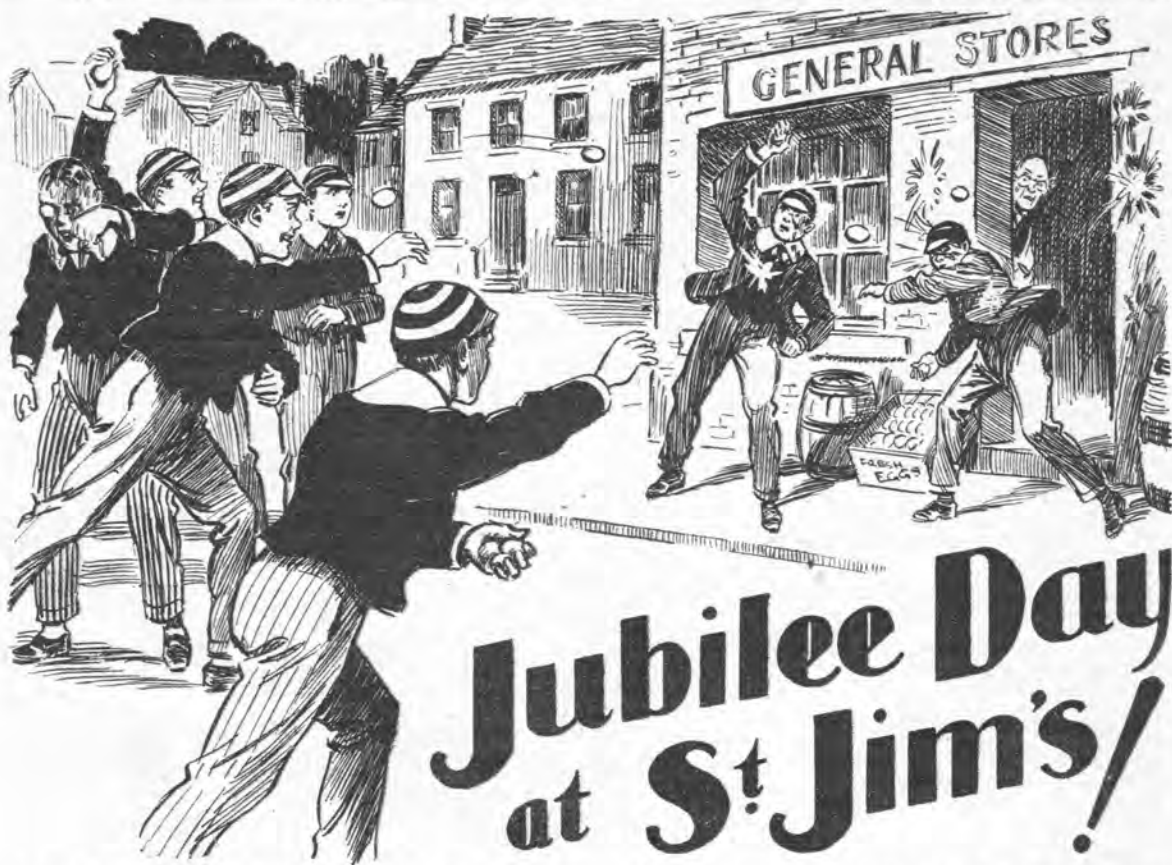


GRAND JUBILEE NUMBER. SPECIAL ST. JIM'S STORY INSIDE!



TOM MERRY & CO. CELEBRATE JUBILEE DAY WITH A RIOTOUS "RAG"!—



Jubilee Day at St. Jim's!

"Three shies a penny!" sang out Monty Lowther. "And all the Grammarians you knock down!" Crunch! Crunch! In rapid succession eggs smashed on and all around Gordon Gay and Frank Monk as the St. Jim's juniors pelted them. The Grammarians promptly returned the fire, and there was a yell from D'Arcy as one crunched in his eye!

CHAPTER 1.

Cash in Plenty!

"TWO hundred pounds!"
"Bai Jove!"
"Two hundred quids—"
"Ripping!"

"Let's see them, Tom Merry! Turn them out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry unlocked the box that lay on his study table. Round the table a crowd of juniors had gathered.

It was an exciting moment. It was seldom indeed that a junior at any school found himself in possession of such a sum as two hundred pounds.

It did not all belong to Tom Merry; it was common property among a dozen juniors of St. Jim's. But it had come down to the school in the box addressed to Tom, and he had called the other fellows together to see it opened.

Two hundred pounds! The juniors could scarcely believe their eyes.

Many months earlier Tom Merry & Co. had gone on a treasure hunt to the South Seas. They had discovered treasure, only to lose it for ever when their ship sank. But they had succeeded in salvaging a number of Spanish golden doubloons, and Lord Conway, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's elder brother, had taken them to dispose of. He had held on to them until the price of gold had risen to a high figure. And now he had sold them in London, and here was the result—two hundred pounds in rustling banknotes!

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There was a buzz of deep-drawn breath as the lock clicked, and Tom Merry opened the lid of the box.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass a little more tightly in his right eye, and turned his aristocratic gaze upon the wads of notes. Wally—D'Arcy minor—calmly pushed Monty Lowther out of the way to get nearer. Jack Blake said: "Good!" and Herries said: "My hat!"

"Two hundred quids!" repeated Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, that is wathah a wotten expression!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his monocle upon Lowther. "Why can't you call them pounds, deah boy?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally—"

"Don't you begin, Gus!" said Wally. "Give us a rest! Turn the notes out, and let's count 'em, Tom Merry! My only Aunt Jane! Ain't they nice?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"The question is what are we going to do with them?" asked Tom Merry.

"Spend 'em!" said Wally.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes, I suppose we shall do that," he assented. "The question is, how? We've agreed that the cash is to be expended upon a ripping Jubilee celebration, I think."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!" said all the juniors together, very cordially.

"All the country is celebrating the Jubilee, and it would be absurd for St. Jim's to be left out," Jack Blake re-

marked. "What we want to have is a really ripping first-chop top-notch celebration which will make the Grammarians green with envy. I've heard that the Grammar School are going to celebrate, and, of course, we shall have to knock them sky-high."

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins of the New House. "In a matter like this, both Houses of St. Jim's stand together. We shall have to give the Grammarians the kybosh, of course!"

"Yaas, wathah! I agwee with my fwiedd Figgy. I do not exactly approve of the word 'kybosh,' but I agwee with Figgy in spiwit."

"Bonfires, fireworks, bunting and flag-wagging," said Manners. "That's the idea! What are you looking so thoughtful about, Wynn?"

Fatty Wynn started.

"I was thinking of a ripping idea," he said. "I'll tell it to you fellows, if you like."

"Go ahead!" said Kerr.

"The money couldn't be better spent than in standing a regular, big, stunning feed," said Fatty Wynn. "A feed that would make a record at St. Jim's! Think of the tuck we could get for that money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared.

"Two hundred pounds' worth of pork-pies!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Oh, ripping!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that's my idea!" said Fatty

—RIP-ROARING YARN OF ROLICKING FUN AND LIVELY ADVENTURE.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

Wynn, with a grunt. "If you don't want to adopt a really ripping idea, you can go and eat coke!"

"Weally, Wynn—"
"Well, we shall have a big feed, of course!" said Tom Merry. "But I think we ought to have something more than that—something in the nature of a procession, and a big celebration, to end up with a feed."

"Well, that's all right!" said Fatty Wynn, with a nod. "We might start with a feed, and then have a bit of a procession or something, and then a big feed!"

"Or we could start with a feed," said Lowther. "And go on with another feed, then have still another feed, and finish with a—a feed, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn snorted.
"Decorations, too," said Figgins. "We want the whole school to look gay on an occasion like this. We've been given a whole holiday for the occasion, and we ought to make the most of it in proper style, I think."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now's the time for showing what we really can do," said Tom Merry. "Suggestions welcomed from everybody!"

"Well, this is my idea," said Figgins. "The Grammar School chaps are going to celebrate, and they're raising subscriptions for decorations and so forth. My idea is to spend this cash in making a Jubilee corner."

"What!"

"A which?"

"A corner," said Figgins calmly. "You know what a corner is? Chaps buy up stuff so that nobody can get any—makes a corner in it, you see. Rotten financiers in Chicago, for instance, buy up all the corn, and make a corner in grub, and raise the price of bread. Of course, a decent chap couldn't do anything like that. But a corner in fireworks, flags and bunting would be a jolly good idea—no harm done, and one in the eye for the Grammarians! I can imagine Gordon Gay's feelings when he gets to Rylcombe and finds everything bought up over his head. Of course, we'll let the Grammar School cads down lightly—they can come here and celebrate if they like! But—"

There was a cheer at once.

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Figgy!"

"Hip, pip!"

And slaps on the back were bestowed upon the ingenious Figgy till he gasped for breath and picked up a cricket bat to defend himself.

CHAPTER 2.

Chucked Out!

FIGGINS' idea was evidently the "thing." It was jumped at by the juniors, and agreed upon at once.

A Jubilee celebration, which would also be a score over their deadly rivals of the Grammar School, was exactly what they wanted. And the idea of a corner in Jubilee accessories tickled the fancy of the St. Jim's juniors very much.

With such a sum as £200 to spend, the juniors were certain to have things all their own way, as far as purchasing went. The Grammarians could not hope to "rise" to that. The thought of Gordon Gay & Co. going

down to Rylcombe in the afternoon and finding everything they wanted bought up in great quantities over their heads made the Saints roar.

"It will be simply ripping!" said Blake. "It will be shrieking—screaming, in fact!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I should like to take a snap of Frank Monk's face when he goes for his giddy purchases and finds the stuff all gone," Manners remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah—"

"Hallo! Who's that?"

The study door had opened, and a face looked in. It was the face of Levison of the Fourth. Nobody was glad to see Levison. He was not popular, especially in Tom Merry's study, and it was cheek on his part to put his head in without even knocking.

"Well?" said Tom Merry, looking at him.

Levison nodded coolly.

"I heard the cash had come," he said.

"Yes, it has."

"No harm in a fellow looking at it, I suppose?" said Levison, his eyes turning towards the open box on the table.

"You can look at it, if you like."

Levison came into the study. His

Two hundred pounds to spend and a day's holiday! The chums of St. Jim's are in clover on Jubilee Day! Read how they celebrate with a great "rag" on their Grammar School rivals, rounding off the day with a glorious bust-up!

eyes glittered as they fastened upon the wads of notes packed in the box. The sight of them seemed to have a fascination for him.

"By gum!" he said. "How much have you got there?"

"Two hundred pounds," said Lowther.

"Two hundred!" said Levison. "My hat, what larks a chap could have with a sum of money like that! Look here, I—"

"Got any suggestion to make?" asked Manners.

"Yes; I could show you chaps round at the races, and you could have a gorgeous time with cash like that in your pockets."

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"Well, we don't want to be shown round at the races, nor any caddish rot of that sort," he said. "Astonishing as it may seem to you, we are going to be quite decent."

Levison laughed. It was not easy to hurt his feelings.

"Every chap to his taste," he said.

"If I had that money I should have a flutter with it. What are you going to do?"

"Jubilate," said Lowther. "Celebrate the Jubilee."

Levison sniffed.

"You're going to waste that money celebrating, when you might have the time of your lives?" he said. "Of all the duffers—"

"Thanks!"

"Of all the silly chumps—"

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind finishing your remarks out in the passage," Tom Merry suggested politely.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Levison as a wude beast, and if he wepeats one of those oppwobvious phwases again I shall give him a feahful thwashin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass severely upon the cad of the Fourth.

"Rats!" said Levison.

"Weally, you wottah—"

"Of all the fatheads—"

D'Arcy pushed back his beautiful white cuffs.

"You heard what I said, Levison?"

"Yes, I heard," said Levison coolly.

"In the cirs, as I do not wish to spoil my linen or to disawwange my necktie, I will give you one more chance to wettah fwom the studay without bein' thwown out," said the swell of St. Jim's, with a great deal of dignity.

"Rats!"

It really looked as if Levison rather enjoyed the prospect of soiling D'Arcy's linen and disarranging his necktie.

"You uttah wottah—"

"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus did not expend any more energy in words. He rushed right at Levison and clasped him round the neck.

"Out you go, you wottah!"

"Go it!" said Blake. "Chuck him out!"

The juniors stood back out of the way. D'Arcy as a chucker-out was very entertaining.

Levison stood his ground and resisted. D'Arcy's necktie was soon disarranged, and there was no doubt that his linen was spoiled. There was a large crack as his collar parted company with his shirt.

"Ow! You uttah wottah!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Chuck him out!"

"I'm chuckin' him out. It's all wight, deah boys!"

Round came Levison, swinging towards the door, in the grasp of the swell of St. Jim's. In spite of his elegant ways, D'Arcy was an athlete.

But the cad of the Fourth swung right round, and, instead of going through the door, he came whirling back towards the table, bringing D'Arcy with him.

"Oh!" gasped D'Arcy. "You wottah!"

"Rats!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! Outside, you ass!"

Round they whirled again, just missing the doorway, and they staggered over towards the bookcase and crashed upon it. There was a crash of breaking glass and a thunder of showering books and papers.

"Here, look out!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Sowwy, deah boy—"

"Don't wreck the blessed place!"

"Awfully sowwy! Out you go, you wottah!"

"Rats!"

With a herculean effort D'Arcy brought Levison through the doorway. But Levison held on to him, and they went through together. There was a sound of heavy bumping in the passage.

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

D'Arcy, unfortunately, had fallen underneath in the passage. Levison promptly sat astride of him, pinning him down.

The swell of St. Jim's gasped.

"Gewwoff, you wottah!"

"Rats!"

"Gwoogh! Gewwoff!"

"Not till you apologise," said Levison smartly.

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CHAPTER 3.

Gussy in a Hurry!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY lay on his back on the cold linoleum and gasped.

With Levison sitting on his chest, he could not get up, neither could he throw off the cad of the Fourth. The chucking-out of Ernest Levison had ended rather unfortunately for the swell of St. Jim's.

"You uttah wottah!" gasped D'Arcy. "I insist upon your gettin' off immediately. You are wuinin' my clothes!"

"Rats!"

"I'm gettin' howwibly dusty——"

"Serve you right!"

"I insist——"

Wally D'Arcy came out of the study, and, without saying a word, he laid hold of Levison's ears and pulled.

The Fourth Former roared.

"Ow! Leggo! Yow!"

Wally did not let go. He pulled as if he were pulling in a tug-o-war. Levison went backwards off Arthur Augustus and crashed on the floor in the doorway.

D'Arcy staggered to his feet.

"Now, you wottah——"

Levison had turned furiously upon the scamp of the Third. But he had no time to deal with Wally. The swell of the Fourth was upon him like a whirlwind. D'Arcy did not close with Levison again. He hit out.

"Put up your hands, you uttah wottah!" he shouted.

Levison put up his hands. He had no choice about the matter. But it did not serve him very much. D'Arcy's fists came home in rapid postman's knocks, and the cad of the Fourth staggered out of the study under a shower of blows.

In the passage he fairly took to his heels; and D'Arcy came back into the study, gasping and triumphant.

"I've given him a feahful thwashin'!" he panted.

"Hurrah!" said Wally.

"Good!" said Lowther. "You must be a useful chap to have in a study, to fall on visitors in this way."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"It's very obliging of Gussy," Manners remarked. "By the way, what did you do for Levison for? Had he done anything?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"If Gussy has done with playing the hoodigan, we might as well get down to Rylcombe, before the Grammarians get there," Figgins remarked.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Awful ruffian that chap is to take about," Blake said. "We try to keep him in order—but it's no use!"

"You uttah ass——"

"Well, suppose we get out?" said Tom Merry. "It's a whole holiday—Jubilee Day—and no blessed passes required. We can go where we like."

"Come on!"

"Pway wait for me, deah boys. I shall have to change my clothes aftah gettin' into this howwid state."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't wait, Gussy. The Grammarians may be first in the field if we don't buck up; there's not a minute to waste."

"I shall not keep you more than an hour——"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm jolly sure you won't!"

"Pewwaps I could get weady in half an hour——"

"I think I can see us waiting half an hour, and letting the Grammar School

ends get ahead of us! Come on, you chaps!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I cannot go in this state, and you fellows will get into some touble if you don't have me with you. What is weaquahed on an occasion like this is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Come as you are," said Blake.

"Quite imposs, deah boy. I could not disgwace the coll by appeawin' in public in this dirty and dishevelled state!"

"You should have thought of that before you started fighting!" said Blake severely. "Let this be a lesson to you. Come on, you chaps!"

"Weally, you fellows——"

The juniors, laughing, crowded out of the study. Tom Merry stayed behind to lock the box of banknotes up in the cupboard. D'Arcy followed him out into the passage, still expostulating.

"Pway wait, deah boys! I might possibly cwam it into a quatah of an hour."

He was still expostulating when the juniors went downstairs. Arthur Augustus indulged in a scornful sniff, and went to the Fourth Form dormitory to change. He intended to change as quickly as possible and follow on, hoping to arrive in Rylcombe in time to prevent the other fellows making a mess of things. For D'Arcy was firmly possessed with the conviction that unless he was present, something was bound to go wrong. The other fellows held that things were less likely to go wrong if he were absent.

The change, for Arthur Augustus, was very quick. He was finished in twenty minutes. He came out of the dormitory and ran downstairs, and dashed out of the School House. There was a yell from a big senior on the steps as D'Arcy ran into him.

