, Gussy."

"I haven't been in any beasly deadly pewils," said D'Arcy. "I want to speak to you thwee fellows—Blake and Hewwies and Digby—on an important mattah. Let these cthah boundahs go and play marbles!"

"Come along, then!" said Blake. "You other bounders go and play marbles!"

The chums of the Fourth marched off to their study with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, leaving the rest of the Co. considerably puzzled.

D'Arcy did not speak a word till they were within Study No. 6, and then he closed the door carefully and turned to his comrades.

They watched him in some surprise. D'Arcy seemed to find some difficulty in beginning.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked Blake at last. "Have you something to say, Gussy? If you have, old fellow, say it, and don't keep us here all the afternoon!"

"Weally, Blake, I hardly know how to begin!"

"The beginning is a good place," said Blake.

"Or you could tackle it in the middle if you found that come easier," suggested Digby.

"Or begin at the end and work backwards," said Herries, "if you fancied it that way."

"Pway allow me to speak. I have had a most unfortunate encounth with the Gwammah School cads, you know."

"Have you? What happened?"

"I was a pwisonah, you know, and I have pwomised to send them the fwagment of that document of suwwendah, you know, which we have in the study—"

The swell of the School House was interrupted by a howl from three throats simultaneously.

"What!" roared Blake, Digby, and Herries.

"I have pwomised to send them—"

"You—you—you howling bounder!"

"You utter ass!"

"You frightful lunatic!"

"I wufuse to be called a frightful lunatic. I wufuse to be chawactewised as a howlin' boundah. I uttaly wufuse to be designated as an ass!"

"Monster!" howled Blake. "Don't you know that that scrap was all St. Jim's had left to show that they had licked the Grammarians?"

"Yaas, wathah! I was quite awah of that—"

"Don't you know that Tom Merry's share is gone, and Figgins' share is gone, and we've been crowing over them because we were taking better care of our little bit?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And now you've been and given it away!"

"It couldn't be helped, you know."

"You ought to have helped it! Have you promised, honour bright?"

"Yaas; I have pwomised, honah bwight!"

"Then it will have to be done," said Blake. "We're diddled, dished, and done. The trophy of victory will depart from the walls—"

"All through Gussy playing the giddy ox!" said Digby.

"Well, he knows what to expect," said Herries. "A study licking is a light punishment for this. He wants boiling!"

"Boiling in oil," agreed Blake. "We can't do that, but a study licking is quite in order. Gussy, are you ready?"

"Certainly not! I wufuse to have a study lickin'! I—"

"You can refuse till your hair turns ginger, but you are going to have it all the same. You horrid image!"

"I should say so!" exclaimed Digby. "You helped to give Blake one when he let the study down one time, I remember, and made him fairly squirm!"

"That was a vewy diffewent mattah. Blake can be handled wuffly if you like. But, as for myself, I have to considah my dig, and it would go against my dig to allow you to treat me with diswewpect!"

"Collar him!"

"I wufuse—"

But D'Arcy's refusal did not save him. His chums seized him, and for the first time in his career D'Arcy experienced a study ragging.

He did not enjoy it.

Exactly what happened he did not know then, and never quite knew; but it seemed to him as if an earthquake or a cyclone had suddenly struck Study No. 6.

When it was finished, D'Arcy sat in the middle of the floor, looking round him, and wondering whether the world had come to an end.

His clothes were dishevelled and dusty, his hair ruffled and wild, his collar torn out, and his tie hanging over his shoulder. His face was streaming with a mingling of red and black ink. He was sitting on his silk hat, which was crushed into the shape of a concertina.

The chums had left the study. Arthur Augustus rose slowly to his feet. He had never felt such a wreck in all his natural life.

"I—I weally feel quite exhausted!" he murmured. "And I shall nevah speak to those feahful wuffians again! I am no longah wegardin' them as fwends!"

CHAPTER 4.

Defiance!

THE afternoon post the next day brought a letter to St. Jim's from the Grammar School, acknowledging the receipt of study No. 6's share of the famous surrender document—which had been posted by Arthur Augustus, as in honour bound.

"The bounders!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We'll be quits with them again soon. Any more, Blake?"

HARD ON THE HIKER!



Hiker: "I've done over forty miles to-day, I should say. However, I shall get a good lie-in to-morrow."
Yokel: "Ye got a good one in then, if ye ask me!"

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Blake was reading out the letter, which had been addressed to Study No. 6. He nodded, with a rather curious expression.

"Yes," he said. "There's a postscript. Listen!"

"Go on!"

"P.S.," read out Blake. "Under the circumstances, we, the juniors of the Grammar School, are quite willing to allow the warfare to lapse between us, on the understanding that the position is perfectly equal. Having won back the document you won from us, we are satisfied. Now that we have got our own back, and proved that the Grammar School is top dog, we are willing to admit you to terms of equality."

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Well, of all the cheek!" he exclaimed. "Top dog—eh? That mouldy Grammar School top dog! I like that!"

"We're not going to agree?" said Figgins.

"Not much! When they acknowledge us top dog, we'll make peace."

"Wathah, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "I weally think we had bettah weply in stwong terms to F'wank Monk, you know."

"Rather!"

"Let me see," said Tom Merry, taking a pen. "How shall we start? Dear Monkey—"

"That sounds wude," said D'Arcy. "In a case like this I should wewcommend a dignified style, and I weally think you had bettah let me wite the lettah, Tom Mewwy."

"Rats! 'Dear Monk,—Yours to hand.' That will do. Many thanks for your kind suggestion, but we are far from admitting that the Grammar School is top dog—"

"That's all right," said Monty Lowther. "Tell 'em we consider it bottom dog, and a low-down sort of mongrel of bottom dog at that!"

"That would be diswewpectful—"

"Far from admitting that the Grammar School is top dog," went on Tom Merry; "and, as a matter of fact, we consider it a bottom dog, and a measly, mongrelly sort of one into the bargain—"

"Good!" said several voices.

"As for the document you have managed to collar on the instalment plan—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're going to get it back again, unless you destroy it; and if you do that, we shall take it as a confession that you're afraid we shall get it back—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I hear that you are framing it, and putting it up with an inscription—"

"Yaas, that wottah told me so, you know."

"And keeping it as a trophy. You won't keep it long."

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

We are going to collar it back again, unless you lose your nerve, and make it safe by burning it."

"Good!" said Figgins. "That'll make it all right. Monk would as soon burn off his eyebrows as burn the document after that."

"That's the idea, of course."

"But how are we going to get it back?" said Marmaduke doubtfully. "That ransom business wouldn't work, you know. They wouldn't give it up."

"Oh, wait till I'm captain, dear boys!" said D'Arcy. "I shall think of a wippin' plan when the time comes. Only wait—"

"Wait till you've done it before you start gassing, Gussy."

"If any gentleman pvesent accuses me of gassin'—"

"Oh, dry up while I finish this letter!" said Tom Merry. "Let's get it posted and done with. You can take it to the letter-box, Gussy!"

So the letter was posted, and, as the Co. expected, it brought a prompt reply from the leader of the Grammar School juniors, in which Frank Monk declared that the document in question would never be destroyed, and that it was hanging in a frame on the wall of the Common-room at the Grammar School, ready to be taken by the juniors of St. Jim's if they could get at it.

"And you won't be able to work the ransom business," the letter went on, "because I've made all the fellows swear that it shall never be given up under any circumstances whatever. And they won't go back on their word. So you can get it if you are able. You're welcome to try, if you like."

"We'll try," said Tom Merry, "and we'll do it, too!"

But how it was to be done was a question that remained to be answered.

Tom Merry was thinking it out, but he had not hit upon an idea yet, and the others confessed that it was too much for them.

And just at present there was another matter occupying the minds of the Co. Digby had received a letter, to his dismay, to say that his father was coming down to the school, and Dig was to return home with him. Sir Robert Digby had conceived the idea of sending his son to school in France, for a time, at any rate, to improve his knowledge of the language. Digby did not like the idea at all, and his chums were prepared to do all in their power to keep him with them. Unless something could be done, Dig would be gone on the morrow, and unable to take any further part in the campaign against the Grammar School for the rest of the term.

"We've got to persuade Sir Robert to leave him here," said Tom Merry decidedly. "The only question is—how's it to be done?"

Digby shook his head dolefully.

"You see, my governor won't understand the importance of our giving the Grammar School the kybosh, and my being here to lend a hand," he remarked. "I've often noticed that grown-ups don't attach sufficient importance to the things that really matter."

"Listen to the words of wisdom, then," said Tom Merry. "Before your governor arrives at St. Jim's, I'll buzz over to the Grammar School and fix up a footer match. I can whiz over on my bike after morning school to-morrow, and take a flag of truce, you know. There's no time to write, as we must have the thing settled before your governor comes. We'll fix up the match with Monk for next Saturday, if possible. When Sir Robert comes we'll wait on him in a body and explain to him that you're in the eleven, going to play on Saturday in an important match, and that we can't spare you."

Digby gave a jump.

"My hat! That's a ripping idea. I don't know if it will work, but if anything could persuade the pater, that's it."

"Then we'll fix it up with Monk and trust to luck," said Tom Merry. "Sir Robert is a sportsman, and he couldn't refuse to let you remain till the end of the week for the sake of playing for us. And by the end of the week, kids, we'll have had that paper back from the Grammarians and given them the giddy kybosh."

CHAPTER 5.

On Hostile Ground!

B UZZ-Z-Z!

It was a bicycle bell, buzzing loudly and imperatively, and Lane, who was standing at the gates of the Grammar School, turned his head to look. He had just time to jump aside as a bicycle, with Tom Merry in the saddle, came dashing up from the direction of St. Jim's and turned into the gateway.

"Hallo, you rotter!" yelled Lane. "What are you up to? You nearly ran over me! You—"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

But Tom Merry was gone. He was cycling at top speed right through the playground. The ground was pretty well crowded with Grammarians, and a shout went up at sight of Tom Merry.

"Hallo, a St. Jim's rotter!"

"It's Tom Merry. Collar him!"

And there was a rush to get hold of the bold cyclist. But Tom Merry, ringing his bell furiously, dashed right up to the steps of the Grammar School, and there he dismounted and leaned his bicycle against the balustrade. He faced round quite coolly, and waved a white handkerchief in the faces of the excited Grammarians.

"Pax!" he exclaimed. "Stand off! I'm a flag of truce!"

"You're a what?"

"A flag of truce. I've come with a message to your giddy chief. Keep your distance and respect the white flag, my infants!"

The Grammarians looked rather puzzled.

They did not like being bearded in their own den, as it were, by the chief of the St. Jim's juniors, but Tom Merry's evident faith in their honour could not fail to appeal to them.

They hesitated, and looked round for their leader. Carboy and Lane were soon on the scene, the latter very red and indignant.

"What are you doing here, you outsider?" demanded Lane. "You nearly ran over me just now!"

"Well, I've cycled over lots of lanes before now," said Tom Merry. "What's a lane for?"

Some of the Grammarians chuckled. Lane turned redder.

"I can see that you have come here for a hiding," he remarked. "You've come to the right spot to get one, and—"

"Can't you see the white flag? I'm a messenger. I've got a message for your giddy chief. Where's Monk—the young Monkey, I mean?"

"Here I am!" said Frank Monk, pushing his way forward. "What have you got to say for yourself before we frog's-march you, Tom Merry?"

"You can't do it; you must respect the white flag," said Tom Merry coolly. "I've come to bring you kids a challenge from St. Jim's."

"We'll accept it, whatever it is," said Monk instantly.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I believe you kids fancy you can play football—" he observed.

"Yes," said Monk. "I believe we fancy something of that sort. We fancy we can play it better than any of you young asses over at St. Jim's, too!"

"I don't see what could put that idea into your head. I've seen you play, and it was enough to make a Hottentot weep to see you; it was, really!" said Tom Merry, shaking his head.

Frank Monk breathed hard through his nose.

"If you keep on like that, that giddy flag of truce won't protect you long!" he remarked. "What message have you got for us, kid? Have you come to say you've changed your mind and are willing to accept the terms of our letter?"

"Couldn't be done, my dear fellow," said Tom Merry, with a decided shake of the head. "We're going to have that giddy document back, you see, and we shan't be happy till we get it; and, besides, you've got to admit that we are top dog, you know. But to come to business, Monkey, we want your lot to meet us in a football match. I thought I'd come over and tell you instead of writing, as I wanted to get the matter fixed up at once, if possible."

"Oh, that's all right! We'll meet you anywhere you like, and give you as big a licking as you require," said Frank Monk. "Anything else you want?"

"No; not at present. Shall we say Saturday next for the match, on your ground, kick off at half-past two? We've got that date still open, if you have?"

"We can fix it. We have only a practice match on for that afternoon."

"Then it's settled?"

"Certainly! Come, and we'll wipe up the ground with you to your heart's content," said Frank. "I've often thought it would be a good thing to teach you youngsters how to play football, and now we'll give you a lesson. You beat us before by flukes, of course."

"Look out for another fluke, then," grinned Tom Merry.

Gee, it's sensational! What is?

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"We'll come over in good time, and I expect most of our chaps will come over to look on. It will be pax for the time, of course!"

"Right you are!" said Carboy, with a grin. "We want a lot of your fellows here to see you licked!"

"I don't suppose they'll see much in that line," Tom Merry remarked. "But we shall see about that. We licked you on our ground, and we're going to do our best to lick you on our own, and I think we shall do it. That's about all I've got to say."

"Good!" said Frank Monk. "It was like your cheek to come here like this, Tom Merry, but we'll respect the flag of truce. I'll walk down to the gates with you."

Tom Merry wheeled his bicycle down to the gates, accompanied by Monk, Lane, and Carboy. And there they parted.

Tom Merry, grinning gleefully over the adventure, rode back to St. Jim's, and was immediately met at the gateway by the Co., anxious to know the result of his mission.

Afternoon school was almost over when the sound of a car was heard in the quadrangle, and a little later Digby was called out of the Fourth Form class-room with the news that his father had arrived. Ten minutes later the Fourth were dismissed; and as Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy hurried out into the passage Dig met them, looking very excited.

"Where is he?" asked Blake, in a tragic whisper.

"In Study No. 6," said Dig. "I persuaded him to come and look at our quarters. Go and talk to him prettily while I hunt up Tom Merry."

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "Find Figgins & Co. as you come out, Herries, and bring them along. We must tackle him in a body. Come on, Gussy! You and I will keep him engaged till our forces arrive."

"Yaas, wathah! Pewwaps you had bettah wemain outside the study, though, Blake. This is a delicate mattah, and wequahs to be handled with gweat judgment. It



Fellows crowded their study doorways as Tom Merry led Gussy along the passage. "What have you got there, Tom Merry?" called out Gore. "Gentlemen," said Tom, "this is an orang-outang of the species *Gustavus*!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Tom Mewwy," came a muffled voice from the bag, "I ordah you to welease me instantly!"

"It's all serene!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Everything in the garden is simply ripping! We're to meet the Grammarians on their own ground next Saturday afternoon, and lick them. They think they're going to lick us. But that's a detail."

"We had a hard fight last time when they came over here to play us," Blake remarked.

"Well, we're not afraid of a hard fight again. I wouldn't give twopence for a game of football that was a walk-over! We shall lick them, and that's enough—at least, I hope so. If we're licked, we'll fall with honour."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We shall have a stronger team than last time, with Marmaduke and Digby in it," said Figgins. "We shall win all right!"

"But shall I be in it?" said Digby lugubriously. "My governor is coming down to-day, you know, and he means to take me back. If Tom Merry's idea proves a success—"

"Well, let's hope it will," said Tom Merry. "We'll put it to him straight, you know, and make him see reason. That's the best we can do."

would weally be bettah to leave it entirely in my hands, deah boy."

Blake did not seem to think so, however, for he marched straight on to Study No. 6, and entered. A tall, soldierly man was standing before the fire, looking about the study. He had a face like granite, but there was a kindly gleam in his grey eyes.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said Blake. "How do you do, Sir Robert? You remember me, sir?"

"Certainly!" said Sir Robert Digby, shaking hands with Blake, and then with Arthur Augustus. "I have seen you before, Blake, and I am glad to see you again. I have come to take my son away with me. I'm going to pack him off to France for a bit."

"We don't want to part with him, sir."

Sir Robert Digby laughed.

"Perhaps not. And I am glad to find that he is so popular. But he is wanted, you know, and I must take him away with me."

"Pway considah—" began D'Arcy.

Blake trod on his toe and stopped him.

D'Arcy adjusted his monocle and glared at Blake.

"My lad wished me to pay a visit to his quarters," said Sir Robert. "Cosy little place, I must say. Do you know, I was in this very study when I was at St. Jim's, forty years ago!"

"Were you really, sir?" said Blake, genuinely interested.

