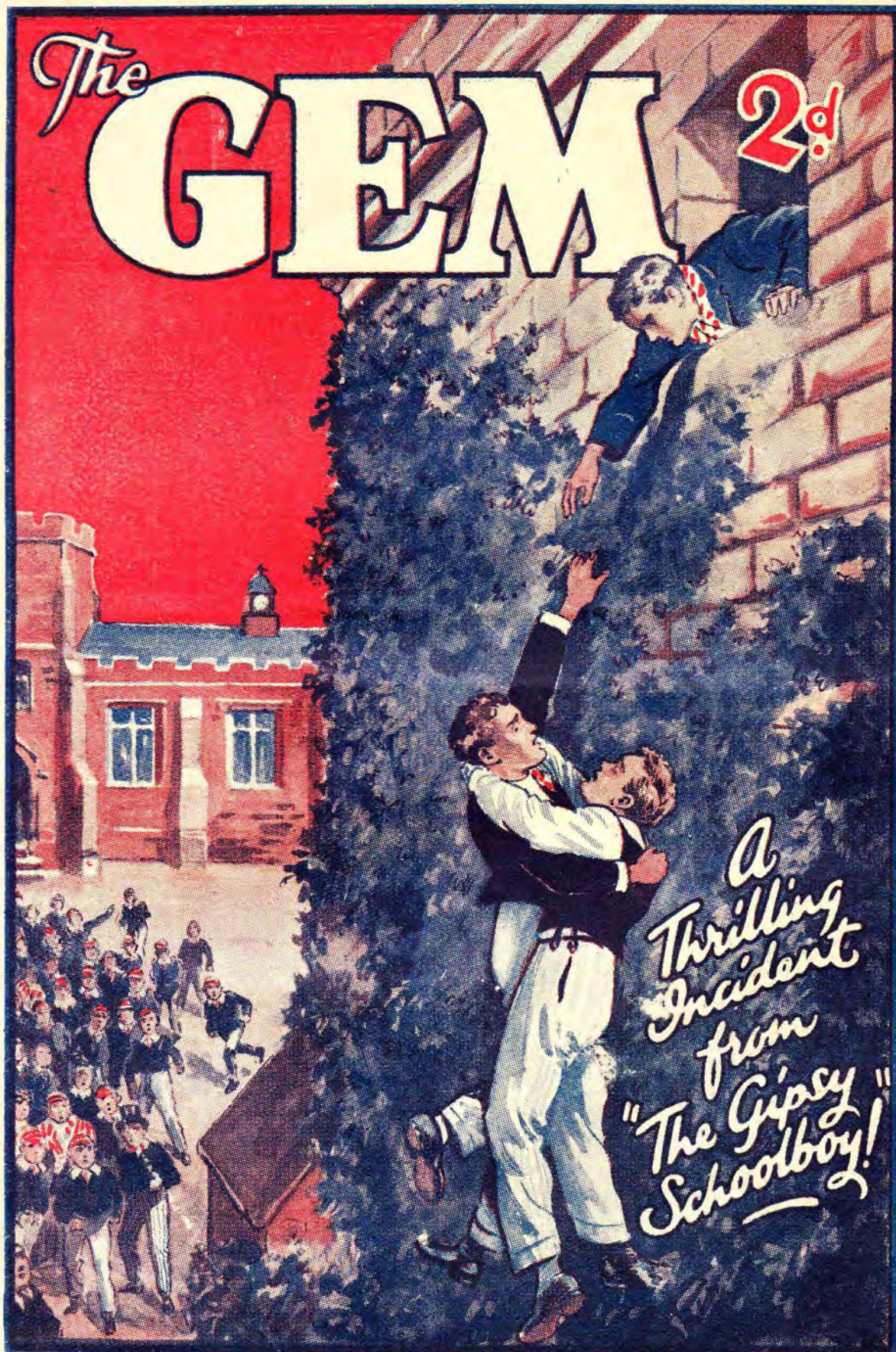


DO YOU KNOW A FUNNY JOKE? Half-crowns Awarded For Them Every Week! See page 11



The GIPSY SCHOOLBOY!



When Kit, the Gipsy, joins Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's,
the Old School Sits Up and Takes Notice!

CHAPTER 1.

The Gipsy's Warning!

"GUV'NOR!"

Tom Merry started.

The sudden, low, husky whisper came from the shadows at the cross-roads in Rylcombe Lane.

Darkness had fallen on the woods and lanes, and there was no moon. The Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell Form at St. Jim's—were tramping home to the school, with the pleasing prospects before them of getting a hundred lines each for missing call-over.

Tom Merry was a little ahead of the other two when the voice from the shadows startled him, and he stopped.

"Guv'nor!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

The whispering voice came from the clump of trees that clustered round the signboard in the centre of the cross-roads. Tom Merry, as he looked into the deep shadows, discerned a boyish form there—the form of a boy much smaller than himself, clad in tatters, with a wild shock of curly hair. Two gleaming black eyes were looking at Tom Merry from the gloom.

"Guv'nor, hold on a minute. I want to speak to you."

Tom Merry's hand went to his pocket. He naturally supposed that the tattered lad wished to beg, and Tom Merry, when he had anything to give, seldom or never refused to give it. But the boy shook his head impatiently.

"It ain't money I want, guv'nor."

"What do you want, then?" asked Tom Merry. "Lost your way?"

The boy chuckled softly, as if something in that question amused him.

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"Lost my way?" he repeated. "Ha, ha, ha! No, I haven't lost my way, guv'nor. Did you ever know a gipsy who lost his way?"

Tom Merry looked at him closely.

"Oh, you're a gipsy, are you?" he said.

"Yes, guv'nor!"

"Don't let me interrupt you, Tommy," said Monty Lowther, in a tone of great politeness, "but if we don't get in pretty soon, we shall get a licking instead of lines. Of course, I don't mind if you don't. And I'll stand on one leg, and then the other, while you carry on this interesting conversation."

"Oh, shut up, Monty, and don't be funny. The kid wants something or other."

"Then buck up, kid," said Manners. "We're in a hurry. We're out after locking-up."

"If you can't stop, it's no good," said the boy. "You'd better get on, and I'll do the best I can alone."

"Hold on," said Tom Merry, as the gipsy lad was retreating into the trees. "What is it you wanted? Shut up, Monty, I tell you. I'm going to know what it is."

"Oh, all right," yawned Monty Lowther. "I expect this kid belongs to the gipsies who are camped on Wayland Common, and a desperate-looking lot of ruffians most of them are. I've seen 'em. But do as you like, and we'll take the licking from Railton."

"Now, then, kid—"

The gipsy boy came out of the trees again. His dark eyes gleamed up and down the road with the look of a hunted animal. He bent his head as if to listen to catch the slightest sound on the road.

Then he looked directly at Tom Merry again, his dark, swarthy face aglow with suppressed excitement.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 2. The Ambush in the Lane!

KIT clutched Tom Merry by the arm. "It's coming!" he muttered. Tom Merry nodded. "We can stop it here, you fellows," he whispered hurriedly. "I wish we had a light of some sort, but—"

"I've got a lantern, guv'nor."

"Good! Hand it over."

Tom Merry took the lantern from the gipsy boy and lighted it quickly. The sound of the car, coming from the Wayland road, was very near now. The two great electric headlights could be seen glaring from the darkness up the road.

Tom Merry stepped into the middle of the lane, waving the lighted lantern towards the approaching car.

"Shout, you fellows!" he exclaimed.

And the St. Jim's juniors shouted together.

"Stop!"

Toot-toot!

The chauffeur was sounding his horn. The car came whizzing on, but Tom Merry stood his ground, waving the lantern.

"Stop!"

There was a hissing of brakes, and the car slowed down. It halted at last within a dozen feet of the Shell fellows.

"What's the matter?" asked the chauffeur sharply. "What have you stopped us for?"

Tom Merry ran to the side of the car, followed by Manners and Lowther and the gipsy boy. Lord Eastwood was looking out in surprise. He recognised Tom Merry, and uttered an exclamation.

"Merry! Why have you stopped the car? I am in a hurry to get to the school. I have had a long delay at Wayland."

"You can't go on, sir," said Tom Merry. "There are a gang of ruffians waiting for you on the road, and they've got a wire rope stretched across to stop the car, so this kid says."

Lord Eastwood started.

"Good heavens! Are you sure of that Merry?"

"This kid says so, sir, and I believe him."

"Who is this boy?" asked Lord Eastwood, looking at Kit in the light of the lantern, and noticing his swarthy face and tattered clothes.

"A gipsy kid, sir. He belongs to the lot who are going to stop you, but he wanted to prevent the robbery."

"Oh, I see!"

Lord Eastwood looked very keenly at Kit. The gipsy boy met his gaze steadily. Lord Eastwood pursed his lips in a thoughtful way.

"I must get to the school," he said. "If I go round by another way, Merry, how long will it take?"

Tom Merry whistled.

"You'll have to go back to Wayland, sir, and take the upper road."

Lord Eastwood shook his head.

"I cannot spare the time, as I have to go to London to-night. Besides, I do not doubt your word, my lad," he said, turning to the gipsy. "But you are a stranger to me, and I am as likely to be stopped, I think, on the upper road, as on the lower. Have you any proof of your story?"

Kit flushed.

"I only know what I've told this young gentleman, sir," he replied. "I wanted to stop the Fox from robbing you, sir, that's all."

"I'm sure he's telling the truth, sir," said Tom Merry earnestly.

"I cannot turn back," said Lord Eastwood, frowning. "But you boys get into the car. I will give you a lift to the school. I suppose you are going there, at this time—"

"Yes, sir."

"Get in, then. And you, too, my boy. There is plenty of room in the car, and there will be enough of us, I think, to keep the rascals from interfering with us. If they are really there, they are expecting, I suppose, to encounter only an old man?"

"Jolly good idea, sir!" said Tom Merry eagerly. "Let's cut some cudgels in the thickets, sir, before we start. We've nothing to biff them with."

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"Very good; but be as quick as you can."

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"I can't 'ear it yet!" he muttered. "What do you expect to hear?" asked Tom Merry. "The car. It's going to the big school up yonder to-night," said the gipsy boy, jerking a dirty thumb in the direction of St. Jim's. "There will be a rich man in it—a lord, I reckon, going to the school."

"My hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "How the dickens do you know that, kid? It's a fact that Gussy's pater is coming down to see him this evening, you fellows. He's leaving England, and he's coming to see Gussy and Wally first."

"Lord Eastwood—yes, I remember hearing D'Arcy say so, now," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "He will come from Eastwood in his car, I suppose. But how do you know anything about it, kid?"

"I heard Melchior and the Fox talking," muttered the gipsy boy. "The car was hung up in Wayland with a burst tyre, and they found out all about it—they know the road it will take to the school—and they're on the road waiting for it. You catch on?"

Tom Merry gave a jump. "Do you mean to say that the gipsies are waylaying Lord Eastwood's car on the road to St. Jim's?" he asked.

The boy nodded.

"Yes, guv'nor."

"My hat! We shall have to stop this," said Manners.

"Are they your friends who are playing this game?"

"They're the men I tramp with," said the boy.

"And you heard them planning the business?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," muttered the gipsy. "So I came here. The car must pass the cross-roads to get into the lane to the school, and I was going to stop it and warn them. But—"

"But what?"

The boy looked down at his tattered clothes, and laughed. "They mightn't take any notice of me," he said. "They mightn't believe my yarn if they did. You savvy?"

"It is very likely," said Tom Merry.

"I was going to try it, though; it was the only thing I could do."

"You could have gone to the police in the village," said Manners.

The gipsy boy laughed scornfully.

"A Romany chal never betrays others," he said. "I want to save the gentleman they are going to rob, but no more than that."

"Well, you're a queer beggar. They'll be pretty down on you if they find out what you've done," said Manners. The boy shivered a little.

"They'll know what I've done," he said. "They know nobody else knew the game. But I don't care for that. I've never been a thief, and I won't be mixed up with thieves. I begged the Fox to give up the job, and he laughed and shook his stick at me. He'll laugh the other side of his mouth soon, when the car doesn't come. He's got a wire rope across the road, and if the car doesn't stop when he calls, it will run into the wire."

"The villains!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, he's a deep one, the Fox is," said the gipsy boy in tones of mingled fear and admiration. "He's deep and as cruel as a tiger. He'll nearly kill me for this; but I don't care. I told him I wouldn't have any truck with thieving. But—but I spoke to you, young gentlemen, because you can help me if you like. Very likely the car won't even stop for me; they mayn't believe me. But if you call out, they'll stop. You see? The lord will listen to a young gentleman like you."

Tom Merry nodded.

It was only too probable that the chauffeur would not even slacken his speed at a call from the dusky roadside from a ragged gipsy boy. But the St. Jim's fellows would most likely be heeded.

"You're right, kid," said Tom Merry. "Look here, you chaps, we shall have to risk making it a bit later at St. Jim's, and see this through. What's your name, kid?"

"Kit, guv'nor! Hark!"

The gipsy boy bent his head again, and raised his dusky hand. A low sound came softly through the night, audible only to the gipsy's keen ears at first, but soon heard by the others—the distant hum of a fast-travelling car approaching.

From gipsy encampment to St. Jim's! It's as wonderful as it is unexpected to Kit, the gipsy. But in spite of a warm welcome from Tom Merry & Co., Kit makes an enemy in the school—and yet does not hesitate to risk his life for the boy who hates him!

Kit hesitated.

"I—I don't want to come in the car, sir," he said in a low voice.

The juniors looked at him quickly, and Lord Eastwood fastened a stern look upon the gipsy boy.

"Why not?" he asked.

"I—I don't want to meet Melchior and the Fox."

"You can keep yourself concealed in the car, if you choose," said Lord Eastwood. "I insist upon your coming in the car. If you have told me a false story, to delude me into a trap, you shall be punished."

"Oh, sir!"

"If I find that your story is true, and the car is really attacked in Rylcombe Lane, I shall reward you and find you some better associates than these scoundrels," said Lord Eastwood. "If you are really an honest lad, you cannot wish to remain in their company."

"I ain't got nothin' else to do, sir."

"I will find you something else, then. Step into the car."

The gipsy obeyed. The Terrible Three in a few minutes cut three stout sticks in the wood, and they followed the gipsy boy in.

Lord Eastwood picked up a heavy malacca cane from the seat. There was ample room for all in the big car, and the juniors chuckled softly as they thought of the surprise the gipsies would get when they found the car full, instead of its being occupied by only one old gentleman. Lord Eastwood gave the word to his chauffeur to proceed at a moderate speed, and the car rolled on.

The juniors watched keenly from the side windows of the big Daimler. The chauffeur drove on slowly down the dark, shadowy lane, ready to jam on his brakes at a sign of an obstruction in the road.

In the sombre shadows of the lane a highway robbery might easily have been carried out, and the car had been delayed at Wayland quite long enough for the footpads to learn all about it and its owner.

Lord Eastwood remembered, as he sat in silence, that a dark, gipsy-looking man had helped his chauffeur while the repairing was going on.

Suddenly the headlights of the car picked out a rough-looking figure in the darkness in the centre of the road, and showed up a black line stretched across the highway.

The chauffeur slackened down at once. It would be dangerous for the car to dash into the wire rope. The juniors quivered with excitement.

"Halt!"

It was a deep voice from the shadows of the trees.

Kit gave a start.

"That's Melchior!" he muttered.

The car halted, and three burly forms came rushing out of the gloom. One of them ran to the chauffeur and grasped him by the arm, while the other hand was raised with a thick bludgeon.

"Hands off that wheel!" he said savagely.

The chauffeur obeyed.

Two fierce-looking faces peered into the car, one on either side.

"Sorry to trouble you, my lord," said a soft, insinuating voice. "But we are compelled to stop your lordship's car."

Kit shivered.

"That's the Fox," he said.

The soft, mocking voice went on:

"I am sure your lordship will excuse us. We are hard up, and we know that your lordship is well provided with money. We are sure that your lordship will have no objection to relieving the necessities of his poorer brethren."

The other man chuckled.

"You scoundrel!" said Lord Eastwood angrily. "Do you mean that you have dared to stop my car to rob me?"

"That is a harsh word, my lord," said the Fox, in the same soft, ironical tones. "Say borrow. We require a small loan—merely all you have about you, including your watch and any jewellery you may happen to be wearing. Will you have the extreme goodness to hand it over, or shall we lift you from the car and search you?"

"I shall give you nothing! Stand back and let us proceed, or take the consequences!" said Lord Eastwood angrily.

The gipsy laughed.

"The consequences will be worse for you than for us," he said. "We are desperate men. There is a rope across the road, and the car cannot proceed, and we shall not allow you to turn back until you have made us a loan. Come, now, be sensible, my lord!"

"Stand back!"

"Bah! Drag him out!"

The Fox swung open the door of the car and plunged in. It was dark inside; the electric light had been switched off, and the gipsy could not see that the car was full. He plunged in, and the next moment he reeled back from a

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terrific right-hander, delivered with all the force of Tom Merry's strong right arm. He reeled into the road with a gasp and a curse, and fell.

"Well done, Tom Merry!" said Lord Eastwood.

And he sprang from the car, with the juniors after him.

CHAPTER 3.

The Fight!

THE Fox staggered to his feet. He had imagined that Lord Eastwood had struck him down, and he was springing furiously towards the car again. He stopped as the juniors came pouring out, cudgels in hand.

Melchior came running round the car to join him, and the man who was holding the chauffeur's arm let go, and joined him, also. There were only three of the ruffians; ample to have robbed the car if Lord Eastwood had been unassisted, but the task before them was more difficult now.

But they were not disposed to give it up. After a moment of angry surprise they rushed on to the attack.

"Sock it to them!" roared Tom Merry.

There was a crash as the cudgels met the gipsies' bludgeons. The chauffeur had caught up a spanner to join in the conflict, and the party were five against three. But the gipsies attacked them desperately with lashing bludgeons, evidently reckless of what damage they did. Kit called out from the car:

"Melchior, you idiot! Why don't you run while you've got the chance?"

The gipsy gave a shout.

"It's Kit! The young hound has betrayed us!"

"I'll kill him!" muttered the Fox.

And leaving the combat the Fox ran at the car to get at the gipsy boy. Kit leaped out into the road, defending himself with his stick. The Fox attacked him with desperate ferocity, and the lad backed away, warding off the fierce blows as well as he could.

But the Fox's action left his two companions at too great disadvantage. Melchior fell, half-stunned, under Lord Eastwood's malacca, and the third man, driven back by a shower of blows, fairly took to his heels and ran. He disappeared into the shadows, while Melchior crawled away on his hands and knees into the trees.

Tom Merry ran towards the Fox.

In a few minutes Kit would have fallen, stunned, or perhaps killed, under the gipsy's furious attack. Tom Merry brought down his cudgel on the Fox's shoulder, and the ruffian gave a yell of pain and turned upon him, leaving the gipsy boy alone.

"You hound!" said Tom Merry.

With a curse the Fox sprang at the Shell fellow. But Lowther and Manners were dashing up, free now from their other opponents. The Fox's weapon was knocked from his hand, and he reeled back under fierce blows from the cudgel. He staggered on the edge of a ditch that bordered the road, his hand fumbling in his breast. There was a gleam of steel in the light from the lamps on the car.

"Look out!" yelled Kit. "He's got a knife!"

"Stand back, my lads!" gasped Lord Eastwood. "Leave him to me!"

But Tom Merry was ready for the gipsy. As the knife gleamed in the Fox's hand Tom Merry hurled his cudgel with all his force, and it caught the ruffian under the chin.

The Fox gave a yell of agony, and tumbled backwards, and plunged head first into the ditch. The knife flew from his hand into the bushes on the farther side.

"Bravo!" yelled Lowther.

The juniors ran to the edge of the ditch, ready for the Fox when he emerged. But the gipsy dragged himself out on the farther side, and plunged into the wood.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've beaten them!"

"Get the road clear, Johnson!" said Lord Eastwood to his chauffeur. "We must get on as quickly as possible."