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove! Sowwy, Kildare!"

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, gasped, and seized the swell of the Fourth by the arm.

"Ow!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ow! Leggo! You are disawwangin' my collah, you silly ass! Wow! Leggo!"

"You young duffer!"

"Pway leggo, deah boy! I'm in a feahful huwvy! Those boundahs have started without me, you know, and I know they will get into some feahful touble!"

D'Arcy jerked himself loose, the captain of St. Jim's good-naturedly letting him go. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dashed down the steps, and ran into Gore of the Shell. Gore gave a roar.

"Sowwy, Gore!"

"You ass!"

"Sowwy, but I'm in a feahful huwvy!"

"You fathead."

D'Arcy rushed on without stopping to argue with Gore. He sped across the quadrangle as if he were on the cinder-path, holding on his silk hat with one hand, while his eyeglass fluttered in the breeze at the end of its cord.

He had almost reached the gates when his name was yelled.

"Gussy! Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus halted, petrified. He looked round, groping for his eyeglass. Tom Merry & Co. were behind him, strolling lazily towards him from the direction of the School House.

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and stared at them. They came up with an easy saunter.

"You might stop for a chap," said Monty Lowther.

Besides, what's the fearful hurry?" asked Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"We can't possibly run all the way to Rylcombe," Figgins remarked.

"May as well take it easy, Gussy."

"You—you wottahs!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "Then you haven't started at all."

"Started! We're starting now!"

"You—you feahful boundahs! Where were you when I came out of the House?" demanded D'Arcy.

"Leaning up against the wall waiting for you," said Tom Merry innocently. "You asked us to wait, didn't you?"

"You—you feahful ass! Why didn't you tell me, then?"

"Well, it was rather funny to see you biffing into people," Monty Lowther observed, "and I must really compliment you on the way you sprinted."

"You—you——"

D'Arcy was speechless as he realised that while he was bolting at top speed to overtake the juniors, they had not started at all. They walked on in a leisurely way to the gates, and D'Arcy walked behind them, with feelings too deep for words.

CHAPTER 4.

Wholesale!

D'ARCY did not speak all the way to Rylcombe.

An expression of deep indignation was on his face, and he cast glances of scornful dignity at the juniors, which apparently they did not see. When Rylcombe was reached Tom Merry stopped outside the shop of Mrs. Murphy, familiarly known as "Mother Murphy," and the others stopped, too.

"We've got to do this thing in order," Tom Merry remarked. "We'll make the round of Rylcombe, and order every blessed thing in the decorative line that there is in all the shops. Fortunately Rylcombe is only a small village. We can buy up all the Jubilee stuff they've got here, I imagine, if we buck up, before the Grammarians start their shopping."

"Yaas, wathah! Pewwaps it would be bettah to twust the shoppin' to me."

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Have you found your voice again?"

"I did not intend to speak to you wottahs any more; but I don't want the whole affair messed up for want of a little common-sense on the subject," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "Of course, I don't want to put myself forward in any way, but what an affair of this sort wequahs is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"I don't know," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Of course, I may be wrong, but I believe that I could manage to buy fireworks unaided, or, if two or three of us put our heads together, we could manage it between us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Let's start with Mother Murphy."

The juniors crowded into the shop. Mrs. Murphy came out to greet them with an expansive smile. The good dame knew that it was a whole holiday at St. Jim's, and she was expecting a rush of custom that day. Mrs. Murphy sold everything, excepting aeroplanes and grand pianos. Pastries of all sorts, from the delicate jam tart to the festive doughnut, fireworks and flags and lanterns—everything that the heart could desire, in fact, could be purchased at Mrs. Murphy's for cash, or on "tick," if the credit was good.

"Yes, young gentlemen, what can I



In a few moments a terrific battle was being waged in the lane, and fighting St. Jim's juniors and Grammarians were soon dotted all over the road. "Ow! Yawwoogh!" came a sudden roar from Arthur Augustus as he sat down with a bump. Squelch! His topper was crushed down over his ears under the weight of a playful Grammarian!

do for you this nice morning?" asked Mrs. Murphy, gently rubbing her plump hands. "What can I get for you, Master Merry?"

"Everything," said Tom Merry.

"Eh?"

"How much tuck have you in the shop?"

"I—I don't quite know, Master Merry. 'What sort?'"

"All sorts."

"Jam tarts and cakes and doughnuts, and—"

"Yes; and everything else to eat. How much would the lot come to?"

Mrs. Murphy gasped. She was used to generous orders from the juniors of St. Jim's. When they were in funds they were accustomed to spending money royally, especially Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was frequently the recipient of a fiver, above his usual pocket-money, from his father, Lord Eastwood.

But an order on this scale had never fallen to Mrs. Murphy's lot before.

"You—you are joking, Master Merry!" she gasped.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not at all," he said. "I want the lot."

"The—the lot?"

"Yes. We've just received a small fortune for the Spanish doubloons we brought back from the South Seas some time ago," Tom Merry explained. "We're blowing the whole lot on Jubilee festivities. We think it's our duty as loyal subjects to King George the Fifth to make a little bit of a flutter on Jubilee Day. Now how much will the tuck come to—the whole lot of it?"

"Ginger-beer and all," said Figgins.

"Everything eatable, in fact."

"I—I don't think I could tell at a moment's notice," said Mrs. Murphy

breathlessly, "but it would not be less than twenty-five pounds."

"Good!" said Tom Merry, making a note in his pocket-book. "Very good! Twenty-five pounds, so far. You can send in the exact bill along with the goods, and we'll pay on delivery. My word is good enough, isn't it?"

"Dear me! Yes, Master Tom."

"Thank you!" said Tom Merry, smiling. "Mind, you're to send up everything, and we'll pay carriage, too, if it costs you anything. Every blessed thing in the show to be delivered at St. Jim's as quickly as possible."

"Yes, Master Tom."

"What about fireworks?" said Kerr.

"By Jove, yes; I forgot! I want your whole supply of fireworks, Mrs. Murphy."

"That will be quite ten pounds, Master Tom."

"All right, send them along."

"Very well," said the good dame, almost dazed at the prospect of doing a turnover of thirty-five pounds in a single day. "Very well."

"When can you deliver them?"

"I will get the carrier to take them by noon, Master Tom."

"Good! Mind, everything in the shop belongs to us now," said Tom Merry impressively. "It's all our property, and you're not to sell a single article to anybody else."

"Certainly not, Master Tom!"

"Especially the Grammar School chaps. If Frank Monk and his lot come along, don't forget to tell them that you've sold right out to St. Jim's."

Mrs. Murphy smiled.

"Deary me! What a boy you are, Master Tom!"

"It's a bargain, Mrs. Murphy."

"Yes, indeed!"

"Good! We've finished here, you chaps. Come on!"

The juniors crowded out of the shop in high spirits. Thirty-five pounds was a large sum of money, certainly, but it would hardly be missed out of two hundred pounds. And Mrs. Murphy's establishment was the best supplied of its kind in Rylcombe. The other shops would be sold out at lower figures.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his good humour quite recovered by now. "I wegard this as wippin', you know."

"Gorgeous!" said Herries.

"Hallo! Grammar School cads!" shouted Manners.

A youth with a blue and white cap came swinging down the old village street. Another fellow in a similar cap followed him round the corner. The first was Frank Monk, the son of the headmaster of Rylcombe Grammar School; the second was Gordon Gay, both of the Fourth Form at the Grammar School. They stopped as they saw the Saints. Between St. Jim's and the Grammar School warfare had existed ever since Dr. Monk opened his establishment on the outskirts of the village of Rylcombe.

"Grammar School cads!"

"St. Jim's worms!"

Tom Merry whispered hurriedly to his companions.

"They can't be allowed in the village now. They'll find out what we're up to—and they may offer higher prices and bust the game. Chase them!"

"Good egg!"

And the Saints rushed at the Grammarians. They did not stand upon ceremony. Frank Monk and Gordon Gay had to be got rid of till the "Jubilee corner" was complete, and any means were good enough. In a moment the two Grammarians were surrounded.

CHAPTER 5.

Eggy!

GORDON GAY and Frank Monk backed against a shopfront. It happened to be the shop of Mr. Sands, the village grocer.

Outside, great boxes of eggs were exposed for sale, and the great boxes covered the flanks, as it were, of the Grammarians, on either side, leaving them open only to a frontal attack. They put up their hands at once. In the circumstances, with the odds so heavily against them, the Grammar School chums would not have disdained to take to flight. But they had no choice.

"We're sorry," said Tom Merry, "but we can't allow you here."

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "Have you bought up the village street?"

"Not exactly; but we can't allow Grammar School cads around. Run back to the school."

"No fear!"

"We're willing to give you a couple of minutes' start."

"Rats!"

"Will you buzz off?"

"What for?"

"Because we tell you to."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"No, we won't!" roared Gordon Gay wrathfully. "We won't do anything of the sort! Go and eat coke!"

"We want the village this morning," said Tom Merry, with a manner of great politeness. "We can't allow you here."

The two Grammarians simply snorted. "Yaas, deah boys, that's how it is," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The best thing you can do is to wun."

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Are you going?"

"No!" roared Frank Monk and Gordon Gay together.

"Ere, don't you row outside my shop, please!" said Mr. Sands, coming to his door, with an uneasy eye on his egg-boxes. "Go a little farther on, please!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"We want some eggs, Mr. Sands," he said.

"Yessir!" said Mr. Sands, all businesslike at once. "Certainly, Master Merry! How many, sir?"

"Say three dozen," said Tom Merry. "Catch!"

He tossed two half-crowns to the grocer.

"Thanks, Master Merry! I'll select them for you."

"Thanks, we'll select them ourselves," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "They're intended as a present to our friends here, so we want to select them ourselves."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very well, Master Merry."

"Look here—" began Gordon Gay and Frank Monk.

"Three shies a penny, and all the Grammarians you knock down!" sang out Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's juniors grasped the eggs from the box.

"Crunch, crunch!"

In rapid succession eggs spattered upon the shopfront round the two Grammarians. They spattered among the Grammarians, too. Frank Monk gave a wild yell as an egg broke on his waistcoat, and Gordon Gay roared, with a breaking egg on his chin.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monk and Gordon Gay clutched at the box nearest them and hurled them back. As they stopped, fresh eggs caught them on the ears and the eyes and the neck. They roared, and, half-blinded by broken eggs, began to hurl back almost at random.

"Here, hold on!" shouted Mr. Sands. "Old on! You ain't paid for them heggs!"

But Gay and Monk did not stop to think of that. They only wanted to get some of their own back, so to speak, on the Saints.

"Biff, biff! Squelch!"

"Ow!" roared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Ow! You uttah wottah! Yoop!"

An egg had caught the swell of St. Jim's fair and square in his aristocratic eye. It broke there—naturally—and squelched all over his face. He yelled and jumped into the air.

"Ow! Groo! Ooooh! Oh! Ah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Biff, biff! Squel-l-eh!"

"Yawwoh! Ow! You beastly cads! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. pelted away wildly. Their fire was too hot for the Grammarians, and Frank Monk and Gordon Gay sprang over the egg-boxes—at a ruinous cost in eggs—and scrambled away.

"Pelt them!" roared Blake.

"Go it!"

"Pile in!"

"Whiz, whiz, whiz!"

Eggs, most of them sent with deadly aim, followed the Grammarians down the street. The Saints rushed after them, pelting.

"Squelch, squelch, squelch!"

Frank Monk turned round and shook his fist furiously.

"We'll come back with a crowd!" he roared. "We'll squash you! We'll pulverise you! We'll—Ow, ow!"

Three or four eggs caught Frank Monk in the face, and he ceased abruptly and ran on. More eggs broke on the back of his head. He disappeared round a corner with Gordon Gay. The chums of St. Jim's were left, yelling with laughter.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha! I think it was worth the price in eggs. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Gwooh! Yawwoh!"

"Hallo! What's the matter with you, Gussy?"

"Yow! Ow! Look at me!" roared the swell of St. Jim's. "Look at my face! Ow! I'm smothahed! Ow! Yah! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors gathered round D'Arcy, roaring. As it happened, the Grammarians' shots had mostly gone at random, and D'Arcy was the only one of the Saints who had been hit.

D'Arcy was reeking with eggs—and not of the freshest variety, either. He scraped at his face, and gasped, sniffed, and snorted. The juniors laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks.

"You uttah asses!" shouted D'Arcy. "I uttally fail to see any cause of mewwiment. I wegard this as wotten! Those Gwammah School cads are disgustin' wottahs!"

"How are they?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Look at the way they've tweeked me!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"But you had just biffed Monk in the eye with an egg," said Figgins.

"That is quite anothah mattah, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall have to go and get cleaned up somewhere," said D'Arcy. "I am in a most disgustin' state. It's wotten!"

"Some of the eggs are, I think," said Blake, sniffing. "Don't come too near me, Gussy, please. I'm rather particular about scents."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy glared at the juniors through a film of egg, and tramped off in high dudgeon. Mr. Sands came forward in a state of great agitation.

"Who's going to pay for my heggs?" he demanded. "There's thirty shillings' worth busted hover your little game. Who's going to pay for them, I'd like to know?"

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"That's all right," said Tom Merry. "We'll settle for the lot—though really you ought to charge them to Frank Monk and Gay—they've had them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Mr. Sands smiled. He could afford to smile when he was assured that the eggs would be paid for. As a matter of fact, he was not likely to lose on the transaction if he charged thirty shillings for the eggs that had been broken.

"Wery well, young gents," he said quite amiably. "Shall I make out the bill?"

"Yes, and send it up to the school to me," said Tom Merry. "I'll pay this afternoon—we're in funds to-day, Mr. Sands."

"Wery well, sir."
And the juniors, quite satisfied with the way they had got rid of the Grammarians, expensive as it was, walked on to their next place of business. What was thirty shillings' worth of eggs to a party of fellows who had two hundred pounds?

"Those bounders will be back with a crowd soon, as Monkey said," Tom Merry remarked. "We shall have to buck up and get through before they come."

"Yes, rather!"

CHAPTER 6.

Something Like a Fight!

"**B**AI JOVE! Look out! Gwammah School cads!"

Tom Merry & Co. had just come out of their eighth establishment. Mrs. Murphy, Mr. Sands, Mr. Wragge, Mr. Bunn, and Mr. Popper had been visited and dealt with. After them came Mr. Brick, the baker and confectioner; Mr. Knowles, of the fancy shop; and Mr. Speckles, the greengrocer. They had been dealt with quite easily and satisfactorily.

The story of the sudden and surprising wealth of the St. Jim's juniors was all through the village by this time, and nobody had any hesitation in letting anything go up to the school on trust. Besides, Tom Merry's word was known to be as good as gold. Whole stocks had been bought up, and delivery had been promised for noon, or soon after. And the juniors chuckled when they thought of the looks of the fellows at St. Jim's when the consignments began to arrive.

As for Taggles, the porter, he was certain to be in a flaming rage all the afternoon. And as for the Grammarians, Tom Merry & Co. chuckled at the thought of them.

The "corner" was complete.

Everything available in Rylcombe in the way of tuck, Jubilee decorations, and so forth, had been bought up.

Little supplies at little shops the juniors had bought up for cash. Big supplies at the biggest shops they had ordered from end to end, to be paid for on delivery. Rylcombe was cleared out. It was close upon dinner-time now, and as the celebration was to be in the afternoon, it was time to be getting back to St. Jim's.

But Tom Merry & Co. did not expect that they would get back without a brush with the Grammarians, and they were right.

Frank Monk & Co. did not yet know the trick that had been played. They were going to stroll down in a leisurely way for their shopping, and did not dream that everything had been bought up over their heads—yet. When they discovered it—the St. Jim's juniors simply yelled at the prospect.

The last visit had been made, the last bargain had been struck, and the corner was complete; and then, as Tom Merry & Co. came out of Mr. Speckles' greengrocery shop, the Grammarians came in sight, and Arthur Augustus gave the alarm.

Frank Monk had said that he would return with a crowd—and he had!

It was a crowd—or, rather, a horde—of fellows that came pouring along the old High Street of Rylcombe. They had evidently been searching up and down for Tom Merry & Co., and they came upon the Saints just as they came out of the greengrocer's shop.

Tom Merry & Co. halted. There were a dozen of them, and all of them were fighting men of renown in their Forms at St. Jim's. But the Grammarians were legion. Frank Monk and Gordon Gay were at the head of them, and there were Harry and Jack Wootton, Lane, Carboy, Tadpole, and Carpenter, and at least two dozen more. The odds were very great.

The Grammarians gave a whoop of triumph at the sight of the St. Jim's cads.

"Here they are!"

"St. Jim's cads!"

"Go for 'em!"

And the Grammar School came on with a rush.

"Bai Jove! We're howwibly outnumbered, deah boys!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pewwaps a mastahly wetwate would be the pwopah capah!"

"Masterly or not, we'd better retreat," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We can't fight four to one. March!"

The juniors retreated in the direction of St. Jim's. Their business in Rylcombe was done, and they were quite willing to yield the ground to their rivals of the Grammar School.

But Frank Monk & Co. were not disposed to allow them to escape so easily. The Grammarians came on with a rush.

The Saints would not actually run. And if they had run, it would have been of little use, for the Grammar School fellows could probably have run just as fast. And, as Blake said, if a fellow was to be punched, it was better to be punched on the face than on the back.