"We—"
He was interrupted by the entrance of the Terrible Three and Digby. Sir Robert knew them, and he shook hands all round. He had scarcely finished when Herries came in with Figgins & Co., and there was more handshaking. Sir Robert looked a little surprised. He wondered how many Lower Form boys were going to cram themselves into that not very extensive study.

"These are all my friends, dad!" said Digby, with a wave of the hand. "We're always having fearful rows, and we get on rippingly!"

Sir Robert laughed.

"That sounds rather contradictory," he remarked. "But I think I understand you. Now that I have seen your friends, Arthur, I think we had better prepare for our journey."

"I hope you are not in a hurry, sir," said Tom Merry glibly. The Co. had not had time to elect a captain, and Tom Merry naturally fell into the place of leader. "I really hope you are not in a hurry, sir. We—we thought that while you were here you might like to have tea in the study, just as a reminder of old times, and—"

"H'm! Really—" hesitated Sir Robert.

"Of course, we don't want to bother you, sir, only we've made some preparations, and if you would be kind enough to stay to tea—"

It was impossible for an old St. Jim's boy to refuse an invitation like that. Sir Robert's face, bronzed by the burning sun of India, broke into a smile.

"Well, in that case, I must not disappoint you," he said kindly. "I will certainly stay to tea, my lads."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom Merry, with great relief. "It is very kind of you, sir. I don't know whether you'll care for the tommy, but we'll do our best. The armchair, Figgy."

Figgins pulled out the armchair for the baronet, and Sir Robert, being fairly in for it now, sat down.

CHAPTER 6.

He's a Jolly Good Fellow!

"LAY the cloth, Blake, while we get in the grub," said Tom Merry. "Would you like to look at the paper, sir, while we're getting tea?"

"Certainly! Dear me! What is this?"

"Latest number of 'Tom Merry's Weekly,' sir—our magazine."

Sir Robert laughed, and began looking over "Tom Merry's Weekly," turning a studiously deaf ear to the whispers going on among the juniors.

"The cloth is rotten!" Blake remarked to Tom Merry. "We haven't had a clean one this week. And Dig spilled a cup of cocoa on it yesterday, and there were some sardines upset—"

"You must get a clean one. Go and borrow one of Kildare. He's a ripping good sort. If he's not in his study borrow it all the same."

Blake grinned and went out. Digby came close to the hero of the Shell.

"There's no grub," he muttered. "We've got nothing in, and we're stony. Even D'Arcy is broke till a remittance arrives."

"That's all right. I'll go down to the shop and get all we want."

"Good! I'll put the kettle on. I say, what about crockery? We haven't anything like enough for twelve, you know."

"We'll all bring our own."

"And as for seats—"

"There's no room in the study for twelve people to sit down, so some would have to stand, anyway. Those who stand can be behind Sir Robert's chair, you know, and he won't notice," said Tom Merry hopefully.

"Yes, I didn't think of that."

Digby filled the kettle at the tap in the passage, and put it on the fire. Herries got out the caddy and teapot ready. Arthur Augustus cleared the table, and had it ready by the time Blake came back with Kildare's clean tablecloth—borrowed without permission.

Tom Merry & Co. returned with food and the tea was made. Sir Robert laid down the "Weekly," over which he had laughed heartily, and turned politely to the tea-table. Bread-and-butter and sardines and a fragrant cup of tea were really tempting. The granite face of the old soldier

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

relaxed more and more as boyish recollections rushed upon his mind. Forty long years had passed since, a lad of fifteen, he had given a study "feed" in that very study. The forty years seemed to shrivel away, and he was a boy again.

"This is extremely pleasant," he said, putting down his cup and attacking the provisions with a gusto which proved that he had not lost his appetite in India. "I feel a lad again. Same old study, too, and not a bit changed! A bit dingier, perhaps. Same old school; and I suppose you play the same old games?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry. "Especially footer, sir."

"Ah, there have been some developments in football in my time!" said Sir Robert. "Do you know, I've been out of England so much that I haven't seen a game played by St. Jim's since I left the school."

Tom Merry's eyes sparkled.

The baronet was approaching the very topic the hero of the Shell had planned to lead up to by slow and artful degrees.

"Would you like to see a game, sir?" he said. "A real good, ripping game between St. Jim's juniors and one of the strongest sides they ever met?"

"Ah, yes; I should certainly like it!"

"Could you come on Saturday, then, sir, when we meet the Grammar School?"

Sir Robert pursed his lips.

"Fellows who know," went on Tom Merry, "say that the match will be as good as anything ever played by the St. Jim's First Eleven—the seniors, you know, sir. Our junior team is a very strong one. And the Grammarians are a powerful side, and always fight to a finish."

"Let me see. Perhaps—"

"And, sir, if we could venture to ask you a favour—"

"Why of course you can, my lad!" said the baronet good-naturedly. "What can I do for you?"

"Why we've challenged the Grammarians to the match, sir, so naturally, we want to put our strongest possible side in the field."

"Yes of course."

"We've picked out the best players in the Shell and the Fourth, and—and we're depending on Digby for inside-right, sir."

Sir Robert looked grave.

"We can't spare old Dig, sir," said Tom Merry eagerly. "If he's not there we shall have to put Kerr forward, and play Jimson at back. The team will be weaker. Jimson is a good sort, but not up to Kerr at back; and Kerr isn't up to Dig in the front line, as he'll tell you himself."

"That's so," said the Scottish partner in the Co., with a nod. "It's quite right, sir. We hope you'll let Dig play, sir."

"Yaas, wathah! You can't refuse, sir, when it's a question of the honah of St. Jim's bein' at stake, my deah sir."

"But really—"

"You'll let Dig play, sir?"

Sir Robert's face remained grave for a minute, then he broke into a laugh.

"Come, you have fairly caught me in a trap!" he said. "I don't know what I shall say to Arthur's schoolmaster in France, but I suppose I cannot refuse you."

"Hurrah!" shouted Herries.

"Bwavo! Bwavo!"

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"As captain of the Junior Eleven of St. Jim's," he said. "I thank you, Sir Robert. You've lifted a weight off our minds. Dig, you're going to stay."

"Hurrah!" shouted Dig.

Sir Robert beamed upon the juniors as he finished his fourth cup of tea.

"And I will come down and see the match," he said. "And if you don't play up like an international, my boy, you will hear from me! Another cup of tea, please, Figgins."

Sir Robert had his cup of tea—and another, and another—while they talked football and bygone times at St. Jim's; and after tea, as the baronet had decided to catch a later train, there was some singing. Tom Merry sang "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," as most appropriate under the circumstances; and, finally, the party broke up in the highest of spirits.

And when Sir Robert had driven off to the station, leaving Arthur Digby behind, the Co. voted him a jolly good fellow—as, indeed, he was.

"You stay to the end of the week, Dig!" exclaimed Blake, slapping his chum on the shoulder. "And by that time the Grammarians are going to have the proper kybosh. And when you leave you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that they'll sing smaller. We shall lick them on the footer field as a proper wind-up."

"Yaas, wathah! But you haven't decided yet how you

are goin' to get the document out of the Common-woom in the Gwammah School."

"Where there's a will there's a way."

"Yaas, wathah! And if you choose to elect me captain, I am pwetty certain I can find—"

"Oh, rats!" said the Co. in chorus, and they parted.

CHAPTER 7.

Captain Tom Merry!

"**W**HERE'S Gussy?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Blake. "Haven't seen him for a dog's age! Have you, Herries?"

"No," said Herries. "I believe he's gone out scouting."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, the meeting must proceed without him." He looked round the woodshed. "Ten of us here. We're all here, except Gussy."

The Co. were in conclave again, met together for the purpose of electing the captain of the day and deciding upon further operations against the Grammarians.

Ten juniors had turned up to the meeting. Arthur Augustus was conspicuous by his absence, and, according to the rules of the Co., he lost his chance of getting the captaincy when the lots were drawn. That was his own look-out.

"Gentlemen, we are here once more upon this old familiar spot," said Tom Merry. "Only one member of the Co. is absent, and he doesn't count. We have the aid of our esteemed friend Arthur Digby, Esquire, till the end of the week, and by that time we have got to give the Grammarians the complete and crushing kybosh!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's time to draw lots for a new leader," went on Tom Merry. "D'Arcy will have to be left out of it as he's not here. Shove the names in the bag, Monty."

"Right you are."

The slips with the names of the remaining candidates were shuffled in the bag, and Figgins drew one out.

He held it up to the light of the bicycle lantern which illuminated the meeting, and the name of Tom Merry was visible to all.

"Tom Merry!" said Blake, with a sniff. "Well, you've got it, Tom Merry. I hope you'll do better than the others, that's all!"

"I've no doubt I shall," said Tom Merry serenely. "But we'll see. My idea is that we ought to put our heads together and give the Grammarians a really hot time. Has anyone thought of a wheeze?"

There was a general silence.

Tom Merry looked round the meeting. Apparently ideas were at a discount, for nobody was in a hurry to speak.

"Don't all speak at once," Tom Merry remarked pleasantly; "but, on the other hand, don't leave it till next term."

"Who's the leader of the giddy Co.?" demanded Blake.

"I am."

"Well, if you're leader, think of something. Blessed if I'm going to do your work for you!" said Blake. "What's the good of taking a back seat if you have to do the thinking? You're the leader. Think it out!"

"That's right!" said Monty Lowther. "You're leader, Tom. Set your wits to work."

"Good!" said Marmaduke. "I'm not going to think out any giddy schemes till I'm leader. It's your place to do that, Tom Merry."

"We want to keep the ball rolling," Kerr remarked. "We ought to give the Grammar School cads some sort of a dig. No good getting rusty, or giving them a rest, that I can see, and so I call upon Tom Merry, as leader, to propound an idea."

"We all call on him," said Fatty Wynn. "If he's leader, let him lead. What are we going to do against the Grammarians to-day, Tom Merry?"

"Here, I say, give a chap a chance!" said Tom Merry. "I—"

"Hallo, deah boys! I was wathah afwaid I should be late for the beastly meetin', don't you know!" A familiar voice broke in at the door of the woodshed.

Blake looked round as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered. "Hallo! Here's the image!" he exclaimed. "Where have you been, Adolphus?"

"I have so often remarked, Blake, that my name is not Adolphus that I weally wondah that you continue to address me in that ridiculous mannah."

"Oh, rats! Where have you been? Why didn't you come to the meeting?"

"I have been scoutin'," said D'Arcy.

"Found any mare's-nests?"

(Continued on page 12.)



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.

BANG!

Sambo: "Do yo' think yo' got brains, Rastus?"

Rastus: "Sho Ah do!"

Sambo: "Den if yore brains was dynamite, an' doubled every day fo' twenty years, an' den exploded, it sho' wouldn't blow yo' hat off on a windy day!"

A football has been awarded to A. Widgery, Burton's Cottages, Curry Rivel, Somerset.

IMPROVING!

Boy: "Well, mother, I have better news about my school exam. this time."

Mother: "Then you must have passed at last."

Boy: "Well, not exactly—but I'm top of those that failed."

A football has been awarded to H. Betts, 12, Lower Park Road, Belvedere, Kent.

CONSIDERATE!

Mike: "Have ye made yere will, Pat?"

Pat: "I have that. I'm laving everything I possess to the docther who saves my loife!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Percival, 100, Queen Street, Rushden, Northants.

(AM)ISS!

First Boy: "Ever seen 'am growing?"

Second Boy: "'Am doesn't grow."

First Boy: "Garn! Ain't yer ever 'eard of an ambush?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Gardner, 22, William Street, Redditch.

TAKE HEED!

What happened when the Gem sold out.

"Hang it!" exclaimed the judge.

"Crumbs!" ejaculated the baker.

"Rubbish!" snorted the dustman.

"Fiddlesticks!" remarked the musician.

"My stars!" said the astronomer.

"It's a washout!" muttered the laundryman.

"Order in advance in future!" advised the editor.

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Evans, 38, Lord Roberts Street, Walney Isle, Barrow-in-Furness.

AS A RULE.

Jones: "I have a head suitable for an emperor."

Bones: "Well, any block of wood can be made into a ruler."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Corby, 1, Baylay Terrace, Stanhope, Lines, Aldershot.

BRAVERY!

Foreman (to workman discovered idling): "Come on, there, are you afraid of work?"

Workman: "Hardly, guv'nor. Why, I could lie down and sleep beside it!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Grimwood, 17, Fairfield Road, London, E.17.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

"No, certainly not, Lowthah! I have been on the twack of the Gwammah School cads."

"Didn't they go for you?" asked Dig.

"They did not see me. I twacked them like a Boy Scout, or an Indian brave!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I am an awfully deep fellow, you know, sometimes, and I weally flattah myself that I did this little twick in a mastahly mannah."

"Well, what's the result of it?" asked Tom Merry.

"I have made a gweat discovevay."

The Co. looked rather sceptical. They had very little faith in Arthur Augustus and his skill in the Buffalo Bill line. But the swell of the School House was looking very serious and earnest. He adjusted his monocle and beamed upon the assembled Co. with the air of one who had reason to be very well satisfied with himself.

"Well, get it off your chest!" said Tom Merry. "Can't you see that we're all simply on tenterhooks of curiosity, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah! That is only natuwal, undah the cires," assented D'Arcy. "Vewy well, Tom Mewwy, I will welieve your curviosity. I have been scoutin'—"

"I fancy I heard you say that before," Figgins remarked.

"Don't intewwupt, Figgins. If there is anythin' I weally can't stand, it is these constant intewwuptions from you wude youngstahs. I was scoutin', when I fell in with a vewy unpleasant chawactah from the Gwammah School. It was not one of our fwends the enemy, but that ovahgrown person whom we wagged on the wivah, named Salmon, or Codfish, or somethin'—"

"Do you mean Hake?" asked Tom Merry, with interest.

"Yaas, wathah! I knew it was somethin' fishay," said D'Arcy. "Well, I met him, and he acted most wudely. He actually had the feahful impertinence to lay hands upon me and push me into the hedge in a vuff and violent mannah!"

"He did, did he? The horrid bounder! He couldn't have known whom you were," said Tom Merry gravely. "If he had known that you were the one and only Gussy—"

"Oh, pway don't wot, Tom Mewwy! I wegard this as a sewious mattah. He pushed me with such extweme violence that I bwoke through the hedge and fell with gweat wapidity into the ditch on the othah side. Fortunately, the ditch was a dwy one, or I should have spoiled my coat and waistcoat; but as it was, my twousahs were howwibly wumped, and I was in a state of extweme wage. I was so enwaged, in fact, that I quite lost my tempah, and I sewambled from the ditch and wushed upon Codfish to stwike him!"

"Ha, ha, ha! And was he struck?"

"No; he had the feahful cheek to take me by the collah and sling me through the hedge again," said D'Arcy. "I fell into the ditch with gweat violence, and he looked down on me and gwinced, and said that if I got out again he would jump on me!"

"The wretch! It makes me almost weep to think of your trousers at that terrible moment!" said Tom Merry, with a sob.

"Pway be sewious, Tom Mewwy! I was feahfully enwaged, but I thought upon the whole it would be bettah to wemain where I was till the shockin' wuffian had gone. I was weally feelin' most exhausted. I was not afwaid, of course, but I knew that he was quite capable of wuinin' my waistcoat if I pwovoked him. So I considahed it vewy much wisah to wemain there till it was safe to sewamble out!"

"What a thrilling tale of adventure!" said Monty Lowther. "It is awfully interesting, but what has it got to do with the washing, Gussy?"

"Pway allow me to explain. While I was westin' in the ditch three persons passed along on the othah side, and they were talkin'. They were the three boundahs who tied Marmaduke to the college gates the othah night."

"Monk, Lane, and Carboy?" asked Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah! Now, you see, I knew their voices, and I immediately caught on to what they were sayin'. Some fellows wouldn't have thought of it, but you know I'm awfully deep—"

"Yes; we know how awfully deep you are, Gussy. Go on!"

"Monk was sayin' that to-night would be the vewy time as it was misty, and it would be easy to slip into the gwounds of St. Jim's without bein' noticed."

Tom Merry started.

Up till now he had preserved a rather sceptical countenance, but just then he became really interested. It looked as if Arthur Augustus had discovered something, after all.

It was evident that Tom Merry attached the greatest importance to the information brought in by the scout.

Tom's eyes were sparkling now.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

It was pretty plain that he had a "wheeze" in his mind, but he did not seem to be in a hurry to communicate it to the impatient Co.

"Well, what is it?" demanded half a dozen voices impatiently. "Out with it, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry shook his head calmly.

"Not at all. I've got an idea for making the Grammar School kids wish they hadn't thought of invading our territory, but for the present I'm keeping it to myself."

There was a simultaneous howl of indignation from every member of the Co.

"I've got nothing to say."

"It's all rotting, then! You haven't an idea in your head?"

"Oh, yes, I have—a first-rate, ripping one!"