"Yes, my lord."

The three gipsies were gone, taking with them plenty of bruises to remind them of their encounter with the juniors of St. Jim's.

The juniors ran to help the chauffeur get the wire rope loose. In a few minutes the lane was clear.

"Get into the car!" said Lord Eastwood. "We do not know how many of those scoundrels may be near at hand. You had better get in, too, my boy."

Kit hesitated.

"I ain't no more business 'ere," he said. "I've got to 'op it. If the Fox sees me agin, he'll murder me!"

"You have done me a very great service," said Lord Eastwood, "and you have run very great risks to do it. You are a brave lad, and you remember what I told you—if your warning was true, I would find you some better associates. You do not refuse my help?"



Lord Eastwood's chauffeur slackened down speed as the headlights picked out a figure in the centre of the road and a wire rope stretched across the highway. "Halt!" shouted a voice. The car stopped, and two rough-looking men came rushing out of the trees at the side of the road. It was a hold-up!

"I ain't a beggar, sir."

"Not at all. You can accept my help without being a beggar. Have you a father or mother among the gipsies?"

Kit shook his head.

"I never had neither that I remember, sir. Mother Barengro brought me up, so far as I was brought up at all. Her and the Kid Pety is all that I ever care to see agin of that gang."

"Then come with me."

Kit stepped into the car again. The big Daimler rolled on towards the school. The juniors kept an anxious watch

the road, but there was no further sign of the gipsies.

Lord Eastwood sat very silent and thoughtful for a time, occasionally looking at the gipsy lad. The electric light was glowing in the car again now, and the gipsy's face could be clearly seen. It was a strong and handsome face, tanned by wind and sun, dark as a Spaniard's; handsome, with an almost wild quickness in every feature, and alertness of expression that had doubtless come from the wild, free life the boy had led in the open.

Tom Merry looked at the earl, and he could see that the gipsy boy favourably impressed Lord Eastwood. He wondered what D'Arcy's father was thinking of. Some plan for benefiting the gipsy boy doubtless, and saving him from evil associates who had not been able to corrupt him, so far.

"Have you ever been to school, my boy?" Lord Eastwood asked, breaking a long silence.

Kit started.

He had been in a deep reverie, too, perhaps thinking of the Fox, and the revenge he would try to take for what had happened that night.

"No, sir."

"Would you like to go to school?"

Kit's eyes sparkled.

"More than anything else in the world, sir," he said.

"But—but it ain't possible for a gipsy kid. Besides, I've got to live."

"There are schools where you could live, my boy," said the earl, smiling. "Where you would only have to work at lessons, and at keeping yourself fit."

"But I ain't got no money, sir."

"I dare say that could be arranged. You have saved me more to-night than your school fees would be for two or three years," said Lord Eastwood. "I am not ungrateful. So you would like to go to school?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Then you shall go to school, my boy—and some school where you will be quite safe from those rascals."

"Oh, sir!"

Kit could say no more. He was overjoyed.

The car rolled up to the gates of St. Jim's. Tom Merry jumped down and rang the bell, and Taggles, the porter, came down to open the gates. He gave Tom Merry a grim look through the bars of the gate.

"Which these is nice goings hon!" he said.

"Yes, hain't they hawful?" assented Tom Merry.

"You are to report yourselves to your 'Ousemaster at

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once!" said Taggles, as he unlocked the gates. "My heye! Lord Eastwood's car! My heye! Yes, my lord! Good hevening, my lord! I hope your lordship is well, my lord!"

And the car rolled in.

CHAPTER 4.

Kit at St. Jim's!

"BAI Jove! Here they are!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's said that. He was standing on the steps of the School House, with Blake and Herries and Digby, also of the Fourth Form, and Kangaroo of the Shell. The juniors were waiting for the Terrible Three to come in, and wondering whether anything had happened to them. The sight of the great lights of the car warned D'Arcy that his father had arrived, but the car stopped outside the Head's house, and D'Arcy was evidently not to see his father until his father had seen the Head.

Then the Terrible Three came out of the gloom into the circle of light falling from the School House doorway.

Kit was with them. They had alighted from the car at the Head's house, and were coming back to report to their Housemaster.

"Here they are!" said Blake. "My hat! Who have they got with them?"

"A gipsy, bai Jove!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Kangaroo. "Who's the kid?"

"Hallo!" said Mellish of the Fourth, looking out of the doorway. "Where did you pick up the ragamuffin, Tom Merry?"

"Hold your tongue, Mellish!" said Tom Merry fiercely.

The cad of the Fourth backed away.

"Well, who is he?" he asked. "He looks ragged enough."

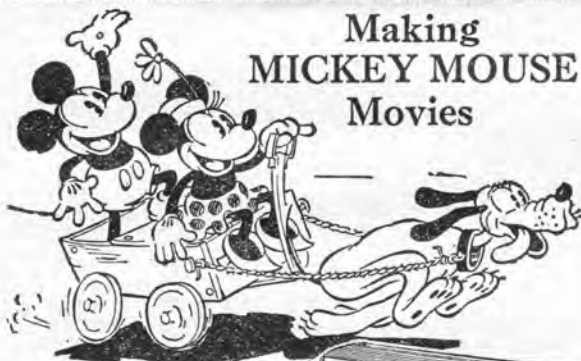
"Shut that rotter up!" said Tom Merry.

Blake gently bumped Mellish's head against the wall.

"Scat!" he said.

And Mellish, rubbing his head ruefully, "scatted."

The Terrible Three came up the steps of the School House, Kit with them, with a strange hesitation in his manner. The imposing building, with its ranges of windows, the lighted Hall and the great staircase visible within, the



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well-dressed fellows in Eton jackets, all were strange and almost scaring to the lad fresh from the wild life of the wood and the common.

Tom Merry passed his arm through Kit's. He comprehended what the boy was feeling like.

"Who's your fwiend, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus politely.

"Kit!"

"Ahem! Glad to see him."

"You ought to be," said Tom Merry. "He saved your noble governor from being robbed of all he had about him, and probably of being knocked on the head into the bargain. If he had been alone, and had shown fight, he would certainly have been knocked on the head."

"A D'Arcy would certainly always show fight, deah boy, if any wascal twied to wob him!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Then this kid has saved your pater from being knocked on the head," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "And as your pater was most likely bringing you a fiver, you ought to be grateful."

"But how did it happen, deah boy?"

Tom Merry explained. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy held out his hand to the gipsy boy. Arthur Augustus of the Fourth was the biggest swell at St. Jim's. He had more pocket-money than many fellows of the Sixth. He was dressed in a way that was the envy and despair of the dandies in the higher Forms. The crease in his trousers, the cut of his jacket, the way he fastened his tie, the tilt of his silk hat—they were all the very last words in elegance. But there was no trace of snobbishness about D'Arcy. He shook hands with the gipsy as he would have done with his best friend.

"I'm jolly glad to meet you, deah boy!" he said. "You're a wippin' chap! I thank you vewy much on behalf of my governah. My governah is a decent old boy, though he is wathah obstinate in some things, but I believe in allowin' one's governah a certain amount of wope. You are a good sort, and I'm vewy pleased to make your acquaintance."

"Thank you, sir!" stammered Kit.

"My name is D'Arcy, deah boy. Is your fwiend goin' to stay with you, Tom Mewwy?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Tom Merry. "Lord Eastwood brought him to the coll, and he's gone in to see the Head now, and he told us to look after Kit while he was engaged."

"Vewy good! You've got to go in and weport yourselves to Mr. Wailton for missin' call-over," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall be vewy pleased to take charge of your fwiend while you are gone. Blake will cut across to Mrs. Taggles' shop and get in some gwub, and we will stand him a study feed. Have you had your tea, deah boy?"

Kit grinned.

"I'm hungry, if that's what you mean, sir," he replied.

"Yaas, wathah; that's weally what I mean. Blake, deah boy, pway cut oval to the tuckshop while I intwoduce our young fwiend into the study. Digby, you can go with Blake, and Hewwies can come with me."

The Fourth Formers stared a little as D'Arcy gave his orders, but they only grinned and obeyed. They were quite prepared to follow D'Arcy's lead in making much of the gipsy boy.

D'Arcy touched Tom Merry on the shoulder as he went into the School House.

"I pwesume you chaps are hungwy, aftah stayin' out so long?" he inquired.

"We could eat you, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "Can I say more?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Hungry as hunters!" said Manners cheerily. "Yes, we'll come."

"Bai Jove!"

"Expect us. Lay in a good supply!" said Tom Merry.

"Have a good fire burning and cushions on the chairs, and we'll come."

"Weally, you know—"

The Terrible Three, laughing, went their way to Mr. Railton's study. They had expected to get lines, at least, for being late. But the adventure with the gipsies raised their hopes somewhat.

By skilfully pitching the yarn to the Housemaster it was possible that they might get off scot-free. Monty Lowther had a bruise on his forehead from Melchoir's club, and he carefully pushed back his hair so as to show it in its full effect. Mr. Railton was sure to notice it, and that would lead up to the subject.

Tom Merry tapped at the Housemaster's door, and the Terrible Three were bidden to enter. Mr. Railton was talking to Mr. Tenby, the master of the Second Form. Mr. Tenby was a stout, good-natured looking gentleman, and

was generally known at St. Jim's—not when he was present, of course—as the Turtle.

Both the masters looked round as the juniors came in. Mr. Railton glanced at his watch.

"Ah, you have come at last!" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry meekly.

"You missed calling-over," said Mr. Railton. "You have been out an hour and a half after locking up. What explanation— Good gracious, Lowther! How did you get that bruise on your forehead?"

"I've had a whack, sir."

"A what?"

"I—I mean, a blow, sir," said Monty Lowther, a little abashed.

"Have you boys been getting into any trouble?" asked the Housemaster sternly. "You surely did not get a blow like that, Lowther, in any dispute with the boys of the Grammar School?"

"Oh, no, sir! Gipsies, sir."

"The gipsy encampment on Wayland Common is out of bounds. You were perfectly aware of that," said the School House master severely.

"We haven't been there, sir."

"Then what has happened?"

"Gipsy bounders tried to rob Lord Eastwood, sir, as he was coming down in his car, and we took a hand, sir," Tom Merry explained.

"Dear me! Tell me about it."

Tom Merry did so.

"You may go, my lads. As that was the cause of your being late, I shall certainly excuse you, and I think you have acted very well indeed."

The Terrible Three looked at one another hesitatingly. They certainly wanted to go without being punished, but they did not want to give a false impression which would amount to a lie.

"Well," said Mr. Railton in surprise, "why do you not go?"

"Ahem! If you please, sir, that wasn't exactly the cause of our being late!" stammered Tom Merry. "We—we should have been an hour late, anyway."

"Oh, indeed!"

Mr. Railton looked very curiously at the Terrible Three. Mr. Tenby smiled. The chums of the Shell stood waiting for the verdict.

"And what made you an hour late?" asked Mr. Railton.

"We were rambling in the woods, sir, and didn't notice the time passing."

The Housemaster smiled.

"Well, you are very frank, at all events, so I shall excuse you all the same."

"Thank you, sir!"

And the Terrible Three left the study, feeling very satisfied with the Housemaster and with themselves.

"My word!" Monty Lowther murmured. "George Washington knew a thing or two, you know. There's nothing like telling the truth, after all. Railton is an old sport. I say, I'm famishing. I wonder if Gussy's got tea ready?"

And the Terrible Three hurried off in the direction of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

CHAPTER 5.

A Feed in Study No. 6.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY ushered the gipsy into Study No. 6 in his most impressive way.

Herries was grinning a little, perhaps at D'Arcy's Chesterfieldian manners. A big bulldog was curled up on the hearthrug, and he rose with a rumbling growl as the juniors came in.

D'Arcy backed away a little.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "There's that howwid beast in the study again!"

"It's all right!" said Herries. "It's only Towser!"

"Hewwies, I have to say distinctly that I refuse to have Towser in the study; and you know very well that it is forbidden to have pets in the House at all! You are tweatin' the pwopah authowity of your mastahs with disrespect!"

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Hewwies—"

"Going to have a row to amuse your guest, D'Arcy?" asked Herries cheerfully.

"Bai Jove! But look here, Hewwies, pway kick that beast out! You know perfectly well that Towser has no pwopah respect whatever for a fellow's twousahs! And he nevah gets on with stwangsahs, anyway."

"He seems to get on with this giddy stranger!" grinned Herries.

"Bai Jove!"

Herries was certainly right. Towser had given Kit one suspicious look, and then he came lazily up and rubbed his big head against Kit's ragged trousers. Kit stroked his head affectionately.

"What a jolly good dog!" he exclaimed.

Herries beamed upon him. A liking for Towser was an easy and sure way to the innermost recesses of Herries' heart.

"I should say so!" he exclaimed. "Towser doesn't take to everybody, either, I can tell you. Towser knows something. He can tell a decent chap from a rotter at once. You remember when Levison came, Gussy, Towser wanted to go for him. He knew him."

"I believe the beast has wanted to go for lots of people," said D'Arcy. "And he nevah respects the most expensive twousahs, I know that."

"He knows that this kid is all right, or he wouldn't let him come in the room," said Herries. "Do you like dogs, kid?"

"I reckon I do, guv'nor," said Kit. "Dogs and horses, and animals of all kinds, too. I've lived among 'em, and they like me, too."

"Are you goin' to kick that beast out, Hewwies?"

"No fear. Can't you see that he likes our visitor, and our visitor likes him?" demanded Herries. "There's such a thing as politeness, Gussy."

D'Arcy almost gasped. That he, the Chesterfield of the Lower School, should receive instruction in politeness from the rough-and-ready Herries was a little too much. Words failed the swell of St. Jim's. Before he could think of a suitable reply, the Terrible Three marched in, merry and cheerful after their extremely satisfactory interview with their Housemaster.

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther. "Tea not ready? I see—you're playing with Towser, Gussy!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"After inviting us to tea in such a pressing way, Gussy," said Lowther, "I must say that you have allowed the grass to grow under your feet."

"Pway excuse me, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately way. "Blake will be back in a few minutes with the gwub. Ah, here he is!"

Blake and Digby came in, heavily laden. They deposited their parcels on the table, and the juniors proceeded to unpack them. Kit stood looking on, stroking Towser, who kindly and graciously allowed himself to be stroked without showing his teeth. The juniors soon had tea ready.

The Fourth Formers had already had their tea; but they were ready for another—they had the healthy appetites of vigorous youth, and an extra meal or two did not come amiss to them.

"Pway sit down, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, placing Kit in a chair. "I don't know how long my governah will be, but we're going to look after you till he turns up. Do you care for cold chicken?"

Kit grinned.

"I reckon I do, guv'nor!"

"Pway don't call me governah. My name is D'Arcy—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and I wegard you as a fwend. Are you carvin', Lowthah? Pway help my young fwend to a wing."

"Certainly," said Lowther. "Here you are, my young friend! Pass the tomatoes, Gussy."

"There are baked potatoes, too," said Blake. "Here you are, young 'un!"

"Thank you, sir!"

"My name's Blake."

Kit was certainly hungry. The juniors thought that perhaps it was a very long time since he had had his last

(Continued on the next page.)

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meal; and as a matter of fact, the gipsy boy had eaten nothing since the morning, when his breakfast had consisted of hard crusts. He had a very healthy appetite to bring to the feast—an appetite that would have been envied even by Wynn of the New House.

Cold chicken, baked potatoes, and tomatoes, and water-cress, and nice white bread-and-butter, seemed little short of paradise to the hungry gipsy boy. Kit did not need telling to fall to. He fell to, and ate it with a relish that delighted his entertainers. They regarded a good appetite as a compliment to their table, as indeed it was.

The feed was going joyfully enough. There came a tap at the door, and Levison of the Fourth looked in. There was a sneering kind of grin on the face of the cad of the Fourth Form.

"I hear you've brought home a wild gipsy," he remarked. "May I have a look—"

Scquelch!

Levison broke off as a pat of butter hurled by Jack Blake with unerring aim, caught him full on the mouth, and he staggered back into the passage with a yell and a splutter.

"Ow! Geroooh!"

"Goal!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing. "Come in, Levison, old man; I've got another pat of butter ready for you."

Levison did not accept the invitation. He stamped away down the passage, wiping his face furiously with his handkerchief, which was soon reduced to a greasy rag.

"Pity to waste good butter on a beast like that!" Blake remarked thoughtfully. "But I couldn't help it. It was right on the wicket, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kit grinned. The manners and customs of the juniors of St. Jim's were very new to him, but it was plain that he was enjoying his experience. The sight of Eton jackets and silk hats had perhaps made him feel more keenly than he was wont his own ragged clothes and dilapidated boots. But there was a hearty cheeriness in the study that put him quite at his ease.

Several fellows looked in at Study No. 6 during the feed out of curiosity, but as they came civilly, they did not get the same reception that Levison had. Later on, three New House fellows looked in—Figgins & Co. of the Fourth. The School House juniors half-rose at the sight of the fellows from the rival House, expecting a raid—but Figgins waved his hand in a friendly way.

"It's all right," he said. "We've only come to give you a look in. I've heard about what the gipsy kid did—it's all over the school now—and we want to see him. I should like to shake hands with you, kid."

"Thank you, sir!" faltered Kit.

"My name is Figgins. That chap is Kerr. This fellow eyeing the steak pie is Wynn—Fatty Wynn for short."

Fatty Wynn gave a guilty start.

"I—I wasn't eyeing the pie!" he said indignantly. "I was just looking at it absent-mindedly, that's all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We didn't come over here for a feed, only to speak to the gipsy chap," said Fatty Wynn. "Of course, a fellow generally gets hungry about this time in the evening."

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Pway join us, deah boys!" he said. "You can find woom to sit down somewhere. We are in funds just now, and I'm expectin' at least a fivah fwom my governah, as he's goin' away. Pway carve the pie for Fatty Wynn, Lowthah, deah boy."

And Figgins & Co. made themselves at home. There was a fire of cheery talk in the study, two or three fellows talking at once most of the time, and Kit listened to it all—without understanding much of it, for St. Jim's talk was full of local allusions, mysterious enough to an outsider.

It came into the mind of the gipsy boy how splendid it would be to be a St. Jim's fellow, how he would like to stay at the school and chum up with fellows like this. Then he sighed. It would be splendid, but it was impossible. It was not for him.

CHAPTER 6.

A Chance for Kit!

"**L**ORD EASTWOOD! I am glad to see you!"

Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, shook hands very cordially with his visitor.

Lord Eastwood was one of the governors of St. Jim's, and the man with most influence in the governing body of that ancient foundation. He was, indeed, an old college friend of the Head's, and their friendship had never lacked during the great number of years that had passed since they were at Oxford together.

Visits from parents, as a rule, were taken by the Head of St. Jim's as a duty that had to be done; but he was always glad to see Lord Eastwood.

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His lordship sat down a little breathlessly. The combat in Rylcombe Lane had told more upon the old gentleman than upon the tough and wiry juniors.

"I have had an adventure on my way here," he said. "A most unusual affair! I shall stop in Rylcombe on my way back to inform the police of it—an attempted highway robbery!"

"Dear me!" said the Head.

"I should certainly have been robbed, and maltreated in all probability, but for the assistance given me by three of your boys, Dr. Holmes, and by a gipsy lad, who warned me that his associates intended to rob me."

"I am very glad you escaped!" said the Head. "I suppose the ruffians belong to the encampment on Wayland Common? There have been two robberies in the district since they have been there."

"Now, Dr. Holmes, I am going to ask a favour of you," said Lord Eastwood.

The Head smiled.

"You need hardly ask," he said. "Anything that is in my power to do, I will certainly do."

"You must hear what it is first, Dr. Holmes. The gipsy lad who helped me has placed himself in a position of danger by doing so. One of the ruffians attacked him very savagely, and if he should go back to them I fear that even his life may be in danger."

The Head looked very grave.