The juniors backed away towards the school in good order, keeping close together, and facing the enemy. The Grammarians came on, rushing, and hurling themselves upon the St. Jim's juniors.

In a few moments a terrific battle was being waged in the wildest confusion. Fellows rushed at one another, hitting out, and closing, and rolling on the ground, and scrambling and falling over one another.

It was such a wild and whirling fight as the quiet shades of Rylcombe Lane had seldom seen before.

"Come on, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, waving his hands. "Follow me, deah boys! Pitch into the wottahs like anythin'!"

With his eyeglass floating at the end of its cord, and his silk hat on the back of his head, D'Arcy rushed into the fray.

Arthur Augustus was a terrific man of war when his aristocratic blood was up. Frank Monk took Gussy's left in the eye, and Gordon Gay received his right on the nose. Then

Lane caught the left again, and Carboy an upper-cut.

Four juniors sprawled on the ground, but unfortunately one of them caught the leg of Arthur Augustus, and pulled him over, too.

"Ow!" gasped D'Arcy, as he staggered. "Yow! Leggo, you wottah!"

Bump!

He dropper on Gordon Gay, knocking all the breath out of the Australian Grammarian. Gordon Gay gave a terrific grunt.

"Grooooooh!"

"Bai Jove!"

Three or four Grammarians seized upon Arthur Augustus, and rolled him over in the dust. They seemed to take a sort of fiendish delight in rubbing him in the dust. He struggled and yelled, and shouted for rescue, but the other Saints were all attacked by heavy odds, and far too busy defending themselves to think of Arthur Augustus.

"Ow! You wottahs! Welease me at once! Wescue! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!"

"Roll him over!"

"Sit on his hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Squelch!

It was a mournful sound as a Grammar School youth sat on the silk hat on D'Arcy's head. The topper was not likely to be of much use again—at least, as a topper. Squashed over Arthur Augustus' ears, it looked something like an opera-hat now.

D'Arcy gasped.

"Oh! You uttah wottahs! Ah! Ow! My hat! Bai Jove! Yawwoh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sock it to them!" shouted Tom Merry. "Buck up, St. Jim's!"

"Hurrah!"

"Buck up, Grammar School!" yelled Gordon Gay.

"Go it!"

"Pile in!"

Away up the road the Saints went, driven by numbers. They did their best to keep together, but the road was dotted with Saints in the grasp of Grammarians, who bumped them in the dust with great energy.

Within sight of the old tower of St. Jim's the Grammarians kept at it, and Tom Merry & Co. were quite fagged out by that time, and bumped till they seemed all aching bones and dust. Still, they were putting up a fight, and the row in the lane had attracted attention from the school now, and help was coming.

Pratt, of the New House, lounging at the school gates, was the first to see the row, and he yelled an alarm into the quad.

"Grammar School cads! Rescue!"

Then Pratt started down the road.

In about five seconds there was a crowd after Pratt. Kerruish of the Fourth, and Hancock, Macdonald, Gore, Clifton Dane, Bernard Glyn, Jameson, and Gibson of the Third, and French and Jimson, and other fellows came dashing out, and more and more followed.

(Continued on the next page.)



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Then it was the Grammarians' turn to retreat.

Frank Monk rapped out a brief order:

"Buzz off!"

And the Grammarians "buzzed"!

Down the road they went, with yells of laughter and defiance, leaving Tom Merry & Co., dusty and done, in the lane.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, staggering out of a mass of fern in a dry ditch.

"Bai Jove! I feel howwid?"

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

"You look horrid, too!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I can't look much howwidah than you do!"

"I shouldn't wonder. Ow! My nose!"

"Oh! My eye!"

"Grooogh! M-my mouth! Oh!"

"After them!" roared Reilly of the Fourth, dashing up. "After the heathens! We'll wipe up the ground with them entoirely!"

And he dashed on in pursuit, with a dozen others. But Frank Monk & Co. were going fast now, and the pursuit was dropped before the village was reached.

There were crowds more of Grammarians there now, ready to take part in the fray. And Tom Merry & Co. were quite spent. Even Figgins said that he hadn't another punch left in him.

"My only hat!" Monty Lowther exclaimed, looking round at the dilapidated crowd. "I must say we look pretty! I've got a black eye for the Jubilee, at all events!"

"I don't believe my nose will ever go straight again," murmured Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind, we've done the Grammarians!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather! Hurrah!"

"Huwwah, deah boys!"

"Done the Grammarians!" repeated Clifton Dane. "Well, if you say you've done them, I suppose you have. But I must say that it looks remarkably as if they've done you!"

"Weally, Dane—"

"But we've done them, all the same," said Tom Merry. "We've cleared Rylcombe out of supplies for the Jubilee. Frank Monk & Co. are going to celebrate, and they won't be able to get a rag of bunting, or a penny flag, or fireworks, or any tuck. What do you think of that?"

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"It must have cost a jolly lot!" said Bernard Glyn.

Tom Merry laughed.

"It cost a hundred and fifty pounds!"

"A hundred and fifty pounds!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was the son of a millionaire, and used to plenty of money; but a sum like that took even his breath away.

"Yes, we're celebrating the Jubilee," Tom Merry explained. "There will be nearly fifty pounds left still for anything more that we need."

"By Jove!"

"We shall have a jollification here such as St. Jim's has never seen," said Manners. "I'm going to write up a description of it for the 'Weekly,' and put in a picture of Gussy jubilating."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Seems to me that I want a wash," said Kerr. "Let's get in!"

"Good egg!"

And they got in. They were indeed very much in need of a wash and a change after that desperate battle. But

for all the damage to clothing and to features, they had the greatest consolation—they had utterly and thoroughly "done" the Grammarians.

CHAPTER 7.

The Money is Missing!

TOM MERRY threw himself into the armchair in his study, and laughed.

There was a bluish circle round one of Tom Merry's eyes, and there was rather a rich shade of pink on his nose. He had an ache in his jaw, and another ache in his elbow, and a third ache in one leg. Such a "scrap" as that with the Grammarians could not be got through scatheless. But Tom Merry did not care. He was feeling in very high feather just now.

The juniors had cleaned up in time for dinner; they were waiting for the consignments to arrive from Rylcombe.

Tom Merry laughed. He could not help it. The idea of all the tuck and all the Jubilee decorations in the village being delivered in vast quantities at St. Jim's was too comic.

"I wonder whether the Grammarians have started shopping yet!" he said.

Monty Lowther grinned.

"I don't suppose they'll be in a hurry," he said. "They'll reckon they're holding the village now, and that we shan't show up there again."

"They can hold it," grinned Manners. "They're welcome. Ha, ha, ha!"

Toby, the School House page, put his fat and grinning face in at the door.

"Master Merry, if you please—"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

"The carrier 'ave brought some boxes from Mrs. Murphy's, sir," said Toby. "Which Mr. Taggles wants to know where they're to go, sir, as they can't come hup to the study?"

"In the Form-room, of course!"

"Very good, sir!"

And Toby vanished.

"I've asked Mr. Linton's permission to have them in the Form-room," Tom Merry explained. "As there's no lessons to-day, that will be quite all right. Mrs. Murphy's lot has come first. We'd better go down and see them in."

"Yes, rather!"

The Terrible Three went downstairs. A good crowd of juniors had gathered to watch the arrival of the consignment from Mrs. Murphy's. Tuck and fireworks and all sorts and conditions of things had arrived in boxes, baskets, parcels, and packages. Mr. Craggs, the carrier, was bringing them in with the help of Taggles, the porter. Taggles wore a Jove-like frown.

He stopped, with a big box on his back, outside the Form-room door, and leaned the box against the wall to rest, and blinked at the chums of the Shell.

"Which it's a 'ot day, Master Merry!" said Taggles.

"It often is in May," said Monty Lowther blandly. "Snow good expecting snow, you know!"

It took nearly a minute for that little joke to dawn upon Taggles. Then he smiled in a rather weak way.

"Yes, Master Lowther. You will 'ave your little joke, sir! It's 'ot, and these ere things is 'eavy!"

"How singular!" said Manners.

He was referring to Taggles' verb, but the porter was quite oblivious of the irony of his remark.

"Makes a man thirsty!" said Taggles.

"Shall I fetch you some nice, clear, cool water from the tap, Taggles?" said Levison, who was among the lookers-on.

Taggles gave Levison one look, and shouldered the box and carried it in.

By the time the whole consignment had been delivered there was quite a stack in the middle of the Form-room.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "That looks wippin', you know!"

"Yes, rather!"

The carrier, wiping his perspiring brow with a red handkerchief, presented a bill to Tom Merry for payment.

"Which I'm to take the money for Mrs. Murphy, Master Merry, sir!" he said. "Thirty-eight pound seventeen shillings and threepence-halfpenny, sir!"

"It's grown a bit since we saw Mrs. Murphy!" Kerr remarked. "I suppose it's all right? You've got the tin, Tom Merry?"

"Good! I'll fetch the money down. You can receipt the bill, Mr. Craggs."

"Yes, sir!"

The carrier wetted his stump of a pencil, and scratched his name on the bill.

Tom Merry went up to the study for the money. On arriving there, he felt in his pocket for the key of the cupboard in the study wall and unlocked it.

The box lay inside just where he had left it.

Tom Merry picked it up and carried it downstairs under his arm. In the Form-room a crowd of fellows waited round the carrier.

Mr. Craggs had the receipted bill in his hand.

There was a general movement of interest as Tom Merry appeared with the box under his arm.

The juniors crowded round to look at the contents of the box as Tom placed it on the table to open.

"Pway don't ewush, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus in a tone of remonstrance. "You are wumplin' my jacket, weally, Weilly!"

"Faith, and I was quite aware of that, Gussy darling!"

"Weally, Weilly—"

"Order!" said Monty Lowther. "Count out the pounds, Tommy!"

"Hallo! Look here!" shouted Tom Merry. "What does this mean?"

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Bai Jove!"

Amazed looks were bent upon the box. Tom Merry had unlocked it and opened it, and, instead of the wads of banknotes inside, he revealed a closely packed quantity of blank notepaper. The notes had been taken out, and the blank notepaper, evidently, had been crammed in to give the box the same weight as before, so that the abstraction of the money would not be discovered until the box was opened.

There was not a banknote of any sort in the box. But on the inside of the lid, in ink with a rough brush, had been scrawled the word:

"Rats!"

That was all.

"Rats!" repeated Tom Merry dazedly.

"Where's the money?"

"Where are the notes?"

"The notes, deah boy—"

Tom Merry's brow grew dark.

"I suppose this is a rotten jape!" he exclaimed. "Somebody has taken out the notes and put in this notepaper instead for a silly lark. The chap who has taken the money had better own up and bring it back!"

Silence!

"Taking money for a lark is next door to stealing, and likely enough to be taken for stealing!" said Tom Merry. "One can't help suspecting that, if the rotter isn't found out, he might keep the money. Who has taken this?"

"Was there ever any there?" asked Mellish of the Fourth, with a sneer. Tom Merry started, and looked at him.

"There were two hundred pounds in this box," he said.

"I never saw them."

"Neither did I!" said Crooke of the Shell, with a sneering laugh. "I remember saying to Mellish, too, that I believe it was all Shell swank about the money!"

"Yes, rather!" said Levison.

Tom Merry turned on him in a flash. "Why, you saw the money!" he exclaimed. "You came into our study while we had the box open on the table, and you saw the money in it!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I saw something," he replied. "You wouldn't let me touch it, I remember that, and you chucked me out of the study before I could get near it!"

"You—you hound!"

Tom Merry made a step towards the cad of the Fourth.

Levison backed away. He did not intend to enter into conflict with the captain of the Shell, and he had said enough.

"Well, have it your own way," he said. "If they were real notes, I don't see where they've got to."

"Weally, Levison—"

"We had two hundred guids!" said Monty Lowther.

"Pounds, deah boy!"

"And somebody's taken them!" said Tom Merry, knitting his brows. "I'm sure it's only a jape—a silly, rotten jape! But we can't pay for these things till we find them. Craggs, you'd better keep that bill. Tell Mrs. Murphy I've lost the money, and we'll send it to her the moment I find it."

Mr. Craggs hesitated.

"Which Mrs. Murphy told me I was to take the money," he said slowly.

"You see, it's lost."

"Yes; but—"

"You can take the stuff back again, if you like," said Tom Merry, looking very worried. "I know I've no right to keep it unless I can pay for it. But you know me well enough, I should think, to know that that's all right."

"Yes, Master Merry. I'll leave it, and I'll tell Mrs. Murphy you're sending the money on," said the carrier.

"That's right."

And Mr. Craggs departed.

Tom Merry was left looking at the blank paper in the box and the word scrawled on the lid:

"Rats!"

It was the only message left by the raider who had taken the two hundred pounds. Where was the money? Would the juniors ever see it again?

Tom Merry thought of the consignments of goods that were arriving at St. Jim's that afternoon, and he wore a decidedly worried look. What was to be done if the money did not turn up?

CHAPTER 8.

Sold Out!

FRANK MONK strolled down the High Street of Rylcombe with his hands in his trousers-pockets, and his cap on the side of his head.

Frank Monk had a black eye, but that was nothing to him. Gordon Gay, who strolled by his side, had a swollen nose, and he cared nothing. Lane and Carboy both showed signs of conflict. But they were in a jubilant mood.

"Licked!" said Frank Monk.

And Lane and Carboy chortled:

"Licked hollow!"

"Beaten to the wide," said Gordon Gay. "Biffed, beaten, done in, and done for! Squashed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I rather think we've proved that the Grammar School is top-dog this time," grinned Frank Monk.

"What-ho!"

"You bet!"

"The giddy Saints will have to hide their diminished heads," grinned Lane. "We've beaten them out of their giddy boots. And now—"

"Now for the celebration," said Monk. "My idea is march in a procession up and down Rylcombe, and decorate the school, and make things hum generally, and finish up with a record feed."

"Good idea!"

"We're in funds," said Frank Monk. "We've raised twenty pounds by the Jubilee subscription, and we ought to be able to have a spree on that."

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, here's Mother Murphy's—we'll give her a look in," said Monk. "She's a good old soul, and always gives you value for money."

And the four Grammarians walked into Mrs. Murphy's little shop. The good dame looked a little self-conscious as she greeted them. She guessed what they had come for, and she wondered how they would take what she had to tell them.

"Good-day, Mrs. Murphy!" said Frank Monk genially. "What have you got for us to-day?"

"Ahem, Master Monk—"

"We want tuck by the yard, and ginger-pop by the gallon, and flags and rags by the mile," said Carboy.

"Yes, rather!"

"Trot them out, Mrs. Murphy!"

"Ahem!"

"Twelve dozen jam-tarts," said Gordon Gay.

"Six dozen of ginger-beer—"

"Three dozen of lemonade—"

"A whole cake—one currant, one seed," said Lane, "and I think we'd better have a whole box of biscuits."

"Oh, certainly; yes!"

"And yards of bunting," said Monk. "We want to rig up all the Form-rooms in giddy colours."

"Excuse me, young gentlemen—"

"Make out a list, Monkey," said Gordon Gay. "We'll blow a fiver here, and then march on to the other places."

"Good egg!"

"Excuse me—" murmured Mrs. Murphy.

"Not at all; we shan't want any change from the fiver," said Monk.

"Can you send the things up to the school in an hour?"

"You see—"

"Why, what's the matter, Mrs. Murphy?" asked Monk, in surprise.

"You're not ill, are you?"

"Oh, no, Master Monk!"

"What's the trouble, then?"

"Nothing, Master Monk; only—"

"Well, out with it, you know."

"I—I can't sell you anything to-day. I'm so sorry."

"What!" roared the Grammarian.

"I—I haven't any stock left," faltered Mrs. Murphy.

"Haven't any stock?"

"What!"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"What do you call this?"

"It's—it's all sold, young gentlemen."

The young gentlemen from St. Jim's have bought it all up," said Mrs. Murphy.

"What! My hat!"

"Draw it mild!"

(Continued on the next page.)



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GOOD FOR TRADE.

"Yes," said the gentleman in the hotel lounge, "this hiking is a fine idea! Nothing pleases me better than to see crowds of hikers on the roads!"

"May I ask if you're a hiker yourself, sir?" said a listener.

"Oh, no!" was the reply. "I'm a manufacturer of corn-plasters!" Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Whitty, 132, Beeches Road, West Bromwich, Staffs.

NO ENCORE.

Artiste: "See here, I object to going on after this monkey act!"

Manager: "You're right! The audience may think it's an encore!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Hawe, 49, Marksbury Avenue, Richmond, Surrey.

ROUGH ON THE RECEIVER.

Teacher: "It is always better to give than to receive, Jimson."

Jimson: "Yes, sir; that's what my father does."

Teacher: "What is your father?"

Jimson: "A boxer, sir!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," 96, Brookbank Road, Lewisham, London, S.E.13.

UNLUCKY THIRTEEN.

Tramp: "No matter where I goes, nor what I does, my unlucky number allus pops up and does me!"

Old Lady: "What is your unlucky number, my man?"

Tramp: "Thirteen, ma'am—twelve jurymen and a judge!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Blanchfield, 7, Elm Close, Raynes Park, London, S.W.20.

THE LIMIT.

Tom Merry was in his study doing his prep when Monty Lowther rushed in.

"I say, Tommy," exclaimed Monty, "it's the limit!"

"What is?" asked Tom Merry.

"Why," replied Lowther, beating a retreat, "thirty miles an hour!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Martin, Oldbury, Church Road, Whitstable, Kent.