"Then tell us!" howled the Co.

"Can't be did! For military reasons—"

"You—you humbug! You ass! Tell us!"

"Explain!"

"Rats! For military reasons I can't—"

"Blow your silly military reasons! I tell you what, chaps—we'll give him a chance, and if he doesn't live up to this we'll depose him and elect a new leader!" said Blake.

"Hear, hear!"

"You understand, Tom Merry? This is not going to be merely a jape on the Grammarians, but you're on your trial. If the wheeze doesn't come off in first-chop style you get the order of the boot instanter, and you're incapacitated from ever leading the Co. again!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted the Co. in unanimous approval.

"I'm agreeable," said Tom Merry, smiling serenely.

"Then we'll let it go at that. About time this beastly meeting broke up, I fancy; I'm getting hungry. Come on, kids!"

"Yaas, wathah! But wait a moment, deah boy. Tom Mewwy, I quite admit that you have ewery weason to keep the secwet of your intentions as a gweat general, but as I bwought the information of the enemy's movements—"

"Sorry, Gussy! You'll all know about it in good time."

"But weally, Tom Mewwy, I must insist upon my wights—"

"Travel along, Adolphus! You are making me tired."

"Tom Mewwy, as I bwought the information, I must once and for all insist upon my wights to share the secwet!" said Arthur Augustus, with emphasis. "It is extwemely pwob that I can give some advice upon the subject, as you must admit two heads are bettah than one, especially when one of them is mine. I—"

"Blake, that thing belongs to you. Take it away!"

"Come along, Gussy! It's time to go!"

"I wefuse to come along," said Arthur Augustus. "It is a question of dig with me. I am not bein' tweated with pwopah wespsect, and I must wesen it. Tom Mewwy, I have stated—"

"Good-night, Gussy! Come along, Monty—Manners!"

"Stop, Tom Mewwy! I insist upon your stoppin' and heavin' what I've got to say! Unless you suwvendah on this point I shall have no alternative but to thwash you!"

Tom Merry looked terribly alarmed.

"Oh, Adolphus," he exclaimed, "unsay those fearful words!"

"I wefuse—I distinctly wefuse! I shall give you such a feahful thwashin'—"

"Hold him while I run away and lock myself up somewhere!" gasped Tom Merry, apparently in a state of terror.

"Hold the dangerous ruffian!"

And Tom Merry dashed off towards the School House. D'Arcy attempted to pursue, but was promptly collared by Blake, Herries, and Digby.

"No, you don't, Gussy," said Blake.

Figgins & Co. walked away, laughing. Monty Lowther and Manners followed Tom Merry at a more leisurely pace, chuckling to themselves. But the swell of the School House was in deadly earnest. His dignity was involved, and that was always a matter of great importance to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Blake, let me go! Hewwies, welease me! I no longah wegard you as fwends—"

"Now, don't be a bigger fathead than you can help, Gussy—"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a fathead! I wefuse to wemain here! Welease me at once, or I shall get angry and stwike you!"

The three juniors staggered away in affright. Arthur Augustus bolted from the woodshed on the track of Tom Merry. Blake sat down on a pile of fagots and laughed till he was out of breath.

"That chap will be the death of me!" he gasped. "Here, let's follow him and see what he's up to! Come on!"

And the chums of the Fourth followed on the track of the indignant swell of St. Jim's.

(Continued on page 14.)

HERE WE ARE AGAIN FOR MORE NEWS AND VIEWS FROM—



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! Judging by the hearty approval with which the recent "Joe Frayne" stories have been received by readers, there can be no doubt that St. Jim's yarns that have a real human interest have a special appeal. Therefore, chums, you will all welcome the good news that our next story is one of very real human interest, again starring Joe Frayne, the waif of the Third Form. It is entitled :

"THE BOY WHO RAN AWAY!"

Joe has made good since he came to St. Jim's, and by his undaunted pluck, has won the esteem and friendship of most of the fags in the Third Form and fellows in higher Forms. But there is one snag in Joe's otherwise happy existence at St. Jim's—and that is his Form-master, Mr. Selby. The sour-tempered master seems to delight in "taking it out of" Joe, and trying to break the lad's indomitable spirit. Joe "sticks it" bravely, but in next Wednesday's story, Mr. Selby oversteps the limit. What does Joe do? The title of this ripping yarn tells you. What happens then? That you will learn when you read this story. See that none

of you miss it—it's a winner from beginning to end.

"TREASURE ISLE!"

In the next stirring chapters of our powerful serial, events move with breathtaking-swiftness and are full of thrilling excitement. Nelson Lee & Co. get to grips with Haynes and his gang when they attempt to rescue Nipper and his eight captive companions! Can they beat the modern buccaneers? Follow the further adventures of the St. Frank's party and be thrilled.

To complete next week's grand programme there will be a special Boat Race number of "Tom Merry's Weekly," another column of readers' prizewinning jokes, and lastly, another chat from your Editor.

SPEED RECORD BREAKERS!

John Fredericks, of Walthamstow, is very keen to know when Sir Malcolm Campbell intends to make his next attempt on the World's land speed record. As far as I know, John, Sir Malcolm will be going to America in July. It is his intention to make his attempt on the bed

of the Salduro Lake, near Salt Lake City, in August. His present record is 272 miles an hour, but Sir Malcolm's great ambition is to reach the three-hundred-an-hour mark. Before he makes the attempt he will have a trip to South Africa, while the Bluebird is being prepared.

John also asks who has travelled the greatest distance on land in an hour. That honour belongs to Mr. G. E. T. Eyston, the famous British racing motorist, who recently covered 133.01 miles in an hour at the Montlhery track in France, driving an 8-cylinder Panhard. This is the car which, in 1932, had such a tremendous fight at Brooklands with Mr. John Cobb's Delage, for the first British Empire Trophy. Mr. Cobb just won the race.

CAN YOU BEAT IT?

No one has written to ask me which is the biggest cat, but I am going to tell you of an animal that lays claim to the title, and if any of you know of one to beat it, let me know. By the way, this title is open only to domestic cats; tigers and the like are not admitted.

Gibson is a very proud cat, for he claims the world's championship for size. He has no wonderful pedigree; his mother was a stray cat who was taken in by Mr. and Mrs. Turner, of Wimbledon. His three brothers are just ordinary cats, like his mother, but Gibson—oh boy, what a cat! He measures, from nose to tail, 37 inches, and weighs 35 lbs.—just about a pound an inch! He is 14 inches across the shoulders and 33 inches round the middle—nearly as wide as he is long! His paws are two inches across. Gibson is over seven years old, but they say he is still growing! Despite his enormous weight he is quite agile, and sometimes hurls himself into the lap of a visitor—who, presumably, gets something of a shock! Has he got an appetite? He has! He eats a pound of steak and some liver at a meal!

THE EDITOR.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice to The GEM LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Alfred Hill, 15, Butler Road, Dagenham, Essex, wants correspondents in Canada or France; ages 15-16.

C. T. Peh, 113, Lorong Slamet, Penang, Straits Settlements, wants correspondents interested in photos and magazines, in Belgium and Australia.

Edward C. Field, Blenheim, My Lord's Hill, St. Michael, Barbados, West Indies, wants correspondents who know English and French; ages 14-18.

Robert Parker, 59, Renfrew Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, wants to hear from stamp collectors; ages 14-16.

Alex G. Gillespie, Box 496, Port Colborne, Ontario, Canada, wants to exchange stamps.

Theodore Giannou, 135, Military Road, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, wants a correspondent; age 11-14.

Cedric Trudgen, 7, Hurlstone Street, Peterborough, South Australia, wants members for his Cheery Correspondence Club.

W. de Villiers, Box 6468, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wants correspondents in Great Britain and America; ages 14-15; interested in cigarette cards and stamps.

William Goh, Pasis Panyang Rubber Estate, Singapore, wants correspondents in France, Germany, Malta, Transvaal, etc.; ages 14-15.

W. Speer, Jun., 70, Lion Street, New Kent Road, London, S.E.17, wants a correspondent in Spain or America; interested in stamps and views.

Alex English, 15, Blaney Street, Agnes Street, Belfast,

Ireland, wants correspondents in South America, Canada, Spain, and South Africa; ages 12-13.

W. C. Leitch, 87, Mansfield Place, Torry, Aberdeen, wants to hear from readers interested in the Blue Crusader yarns in the "Boys' Realm."

J. Pikes, 74, Pantbach Road, Birchgrove, Cardiff, wants pen pals interested in sport, hiking, etc.; ages 12-15.

Basil G. Wooding, 142, Wellingborough Road, Northants, wants a pen pal interested in photographic chemistry, animal physiology, and amateur theatricals; age 19-22.

Douglas Lincoln, 7, Antrim Road, Henleaze, Bristol, wants a pen pal keen on Rugby and all sports; age 11-13.

Len Barnett, 2, New Street, Pittshill, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, wants correspondents in China, Africa, France, or Germany; interested in music specially.

Peter Berry, Leipzig, C.I. Thomasstrasse 28 I, Germany, wants to hear from readers keen on "Nelson Lee" stories prior to July, 1929.

D. Cochrane, The Pedlar's Tray, Ferring-by-Sea, Sussex, wants correspondents in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada; ages 10-13.

Paul Thomas, 326, Cummins Street, Broken Hill, N.S.W., Australia, wants a pen pal interested in wireless, engineering, and stamps; age 17-18.

Ted Cole, 31, Martin Street, Elwood, Melbourne, Australia, wants a pen pal interested in films and mystery magazines.

Max Dickinson, 116, John Street, Singleton, N.S.W., Australia, wants pen pals; ages 12-16.

Albert Matthews, 58, Lupin Street, Birmingham, 7, wants pen pals interested in sport, wireless, etc.

Miss Rose F. Daim, 1118, Robson Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, wants girl correspondents outside Canada; ages 15-16.

C. A. Wahlstrom, o/o Mental Hospital, Porirua, New Zealand, wants correspondents; interested in meteorology; age 26.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

What Price Victory?

(Continued from page 12.)

CHAPTER 8.

Bagged!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was really excited. He bolted across the dusty quadrangle, and passed Manners and Lowther like a flash. Manners uttered an exclamation. "There goes Gus! Oh, my hat! That chap ought to be in a museum!" "Ha, ha, ha! There are going to be ructions!"

"Come on; let's follow the ass!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was already out of sight. He ran up the steps of the School House and bolted into the Hall and mounted the stairs three at a time. He reached the door of Tom Merry's study and pounded upon it.

The door was locked. Evidently the hero of the Shell was in a state of terrible fright, and desired to escape the vengeance of Arthur Augustus.

"Open the door, Tom Mewwy!"

A gasping, scared voice came from within.

"Who is there? Oh, who is there?"

"It is I, D'Arcy! I have come to give you that thwashin'!"

"Oh, Gussy! Oh, Gussy! Don't!"

"I am sowwy, but I have no alternative. You may as well have it now, Tom Mewwy! If you don't open this door I shall wait till you come out, and stwike you!"

"You won't let me off, Gussy?" came that quivering voice from within.

"Certainly not! I am sowwy, but I am compelled to considah my dig. You have insulted me, and I have no alternative but to thwash you."

"Then—then I may as well let you in, as you are so fearfully determined."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a sound of the key turning back in the lock. Arthur Augustus tried the door again, and it opened to his touch. The swell of St. Jim's rushed in. The study was pitch-dark inside, for the blind was down and there was no light. D'Arcy dashed recklessly in—and the next moment gave a yell.

His foot was caught in something, thoughtfully placed there in readiness for him, and he measured his length on the carpet.

He went down on his hands and knees, his eyeglass dropping off, and for a moment he remained there, too startled to move.

That moment was enough for the hero of the Shell.

D'Arcy felt someone drop astride of him, a good deal as if he were a rocking-horse, and his wrists were dragged up behind him.

"Welease me!" gasped D'Arcy, squirming on his face. "Welease me! I forbid you to tie my wists togethah! I weseuse to be tweeked like this! Welease me, you howwid wuffian!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In a twinkling the looped cord Tom Merry had ready was over Gussy's wrists, and tightened and knotted, and the swell of St. Jim's wriggled on the floor with his hands secured behind his back.

But that was not the end. He sat up, furious, and as he did so a large bag was slipped over his head and drawn tight and fastened round his neck.

"Welease me! What silly twick is this? I ordah you to welease me!"

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No. 4. Vol. 1 (New Series).

Flying Squad Reports

SQUAD RECEIVE VISITORS

Grammarians seen in quad! Skimpole gave the alarm. Flying Squad flew to engage enemy raiders. Raiders found to be led by Frank Monk, of Rylecombe Grammar School. Monk and his men rapidly bombed almost out of existence. Remains left strewn in quad. At command of Air Marshal Merry, rescue party dragged Monk clear of debris. Monk muttered feebly that he had come in spirit of peace to arrange footer fixture. Slight mistake! Apologies all round; Grammarians flown back to study as guests. Monk entertained in Study No. 10 to tea, all merry and bright. On leaving, Monk agreed Flying Squad smartest organisation he has met!

TOM MERRY'S HEROISM

Plane circling overhead attracted attention of Flying Squad on half-holiday spin. Engine sputtered, stopped. Machine plunged suddenly to earth in field, 100 yards off road. Chief Air Marshal Merry led dash to scene. As Flying Squad arrived, plane burst into flames. Tom Merry took life in hands, and disappeared amid flames and smoke. Flying Squad leaped after him; found Tom dragging pilot clear. Flying Squad dragged both to safety. Tom Merry's clothes ablaze. Flying Squad extinguished clothing retreating from plane. A few seconds later the petrol tank exploded. Pilot safe, with slight burns—thanks to Tom Merry and Flying Squad. Tom Merry severely burned about the hands. Pilot handed over to P.-c. Crump and Farmer Blunt's men. Later, all St. Jim's cheered Chief Air Marshal Merry to the echo!

SQUAD ROUTS CHALLENGERS

Flying Squad were challenged at footer by Wally D'Arcy on behalf of fags. Challenge scorned. Wally put it on school notice-board. School chuckling—Flying Squad obliged to accept. Chief Air Marshal Merry flew his strongest air fleet. No quarter asked, none given. From kick-off Flying Squad in ascendant. Fags dizzy at manoeuvres of Squad. Ball netted six times in first ten minutes. Fags game, but outflown. Goal-keeper riddled with shots. With score at 20 to nil, Chief Air Marshal Merry drew off bombers, at Wally's request. No further challenge expected. Flying Squad supreme!

KNOX BOMBARDED

Knox of the Sixth commanded Jack Blake to join him at footer practice. Blake not honoured—Knox kept him busy sending in shot after shot, to improve Knox's goal-keeping! Chief Air Marshal Merry mobilised Flying Squad, flew over Big Side. Landed, joined unbidden in practice. Knox dumb-founded as bombardment from Flying Squad commenced. Mud-bespattered, Knox cried: "Enough!" Squad deaf to appeals. Surrounded Knox and crashed on him! Knox made soft landing in mud—but was left with badly-flattened body!



LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

MR. RAILTON SPEAKING

How do you do? I have been asked to speak to you before the Televisor, and Merry has handed me a list of questions which I am invited to answer.

These questions include: "Whom do you consider the best scholar in the junior school?" "Whom do you consider the best footballer?" And so on.

I very much regret that I cannot answer such questions as these. I have my private opinion, of course, but a master should, I think, keep his private opinions to himself—just like a lesser mortal. A master is not a god, to say: "This boy is perfect, and this boy is not!"

I believe it is the best way to let boys fight for supremacy in every branch of life without too much criticism, but with every encouragement. Those who have left St. Jim's to do battle in a wider sphere, write to me and sometimes come to see me. They say the outside world is a hard place for many, though a fellow with pluck can always win through. If a boy has real confidence in himself he can make good.

As I see it, it is a master's duty to see that a boy receives encouragement for what he does, as well as criticism. So many people think criticism sufficient. I try as much as possible to dispense with it. Boys are bound to make many mistakes, very few of which are serious. The only mistake which I cannot condone is that of slowness. I have no use for slackers. But if a boy will try, I am ready and eager to help him. It is perhaps because most of my boys realise this that we get on so well together.

I think that will be enough. It is very nice to have met you all.

St. Jim's News Reel

Mr. Ratcliff was heard to say that he had resigned. The whole of the New House rejoiced, and a vote of thanks was passed. When Figgins asked Ratty if it were true, however, Ratty said he had merely "resigned" himself to having such an unruly House to control!

When Tom Merry went to Clavering, his first school, he arrived in a little velvet suit. To watch Tom on the playing-field now, you would have difficulty in connecting him with velvet!

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, is so forgetful that if he gets flustered he will forget his place in his book. Slackers like Crooke do their utmost to fluster Mr. Lathom during Latin "construe"—though when caught out Crooke is pretty flustered himself!

(Continued at foot of next column.)