"He is a brave and honest lad, and has a great deal of good in him, I believe," said Lord Eastwood. "His conduct, indeed, is a proof of that. Now, as he has placed himself in such a position to do me a service, I feel that I am bound to take care of him."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"It would be a serious matter to take care of a wild young gipsy," he said. "You want my advice on the matter?"

"Yes; and your help."

"You shall have both, certainly."

"He has a strong desire to go to school," said Lord Eastwood.

"That is certainly very praiseworthy."

"I want to place him at some school where he will be secure from his former associates, and cut off from any contaminating influence—where he will have a chance, in short, of growing up a decent fellow, and making his way in the world."

"A very good plan, if you are convinced that there is good in the lad," said the Head, with a nod.

"I am perfectly convinced of that. You approve of my intention, then?"

"Most decidedly!"

"And would you be prepared to receive him at St. Jim's?"

The Head started.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

The earl leaned forward a little, looking very earnest.

"That is the favour I want to ask you," he said. "I want the boy to be taken into this school. I want him to be taken care of. All expenses—fees, and the necessary expenses of outfit, and so on—will, of course, be met by me. That is the least important detail. But will you take this boy in charge, Dr. Holmes, and do the best you can for him?"

The Head's face was very grave now.

"You must give me time to think," he said slowly. "I have all sorts and conditions of boys in my charge—good, bad, and indifferent—mostly good, I believe. But this would be a great change—a gipsy boy."

"A very good and honest lad, I am convinced," said Lord Eastwood. "If he turned out to be anything else, of course, he could be sent away. But I'm sure that there is good in him. I'm sure that, given a chance, he will turn out well. Of course, there will be a little difficulty at first—he would not get over all his wild ways at once. But I think he would soon settle down. I should speak to my two sons here on the subject, and ask them to befriend him, which I am sure they would do."

The Head was silent.

"If you have a strong objection, sir, tell me so, and I will think of something else for him," said the earl. "Otherwise I should like you to take him—at least, until I return to England in a fortnight's time. That fortnight will suffice to give him a trial, and for you to ascertain whether he could remain here."

"That is true."

"I do not think you would be sorry for it, sir."

"But I suppose the boy is wholly uneducated?" said the Head hesitatingly. "What Form could I place him in?"

"That is a difficulty, too. He must be thirteen or fourteen years old, and he probably knows less of school work than any child in the First Form. But he looks to me a very intelligent boy."

"Where is he now?"

"I brought him on in my car, and I left him with Tom Merry when I came in," said Lord Eastwood. "As I have

to return to London immediately, to take the train for Paris, I do not know what to do with him, unless I leave him here. Owing to the delay at Wayland, where my car had a puncture, I have very little time. What do you say, doctor? Will you keep him for a fortnight, and give him a chance?"

The Head smiled.

"I could hardly refuse to do so," he said. "I will certainly do that. And if it turns out to be impossible to keep him at St. Jim's, I think I can undertake to find a more suitable school for him."

Lord Eastwood rose.

"Thank you very much," he said. "I shall see you again in a fortnight's time, and you can tell me what you think of him. In the meantime he can remain at the school?"

"Assuredly."

"Thank you! Now I will say good-bye, as I have to see my boys before I leave, and I have to leave almost immediately."

And Lord Eastwood shook hands very cordially with the Head, and took his leave. He left Dr. Holmes with a very thoughtful expression upon his kind old face. The Head's kind heart had prompted him to assist the earl in his generous scheme for the benefit of the gipsy lad. But he could not help feeling some misgivings as to how the boy would act under the restrictions of a school. There was likely to be trouble of many kinds in store for the gipsy schoolboy.

Lord Eastwood left the study, and made his way to the Third Form Room. The earl was a frequent visitor at St. Jim's, and he knew his way well enough—as a matter of fact, forty years before he had been a fag in the Third Form Room himself, and the old school had not changed since then. There was a loud disturbance proceeding from the Form Room as the earl approached the door, and he smiled. Until the hour when the Third Form master took

the Third in evening preparation, the fags had the room to themselves, and they preferred it to the Junior Common-room, where they were generally sat on by the Fourth and the Shell.

In their own Form-room, excepting when a master was present, they could do as they liked—and they usually did.

Lord Eastwood knocked at the Form-room door, and opened it. Two youths were confronting each other on the hearthrug, and there was a strong smell of burning bloaters. One of the two was Wally—otherwise Walter Adolphus, the youngest son of Lord Eastwood—and the other was his bosom chum, Jameson.

Evidently there was a rift in the lute at the present moment, however, as Wally and Jameson were brandishing their fists in each other's faces, and shouting at the same moment at one another.

"You silly, frabjous ass!" roared Wally. "You biffed the bloaters over, I tell you, and now they're no good!"

"I didn't!" yelled Jameson. "You biffed them over, you burbling jabberwock! Now they won't be fit to eat!"

"You fathead——"

"You chump!"

"Ahem!"

Wally swung round in alarm.

"My only Aunt Jane! It's the pater!"

In an instant all signs of warfare vanished. Wally came sheepishly towards Lord Eastwood.

"I—I didn't know you'd come, pater," he said. "As it was getting so late, we'd given you up. I—I was just talking to Jameson about bloaters."

Lord Eastwood laughed.

"You can go on talking to Jameson about bloaters, soon," he said. "I have only a few moments to stay. I want to speak a few words to you, Wally."

The other fags drew back respectfully. Wally dragged



"I hear you brought home a wild gipsy," remarked Levison. "May I have a look——" Squelch! He broke off as a pat of butter hurled by Jack Blake hit him full in the face. "Ow! Geroooch!" he spluttered. "Goal!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

out a chair for his lordship, and stood before him as he sat down.

"Go on, pater."

Wally spoke resignedly. It was evident that he expected a lecture. But it was not a lecture for the scamp of the Third this time.

"It seems that you have not heard what happened to me on the road this evening, Walter," said Lord Eastwood.

"No, dad."

"I was attacked by footpads."

"My only Aunt Jane!" exclaimed Wally.

"I escaped injury, Wally," said Lord Eastwood, "owing to a warning from a gipsy lad, whom, in return, I have taken charge of, and whom I am leaving at this school. He will be put in a very low Form. Wally, I want you to be a friend to him, and help him in every way you can. He is a wild boy, but I believe a thoroughly decent little fellow, and you will oblige me greatly, Wally, if you do everything in your power to help him on and make things easy for him at this school."

Wally nodded cheerfully.

"Certainly, dad!" he exclaimed. "I'll be only too glad I wish I'd been there. Was anybody hurt?"

"Yes; some of the gipsies were hurt."

"Don't I wish I'd been there!"

Wally appeared to worry more over the fact that he hadn't been there than over anything else in connection with the matter. But when Lord Eastwood took leave of his hopeful youngest son, he felt that he could rely upon Wally to do his best.

Wally, scamp as he was, was a fellow of his word, and he was certain to keep his promise to stand by the gipsy schoolboy.

CHAPTER 7.

Good News.

"PWAY, will you have anothah cup of tea, Kit, deah boy?"

"Thank you, sir, no."

"As I have wemarked before, my name is D'Arcy."

"Thanks, D'Arcy, no."

"Anothah jam-tart?"

"I will," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll have some tea and some more jam-tarts, if you like, Gussy."

And he did.

"Well," said Tom Merry, "I must say you've done us down well on this occasion, Blake, my son. I move a vote of thanks to the founder of this feed."

"Hear, hear!"

There was a tap at the door, and Lord Eastwood looked in, with a smile. The juniors turned towards him respectfully at once.

"May I come in?" asked the earl genially.

"Pway do, patah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We are vewy glad to see you. I hope you will be able to stay to suppah."

Lord Eastwood shook his head.

"I have to leave immediately," he said. "But I have a few words to say to you before I go. I have already spoken to Wally. I suppose you know, Arthur, what service this gipsy lad has rendered me?"

"Yaas, wathah; I've had it from Tom Mewwy. I wegard him as a weally decent chap."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Arthur, because I wish you to be his friend. Kit, come here."

The gipsy boy advanced towards Lord Eastwood, his cheeks flushing.

"You told me that you wanted to go to school, Kit," said Lord Eastwood. "You are sure upon that point?"

The gipsy's black eyes gleamed.

"Oh, yes, sir," he exclaimed eagerly. "I'm quite sure! Of course, I know I should have to live among the gorgies; but I do not feel like the other Romany chals about that, and I should not mind being among the house-dwellers."

Lord Eastwood looked a little puzzled. He did not know what a gorgio or a chal might be, but he gathered the meaning of the gipsy's speech.

"Would you like to remain at this school?" he asked.

Kit's eyes danced.

"At this school?" he repeated breathlessly.

"Yes."

"With these?" said Kit, with a wave of his dusky hand towards the juniors.

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"Yes, certainly!" he said. "You would be put very low in the school at first, but I have no doubt you would see

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a great deal of these juniors, with whom you appear to have made friends already."

"Yes, rather, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We'd look after him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I should think so, sir!" said Herries. "He's a ripping good sort, sir. Towser took to him at once."

"You'd like to stay here, Kit?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I have spoken to the headmaster, and he has agreed to take you for a fortnight, at least, to give you a chance as a St. Jim's boy," said Lord Eastwood. "If during that time you prove yourself suitable for the school, you will remain, and be educated here. If not, I shall find another place for you. But I will say that my belief is that, if you take care, you will be able to remain here, and perhaps distinguish yourself in the school. I am sure you will do your best."

"Yes, sir," said Kit. "I'll—I'll do my best. But how can I ever repay you for your kindness, sir?"

"So long as you work hard, obey your masters, and try to rise in the school, and do yourself credit, I shall consider myself repaid," said Lord Eastwood, holding out his hand to the gipsy boy. "Good-bye!"

He shook hands with Kit.

"Good-bye, my lads!" said Lord Eastwood. "Arthur, you may come down to the car with me."

"Yaas, wathah, patah!"

D'Arcy descended the stairs with his noble parent. It was ten minutes later when he came up. Kit was the centre of the crowd of juniors, and he was telling them of his gipsy life.

"What have you got there, Gussy?" asked Blake, as D'Arcy came in.

"A tenah, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's, with considerable satisfaction. "I was expectin' a livah, but the guv'nah has spunged a tenah this time. I wegard it as vewy decent of him. By the way, Kit, deah boy, the Head wants to see you in his study."

Kit rose and changed colour a little. The boy was quite unnerved at the prospect of facing the quiet, scholarly old gentleman who ruled the destinies of St. Jim's.

"It's all wight, deah boy!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Dr. Holmes is an awfully decent old sport, and he'll tweat you all wight. Don't be afwaid. Come with me, and I'll show you the way."

"Thank you!" muttered Kit.

Arthur Augustus led the way to the Head's study. He knocked at the door, and opened it for the gipsy.

"This is Kit, sir," he said.

"Thank you, D'Arcy! Come in, my boy!"

Kit entered the study. Dr. Holmes gazed keenly and earnestly at the gipsy boy. The nervousness Kit betrayed did not tell against him with the Head. It was only natural that a lad of his age should be unnerved in such strange and new surroundings.

"Sit down, my boy," said the Head quietly. "You are going to remain at St. Jim's, and we shall see how we get on together. I think I shall place you in the Second Form at first; but if you work hard, you will soon rise to be among boys nearer your own age. We shall see. Now I want you to tell me something of your history and associations, so that I shall understand with whom I shall have to deal. You have no objection?"

"I reckon not, sir."

"Very well, then."

And the Head asked questions, to which the gipsy boy replied frankly and freely enough. It was clear that there was, at all events, no deception in his nature. The Head frowned a little at the description of Melchior and the Fox, and the hint of poaching expeditions in which the boy had been very useful to the two ruffians.

"Do you not know that poaching is wrong, my boy?" the Head asked gently.

"Nobody ever told me so, sir."

"But you knew that it was punishable?"

"Yes, sir."

"You must remember it is wrong, and must not be done," said the Head. "It is likely that your old associates may attempt to get you back among them—is it not?"

"Very likely, sir."

"In that case, you had better be careful to remain within the school gates until the gipsies have moved on from their present encampment," said the Head. "They are not likely to come here for you."

Kit was a quarter of an hour in the Head's study, and when he left it, he left it an enthusiastic admirer of the Head of St. Jim's, and thoroughly determined to do his very best to get on at St. Jim's, and become a credit to his new school.



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Half-a-crown is awarded to the sender of every joke that appears in this column.

NOT WANTED.

Mike: "Was the boss annoyed when you told him you were leaving next week?"

Pat: "Yes—he thought it was this week."
Half-a-crown has been awarded to N. Walsh, Norlands, Hawthorn Drive, Newton, by Frankby, Wirral, Cheshire.

A READY RETORT.

Motorist (stopped for dangerous driving): "Constable, what I know about motoring would fill a book."

Policeman: "Yes, but what you don't know would fill a hospital!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Walker, Corn Heyes, Lymm, Cheshire.

PITY THE PATIENT.

Doctor: "Did you drink hot water an hour before each meal, as I ordered you to do?"

CHAPTER 8.

A Helping Hand.

THE news that the gipsy boy was to remain at St. Jim's caused considerable interest among the juniors.

During the evening nearly every fellow in the School House came to have a look at him, and Kit bore the general inspection with fortitude.

A few fellows like Levison and Mellich seemed determined to make a set against him from the start; but he had found friends in Tom Merry & Co., and he was likely to have more friends than foes in the School House.

His chief difficulty was likely to be his being placed in a very low Form—among boys years younger than himself. His education was so fragmentary that anything else was impossible.

It was settled that he was to be placed in the Second Form, and Mr. Tenby, the master of that Form, had an interview with the Head on the subject, and promised to do his best for the gipsy. And Kit was so humble about his shortcomings, and so eager to learn, that it quite touched the heart of the genial Turtle.

The First Form, indeed, would have been ahead of the gipsy boy in school knowledge, but it was quite impossible to place him among the "babes." And Tom Merry & Co. had agreed among themselves that they would all help in coaching the kid, as they called him, and helping him on with his lessons. And for that offer of help the gipsy was very grateful.

Lord Eastwood had left a sum of money to be expended on his outfit. In the meantime, the juniors, among themselves, provided him with clothes and other necessities. Wally's Etons were found to fit him pretty well, and the change into a white shirt and collar and an Eton jacket made a tremendous difference in the gipsy boy. And a thorough wash made a still greater difference. And a good combing of his wild hair reduced it to something like order. And he was initiated, too, into the mysteries of clean finger-nails and shiny boots. But he took to every change like a duck to water. There was no hesitation and no arguing, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy declared that it was a pleasure to instruct him.

Wally said that he was sure he would get on with him, and wished that he could be in the Third Form. And Wally, too, was a fellow to whom Kit took most of all.

Patient: "I tried, doctor, but I had to give it up after about ten minutes."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Creighton, 5, Morley Road, Observatory, Cape Town, South Africa.

UNFORTUNATE.

Major: "About this hand-grenade accident. You told the recruit to pull out the pin, count three, and then throw, didn't you?"

Sergeant: "Yes, sir. But 'ow was I to know the man stammered?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to K. Sayce, Virginia, King's Acre Road, Hereford.

SEEING THE DENTIST!

Jones (at football match): "How did you manage to get the afternoon off?"

Bones: "I told the boss I was going to see my dentist."

Jones: "And are you?"

Bones: "Yes, he's playing half-back for our team."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Taplin, 36, Whinfield, Farrar Lane, Adel, Leeds 6.

CLUB WANTED.

The hiker put down the rock cake he was eating and glanced at the notice on the wall of the shop: "Home-made cakes. Clubs supplied."

"Waitress," he called, "you forgot to supply me with a club!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Legon, 196, Browning Road, Manor Park, London, E.12.

NO DRIVER.

A Jew and a Scotsman went into partnership and bought a bus.

On the first morning they both turned up as conductors! Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Nevill, 50, Witherington Road, Highbury, London, N.5.

And he, too, most sincerely wished that he could get into the Third.

"I s'pose if I work hard and learn I shall get into your Form, Master Wally?" Kit said, when Wally was expounding his views on the subject just before bed-time.

"Oh, yes!" said Wally confidently. "You don't really have to know much, you know. And it's a lot of rot, too, compared with the things you do know. You'll have to teach me a dodge about catching rabbits. I'd rather be able to light a fire without matches than construe that awful stuff about the Gallic War. What does it matter to us which part of Gaul was inhabited by the blessed Aquitani, hey?"

"The—the what?" asked Kit.

"Aquitani," said Wally. "My only Aunt Jane! But you are a refreshing chap, you are! I never knew there was a kid in existence who didn't know that all Gaul was anciently divided into three parts, of which one was inhabited by the What-do-you-call-'em, and the second by Thingumbobs, and the third by the What's-his-names. You'll learn all that in the Second Form. You know who Julius Cæsar was, of course?"

"We had a dog called Julius," said Kit timidly.

Wally grinned.

"I expect he was named after Julius Cæsar," he replied. "Julius Cæsar was an old johnny who lived—I forget when. It was before my time, you see. He used to go to war in all sorts of places, and write rotten books about it, and we have to learn up the rotten books. He got himself done in at last—a chap named Brutus knifed him in a row."

"I should like to learn all about that," said Kit wistfully. "Oh, I'll give you some tips!" said Wally airily. "How are you in English history? Gimme the date of the Conquest?"

"What was that?"

Wally whistled.

"You lucky bargee!" he said. "You've never heard of the Conquest. That was when our family came to England, along with an old codger named William the Conqueror. I can't remember the date, or I'd tell you. Don't you know your kings and queens, either?"

"I—I'm afraid I don't know any of them," said Kit. "I know that King George and Queen Mary are King and Queen of England."

"Well, yes, you could hardly help knowing that, I suppose," said Wally, with a touch of sarcasm. "You'll have to learn up a whole bunch of 'em. I don't mind giving you some tips ready for the old Turtle. There were seven Edwards, and eight or nine Henrys, and King John signed Magna Charta at Runnymede."

"Did he?" said Kit. "What was Magna Charta?"

"I believe it was a paper of some sort, or something," said Wally cautiously. "Of course, you don't go very deep into these things in the Second Form. King John was an awful spoofer, and he signed Magna Charta; that's really enough for a chap to know. Then there was Henry the Eighth. He was a sort of Mormon, and had no end of wives, and used to chop their heads off. And you ought to know about Queen Elizabeth—good Queen Bess, you know. She was a tough old bird, and used to make 'em hop, I can tell you. Look here, we'll have a jaw sometimes, and I'll give you a lot of tips."

"You're very kind, Master Wally."

"I'm Wally, you ass. Don't give me any of your gammon," said Wally. "Look here, you buck up and get into the Third Form, and we'll have some jolly times together. Don't stick in that rotten Second among those inky kids."

And Kit promised that he wouldn't if he could help it.

That evening was one of intense excitement to the gipsy boy. His new surroundings almost took his breath away, and the kindness he met with on all sides softened him almost to tears, though he was far from being one of the crying kind. But when bed-time came, he had to part from the fellows he had come to know, and to go among the strangers of the Second Form.

Mr. Tenby took him in hand, and led him to the Second Form dormitory in the School House, where the Second went to bed.

All the Second, of course, had heard about Kit, and were curious to see him. Gander, the biggest boy in the Form, who ought to have been in the Third long ago, had announced his intention of putting the gipsy boy in his place if he tried any nonsense, but that was Gander's unpleasant way of putting it.

Gander resented the furor that the gipsy seemed to have caused, and seemed to fear that it might have the effect of putting him in the shade. He looked grimly at Kit when Mr. Tenby brought him into the dormitory.

"This is your new Form-fellow, my boys," said the Turtle, in his genial way. "I'm sure that you will give him a very hearty welcome to the Second Form."

"I don't think!" murmured Gander.

Mr. Tenby looked at him.

"Did you speak, Gander?" he asked.

"I only said we should do everything we could for the new boy, sir, if you wanted us to," said Gander submissively.