TAKING NO RISKS.

It was late at night; the taxi had just pulled up under a lamp, and McPherson got out and began fumbling in his pockets. At last he handed the driver a coin.

"I have known gents to give a bit over the fare!" grumbled the taximan, as he took the coin.

"Ay," said McPherson, "that's why I asked ye to stop under a lamp!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to N. Mitchell, E Ward, Southmead Hospital, Bristol 7.

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"They have, really, Master Gay," said Mrs. Murphy.

Frank Monk whistled.

"Well, they're doing things in style, and no mistake," he said.

"What-ho!" said Gordon Gay. "Fancy buying out a whole shop—the bouncers! Well, there are other shops in Rylecombe."

"Yes, rather! Good-day, Mrs. Murphy."

"Good-day, young gentlemen! I'm so sorry."

"Not at all; it's all right."

The Grammarians quitted the shop. Monk and his friends looked amazed; Gordon Gay extremely thoughtful. The young Australian was very keen, and he smelt a rat.

"We'll get along to Mr. Bunn's," said Monk. "He can do us down quite as well as Mrs. Murphy could, and in fact better; only I wanted to stick to the old firm."

"Good!" said Gordon Gay.

He spoke in such a peculiar tone that the others stopped and stared at him.

"What's the matter?" asked Lane.

"Oh, nothing!"

"You've got something on your mind. What is it?"

"Let's go and see Bunn," said the Cornstalk evasively.

"Come on, then!"

The Grammarian juniors walked into Mr. Bunn's elegant establishment. Mr. Bunn greeted them with an expansive smile.

"Glad to see you, young gentlemen. What a fine day for the Jubilee!"

"Yes—and for a jollification, too," said Frank Monk. "We're going to put you on your mettle as a caterer, Mr. Bunn."

"Ahem!"

"We want ten pounds' worth of tuck," said Lane; "and we want it delivered at the school in an hour or less."

"We'll select the stuff now—"

"Ahem!"

"What on earth are you aheming about?" demanded Monk. "I suppose we can have the tuck, can't we?"

"I'm sorry, young gents—"

"Eh?"

"I'm afraid I can't supply you with anything to-day."

"What?" roared Monk.

"Why?" shrieked Carboy.

"I'm sold out."

"Sold out?"

"Yes, young gents. I'm sorry, but Master Merry of St. Jim's has bought up all my stock, and I haven't anything left till to-morrow."

The Grammarians stared at him blankly. Gordon Gay burst into a yell.

"I knew it! They're all sold out—and we're sold, too! It's a giddy corner! They've done us—but we're going to do them! We'll raise all the Grammar School and go for them at St. Jim's—in their own blessed quad, if we can't think of anything better."

And the Grammarians said together:

"Hear, hear!"

CHAPTER 9.

In a Fix!

TOM MERRY stood with a box of notepaper in his hands after the carrier had gone. He hardly knew what to do.

And the fellows stood round him, looking at the box, too, with very peculiar expressions upon their faces.

The vanishing of the money from the box was very mysterious, to say the least of it, and there was only too much probability to many minds in the in-

sinuations of Levison, Mellish, and Crooke, and their friends.

Had the money ever been there?

Only the chums of St. Jim's had seen it, with the exception of Levison; and Levison, who was an eye-witness, had declared his belief that the money in the box was "faked."

Tom Merry's cheeks burned as he read the expressions in the juniors' faces.

He closed the box, his lips setting hard.

"If the fellow who cleared out the money is here, I warn him that he'd better own up," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was no reply. Some of the fellows grinned, others winked; some of them looked grave and concerned.

"I don't believe whoever it was meant to steal them," said Tom Merry quietly. "But if they are not returned to me at once I shall look upon the fellow as a thief."

"The cad had better own up!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Still no one spoke.

Kildare of the Sixth came along and stopped. There was something in the looks of the crowd of juniors that caught his attention.

"Anything wrong?" asked the St. Jim's captain.

"Yes, rather!" said Blake.

"What is it?"

"Two hundred pounds lost!"

Kildare almost jumped.

"What!" he exclaimed.

"Two hundred quids taken away!"

said Monty Lowther.

"Pounds, deah boy!"

Kildare glanced at the box.

"Explain this, Merry," he said.

"There isn't much to explain," said Tom Merry. "I had two hundred pounds in this box; somebody has taken it away—I suppose for a lark."

Kildare's brows grew very stern.

"I don't like that sort of lark," he said. "Taking a fellow's money is not a lark. You are sure the money was there, Merry?"

"Quite certain."

"Where did you put the box?"

"In the cupboard in my study."

"Did you lock the cupboard?"

"Yes."

"It was broken into?"

"No," said Tom Merry, with a troubled look. "It was locked when I went back to it just now to get the money."

"Then the thief must have had a key to it?"

"I suppose so."

"Did you know there was another key to the cupboard?"

"I wasn't aware of it. But it is not an uncommon sort of lock. There may be two or three like it in the School House."

"H'm! Was the money in that box?"

"Yes."

"Locked?"

"Yes."

"Then it must have been broken open?"

"No; I found it locked just as I had left it."

"Then the thief must have found a key to the box, as well as a key to the cupboard," said the St. Jim's captain, looking hard at the captain of the Shell.

"Ye-es, I suppose so."

"Is that a common lock, too?"

"It's not an uncommon one."

"That box had only arrived at St. Jim's to-day, I understand."

"Yes, Kildare."

"Then it is hardly likely that any

fellow here would have a key to fit it," the St. Jim's captain said dryly.

"No—no."

"The lock must have been picked," said Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It is very curious," said Kildare.

"You are quite sure that the money was in the box, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, Kildare."

"You have not been japing the fellows, I mean."

Tom Merry flushed scarlet.

"I hope you don't think that I would tell lies, Kildare," he said.

"I don't think you would, Merry, but—well, it's very curious. I can't think the money has been stolen, at all events. I should advise you to look for it. You may have locked it up somewhere and forgotten it, or it may be a jape of one of your own friends."

And Kildare walked away.

There were open sneers on a good many faces now. Levison burst into a chuckle.

"Anybody seen quids lying about in hundreds?" he asked.

The juniors laughed.

Tom Merry turned aside. He took the box back to his study, the crimson flush still on his cheeks. He could see that very many of the fellows doubted whether the two hundred pounds had any real existence at all; and certainly it did look very curious that the money, twice locked up, should have been abstracted without a trace of the thief left.

Tom Merry's chums followed him. A very thoughtful and worried party gathered in the study in the Shell passage. The juniors were decidedly worried; they did not in the least know what to do.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "It's wotten!"

"Beastly!"

"Horribly awkward!"

Tom Merry's brows knitted in a deep frown.

"It's a rotten jape, and it's the kind of jape no decent fellow would play!" he exclaimed. "It's done by Levison, or Mellish, or one of that lot!"

Blake nodded thoughtfully.

"I rather think so," he said. "But what have they done with the tin?"

"I hardly think they'd spend it."

"No; it's hidden to put us in an awkward fix with the tradespeople we've ordered the things of," said Tom Merry. "My hat! What do you want, Toby?"

"Goods arrived from Mr. Popper's, sir, and, please, the carman is waiting for the money. Things 'ave been put in the Form-room, sir."

Tom Merry looked harassed.

"Tell the carman we'll send the money, Toby."

"Yessir."

"Give him this shilling, too," said D'Arcy.

"Yessir."

Toby vanished, and the juniors exchanged glances almost of consternation. The goods were arriving now thick and fast, and the money was gone!

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy.

Then there was silence.

It was broken soon by the return of Toby, the page. He was grinning more widely than before.

"If you please, sir—"

"Well, has the carman gone?"

demanded Figgins.

"Oh, yes, sir; it isn't that. It's—"

"What is it, then?"

"Goods from Mr. Bunn, and the carman's waiting for the money, sir, if you please!" said Toby.

Tom Merry groaned.
"Tell him we'll send it on."
"Yes, sir."
"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 10. Not a Fiver!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked at one another in dismay.

What was to be done?

They discussed the matter, but endless discussion could not restore the lost two hundred pounds.

Where was the money?

They did not believe that it was stolen; it was merely hidden away by an ill-natured practical joker. But where? If they could not find it, how were they to pay for the goods they had ordered upon so reckless a scale—goods to the value of a hundred and fifty pounds?

"A few quids, perhaps," said Lowther.

"Pounds, dear boy!"

"Oh, ring off!"

"We might give them something on account," said Fatty Wynn hopefully. "Suppose we go and sample some of the tuck, and think it over."

"Fathend!"

"Look here——"

"Chump!"

"Well, I know I always think things over better when I'm having something to eat," said Fatty Wynn; "and, as a matter of fact, I'm getting hungry. I always get a specially good appetite in this May weather."

"Oh, blow your appetite!"

"We'll raise as much tin as we can, and see what we can give on account," said Tom Merry. "Just a pound or two would be something; it would break our duck."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes."

on account, if the champion ass has found it!" said Monty Lowther.

"Fancy a chap mislaying fivers."

"Oh, it's just like Gussy!"

"Let's go and look for him."

The juniors went to look for the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as a matter of fact, was very busy. He had looked through his desk and several drawers, and had not found the fiver. The elegant junior was a little absent-minded in money matters, and he could not remember where the fiver had gone.

"The question is, what clothes was I wearin' at the time?" he murmured, as he stood in Study No. 6 thinking it out. "I suppose I put it in a pocket. But what clothes were they? It's weally quite a bothah!"

It really was.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy suddenly. "I wemembah now! I was wearin' these vevy things! I wemembah a speck of dust on the twousahs."



Exclamations of amazement burst from the juniors as they saw the contents of the box. Instead of wads of banknotes, wads of blank notepaper were revealed. And on the inside of the lid was scrawled the word "Rats!!" "My hat!" cried Tom Merry. "Who's taken our money?"

It was all very well to tell the carmen to tell the various dealers that the money would be sent. So it would be if they could find it. But if they could not find it, they could not send it, and then there would be trouble.

Shopkeepers who had had their whole stock bought up, and had thereby been prevented from selling to other customers, were not likely to give unlimited credit for such large sums. And out of their limited pocket-money the juniors had, of course, not the slightest hope or chance of ever being able to pay such bills. If the money was not found——

Visions of an army of indignant and exasperated tradespeople invading St. Jim's in search of payment came before the minds of the juniors.

What was to be done?

Even if they sent the goods back, they could not be returned in time for sale that day. The tradespeople would certainly refuse to take them back. They would want their money!

"I suppose you chaps can't raise very much among you?" asked Tom Merry at last, desperately.

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove, I wemembah now, I believe I have a fivah!" said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I'll go and look for it, dear boys. I had forgotten it."

The juniors grinned. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the only fellow at St. Jim's who was likely to forget whether he had a fiver or not.

The swell of St. Jim's left the study, and Tom Merry & Co. remained discussing the problem. It was, as Blake said, worse than Euclid, for there was no way out of it.

What was to be done?

Toby looked in.

"Goods from Mr. Brick, sir."

The juniors groaned.

"And, please, sir, Mr. Brick's man is waiting for the money."

"Tell him to shove the things in the Form-room," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, sir."

"And tell him we'll send the money on."

"Yessir."

"I'm getting fed-up!" said Blake. "When we find the chap who abstracted the cash, I vote that we rag him into little chips."

"Yes, rather!"

"We could send Brick Gussy's fiver

And the swell of St. Jim's went methodically through the pockets for the fiver.

He turned out one pocket after another in search of the elusive banknote, and his face grew longer and more dismayed, for the fiver was not to be found.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy exclaimed at last. "Bai Jove! Where is that wotten fivah? Bai Jove! I weally twust I haven't lost it!"

He went through his pockets again, even pulling out the lining to make sure.

But the fiver was not to be found.

"Bai Jove! It's wotten!"

Blake looked in at the door, with the other fellows behind him.

"Gussy, you ass——"

Arthur Augustus turned round.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Have you found the giddy fiver?"

"It's a most extwaordinawy thing," said Arthur Augustus. "I haven't! I wemembah distinctly that I put it in one of the pockets of the clothes I am wearin' at the pwesent moment, and it is not here now."

"You careless ass!"

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"Weally, Blake—"

"It's in some other pocket," said Tom Merry. "But it would take too many days, I suppose, to go through all your wardrobe?"

"Sure you haven't spent it?" asked Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You may have paid some old bill with it."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I can't wemembah doin' so," he said. "And I don't wemembah havin' bought anythin' new lately. Of course, a chap sometimes does a little shoppin' in ties and things, and it wuns into pounds, and he doesn't notice it. But—"

"How many silk toppers have you bought this week?" demanded Monty Lowther. "My aunt! There's a new bandbox standing there now."

D'Arcy glanced at the bandbox on the floor. He had not noticed it before in his preoccupation in the search for the fiver.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"Have you been blueing it on hats?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that! I wemembah now ordewin' a new toppah ffrom my hattah, and payin' his account. It was a vewy thoughtless thing to do, I admit. A chap can be far too hasty in payin' his accounts!"

"You ass!"

"You chump!"

"You fathead!"

"Weally, deah boys, I suppose a chap must have a hat or two," said D'Arcy. "In the cirs, you see, I considah—"

"Ass!" roared the juniors in chorus.

And Jack Blake, in his wrath, gave the bandbox a kick that carried it across the study.

D'Arcy uttered a horrified exclamation, and chased after it, and the juniors tramped out of the study in great wrath.

Toby brought the news that Mr. Brick's man had left the goods, and gone to report to his master that payment would be forwarded, and he brought the news at the same time that the goods from the fancy shop in Rylcombe had arrived, and that the carman had presented a little bill.

"My hat!" said Blake. "What's to be done?"

Monty Lowther gave an involuntary chuckle.

"It looks to me as if the shopkeepers will be done!"

"Oh, don't be funny, Lowther."

"Tell him we'll send the money on, Toby," said Tom Merry, looking terribly worried.

"Yes, sir!"

Ten minutes later Toby reappeared. His face was wreathed in smiles, and no wonder. He bore a message that Mr. Speckles' cart had delivered a consignment of goods, and that Mr. Speckles himself was waiting for the money. The same message was sent to Mr. Speckles as to the others, and the greengrocer departed, whether with a good grace or not the juniors did not know.

CHAPTER 11.

A Gathering of Creditors!

KERR had not taken a very decided part in the discussion of ways and means; he had fallen silent, sitting in a chair in the corner, and thinking.

That was Kerr's way when there was anything to be thought out. The keen Scots junior was generally capable of

thinking a way out of any difficulty. When he broke silence at last, he had something to say, as he usually had.

"Look here, you chaps, we've got to find the money!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Has it taken you an hour to think that out?" asked Tom Merry sarcastically. "I could have told you that at the start."

"Oh, let Kerr alone!" said Figgins. "Kerr's got a brain on him! I shouldn't wonder if he's thought out the whole thing while we've been jawing!"

"What a howwid expression, Figgins! Talkin' is a better word!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Monty Lowther. "Let's hear what Kerr has to say. If he has thought of a way of recoverin' the quids—"

"Pounds!"

"Rats!"

"Go on, Kerr!" said Tom Merry.

"Do leave off talking, you chaps!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, my idea is that the money's got to be found, and so we've got to find the chap that took it," said Kerr. "Now, it's one of the rotters in the school that has played such a beastly trick on us."

"Yes, rather!" said Kangaroo. "And I think it's most likely Mellish. He's cad enough for anything, even to keep the money, if he thought it safe!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kerr shook his head.

"I don't think it's Mellish," he said. "He's cad enough, but he's not plucky enough; he wouldn't dare to make us so wild with him. He knows that the facts might come out, and that if he'd done it, we should rag him baldheaded. He generally keeps out of that if he can. I was thinking of Levison."

"Levison!"

"Quite likely!"

"He's the only chap who's seen the money, as well as ourselves," said Kerr. "You remember he came poking into the study while we were looking at it. Then there was a row, and he was hoofed out! He would bear malice for a hundred years, if he lived so long."

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's right enough, Kerr. I had thought of Levison myself, already. But I don't see how we're to bring it home to him. He's an awful liar, and we can't get him to tell the truth, especially as he may be innocent all the time."

"That's it!" said Kerr. "We want some proof; and as soon as we're morally sure that he's hidden the money, we shall be justified in ragging him till he tells where it is."

"Oh, yes, rather! Once we know that he did it, we'll rag him baldheaded, and we'll make him tell. Only we don't want to start ragging a chap who may not, after all, know anything about the matter. We've got to get proof, or, at least, a strong suspicion," said Blake.

"Yes. Well," said Kerr slowly, "the chap had a key to this cupboard, or else he picked the lock. He had a key to the money-box, or else he picked that lock, too. You chaps know about Levison being a clever conjurer—there's no denying that the rotter is clever. He's given us exhibitions of his conjuring, and, among other things, he's shown us sleight-of-hand, and picking locks. You remember he said some time ago that there wasn't a lock in the school he couldn't pick if he chose? He had a peculiar gift for that sort of thing."

Tom Merry started.

"I remember!"

"Picking locks is not a difficult business, but it's not one generally known to chaps at school," said Kerr. "Levison knows how to do it. Now, he had seen the money here, he had got his back up against us, and he is the only chap we know who could get through the locks. I think that's a pretty good case against Levison."

"Jolly good!"

"It's more than suspicion," said Tom Merry; "it's evidence strong enough for Levison to be arrested upon suspicion for, if this were a police case. I rather think we'd better interview Levison."