Week Ending March 10th, 1934.

ST. JIM'S STERN STRUGGLE

THRILLING GAME AGAINST 'FRIARS

Entertaining Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars is always a tough fixture, and Tom Merry & Co. were ready for a hard game. Wharton and his men looked very fit, and their goal-scoring reputation caused anxious faces around the ropes.

From the start it was plain that St. Jim's would have to go all out to "down" their friendly rivals. Wharton came through, and only a last-minute tackle by Figgins averted one of those quick cross-shots for which the Greyfriars skipper is famous.

Play swept to the other end, and Tom Merry came into the picture with a superb piece of dribbling which proved abortive, owing to a fine tackle by Johnny Bull. A corner was given, and Blake made a great effort to score, but put the ball by the post.

The ball bobbed rapidly from one end to the other—and for a period, shot after shot was rained at the opposing goalkeepers. Witnesses said that in the next half-hour more shots were sent in and saved than had been seen on the ground for generations! Fatty Wynn saved brilliantly from Wharton and Bob Cherry, dived at Nugent's feet a little later, and punched out from Vernon-Smith and Hurree Singh. In the Greyfriars goal, Field held Tom Merry and his men at bay with inspired goalkeeping. Tom Merry was unlucky with a really great drive which skimmed the bar with "Squiff" beaten—and D'Arcy went very close with a shot which just curled round the upright.

First blood came only after the change-over. Wharton eluded Figgins' watchful vigilance, and crashed the leather home a second before Fatty Wynn was prepared. The 'Friars were leading!

Tom Merry & Co. steeled themselves, and went all out. They fairly besieged the Greyfriars goal, and it was a matter of minutes only ere a magnificent shot by Tom Merry beat Field all ends up. It was ding-dong from then for the deciding point, which came when, leg-weary, the Greyfriars defence let Blake in with a comparatively simple opening. Blake made no mistake—and the persistence of the Saints was rewarded by a last-minute victory in one of the fastest and most thrilling games on record!

Mr. Railton, besides acting as House-master of the School House, acts as coach for football and cricket elevens, both senior and junior. Mr. Railton is an excellent batsman, though his wounded arm prevents him from bowling much!

George Gore is the champion bully of the lower school and claims to have cuffed every frog in the school at least twice this term!

Robert Digby has been messing about with clay, and talks of becoming a sculptor, carving a career for himself, as it were!



MONTY LOWTHER CALLING

Hallo, Everybody! I hear a criminal called Hunt has been eluding the police for ages. Hunt, the slipper! Apropos of nothing, an old gent went up to a Scots boy and said: "Tell me, when is your birthday?" The little boy answered: "I dinna ken—my father will never tell me!" Which reminds me—a Scots reader has written to me: "If you make any more jokes about Scotsmen, I shall stop borrowing the GEM!" Oh, yes! An old actor, trying to impress a friend, said: "I was refused admission at the theatre last night, till I told them who I was!" And whom did you tell them you were?" asked the friend. Nasty fellow! "The camera is the most popular of modern inventions," says Manners. Certainly a great many people are taken with it. Asked by Mr. Linton in class, to define manual labour, Gore said he thought he was a Spanish grandee—whereat Linton was wrathful! "Who gives a thought to the policeman pacing on his lonely beat?" asks a reader. We've guessed it—the burglar anxious to start work! The Rylcombe dentist told us this one. Skimpole called to have a tooth out, but, preoccupied as usual, didn't seem to know which one. The dentist shook his head: "I can't give you gas, old chap," he said. "How am I to know when you're unconscious?" Now for a simple riddle: Why is a lawn-mower so named? Because just when you think you've finished the lawn, you look round and see some "mower"! Sorry! Furniture-removers were exchanging the Head's grand piano for a new one the other day, when one of them dropped the old one—with disastrous results! "Didn't I say leave it?" bellowed his mate. "Lumme! I thought you said leave it!" answered the culprit. I'll be seeing you!

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

A certain rather fat junior well known in the New House showed me this. He placed twelve mince-pies on the table, as illustrated, forming six straight rows with four pies in every row. Fatty—I mean, my friend—then moved four mince-pies to new positions, so as to make seven straight rows with four in every row. Which four would you remove, and where would you replace them?

Solution of last week's puzzle.



The cake cuts into 22 pieces.



STOP PRESS. Special Boat Race Number next week.

D'Arcy's voice became faint and muffled from the interior of the bag.

Tom Merry gave a shout of laughter. He jumped up and turned on the light. Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet. He looked a curious object with his hands fastened and the bag covering his head down to the neck.

"Is that all right, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry anxiously. "Anything more I can do for you?"

"W release me! W release me at once, Tom Mewwy!"

"I—I—I'm afraid. You're too dangerous! I'm afraid for my life," said Tom Merry. "I don't think you'll get suffocated, Gussy; I've cut some holes in the bag to let in the air. It's your own bag. I fetched it out of Study No. 6, so that doesn't matter."

"You—you fearful beast! You wuffian!"

"You see, you're too dangerous to be let loose. I'm so afraid of you when you get into a fearful temper, Gussy. Come along!"

"W release me immediately!"

"Certainly not! Now I've captured you I'm going to exhibit you," said Tom Merry, fastening a cord to Gussy's tied wrists. "Follow me. Tread carefully, or you'll take a tumble. I should really be sorry if you broke your neck, or anything like that."

"I w refuse to stir from this study," came the muffled voice from the bag. "I w refuse to appeah such a widiculous sight! I distinctly w refuse!"

"It doesn't sound very distinct, Gussy. Come along!"

"I w refuse—I—"

But Tom Merry was pulling on the cord, and Gussy had to go. He stumbled blindly down the corridor, and fellows came to their study doors to look on in amazement and merriment.

"I say, what have you got there, Tom Merry?" called out Gore.

"My latest capture," said Tom Merry. "Gentlemen, this is an orang-outang of the species *Gustavus*. It is a peculiar animal, and its native habitat is any old study—"

"Tom Mewwy, if you do not instantly w release me—"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's D'Arcy! I thought I knew those trousers!"

"I ordah you to w release me at once, Tom Mewwy!"

"The animal is found wild in the woodshed," continued Tom Merry, with the air of a showman, as he led the reluctant Gussy along the corridor between two rows of open study doors and grinning faces. "On the least attack upon his dig he becomes ferocious, and has then to be tied up in the way you see. Its face is covered out of consideration for the spectators, who would otherwise suffer considerably from the sight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tom Mewwy, I w egard you as a beast! W release me!"

"Come on, Gussy! This animal, gentlemen, when in a ferocious state, as at present, has to be confined to the cellar, and left there for a few hours to cool."

"Take him along! Ha, ha, ha!"

Gussy marched on perforce behind his leader. Tom Merry led him directly to the corridor upon which the Fourth Form studies opened.

"Tom Mewwy, if you dare to put me in the beastly cellah—"

"It's the only place where you're safe, Gussy!"

"I w refuse to be shut up in the cellah! I w refuse—"

"Well," said Tom Merry, with an air. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

of thoughtfulness, "there's that old disused box-room on the top landing. Would you prefer that?"

"I refuse to be shut up anywhere! I ordah you—"

"The box-room will do. There are lots of rats there, but you will not mind that, will you? Come along! Get a move on!"

Blindfolded as he was, Gussy could not see or guess in what direction Tom Merry was taking him. Tom marched him up some stairs and down others, until he had lost every clue to his whereabouts. Finally he marched him into Study No. 6, his native quarters, D'Arcy at the same time being fully persuaded that he was being led into the disused box-room at the top of the School House—a room far from the studies and seldom entered by anyone.

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry. "Here we are, Gussy! Ugh! How cold it is! Can you hear those beastly rats scuttling?"

"Tom Mewwy, if you dare to leave me in this feahful place—"

"Yes, it is a rotten hole of a place," said Tom Merry. "Never mind, there's a chair here, and you can sit on it. Sit down!"

"I refuse to sit down! I distinctly—"

"Rats! There you are!" Tom Merry pushed Gussy into a chair, and in a few seconds fastened him there, in spite of his struggling and wriggling. "There, that will do! Now, you won't be able to get out, Gussy! You'd better remain in this box-room all night, I think, and you will be in a better temper in the morning."

"You wuffian—"

"Good-night! See you again in the morning!"

The door closed.

Arthur Augustus was alone. He wriggled in the chair and called to Tom Merry, but there was no reply—only the muffled echo of his voice.

"The howwid bwute has weally gone and left me!" murmured the swell of the School House. "How vewy bwutal! I nevah thought it of Tom Mewwy. He has nevah weally tweeked me with pwopah respect, but I nevah suspected him of bein' such a feahful wuffian as this! Fancy leavin' a chap shut up in a beastly box-room among the beastly wats! Howwid!"

And Arthur Augustus began to shout for help.

He wasn't going to be left in that lonely box-room all night if he knew it; and if Tom Merry meant to carry out his threat, the only way was to attract attention. If there was a row, that was Tom Merry's look out. Gussy could not be expected to think of that now.

"Help!"

He shouted as loudly as the muffling bag over his head would permit.

"Help, help, help!"

CHAPTER 9.

A Lesson for Gussy!

TOM MERRY joined Manners and Lowther when they came in. The hero of the Shell was grinning, and his chums grinned, too.

"Where's Gussy?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"Has he slain you?"

"I think he's gone to his study."

"What's the little game?" asked Manners. "I can see you're up to something."

"D'Arcy fell over a cord stretched between two chairs when he chased me into my study," exclaimed Tom. "Then somebody tied his hands, and fastened a bag down over his head, and walked him off to Study No. 6. He's fastened up to a chair there."

"Help! Help!"

It was a faint, distant, strangely-muffled shout from somewhere.

Monty Lowther and Manners started simultaneously as they heard it, and looked at Tom Merry. Faint and far-away as the sound seemed, they thought they knew the dulcet tones of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, that's Gussy," he said. "He fancies he's tied up in the disused box-room on the top floor. He must have come to that conclusion from some words I let drop. Curious, wasn't it? I never told him anything of the kind, of course. Ha, ha, ha! Awfully curious!"

Blake, Herries, and Dig came in and looked at the Terrible Three.

"I say, where's Gus?" asked Blake. "You don't look as if he had slain you, Tom Merry. Where has he got to?"

"I think he's in your study, Blake."

"Help! Help!"

Blake gave a jump. Herries and Digby stared.

"Why, that's his voice! It sounds peculiar, as if he'd got his head in a box. Come along, chaps! Let's go and sort him out."

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The chums of the Fourth ascended the stairs. A shout of laughter followed them. They found a good many Fourth Formers making for Study No. 6. The muffled shouts of Arthur Augustus had fallen upon many ears.

"Hallo, Blake!" exclaimed Mellish. "There's something wrong in your study. That's the sweet voice of your pet lunatic."

Blake nodded shortly. He opened the door of Study No. 6. Tom Merry had turned the light out before leaving, and the place was pitchy dark.

"Help! Help!"

Blake turned on the light. The light glimmered upon Arthur Augustus, fastened to the chair, with the fastened bag completely concealing his aristocratic features.

D'Arcy heard Blake come in, and gave a gasp of relief. His shouts had brought help at last.

"Help!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Who evah you are, pway welaase me! Who is it? Pway welaase me at once, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Blake! I'm glad you've come. I've been shoutin' for hours!"

"How on earth did you get like this?"

"Tom Merry did it! He made me a pwisonah by a twick in his study, and then bwrought me to this beastly box-room, and left me here among the wats. They have been cwawlin' all ovah me for hours, the howwid bwutes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the group of Fourth Formers at the door.

And Blake laughed, too, till the tears ran down his cheeks. It seemed too funny for Arthur Augustus to imagine that he was in the disused box-room at the top of the House, when he was really sitting in his own chair within the familiar walls of Study No. 6.

The swell of the School House spluttered with indignation inside the thick bag as the sounds of merriment penetrated to his ears.

"You feahfully heartless wuffians!" he gasped. "I do not see anythin' to laugh at. I have been tweeked with fwightful diswpect. I have sat here for hours with the howwid wats cwawlin' all ovah me, and biting me all ovah in the most cwuel way."

"Ha, ha, ha! You ought to be a poet, with an imagination like that, Gussy!" Blake exclaimed. "It is only ten minutes or so since the meeting broke up in the woodshed."

"Nonsense! How can you tell such a feahful whoppah, Blake? I am surprisid. I have been here at least two hours, suffewin' feahfully."

"You've been here about two minutes, I suppose," said Blake. "Where do you think you are, Adolphus Aubrey Algernon?" He was unfastening the bag with deft fingers.

"In that beastly box-room," muttered D'Arcy. "Those feahful wats have been cwawlin' all ovah me, and I am afwaid they have soiled my clothes!"

Blake jerked the bag from his head.

D'Arcy looked round him—at the familiar room, and the group of almost hysterical juniors in the doorway. He was utterly amazed.

"Why—what—how— This is our study!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake. "Oh, Gussy, you are the champion ass!"

"How—how did I get here?"

"You've been here all the time. Those rats! My hat! Gussy, your imagination would do credit to a patent medicine advertiser!"

Blake released the swell of the School House, who was still looking round him like one in a dream.

"There you are! Now, I think you've had enough war-path for one night. You kids can travel along; I don't want a whole flock of geese cackling in my doorway."

The juniors were screaming with laughter. Gussy's expression was funnier than anything else. He evidently could not yet make up his mind quite where he was.

"Clear off!" said Blake. "Go and cackle in your own studies."

The laughs at the door melted into thin air. The chums of the Fourth were left alone in their study. D'Arcy dusted down his trousers with a rueful air.

"Let that be a lesson to you, Gussy," said Blake severely.

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite if it is their nature to. Let Kerr and Figgins growl and fight, they've nothing else to do. But, Gussy, you should never let such angry passions rise; your little fists were never meant to black Tom Merry's eyes."

CHAPTER 10.

Trapped!

TOM MERRY made his way down to the gates, for he had a deep scheme on hand. He knew that if the Grammar School juniors intended to enter the territory of St. Jim's that evening, they would leave it as late as possible, so that the quadrangle would

be clear; but as they knew the time the gates were locked, they would have to come before then.

As a matter of fact, nothing was easier than what Frank Monk designed to do, and Tom Merry wondered that it had never occurred to him to carry the war into the enemy's country in the same way.

Within the House the lights were shining, but in the quadrangle it was hardly dark yet. The mists of the evening made it seem darker than it was.

Tom Merry went down to the gates and took up his position to watch. The mists which Frank Monk had counted upon to favour his design concealed Tom Merry also.

"All serene!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath as he heard the whisper in the ancient gateway.

He had calculated well, and he had not been on the watch ten minutes when that whisper warned him that the foe were at hand.

"It's all serene, kids!" whispered the voice again; and Tom Merry recognised the tones to be those of Frank Monk. "The coast is quite clear."

The three Grammarians stole out of the shadow of the deep old gateway, and crossed the quadrangle with quick, silent steps.

Tom Merry stepped quickly to the gates. He drew a length of thick, strong wire from his pocket, and wired the lock fast, so that the gates could not be opened. It was quite as secure now as if Taggles had been there with the keys.

Then, grinning to himself, the hero of the Shell hurried on the track of the Grammarians. He was curious to know what they intended to do. He had his whistle ready for calling up the members of the Co. as soon as they should be needed.

He quickly came in sight of the three raiders again. He saw that Frank Monk was carrying something under his arm—he could not quite make out what. Once a chuckle floated back to him from the Grammar School chums.

"What the dickens is their little game?" murmured Tom Merry. "Hallo, they've stopped!"

Monk, Lane, and Carboy had stopped under the huge old elm that grew near the steps of the old school, and in summer shaded them with its foliage. Tom Merry, keeping the tree between him and the enemy, drew nearer.

Close as they were to the House now, the three Grammarians were quite safe from observation in the mist. But for Tom Merry being on the watch, they would have carried out their plan with perfect ease and impunity.

Monk opened the parcel he had been carrying under his arm, and Tom Merry, straining his eyes through the fog, saw, to his utter amazement, that it was a funeral wreath that came to light.

Tom was bewildered. What on earth the Grammar School juniors could have brought a funeral wreath to St. Jim's for, was past his comprehension.

"Got the card, Laney?"

"Rather! Here it is!"

"Pin it on the tree, and I'll fasten the wreath round it."

"Ha, ha, ha! That's soon done!"

Lane produced a mourning card from his pocket and pinned it upon the trunk of the elm facing the School House door. Then the funeral wreath was fastened upon the tree encircling the black-edged card.

"Read it out," said Frank Monk, with a catch in his voice. "Read out the mournful inscription, Lane, and let us weep."

"Certainly!" said Lane, deeply affected. "'In loving memory of Tom Merry & Co., licked out of existence by the Rylcombe Grammar School. Let them R.I.P.'"

Tom Merry could hardly help breaking into a chuckle.