"Quite right, Gander," said Mr. Tenby, unsuspiciously. "I am very glad to hear you say that, Gander, very glad indeed."

And Mr. Tenby left the dormitory, leaving the Second to go to bed. The fags were not in a hurry to undress. They gathered round Kit, the gipsy.

"What's your name?" demanded Gander.

"Don't begin ragging the poor kid, Gandy," murmured a fair-haired and kind-looking kid, touching the cock of the Second on the arm.

Gander glared at him.

"You mind your own bisney, Wallis!" he snorted.

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, shut up! What's your name, kid?" shouted Gander.

"Kit," replied the gipsy simply.

"Got any other name?"

"No."

Gander gave a sneering laugh.

"Nice sort of kid to come to this school—I don't think!" he remarked. "Hasn't got a surname. Where did you get those togs?"

"Master Wally gave them to me."

"Oh, I thought you might have found 'em," said Gander humorously. "I believe you gipsies find a lot of things, don't you?"

Kit flushed.

"I'm not a thief, if that's what you mean," he said hotly.

"I don't know that you're not, you young ruffian," said Gander. "I think it's rotten, having a wild gipsy stuck in here with us. That's what I think."

"Oh, let him alone, Gander," said Wallis.

"Shut up, Wallis!"

"The kid hasn't done anything."

"Well, if he likes to keep his place, and keep a civil tongue in his head, that's all right," said Gander. "But I'm not going to have any of his cheek. Mind, you gipsy bouncer, if I get any sauce from you, you'll get it in the neck."

"I reckon—"

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"Don't talk to me," said Gander loftily. "As a matter of fact, I think I ought to give you a hiding to start with, to teach you civilised manners."

Kit's eyes flashed.

"I don't want to quarrel with you," he said, "but if you touch me, I shall hit back, I warn you of that."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gander, coming close to Kit, and towering over him with his broad shoulders and bullet head. "Well, I like that. Ha, ha, ha! Why, you young savage, I could knock you into the middle of next week with one hand."

"I don't think you could."

Gander peeled off his jacket.

"I can see that this gipsy bouncer is going to begin by being cheeky," he said. "I shall have to put him in his place sooner or later, and I may as well begin now. Put up your hands, you outsider."

Kit had no choice about putting up his hands. Gander was rushing at him, slogging out with all his weight. But he found a great surprise in the gipsy boy.

Kit was certainly a head shorter than Gander, but he was in the pink of condition, and he had learned, in his rough life, to use his hands in a way that the fags of the Second never dreamed of. He knocked Gander's fists up almost without an effort, and let out his right, and Gander tumbled over backwards as if a cannonball had struck him.

There was a shout from the fags.

"Gander's down!"

"My hat!"

Gander sat up, looking very sheepish. That blow might have been dealt by a grown man, from the force that Kit put into it, and Gander did not want any more. He had his position to maintain as bully of the Second Form, but nothing would have induced him to face another knockdown blow like that.

"Had enough, Gander?" asked Wallis, with a roar of laughter.

Gander staggered up.

"Oh, I was only funning," he said. "I don't want to hurt the kid."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Gander went to bed without another word.

Kit smiled quietly as he undressed himself. He was not in the least inclined to crow. He had seen that Gander was no match for him at the first glance. The other fags looked at the gipsy boy with a new respect. A fellow who could knock out the biggest fellow in the Form with a single blow deserved respect. There was no danger of Kit being ragged in the Second Form, whatever his shortcomings.

When the Turtle looked into the dormitory to put lights out, he found the Form very peaceful.

CHAPTER 9.

The Gipsies' Attack!

"LOOK out! The gipsies!"

Tom Merry uttered the sudden exclamation. It was early morning, and the Terrible Three were standing on the steps of the School House, looking out into the sunny quad. By the open gates of St. Jim's four or five burly figures in rough garb were standing.

Two of them, at least, were familiar to the eyes of the Shell fellows. Melchior and the Fox were easily recognised. Both of them wore big bruises plain to the view, proofs of a late encounter. The two rascals were looking savage and determined, and they evidently had come to the school for a purpose.

Mellish, who was in the doorway, laughed softly, and called out to Kit, who was in the passage.

"Hallo, young Gipsy! Here are your friends come to see you."

Kit ran quickly to the door.

His dark face changed colour at the sight of the gipsies.

"They all belong to our gang," said Kit. "They've come to take me back."

"Have they?" said Tom Merry grimly. "They won't find that so jolly easy, I think."

"That's what they mean to do, I reckon."

"We'll stop them fast enough. Blake, Gussy, Kangy—line up here!"

The juniors ran up at the call.

"Get some cricket stumps, Monty, quick!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying the approaching gipsies through his monocle. "If the wottahs twy any of their wotten twicks here, they will get a feahful thwashin'."

The gipsies caught sight of the boy standing beside the juniors. The Fox muttered something to the others, and all four of them ran forward towards the School House.

(Continued on page 14.)

GATHER ROUND, CHUMS, FOR OUR WEEKLY CHAT



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

HALLO, chums! As I announced last week, four great "Lumley-Lumley" stories are on the way. These are extra-special yarns dealing with the return and further adventures of that powerful and unusual character known as St. Jim's as the "Outsider." The first yarn of this splendid series appears in next Wednesday's grand number, and it is called:

"THE OUTSIDER'S RETURN!"

In spite of Lumley-Lumley's past sins at St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co. and most of the juniors are willing to let bygones be bygones, and accord him a hearty welcome on his return. But there are some who have doubts, who say the leopard cannot change his spots. Will the softer side of Lumley's hard nature prevail, or will he be the reckless and cynical Outsider of old? It remains to be seen. The powerful story of his latest adventures will grip and hold your interest as no yarn has done before.

"THE PRISON OF PERIL!"

For sheer thrills it would be impossible to beat the next nerve-tingling yarn of Mr. Brooks' best-ever series. "The Ten Talons of Taaz!" Archie Glenhorne is the next St. Frank's boy to come under the mystic spell of the Tibetan priests. His test of courage takes place in an old derelict convict prison on Bannington Moor, and what happens to him there will hold you breathless with interest. It's one long thrill. Don't miss it.

ENGLAND v. SCOTLAND

The international match between England and Scotland, J. McMurray, of Aberdeen, will be played at Glasgow on Saturday, April 6th, 1935. The first match between the two countries was played at the same place sixty-two years ago, and since then Scotland have won 26 games, England 18, and 14 have been drawn.

The first 'national, it is interesting to note, was staged on a cricket ground at Partick. And the following year, as for six other matches, the Surrey Cricket Club's ground at Kennington Oval was the venue. The receipts for this first international game in England were £106, whereas in the last international at Wembley £13,384 was the sum the F.A. received after ground and other expenses had been met. It just shows how popular our great winter game has become as a spectacle.

GLIDING RECORDS

To reach a height of 7,000 feet in an engineless plane is a feat that calls for as much courage as flying skill, and Flight-Lieutenant G. M. Buxton, of the London Gliding Club, proved that he had an abundance of both by his wonderful achievement of getting to a height of one mile and a third in a glider. This is a new world's record, and it was a thundercloud that helped Mr. Buxton to attain it. While he was

in the cloud he was blown about like a feather, and couldn't see a thing. But he gained height by the force of the wind until he reached the record-breaking altitude of 7,000 feet.

Another gliding record, which also adds fresh laurels to Great Britain's supremacy as a flying nation, has been set up by Mr. J. Laver, of the Dorset Flying Club. He has remained in the air in a glider for 12 hours 21 minutes, beating the previous British record by nearly 5 hours.

A BIG BRIDGE

The mighty bridge that will cross the Francisco Bay will be the largest in the world, Jack Barnes, of Newcastle. It will be eight and a quarter miles long, linking up San Francisco and Oakland. If all goes well the bridge will be opened in 1937, and will cost £19,000,000 to construct.

The bridge that spans Sydney Harbour is the biggest single-span bridge in the world, however, and is a marvel of British engineering. It cost £2,000,000, and took seven years to build. It is 1,650 feet long.

GRAND FREE GIFTS

Who wants a ripping sheriff's six-shooter? You all do, of course! Then see your newsagent to-day about getting the "Magnet." Our grand school-story companion paper is presenting this wonderful gift to its readers. You can have endless fun with this "six-shooter," and you can stage shooting matches with your chums. There are other gifts to follow in the "Magnet," and you will be well advised to make sure of getting them all by placing a standing order for this paper. It's on sale Saturdays, price 2d.

By the way, don't forget that the "Holiday Annual" and the "Popular Book of Boys' Stories" and other grand annuals that are advertised in the GEM are all brought within the reach of every boy by the Annuals Christmas Clubs that most newsagents run. By this means you can obtain your favourite annual on terms that most boys can afford. Why not see your newsagent about his Annuals Club to-day? That is, if you haven't already got your favourite annual.

TAILPIECE

Jinks: "I am told that your brother used to have great luck as an angler."

Binks: "Yes, he did. Everybody used to believe him!"

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS COUPON

13-10-34



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, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Dennis Shein, Vandeventer Street, Witbank, Transvaal, South Africa, wants pen pals; age 10-14; films, books, sports. Cecil Leith Garcia, 11, McWhinney Street, Kingston, Jamaica, wants pen pals; conjuring, swimming, photography. Miss Joan Hesketh, 34, Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, Lancs, wants girl correspondents overseas; age 16-19; swimming and other sports.

James H. Knox, Barkston, near Grantham, Lincs, wants a correspondent in British Isles or France; age 14-17.

E. C. Colville, 22, Crosgrove Road, Walton, Liverpool, 4, wants a pen pal in France; age 14-15; interested in chemistry and cycling.

Harry Sheasby, 111, Slade Road, Roughley, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, wants pen pals in the Dominions, U.S.A., Japan, etc.; age 14-18; stamps, cigarette cards.

Charles G. Trotman, 38, Walton Road, Woking, Surrey, wants to hear from match brand collectors.

Fred Harker, 10, Queen Street, Carlin How, North Yorks, wants a correspondent in Australia or New Zealand.

Bill Markle, 4,630, Connaught Drive, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, wants a pen pal who is interested in writing stories; age 14-15.

Andrew Illingworth, 7,238, Outremont Avenue, Montreal, Province Quebec, Canada, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Shirley C. Pilsen, 8, Gottingen Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, wants a pen pal; age 14-15.

Cecil Watson, 131, Addison Road, Marriekville, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants pen pals.

Miss Margaret Hutchinson, Duneraig, Beltinge Road, Herne Bay, Kent, wants girl correspondents interested in singing and animals.

Pte. C. Jackson, 4534223, A Coy., 1st Btn. West Yorks Regt., Roberts' Barracks, Quetta, India, wants pen pals, especially those keen on sports and snaps.

Sydney W. Daniel, No. 618, 133rd Street, Rangoon, Burma, wants pen pals; Europe, Great Britain, U.S.A., etc.; age 18-22.

Miss Jean Malkin, 63, Argyll Road, Normacot, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, wants girl correspondents; age 14-16.

(Continued on page 26.)

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THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY!

(Continued from page 12.)

Tom Merry raised his hand. "What do you want here?" he called out.

The Fox gritted his teeth.

"We want that kid!" he exclaimed. "Rats!"

"He's a Romany chail, and he belongs to us," said the Fox. "He's comin' back with us. He's run away, and we're goin' to take him back!"

"Quite right of him to run away from a set of thieves," said Tom Merry. "Two of you, at least, tried to rob Lord Eastwood last night. Kit certainly isn't coming back with you. You had better clear off!"

"Kit! Come here!"

The gipsy boy shook his head.

"I can't, Fox!"

"You're coming back with us!"

"I can't!"

"You've got to!"

"I won't, then!" said Kit, with a flash in his eyes. "These young gentlemen will stand by me. You shan't take me away!"

"Wathah not!"

The Fox came up the steps. Tom Merry & Co., grasping the cricket stumps Monty Lowther had hurriedly fetched, lined up, keeping the gipsy boy behind them. They evidently intended to give battle if the ruffians came on, and the Fox faltered.

"Will you give that boy up to us?" he demanded hoarsely.

"No!"

"He belongs to us. He's a Romany, and he belongs to us. We can't let him go! We're his people, his own blood, and he can't leave us!"

"He has left you!"

"He's got to come back! Kit, if you don't come, I'll whip the hide off you when I do get you!" said the Fox hoarsely.

Kit was very pale, but he did not waver.

"I can't come!" he said.

"We'll take you by force if you don't come!"

"Better not try!" said Tom Merry.

"For the last time—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

The Fox said no more. He dashed up the steps, his companions at his heels.

"Stand ready to repel boarders!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The juniors did not flinch. In a moment more a terrific combat was raging on the steps of the School House.

The gipsy gang made a desperate rush, but the juniors stopped it. The cricket stumps lashed out heavily. The juniors did not care how hard they hit. Melchior rolled down the steps, and lay groaning at the bottom. Another man went reeling down, and fell upon him, and Melchior grunted dismally.

Down went a third man, clasping both hands to his head where Tom Merry's cricket stump had smitten hard.

The Fox still came on, brandishing his cudgel. His face was white with fury. It seemed as if he would succeed in breaking through the defenders and reaching the gipsy boy. But the juniors closed in upon him, lashing out fiercely, and Fox rolled down the steps after his companions.

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No. 35. Vol. 1. (New Series.)

KEEN GAME WITH VILLAGERS

GUSSY GETS WINNING GOAL

Wally D'Arcy at the Microphone

St. Jim's are pausing in their Eastwood League programme this week to play a match with Grimes and his Rylcombe Village Eleven. Glyn's pater, Mr. Lyell Glyn, who lives near St. Jim's, has offered a silver cup to be fought for by Grimes & Co. and a team from the school.

Pheep! The ball's rolling—there goes Merry, winding his way through, a very wizard with the ball, past lunging defenders, till the goal yawns before him. Merry steadies himself to shoot—oh, catfish! He's charged off his feet just as he shoots! A fair enough charge, but the leather sails high, grazing the crossbar.

Now here come the villagers, all out for that silver cup! Grimes plays at centre-half, and feeds his forwards splendidly, while being as quick as a flash to frustrate an attack. A pass from him sends the hefty, long-limbed Burlow away. The village team's centre-forward has an average of three goals a game so far. He thunders down on the St. Jim's citadel, beating defenders by pace and brawn. Burlow steadies as he nears goal. Boomph! The sphere flies—Burlow has a kick like a horse! But Fatty Wynn flies, too—his plump hands reach out, grasping the ball firmly and holding it. While a gasp of chagrin goes up from the village supporters, Wynn coolly bounces the leather and boots it well clear of the danger zone.

Now Figgins is on the go, inspired, I guess, by his chum's success. Figgins smashes his way through the village defence, and then, with nobody but the goalkeeper before him, he unselfishly "draws" the keeper and puts across a nice ground pass, which Merry takes in his stride. Bang into the empty net the ball goes—and St. Jim's cross over leading 1—0.

Second half supplies thrills aplenty. The big-limbed Burlow, having been "bottled up" by Kangaroo in the first period, is all out to maintain his good average. But Burlow's pride is still further cast down by his failure to beat Wynn a second, a third, and even a fourth time. Fatty's series of wonderful saves comes to an end at last, though, Burlow netting deservedly with a dynamic drive to level the scores at 1—1, with only ten minutes to go.

Now it's Gussy's turn. Old Gus comes into the picture with a scintillating run down the touchline, finishing with a swerve in on goal that outwits both full-backs, leaving Gus the goalkeeper only to beat. Gussy is cool as a cucumber, and rams home an oblique shot which nestles neatly in the far corner of the rigging. Two to one for St. Jim's—and they're full value for a win! Pheep! There goes the whistle and the silver cup is ours. And Grimes, a true sportsman, is the first to congratulate us!



JUST MY FUN

By Monty Lowther

Hallo, everybody! We note Soccer teams are worrying about "league theory" again! There's been trouble, too, among the Wayland Post Office football team. It seems they all want to play "between the posts"! Wearing a golfing suit of an extra "loud" check, Mr. Selby went round in 189. We fear the suit was rather "too much of a check"! Skimpole looks in to ask why do we say 'Sssh!' for silence. We say 'Sssh! my dear Skimpy, entirely because we do not say Prrrt! Zzzzzt! or Mmmmmzz! Herries complains that he heard a peculiar noise in the Fourth-Form dormitory the other night. Blake suggests Herries probably woke up and heard himself snoring! "I can do most things," states Gore. "What would you call a really difficult job?" What about opening an oyster with a tram ticket, old chap? "Do criminals work in gangs?" inquires Digby. Oh, yes, especially when doing time!

A scientist says solid wood is from twenty to forty per cent gas. Now we know why Skimpole talks so much! The story that Mr. Ratcliff is so mean that he has trained a glow worm to perch on his nose so that he can read in the dark and save light bills is untrue. Rushden of the Sixth, who goes in for cycling, caught two village boys trying to steal his bicycle. He "tandem"! Now, quickly: Who gets all the breaks? Why, the waitress, of course! A Wayland landlord eyed his tenant. "I'm glad you've stopped complaining about that falling plaster," he said. "Yes," answered the tenant. "It's all down now!" Mr. Selby commanded the Third to write an essay on the funniest thing they had ever seen. Wally D'Arcy wrote: "The funniest thing I ever saw was too funny for words." Know this one? "Hey, waiter!" shouted the impatient diner. "Sorry, sir," came the reply, "we don't serve it!" As one Scot said to another: "How d'you come to break your tooth, McDonald?" "Oh," answered McDonald, "McTavish paid me that shilling he owed me!" A man named Jerry has worked fifty-six years in a glue factory near Wayland. Stick it, Jerry! Latest shipping news—steamer goes down with cargo of coal! "Scuttled"! Ow! Then there was the Scotsman who kept his gas burning night and day because, he said, it saved matches. Believe it or not!

An African tribe lives entirely on flies. Presumably the quickness of the hand bereaves the fly! Here's a cable from Australia: "Don Bradman voted the best batsman for years." Well, certainly for "centuries"!

Stop Press

St. Jim's v. Greyfriars
St. Frank's v. Rylcombe Grammar School
Next week's great Soccer games.

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Week Ending October 13th, 1934.

ST. JIM'S REGIONAL CALLING

TUNE IN TO YOUR FAVOURITE

Would you like to know just what various of your friends at St. Jim's are doing at this very moment? You can overhear what they are saying, and draw your own conclusions by tuning in below.

Here is a list of St. Jim's characters, with a wavelength for each. Consult the appropriate wavelength in the **AMPLIFIER** section, and you can hear each character talk.

TUNE IN TO:

Wally D'Arcy ..	111
Curly Gibson ..	112
Eric Kildare ..	4000
Gerald Knox ..	4433
Harry Manners ..	373
Tom Merry ..	141
Taggles ..	000
Toby (the page) ..	007

AMPLIFIER.

- 000 Wot I says is this 'ere—if that Master D'Arcy 'as hany more of 'is clothes delivered at my lodge, I hain't a-goin' to carry 'em hup into the 'Ouse—not without a tip! Still, Master D'Arcy is usually very generous!
- 007 That dratted Mr. Selby has sent me down to ask why his eggs and bacon were burnt five mornings following! Drat him, says I! Cook says they weren't burnt at all—it's Selby's temper that singes 'em!
- 111 Fagging ought to be abolished. I'm trying to think of a way to effect the reform. Just a moment—I must rush! I can hear Darrell calling!
- 112 Kildare is a sport—not a bit like Knox! I laid Kildare's tea nicely—and he gave me some tarts! Whoopee!
- 141 If we can do as well against Greyfriars as we did against Rookwood, we shall be in clover. The Friars are hot stuff, though—we shall have our work cut out!
- 373 Kerr says my new chess gambit is not unbeatable. We're playing a game to-night—and we'll see!
- 4000 Games practice to-morrow at three p.m. sharp. Any fellow who doesn't feel like it, speak up now!
- 4433 You little rotter, Gibson—you burnt that toast on purpose! Bend over!