"And if he won't tell—"

"Bump him!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's pretty clear that it was Levison," said Monty Lowther, "and we'll bump him till he tells us what he's done with the quids."

"Pounds, deah boy!"

Kerr rose to his feet.

"Let's go and look for Levison, and have it out, anyway," he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Toby, the page, met the juniors in the passage. Toby's face wore a broad grin, which alarmed the juniors at once. Herries inserted his knuckles into Toby's collar and shook him, and the page ceased to grin.

"Ow! Ow! Groogh!"

"Now, what's the row?" asked Tom Merry.

"Mrs. Murphy to see you, sir!" gasped Toby.

Tom Merry groaned.

"Mother Murphy?"

"Yes, Master Merry."

"Tell her I'm engaged!"

"Or married, if you like!" said Lowther.

"Yes, sir."

"She won't go!" said Lowther. "Her bill comes to thirty-five quid!"

"Pounds!"

"Quids. And she'll think we've been japing her," said Lowther. "I'll bet Gussy's latest topper that she doesn't go without the money!"

Tom Merry made a hopeless gesture. He was rather of that opinion himself. He waited anxiously for the return of Toby. The School House page came up, with a grin on his face, and keeping at a safe distance from Herries.

"If you please, Master Merry, Mrs. Murphy says that she wants to see you very particularly. She's come for the account, to save you the trouble of sending it!"

"Oh dear! Tell her I don't mind the trouble in the least."

"Wathah not. We would do more than that to oblige a lady!"

Toby hurried off. He came back in about a minute. The expression on his face was proof enough that the good dame had not taken her departure.

"Well, Toby?" growled Blake.

"Mrs. Murphy says she won't go without seeing Master Merry, sir."

"Tell her—"

"She says she'll go to the 'Ead if you don't see her, sir!"

"Phew!"

"Bai Jove!"

"This is getting serious," said Digby. "What on earth is to be done? I suppose we can't call in Taggles to chuck a lady out?"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Show her into my study, Toby!" said Tom Merry desperately. "Tell her we're looking for the money now, and ask her to kindly wait."

"Yessir!"

The juniors hurried out of the Shell passage. They did not wish to meet Mrs. Murphy en route to the study. From a side passage they saw the stout dame pass, with a decidedly war-like and determined expression upon her usually placid face. Whoever might be "done" in these peculiar transactions, it certainly would not be Elizabeth Murphy, or there would be trouble.

Toby marched the good lady into Tom Merry's study and soothed her with soft words, while the chums of St. Jim's looked for Levison.

The cad of the Fourth was not in his study, neither was he in the Common-room. On that May afternoon nobody was likely to be indoors if he could help it. The chums looked for him in the quadrangle, but he was not to be seen.

"The cad!" muttered Blake. "He's got out of the way on purpose. He knows we should tumble, sooner or later!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

After a long tramp round, the juniors returned, angrily and savagely, to the School House.

Levison had not been seen. Toby met them at the door.

"If you please, Master—"

"Well, what is it?" asked Tom Merry, almost snappily—a very unusual thing for him.

"Mr. Brick has called to see you, sir—the confectioner, sir!"

"Tell him—"

"He says he can't leave without seeing you, sir."

"Oh, show him into the study!"

"I have done, sir."

"Well, leave him there, then," said Tom Merry. "And if anybody else comes, show him into the study, and come and tell us."

"Yessir!"

"This reminds me of the time when Gussy was passing bad cheques, and the tradesmen got alarmed!" growled Blake.

"Blake, you uttah ass, how can you say I evah passed bad cheques!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah fathead! The cheques were all wright. They were dwwn in the cheque-book my governah gave me. The cheques were in perfect ordah."

"There wasn't any money to meet them, though."

"That was not my fault. 'That was owin' to my governah havin' placed an insufficient sum to my cwwedit at the bank. The cheques were all wright."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Well, I know the tradesmen got waxy over the cheques, right as they were, when they couldn't get any money for them at the bank," said Tom Merry. "And blessed if this isn't like it, only this is worse. Lord Eastwood came down and rescued you; but it looks to me as if we're completely done, unless we find the two hundred pounds."

"We've got to find Levison first. His keeping out of the way like this makes it pretty certain against him," said Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hallo! Here comes Bunn in at the gate!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "Cut!"

The juniors melted away. They did not want to interview Mr. Bunn personally just then. The stout catering gentleman marched on to the House, with a red and determined face, and was doubtless shown into Tom Merry's study, for he did not reappear. Tom Merry & Co. looked for Levison again.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther
Calling



Hallo, everybody! How would you make a pound note go a long way? Send it to Australia. "What sort of play do you prefer?" asks a reader. Fair play. "Comet seen during Cuban revolution," reads a headline. Ah, a "shooting" star? "Were you ever in trouble before?" demanded the magistrate. "Well," gasped the meek little man, "I once kept a library book too long, and was fined twopence!" "Nother: "Well," said Curly Gibson's pater grimly, "what position in Form did you occupy this term?" "I was next to the top boy when we stood in a circle!" replied Gibson. A Chinaman had toothache badly, and called to make an appointment with the dentist. "Two-thirty?" said the dentist. "Yes, velly much!" answered the Chinaman. "But when can I have it out?" An old lady went to the doctor, who gave her a special tonic. "But, doctor, if this bottle is going to make me ten years younger, how do I stand about my old-age pension?" "Where is

CHAPTER 12.

A Bumping for Levison!

MELLISH had been watching the chums, with a peculiar expression upon his face. That the sneak of the School House rejoiced in their discomfiture was no secret.

The chums hardly noticed him till Kerr, as if struck by a sudden thought, turned round to him and caught him quickly by the collar. Mellish wriggled in the grasp of the Scottish junior.

"Leggo!" he shouted. "Hands off, you rotter!"

"I want to speak to you, and I don't want you to bunk," said Kerr.

"We'll see to that!" said Figgins.

Kerr released the sneak of St. Jim's. The juniors were crowded round him now, and there was no chance for Mellish to escape. He was looking very much alarmed.

"Look here," he exclaimed, "what's the row? I haven't done anything, and I don't know anything about your blessed old money-box!"

"Where is Levison?"

"I don't know!"

"I expect you do know," said Kerr. "I believe you know the trick he has played us. He would be bound to tell somebody, to chuckle over it with him, and you're the sort of worm he would confide in!"

"Yaas, wathah! I quite agree with my friend Kerr, there!"

"Look here—" began Mellish blusteringly.

"Listen to me! If you like to tell us where to find Levison, you're all right," said Kerr; "and you shall join us in the feed—and it will be a record feed at St. Jim's. I can tell you!"

"Of course, I don't want to be unfriendly," said Mellish, with a glimmer in his cold eyes. "I'd willingly do anything I could—"

"If you don't tell us where Levison is,

Oshkosh, Wis.?" asks a reader. It's on the right as you go in. Then there was the Scotsman who was married in his back garden, so that the fowls could pick up the rice. "Your conduct is terrible!" snapped Mr. Selby to a new boy. "I strongly object!" "Objection overruled!" retorted the new boy. He got the "ruler"—on his knuckles! Here's a nightcap: "Yes, he's a year old now, and he's been walking since he was eight months!" said an aunt of Wally D'Arcy's, exhibiting her baby. "Gosh, he must be tired!" exclaimed Wally. I'd tell you about the bottle of pop Kildare stood Fatty Wynn for bowling to him at the nets—but there's nothing in it! Oh, I've just heard that Cuban revolution is nearly over—all over, bar the shooting! Man told me the Wayland Cinema operator is looking for a steadier job. He has too much "reeling" to do! "Can I learn to swim indoors?" asks Skimpole. Yes. Just turn on the bath-room taps full, and practise diving off the toothbrush-rack! Funny thing, Figgins is the tallest fellow in the Fourth, but he says he has been short lately. Mr. Railton says it is possible to awaken just when you wish. "No need for 'alarm'! Scientists say the sun will last us another 25,000,000,000 years. Yet we had a dull afternoon for our cricket match. "I'd like to touch 100 on a motor-bike," writes a reader. Miles or pedestrians? Fast one: "Can I get out at Sludgham?" asked the old gentleman. "You can, sir," replied his fellow-passenger, "but I shouldn't—the train doesn't stop there!" Clear the lines, boys!

we shall take it for granted that you want to back him up against us, and we shall give you the frog's-march round the quad!" said Kerr.

"Hear, hear!"

Mellish smiled a sickly smile.

"I don't know that I really know where Levison is," he remarked, "but I have an idea that he intended to read a novel in the library."

Kerr grinned. He thought it was very probable. The school library was certainly the last place where they would have thought of looking for Levison, and if the cad of the Fourth wanted to keep out of the way of a possible search it was an excellent hiding-place to choose.

"That sounds likely," said Kerr. "We'll go and see. You can come along with us, Mellish, old chap, in case your information shouldn't prove to be quite correct."

Mellish gave another sickly grin. But he knew that it was useless to raise objections. Kerr had linked arms with him, and certainly did not mean to let him go.

The crowd of juniors hurried off to look for Levison in the library. Herries uttered a sudden exclamation.

"There's Popper!"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Popper was seen striding towards the House with a very red face. He caught sight of the juniors and called out to them; but they did not seem to hear. They disappeared from Mr. Popper's gaze like a beautiful dream, and the merchant stalked on wrathfully to the House, where he was shown into Tom Merry's study by the grinning Toby, and where he found congenial company on the same errand.

"That's four of them!" groaned Tom Merry. "There are three more of them to come. This is getting rather too thick!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They'll be raising the blessed roof if we don't go in and see them soon," said Monty Lowther. "And when the Head discovers that we've ordered a hundred and fifty quids' worth of stuff, he—"

"Pounds' worth, deah boy!"

"Quids' worth of stuff, and haven't the cash to settle, he will be ratty. We shall get it in the neck, and no mistake!"

"Oh, let's look for Levison! There's a chance yet!"

Tom Merry opened the big, heavy door of the school library. The door swung open quietly, almost without a sound. In the long, lofty room, lighted by stained-glass windows, there reigned a gentle calm. In one of the deep chairs a junior was seated, with his feet on another chair and a book in his hand. It was a "Schoolboys' Own Library" that Levison was reading, and he was so absorbed in it that he did not see or hear Tom Merry & Co. enter the library.

Mellish slipped quietly out. He did not want to see Levison. Tom Merry closed the door behind him and the juniors crossed over towards the cad of the Fourth.

Then Levison saw them, and he laid down his book and rose to his feet in alarm. The looks of the juniors showed that they meant business—and business not of a friendly nature.

"So we've found you!" said Lowther. Levison looked at him with steely eyes.

"I haven't been hiding, if that's what you mean," he said. "I came here quietly to read my book."

"Whether you were hiding or not, we've found you," said Kerr, "and in a really suitable place. You couldn't have chosen it better. The House is empty. Nobody's likely to come to the library, and you can be ragged bald-headed quite easily."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison backed away.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"What do you want?"

"We want the two hundred quids—"

"Pounds!"

"We want what you've taken, Levison," said Tom Merry. "Hand it over, or tell us where it is and you can go."

"He ought to be wagged, Tom Mewwy. In the cires, I must certainly remark that the uttah wottah ought to be wagged!"

"Will you tell us where it is, Levison?"

"How should I know?"

"Will you tell us where it is?" repeated Tom Merry.

"I refuse to admit that I know anything about it," said Levison. "As a matter of fact, I don't believe in the existence of the money at all. My belief is that it was faked."

Tom Merry looked at him sternly.

"Your belief is nothing of the sort," he said. "You know perfectly well that you saw two hundred pounds in my study this morning; and you know, too, that you played this rotten trick on us in revenge for chucking you out this morning, which was all your own fault."

"Yaas, wathah! I should nevah have given you that feahful thwashin', deah boy, if you had not been an awful wottah, you know."

The juniors could not help grinning. D'Arcy had evidently forgotten the points in the conflict that had gone against him. The final victory had been with him, and that was enough for the swell of St. Jim's to remember.

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Levison sneered.

"I suppose you've picked on me because there's been bad blood between us," he said, "and you've come to rag me—twelve to one. I must say it's very brave of you—just what I should have expected, in fact!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It's not a question of courage," said Tom Merry. "Any fellow here is ready to fight you on fair terms, if that is what you want. But at present we're concerned with getting back what you have stolen, and we're going to bump the truth out of you. We feel certain that you emptied the box of the money."

"What proof have you?"

"You're the only chap we know in St. Jim's who's handy in picking locks," said Tom Merry. "It was Kerr who thought of it. You gave a show once, in the Form-room, and picking locks was part of it."

Levison changed colour a little.

"We feel so sure about it that we're going to rag you if you don't own up," said Figgins. "That's flat! If we happen to have made a mistake it's really your own fault, because if you weren't this kind of cad we shouldn't suspect you at all."

"Yaas, bai Jove! I wogard that as vewy well put, Figgy, deah boy!"

Levison cast a glance towards the door.

"No, you don't!" said Tom Merry. The juniors collared the cad of the Fourth in a moment. Levison struggled, but the futility of it struck him at once and he ceased to resist. He looked round at the angry faces of the juniors with a cold and bitter expression.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"We're going to bump you till you confess what you've done with the money."

"Then go ahead," said Levison, setting his teeth. "I've got nothing to say."

"We'll take you at your word. Bump him!"

Levison was swung off his feet.

Bump! Bump!

The cad of the Fourth had set his teeth hard. He did not mean to surrender; he did not mean to let a cry escape him. But the punishment was too severe. His resolution melted away. He gasped and shouted for help.

Bump, bump!

The juniors bumped him with steady persistence. At the fifth bump Levison yelled out desperately:

"Hold on! I'll give in!"

"You'll tell us where the money is?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yes."

Kerr grinned. "What did I tell you?" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah! We must admit, deah boys, that Kerr weally found this out," said D'Arcy. "It is vewy singulah that I did not think of it myself, but it is a fact."

"Go hon!"

Levison was allowed to rise. His face was white

with pain and rage, and his eyes glittered like diamonds. His hands were clenched hard.

"Where is the money?" asked Tom Merry.

"In your study," said Levison sulkily. "It was only a lark. I never took it out of the study at all."

"In my study?" said Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Yes."

"Where?" demanded Tom.

"In a bag; in the chimney. Put your hand up the chimney on the right, and feel round, and you'll find it there," said Levison.

"Bai Jove!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "If that's the truth, you're let off; but you can come with us to the study."

"Look here, I won't—I—"

"You will. Will you walk, or be carried?"

Levison decided to walk.

CHAPTER 13.

All Serene!

"WHERE is Tom Merry?"

"I want to see Master Merry."

"I demand to see Tom Merry at once!"

"I order you—"

"I insist—"

"Yessir!" said Toby cheerfully. "Yes, sir! Quite so, sir! This is Master Merry's study, sir! 'Ere you are, sir! Standing room only, sir!"



The sight of Tom Merry entering the study evoked a storm of protest from the juniors. "Pay up!" "I insist on payment!" "Let me speak," said Tom Merry.

The last of Tom Merry's creditors had arrived. It was Mr. Speckles, the greengrocer. Mr. Speckles was a very good-natured man; but he was very excited now.

Mrs. Murphy and the six gentlemen in the study represented debts amounting to a hundred and fifty pounds. And when they compared notes and found what a huge sum was involved, their hopes of payment sank down to zero.

When Toby showed in Mr. Speckles a storm burst upon him. The visitors were getting wildly impatient.

"Where is Master Merry?"
"I insist upon seeing him at once."
"Suttinly, gentlemen!" said Toby.
"I'm going to see Master Merry at once, sir, and tell 'im you've come, sir. Just you wait a minute, sir."

"I tell you—"
"I say—"
"I think—"
"It is wicked—monstrous!"
"Scandalous!"
"Shocking!"
"Criminal!"

"But I will be paid, sir!"
"And I, sir; I shall be paid!"
"As for me, I shall decline even to take the goods back. Light pastry has its value impaired by time—"
"Certainly! As for my cakes—"
"And my fireworks—"

"It is too late now to sell them for Jubilee festivities."
"Naturally!"
"I shall insist upon full payment, and carry the matter before the courts, if necessary."

"I shall do the same."

"It is scandalous!"

"Shocking!"

"Infamous!"

And the chorus began again. Mrs. Murphy was sitting in the armchair, and the gentlemen were walking about the room, excited and gesticulating.

The door opened, and Tom Merry came in. The juniors were crowding behind him, but there was really no room for them to come into the study.

The sight of the hero of the Shell evoked a fresh storm. Mr. Sands shook a fist at him, and Mr. Speckles shouted, and Mr. Bunn yelled, and Mr. Brick roared. It was really surprising that six middle-aged gentlemen could produce so much noise.

"Good-afternoon!" said Tom Merry. But his voice was drowned in a storm.

"Pay up!"

"This is your bill, sir!"

"Pay, pay, pay!"

"If this is a joke, sir—a jape on us—"

"I will have the law on you!"

"It's scandalous!"

Tom Merry turned red.

"Will you let me speak?" he asked.

"What have you to say?" demanded Mr. Bunn.

"Let Master Merry speak," said Mrs. Murphy. "I'm sure Master Tom isn't the boy to deal dishonestly with a poor widow."

"I hope I'm not," said Tom Merry, flushing. "If you'll be patient, I'll square you all. We had the money here—two hundred pounds in a box—and a rotten cad hid it for a rotten jape!"