It would have been an extremely telling wheeze—if it had worked. The mists of the winter night hid the wreath and the card on the tree, and they could not be discovered until the morning, when they would be on view to the whole of St. Jim's.

Cackling softly the three Grammarians stole away into the mists.

Tom Merry waited silently for them to go. He knew that they could not get out of the gates. He hurried up the School House steps, and ran into Arthur Augustus in the Hall.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I wish you—"

"Get a move on, Gussy!" said Tom Merry hurriedly. "Go and fetch Blake and the rest—quick! There's not a second to be lost!"

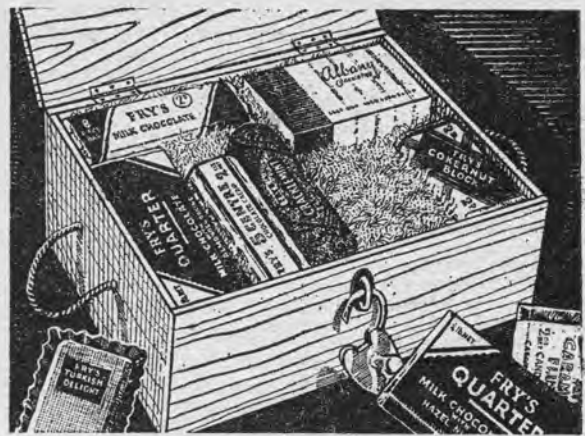
"Weally—what is the mattah?"

"The Grammar School cads are in our hands, that's all." That was enough for D'Arcy. He dashed up the stairs.

"Wight you are, Tom Mewwy!" he called back. "I'll wun like anythin'!"

"Call Manners and Lowther, too."

(Continued on next page.)



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"All wight!"

Tom Merry ran down the steps again. The shrill blast of the whistle rang through the foggy quadrangle, carrying the alarm to Figgins & Co.

Monk and his comrades heard it as they went down to the gates.

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Frank Monk, stopping.

"Only a whistle," said Lane. "Nothing to do with us, I suppose."

"I wonder if it means—"

"Don't see how it can matter to us. Anyway, let's get out. If there's anything found out, we're safer on the other side of the gate," said Carboy.

"Yes, that's true enough."

And the three Grammarians broke into a run.

They reached the gate, and Frank Monk tore at it. It remained fast, and he dragged and dragged again—in vain! Carboy uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"My hat! Have they looked up already?"

"No," exclaimed Monk. "I know it's not the usual time yet—the clock hasn't struck. The gate has got jammed somehow. My word! There's a lot of wire twisted round the bars."

"Wire! Somebody has fastened it up on purpose."

The three Grammarians stared at one another in the mist. "Trapped!"

The word broke from three mouths at once.

There could be little doubt about it now. They had been seen to come in, and the gates had been fastened behind them.

Frank Monk tore desperately at the wire. The joke played off on the St. Jim's fellows was a good one, but it would be a poor ending to it for the Grammarians to be caught on the enemy's ground and made an example of.

But Tom Merry had done his work well with the wire. With time Monk could have untwisted it, but he was not given time. Forms were already looming up in the gloom.

"They're at the gate!"

It was the voice of Tom Merry. Tom's whistle had brought Figgins & Co. out of the New House in a twinkling. In spite of their captain's refusal to take them into his confidence, the loyal Co. held themselves in readiness for his signal. The whistle had been immediately followed by the arrival of Figgins & Co.—Figgins, Kerr, and Marmaduke first, and then Fatty Wynn, who had delayed a moment or two to remove a pan of frying sausages from the fire.

As they joined Tom Merry at the School House door, Study No. 6 came out, followed fast by Manners and Lowther. The whole Co. met together round Tom Merry, full of eager inquiries.

"What is it?"

"Have they come?"

"What's the row?"

"What—"

"Look at that!" said Tom Merry, pointing to the card and the wreath on the trunk of the elm-tree facing the School House steps.

The Co. looked, and looked again, and grinned rather sheepishly.

"In loving memory of Tom Merry & Co., licked out of existence by the Rylcombe Grammar School," read out Figgins. "'Let them R.I.P.' My only pyjama hat! What astounding cheek!"

"Nice if all St. Jim's had woke up in the morning and found that there," said Blake, as Tom Merry tore the wreath down and jumped on it.

"Yaas, wathah! If I had not scouted, deah boys—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry, snatching the mourning-card from the tree. "They're not gone yet, and we're going to make them eat their words!"

"They're bound to have scuttled off!"

"I've fastened the gate; and they can't!"

"Hurrah! Come on!"

And the Co. swept down to the gates through the mist. Tom Merry's voice rang through the fog as he caught sight of the figures wildly tearing at the wire on the gate. It was half undone, and a few minutes more would have seen Monk & Co. at liberty. But Tom knew that he had them.

"Got 'em!" yelled Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Collar the cads!"

Carboy and Lane faced desperately round to stop the rush, while Frank Monk went on tearing wildly at the wire. It was twisted together in a baffling way, and his hands were cold. Carboy and Lane hit out furiously, but they could not stem that rush.

The Saints came on irresistibly, and fairly jammed up the Grammarians against the closed gates.

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Two or three pairs of hands seized each of the Grammar School trio, and Monk & Co. were helpless prisoners.

They struggled, but in vain, pinioned by such long odds.

"Chuck it, chaps!" said Monk at last. "They've got us! I say, whose idea was it wiring up the gate like this?"

"Mine," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Well, it was a neat dodge. We had no idea the gate was fastened. You must have known we were coming."

"Yaas, wathah! I have been scouting, you see, and I learned the plans of the enemy, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "You weally owe all this to me, Frank Monk. It is a weturn for your little joke about the persecuted maiden, you know, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, we can afford a reverse, after all the lickings we've given you," said Frank Monk coolly. "I suppose you've found the wreath?"

"Yaas, wathah! And it's broken to bits."

"Got the card, too. In loving memory '—ha, ha, ha!—' of Tom Merry & Co." Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Carboy and Lane.

"The rotters are taking it pretty coolly," Monty Lowther remarked.

"Why not?" said Lane. "You can't eat us! We've come into your quarters and japed you, and you can't get out of that, anyhow."

"Yes, you've come into our quarters," said Tom Merry, "but you're not out again yet, my pippins! I got that mourning-card here. I regard the words as a libel on Tom Merry & Co."

"Yaas, wathah! A weally pwovokin' pwevawication."

"When a chap libels another chap," said Tom Merry, "the proper thing for the chap to do is to make the other chap—"

"My hat! What a lot of chaps!"

"Silence, prisoner at the bar! When a chap libels another chap," repeated Tom Merry severely, "the libelled chap ought to make the libeller eat his words!"

"Possibly; but you couldn't do it!"

"My dear fellow, that's just what we're going to do! Here's your words written on this giddy mourning-card. If you eat the card, you'll eat the words, too. That's as clear as anything in Euclid."

"Do you think we are going to—" broke out Monk hotly.

"I don't think—I know!" said Tom Merry tersely.

"Bring them along to the woodshed, kids, and then gather the clan to see them do the trick! Come along!"

And the Grammarians were hustled along by their captors.

CHAPTER 11.

Prisoners of War!

THE glimmer of a bicycle lamp broke the darkness in the interior of the woodshed. In the light of the lamp Tom Merry & Co. had met. In the middle of the shed stood the three prisoners of war, looking decidedly sheepish and uneasy.

The door of the woodshed was open, and the juniors were pouring in in twos and threes. The word had gone forth that the Grammar School trio had been captured on the St. Jim's ground—within the entrenchments, as Blake put it—and the followers of Figgins and Tom Merry were pouring in from New House and School House to see the fun.

The woodshed was a pretty large place, but it was soon crammed. Round the prisoners Tom Merry & Co. had formed a circle to guard them. Outside the circle the rest of the juniors of St. Jim's were at liberty to pack themselves; and they did so in a thick crowd, which completely cut off any chance of the unfortunate Grammarians' escape.

Tom Merry held the mourning-card in his hand. He waited till the shed was pretty well packed, and then held it up to view.

"Gentlemen of the Shell and the Fourth Form at St. Jim's—"

"Excuse me," said D'Arcy politely. "The Fourth Form take precedence of the Shell."

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to shut up. I—"

Two or three pairs of hands seized D'Arcy and shook him, and Tom Merry went on:

"Gentlemen, you are called together to see three animals which have been captured within the borders of St. Jim's. These three reckless bounders have come within our walls for the purpose of erecting a memorial to Tom Merry & Co., under the pretence that they have licked us out of existence. They look like licking anybody out of existence just at present, don't they?"

There was a laugh.

"We've caught them in the act," went on Tom Merry. "And as we regard the card as a libel on the honourable firm of Tom Merry & Co.—"



Right at Carboy dashed Kerr, and he tackled him like a Rugby back collaring a charging three-quarter. The two rolled in the lane together, leaving Tom Merry free to escape, with the signed document of St. Jim's supremacy, from the pursuing Grammarians.

"What's on the card, then?" demanded Gore. "You haven't told us that yet, fathead!"

The hero of the Shell read out the inscription on the mourning-card. There was some grinning amongst the juniors; and the joke appealed to their sense of humour. But the laugh was decidedly against the Grammarians, as it turned out.

"Now," said Tom Merry, "as Monk, Lane, and Carboy have libelled Tom Merry & Co., they are going to eat their words."

"Hear, hear!"

"They do not like the idea, but it's got to be done, all the same. They will eat their words by the simple and effectual process of eating this mourning-card."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze!"

Tom Merry divided the card into three equal portions. The crowd of juniors watched him with breathless interest. Would the Grammarians submit to the ordeal? It would be a more crushing defeat than they had yet sustained if they actually did eat their words in the presence of the assembled juniors of St. Jim's.

Their looks were not very promising. Monk's brow was clouded, Lane was frowning darkly, and Carboy had set his teeth like a vice.

"Are you ready, my children?" asked Tom Merry.

"If you think we're going to eat that card," said Monk, "you're jolly well mistaken, Tom Merry! We're going to do nothing of the sort!"

"Nothing of the sort!" echoed Lane and Carboy.

Tom Merry smiled sweetly.

"Do you refuse?"

"Yes, we do, and be hanged to you!"

"Very well. Figgins, kindly bring out Taggles' tar pot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Right-ho!" grinned Figgins; and he dragged a fear-some-looking pot, half-full of sticky tar, into the circle.

There was a large brush in the tar.

Tom Merry took it by the handle, and stirred the sluggish mass.

"Do you see this tar, my dear infants?"

"Yes, confound you!" growled Monk apprehensively.

"Do you particularly desire to be anointed with it?"

"Hang you, no!"

"Well, you will be if you don't eat that card—and sharp!"

"You—you won't!"

"Oh, yes, we will!" Tom Merry dragged the brush out of the tar. "Now then, hand them their pieces, Digby. Monk first!"

Dig handed a scrap of the mourning-card to Frank Monk, who took it gingerly.

"Eat away!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"I won't! I— Ooooooch!"

The tar-brush was dabbed in Monk's face, cutting short his speech. He gave a horrified gasp at the taste of the tar. A yell of laughter went up as his face was seen smeared over with black.

Lane and Carboy shuddered.

"Are you ready for that little feed now?" inquired Tom Merry politely. "There's no hurry. We've got plenty of time—and plenty of tar."

"I—you—you beast! I'll—I'll wring your beastly neck!" mumbled Monk. "And I won't eat the card, so there! Oooooow!"

A second dab fairly smothered his face.

"Are you going to eat your giddy words? Yes or no?"

"Ye-es!" growled Monk.

"Eat away, then, and buck up about it!"

There was no help for it. The Grammarians were fairly in the toils. After the example they had set, they had no right to complain. Frank Monk, with immense reluctance, slowly put the fragment of the mourning-card

into his mouth and masticated it, to the intense delight of the St. Jim's juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The woodshed rang with laughter. Frank Monk having satisfactorily eaten the fragment of card, Lane and Carboy followed the example of their leader. The morsels were too small for the prisoners to care about the actual eating; it was the humiliation of eating their words in public at the bidding of Tom Merry that made them wild.

The last fragment having disappeared, Tom Merry replaced the tar-brush in the pot, with a cordial smile.

"Well, you've done it," he said, "and you might as well have done it at first as last, and save wasting Taggles' tar."

"You—you horrid, beastly bounder!"

"Ha, ha, ha! What price St. Jim's now? Who's top dog?"

The prisoners were escorted down to the gates through the mist by fifty or sixty laughing juniors.

HE WAS!



Explorer: "Hey, you lean on your dinner!"
Cannibal: "Dat's what Ah am doing!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to B. O'Sullivan, St. Joseph's College, Dumfries, Scotland.

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

"Rats!" said Monk. "You haven't got the surrender document, anyway. We've got that safe, and we show it to visitors as a proof of how we licked St. Jim's!"

"Oh, we'll have it before long!" said Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 12.

The Brothers Smith!

THE mists were dim and shadowy on the old school. The morning sun gleamed a yellow ball through the fog, and the lights were on in the class-rooms.

"Jolly nice weather this for a half-holiday!"

Blake grumbled, as the Fourth Form came pouring out after morning school. "Hope it will be a bit better on Saturday, or the game at the Grammar School will be a muck-up, after all."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, who had an unusual shade of thought upon his face. "I say, Blake, deah boy, is there a meetin' of the Co. this aftahnoon?"

"Of course there is, image! Do you think we shall allow a half-holiday to pass without improving the shining hour? We're to meet in the haunted priory, at the solemn hour of midnight—I mean, we're to buzz off to the woodshed after dinner."

"Vewy good! I have a pwoposition to make—"

After dinner the Co. gathered in the place of meeting. They were all there—eleven good men and true, as Blake put it.

"Gentlemen," said D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle, and taking a survey of the meeting, "before we pwceed to the business of electin' anothah beastly captain, I have a pwoposition to make. My ideah is this—that as a captain gets the ordah of the boot as soon as he is defeated, he ought to be allowed to wetaim the command as long as he is victowious. I think that's a weally rippin' ideah!"

"Hear, hear!" said several voices.

"Of course, when I become captain that would lead to my bein' permanent captain," said D'Arcy modestly. "But at pwesent Tom Mewwy is captain, so you cannot weward my pwoposition as bein' in the slightest degwee self-seekin'. I put it to you."

"Well, I approve of the idea, of course," said Tom Merry. "It can't be denied that once upon a time when this gang was Tom Merry & Co. it was successful, and that since Figgins' idea of a continual change of leaders was adopted we have been knocked sky-high by the Grammar School. I don't want to brag, but I really think I manage you silly asses pretty well, considering what asses you are!"

This tribute from Tom Merry was not very well received. But D'Arcy's opinion was discussed. The general opinion was that it was a good one.

"You see, it's a poor wule that won't work both ways," said D'Arcy. "I weally think you will find this a good ideah—like most of mine. Let the leadah continue leadah so long as he defeats the enemy—that's the ideah!"

"Well, it's not a bad wheeze," said Blake. "I admit

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,360.

that circumstances were against me when I was leading and Tom Merry has made the best of it, so far."

"And now let's get to business, as the important question of the leader is settled," said Tom Merry. "Have you noticed that it is a trifle foggy this afternoon?"

"I think I've noticed something of the sort, Tom Merry," said Blake. "What the dickens are you getting at?"

"You haven't forgotten that the Grammarians invaded our quarters last night?"

"Are we likely to forget it?" exclaimed Kerr. "Get on with the washing, and cut the cackle!"

"Yaas, wathah! Cut the beasty cackle, deah boy!"

"Patience, my infants. I have thought over the matter, and I have compiled a wheeze. We can't possibly be put in the shade by the Grammarians. If they come within our sacred borders, we must penetrate within theirs!"

"I suppose you're not going to suggest an attack on the Grammar School?" ejaculated Figgins. "I should think that's rather too tall an order even for Tom Merry & Co."

Tom Merry laughed.

"No; I'm not thinking of anything quite so heroic as that," he said. "I'm thinking of that document the Grammarians have boned from us. We can't get it back without going into the Grammar School. The fog this afternoon favours the enterprise, as well as the fact that most of the Grammarians will be out of gates."

Blake gave a whistle.

"But a gang could hardly think of going into their quarters without being spotted!" he exclaimed. "Tom Merry, I'm afraid that you're talking out of the back of your head!"

"You haven't heard it all yet," said the captain of the great Co. serenely. "Why shouldn't a couple of us—Kerr and myself—get into the Grammar School in disguise?"

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Kerr instantly.

The rest of the Co. remained silent in sheer astonishment at the boldness of the idea.

"Kerr is wonderful at making up," went on Tom Merry, "and I've had a lot of practice in private theatricals. The weather is so dull and foggy that nobody would get a really good look at us. What do you think of the wheeze?"

"Ripping!" said Kerr.