Planes now connect England and the Channel Islands. Knox, who had a rough crossing last vac., is glad it will be "plane sailing" in future!

Films we should like to have made: Merry, Lowther, Manners: "The Three Musketeers."

Gore: "Captain Blood."
Blake: "Jack Ahoy!"
D'Arcy: "Gentlemen of the 'Press.'"
Reilly: "Men of Aran."
Herries: "Bulldog Drummond."

MORE POINTS FOR ST. FRANK'S

Special Message by Phone

Visiting Abbotsford, Nipper and his stalwarts found the not-too-successful Abbotsford team in unusually fine form. Fane led a dashing forward line, and in spite of Nipper's determined efforts, Abbotsford were definitely "on top" during the first half hour. Fane scored a really brilliant goal at the end of that time, Nipper attempting to retaliate a few moments later, but his shot going just wide. St. Frank's showed the value of steadiness on resuming, though, and Abbotsford were by this time feeling the effects of the rattling pace. Nipper broke through to level the scores after a few minutes, and soon after Travers netted to give the visitors the lead. Abbotsford pressed in the closing stages, but Handforth's goalkeeping was more than equal to the bombardment to which he was subjected.

St. Frank's are nicely placed at the head of the Eastwood League now, but there's a long way to go, and St. Jim's and other schools will offer a strong challenge. Nipper's special message is: "Let 'em all come!"

FULL RESULTS.

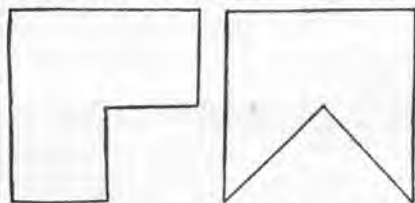
THE GLYN CUP.

RYLCOMBE VILLAGE 1	St. Jim's ..	2
Burrow	Merry, D'Arcy	

EASTWOOD LEAGUE.

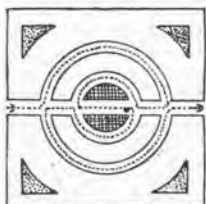
ABBOTSFORD ..	1	St. FRANK'S ..	2
Fane		Nipper, Travers	
BAGSHOT ..	2	ROOKWOOD ..	4
CLAREMONT ..	1	HIGHCLIFFE ..	6
REDCLYFFE ..	2	St. JUDE'S ..	2
RIVER HOUSE ..	0	GREYFRIARS ..	1

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER



A farmer had two fields, each to be distributed equally amongst his four sons, so that every son's portions were of the same shape and size. Here are the two fields, can you see how the farmer divided them up?

Solution of Last Week's Puzzle



"Hurrah!" roared Blake. The din of the disturbance had brought a crowd rushing to the spot. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, and several other Sixth Formers came rushing up. A crowd of juniors swarmed upon the scene. As the gipsies staggered to their feet they found themselves in the midst of the crowd.

"Better hook it!" muttered Melchior, with a groan.

"Kick them out!" rose the shout. And the gipsies were hustled and kicked to the gates of the school, and sent sprawling out into the dusty road. A mocking crowd lined the gateway as they snooped away. The Fox turned back, shouting in a strange tongue, and shaking his fist at the crowd of fellows.

Kit, in the Hall of the School House, stood pale and silent. Tom Merry clapped him upon the shoulder.

"Safe enough now, Kit," he said.

Kit nodded.

"I know that, Master Merry—thank you!"

"No need to wowwy about those wot-tahs!" said Arthur Augustus. "You're all wight now, deah boy!"

"I know," said Kit. "But—but they're my own people, after all—my own people!"

He moved restlessly away.

Tom Merry glanced after him, but did not speak again. He understood very well the conflict of feelings in the heart of the gipsy schoolboy.

CHAPTER 10.

First Morning in Class!

"KIT—I suppose I must call you Kit?" said Mr. Tenby thoughtfully. "I understand that you have no other name. Kit, I think I will place you a little apart from the rest of the Form, at least, and give you some—er—separate instructions."

"Yes, guv'nor," said Kit.

"Ahem! You call me 'sir,' and not 'guv'nor,'" said the Turtle in his mild way. "It is the—the custom here, Kit."

"Yes, guv'nor—sir!"

Mr. Tenby sat down beside Kit at his desk, a little apart from the rest of the Second.

The Second were busy working out problems set out on the blackboard.

Mr. Tenby surveyed the gipsy boy in a thoughtful way. Kit was willing and keen to learn, but his knowledge of school subjects was so lacking all round that the Second Form master hardly knew where to begin with him.

"Have you any—any knowledge of Latin at all?" he asked.

"No, guv'nor—I mean, sir!"

"Any—ahem!—acquaintance with Roman history?"

"I've heard of Julius Caesar," said Kit cautiously, remembering what he had learned from the hero of the Third the previous evening.

Mr. Tenby brightened up considerably.

"Very good!" he said. "Tell me what you know about Julius Caesar, my boy."

"Yes, sir. He was an old johnny—"

"A—a what?"

"An old johnny, sir, who lived a long time ago!" said Kit innocently.

"Bless my soul!"

"He was knifed in a row with a chap named Brutus, sir!"

"Dear me!"

"He wrote a lot of rotten books, sir!"

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr.

Tenby. "This is—amazing! If I were not convinced that you were quite ignorant, Kit, I should think that this was intended for impertinence!"

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"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Kit.
 "There, there! I am sure you did not mean it in that way!" said the Turtle soothingly. "But—but it is most extraordinary, all the same! We—we will take another subject. Can you do—ahem!—long division sums?"

"No, sir!"

"Do you know anything of arithmetic?"

"What is that, sir?"

"Ahem! We—we will take, say, English history. Do you know anything of the history of your own country, my poor lad?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Kit.

Kit had a very retentive memory, which was not in every way an advantage when D'Arcy minor of the Third was his instructor.

"There was seven Edwards, sir——"

"Good—very good!" said Mr. Tenby approvingly. "We are getting on—getting on famously! What more can you tell me, my lad?"

"There were eight or nine Henrys, sir——"

"Eight, Kit—eight!"

"Yes, sir. Henry VIII. was a Mormon, sir——"

"A—a Mormon?" stammered Mr. Tenby.

"Yes, sir; he had a lot of wives, and used to chop their heads off!"

"Dear me!"

"Yes, sir. Then there was Queen Elizabeth, sir," said Kit, feeling that he was getting on, and feeling very grateful to Wally for his hints upon English history. "She was called Queen Bess, sir."

"Very good! And what can you tell me about Queen Bess?" beamed Mr. Tenby.

"She was a tough old bird, sir!"

"What?"

"And she used to make them hop, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"And—and King John signed Magna Charta, sir!" said Kit timidly.

"Ah! You know something about King John, then? Now, what can you tell me about King John, my lad?"

"He was an awful old spoofer, sir!"

Mr. Tenby almost fell off the form.

"Dear me! I—I am afraid that your somewhat slight knowledge of English history has been gained in—in a somewhat irregular manner, Kit. May I inquire where you learned these extraordinary facts?"

"D'Arcy minor told me, sir."

"Oh, I understand now! As a matter of fact, Kit, your information is mostly correct. But—but it should have been couched in far better language. Queen Elizabeth was a severe old lady, not a tough old bird! Do you comprehend?"

"I—I think I do, sir."

"And Julius Cæsar was not knifed in a row—dear me!—he was assassinated in the Capitol of Rome!"

"Yes, sir."

"But I perceive in you a great aptitude to learn," said Mr. Tenby. "I am sure we will get on well together, Kit."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"Now I will set you a task—a very simple task," said Mr. Tenby. "We shall see."

Mr. Tenby kept a kindly eye on Kit during that morning, and did not neglect him. He found that the boy made astonishing progress. Kit's mind was like a field that had lain fallow for a very long time. It was all ready for the reception of the seed of knowledge, and the seed took root and grew with wonderful rapidity. The boy who had never heard the word arithmetic in the morning was able to do simple sums by the time classes were dismissed that noontide, and Mr. Tenby was well satisfied.

Tom Merry & Co. were waiting for Kit when the Second Form came out.

Tom Merry clapped the new boy cheerfully on the shoulder.

"How did you get on?" he asked.

"Very well indeed, I think, sir," he said. "Mr. Tenby said that I had done very well for a beginning."

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah; jollay good!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard that as wippin'!"

"How did you get on with the Turtle?" asked Monty Lowther.

Kit looked puzzled.

"The Turtle?" he asked.

"Yes; old Tenby!"

"He is very kind," said Kit. "But why do you call him the Turtle?"

"Ahem!" said Monty Lowther. "We call him the Turtle because he 'tortoise,' you know!"

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"Bai Jove! Because he taught us!" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard that as a wotten joke, Lowthah!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I considah——"

"Let's go down and have a kick at the leather," interrupted Tom Merry. "I want to see how this kid will shape at footer. Have you ever played, Kit?"

The gipsy schoolboy shook his head.

"No, Master Merry; but I've kicked an old ball about on the common, and I think I can kick pretty straight. But I never had a chance of playing a game."

"You shall have a chance now, then, kid."

The Terrible Three marched Kit out into the sunny quad. They were taking him in the direction of the playing fields, when Kit suddenly halted.

"Lemme stop a minute, guv'nor!" he muttered.

"Certainly!"

"But what——"

"It's Mother Barengro and little Pety!"

CHAPTER 11.

The Gipsy's Farewell.

Kit turned eagerly towards the old gipsy woman who was crossing the quad towards him, with a little swarthy lad holding her hand.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances. The newcomers were evidently more visitors from the gipsy encampment on the Wayland Common; but these had not come with hostile intentions.

"Who is it?" asked Tom Merry.

"Mother Barengro," said Kit, with a catch in his voice. "She brought me up, sir, and did a lot for me. That's little Pety."

"I suppose they've come to say good-bye?"

"I s'pose so, sir."

The Terrible Three stepped back as the old gipsy woman came up. Kit's face was pale, and there was a troubled look in his eyes.

He had gained what had been his life's ambition in coming to a good school, but it was with a wrench that he parted with the old free life and the only two people he had cared for in the gipsy camp.

The old woman came up. There were tears on her dark eyelashes. She did not glance at the chums of the Shell. All her attention was given to Kit.

"Kit, my little chal," said Mother Barengro, "you're leaving us, then? You don't mind your old mother coming to say good-bye, even in this grand school?"

"Of course I don't, mother," said Kit, kissing her dusky cheek. "I should have come to the camp to say good-bye, only I couldn't come. The Fox would never have let me get away again, even if he hadn't half killed me."

The gipsy woman nodded.

"It's best for you to keep away, Kit," she said. "It wouldn't be safe for you to see the Fox again anywhere where he could harm you."

"I know that, mother."

"We are moving on to-day," said the old woman, with a sigh. "I brought little Pety to say good-bye to you. You won't ever see us again."

Kit's face worked.

"I shall see you again, mother—some time. I shan't always be at school, and when I'm a man I shan't be afraid of Melchior or the Fox or the others. I'll take you with me then, to live in a house."

The old woman shook her head.

"No house for a true Romany woman," she said proudly. "I was born in a tent, and I've lived all my years on the road and the heath, and I shall not die among the house-dwellers. But perhaps I'll see you again, Kit—if you grow tired of walls and a house, and want to come back among your own folk."

Kit shook his head.

He knew that that would never be. Life had a path for him different from that known to the gipsies.

He threw his arms round the little boy, and hugged him. Pety was crying. Kit had been a good friend to him in the gipsy gang, perhaps his only one excepting his mother. Kit's heart was heavy. How the "kid" would miss him, and Mother Barengro, too! Had he been selfish in thus making his choice of a new life?

"Oh, Kit, what am I going to do without you?" muttered Pety.

Kit's eyes were wet.

"Mother, if you want me to come back——"

Mother Barengro shook her head.

"No, Kit. You were always different from the rest, and you have a strain of the blood of the house-dwellers in your

veins. You will go your way, Kit, and we shall go ours. But good-bye, lad, and an old gipsy's blessing upon you!"

She drew her shawl over her wrinkled, swarthy face for a moment.

"Come, Pety!" she said.

The child was climbing to Kit's knees, and crying.

"Won't Kit come, mother?"

"He can't, Pety."

"If you want me to come—" repeated Kit hoarsely.

"Mother, if you and Pety want me—"

He broke off. He looked round at the old elms, the stately buildings, the playing fields, and thought of the squalor and poverty of the gipsy encampment. The old gipsy read his thoughts in his face, and smiled ironically.

"You cannot come," she said. "Your path is not our path, your ways never were our ways. Good-bye, Kit! Come, Pety!"

Kit walked down to the school gates with them in silence. A caravan was waiting in the road. It was true; he could not go. The old life, though not twenty-four hours behind him, seemed as if it had passed centuries ago. He could no more have become a wandering gipsy again than he could have become a little child.

"Mother, if you would like Pety sent to school, perhaps—"

"Pety is a Romany," said the old woman proudly. "He will stay with his people."

Kit flushed.

"If you mean that as a reproach, mother—"

"I don't, Kit—I don't reproach you. I say that your ways were never ours, and I wish you well. Bless you—bless you! May you thrive and prosper! That's the last wish and prayer of the old gipsy."

Kit stood in the gateway, staring after Mother Barengro and Pety dully, his eyes blurred with tears. The old woman had not meant to reproach him, yet every word she uttered stung him like a reproach. She had been kind to him from his earliest years, yet how lightly he had left her.

It lay heavily upon his heart now. Yet was he to blame? For kind as Mother Barengro had been to him, the old woman was of the light-fingered fraternity, and Kit had had many a miserable hour when he saw in the old woman's caravan articles that he knew did not belong to her. It had been impossible for him to remain in such surroundings, where his scruples brought general dislike upon him, and, indeed, had often brought long naggings from Mother Barengro herself.

It was fate. The gipsy life was behind him, a new and unknown career was in front. But his heart was very heavy as he turned back into the gateway of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 12.

Kit's Perilous Climb!

KIT was not wholly easy in his mind for the next few days.

Although the gipsy band had moved on from Wayland, he could not quite believe that the Fox and Melchior were gone, and that he would not see them again. But it seemed to be true. The police were looking for the attempted highway robbers, and the gipsies were probably glad to place a good distance between themselves and the police.

The one desperate attempt they had made to get Kit away from the school had failed, and they had left the countryside without attempting it a second time.

Kit realised at last that they had left the countryside, and he breathed more freely. He thought often of Mother Barengro and Pety, and thought of them sadly; but he had much to occupy his mind in these days. Even the game of football, which he had longed to play, was not allowed to take up any of his spare time yet. He was almost feverishly anxious to qualify himself to take his proper place in the school, and Mr. Tenby reported to the headmaster that his progress in the course of a few days had been wonderful.

"I do not think it will be necessary to keep him long in the Second, sir," the Turtle said. "Of course, he is much too big and much too old for the Second Form. He shows a marvellous aptitude for learning, and I think that in the course of a few weeks it will be safe to put him in the Third."

"I am very glad to hear it, Mr. Tenby," said the Head. "And as for his general conduct—what is your opinion of that?"

"Exemplary, sir!" said Mr. Tenby, with emphasis. "A harder working boy I never saw; and he is very kind and peaceable in his manners. He has been engaged in two or three fights, I think, since he has been here, but I believe that the quarrels have all been forced upon him. Certainly

the boys he has had trouble with are far from being the most favourable specimens in the Lower School. With the best boys, such as Merry, Blake, and Figgins, he is on the best of terms."

"Then your opinion, Mr. Tenby, is that the experiment is a success—that we shall be able to make a good scholar of our wild gipsy?" asked Dr. Holmes, with a smile.

"I certainly think so, sir," said the Turtle.

"That is good news, and will be good news for Lord Eastwood. I shall certainly write to him and repeat your report of the boy."

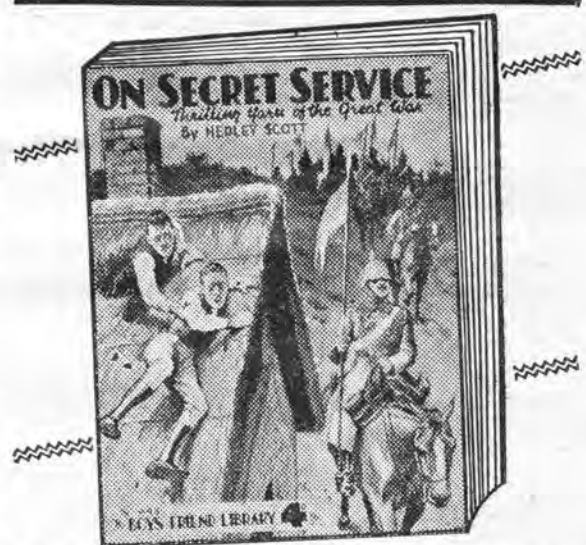
All Mr. Tenby's encomiums upon the gipsy schoolboy were well deserved. But there was one point the master had not considered. Kit was still very new to St. Jim's. He was in the first flush of his eagerness to learn—to take a good place in the school. When he had settled down to school life, it was possible that the wild gipsy blood would wake in him again—that he would grow sick and weary of the restraints of the classes, the regular meals, the order and discipline of the school, and would feel a restless longing for the savage freedom of the old life by wood and heath.

It was only too possible; in fact, it was certain, and it remained to be seen whether the boy's good sense would be able to combat successfully the wild promptings of the gipsy blood.

Tom Merry came up to his study after school on the fifth afternoon, and found Kit there. The boy had a Latin grammar open before him, and was working away at the first conjugation, steadily and patiently.

"Amo, amas, I love a lass," sang Tom Merry cheerfully. Kit looked up with a smile.

"You've done enough swotting for to-day," said Tom Merry, taking the grammar and tossing it across the study. "You'll make yourself ill, my son, if you don't get



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some outdoor exercise, especially after what you've been used to."

"I want to get on in the Form," said Kit.

"Yes; but there's such a thing as making haste slowly—*festina lente*, you know," said Tom Merry, laughing. "You are beginning to look quite pasty."

"Am I?" said Kit, with a sigh. "Perhaps I am, sir. But I do want to get on."

"You shall go on mugging Latin presently," said Tom Merry. "Just at present you're coming out for a run. I'm going to try you at footer. You've been dodging footer."

"I didn't mean to, Master Tom: but—"

"Then it will do you good. Come on!"

And Tom Merry picked up a footer in one hand, grasped Kit by the other, and marched the gipsy schoolboy out of the study.

Thus constrained, Kit made his appearance on the playing fields.

"Gweat Scott!"

"What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Look at that young ass!"

Tom Merry looked upward as Arthur Augustus pointed with a shaking finger. It was just after the footer practice, in which Kit had acquitted himself well. Tom Merry had glanced round for the gipsy schoolboy, but had not been able to see him, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's startled exclamation caught his ears.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

They were standing by the old tower of St. Jim's—the most ruinous part of what was left of the ancient edifice. The old stone walls, windowless, shattered, were covered with thick and clinging ivy. Broken and shattered as the old tower was, it still rose to a dizzy height, and from the top a splendid view could be had far over the Sussex downs and away to the sea.

But the stone staircase within was broken away, and boys were strictly forbidden to attempt climbing the ivy. There was a contest sometimes among reckless fags as to who could climb the highest on the old tower, but no one was known to have climbed higher than the first casement.

But as D'Arcy now caught sight of the gipsy schoolboy he was far above the first casement, clinging to the ivy like a cat, and working his way up to the next shattered aperture in the stone wall of the tower.

Tom Merry turned quite pale.

"The young ass!" he muttered. "He'll break his neck!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Call out to him!" exclaimed Blake, who had just come up.

Tom Merry laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"No. It might startle him. Let him keep on. I believe he intends to get in at the second window—he can't be mad enough to climb higher!"

The juniors watched the climbing gipsy with a strange fascination. He was in peril of his life—a false hold, the snapping of an ivy tendril, would have hurled him down to a terrible death on the earth at their feet. But he was perfectly cool, quiet, methodical.