"Ahem!" said Mr. Brick.

"Hum!" said Mr. Bunn.

"Have you found it?" asked Mr. Sands sceptically.

"I hope to find it."

"That won't do. You've got to pay—"

"Pay up!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry.

"Can't you give a chap a chance? I believe the money is in this study."

"Oh!"

"Wait a minute!"

Tom Merry crossed to the grate and knelt down, and groped up the chimney as Levison had directed him. Arthur Augustus watched him anxiously.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, hadn't you bettah put on an old glove?" he asked.

"You will make your hands howwibly dirtay."

"Never mind that, if he finds the quids," said Lowther.

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation. His hand had just come in contact with a linen bag, thrust into an aperture in the brickwork. He brought it down with a little shower of soot. His hand was, as D'Arcy had feared, decidedly sooty; but Tom Merry did not mind. He opened the bag upon the table.

There was a general exclamation from the creditors. Their anger vanished in a moment at the sight of the money.

There was enough there to settle all their claims, with fifty pounds to spare. It was curious to watch how apologetic smiles took the place of angry frowns.

"Found."

"Two hundred quids, by Jove!"

"Two hundred pounds—"

"Hurrah!"

"Kick that cad out!" said Figgins, with a nod towards Levison.

And Levison was kicked down the passage.

Tom Merry turned to the anxious creditors with a smile upon his face. They were not anxious about their money now; but they were anxious to assure Tom Merry that they had never, really, had the slightest doubt of his ability and his intention to pay.

"Bills, please!" said Tom Merry.

"I really don't know that it matters," said Mr. Bunn. "But if you prefer to settle now, of course."

He produced his bill.

"Hand them out," said Tom Merry.

"Here's a pen and ink; receipt the lot."

"Very good!"

"If you insist—"

"Thank you!"

"I'm sure, Master Merry, that I shall be always very pleased to serve you, and to allow credit—"

"I knew Master Merry was all right," said Mrs. Murphy. "Faith, and I knew he could be trusted! But thirty-five pounds is a great deal to a poor widow—"

"Of course it is," said Tom Merry.

"But it's all right now."

"Ah, Master Tom, what a boy you are!"

And Mrs. Murphy and the commercial fraternity of Rylcombe departed, very well pleased with Tom Merry and with themselves. And the juniors breathed freely.

"My hat!" said Blake. "We're well out of that!"

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

"Made me beastly anxious while it lasted!" said Digby.

"It's made me hungry," said Fatty Wynn.

"Worry of any sort always makes me hungry; and I have a pretty keen appetite, anyway, at this time of the year. I think—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think perhaps I'd better have a snack."

And he had one—quite a large one. In fact, although Fatty Wynn called it a snack, it was very probable that anybody else would have called it a good square meal!

CHAPTER 14.

A Great Day!

"COME on!"

"You bet!"

"What-ho!"

"Here we are!"

The Grammarians had arrived.

The gates of St. Jim's were wide open, and within there was a busy scene. The Grammar School fellows looked in, unnoticed for the moment by the Saints.

The old quadrangle was gay with bunting.

Streamers ran from all the trees, the old elms blazed with colour, and Chinese lanterns were stuck up in all available places ready for lighting.

The old walls shone with decorations, and there was a bonfire piled up in the place where the Fifth of November bonfire usually burned, already for lighting when evening should descend.

It was getting towards evening now, and the juniors were very busy.

The goods having been paid for, Tom

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aggy cries from the tradespeople, and they crowded round
"I will have the law on you!" "It's scandalous!" "Let
"Give a chap a chance!"

Merry & Co. were able to use them with a clear conscience, and they had placed the supplies at the disposal of the whole school for the purpose of celebrating the Jubilee.

The whole school had entered into the spirit of the thing most joyously.

Seniors and juniors had joined to make a celebration worthy of the epoch—to show their loyalty, in a boisterous and noisy form, to their gracious Majesty King George the Fifth.

The Grammarians looked in, and snorted.

This was their celebration, as a matter of fact, bought up over their heads, and they were wrathful.

"My hat!" said Gordon Gay. "They're going it, and no mistake!"

"We're going it, too!" said Frank Monk. "We'll muck it all up!"

"Hurrah!"

"We'll squash them, and bash them, and pulverise them!" said Lane.

"We'll teach 'em to make a corner on Jubilee Day—or, rather, we'll teach 'em not to!"

"Come in!"

"You bet!"

The Grammarians marched in. It was certainly a risky business invading the enemy's territory in this way, but the Grammarians were desperate. They had been diddled, dished, and done, as Gordon Gay elegantly expressed it, and what they wanted was revenge.

Not that they were really revengeful. They wanted to get their own back, that was all. Their celebration had been "mucked up," and they were going to muck up that of their rivals, that was all.

If there was a terrific combat, it did not matter; if they were licked and booted out, that really did not matter, either, so long as they utterly, thoroughly, and completely mucked up the celebration at St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!"

It was a sudden exclamation as an elegant figure stood before the invading Grammarians. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and looked at the invaders. Then he smiled.

"Welcome, deah boys!"

The Grammarians stared.

To their surprise, they refrained from massacring Arthur Augustus on the spot.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"Welcome, deah boys!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "So glad to see you!"

"Oh! What?"

"I twust you are feelin' well, Monk?"

"Eh?"

"You are just in time," went on D'Arcy, apparently quite unconscious of the very peculiar looks of the Grammar School fellows. "Just in time, my deah fellows. Welcome, in the name of his Majesty King George!"

"Eh?"

"We want you to join in the celebrations and in the feed!" said D'Arcy gracefully. "On an occasion like this we regard it as a good wheeze to buy the hatchet, you know. We want you all to join us in the festivities! All are welcome! The more the mewwiah! Come in, please!"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry, hurrying up.

The St. Jim's juniors were gathering round, ready for either peace or war, not really very much caring which it was.

"Come in, Gay! This way, Monkey!"

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We're going to celebrate, and you chaps are going to celebrate with us!"

"Look here," said Frank Monk, "we came over to paralyse you, to knock you into a cocked hat—to wreck St. Jim's, in fact, and give you the giddy kybosh!"

"What-ho!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Let's leave the giddy kybosh for another occasion," he suggested. "We'll all join to-day in celebrating the Jubilee."

"Well, I guess it's not a bad idea,"

Gordon Gay remarked thoughtfully.

"What do you chaps say?"

"Oh, all right!" said Monk. "We've been done!"

"Well, you can consider yourself kyboshed, and we'll call it a truce," said Figgins.

The Grammarians could not help laughing.

"All serene, then!" said Gordon Gay.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Walk in! This way for the Jubilee celebrations!"

"Hurrah!"

Peace having been established, the Grammarians entered into the spirit of the thing, and fraternised in the most cheerful way with the Saints.

In the sunny May afternoon a huge open-air feed had been prepared—a picnic that was large enough for hundreds. There was certainly no lack of supplies of any sort. Fatty Wynn presided over the arrangements, and he was beaming.

Fatty Wynn was in his element.

Wherever there were plentiful supplies of tuck, Fatty Wynn could be happy, and certainly the genial Fourth Former had never, in his dreams, found himself in the midst of such magnificent preparations.

Fatty Wynn welcomed the Grammarians in the most genial manner. He was only too happy to share his enjoyment with any number of people.

"It will be a ripping spread," he confided to Gordon Gay. "The whole thing is going to be ripping, but I must say that I think Tom Merry is devoting too much time to the preliminaries."

Gordon Gay grinned.

"What are the preliminaries?" he asked.

"Oh, fireworks, and decorations, and things," said Fatty Wynn indifferently.

"What I want to know is, how can a chap show his loyalty better than by having a jolly good feed?"

"How, indeed?" said Monk, laughing.

Fatty Wynn sniffed.

"Well, you can snigger if you like," he said. "But that's my idea. My idea of a celebration is a jolly good spread, and I don't care who knows it. I say it's to be a feed in the open air—

alfresco, you know—and the Head himself has promised to give us a look-in."

"Really!"

"Yes; and Cousin Ethel's coming."

"Hear, hear!" said the Grammarians heartily.

A few minutes later Frank Monk came upon Figgins looking extremely thoughtful. He slapped him on the back, and Figgins started.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated.

"Thinking out some splendid scheme in fireworks?" asked Frank.

"Fireworks?"

"Or a new design in table decorations?"

"Table decorations?"

"Or a new design in streamers?"

"Streamers?"

"Blessed if he isn't a giddy parrot!"

said Gordon Gay, shaking Figgins by

the shoulders. "What's the matter with you, Figgys?"

"Cousin Ethel's coming," said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins glared.

"What are you sniggering at?" he demanded. "Look here you asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins marched off with a snort. The Grammarians grinned as they saw him take up his stand at the gates. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy ambled down in that direction, too.

He adjusted his eyeglass with great care, and bestowed a look upon Figgins that seemed really to penetrate right through the New House junior.

"Hallo, Gussy!" he said.

"Oh! Hallo!"

"I think Tom Merry wants you to help get the fireworks ready," said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"And there's the bunting to be shovled on the School House windows yet—"

"I am waitin' here for my cousin," said D'Arcy stiffly.

"Eh? Oh, yes! Ethel is your cousin, isn't she?" said Figgins feebly.

"I twust you have not quite forgotten that important fact," said Arthur Augustus crushingly. "I am quite able to wait alone, as a mattah of fact."

"Jolly fine weather for a Jubilee, ain't it?" said Figgins affably. "Don't let me keep you here, Gussy."

"Eh? You're not keepin' me here, you ass!"

"Oh!" said Figgins, with a sickly smile. "I—I thought perhaps I was, you know. No harm."

"I weally think—"

"Lucky it kept fine."

"I considah—"

"The fireworks will be ripping. There's an immense set-piece in fireworks of a portrait of the King. 'Long Live the King!' in big letters over it, you know—"

"Figgins—"

"And Fatty's quite enthusiastic about the spread," said Figgins desperately.

"Are you getting hungry, Gussy? You could go and have a snack. Fatty Wynn would be only too glad to get you a really nice snack."

"Figgins—"

"There she is!" roared Figgins.

The station hack drove up, and the next moment Figgins was helping Cousin Ethel to alight, and D'Arcy was raising his silk hat. The arrival of Cousin Ethel was the signal for the celebrations to begin.

Needless to describe the celebrations. The fireworks were a wonderful success, and the whole school cheered lustily and sang "God Save the King," when the immense firework set-piece of his Majesty's portrait was lit up.

The bonfire blazed high and bright, and the procession in the quad was splendid, and caused endless cheering and laughter and fun.

D'Arcy made a speech, which was cheered so loudly that nobody heard a word of it, and D'Arcy never knew whether or not the cheering was a "rag."

And then the spread!

Fatty Wynn, who certainly was an authority on the subject, declared that there never had been a feed like that at St. Jim's, and never would be again.

And amid general joy and good-humour Saints and Grammarians alike celebrated Jubilee Day at St. Jim's.

(Next Wednesday: "FOR THE SAKE OF HIS SIDE!"—a powerful

long yarn of cricket and school adventure at St. Jim's that every reader

will revel in.)



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.

THE celebrations of the Royal Silver Jubilee are now at their height, and not the least of the reasons for the popular rejoicing marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of our King's reign is that he and all his family are leaders in the world of sport.

Despite the tremendous amount of time that His Majesty the King spends on State business, he is one of the finest all-round amateur sportsmen in this country. He is one of the ten best sporting shots in the country, an expert horseman, a famous helmsman aboard racing yachts, and an angler who has brought to gaff some record fish.

A CRACK SHOT.

Of recent years the growing cares of Government have not left him much time for sport, but before he ascended the throne he travelled abroad, and went big-game shooting, where his prowess with the rifle amazed professional hunters. He bagged tigers in India, lions and elephants and rhinoceri in Africa—and then came back to Britain to make record-breaking "bags" with a sporting rifle on the grouse-moors. In one day's shooting he got seventy brace of birds, while the nearest total among his companions was less than half that figure!

The King's racing cutter, *Britannia*, is the most famous yacht in the world—and not merely because of the fame that attaches to its royal ownership. No other vessel has ever won so many races, and, counting the trophies it has gained for seconds and thirds, has a total of over 200 prizes. Although the King does not often take the wheel of his yacht nowadays, even professional experts acclaim his skill when he does.

Our King's love of sport has been passed down to his family—to his daughter, Princess Mary, as well as to his sons. The former is a keen follower of horse-racing, like his Majesty, and her husband owns several crack thoroughbreds.

OUR SPORTING PRINCES.

The Duke of Gloucester, although not an owner of racehorses, is a great horseman, and has competed in several races "over the sticks" both in this country and the Colonies. His brother, the Prince of Wales, is more keen on riding to hounds than on horse-racing, but recently had to dispose of his stable of hunters because of the calls on his time from affairs of State.

For the same reason the prince took up flying, and has one of the finest private fleets of planes in the world. Although he has never taken out a pilot's licence, the prince is able to handle the controls of his machines, having been instructed by his own private pilot.

The chief sporting hobby of the Prince of Wales is golf, but here again he is handicapped by his lack of time.

Professional players who have seen him in action during friendly competitions have said, however, that if he could devote more time to practice he would be one of the best amateurs in England.

"FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW!"

Motoring is the Duke of Kent's hobby—and preferably in fast cars. His huge Bentley is capable of 100 miles an hour, and the duke is a masterly driver. He is also the best swimmer in the Royal Family.

The Duke of York is a boxing fan, a great walker, and a lover of the outdoors. Every year, if his other engagements permit, he joins a big camp where Public school and working boys mingle, and plays games, goes for walks and sea-bathes, and caterwauls around the camp-fire during the sing-songs with the best.

So that when the other campers bellow out "For he's a jolly good fellow!" they mean it!

Incidentally, when he was at school the Duke of York was looked on as a fellow with the makings of a first-class cricketer, but he has had no chance to develop the talent. When in camp, however, he can still show up most of his companions during the "knock-about" matches that are played.

So, you see, every member of our Royal Family is a real sportsman, from the King himself down to the youngest of his sons. Let's wish them all a Joyous Jubilee!

"FOR THE SAKE OF HIS SIDE!"

The new cricket season is in full swing now, and at St. Jim's, as in most schools, there is no little keenness for the grand summer game. In Martin Clifford's next ripping yarn, cricket is a big feature of the theme. The St. Jim's First Eleven have an important fixture with Loamshire, a county team, and at the school it is regarded as the match of the season. Locally, too, a lot of interest is taken in the game, and there is a good deal of betting on it. Simeon Levy, a Rylcombe bookmaker, is faced with ruin if St. Jim's wins. And there is every chance of them winning, for Langton, the Sixth Former, reveals wonderful form with the ball. In consequence, the bookmaker, who has a hold over Langton from the time when the Sixth Former was a black sheep, seeks to save himself by unfair means. Unless Langton plays to lose, Levy threatens to disgrace him! It is a sorry plight for the kind-hearted scholar, who is trying to live down the past. He must choose between betrayal of his team or expulsion from school! No reader should miss this powerful yarn of human interest, sport, and adventure. Put all your pals wise to it, too, chums.

"HAWK'S LAST TRAIL!"

This is the title of the final yarn of our great Packsaddle series telling of the kidnapping of Slick Poindexter from the cow town school, and the story is as full of excitement as that great author, Frank Richards, can pack into it in his inimitable style. Then there are more gripping chapters from that greatest-ever St. Frank's serial, "The Secret World," and our humorous features are well up to standard, as usual, giving you all the best laughs of the week.

"See" you in next Wednesday's GEM, chums! Cheerio!

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS COUPON
11-5-35



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.

J. Bacon, 69, Ridgeway Avenue, Gravesend, Kent, wants to hear from readers who have made a hobby of the old "Nelson Lee" and "Monster" Libraries.

D. A. Pigott, Hay Green, Terrington St. Clement, King's Lynn, Norfolk, wants a French correspondent; age 13-15.

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Miss Yvonne Hodges, 50, Howick Street, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia, wants girl correspondents; age 13-14; Europe, N. and S. America, India, China.

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N. Warren, 588, Rochdale Road, Collyhurst, Manchester 9, wants correspondents; British Empire, Scotland, etc.; snap-shots, books, leaves, fossils.

Alberto Botelho, 6, Austin Avenue, Kowloon, Hongkong, China, wants correspondents.

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In the SHADOW of DEATH!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Mick Hits the Trail!

"BILL—"
"Aw, can it, you!" snapped Bill Sampson, headmaster of Packsaddle School.

"But—" persisted Mick Kavanagh. Bill slipped his quirt from under his arm into his hand. Mick jumped back out of reach just in time, the lick from the cow-whip missing him by an inch.

The Packsaddle headmaster seemed to have a grouch that morning. He was standing in the school gateway, looking out over the trail and the rolling prairie that stretched, mile on mile, from the banks of the Rio Frio to the rugged slopes of Squaw Mountain.

Bill's brow was black.

The school bell had clanged, and the bunch had gone into the school-room with Small Brown, the teacher. Mick was the only fellow out of class.

Instead of following the bunch in, Mick came down to the gate, where the headmaster was standing and staring out. With his two chums—Dick Carr and Slick Poindexter—missing from the bunch, Mick was not thinking of class that morning.

"Look here, Bill—" he began again, keeping out of reach of another lick of the quirt.

Bill turned his head and glared at him.