"Jolly good," said Figgins slowly, "if it can be worked. But if they found you in their quarters they'd simply skin you, after the way we wiped them up last night."

"They won't find us out; but if they do we'll stand," said Tom Merry. "I'm game, and I know Kerr is."

"Rather!" said the Scottish partner in the Co. promptly. "We'll stick it out if they collar us; but they won't."

"Ripping!"

"Great!"

"Marvellous!"

Such were the comments of Figgins, Fatty Wynn, and Marmaduke, as Kerr and Tom Merry completed the process of "making-up," and stood up for inspection.

The metamorphosis was really wonderful.

Kerr was a born actor, and his skill in impersonation had often afforded fun to his chums of the New House. He had played many parts in his time. Tom Merry was quick and clever, and Kerr willingly gave him the benefit of his experience. The result was really worthy of the commendation bestowed by Figgins & Co.

There had been some doubt in deciding what characters to adopt. Fatty Wynn had suggested capturing a couple of Grammarians and impersonating them. But the idea was given up as impracticable. It was Tom Merry who decided upon a plan. It was simply to enter the Grammar School with perfect boldness, and if questioned to assume the name of Smith, and state that they had come on the half-holiday to see their cousin of that name at the Grammar School.

"You see, I know there are five different Smiths in the Grammar School," said Tom Merry, "and if we happen to be questioned by one of them, he'll suppose that we're the giddy relations of one of the others. I don't see how the wheeze can be found out, so long as they don't recognise us."

"And they won't do that," said Kerr.

And Figgins & Co. agreed that they wouldn't. The disguise was made by only a few light and artistic touches, but it was perfect. The skins were darkened, the eyebrows and lashes blackened, colour added to the cheeks, and a dark tint to the hair. The two boys then had the appearance of lads of a somewhat foreign aspect, and no one would have dreamed of recognising Tom Merry's fair skin or the sandy complexion of Kerr. They dressed in tweeds, with ordinary caps. Figgins & Co. hardly knew them when the disguise was finished.

"Ripping!" repeated Figgins enthusiastically. "I never thought that even Kerr could do it so well. It's safe as houses!"

"Rather!" said Marmaduke. "If I came into the study now, I shouldn't know you."

Tom Merry and Kerr left the New House, and went down to the gates. A good many glances were cast at them, but nobody recognised them. They left the school, and walked down the lane towards Rylcombe.

A few minutes more brought them to the gates of the Grammar School.

Misty as the afternoon was, most of the Grammarians were out for the half-holiday, in the fields or on the river. There was some practice going on on the football field, but this was some distance from the school, and so it caused the coast to be clear. Tom Merry and Kerr marched boldly in at the open gates into the playground.

Tom Merry looked round him keenly.

He did not know the lie of the land very well within the walls of the Grammar School. The valuable document he had come to capture was framed and hung up in the Junior Common-room, he knew that. But where was the room?

There was a tap on his shoulder. He turned his head and saw Mr. Phipps, one of the masters of the Grammar School.

"Are you looking for anyone, my lad?" asked Mr. Phipps. "You are a stranger here, I think?"

"Yes, sir; thank you!" squeaked Tom. "I am William Arthur Smith, and this is my brother Alfred. We have come to see our cousin. Can you kindly direct me to the Common-room, sir?"

"Your cousin is a Lower Form boy, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir!"

"Then, that is your way. You expect to find him in the Common-room?"

"Well, we haven't been able to find him out of doors, sir."

"Well, that is your way—down that passage, and the last door, facing you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Thank you, sir!"

And the brothers Smith marched down the passage.

They entered the Common-room, and, as Tom Merry expected, found it empty. It was not likely to be occupied on a half-holiday which was fine enough for the boys to be out of doors.

Tom closed the door. Then he broke into an irresistible chuckle.

"My word!" he said. "What would Monk & Co. say if they knew we were here? But don't let us lose a second. Somebody may come in at any moment."

"It won't take us long to find the thing," said Kerr. "If they've framed it and hung it up in the room, as they said, it's easy enough."

The two juniors from St. Jim's made a hasty examination of the room.

It was a large, white-washed apartment, with a fire-grate at one end, and there were several pictures and maps hanging on the white walls.

It did not take the juniors long to find the one they were in search of.

A gilt frame was hanging directly over the mantelpiece, as the most prominent spot in the room, and in it, nicely mounted, was the document they sought.

The original confession of surrender, extorted from the Grammarians, had been written out on cardboard and signed by Frank Monk and his chums. The St. Jim's juniors had not agreed as to the possession of it, and in the struggle it had been torn in three pieces.

The three successive fragments had been won back again by the Grammarians, and had been carefully pasted up on the mount, and now made a whole document again. But over the writing on the card was an added inscription in red ink, daubed on with a brush in letters of a size that quite put the writing in the shade: "Won back from St. Jim's, and preserved as a trophy of the licking we gave them."

Tom Merry grinned.

"There'll be another inscription on that card when we hang it up in the School House," he remarked.

"In the New House, you mean," said Kerr pleasantly.

"Give us that chair, and I'll get it down! We may be interrupted at any moment."

Tom Merry stood on the chair and reached down the frame. To take the back out and remove the mount was the work of a very few moments. The valuable document was pasted there, but Tom Merry soon had it off with his penknife.

"Got it!" he exclaimed triumphantly.

He thrust it into his breast-pocket.

"Here, I say, hand it over!"

"I tell you we'll settle that at St. Jim's. Let's shove the frame up again. But wait a tick. We ought to leave them a message."

Kerr grinned. The idea was a good one.

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in thought for a moment.

There were pens, ink, and papers on a table at hand. Tom picked up a pen and traced a word in large letters on a sheet of paper, and Kerr grinned approval. The word was quickly blacked in, and then Tom blotted it, and the paper was flattened on the glass and the back of the frame put in place again.

Then Tom Merry hung it up in its former place over the mantelpiece.

From the gilt frame, instead of the trophy of victory, a single aggressive word stared in bold, black letters from white paper.

"RATS!"

"My hat!" murmured Kerr. "I would give a week's pocket-money to see Monk's face when he reads that!"

"Ha, ha, ha! So would I, but we can't stop! The thing now is to get safe away with the giddy document."

"Come on, then!"

They went to the door. Tom Merry's hand was on it to open it, when it was opened from outside, and Monk and Lane, coming in, nearly ran into the two juniors.

CHAPTER 13.

Triumphant!

FRANK MONK stared at the two strangers.

"Hullo, you're in the wrong kennel!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

Tom Merry had been startled for a moment by the sudden appearance of the enemy, but he was quickly himself again.

"If you please," he squeaked, "I'm William Arthur Smith, and this is my young brother, Alfred. We've come to see our cousin."

"Oh, you have, have you?" said Frank. "Then go and see your cousin, or go and eat coke, or anything you like!"

"Certainly. Thank you very much!"

"Wait a tick, though!" said Monk good-naturedly. "You don't know your way about the school, I suppose, do you?"

"Thank you, not very much," squeaked Tom Merry.

"Well, I'll help you find the chap, then. You can get that letter out of my desk, Lane, and bring it to me. Come along, you kids! Now, which Smith is your cousin? There are five kids of that name at this school."

Tom Merry's eyes met Kerr's with a glance of dismay.

"He may use any of his Christian names here," suggested Tom Merry, struck by an inspiration. "His full name is John Henry Frederick William Sydney Smith."

"Well, that's enough of that," said Frank Monk. "I dare say it's Sid Smith you want. There's a chap of that name here. But it's very queer."

And something like suspicion came into Frank Monk's eyes. It occurred to him that these innocent-looking youngsters might be having a little game with him, though not for a moment did he suspect the full facts.

"Can you tell us where Sid is?" asked Tom Merry, anxious only to get out of the school so that there would be a chance of making a cut for the gate.

"Yes; he's playing fives now, I believe. Come along!"

They followed Frank Monk down the passage. Lane was in the Common-room, looking in Monk's desk for a letter, which was what had brought the two juniors into the room at that unlucky moment.

Tom Merry and Kerr drew a deep breath of relief as they came out into the open air again. They were nearer to freedom now, at any rate.

"This way!" said Frank, turning off to the right.

"Hook it!" whispered Tom.

The Saints broke into a run. Frank Monk turned round in amazement.

"This is the way to the fives courts!" he bawled. "Where are you going?"

"It's all right," squeaked Tom, turning his head, "I can see my cousin now."

"Oh, all right! Hallo, Lane! What's the matter?"

Lane came out of the House with his mouth wide open and his eyes staring. He looked as if he had seen a ghost. He held a picture-frame in his hands. Tom Merry saw him, and knew that all was up.

(Continued on the next page.)



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"Run for your life!" he gasped.

The two juniors out across the playground to the gate with a speed they had seldom shown even on the football field or on the cinder-path.

"What's the matter, Lane?"

"Look!" gasped Lane. "I've brought it for you to see."

He held up the frame which had contained the valued trophy of victory.

Frank Monk gave a jump.

"Rats!"

That word, in bold, black, aggressive letters, stared him in the face.

"What—what does it mean?" he stammered.

"Can't you see? It was hanging up in its usual place, and I noticed it as I glanced up from your desk. The document's been taken, and they've left this in its place!"

"Who—who—what—what—"

"The St. Jim's kids have been here!"

Light flashed upon the bewildered brain of Frank Monk. "I know!" he fairly yelled. "Those Smith kids! I see it all now! They've just done it. After them!"

Out of the gate came Monk and Lane at full pelt. After them came half a dozen Grammar School juniors.

Tom Merry glanced back over his shoulder.

"They're gaining!" He gasped out the words.

Kerr's eyes swept anxiously along the road. He expected to see the Co. somewhere on the road; but they had been instructed not to come too near the Grammar School for fear of exciting suspicion in the Grammarian minds that something was "on." The two comrades would have been very glad to see them now.

"Still gaining!" gasped Tom Merry. "Run for your giddy life!"

Kerr glanced back. Monk, Lane, and two others were certainly gaining; they were overhauling the St. Jim's juniors foot by foot.

Kerr's eyes gleamed.

"Keep it up!" he muttered.

The chase swept on. One of the Grammarians dropped behind, but Monk, Lane, and Gordon Gay were coming on like racers.

Tom Merry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Carboy, by all that's rotten!"

Carboy it was, coming up the lane in all unconsciousness of what was going on, coming directly towards the fugitives, directly in their path.

Monk sighted his chum almost at the same moment. He gave a yell.

"Carboy, look out! Stop 'em!"

Carboy gave a start, and looked out. He took in the situation at a glance.

Tom Merry set his teeth hard.

"Knock him over, Kerr! One chap can't stop two of us!"

"No!" gasped Kerr. "You've got the paper! You get clear. I'll collar this chap, and hold on to him. The trophy of victory must be saved!"

"Kerr, you're a trump! I'll do it!"

They dashed on. Right at Carboy went the Scottish partner in the Co., and he tackled him like a Rugby back collaring a charging three-quarter. The two rolled in the lane together, and Tom Merry passed them and ran on like the wind. A few seconds later the Grammarians were tumbling over the two struggling forms.

"Has he got the document?" gasped Monk, picking himself up. "They've been in the school and collared it! Has he got it?"

Kerr was fighting like a demon, to waste time and delay the pursuit of Tom Merry. Anything to save the trophy! But Monk was as keen as Kerr, and he guessed the truth.

"Search him, while we get the other bounder!"

And, leaving Kerr wriggling in the hands of a couple of Grammarians, Frank Monk, Lane, and Carboy darted off on the track of Tom Merry.

Tom Merry had gained ground, and he was running hard. St. Jim's was in sight, and at any moment the Co. might appear. Monk knew it, too, and he put on a desperate spurt. His outstretched hand touched the shoulder of Tom Merry; but the touch acted as a spur to the hero of the Shell. He shook it off, and ran harder.

"It's Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry gave a gasp of delight.

"Rescue!" he shouted. "Rescue, St. Jim's!"

Arthur Augustus was standing in the middle of the road, waving his hand wildly to the Co., who were coming on. The swell of St. Jim's had been strolling on ahead. The Co. heard and understood, and came on with a run.

None too soon. Frank Monk had clutched at Tom Merry again, and this time his grip closed on the junior's shoulder and fastened there.

Tom was almost too spent for a struggle. Monk, Lane, and Carboy were scrambling over him, eager to regain the document. But D'Arcy had reached the spot now, running

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hard, his eyeglass trailing behind him at the end of its cord. He hurled himself upon the Grammarians without an instant's hesitation.

"Rescue!" bawled Tom Merry.

"Here we are!" said Figgins, the first to reach them.

The rest of the Co. were only a moment behind. They simply piled themselves on Monk, Lane, and Carboy. The three Grammarians were yanked off Tom Merry in no time, and rolled in the road. Monty Lowther and Manners helped Tom to his feet.

"Good old Tommy! Got it?"

"Yes. Go and help Kerr!"

Figgins & Co. were already racing up the lane.

Frank Monk gave a gasp.

"Merry! Kerr! My only hat! How we've been done!"

Done, the Grammarians certainly had been—completely done. The trophy of victory was safely in Tom Merry's possession, and he was safe in the midst of the Co.

Monk, Lane, and Carboy wriggled out of the grip of the juniors, and fled through the hedge, cutting across country to escape. The Saints were content to let them go without pursuit. They turned back towards St. Jim's. Tom Merry drew the trophy from his breast pocket, and they feasted their eyes upon it.

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry and Kerr, rumped and dusty, but triumphant, were hoisted upon the shoulders of the Co., and borne in state through the gates of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 14.

The Big Match!

SIR ROBERT DIGBY stepped from the station hack and shook hands with his hopeful son on the steps of the School House, and then with the rest of Tom Merry & Co.

It was Saturday midday—the day of the football match with the Grammar School.

Morning lessons were over, and glad enough had the juniors of St. Jim's been to be dismissed that morning. They were thinking of the afternoon, and the visit to the Grammar School.

Besides the eleven—of which Tom Merry was the captain—nearly every junior of St. Jim's had made up his mind to go, in order to see the match, and some of them started walking over immediately after dinner.

It was "pax" between the two schools for the day, and the Saints were given a cordial welcome on the Grammar School ground.

"A fine afternoon for your match!" said Sir Robert, as he shook hands with Tom Merry. "I hope I shall see you beat the enemy."

"We're going to try, sir!" said the hero of the Shell cheerfully.

The baronet smiled, and passed in. Dr. Holmes and some of the masters were going over to see the match, and Sir Robert was going in the Head's car.

Tom Merry & Co. were in high spirits.

The afternoon was fine and clear, with a hint of spring in the air, and the late mists had quite cleared away. The sky was of steely blue, the weather quite dry. Never had Tom Merry's eleven been in better form for a match.

The motor-bus rolled up to the Grammar School ground. A couple of dressing-tents stood there, and Frank Monk and his friends came to welcome the Saints and show them to their quarters.

Tom Merry shook hands cordially with Frank Monk.

"You did us brown that time, Merry," grinned the Grammar School leader. "It was a ripping wheeze, and we didn't catch on till too late. But we'll give you the kybosh this time to make up for it, my pippins!"

"We'll take all the kyboshing you can give us," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

A cheer greeted the appearance of the teams in the field. The ropes round the football ground were lined with eager faces. Grammarians and Saints seemed to be there in almost equal forces. The two captains tossed, and Frank Monk won the choice of goals, and St. Jim's were given the kick-off against a stiff breeze.

The ball rolled from the foot of Tom Merry. The play was hard and fast from the start.

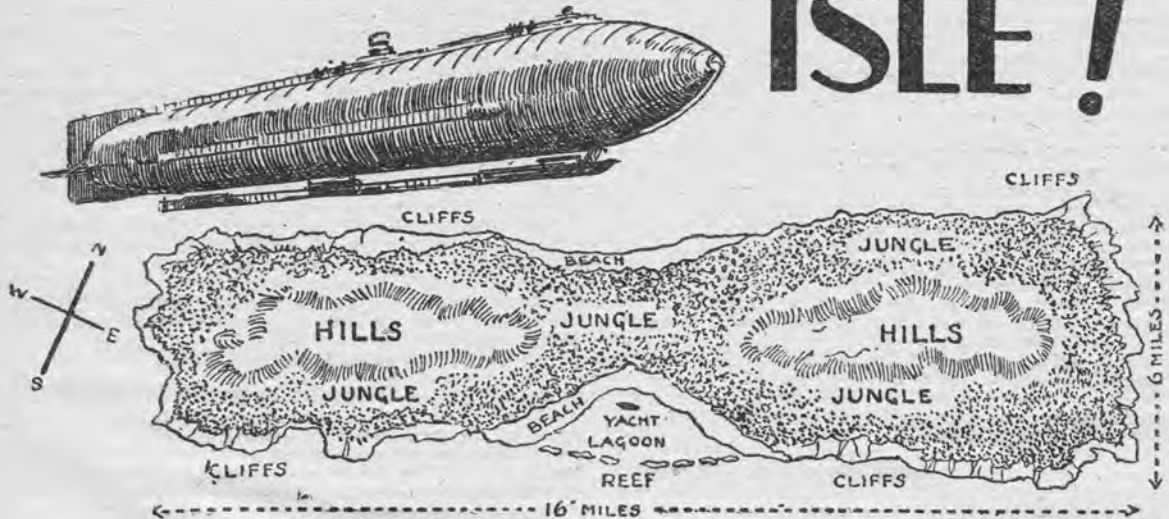
Presently the Saints seemed to get more into their stride, and a fine run up the field by Gussy resulted in a goal from the foot of Blake, the first scored in the match. But just before half-time the Grammarians responded with a goal, shot by Frank Monk, and the first-half closed with the score equal.