It was very clear that this was not the first dangerous climb he had undertaken. It was the wild blood of the gipsy asserting itself.

In the Form-room and the study Kit worked hard—harder than any other junior in the school had ever worked probably. But that was not natural to himself. What was natural to the gipsy was the free life of the heath—he could run, swim, and climb. That was where his strength really lay.

And Kit was his natural self again now for the time. He was the gipsy boy, climbing the ivied tower as he had climbed risky walls and trees to escape the keepers in forbidden woods; climbing the perilous wall of the old tower because the exercise and the skill and the danger all had a fascination for him.

The gipsy schoolboy did not even look below. He did not know whether he was watched or not. He climbed to please himself. The juniors below watched him with wild eyes, in incessant fear for his safety, and gradually a crowd gathered there to watch him.

Seniors and juniors collected, with anxious faces, as the nimble figure of the gipsy grew smaller to their view, higher up the wall of the old tower. But they all refrained from calling out.

Knox, the prefect, would have done so, but Kildare stopped him. A call might startle the gipsy into losing his hold. They could only watch him and hope that he was going in at the second casement, and that he did not intend to climb on to the dizzy top of the tower.

"Oh, the young ass!" murmured Wally of the Third.

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"Why, I wouldn't risk that myself, and I can climb! I wish he'd buck up!"

But there was one person present who felt no fear or sympathy, and who only sneered! That one was Gander of the Second.

Gander had been on the worst of terms with the gipsy junior ever since the fight in the Second Form dormitory on Kit's first night at St. Jim's. Gander had been cock of the walk in the Second Form before that; Gander was nothing at all now. Nobody cared for Gander now. Indeed, when Gander was high-handed with some of the smaller fags now they had driven him off with threats to "tell the gipsy."

"What rot!" he muttered to Wallis of the Second.

"Blessed if I can see anything to make such a fuss about! I could climb up there quite easily if I tried!"

Wallis chuckled softly.

"I shouldn't recommend you to try, then!" he said.

"Do you think I couldn't do it?" demanded Gander fiercely.

"I jolly well know you couldn't!" said Wallis serenely.

"Look here, I'll jolly well show you—"

"Quiet!" said Kildare.

The voice of the St. Jim's captain silenced the fags. But Gander looked very angry and aggressive. As a matter of fact, he would never have dreamed of climbing the ivied tower if he had not seen Kit climb it. But his licking still rankled sorely with him, and he was determined not to be outdone on every point by the gipsy junior.

He stood watching the gipsy, and calculating his chances of making the same climb.

"You idiot!" whispered Wallis. "Don't you think of doing it, that's all! You'd lose your nerve and come a cropper!"

"Oh, rats!" said Gander.

"Dear me! What is this? What is this?"

It was the gentle voice of the Turtle.

Mr. Tenby came up, looking alarmed and distressed. He peered up at Kit through his glasses and gasped.

"The foolhardy boy! Oh dear!"

"Better not say anything, sir," said Kildare. "He's nearly reached the second window, and I think he'll manage it."

"Yes, yes. Do not alarm him, for goodness' sake!"

And Mr. Tenby watched the gipsy with the rest.

Kit was climbing more slowly now, and perhaps the long, severe strain was telling on his arms. The wall of the old tower was pierced by two windows, both of them in a very shattered state, and almost choked up with the masses of the ivy. The first window was twenty feet from the ground, and the second was twenty feet higher. Above the second window the blank wall ran up higher to thirty feet more, and there was broken away.

The tower had been much higher originally, but the summit was gone.

Cromwell's cannon in the days of the Parliamentary Wars had accounted for some of it, and the wind and the weather for the rest.

There was a faint rustle from the thick ivy as the gipsy boy climbed on.

"The kid's got plenty of nerve," Monty Lowther whispered. "I don't believe it would make any difference if we called out to him. He's got nerves like iron."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I wish he'd get into the window, all the same," he muttered.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There he is—at last," muttered Kildare, with a deep breath.

The gipsy boy was plunging through the masses of ivy by the broken casement. He disappeared in at the opening.

"Hurrah!"

But Mr. Tenby's face was very stern.

"I shall speak most severely to the boy!" he exclaimed. "He has no right to give us a fright like this. When he comes down—"

"My hat!" exclaimed Kildare. "The little beggar's coming out of the window again!"

"Dear me! Stop him!"

"Bai Jove!"

The head of the gipsy boy, with its untidy curly hair, came out from the thick ivy. He looked down at the crowd, and his white teeth showed in a smile.

Mr. Tenby waved his fat hand.

"Go back!" he shouted.

Kit looked astonished.

"I'm going to climb down, guv'nor!" he called back.

"I forbid you to do anything of the sort! Go back immediately, and descend by the steps inside the tower!" exclaimed the Second Form master.



"Get ready to repel boarders!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the Fox dashed up the steps, his companions at his heels. The juniors did not flinch. In a moment a terrific combat was raging on the steps of the School House. But the gipsy gang found the juniors equal to their rush, and one man was soon knocked out!

Rebelliousness gleamed for a moment in the gipsy's dark eyes; but only for a moment. Then he was the disciplined schoolboy again.

"Very well, sir," he replied.

And he disappeared from the window. Two or three minutes later he emerged into the quadrangle.

Mr. Tenby signed to him to approach. The gipsy boy ran up, dusty and dishevelled from his climb.

"Do you not know that boys are forbidden to climb the tower?" exclaimed the Second (Gander) master severely.

"No, sir. I—I didn't know."

"Ahem! Ignoratio legis neminem excusat," said Mr. Tenby impressively.

"Yes, sir," said Kit, who did not know in the least what that might mean.

"However, under the circumstances, I will excuse you," said the Turtle. "But it must never happen again—never! Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well."

The Form-master departed. Then Kit was surrounded by juniors. They slapped him on the back, slapping out great clouds of dust from the old ivy.

"You're a nervy young beggar!" said Tom Merry. "But don't do it again. We had our hearts in our mouths all the time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kit laughed.

"I'm sorry," he said. "But that wasn't much for me. I've climbed in much more dangerous places than that. And I couldn't help it. I like climbing. But I won't do it again, if it's against the rules."

"Bettah not, deah boy!"

"What a lot of rot about nothing!" said Gander. "I could do it easily."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you—"

"I dare say you could," said Kit good-naturedly, "There's nothing in it."

"Oh, you shut your jaw!" said Gander ungraciously.

At which the gipsy shrugged his shoulders. There was evidently no getting on with the defeated cock of the Second.

CHAPTER 13.

Kit Camps Out!

KIT turned to his lessons that afternoon with all the more zest for having let himself go for once.

Already, though he had been less than a week at St. Jim's, the gipsy blood was reasserting itself.

Once a gipsy, always a gipsy, was a true saying; and Kit felt the truth of it. Old Mother Barengro's hint that he might grow sick of stone walls and windows, of roofs and doors, had much of truth in it.

On a fine night Kit pined for the open sky, and the wind on his face as he slept. He would wake in the night, expecting to see the dark blue canopy of heaven over his head, and would feel a sense of being crushed by the ceiling over him, of being confined by the walls and doors and windows. It seemed that St. Jim's, large as it was, was not large enough for him to breathe in freely.

Such thoughts and feelings the gipsy schoolboy kept

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to himself. He confided them to no one. He felt that the other fellows would not understand—that they might even think him ungrateful and repining.

He did not repine. At the times when he felt most cramped by the restrictions of school life, he never felt a desire to change back to his old life. What he would have liked was an occasional outbreak into the free life of the gipsy, and his school life to run on just the same.

That could hardly be managed at a place like St. Jim's. And so Kit, as well as he could, crushed down his vague longings for the sky and the heath, and kept grimly to his work.

Football afforded him great relief, and he threw himself into the game with a keenness that delighted Tom Merry. He had a turn of speed, a sureness of eye, that stood him in great stead in the grand old game, and it was pretty clear that ere long he would be a useful player in the junior team—a fact that soothed the pride of the Second Form—a Form that had certainly never given a player to the junior team before.

But all that was gall and wormwood to Gander. Gander seemed to be the only enemy that Kit had. Gander tried his luck in a second fight, and was more hopelessly beaten than before. After that Gander contented himself with words and sneers which Kit bore patiently, feeling in his heart sorry for the conceited fellow, whose conceit had had so terrible a fall.

Gander, indeed, was not able to trouble the gipsy schoolboy very much. Kit was so kind and good-natured that he was becoming very popular in the Form, and in the Lower School generally.

Mr. Tenby's reports to the Head were all favourable, and the Head was pleased to hear them.

When the fortnight Lord Eastwood had stipulated for was expired, there was no doubt that the gipsy schoolboy would remain at St. Jim's. Of the vague, wild longings for the freedom that was now forbidden—of the gipsy blood that sometimes ran riot in the boy's veins, quiet and sedate Mr. Tenby knew nothing, and guessed nothing.

That climb up the ivied tower was Kit's first surrender, as it were, to the promptings of the gipsy blood. But it was not the last. In the night—one moonlight night with a soft wind—Kit sat up in bed in the Second Form dormitory.

The hour was late—he had heard half-past ten strike. All the Lower School were in bed, and probably most of the seniors. The dormitory seemed insufferably hot to Kit, and the walls as if they were about to fall upon him.

He turned from side to side in his bed, but could not sleep.

He slipped out of bed at last. He did not mean to do so, but he was acting upon an instinct—the instinct of the gipsy. He dressed himself, hardly knowing what he intended to do; only he must escape from the walls and roofs and windows, or else suffocate.

The School House was very quiet as the gipsy boy stole from the dormitory.

Lights gleamed under several doors as he groped his way downstairs, but he made no sound; he was accustomed to treading too lightly to disturb a rabbit.

In a few minutes more he was in the spacious quadrangle, with a cold, clear wind blowing on his cheek. He threw back his head and drew in deep draughts of it.

Kit's eyes were gleaming now.

For a time he was a schoolboy no longer—he was a gipsy—the quadrangle was the heath, where he could sleep under the glimmer of the stars, with the wind on his face.

In a dark and secluded corner of the old quad the gipsy lad gathered fuel, whipping twigs and small branches from the trees, and built himself a fire.

In the red glow of it, as he blew it into a blaze, his dusky face glowed happily. He was happy now—he was Kit, the gipsy, once more—the wanderer of the wood and the heath, the son of the wild.

The gipsy had forgotten St. Jim's. The fire smoked, and blazed up, and glowed in the darkness of the quadrangle. The gipsy schoolboy curled up beside it with a sigh of contentment. He was happy now. He fell into a peaceful slumber, with a smile playing over his dusky features.

In the Second Form dormitory there was one wakeful. It was Gander.

Gander of the Second had seen Kit leave his bed, and had sat in his own, wondering. All kinds of black suspicions were moving in Gander's mind. He did not make a sound as Kit went—but he sat thinking it out. His bitter dislike of the gipsy boy quickened his suspicions.

What had the gipsy schoolboy left the dormitory for?

What could his motive be? He had dressed himself, and crept out with such caution, that it was clear to Gander that he had some underhand motive. Was he going to

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join some crew of revellers in the village—as certain black sheep of the Sixth Form of St. Jim's were suspected of doing? Was he going to rob the school, and leave in the darkness, or to admit some gang of gipsy burglars to the place, who would raid the school silver?

Gander sat in bed shivering with fright and excitement. Had he not been blinded by his dislike of the gipsy junior, he would have known that his suspicions were wildly exaggerated; but he was too glad to suspect the boy he hated. It was not long before Gander came to the conclusion that it was his duty to warn the Form-master that Kit had left the dormitory in the middle of the night.

If mischief came of it, Gander would be blamed afterwards for not having told—that was certain. He crept out of bed, hastily put on his trousers over his pyjamas, and quitted the dormitory, and a couple of minutes afterwards he was tapping at Mr. Tenby's door.

The master of the Second had not gone to bed. He called out to Gander to come in, and the fag entered, to be greeted with a stare of astonishment.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Tenby. "Is that you, Gander? Bless my soul! What are you doing out of bed at this time of night?"

Gander was shivering between cold and excitement.

"If you p-p-please, sir—"

"What ever is the matter, Gander?"

"It is about the gipsy, sir."

"Kit! Yes?"

"He's gone out, sir!"

Mr. Tenby jumped.

"Gone out! Kit has gone out?"

"Yes, sir."

"Goodness gracious! You mean that he has left the dormitory?" asked the Turtle.

"Yes, sir, more than half an hour ago."

"You don't mean that he has left the House?"

"I don't know, sir; but I think he has."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Form-master abruptly. "Why should he run away? Stuff and nonsense!"

"I—I thought it my duty to tell you, sir," said Gander submissively. "If he should be playing any—any tricks, he might come to some harm, sir."

"Quite right, Gander," said Mr. Tenby. "Quite right and proper. You may go back to bed now, and I will look into the matter. Ahem, I will go with you, in order to make quite sure that Kit is absent."

Mr. Tenby went back to the Second Form dormitory with Gander. There was no doubt that the fag's information was correct. Kit's bed was certainly empty.

"Go back to bed, Gander," said Mr. Tenby. "I will look for the boy."

"Yes, sir."

Gander turned in, with a comfortable feeling that Kit was booked for a licking at last.

Hitherto, the gipsy had kept on the right side of the Form-master; but he could hardly escape punishment for this escapade, Gander thought.

Mr. Tenby hurried away, and called in at the study of Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, for assistance in his search.

Mr. Linton was amazed and alarmed. Perhaps a suspicion of gipsy burglars being let into the school crossed his mind, as it had crossed Gander's. He suggested calling Kildare.

The captain of St. Jim's was in bed, but he turned out at once when Mr. Linton called him. He dressed hurriedly and came out.

"Kit is missing from the dormitory," Mr. Tenby exclaimed. "It is necessary to search for him. He appears to have left the House."

"By Jove, sir!"

"I fear that it may be a case of bad associates," said Mr. Linton. "We know that all the boy's old associations were bad."

"I think not, sir," said Kildare, "if I may say so—more likely it's a freak on his part—you know he's a gipsy, sir, and he may have wanted to get out for a run at night; but I'm sure he doesn't mean any harm."

"Your faith in him does you credit, Kildare," said the master of the Shell a little stiffly, "but we shall see. Let us search for him."

And the search for Kit began. And unconscious of it, Kit lay quietly sleeping by the fire in the distant corner of the quadrangle, dreaming of green fields and cool streams and long, white roads.

CHAPTER 14.

Once a Gipsy—

"H E is certainly not in the House," said Mr. Linton, ten minutes later.

"The Form-room lower window is unfastened, sir," said Kildare. "I think it's pretty certain he's let himself out into the quad."

"Then we will look there."

They quitted the House quietly. It was growing towards midnight now, and most of St. Jim's was asleep. Unless there was real cause for alarm, they did not wish to awaken the House.

The quadrangle was dark where the shadows of the trees and the buildings fell. The moon was peering over the old tower, and gleaming on the ivy.

Kildare started.

"Look there!" he muttered.

"What is it?"

"I saw a light."

"Indeed! Where?"

Kildare pointed. The two masters followed his finger with their gaze; but blackness had swallowed up the light, if there had been one.

"I can see nothing!" said Mr. Linton, with asperity.

"I am sure I saw a light," said Kildare. "It was very close to the ground—a red glow, like a fire blazing up for a moment in the wind."

"My goodness!" exclaimed the Turtle. "Dear me! There it is! I saw it then! Look!"

There was no doubt of it now—even Mr. Linton could not doubt it. The wind was blowing, and in the far distance, from the darkness of the trees, came a red glow close to the ground, as if a fire was flaming up under the wind.

"Amazing!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "Can it be—"

"I bet it is!" muttered Kildare. "This way, sir."

Kildare led the way through the elms. There was no doubt now about the fire. It was burning with a dull red glow that fell weirdly upon the trunks of the old trees. They came up to the fire breathlessly, and halted. Beside the fire a figure was stretched in slumber, and they did not need telling who it was.

It was the gipsy schoolboy.

They looked down upon him in silence. Mr. Linton looked angry, Mr. Tenby amazed, and Kildare was grinning quietly. He was not surprised at this escapade on the part of the half-tamed gipsy.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Tenby, breaking the silence. "Most surprising! What can have induced the boy to act in this extraordinary manner? Is he a little weak in the head, do you think?"

Mr. Linton compressed his lips.

"I think it is a wild gipsy trick," he said. "I consider it absurd to admit such a boy to the school at all. As you have found him, there is no need for me to stay here. I do not wish my rheumatism to revive."

And the master of the Shell walked away.

Mr. Tenby looked at the sleeping gipsy again, and then at Kildare.

"This is most extraordinary, Kildare," murmured the Turtle.

"I don't think so, sir. The kid is a gipsy, and I dare say used to sleeping in the open air," said the St. Jim's captain. "It's really quite natural, under the circumstances."

"Ahem! Then, as a prefect, you would not punish him?"

"No, sir! I'd give him a good jaw—ahem!—I mean, a good talking to!"

Mr. Tenby smiled.

"Then that is what I will do, Kildare. Wake him up!"

Kildare stooped, and shook the gipsy boy by the shoulder. Kit started into wide wakefulness at once.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed.

He sprang to his feet.

"What do you mean by this, you young rascal?" demanded Kildare.

Kit hung his head. The enormity of his offence rushed upon him at once. His dusky cheeks were crimson.

"You have caused me a great deal of anxiety, Kit," said Mr. Tenby.

"I'm so sorry, sir," said Kit penitently. "But—"

"I'm afraid you are more of a gipsy than we understood, Kit," said Mr. Tenby submissively. "If you feel that you cannot submit to restraints of school discipline, my lad, you should not have come here."

"Oh, sir—"

"If you wish to change—"

"Oh, I don't, sir—I don't!" Kit exclaimed, in dismay.

"I—I'm very sorry, sir. I know I've done wrong. But—I couldn't help it, sir. I felt suffocated indoors. I—I've slept in the open air nearly all my life, sir. When I wake up and can't see the stars, sir, I feel as if I were in prison. But I won't do this again, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Tenby. "If you will undertake not to do it again, we will let the matter rest there, my lad. Come in now."

Kit reluctantly tramped out the remainder of the fire, and followed the master of the Second and Kildare into the House.

"Go back to your dormitory; and, remember, no more escapades of this kind," said Mr. Tenby, laying his hand upon the boy's shoulder.

"Yes, sir," said Kit.

Gander was awake and sitting up in bed when Kit came in and closed the door quietly behind him.

Gander peered through the shadows.

"Is that you, Gipsy?" he asked.

"Yes," said Kit quietly.

"Where have you been?"

"In the quad."

"Oh! I thought perhaps you'd been out to let burglars into the school, or something of that sort!" sneered Gander.

As a matter of fact, Gander was extremely annoyed to find that Kit had evidently not been out of doors for any dishonest purpose.

Kit's eyes flashed in the gloom.

"Do you want me to come and bump you out of bed, Gander?" he demanded.

"N-no!"

"Then you'd better shut up, I think."

Gander thought so, too.

Kit turned in. But he had little more sleep that night.

In the quad he had been sleeping soundly; in the dormitory he was restless and uneasy. Once a gipsy, always a gipsy. It was hard to live with the house-dwellers. But Kit had thought it out and made his choice, and he realised, with a sigh, that he must stand by his choice—that he must be the one thing or the other, and that he could not sometimes be a schoolboy, and sometimes a gipsy.

He realised that it would not do; and in the morning he realised it more clearly still. For when the fellows were up, the burnt patch under the trees in the corner of the quadrangle was immediately discovered, and a crowd gathered round it.

Kit found Tom Merry & Co. on the scene when he came out, and he coloured as he heard the comments and the exclamations of wonder, and the surmises as to what had caused it.

"Somebody's been campin' out here, deah boys," pronounced Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, after surveying the burnt patch for quite a long time through his eyeglass.

Blake clapped the swell of St. Jim's upon the shoulder.

"Bravo, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "That's ripping! Sherlock Holmes couldn't have done better with a telescope and a magnifying glass—he couldn't really—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I hear that it was that blessed young gipsy," said Kangaroo. "Somebody says he was sleeping out in the quad last night."