"You doggoned young piecan!" roared the cow town schoolmaster. "Why ain't you in school, learning from Mister Brown? Beat it, you! You figure you've got a goldarned holiday because that pesky young guy Carr has vamoosed the ranch, and gone rubbering after Slick?"

"You said it!" answered Mick coolly, but with a wary eye on the quirt.

Bill, generally good-tempered, had had his mad up ever since Hawk

Walker, the kidnapper, had hit Packsaddle.

Bill honed to cinch Mr. Walker and wear out a quirt on his rascally back. But where to lay hands on the elusive Hawk was a poser to Bill. Hawk was somewhere in Texas—that was all Bill knew. It was not safe to argue with Bill in his present worried and irritated frame of mind.

"You pesky young gink—" began Bill.

"Quit chewing the rag, Bill, and give a galoot time to speak!" urged Mick Kavanagh. "That doggoned, kidnapping lobo-wolf, Hawk Walker, has got hold of Slick, and he's holding him for five hundred dollars. Dick Carr's gone hunting for him, and he ain't come back. I guess I'm going, too!"

"What's that?" roared Bill. "I sure had trouble with Carr afore he went," said Mick. "Me letting that piecan Steve make me believe, like all the bunch, that he had a hand in putting it across Slick. I sure want to meet up with him and tell him—"

Bill did not wait for Mick to finish. He strode towards him and grasped him by his neckscarf.

Mick swung in his headmaster's grip, with a yell.

"Let up, you ornery old guy!" he roared. "I'm sure telling you—"

"By the great horned toad!" roared Bill Sampson. "Ain't I got enough trouble on hand, with Slick kidnapped and Carr missing, without you horning in and handing over more? Forget it, you geek! You hit the schoolhouse, and hit it quick—and sure that'll help you!"

A heavy cowman's boot landed on Mick's riding breeches, and he flew.

"Now, if you want some more—" roared Bill.

Mick did not want any more.

It was clear that Bill was not to be argued with. Mick cut off in the direction of the schoolhouse.

Bill turned back into the gateway with a snort, to scan the prairie. The cow town schoolmaster, generally equal to any emergency, was at a loss now. It went sorely against the grain to pay the ransom demanded by the kidnapper for Slick.

Bill hated the idea. Yet what else he was to do was a puzzle to Bill. He was expecting Slick's father now from the Poindexter Ranch. If the rancher brought the dollars for the ransom, Bill reckoned that he would have to give in, and let Hawk Walker get away with the goods. But the thought of it exasperated him intensely.

He forgot Mick, and was unaware that that member of the Packsaddle bunch had not, after all, gone into the schoolhouse. Mick stopped by the porch and looked back at Bill. Then quietly he cut off to the bunkhouse, where he packed a slicker roll. Then he went to the corral and saddled and bridled his bronco.

Bill or no Bill, Mick's mind was made up. He was going after Dick Carr. He did not reckon that Dick had much chance of finding the kidnapped Poindexter; but two heads were better than one, anyhow. And he was very anxious to see Dick Carr, and tell him that the bunch now knew the truth, and that Steve Carson's accusation had been disproved. Bill or no Bill, Mick was going.

The trot of his bronco's hoofs caught Bill's ear, and he glared round, staring blankly at the schoolboy in the saddle.

Bill's rugged face was crimson with wrath.

"Doggone you!" he roared. "Ain't I told you to hit the schoolroom? Get off'n that hoss, you young jay! You hear me whisper?"

Mick grinned.

"Forget it, Bill!" he called back.

And he gave his bronco the spur as Bill rushed towards him.

—STARRING THE PALS OF PACKSADDLE SCHOOL.

Like an arrow the bronco shot out at the gateway, and the lash of Bill's quirt, intended for Mick, fell on the horse. The bronco galloped the faster for it.

Bill rushed in pursuit.
"Say!" he roared. "You stop, you young geek! I'll sure hide you a few! I guess I'll quirt you like you was an ornery steer! You, Kavanagh, I'm a-shouting to you to stop!"

Mick looked back.
He took off his stetson, grinned, and waved it in farewell to the exasperated schoolmaster.

"So-long, Bill!" he yelled.
Bill put on a fierce spurt. But even Bill's long and powerful legs were no use in a race with a bronco. He halted at last, gasping for breath and fanning himself with his ten-gallon hat.

Mick, riding at a gallop, vanished down the trail.

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Bill. "I'll sure hide him! I'll sure use up this hyer quirt on him!"

Bill shook the quirt after the vanishing rider. Then he tramped back to the school to wait there for Mr. Poindexter to arrive, his rugged brow blacker than ever. Mick Kavanagh, safe for the present, at least, from Bill's quirt, galloped away over the grassy prairie towards Squaw Mountain.

From Friends to Foes!

DICK CARR, the tenderfoot of Packsaddle School, sat by a camp-fire, in a rocky canyon that split the rugged side of Squaw Mountain.

His pinto was staked out by the camp. High on either side of the lonely canyon rose great walls of rugged rock.

It was as solitary a spot as any in Santanta County. Dick had picked that spot for his camp, because a torrent of water ran down the canyon-side, forming a stream lower in the canyon.

He had slept rolled in blanket and slicker, with his feet to the fire. In the morning he stirred the embers together and added pine chips, and cooked his breakfast. Now he was thinking before he took the trail—or trying to think.

Dick had ridden out of Packsaddle School the previous day, determined not to return until—and unless—he found his kidnapped comrade.

But that determination, as he soon realised, was easier to form than to carry out.

Slick had been driven off in a buckboard after falling into Hawk Walker's hands. Slick, the town marshal of Packsaddle, had picked up the tracks of the buckboard, and followed them for miles, and found the vehicle abandoned on the prairie. At that point all trace was lost, and the marshal of Packsaddle had had to give it up.

One thing seemed to be clear, and that was that the kidnapper had left the open country and taken to the rocky wilderness of Squaw Mountain, where the stony soil carried no trail.

That was why Dick had arrived at Squaw Mountain. But now he was there he could not fail to see the hopelessness of the task he had set himself.

He had dozens of square miles of rocky, uninhabited wilderness to choose from—and the search for Hawk and his prisoner was remarkably like hunting for a needle in a haystack.

Dick knew it only too well, but he was not going back to Packsaddle School. The bunch believed that he had had a hand in putting Slick into Hawk's clutches. Steve Carson, his old enemy, had made the accusation, and all the bunch believed it—even Mick

Kavanagh. They had wanted to ride him on a rail out of the cow town school. Well, he told himself savagely, they were shut of him now! Bitter indignation and resentment were strong in his heart. Without Slick, he was resolved that he would never set foot within the cow town school again. He had packed all that he needed for camping in his slicker roll, he had the best horse in Texas, and he was going to hunt for Slick—and find him, if he could! At least, until his food gave out, he would keep up the hunt—and he had packed enough to last him a week.

He rose at last and began to stamp out the fire. Thick smoke rose from it, curling up towards the blue sky. From lower down the canyon came a sound to his ears—the distant beat of a horse's hoofs.

Dick Carr started and stood staring at the direction of the sound. It was approaching him, though the rocks, as yet, hid the coming rider from his sight. His heart beat.

In that lonely wilderness of rock and pine riders were rare. Sometimes—but seldom—a puncher from one of the ranches might follow stray steers into those remote recesses. Who was the rider who was coming up the canyon from the lower plains?

The thought of the kidnapper was in his mind. If it was, by chance, Hawk Walker— He was unarmed, save for his quirt, and it was certain

In seeking Slick Poindexter, his kidnapped chum, Dick Carr, the runaway from Packsaddle School, sets himself a dangerous quest—a quest that is to lead him into the shadow of death!

that Hawk packed a gun. If it was the kidnapper— Too late Dick realised that the column of smoke from the camp-fire might have betrayed him to hostile eyes.

With a clatter of hoofs the horseman came in sight, and Dick gave a cry of amazement.

"Mick!"
It was Mick Kavanagh. Dick stared at him blankly. He had never dreamed of seeing one of the Packsaddle bunch so far from the school.

For the moment his face brightened at the sight of the fellow who had been his friend—his friend and Slick's.

But it darkened again at once. Mick had turned against him, with the rest of the bunch. Mick was no friend of his.

He stood with knitted brows, watching the rider. Mick sighted him and waved his stetson and came up at a gallop. He leaped from his horse and ran towards Dick Carr with outstretched hands.

"Sure I've found ye!" exclaimed Mick, with a grin of delight. "I've found ye intirely, though I'll tell a man I might have hunted ye a month of Sundays if ye hadn't lighted a fire to tell all Santanta County where ye was hanging up. You'd sure be Hawk's antelope, Dick, if he wanted such a goob."

"What do you want?"
Dick Carr's voice was cold and hard. Mick stared at him. In his satisfaction at having found the tenderfoot he had rather forgotten the circum-

stances in which Dick had pulled out of Packsaddle. But he remembered now. "Sure it's O.K., Dick!" he exclaimed eagerly. "You don't want to get your mad up, ol' timer! I'm telling you it's O.K.!"

"Is it?" said Dick bitterly. "Yesterday you were leuding the bunch a hand, riding me on a rail out of the school, and—"

"What was a guy to think?" demanded Mick. "You brought Slick the message that took him out to be kidnapped. Steve allowed that the dog-goned lobo-wolf paid you to do it—and a ten-dollar bill was found on you, and all you could say was that you never knowed how it got there! I'll tell a man guys have been lynched on less evidence than that in Texas."

Dick shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"Good enough for Texas, perhaps," he said.

Mick's eyes gleamed.
"You all-fired tenderfoot, what you got to say agin Texas?" he roared. "You want me to give you a few with this quirt, like you was being lambasted by Bill 'along to Packsaddle?"

But he checked his wrath the next moment.

"Forget it, ol' timer!" he said. "I'll say you had reason to get your mad up. But I'm telling you it's O.K. Bill Sampson found out that that ten-dollar bill was Steve Carson's. He'd had it from his popper, Two-Gum. So then we was all wise to it that Steve had planted it in your rags. I'll tell a man Steve had such a quiring from Bill that he's still looking sick. And all the bunch will sure give you the glad hand when you hit the school agin, Dick."

But the tenderfoot's face did not soften.

"Will they?" he jeered. "Until Big Steve plays another rotten trick, I reckon, and then they'll turn me down again, and you along with them. If you've come after me to tell me that, Mick Kavanagh, you've had your ride for nothing. You can tell the Packsaddle bunch that I don't care a boiled bean what they think—or what you think, either!"

"You pesky boob—"
"That's enough!"

Mick's eyes gleamed again.

"You doggoned piefaced tenderfoot!" he exclaimed. "You got to come back to Packsaddle! What you figure you're going to do, riding round Squaw Mountain looking for Slick? Suppose you was to raise Hawk Walker? I guess you'd be sorry you met up with him the next minute."

"That's my business," answered Dick Carr coolly.

"I tell you that lobo-wolf packs a gun, and he's shot more men than he's got fingers and toes!" roared Mick. "You're O.K. now with the bunch, and you got to come back."

"Not without Slick," answered Dick Carr.

"Aw, you're the world's prize boob, and so ye are!" growled Mick. "But if you're going hunting Slick, sure I'm hunting him with ye."

"You're not," answered Dick Carr coolly. "You're no friend of mine and I don't want your company, Mick Kavanagh."

"You're sure asking me to beat ye up!" said Mick, breathing hard.

"You tried that yesterday at Packsaddle, and never had much luck with it," retorted Dick Carr. "Try it again, if you like."

"Howly Mike! I'll beat ye up till you feel like a piece left on the counter!" roared Mick Kavanagh, and he hurled himself at the tenderfoot.

Dick Carr met him half-way, and in another moment they were fighting fiercely.

Swept to Death!

SPLASH!
Dick Carr gave a gasping cry as he went backwards into the torrent.

He had been standing only a few feet from the water's edge, and Mick's fierce attack drove him backwards.

He would have rallied in another moment, but at that moment his foot slipped on the rock, and he went over.

Head and shoulders he went into the water, and his feet kicked in the air for a second before he vanished under the surface.

Mick stopped, panting.

"Howly Mike!" he ejaculated, staring blankly at the swirling water as it closed over the tenderfoot of Packsaddle.

He was taken as much by surprise as the tenderfoot.

He did not realize, however, that Dick Carr was in danger. He knew that he could swim—he had seen him swim in the Rio Frio. And the torrent that poured down the canyon side, though swift, was neither deep nor broad.

As Dick's head came up from the water, his stetson floating away, and a look of bewilderment on his face, Mick burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Sure, it's a wash for ye, and so it is! This way, Dick, ye goob, and I'll lind ye a hand out."

Hostility had evaporated at once. Mick jumped to the water's edge to stretch a hand out to the tenderfoot struggling in the water. He grinned as he stretched it out.

But the next instant the grin disappeared from his face.

"Dick!" he yelled.

Dick Carr was swimming hard. He almost got within reach of Mick Kavanagh's outstretched hand. But the rush of water dragged him away, and he whirled down the stream.

Mick stared after him in consternation as the torrent bore him away, in spite of his struggles, and he went under again.

"Dick!" he panted.

He rushed along the steep bank.

But the great rocks and boulders along the course of the mountain stream impeded him. As he clambered over a great rock in breathless haste, he saw Dick a score of yards away from him, fighting wildly against the torrent that swept him onward.

And he saw, too, what chilled his very heart. The wall of rock on the farther side of the narrow canyon rose almost as steep as the wall of a house. And the torrent did not turn there. It flowed into an opening of the rocky wall, and disappeared into the interior of Squaw Mountain.

Mick's heart missed a beat as he saw it.

Dick had seen his danger, and was fighting desperately against it. But it was in vain. With all his strength he struggled, but if he touched the bank his fingers slipped on the wet rock, and the resistless torrent swept him on again.

For a split second Mick was overwhelmed with horror. Once Dick was swept out of the light of day into the underground stream he was lost.

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Mick rushed to his horse.

There was one chance of saving the tenderfoot of Packsaddle. He grasped his lasso from the saddle of the bronco, and tore back to the bank of the stream.

Rope in hand, he climbed on a high rock, and fixed his eyes on the struggling schoolboy in the water.

It was a matter of seconds now.

Dick was within a dozen feet of the gap in the canyon side where the torrent flowed underground.

His white, desperate face showed like chalk in the sunshine. With all his strength, he fought against the rush of the water.

Whiz!

The lasso flew.

There was time for only one cast—if there was time! Mick's face was like stone as he threw the rope—but his hand was steady, his aim unerring. The loop dropped towards the tenderfoot's head—it seemed to Mick that it would encircle him and save him. But even as the rope touched Dick Carr, the whirl of the torrent dragged him out of its reach—the rope barely touched him and slid away into the water.

Mick saw the tenderfoot make a wild clutch at it—and miss!

The lasso hung useless in his hands, and before he could begin to drag in the rope, the desperate swimmer vanished from his horrified eyes—swept out of sight under the arching rock.

"Dick!" groaned Mick Kavanagh.

He stood staring in blank horror at the water that dashed and foamed on the face of the rocky cliff—with no trace of a swimmer there now. The canyon had only one human occupant—the schoolboy standing dumb with horror on the bank of the torrent that had swept his friend away to darkness and death.

For long minutes Mick Kavanagh stood there, rooted to the rock, hardly daring to believe in the terrible thing that had happened under his eyes.

At his feet the torrent foamed and rushed on, gurgling into the arched gap in the canyon side, rippling and splashing, whirling away fragments of driftwood that disappeared one after another. Dick Carr's hat that had been caught in an eddy came floating down. Mick, with stony eyes, watched it as it whirled on the water and ducked out of sight under the low, rocky arch. The stetson vanished the way its wearer had gone. Mick Kavanagh groaned aloud.

But he pulled himself together.

Was there a chance yet—a remote chance? The torrent that flowed into the apparently solid mass of the mountain must have an outlet—beyond that towering wall of rock was the Squaw River, a tributary of the Frio. Was there a remote possibility that a swimmer might be swept alive through the underground channel out into the waters of the Squaw?

If there was a chance, it was slight enough. But it was all there was, and Mick would not give up hope.

He coiled in his lasso, and went back to his horse. His face was white and strained; but he was keeping cool. Alive or dead, Dick Carr would be swept out into the wide waters of Squaw River—that seemed a certainty. Alive or dead, Mick would find him there.

He mounted his bronco, and taking Dick's pinto by the reins, led him away, riding fast down the canyon. He knew where to strike Squaw River at the nearest point, and by following the bank, he would find the outlet of the underground stream. Alive or dead, he would find the tenderfoot of Packsaddle! He clung to the hope that he might yet find him alive—but as he rode, Mick's heart was like lead in his breast.

No Surrender!

SAY, big boy!" Slick Poindexter gritted his teeth at the sound of the voice. It was the cool, mocking voice of Hawk Walker, the kidnapper.

It came from beyond the rock that barred the opening of the cave in the lonely gulch in Squaw Mountain.

The rock almost filled the narrow opening, but here and there through slits and crevices the sunlight glimmered. The cave was not wholly dark. Slick's eyes had become accustomed to the dim twilight that reigned round him, and he could see his surroundings.

During the days and nights that he had been a prisoner in the cave, the schoolboy of Packsaddle had explored every foot of it—every inch almost.

Again and again he had followed some rift, some crevice, in the hope that it might lead to some outlet—but always in vain.

There was no outlet, and no escape! At the bottom of his heart he knew that there was no chance; for the kidnapper would have examined the cavern with care before choosing it as a place of hiding for his prisoner. But any occupation was better than none, and Slick Poindexter searched and searched till he knew the interior of the cavern like a book.