After the brief interval, the sides renewed the contest with undiminished energy. The spectators continually cheered fine work, but on each side the defence was sound,

(Continued on page 28.)

ANOTHER THRILL-PACKED INSTALMENT OF OUR POPULAR SERIAL—

TREASURE ISLE!



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

The *Sky Wanderer*, the airship school of the St. Frank's chums, lands on Tao-Tao Island, in the Pacific, in response to a message for help from Mr. Beverton, an explorer treasure-seeking on the island. It transpires that Doc Haynes and most of the crew of the explorer's yacht have mutilated to seek the treasure. To ensure his own safety from the airship school, Haynes, who is friendly with the cannibals, captures twelve of the St. Frank's boys. But Handforth and his two chums escape and meet Nelson Lee and three companions. Later, Lee discovers clues which he thinks lead to the hidden treasure. He charges a rock which bars their path—and disappears into blackness as it falls flat!

The Hole of Horror!

NELSON LEE'S first emotion, as he went charging into blackness and space, was unbounded surprise. He had never expected that solid-looking rock to give way so easily. He was through the opening almost before he knew it, and his hands, clutching at the darkness, met nothing. His feet were slithering on smooth rock. From somewhere behind and above him he was aware of shouts of consternation.

He knew that he was descending a long slope of rock, the floor of which was as smooth as glass. His momentum increased. Even in these alarming circumstances, however, the great detective kept his head; he was able to think clearly.

The slope was not so steep as he had at first thought; it was like a straight chute, another tunnel of some kind, descending through blackness to the level of Death Valley itself.

That mad, swift slide into mystery seemed to last interminably; yet, as a matter of fact, it was over within a few seconds.

Suddenly Lee received a jarring bump, and he had the impression that the rock floor of the shaft was now level. This was all to the good, for within a few yards he would come to a halt. But his satisfaction was short-lived, for he abruptly went over the edge of the rock, and dropped into space. He dropped sheer, feet foremost.

Now, indeed, he lost hope. At any second he expected to crash on to the cruel rocks at the bottom of this abyss. Even if he escaped death, bones would be broken—
Splash!

The dreadful ordeal ended as abruptly and as unexpectedly as it had begun. Nelson Lee struck something which was apparently solid—which jarred every bone and fibre in his body. But it was water! Mercifully, he fell into it feet first, and plunged right down.

He had the extraordinary impression that the water was like treacle, sticky, glutinous.

He managed to strike out, and then he knew that his

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

imagination was not running riot. The water, except for a few inches on the surface, was like treacle—in fact, thick, oozing mud—mud which gave forth a disgusting stench.

Lee was on the surface now, and he managed to open his eyes. Strangely enough, he was not in complete darkness; there was a strange, greenish glow in this horror-hole, and along one side, facing him, he saw, beyond a narrow rock exit, masses of trailing, tropical creepers. In that second he knew that this was a mud-hole in the side of a river bank.

The muddy water was churning and bubbling and heaving; and for the first time Lee became aware of the fact that he was not alone in the mud-hole. Monstrous objects were shooting towards the exit, even jamming there, so frantic were they in their haste to get out into the open.

"Great heavens!" muttered Lee, aghast. "Crocodiles!" He was galvanised into action; strength returned like lightning to his limbs, for any second he expected one of those dreadful creatures to come at him open-mouthed, with its fangs ready to close over him.

But the very abruptness of his descent into the crocodile nest—for such it undoubtedly was—had frightened the rightful owners into panic-stricken flight.

In spite of the mud, he managed to get out his electric torch, and the light came on when he pressed the switch. It was dim, owing to the film of mud on the bulb, but it showed him the vile shapes of the reptiles as they went wallowing out under the earthy exit. The trailing creepers were lashed this way and that, and the daylight in the hole increased as the creepers were disturbed. Then came silence.

By now Lee had managed to clean the torch bulb, and the beam of light was vivid. It played upon the rocky sides of the cavity, upon the muddy water, and upon shallow, earthy cavities in the sides, at the water's level—cavities in which the crocodiles had been taking their rest.

Lee was well aware of the habits of these dangerous reptiles; he knew that they spent a good deal of their time in such noisome nests as this, hidden beneath the river bank.

It was vitally necessary for him to get out quickly, for it was certain that the crocodiles would soon return. They had been frightened by the sudden disturbance, and their instinct had caused them to surge out into the open. But if they returned—Lee's position would be hopeless.

But what was the alternative? If Lee escaped into the river he would not only have the crocodiles to contend

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with, but probably the Tao-Tao Islanders, too. He did not doubt that the river flowed close to the jungle extremity of Death Valley. He had, in fact, slithered down this rocky slope right through the high cliff.

He flashed his torchlight upwards, and was glad to find that the sides of the hole, just above the water level, were rocky and craggy. Reaching up, he grasped the rocks and pulled himself clear. Climbing steadily, he made good progress for about ten feet, and here was enabled to rest on a narrow rock ledge. At least he was safe from the reptiles.

But it was impossible for him to climb higher, for his light showed smooth, sheer rocks above, and, at the top, a roof of rock. From his position he could see no sign of the "chute" down which he had slithered.

"In Heaven's name where are you, Lee?" panted Lord Dorrimore, with frantic alarm.

He and his companions stood in the rock canyon, and in front of them there was the black cavity. Dust was rising out of it, for the crashing rock had only just fallen. Dorrie was about to plunge into the opening, but Umlosi laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"Wau! Wouldst thou venture into this peril with open eyes, N'Kose?" asked the black giant. "Umtagati was unable to prevent himself. But we know of the danger, and it would be madness."

"Stand aside, Umlosi!" broke in Dorrie harshly. "Madness or not, I'm goin' in! Lee—Lee!"

He flashed the torchlight, wrenched himself free from Umlosi's grasp, and plunged in. But almost at the first stride his feet went from under him, and he fell down and was slithering.

In the nick of time he thrust out a hand, and grasped at a rocky projection, pulling himself short. Umlosi was right behind, and, reaching out a black hand, he grasped Dorrie and pulled him back.

"Did I not warn you, N'Kose?" he rumbled.

"Gad! You were right!" panted Dorrie. "Sorry, old son! I was a fool to dash in like that! By the Lord Harry! Look here! It's a slopin' tunnel which leads down, apparently, for ever! An' Lee must have gone shootin' into the depths! Great Scott! He must be done for!"

The light beam showed the smooth, rocky floor of the slope. It was, indeed, like a wide tunnel—merely another natural fissure of the rocky mountain.

"What's happened? Where's Mr Lee?" panted Handforth, when the pair emerged into the daylight.

Mr. Beverton and Church and McClure were full of questions, too.

"It's impossible to say," said Dorrie dully. "Just inside this opening there's a long, rocky slope. Mr. Lee must have shot down at terrific speed. Has anybody got a rope? Of course not! I was a fool to ask! What are we goin' to do?"

"My father, thou wilt stay here," said Umlosi. "Let me descend into this strange place. My bare feet will not slip upon the rock. Wait here. N'Kose—wait until I return."

Without another word, he entered the rocky opening. He had taken Dorrie's torch, and had placed the end of it between his strong teeth. Thus he had a good light, and his hands were free.

It was a tricky descent, but, aided by the light, Umlosi did not once make a slip. Holding on to every likely projection, he made rapid progress.

The slope was not so sheer, after all. In places it changed, and Umlosi was able to descend without checking himself by his hand-hold. In other places he had to exercise great caution.

Down he went, lower and lower, until at last he found the rock floor almost level. Now he ran forward, the torch held in one hand. But with a sudden intake of breath he pulled up short—for he saw that the tunnel ended. There was nothing in front of him but a gap, with a rock wall dimly showing on the farther side.

"Umtagati!" he rumbled in anguish.

He flung himself to the edge, face downwards, fully expecting to see Nelson Lee's mangled remains at the bottom of this treacherous rock pit.

"Good man, Umlosi!" came the detective's calm voice. "Umtagati! 'Tis a miracle!" roared the giant Kutana chief. "Wau! Is it not the truth that thou art the greatest of all wizards?"

"I didn't need to be much of a wizard here, Umlosi," came Nelson Lee's voice. "I must have been born lucky, I think."

His own torchlight beam showed Umlosi's face move, and Umlosi's torchlight revealed Lee, clinging precariously to the rock ledge, just above the muddy pool. Umlosi saw, too, a number of monstrous things which swirled sluggishly. He recognised them at once as crocodiles, but he saw, to his relief, that they were well below Nelson Lee's level.

"Art thou without broken bones, Umtagati?" "Yes, thank goodness!" replied Lee. "But there are so many bruises on my body that I'm just one big ache. However, I'm not grumbling."

"Art thou in danger from the enemy?" asked Umlosi.

"The only enemy here is what you see—the crocodiles, who own this infernal, stenching water-hole," replied Lee. "That makes it quite safe from any humans. Even the islanders would never dare to enter this mud pit, for they know it's a crocodiles' nest. Hold out one of your arms, Umlosi and keep it out straight!"

"Even as thou sayest, Umtagati," said Umlosi, obeying without question.

Nelson Lee had started off on this adventure well prepared for emergencies, and now, while he had been speaking, he had uncoiled a length of thin, strong rope from about his waist. He had risen to his feet, too, on the ledge. Coiling the rope cunningly, cowboy fashion, he sent it spinning upwards. Umlosi's free hand was holding the torch, flashing the light full upon his projecting arm.

With unerring skill Lee accomplished that difficult feat. The looped end of the rope coiled over Umlosi's wrist, and in a flash the black giant had secured a grip.

"Wau! 'Tis well!" he grunted happily. "When I give the word, haul me up," said Lee from below. "Yes, the rope's quite strong!"

The feat, for Umlosi, was easy. His strength was terrific. At a word from Lee he braced himself on the rocky floor, and then he pulled the rope up, hand over hand. One would have had difficulty in believing that a full-sized man was at the end. In a very few moments Lee was at the top. He clutched at the rocky ledge, and then hauled himself to safety. He was an extraordinary sight, for he was smothered with evil-smelling mud from head to foot. His features were scarcely recognisable, his hair was matted and dripping with the foul mire.

"Good man, Umlosi!" he said "I think we can make the rest of the ascent all right."

"Hey!" came a vague, distant voice from the mysterious darkness of the shaft far above. "Umlosi! Any luck?"

"Cheer up, Dorrie!" shouted Lee. "I'll be with you in a minute!"

"Hurrah!" Handforth & Co.'s cheer echoed loud in the rocky tunnel.

It was Umlosi who did most of the climbing—he performed Herculean feats in getting up that strange, smooth-surfaced "chute." For he not only hauled himself up, but he virtually dragged Nelson Lee. The detective was grateful for this help. Normally, he would have succeeded unaided, but in his present muddy, slimy condition, with his body aching, he was severely handicapped. Umlosi's help was just what he needed.

At last they reached the summit, and willing hands dragged them out into the suffocating heat of the canyon, where the daylight momentarily dazzled them.

"Glory be!" ejaculated Dorrie. "We thought you were dead, old man! Puff! Pah! There's a mighty overpowerin' niff about you! What's all this mud?"

"Evil as it smells—it saved my life," replied Nelson Lee. "But how can there be mud down there, sir?" asked Handforth eagerly. "What have you discovered? Where's the treasure?"

"The treasure?" repeated Lee dryly. "I fancy we are as far from that as ever, my lad. As a matter of fact, I fell into a crocodile hole—right in amongst the inmates, in fact!"

Briefly he related his adventures, and the others listened spellbound. They all knew that Lee had had a miraculous escape.

In spite of his muddy condition, he insisted upon examining the rock wall just inside the opening. There were no further arrows to be seen.

"I fancy the old buccaners played a grim joke here," he said. "Yet there might be some clue—when we have time to look for it. At present, I'm going straight back

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At a word from Nelson Lee, Umfosi braced himself on the rocky floor, then pulled the rope up, dragging Lee from the crocodiles' nesting hole. In a few moments Lee clutched at the ledge and hauled himself to safety.

into the great cavern—where there is clean seawater. I badly need a wash."

Behind his mask of rapidly drying mud his eyes were gleaming with an eager light. For this adventure had put certain ideas into the great detective's head.

"Aren't we going to stay here, sir—and search?" asked Handforth in some dismay. "It's early yet—"

"We've done enough searching for the present, young 'un," interrupted Lee. "We are all going back to the cavern—for food and rest."

"An' then?" asked Dorrie expectantly.

"Well, when darkness comes we might have a shot at rescuing the nine schoolboys who are in Haynes' hands," replied Lee. "Yes, I fancy there'll be some work for us to do to-night!"

Haynes Pays a Call!

"**H**OW do I look, Bill?" asked Doc Haynes amiably. He was standing in the central room of the bungalow, and his big frame was clothed in a white drill suit of immaculate cleanliness. His wide-brimmed hat was flat on the back of his head, and a long cigar jutted from the corner of his mouth.

"Boss, you look O.K.," declared Bill Button, in an admiring voice.

"Must be smart when I'm goin' visitin', Bill," said Mr. Haynes, with a grin. "I'm going to make certain about them three missing boys. K'biin was tellin' me the truth this morning. He ain't got the young rips, and it stands to reason they must be back at that blamed airship. But I'm going to make sure."

He strode out into the dazzling sunshine to where, on the beach, half in and half out of the water, was a smart-looking motor-boat. Doc took his place in the cockpit, and he took with him Bill Button and another man named Fred Benson—known amongst his cronies as Big Ben not because he was particularly big but because his face was round and moon-like, and not entirely unlike a clock dial.

"Takin' chances, aren't we, Doc?" asked this man, in some concern. "Only three of us, I mean. There's a mighty big crowd aboard that airship, and they're armed like they was the Navy!"

"Leave it to me, matey," retorted Haynes. "I know what I'm doing."

They all wore belts, and each belt carried two guns. But Doc Haynes was not aiming to give any display of "artillery" on this trip. As he often declared, he was a

man of peace, and liked to do things in a peaceful way. But when he had occasion to show his teeth, he was a dangerous man.

The boat, its engine chugging evenly, sped across the marvellous blue of the lagoon, leaving a trail of creamy foam.

It was afternoon now, and the heat was stifling. Overhead, the sky was cloudless, and along the beach the hot, still air was throbbing with the hum of insect life.

"Good to get out on the water, boss," remarked Billy Button, as the boat skirted past the anchored yacht. "There's a tidy breeze out here."

Soon, at the break in the reef, they met the long Pacific rollers. Up rose the bows, the great foaming waves swirling all about the motor-boat; then she dipped, speeding down a greenish, transparent slope, only to rise high again for the next wave. But at last she was well beyond the bar, on the open sea, bobbing and dipping to the steady swell.

Once clear of the reef, Doc Haynes went on the starboard tack, heading westward—for this was the shortest route round the island to the slip of beach on the northern coast.

Haynes was silent and thoughtful. The airship's presence on the island worried him, but he did not believe in letting his worries get him down. He had taken such measures as would ensure the airship party's non-interference with his plans, and he was satisfied that he had done the right thing. With the schoolboys in his power, no amount of persuasion on Beverton's part would induce the airship people to help him.

"Everything's set, boys," said Doc, breaking the silence. "We don't want no trouble with these people. We've got to make 'em understand that we're top dogs—"

"Hold hard, boss," interrupted Bill Button, shading his eyes with a horny hand. "What's that there thing floating about yonder?"

He pointed to a vague object, just awash, which was visible nearer to the shore.

"Mebbe it's some driftwood," said Doc. "Best not go too close in here, Bill. There's that blamed whirlpool to steer clear of."

"Shucks, boss, we're a mile from the whirlpool!" said Bill.

Haynes changed the boat's course, and in a very short time he and his companions made a startling discovery. For the thing which was floating in the blue sea was made of rubber, and it appeared to be inflated, and the section in view was curiously like the bottom of a boat.

"Blamed me if it ain't a boat!" ejaculated Doc, when they were alongside. "Look, boys! A rubber boat—keel up'ards! Looks like somebody has been out o' luck!"