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Why, here he is!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Hallo, kid! Come here. Are you responsible for damaging this sacred spot in such a reckless way?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kit flushed under the eyes that were turned upon him.

"Yes," he said.

"Bai Jove!"

"I camped out here last night," said Kit awkwardly. "Mr. Tenby knows, and he's looked over it. I was sick of the dormitory. That's all!"

He walked away. He left the juniors laughing and talking.

The story of the gipsy's camping out in the quad was soon all over St. Jim's. Kit was not surprised, after morning lessons, to receive a summons to the Head's study. The story was certain to reach the Head, and it was pretty certain that the Head would take notice of it.

Kit entered the Head's dreaded apartment with a shiver in his knees.

Dr. Holmes was looking more stern than usual.

"I have heard of your extraordinary escapade, my boy," he said. "I am surprised and shocked."

Kit groaned inwardly. It was not likely that this quiet, scholarly old gentleman, brought up in the most disciplined way, accustomed to order all his life, would understand the wild promptings of the gipsy boy's heart. It was useless to attempt to make him understand.

"I am very sorry, sir," he said.

"Your Form-master tells me that he has consented to overlook the matter upon your promising not to do such a thing again," said the Head severely. "I am willing, therefore, to allow the matter to rest where it is. But please remember that I am very disappointed in you. That is all. You may go."

And Kit went—with a heavy heart. He was paying dear for that midnight freak. The Head was disappointed in him—and the Head did not understand how sharply, how bitterly his words had cut the gipsy boy. It was hard for Kit to keep back his tears as he walked slowly down the passage. The Head, the kind old gentleman whom he had learned to respect, was angry with him. How could he set himself right again in Dr. Holmes' estimation? That was the question now that troubled the mind of the gipsy school-boy.

CHAPTER 15.

Kit's Triumph.

"**C**HUCK it, my son!" said Wallis of the Second, admonishingly.

Gander snorted.

"I tell you I can do it!"

"I tell you that you're an ass."

"You think I can't do anything that that gipsy cad can do?" demanded Gander, with withering contempt.

"Certainly," said Wallis. "He can lick you, and you can't lick him."

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

"I'm not. You asked me the question."

"I'm going to climb the tower and get in at the second window," said Gander, standing with his hands in his pockets and regarding the tower, with its masses of clinging ivy, black against the setting sun—"or, rather, I'm going to pass the second window and go higher than that gipsy cad went."

"Oh, don't play the giddy goat!"

"I'll show you!" said Gander, taking off his jacket.

There was a chorus of objections from the fags who were there. Gander took no notice of it. Whatever Kit could do, he could do—that was a fixed idea in his mind. He took a hold on the ivy and prepared to climb.

Wallis ran forward.

"Gandy, old man, don't be a silly ass!" he entreated. "You can't do it—you know you can't! I know you can't, anyway. Don't break your neck!"

"Oh, rats!"

Gander drew himself up into the ivy.

The fags watched him breathlessly. Gander had been a great man in the Second Form before the gipsy boy came. After all, he might be able to climb the tower as Kit had done. He was committed to it now, at all events.

Gander climbed up steadily and quickly enough till the first window was reached. Many fellows at St. Jim's had done as much as that. But when the window was passed, and he drew on towards the second casement, Gander's progress became slower. He was seen to pause and hang on with his hands and feet while he took breath. The strain of the weight upon his arms was telling upon Gander. He had not the elastic wiriness of the gipsy in his limbs; he had not been so trained.

"Come back!" shouted Wally.

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Gander did not reply. He needed all his breath for climbing. He climbed on after a long pause, and the fags watched him breathlessly. On, higher and higher, till he was nearly as high as the second window. But he was a good distance from the window, too, one side, and would have to scramble sideways to reach it.

He had announced his intention of passing the window and outdoing the gipsy boy, and evidently he intended to carry out his boast.

"The fathead will break his neck!" said Jameson. "It's all very well going up. But how is he going to get down again?"

"My hat! Yes, that's a jolly good deal harder!"

Gander was still climbing. But now he was seen to pause; and the fags gave a breathless gasp as a loud crack was heard. A strong tendril of the ivy had parted under the weight of the climber, and Gander was seen to sway.

"He's falling!"

But he did not fall. He clutched wildly, and caught a fresh hold with his left hand—his right hand never lost it. But the effort extracted every ounce of wind he had left, and the crack of the breaking ivy had sent a thrill of terror through him. He was half a dozen feet below the level of the second window now, and some way to the left of it. He hung on to the ivy without motion.

"Come down!" shouted Wally.

There was no reply and no movement from Gander. It flashed upon the fags what was the matter. He had lost his nerve, and did not dare to move.

"My hat!" muttered Wally. "He's going to fall—he must fall now!"

Gander did not move.

The excited exclamations of the juniors soon brought a crowd to the spot.

Tom Merry & Co., in football garb, arrived from the playing field, and Kit came from under the elms with a book in his hands. Kildare of the Sixth dashed up with Darrell, his face very pale. The crowd thickened at the foot of the old tower, but they stood well out from the ivy. For there was a conviction now that Gander would fall. If he had lost his nerve he would never make the descent successfully. And he had evidently lost it.

From above, from the depths of the dusky ivy, came a faint cry:

"Help!"

Faces were deadly pale now. Kildare looked up at the old tower, his lips white.

"Can't you climb up to the window, Gander?"

"Help!"

Gander could do only one thing—cling desperately to the ivy, with every nerve in his body quivering with terror, till his strength failed him and he fell.

Kildare made a quick step towards the tower, but Darrell held his arm.

"Don't be an ass, Kildare! The ivy won't bear your weight at that height—it will hardly bear the kid himself!"

The stalwart Sixth Former paused. It was only too true.

"The ivy's thinner and weaker higher up," muttered Tom Merry. "It would never stand you, Kildare. I doubt if it would bear one of us, along with the kid there."

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy slid his eyeglass into his pocket. "I weally think I had better have a twy to weach him, Blake."

Blake grasped the swell of St. Jim's.

"Keep back, you ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I couldn't do it," said Blake. "So I know you couldn't! I—"

"I'm going, guv'nor!"

Kit ran into the tower. The crowd outside waited. Kildare had raised his hand to stop the gipsy boy, and dropped it again. Surely enough, Kit had more chance than anyone else of reaching the unfortunate boy in the ivy. If anyone could save him, the gipsy could. But could he? Would it not mean two deaths instead of one upon the hard stones?

There was no ladder at St. Jim's to reach to half the height. Kildare muttered to the juniors to fetch blankets to hold under the ivy, and a dozen fellows raced off to the dormitories to get them; but it was not likely they would be in time to be of any use. Besides, a fall from so great a height would drag the blankets from the strongest hands.

Nearly all St. Jim's were on the spot now. The Head had come out, pale as death, as he saw the peril of the rash climber.

There was a murmured cheer as the form of the gipsy schoolboy was seen to emerge from the second window, high up the old tower. Kit climbed out upon the ivy, and his soft voice reached the ears of Gander a dozen feet or more from him.

"Buck up, old fellow! I'm coming!"

(Continued on page 28.)

THE ONE AND ONLY HANDFORTH DEFIES THE PRIESTS OF TAAZ!



BY EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

The Call of TaaZ!

MR. CROWELL, the Remove-master of St. Frank's, gave his desk a sharp rap. "Handforth!"

But Handforth took no notice. The burly leader of Study D was sitting at his desk, staring dreamily into vacancy. Quite clearly he was not attending to the geography lesson. Morning lessons had not been too happy in the Remove, for Mr. Crowell was in one of his acid moods. Nothing pleased him. The Remove, as a whole, was feeling a bit fed-up.

"Handforth!" roared Mr. Crowell.

Edward Oswald started, and he looked at the Form-master in some bewilderment.

"Present, sir!" he blurted out.

"Silence!" commanded Mr. Crowell, as a titter went round the room. "I am not calling the roll, as you appear to imagine, Handforth. I'm trying hard to instruct you in geography."

"Why, that's right, sir!" said Handforth, keeping his attention on Mr. Crowell.

"I am hoping—vainly, I expect—that you will remember something of what I have told you," continued Mr. Crowell, with heavy sarcasm. "To what part of the world was the great Napoleon exiled after his downfall?"

"Surf Island, sir," said Handforth mechanically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was no titter this time, but a yell. Surf Island, as everybody in the Remove knew, was a tiny uninhabited islet in the mouth of Langden Bay, just round the promontory of Shingle Head.

"What did you say, Handforth?" thundered Mr. Crowell, striding forward.

Handforth jumped, and looked confused.

"I—I—I—" He paused, incoherent.

"You will write me a hundred lines, Handforth, for impertinence!" continued Mr. Crowell tartly. "You know perfectly well that Napoleon was exiled to St. Helena."

Handforth sank back without a word into his seat. Church and McClure, his faithful chums, who sat on either side of him, gave him curious glances.

"Pull yourself together, Handy!" murmured Church, giving him a nudge. "What are you dreaming about?"

But Handforth took no notice. He was staring straight in front of him again, and there was a dreamy expression on his face. He seemed to be far, far away.

For a space, Mr. Crowell gave his attention to other boys in the Form, and the lesson proceeded quietly enough. Some minutes later when Mr. Crowell happened to glance

in Handforth's direction again, he set his lips in a thin line and rapped his desk harder than ever. There was a fixed look on Handforth's face which Mr. Crowell could not understand.

"Handforth!" he shouted angrily. "Stand up!"

Handforth did not move; apparently he did not hear.

"Handforth!" repeated the Form-master, in a loud voice. "Attend to me! Why, good gracious—Come back, Handforth! Come back this instant!"

For Edward Oswald, ignoring Mr. Crowell as though he did not exist, had left his desk, and was now walking deliberately to the door. He did not pause. He opened the door and passed out.

"Handforth!" shrieked Mr. Crowell, beside himself.

The door closed. Handforth had gone. Mr. Crowell stood at his desk, mingled astonishment and anger showing in his face.

Nine juniors exchanged startled glances. The nine Removites, who were all under the "curse of TaaZ," knew what had happened. The mysterious yellow men of Tibet—the sinister priests of TaaZ—were, at some distance, concentrating their will-power on the next victim. They were compelling Handforth to obey.

Ten St. Frank's boys had incurred the wrath of Tibetan priests by looking upon the face of Raak-ok, the high priest—an offence which only death could wipe out. But as the boys had gone to the rescue of the priests, who were shipwrecked, they had been given their freedom. But the Vulture God had to be appeased, and so each boy would be called upon to face a test of courage. If he failed, he would die.

Two of the ten—Vivian Travers and Reggie Pitt—had already faced the ordeal, and none of the others knew what they had passed through, for their lips were sealed. But they had been "called" during the hours of darkness. The rest had taken it for granted that they were safe during the daylight hours. Now they knew how wrong they were in that assumption.

Church and McClure, with one accord, left their desks and ran to the door. They were afraid for the safety of their chum. For days they had been dreading this hour, for they knew that the obstinate Handforth would not submit meekly to the ordeal the priests had prepared for him. And if he refused to do their bidding it would mean death for him!

"Church—McClure!" barked Mr. Crowell. "Stop! Go back to your places!"

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THE NEEDLES OF NEMESIS!

"It's—it's all right, sir!" said Church frantically. "We'll bring Handforth back!"

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" retorted the Form-master. "I'll deal with Handforth myself—when he has come to his senses. It's bad enough for one boy to leave the class without permission. Return to your seats!"

"But—but, sir—"

"Immediately!" thundered the exasperated man.

For a moment Church and McClure hesitated. They were tempted to rush straight out, in defiance of Mr. Crowell's order. But discipline was strongly ingrained in them, and they were lost in that moment of hesitation.

"You don't understand, sir, but Handforth isn't quite himself," said McClure earnestly. "If you'll only let us go after him—"

"Another word from either of you two boys, and I will recommend you to the Housemaster for a flogging!" broke in Mr. Crowell hotly. "As it is, you will each write me two hundred lines!"

Church and McClure, their faces expressive of apprehension and anxiety, went back to their desks. Most of the Removites were completely puzzled, but they thought little of the incident. Handforth, after all, was always doing something dotty, and Church and McClure were only his shadows.

It was plain that Mr. Crowell, too, thought little or nothing of the incident. Handforth, in his usual reckless fashion, had defied him, and Handforth should pay for it when he came to his senses and returned. Mr. Crowell was quite convinced that Handforth had been "putting it on," and in this conviction Mr. Crowell was justified. For Handforth, as he well knew, was very healthy, and in no way subject to trance-like fits. Probably he had made a foolish wager with somebody that he would walk out in the middle of lessons, under the pretence that he was unable to help himself. So concluded Mr. Crowell. Well, it was a pretence which would cost Handforth dear!

And the lesson continued in a sulphuric atmosphere.

But there was no foolish, practical joke about it. Edward Oswald Handforth was completely governed by the will-power of the priests of Taaz.

He walked out of the Ancient House hatless and strode mechanically across the Triangle in the sunshine. At that hour of the morning, with all the boys at lessons, nobody saw him depart.

In the lane he did not hesitate; he stepped through a gap in the hedge, and made a bee-line across one of Farmer Holt's meadows. He went across country, his direction taking him unerringly towards the sea.

At last he left the cultivated area behind; he was on the open downs, approaching the rugged cliffs in the neighbourhood of Shingle Head.

The breeze was fresh and invigorating; the sea, when he reached it, was sparkling in the morning sunshine. Handforth took the steep cliff path down to the beach, and eventually arrived in the quiet, lonely cove adjoining Langdon Bay. It was one of the most desolate spots on the coast; shut in by cliffs, and not a house in sight.

Drawn up on the beach was a rowing boat. As though acting under orders, Handforth heaved the boat to the water, jumped in, and was soon rowing out across the bay. The tide was coming in, and the sea was peaceful and placid.

There was that same set expression on the burly junior's face. He pulled hard at the oars, working grimly, mechanically. All his movements, ever since he had left the Form-room at St. Frank's, had been automatic.

Tirelessly he rowed the little boat right across the bay where the steep, frowning cliffs of Surf Island rose sheer. To a casual observer it would have seemed that it was impossible to land on the island. But there was one little gap, with a tiny bay, where a landing could be effected. And at the back of this gap, with its strip of beach, there was an opening in the rocks.

Handforth jumped ashore, pulled his boat clear, and then walked through the rock opening. In front of him there was a grassy hollow, with trees and bushes. On one famous occasion a number of St. Frank's Removites had spent a week or two on Surf Island, camping. So Handforth was very familiar with his surroundings.

No sooner had he passed through the gap than he halted, as though uncertain. The rigid expression left his face, and he looked bewildered.

In the hollow, some distance from him, a number of men were sitting in a semicircle. They wore strange robes, and their faces were yellow and impassive. It was an extraordinary sight in a peaceful Sussex scene.

As Handforth appeared the priests of Taaz rose silently to their feet. They dispersed. Two of them walked straight towards Handforth.

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The junior had given himself a little shake, and now his eyes were aglow with understanding. The trance-like condition had left him. He knew where he was; he knew that the men in front of him were the priests of Taaz, whom he had not seen since that dramatic incident in the shipwreck when the St. Frank's juniors had gone to their rescue.

"By George!" he muttered, taking a deep breath. "Surf Island!"

He looked round at the familiar scene.

"Surf Island!" he repeated. "And I don't even remember how I got here! So it's my turn, is it?" His expression hardened. "Good enough! If these yellow-faced blighters think that I'm scared, I'll soon make them change their minds! I'll show them something!"

And in that characteristically reckless mood Edward Oswald Handforth faced the priests of Taaz.

Handforth, the Tartar!

ONE yellow man, taller than the others, came forward and looked at Handforth gravely.

"Well, I'm here," said Handforth coolly. "I don't know how the dickens I got here, but here I am."

"It is well, my son," said the priest, his voice kindly, his face gentle. "Taaz the Omnipotent, the all-seeing, has been offended. It is for you to show Taaz that you are worthy of living. Fail in the task which awaits you, and death will be your reward."

"Cheese it!" protested Handforth. "You can't kid me with this stuff. Taaz is only an idol—a stuffed image, shaped like a vulture. I saw it that day, on the ship—"

"Guard your tongue, foolish boy, for it is apt to lead you into danger," said the priest, becoming stern. "Taaz, the Vulture God, sees all—hears all—knows all. Speak not his name too lightly."

"Sorry," said Handforth. "But you can't expect me to believe in your heathen god, can you?"

"You shall believe in him, ere you return from whence you came," said the priest impassively. "Think not that we are your enemies, my son. We wish you well. It is for you to prove that you are worthy of our esteem."

"Who are you, anyway?" asked Handforth, impressed at last.

"I am Yeza, chief personal attendant of the mighty Raa-ok, high priest of Taaz," said the yellow man. "But come! The preparations are almost ready."

Handforth saw that another priest was standing impassively in the gap, with his back to the hollow. Clearly he was keeping his eyes on the sea, lest there should be an interruption. During the talk with the chief priest, too, Handforth had heard loud hammering.

Now, turning, he beheld a curious sight. Two of the other priests, armed with heavy hammers, were driving a number of glittering nails through a large, circular, wooden object which looked like the lid of a barrel. And this, in fact, was exactly what it was; for Handforth next saw, standing in the shade of a great boulder, a large hogshead.

Yeza said nothing. Handforth was intrigued by the activities of the two other priests. He saw that the objects they were driving through the lid were not ordinary nails, but gleaming metal spikes, as sharp as needles. Each one was driven right in, and the spikes protruded five or six inches on the other side. The last one was driven in, and the two priests held the lid so that all the spikes were pointing to the sky. They gleamed and shimmered in the sunshine. Yeza nodded.

"'Tis done," he said softly.

"What's all this for?" asked Handforth curiously.

"Wait, my son, and you will understand," replied the chief priest.

He added some words in a strange language, addressing his colleagues. They carried the bristling lid to the great hogshead and placed it firmly on top, spikes uppermost.

"Come!" said Yeza briefly.

Handforth, puzzled, followed him to the great boulder which rose, jagged and picturesque, to a height of over twelve feet.

"The moment is here, my son," said the priest solemnly. "You have offended Taaz, and you must prove your courage, for Taaz can forgive every sin but cowardice."

"But what have I to do?" asked Handforth in wonder.

"First, you must climb this great rock," said Yeza, pointing. "Remove your shoes and socks, my son, that your feet may obtain a better grip."

Handforth thought it was very silly. He did not argue. Climbing this boulder of rock was child's play. In less than a minute, having removed his shoes and socks, he was at the top, looking down upon the priests twelve feet below him.

And now he saw that the priests, half a dozen of them, had formed a semicircle round the hogshead with its

ominous lid. The hoghead, in fact, was immediately below Handforth as he stood on top of the boulder. Those awful spikes were about seven feet below him.

"Well, I'm here," he said, feeling rather foolish. "What next?"

"Gather all your courage, my son," said Yeza impressively. "For the thing you must now do requires a courage of the highest quality." He pointed to that hideously bristling platform of spiked steel. "Jump down upon the Needles of Nemesis."

Handforth went suddenly cold. There was no mistaking the order. He saw the relentless, impassive, yellow faces, with their cruel, staring eyes.



"Go and eat coke!" roared Handforth, with sudden violence. "I'm not a fool. I'm not going to jump on those spikes just to please your beastly Vulture God!" "I give you the last warning, foolish youth," said Yeza, handling a dagger threateningly. "Do as you have been told—or die!"

He knew that he had gone pale, and, indeed, he was trembling—not with fear, but with indignation and anger. "You're mad!" he burst out. "You're not telling me to jump down on those awful spikes, are you?"

"Taaz is waiting!" said the chief priest tonelessly.

"But those horrible nails will gash my feet to ribbons!"

"Nevertheless, my son, jump!" commanded Yeza.