"First time I ever saw sich a boat!" remarked Big Ben. "This here boat, with the air out of it, can be folded up like a concertina," said Haynes, pursing his lips. "What does that mean? It means that it's a boat belonging to the airship. Goshdarn my hide! Boys, you can guess what happened, can't you?"

"Can't rightly say that I can guess much," confessed Bill Button, scratching his head.

"Remember that sudden storm last night?" went on Doc. "The airship crowd must have launched the boat—thinkin' to get round to our side of the island. Poor mutts! They didn't know nothing of the whirlpool, and they was drawn in. But it shows they ain't quite so ready to obey my orders as I thought," he added grimly. "Just as well I'm payin' this call—so's I can make things clear."

That upturned boat was, indeed, tragically significant. Knowing of the deadly whirlpool, Doc Haynes came to only one conclusion. He could not know, however, that the apparently doomed men who had been sucked into the maelstrom were still very much alive. The motor-boat continued its course, giving the western headland a very wide berth. It rounded the frowning cliffs, and now came within sight of the northern beach—where the Sky Wanderer, in all her silver majesty, was at her moorings. She seemed to fill the entire beach, dwarfing the jungle just behind her. No figures were visible on the white sands, but Doc, through binoculars, clearly saw men, or boys, on the airship's promenade deck.

The boat had been seen from the ship, and members of the crew, and many schoolboys, were crowding to the rail, eager for news.

For since Nelson Lee and his companions had departed during that black rainstorm, nothing further had been seen

or heard of them. The advent of a motor-boat looked somewhat ugly, for it was soon clear that the boat contained Doc Haynes and two of his buccaneering companions.

It came riding over the long, rolling breakers. There was no lagoon here, and the waves were sweeping right up the silvery sands, crashing amid cascades of foam.

But, skilfully handled, the boat rode buoyantly; and now it was seen, by all aboard the airship, that a white flag had been hoisted.

"So this confounded pirate has had the impudence to come to us for the second time," said Sir Hobart Manners, with deep feeling. "In Heaven's name, Truscott, what can this mean?"

Squadron Leader Truscott, the second-in-command, shook his head.

"I don't think it can mean anything good, sir," he replied. "Shall we go down and meet the boat on the beach?"

"Yes, we'd better, and we'll take rifles with us," said Sir Hobart. "This rascal may be planning treachery."

The party which went down the airship's ladder was headed by Sir Hobart, and it included Truscott, Captain Bridges of the steam yacht, several members of the crew, and a number of St. Frank's Sixth Formers. The juniors, eager as they were to leave the airship, were kept on board by Old Wilkey and Barry Stokes.

The boat had just beached herself, and Haynes and his two companions were standing on the sands.

"Hold hard!" sang out Haynes. "If you gents will throw them rifles down, we'll leave our pistols behind. This ain't an unfriendly visit."

"You'll come on as you are," called Sir Hobart. "We won't fire on you unless you fire on us; but I warn you that we're ready for any treachery."

Haynes shrugged, and came forward under the blazing sun.

"You've got queer ideas, mister, ain't you?" he asked. "There's three of us here, and there's mighty near a score of you. A fat chance we should stand if we tried any tricks. Besides which, I ain't takin' kindly to your attitude. The white flag is the white flag, and I ain't the man to disrespect it."

"You're doing a good deal of talking, Haynes, as usual!" exclaimed Captain Bridges angrily. "By Heaven, you shall pay for this sooner or later! What have you done with Mr. Beverton?"

Doc Haynes faced the grim party with a look of concern on his gnarled face.

"Meanin' that rubber boat?" he asked. "How many was in it?"

"Four," said Sir Hobart Manners. "What do you know of the boat?"

"Precious little, mister," replied Haynes. "There was four in it, you say? H'm! Too bad!"

"Mr. Lee was in that boat—Mr. Nelson Lee—and Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Beverton, and an African named Umlosi."

"Pity they ever started," said Haynes, with a regret which seemed genuine. "They must be dead now, all four of 'em."

"Dead!" went up a general shout.

"Ay, not a doubt of it," said Haynes.

"Why, you impudent scoundrel!"

"Seem' as I came here friendly, there's no call for them personal trimmings," interrupted Doc. "I knew nothing about that rubber boat until I see it, about half an hour ago, floatin' bottom upwards near the headland, yonder. There's a whirlpool round there. I take it that the four gents started out in the dark, last night. Knowin' nothin' of the whirlpool, they was drawn in. It's mighty unfortunate."

Sir Hobart and the others were horrified. There was a ring of truth in Doc Haynes' simple statement. So Nelson Lee and his companions, setting out so enthusiastically, had met with disaster before they had even rounded the coastline. It was a terrible shock.

"I'm real sorry about this," said Haynes. "I didn't want none of your people to get hurt—much less killed. But you can't blame me. What I came here about was to ask you if three boys have turned up."

"None of the boys have turned up," said Fenton of the Sixth.

"Ah, that's a pity," replied Haynes. "The blacks took twelve. I've got nine of 'em safe enough, and they won't come to no harm. But three managed to get away when there was a bit of confusion."

"Good luck to them!" said Fenton promptly.

"Bad luck to 'em, you mean," growled Haynes, frowning. "Since they ain't here, and since the blacks can't find 'em, I reckon they must have tried to cross one of the rivers, and got ate up by crocs. Likely enough, too. Poor young blighters!"

"Do you know who they were?" asked Sir Hobart grimly. "One of 'em was named Hand-something, I believe."



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"Handforth and his two chums, sir," said Morrow. "Just like Handforth to make a break for freedom—and Church and McClure would stick to him, too. You devil! This is your fault!" he added, in an outburst of fury, turning to Haynes. "If it hadn't been for you, those boys would have been safe."

"If they had done as I told them they would have been safe, too," retorted Haynes. "It isn't my fault if they ran off, and get eaten by crocodiles? You're havin' bad luck, gents. Seven of you have been killed."

"Is this really true, Haynes?" asked Captain Bridge in horror. "Do you think that Lord Dorrmore and his companions are actually dead?"

"Cap'n, I'm sorry," replied Haynes earnestly. "If I could give you hope, I would—but there ain't no hope. Once they got into that whirlpool they didn't stand a chance. As for them nine boys with me, they're O.K., and they'll be cared for as long as there's no monkey business on this side of the island. I'll be wishin' you a good-afternoon, gents. I've said what I come to say, and I can see I ain't among friends."

With a sweep of his hat he bowed, and then went back to the boat, accompanied by Bill Button and Big Ben. The three rascals left the airship party well nigh dumb with sorrow and helplessness.

Into the Enemy's Camp!

BUT the seven "dead" members of the party were aiming to spring a surprise that night!

After a good meal of fish, the men and the boys in the cavern rested. Lee had bathed, and was cleansed of all the mud. He had attended to several grazes, and his left side was badly bruised. But he made light of these painful injuries.

Later in the day he set his companions to work. There was a great deal of dried seaweed on the rocky floor of the cavern—mixed with the flotsam and jetsam which the whirlpool had drawn in. Much of this seaweed was wet, being fresh—but there was a good deal very dry; and the long growths were as tough as leather.

Lee superintended the making of a great rope—a rope some hundreds of yards in length, and as thick round as a man's arm. It was a job which occupied quite a number of hours; but when it was done, the rope was a mighty hefty thing—as strong as a ship's cable, in spite of its rough and scraggy appearance.

Dorrie was jubilant, and Handforth & Co. were openly excited. For they knew that the making of this rope could mean only one thing. Nelson Lee was intending to go into action! Handforth said as much after the evening meal—fish again—had been disposed of.

"Yes, boys, it means action," said Lee quietly. "I ought, really, to leave you behind, but don't look so startled. I'm going to do no such thing. We are all in this adventure together, and we'll stick together."

"Crumbs!" gasped Handforth. "You gave me a fright at first, sir!"

"Chance has shown us a way into Haynes' camp," continued Lee, addressing them all. "Haynes is unsuspecting. There is a chance that we may rescue Nipper and the other boys to-night, and we are going to take that chance."

"It sounds all right," murmured Lord Dorrmore.

"But it won't be pleasant," said Lee. "Our only way, at least, the only way we know of, to get into the jungle is by means of the crocodile hole. Any one of you who doesn't like mud had better not come."

"Ye gods and little fishes! I'd forgotten that," said Dorrie, startled. "Must we really go through that messy mud?"

"We ought to be thankful it's there," said Lee. "For it is an exit from the catacomb-like place which Haynes and the blacks know nothing of. And if we have to make a sudden bolt once we are in the enemy's camp we can dodge back into that crocodile hole and we shall be lost. Even the Tao-Tao blacks will not dare to follow; they will not dream that we have gone into such a place."

"I hope you're not forgetting that this precious hole is the home of a platoon of crocodiles," said Dorrie interestedly. "Do we have to fight these toothy gentlemen every time we go in or out?"

"I am hoping that we shall only need to pass through twice—once out, and once back," replied Lee. "And I'll show you how we're going to deal with the crocodiles."

When complete darkness had fallen, they began the task of carrying the great seaweed rope up the canyon. It was no easy job, for it was of considerable weight, and had to be dragged over the ground. When the cavity was reached, Lee slid the rope down the "shute," and the rock floor of the fissure was so smooth and so steep that the rope slid down easily. Before it was fully payed out, Lee called a halt.

"Wait here," he said. "Hold the rope very securely, as I shall want to use it. I shall not be long."

He went into the cavity, his torch sending forth a bright beam. The descent was easy enough now, for with that rope to hang on to there was no danger of falling.

Nelson Lee found, as he had expected, that the rope reached almost to the place where the sloping rock changed until it was level. He walked on cautiously now, and from his pocket he took a small metal object—which was, in fact, a gas bomb of extraordinary power.

Advancing cautiously to the edge of the abyss he cast the beam downwards, and he saw below a movement of the muddy water. There were crocodiles in plenty, and they were disturbed by the sudden light.

But Lee gave them no chance of escaping. In a flash he had withdrawn the safety catch of the bomb, and he deliberately paused for three seconds. Then he let the bomb drop. Practically as it struck the muddy water it exploded—it burst with a dull, puffing thud. Lee saw billowing masses of strangely coloured vapour break out in dense volumes on all sides. There came a churning and swirling of water; and Lee saw, too, that the gas was rising steadily.

He did not wait. Clutching hold of the seaweed rope, as soon as he reached it, he made a rapid climb, and easily succeeded in reaching the open before the first of the gas, coming up the chute, escaped.

"Stand back, all of you," Lee warned. "There's gas coming—and it'll take some time to dissipate."

"Gas!" ejaculated Dorrie. "So that's what you've done to the crocs? Good man!"

They stood well clear, and soon the gas came pouring out of the chute. Nelson Lee waited a full half-hour before he consented to move.

By this time there was no trace of the gas left, and the rest of the rope was lowered. Lee had not payed it all out earlier, for fear that the end, dropping into the pool, would alarm the reptilian inmates. It had been most essential that he should catch them by surprise when he dropped the bomb.

"Now, I'm not going to say much, but we must be ready for any emergency," said the detective quietly. "This is not going to be a picnic, and if it comes to a fight we must stick together."

"What's the exact programme, sir?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"There is no programme," replied Lee. "As soon as we are out of the crocodile hole we must get to the river bank. It is most unlikely that there will be any other crocodiles in the vicinity. In any case, I will go first and make sure. Our objective is the beach. What we shall do when we get there, I cannot tell. But your nine companions, Handforth, are imprisoned somewhere on that beach, and we must find them. That's all."

"And enough, too, sir," said Handforth breathlessly. "By George! What an adventure!"

Nelson Lee was the first to go down; then Dorrie followed, and Mr. Beverton and Umlosi, and the boys were last. The seaweed rope served them well, for they made the descent without mishap. When they were all collected on the level space at the top of the mud hole, Lee and Dorrie and Mr. Beverton cast their torchlight beams downwards. The vile water was absolutely still; half visible in their muddy, shallow holes, were the crocodiles. Not a movement came from them.

"Dead," muttered Beverton, unable to repress a shudder.

"I'm not sure," replied Lee. "But, in any case, they are helpless. The gas in the bomb I used is not deadly to humans—if what you have told me is right, Dorrie."

"It's quite right, old man," replied Dorrie. "This gas brings rapid unconsciousness, but it leaves its victims unharmed when they wake up. I think it's very likely,

(Continued on the next page.)

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however, that the lower forms of life—such as crocodiles—will be killed outright by the gas."

"A heavy dose on any human being would cause unconsciousness for seven or eight hours," said Lee. "This mud-hole was filled with gas—intensely dense gas—for quite a while. I don't think the crocodiles will show any signs of life for twelve hours, at least."

He was the first to lower himself down on the rope. The others followed, one after the other. The mud pool itself was free of the reptiles, for they had gone into their lairs, at the sides, and they lay as good as dead. Lee, swimming out through the creeper-festooned opening, did not venture to make his way out to the river. He pulled himself up the creepers, clutched at the bank overhead, and was soon among the gnarled roots of a great forest tree, which grew on the river's edge.

"All serene?" came a whisper from below.

"Yes—come up," murmured Lee. "And, remember, no talking."

They joined him without mishap, and they were glad enough to get upon dry ground. The river water, outside, had cleansed them to a certain extent—but, as Handforth remarked, they were still pretty smelly.

They found that the river was a fairly wide one, lined on both banks with trees which came down to the very edge—the foliage meeting overhead, blotting out the stars. The jungle, indeed, seemed to be absolutely dense.

Nelson Lee, however, had a fine sense of direction. Now, taking his bearings from the mud-hole, he struck confidently through the jungle.

WHAT PRICE VICTORY?

(Continued from page 22.)

and the best efforts of the forwards—they were—seemed to fail.

But the change of ends had given the Saints the advantage, of which they slowly but surely made full use, gaining the upper hand by degrees. But a lucky shot sent in by Carboy baffled Fatty Wynn, and the Grammar School stood two to one with twenty minutes more to play.

But it was the last score for the Grammar School. St. Jim's bore all before them now. With a fine, combined rush up the field, they forced the home backs to concede a corner, which materialised in a goal for Tom Merry.

Two all! And fifteen minutes more to time.

Five minutes later St. Jim's were yelling themselves hoarse, the result of a splendid dribble right up the field by Lowther, who kicked the ball at the end of the run, with two backs almost upon him, and beat the goalie all the way.

But St. Jim's triumph was not ended yet.

The Grammarians played up splendidly, but the Saints were too much for them. The Co. and Tom Merry worked like clockwork. Another rush besieged the home goal, and

Soon he came to open ground after fifty yards had been covered. One by one his companions broke free of the undergrowth, and joined him. They were looking upon a strange, desolate scene.

"Death Valley!" muttered Mr. Beverton, in surprise.

They were at the very edge of the jungle, and close at hand, the rocky cliffs rose menacingly. The valley itself lay before them, just visible in the starlight. No living soul was in view—for the treasure hunting operations did not go on at night. All the working parties had been withdrawn.

"I think we are fairly safe here," murmured Lee. "It is unlikely that Haynes sets any guards. All we have to do now is to find the jungle path which leads from here to the beach—and the rest will be comparatively easy. But what will happen when we reach the beach is in the lap of the gods."

The hearts of them all were beating rapidly when, after a little trouble, they found the jungle path. It stretched before them, black and mysterious—and somewhere ahead was the enemy's camp.

The rescue party were thrilled at the prospect, and they crept forward eagerly, their ears alert, their nerves tingling—their guns ready.

(How will Nelson Lee & Co. fare in their daring attempt to rescue the nine St. Frank's boys who are prisoners in the hands of Haynes? Whatever you do, chums, don't miss the next nerve-riveting instalment of this great serial.)

from a press of players the ball suddenly popped out like the pip from an orange, and took the home goalie by surprise. It was in the net before he knew that it was coming.

It was Digby's goal. Sir Robert shouted himself hoarse. The Co. slapped Dig on the back as they walked back to the centre of the field.

"Four to two!" grinned Tom Merry. "Give 'em another one for luck!"

And the Co. played up for another goal. And they captured it, too, Tom Merry sending the ball into the net with a terrific shot almost on the stroke of time.

Then the whistle went.

St. Jim's had beaten the Grammar School by five to two! It was a glorious victory, and the cheers of the St. Jim's partisans round the ropes awoke the echoes.

The Grammarians had put up a good fight, but Tom Merry & Co. had surpassed themselves, and were on the top of their opponents all the time. Tom Merry's position as leader of the juniors of St. Jim's was more firmly established than before. He had led his Co. to victory on the football field, and off it, and nothing now remained for Frank Monk & Co. but to hide their diminished heads, and acknowledge defeat in the latest struggle of Saints versus Grammarians.

THE END.

(Another grand yarn of the popular chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday. Look out for "THE BOY WHO RAN AWAY!" by Martin Clifford—starring Joe Frayne of the Third Form.)



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