Handforth was now becoming hot with rage at the insensate cruelty and purposelessness of the "test." He had long suspected, from one or two hints he had heard, that Vivian Travers and Reggie Pitt had been tricked by the priests of Taaz. But they had suffered their ordeals in darkness, when trickery could be easily employed.

But this was different. There was no trickery here. It was impossible. Handforth had seen the spikes being driven in. And they were right beneath him, and he was commanded to jump upon them.

"Is your courage, then, less than the courage of your brave friends?" asked the chief priest sternly. "It is but a short jump for such an athletic youth as yourself."

"But—but the spikes!" said Handforth hoarsely.

"It is the will of Taaz that you should jump down upon the Needles of Nemesis," said Yeza relentlessly. "Know you, my son, the alternative? Do as you have been bidden—or death is certain."

And then Handforth saw, for the first time, that Yeza had withdrawn a long, wicked-looking dagger, and was holding it ready to be thrown.

"Go and eat coke!" roared Handforth, with sudden violence. "I'm not a fool! I'm not going to jump on those spikes just to please you—or your beastly Vulture God either!"

He saw those impassive faces change; they became evil. Every ounce of his characteristic stubbornness surged up within him. He glared defiance.

"I give you the last warning, foolish youth!" said Yeza impressively. "Do as you have been told—or die!"

"I'm not frightened by your threats!" shouted Handforth furiously. "This isn't a test of courage at all! If I jump on that barrel I shall cripple myself, and I'm not going to do it! You can go and boil yourselves!"

Vivian Travers and Reggie Pitt, in like circumstances, had had the common sense to realise that the priests were in earnest—that death would overtake them if they disobeyed. And, with rare courage and stoicism, they had suffered their own dread ordeals.

But Handforth was differently made.

He was no less courageous, but he was as stubborn as a mule. The priests of Taaz could do their worst!

"For the last time, my son, will you obey?" asked Yeza.

"No!" roared Handforth, with fine defiance.

Whiz!

He was warned in the nick of time, for he saw the sun-

light glint on the dagger's blade as the chief priest swung it back. With a panther-like leap, Handforth hurled himself aside, ducking at the same time. The dagger shot through the air at an incredible speed, and the deadly blade tore through his coatsleeve. He knew that if he had not dodged the point would have found his heart.

Next moment Handforth lost his balance, and went rolling down the steep side of the great boulder to the rear.

He fell straight into the arms of two priests, who were waiting.

Lingering Death!

"WHAT are we going to do?" asked Church, frantic with anxiety.

"Wait, I suppose, until he comes back," said Vivian Travers.

"But he might never come back!" groaned McClure.

"You know what Handy is! He's not like any other

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chap; he'll probably start a fight amongst those priests, and they'll knife him in a couple of shakes!"

"In that case, he's knifed already, so there's nothing we can do," drawled Travers, with a shrug.

Morning lessons were over, and the "marked ten," minus Handforth, had collected in the Triangle, against the wall of the gym. Other fellows, with no worries or cares, had gone to their studies, or to Little Side for footer. Quite a few juniors wondered why Nipper and those with him were looking so serious, and some asked questions; but they were given no satisfaction.

Inquiries had been made, but nothing had come of them. Nobody, it appeared, had seen Handforth leave the school. Nobody knew where he was. There was not a clue of any kind.

"We shall have to wait," said Reggie Pitt quietly. "Travers and I know something of what might happen to Handy—and if he behaves sensibly, he'll be safe enough."

"My only hat!" said Church in exasperation. "Have you ever known Handy to behave sensibly? You know jolly well that he's not to be trusted alone. I tell you, we've got to look for him."

"Frightfully easy to say that, dear old thing, but how do we start the dashed game?" asked Archie Glenhorne, jamming his monocle into his eye and surveying Church with interest. "I mean to say, he may have gone into the wood, or he may have gone across the moor, or he may have been spirited away in a car. It's absolutely frightful. We don't know where to start."

"Well, Mac and I are going to have a search," said Church firmly. "You chaps go off in pairs—each pair in a different direction. There's no harm in scouring the countryside on the off chance."

"If it's going to relieve you chaps, we'll do it," said Nipper. "Personally, I can't see that we can do any good, but we might hit on something."

"Better stay here," said Travers with composure. "This is Handy's hour, and he's got to go through it alone. Interference from us will mean his death."

"We're going to look, anyhow," said Church, pale with worry. "Come on, Mac."

They went off, and the others separated into pairs and went in different directions, too. But they all realised that their quest was more or less hopeless.

Handforth, held in a vicelike grip by the priests of Taaz, was as defiant as ever. He was bruised from his fall, but he was tough, and he gave no thought to his pains. His eyes were blazing with rebellious fury as he was brought face to face with Yeza.

"I'm not afraid!" he burst out. "I didn't refuse to jump

PEN PALS

(Continued from page 13.)

Jack Weightman, 168, Channing Street, Walkley, Sheffield, 6, wants correspondents interested in music, aviation, books, and Nature; age 9-13.

Arthur Hampson, 68, Swinley Road, Wigan, Lancs, wants a correspondent in Australia or New Zealand, interested in Rugby League and cricket; age 13-15.

Mark Farrant, Clover Close, Shute, near Axminster, Devon, wants pen pals in Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa, interested in Soccer and films; age 16-20.

Miss Edna Wood, 15, Mere Road, off Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, Lancs, wants girl correspondents overseas; sports, books, films, and snaps; age 15-18.

W. G. Wells, 98, Bury Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, wants a pen pal; age 12-13; theatricals, play-writing, films.

Miss Winifred J. Donaldson, 745, 5th Street, N.W. Calgary, Alberta, Canada, wants girl correspondents; age 15-17; keen on adventure stories.

Edward Harrison, 45, Blair Street, Poplar, London, E.14, wants a pen pal in Egypt or New York; age 13-14; interested in building and shipping.

Fred C. Charman, 47a, Thanklin Road, Brighton, wants a pen pal in England; age 15-16.

Yusuf B. Mohammed, Anglo-Chinese School, Parit Buntar, Federated Malay States, wants correspondents in West Indies, Africa, Fiji Islands, and Turkey; age 14-18; stamps, picture postcards.

Miss Barbara Davies, Park View, Navigation Road, Altrincham, Ches, wants a girl pen pal in France; age 14-16.

Charles E. Mandelstan, P.O. Box 177, Standerton, Transvaal, South Africa, wants a pen pal in the British Isles; age 11-13; cricket and sports generally.

Clive Brown, 11, Garbett Road, Clairwood, Durban, Natal, South Africa, wants pen pals; Canada, Australia; age 12-13; snapshots and cycling.

Miss Madge Shackleton, 365, Clair Road, Clairwood, Natal, South Africa, wants a girl pen pal in New Zealand; age 13-14; swimming, snapshots, Guides.

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because I'm scared—but because I won't do anything so mad."

"So much protesting, my son, argues that your courage was unequal to the test," said the chief priest grimly. "You were quick, or the knife would have entered your heart. So be it. Taaz would not have you die so quickly, so painlessly. First, you shall have your eyes opened to your folly."

He gave orders, and Handforth was forced to climb the boulder again. He was, indeed, literally pushed and dragged up; for one priest went ahead of him, and another followed in his rear. He had no alternative but to climb.

And so, at length, he stood on the summit once more, and now a dread suspicion of what was about to take place gripped him. He had refused to take the leap—so they were going to thrust him down by force!

"No!" he panted. "You shan't! You devils!"

"It is the command of Taaz!" came the voice of Yeza from below. "Scream, foolish boy, if you will. None can hear."

The taunt seemed to steady Handforth, and in a moment he had taken a firm grip of himself. His hot rage left him, and he became grimly calm.

"All right!" he said, between his teeth. "I'll obey! By George! I'm not going to be pushed off like the coward you think I am!"

"Too late, my son," said Yeza, shaking his head. "Your chance has gone. You display no courage in leaping when you know that you must be thrust by force in any case."

He raised his arm, and the two priests closed in upon Handforth, and seized him in a vicelike grip. For a moment he thought of struggling, but then he realised that such a move would be set down as another act of craven cowardice. By his obstinacy he had robbed himself of the chance to prove his courage.

He saw those deadly spikes, gleaming in the sunshine. Next second he was thrust violently from behind, and he was descending straight upon that deadly hoghead, with its so-called Needles of Nemesis.

Thud! He alighted, feet first, full upon the awful spikes, and in that dread second he was bewildered by the fact that he felt no pain. He lost his balance at the moment of contact, tumbled forward, and crashed into the grass.

He sat up, dazed and bruised, and when he looked at his feet they were unmarked. There were no hideous rents in his flesh, as he had expected. In his amazement he leapt to his feet. He knew that he had landed fairly and squarely on the spikes.

"I'm not hurt!" he gasped.

"For an excellent reason, my son," said Yeza. "Come hither."

Handforth, dazed and dizzy, went to the great hoghead.

"Feel!" commanded the chief priest, pointing.

Handforth reached up to the spikes and felt them. He uttered a shout of stupefaction. For the "spikes" bent at his touch, and he saw that they were, in fact, made of rubber—rubber painted with some glistening enamel which resembled burnished steel!

"You see? The ordeal which Taaz prepared for you was harmless," said Yeza solemnly. "It required only the courage which would have convinced Taaz of your worthiness."

"But—but I don't understand!" ejaculated Handforth blankly. "I saw the spikes being driven in—"

"Nay! You saw not this," interrupted Yeza. "What you saw—was that!"

He pointed, and another priest deftly removed a second circular lid from a deep crevice of the rocks. Here were the real steel spikes.

"While you were climbing the rock, my son, the simple substitution was made—the work of a second," explained the chief priest.

"It was only a trick," gasped Handforth, his anger rising again. "You were fooling me all the time!"

"Yet the device served its purpose," replied Yeza tonelessly. "You feared the physical pain which you thought would be yours if you obeyed the order of Taaz. You failed in the test; and Taaz shall have your life."

They were words of doom. Handforth, sceptic though he was, knew that the priests of Taaz were in deadly earnest. He had failed. True, he had not failed in courage. He had been stubborn and angry. But the priests did not recognise this. He knew, too late, that they meant to do him to death.

"No!" he said, looking at Yeza with burning eyes. "It's not fair! Give me another chance! Put me to another test!"

"Taaz allows no second chance," said the yellow man. "My son, you must die."

Handforth compressed his lips. He was not going to beg for his life; he would not utter another word.

Firm hands seized him, and he was marched out of the little hollow. The priest who had been on guard waved a



Mr. E. S. Brooks welcomes letters from readers. Write to him c/o The Editor, The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

VERY sorry, Jeff O'Malley (Westport), that you missed several copies of the Old Paper in which the "Names Lists" appeared. But I'm afraid I really can't repeat these Names Lists for the benefit of fellows like yourself who happen to miss a week or so. If I did that—and made a practice of it—it would simply mean that I should be putting two or three different "Names Lists" in the chat every week—the current one and the others. Can't you find a fellow reader somewhere and get your names from his copies? Or you might even order the necessary back numbers from your newsagent.

hand, and it was evidently an indication that the coast was clear. For, without pause, Handforth and his captors went down the little strip of beach.

Three of them, including Yeza, entered the boat. Handforth was forced to enter with them. Without loss of time the boat was pushed off. The tide was still coming in, but the waves were now choppy.

Presently they were skirting the frowning, menacing cliffs. And after five or six minutes of hard rowing the boat was headed for the rocks. Here there were several ledges, and, as yet, they were mostly uncovered. Handforth saw, low in the cliff, the entrance to a cave. He had been in that cave before. He remembered an exciting adventure he and his chums had once had. He saw the greenish seaweed slime on the rocks and the cliff—extending far above the cave entrance. At high tide the cave was completely under water.

Now, of course, with the tide low, it was exposed. The boat was made secure, and Handforth, still firmly held, was forced into the cave. He and his captors trod over spongy masses of sodden seaweed which covered the floor.

It was very dark at first, but within a few moments Handforth's eyes grew accustomed to the gloom. Not a word was spoken. The priests took him straight across to one of the cold, slimy walls. There was a clank of metal, and Handforth went chill as he realised the nature of his fate.

There were iron rings in the wall—relics of the old-time smugglers. He was held against the wall so that he was spreadeagled with his back to it. One wrist was secured by stout cords to an iron ring; the other wrist to another ring farther along. His legs were outspread, too, and his ankles secured by means of stout cord to two other iron rings. The cords bit deeply into his wrists and ankles, and it was, of course, utterly impossible for him to struggle. Already an occasional wave was creeping into the cave.

"Thus shall Taaz take the life of one who failed," said Yeza impassively. "A quick death is not for you, my son. Others who offend Taaz will be warned by the fate which is now overtaking you."

Handforth felt like making a great outburst, but he checked himself in time. He would not give these cold-blooded priests the satisfaction of hearing him make the slightest outcry. He set his teeth grimly, and glared his defiance.

Without another word the priests walked to the entrance, bent low under the overhanging rocks, and vanished. Edward Oswald Handforth was left alone to his fate.

His thoughts were bitter. He knew that there was no possible escape. He could do nothing to help himself. None of his schoolfellows knew that he had come to Surf Island. There would be no search. Already the waves were splashing and gurgling into the cave, and the seaweed was moving like something alive.

And this was all his own fault. Not for a single moment had he been afraid—horrified and appalled, yes, but his courage had never been in question. It was that temper of his, that pigheaded obstinacy, which had brought him to this pass. He knew it, but the knowledge comforted him not one whit.

Grimly he watched the water coming slowly and inexorably nearer to him as each wave washed into the cave. Soon the sea had reached his feet, then it gradually rose higher until the water was well over his knees. The

Many thanks for your eighteen-page letter, Percy Young (Liverpool). Nice to hear from you again, after so long. It just shows that I still have a good many old friends up and down the country—readers like yourself who have followed my stories for many years. I'm afraid this little paragraph is but poor recompense for all the trouble you must have taken in writing your letter. But I'm sure you understand that I'm a bit limited in space. Shall be glad to hear from you again whenever you like.

Names List No. 13. Modern House, Third Form: Tommy Tripp, Harry Dawson, Arthur Deakin, Roderick Foote, Cyril Harper, Charlie Thompson. There are other Third Formers in the Modern House, but their names have never appeared in the stories; so they need not appear here.

Your first letter to me, Nancy Roberts (Melbourne), will, I hope, not be the last. Glad that you have such a supply of my old stories from your brother's collection. Before Mr. James Kingswood took up the headmastership of St. Frank's, that post was held by Nelson Lee. There was no other headmaster in between. Timothy Tucker is still at the school, of course, but of late I have not mentioned him much. One of these days, perhaps, I'll find an opportunity to bring him prominently into a story.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

waves were now coming in with more force. The level was rising faster, and ere long the water, as cold as ice, was about his waist.

The cave entrance was more than half-submerged; there was only a small space at the top, and the water was rushing through this with a gurgling noise, sometimes booming and echoing in the cave like thunder.

There came a succession of greater waves which reached Handforth's neck as they swept into the cave. The water rose and fell sullenly, and once it came up right over his head, to fall back again. He could still breathe, but he knew that his end was now near.

It was the vengeance of the priests of Taaz!

"Handy!"

A voice, frantic with anxiety, seemed to come from nowhere. Handforth groaned. With death so near him—was he becoming lightheaded?

"Handy—Handy!"

The voice came again, and with a sudden start Handforth recognised the voice of Church, his faithful chum.

"Hey!" he shouted, his voice cracking. "I'm here, Churchy! Help! I'm here!"

Then he gave a wild laugh. What a fool he was. That voice wasn't real; it was only imagination. Then a beam of light suddenly shot upon his pale, streaming face.

"Quick, Mac! We're just in time!" gurgled the voice of Church. "Oh, my goodness! He's tied to the old iron rings!"

"The devils!" exclaimed McClure. "All right; I've got my knife! We'll soon have him free!"

"Churchy! Mac!" breathed Handforth fervently. "Oh, thank goodness! I'm glad it was you chaps who saved me! You're always getting me out of a mess, aren't you?"

A sharp knife slashed through the cords which secured his wrists. Church, diving, succeeded in cutting the other cords. Then, between them, the two plucky juniors dragged Handforth towards the exit, which was now nearly submerged. But Edward Oswald himself was able to swim, in spite of his numbed limbs.

The boat was pulled across the sunlit sea to the mainland. Handforth, although pale, was recovering rapidly.

"Mac and I are out searching when we remembered something," explained Church, in a voice full of thankfulness. "When old Crowell asked you where they shoved Napoleon, you said 'Surf Island.' We thought nothing of it at the time, and not even afterwards. At least, not until Mac and I were by ourselves on the moor."

"So we thought we'd take a chance," put in McClure. "We came out in a boat, and we were just in time to see another boat skirting this part of the island. It was gone before we came up, and we don't know what became of it."

"The priests of Taaz were in it," said Handforth sombrely.

"What happened to you before—before they put you in the cave?" asked Church.

Handforth squared his jaw.

"I'd better not tell you," he said quietly. "I'm alive—and that's enough."

And as they pulled to the shore they wondered if Taaz would be satisfied.

(Next Week: "THE PRISON OF PERIL!")

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THE GIPSY SCHOOLBOY!

(Continued from page 22.)

Crack—crack!

The ivy was cracking, and it was only by marvellous dexterity that Kit secured hold after hold as the tendrils failed in his grasp.

But he reached Gander at last.

His strong grasp closed upon the trembling fag, giving him new life and hope.

Gander turned a haggard look upon him.

"The gipsy!" he muttered.

"Yes, the gipsy," said Kit softly. "It's all right now, Gander—it's all right! Courage!"

"Help me—oh, help me! I—I'm afraid—"

"Hold to me, and I'll help you up to the window."

Kildare and Darrell and Tom Merry and several more had rushed into the tower now. They understood the gipsy's intention, and they made haste to reach the upper window, to help him into the tower with his burden. In a few seconds they were at the window, and Kildare leaned out.

Gander was clinging convulsively to the gipsy boy. Kit worked his way back and up to the window, finding a hold for Gander's nerveless hands and a hold for his own, always keeping an arm round the shaking form of the fag, lest he should lose his hold and fall.

The exertion for the gipsy boy was terrible. The perspiration stood out in beads upon his dusky forehead, and there was a grinding ache in his arms and legs and back. But he never thought of giving in.

He had barely reached the window when Gander's strength utterly failed. He hung a dead weight upon the gipsy, his arms grasping Kit blindly round the neck. Kit clung to the ivy, holding on, but too exhausted and too heavily weighted to move. Kildare leaned far out of the window, Darrell holding his belt behind. Kildare's grasp closed upon Gander's collar, and he drew the Second Former bodily into the window.

"Hold on, Kit!"

The gipsy gasped:

"I'm all right!"

He climbed in, with a helping hand from Tom Merry. Gander had fainted, and Kildare and Darrell carried him down the steps of the tower. Kit, exhausted, panting, descended, leaning heavily upon Tom Merry's arm. There was a roar of cheering as they emerged from the old tower into the quad.

"Bravo! Well done, Gipsy! Hurrah!"

Dr. Holmes grasped the gipsy's hand. Gander, his face dashed with water from the fountain, sat up, gasping, white, still trembling. His eyes turned upon the gipsy.

"I—I say!" he said chokingly. "I—I say, Gipsy, you— you saved my life—I ain't fit to speak to you!"

And Gander fairly burst into tears.

"It's all right," said Kit. "I don't bear any malice."

Dr. Holmes pressed his hand.

"You are a noble lad, Kit!" he said. "I am proud of you. The whole school is proud of you. You are an honour to St. Jim's!"

Kit's eyes glistened. This from the Head! There was a rush of the juniors as the Head concluded. Kit was hoisted upon the shoulders of Tom Merry and Figgins, and a cheering crowd surrounded him, waving caps and shouting.

They bore him in triumph round the old quad, amid yells and cheers and waving caps; and Gander's voice was as loud as any in the cheering. And Kit could not help his face glowing with pride. It was a glorious triumph for the gipsy schoolboy.

THE END.

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