It seemed to him that ages had elapsed since Hawk had landed him there. No food had been given him. As Hawk had told Bill Sampson in his letter, he did not provide his prisoners with "eats." Slick was almost sick with hunger.

Water he had in abundance. The underground stream that flowed at the back of the cave provided him with that. But no food had passed his lips since he had been a prisoner in the hidden cave.

Even the hated voice of the kidnapper was welcome to break the silence and solitude—broken only by the murmur of the water on the rock. Slick Poindexter hurried towards the narrow opening of the cave.

He was weakened by hunger, but he was ready to make the most desperate attempt to break out if the rock was rolled away, as it had been rolled away the last time the kidnapper came. But this time Hawk Walker did not move the rock.

A narrow crevice was blocked by a dark shadow and Slick saw the hard, mocking face looking in at him. It was two or three feet distant, and the crevice was too narrow for him to make an attempt to reach it. He shook a clenched fist at Hawk Walker, who grinned.

"Say, bo, I guess you'll be honing for some eats!" drawled Hawk.

"I sure could eat the hind leg of a mule, you pesky peccan!" answered Slick Poindexter. "You want me to pass in my checks in this hyer cave, you doggoned lobo-wolf?"

"I guess I want five hundred dollars," answered Hawk.

"But your school-master ain't played up yet! Ontil I hear from him, or from your popper, I reckon there won't be any eats in this hyer elegant boarding-house! Nope."

"If a guy could get at you—" sighed Slick.

"You sure was so fresh the last time I shifted this hyer rock, I sure ain't shifting it any more!" answered Hawk.

"If you want to write a letter to your popper, you can push it out through this slit."

Slick Poindexter set his teeth.

"I guess I'll pass in my chips in this cave afore I might you touch my popper for five hundred bucks!" he answered. "I reckon he would have to put a

mortgage on the ranch, and I sure ain't standing for it."

The mocking grin disappeared from Hawk Walker's face, and it became cold and hard and evil.

"You better guess agin, you young geek!" he snarled. "I've played the kidnapping game in every State in the Union, and I ain't slipped up on it yet. I got business over in New Mexico, and I sure ain't burning much more time in Texas. You get me? I'm giving you one day more. If the dollars ain't paid to-morrow, you don't see me agin. I'm hitting the trail."

"Hitting the trail, and leaving me here!" breathed Slick.

Cool and courageous as he was, his heart sank.

napper calculated on it. And what chance was there of rescue?

None! He knew it. By devious rocky paths, the kidnapper had brought him to that solitary gulch on the rugged slopes of Squaw Mountain. Slick might have picked the way again, but the hard rock bore no trace for searchers to follow. He knew that Bill Sampson would do all that man could do to rescue a member of the Packsaddle bunch from a ruthless and merciless kidnapper. But he knew, too, that all that Bill could do would be in vain. Hidden in that rocky recess, he was beyond all help.

Yet his courage did not fail him. If his father paid the ransom for his release, Hawk would handle the dollars, but not by a word would the kidnapper

and Slick saw the blood spurt from a deep cut as the kidnapper staggered back.

He heard a fierce yell of pain and rage as the rascal fell and disappeared from his sight.

A string of fierce oaths followed as the ruffian scrambled to his feet. Next moment the man's face appeared at the crevice, and then his gun was pointing at Slick.

Bang!

It was the roar of the six-gun. In his furious rage, Hawk fired at the schoolboy.

But Slick leapt aside from the narrow opening. The bullet whizzed through the cave, struck the wall of rock at the



Hawk Walker suddenly appeared at the crevice, a six-gun in his hand. Bang! Next moment a deafening report reverberated through the cave as the ruffian fired at Slick. In his rage and fury he was shooting at the schoolboy he had kidnapped!

"You said it!" snapped Hawk viciously. "And I guess you wouldn't be the first guy I've cinched that's passed in his checks because his folks was too slow to pony up, neither! I ain't in this hyer business for my health, young Poindexter! I'll say I'm after dollars, and if I don't cinch the dollars, your folks can comb Squaw Mountain for you till they find your bones in this hyer cave!"

Slick stood silent. He knew that the iron-hearted villain meant every word of it. It was on those lines that Hawk Walker carried on the business of a professional kidnapper. And he had carried it on successfully for so many years that Slick had little hope that he would "slip up" this time. Unless the ransom was paid, he was lost.

"I guess you want to put your popper wise that you're nix on the eats!" urged Hawk. "Jest a line on paper, and I'll see that it reaches him. Guess again!"

Slick gritted his teeth. His hunger gnawed him, and he knew that the kid-

schoolboy urge him to do so. He had resolved on that, and his resolution did not falter.

The kidnapper's eyes glittered at him through the crevice. No doubt Hawk was in haste to finish this piece of business and be gone; he never lingered long in one quarter. And he figured that a word from the boy, pleading for the ransom to be paid, would help the rancher to make up his mind. But he was not going to get that word from Slick.

Slick's hand closed on a loose fragment of stone. He could not reach the kidnapper through the deep crevice—the mass of rock jammed at the cave-mouth was three feet thick. But if he could not get through, the missile in his hand could.

And as the kidnapper watched him, impatiently waiting for his answer, Slick suddenly jerked his arm forward, and the sharp, jagged stone in his hand shot like a bullet through the crevice.

It struck Hawk Walker full in the face,

back, and dropped into the underground stream that flowed there.

Bang! came the roar of the six-gun again. Another bullet spattered after the first.

Slick Poindexter burst into a mocking laugh.

"Keep on burning powder, ol'-timer!" he shouted. "I guess you ain't scoring no bulletseyes!"

He groped for another loose stone and gripped it. He hoped that the kidnapper, in his rage, would roll the rock aside to get at him. He was ready to take the most desperate of chances to make a bid for his liberty.

But if Hawk thought of it, he abandoned the idea. In his rage and fury, he had fired into the cave; but he did not want to shoot the prisoner whom he still counted on exchanging for five hundred dollars. His voice came in a hoarse and savage shout.

"Doggone you! I guess I'll hide you a few with my quirt afore I hand

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you over when they pony up the dollars! I'll sure skin some of the hide off'n you, you goldarned young firebugs!"

"Forget it!" jeered Slick. "I guess you don't dare to horn into this hyer cave, you white-livered piecan!"

A fierce oath answered him, but the kidnapper was not to be taunted into removing the wedged rock. Slick, peering cautiously through the crevice, saw him standing several feet away, dabbing the blood from his cut cheek. A few moments later he was gone, and the clatter of hoofbeats died away in the silence of Squaw Mountain.

"Gum!" said Slick Poindexter. "I guess that guy is hopping mad! I'm sure glad I handed him a sockdolager with that donick, but— Gee-whiz! I'd sure give all the dollars in the bank at San Antonio to step into the chuck-house at Packsaddle! I'll tell a man, I'm sure hungry! I guess—"

He broke off. A voice came to his ears—a voice that made him wonder for a dizzy moment whether his brain was turning. It was a voice he knew—a voice calling his name!

A Startling Meeting!

DICK CARR gave himself up for lost when the torrent swept him out of the bright sunlight into the arched gap in the rocky wall of the canyon.

Light was instantly blotted from his eyes. Water was under him, round him, over him. His head struck the rocky arch over him; it was but a few inches from the surface of the water, and he was driven under.

Whirling in the rush of the torrent, as helpless as any drift-log carried away by the current, the tenderfoot of Packsaddle felt all the horrors of suffocation. Blackness and choking water overwhelmed him. His lungs seemed to be bursting as he was rushed on into the deep, unknown underground recess into which the torrent flowed.

Twice, thrice, in his vain and frantic struggles—the struggles of a drowning man—his head struck hard rock above him—hard rock that shut him down in the merciless waters.

And then suddenly, even as his senses were leaving him, and death's hand was stretched out for him, his head rose clear of the water. Dizzy as he was, he realized that the rocky roof no longer shut him down to death. He drew in a breath of air—air that was new life to his choking lungs. He was still in darkness, but the rock was no longer over him; his head was free of the water.

He was swimming again, in darkness, but breathing air—life-giving air. He had come through the very valley of the shadow of death, but he still lived. He dashed almost with stunning force against a point of rock, and instinctively he grasped at it and clung to it.

The torrent raced by, tearing at him, dragging at him, seeking to drag him away to death. But with a convulsive grasp he clung to the rock—a sharp spur that jutted into the stream. He clamped himself to it with a desperate grip, and as his senses cleared dragged his chest over it so that only his legs still dangled in the water.

There for long minutes he rested, with the ripple and murmur of the water in his ears, his strength returning. And as the minutes passed he discerned that he was not in complete darkness; a dim twilight reigned round him, and he was able to peer out the shape of a cavern.

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Then he knew what had happened. The torrent on its underground way to the Squaw River flowed through a cave, and he had risen to the surface in the cave.

He crawled from the water. Suddenly, loud above the murmur of the imprisoned torrent, came a roar of sound like thunder, filling the cave with booming echoes. It came again, thundering and echoing round him. In utter amazement he realized that it was the roaring of a gun that he heard. Someone was loosing off a six-gun at no great distance.

Dick Carr rubbed his eyes and stared into the gloom before him. Was he dreaming?

Following the booming of the six-gun came the sound of a voice—a voice familiar to his ears. Unless he was dreaming, it was the voice of the kidnapped schoolboy of Packsaddle—Slick Poindexter.

He stood rooted to the rocky floor of the cavern, on the dim bank of the subterranean stream.

It was Poindexter's voice. Was Slick there? In the dimness he could see nothing but the grim walls of the cavern, half lost in gloom. Was he dreaming?

"Slick!" He called the name of his comrade of Packsaddle.

He heard the gasp of astonishment that came from Poindexter. There was a tramping of feet on the rugged floor of the cavern.

Someone was there. It was—it must be—Slick! And Dick Carr shouted again.

"Slick!" A figure loomed in the dimness. He glimpsed a white face.

"Say, is that Dick Carr tooting, or am I plumb loco?" panted Slick Poindexter. "If it ain't Dick Carr I'm sure loco!"

"It's Dick Carr!" panted the tenderfoot of Packsaddle. "Slick, old man, I've found you!"

Slick came closer; he peered at him with almost unbelieving eyes; he grasped his arm as if to make sure that he was real. His eyes seemed to be almost popping from his head.

"Dick! It's sure you; it ain't your ghost—"

Dick laughed breathlessly.

"And it's you, Slick; not your ghost!"

"I'll say this hyer is me—all wool and a yard wide! I guess I'm hyer because that doggoned lobo-wolf, Hawk Walker,

kinder planted me here. But how in thunder—"

Dick Carr pointed to the underground stream issuing from the wall of rock; and Poindexter, as he saw that he was drenched from head to foot, understood. He caught his breath.

"You hit this hyer cave that-a-way!" said Slick in a hushed voice. "By the great horned toad! I guess you got more lives'n a cat, Dick, if you got through that alive. Say, you're wet!"

"Just a few!" grinned Dick.

Poindexter gripped his hand.

"I'll say I'm plumb glad to see you, old-timer!" he said. "But you got sure landed in the same fix as this baby. I'll bet a stack of dollars to a Mexican cent that you never knowed I was here!"

"Hardly!" answered Dick Carr.

"You tumbled in" and was washed away, I reckon?" asked Slick.

"That's it!" assented Dick. He said nothing of his fight with Mick Kavanagh. "But I've found you, Slick! You've been shut up in this cave ever since that villain Hawk got you!"

"You said it! And I sure do miss the cats!" said Poindexter. "You ain't got a bite in your rags?"

Dick shook his head. All his supplies were in the camp by the canyon torrent.

Poindexter whistled softly.

"Dick, ol'-timer, I'm powerful glad to see you! But you're fixed as bad as I am now. I guess Hawk Walker will sure be surprised, a few, when he moseys along to-morrow and finds two where he left one. But he won't let you hit the horizon, Dick, any more than this baby."

"We're getting out of this!" said Dick.

"Mebbe there's a chance with two instead of one shoving at that doggoned donick!" said Slick hopefully. "We'll sure try it on, old-timer!"

Dick Carr followed Slick up the cave to the glimmer of sunlight at the mouth. Slick peered from the crevice, but there was no sign of Hawk Walker; the kidnapper was already far away. Again and again Slick had tried his strength on the wedged rock and had found it immovable. Was there a chance with his comrade to help? It was a glimmer of hope, at least.

The two schoolboys braced themselves against the rock and exerted all their strength; they strained at it till the perspiration ran in streams down their faces.

But it was futile. The heavy rock was too firmly wedged outside, and twice their united strength could not have shifted it an inch. They gave in at last and stood panting for breath.

"I guess that lets us out!" said Slick dimly. "That guy Hawk sure does make a guy safe when he cinches him."

Dick did not answer. He leaned on the rock, breathing hard. Had he found his comrade, only to share his fate in that hidden recess in the rocks of Squaw Mountain? Was it only for that that he had escaped the fearful peril of the underground stream? He spoke at last.

"Anyhow, we're together, Slick!" he said.

"You said it, old-timer!" agreed Slick.

And that was all the comfort the comrades of Packsaddle had. But while there was life there was hope.

(Next Week: "HAWK'S LAST TRAIL!" Whatever you do, chums, don't miss this full-of-thrills yarn. Order your GEM early.)

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From every part of the pirate galley, as it drew alongside the Gothlander vessel, the St. Frank's juniors and the slaves came sweeping aboard the enemy craft, their swords flashing. "Surrender! Surrender! Surrender!" went up the excited yell. "Surrender, and we'll spare you!"

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Victory!

CAPTURED by pirates in a lost world, a party of St. Frank's boys and Moor View School girls are taken to an island in the middle of a large lake which divides Northestia and Gothland, two medieval countries at war with each other. Having been stranded in Northestia with Nelson Lee & Co., the schoolboys and schoolgirls are on the side of the Northestrians.

Princess Mercia, the girl ruler, is also a prisoner of the pirates, who intend to ransom their captives to Kasser, ruler of Gothland. When the pirates depart to bargain with Guntha the Crafty, Kasser's lieutenant, the St. Frank's boys and the Moor View girls escape and release all the slaves of the pirates.

When the latter return they are attacked and overpowered by their former prisoners.

Nipper was the first to rush to the cabin, and he burst in joyously.

"Victory!" he breathed breathlessly.

"Yes, we know!" cried Doris. "We heard everything. We want to come out—"

"Sorry, but you can't," interrupted Nipper. "Not yet, anyway. Keep in here, and don't move until we give the

signal. We haven't finished yet—but we'll soon be ready for you!"

He was off again, and he closed the door.

And now a fresh development was taking place. The pirates were being dragged out of their clothing. Not all of them, but the most picturesque of the ruffians—those who wore the most distinctive clothes.

And some of the St. Frank's fellows donned the pirate garb.

"It's a bit of a struggle, but we've got to do it, and it's all in a good cause," roared Handforth, as he got into his new attire. "I've always wanted to be a pirate, and now I'm going to be one!"

Archie Glenthorne was horrified. "Absolutely not!" he protested, aghast. "I mean dash it! I'm ready to do any jolly old thing for the good of the populace, but this is too dashed much! Ods horrors and atrocities! I can't get into these blighting things!"

"You've got to, Archie—there's no escape!" grinned Nipper.

"But, I mean, they're dashed unclean!" protested Archie. "However, if it's for the sake of the princess, Archie will resign himself. I mean to say, for a lady, nothing is too much!"

But as he donned the nondescript garb which had been allotted to him, he nearly wilted away himself. The

other fellows were too excited to take much notice, and before long they were transformed into a ragged crew of pirates.

And as each pirate was forced into the discarded clothes of his captor, he was chained to the oars, and the key was turned. It was a full half-hour before the transfer was completed.

The former masters were chained and padlocked, and the slaves were in command. Siegan had partially recovered by now, and his eyes were baleful as he watched the activities. Yet he could do nothing. He had exhausted himself by his frenzied struggling, and, moreover, he was chained by both wrists and ankles. He who had chained men to this oar, was now chained to it himself.

"Let me bargain!" he shouted suddenly. "Set me at liberty, and I will betray Guntha the Crafty into your hands! I ask not for the liberty of these other scum—they are best chained!"

"And so are you!" said Browne gently. "And let me also inform you, Brother Siegan, that we already have our plans for Brother Guntha. So the less you say, the better."

"I will give you valuable information—"

Siegan got no further, for his next-door neighbour had half risen in his seat, and he attempted to fling himself

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upon his late captain. In spite of his chains, he succeeded in delivering a vicious blow with his elbow, and Siegan subsided. And at the same moment he realised that there could be no bargaining with his captors.

Handforth was rushing to the cabin, and he thundered upon the door.

"All right—you can all come out now!" he shouted. "It's all clear!"

The door opened, and Irene & Co. burst out. But they recoiled at sight of Edward Oswald.

"Ted!" cried Irene.

"You needn't be astonished," said Handforth, grinning. "This is just a part of the scheme, you know. We're going along to make another capture. We've collared the pirates, but we're not satisfied. We want to take back one of the enemy generals with us as a kind of trophy!"

Princess Mercia was bewildered.

"This more than I can grasp!" she murmured. "Is there no end to the energy and enterprise of these wondrous youths?"

"What about the girls?" asked Handforth. "They've done as much as we—and more. In fact, we couldn't have done a thing without them."

The princess regarded him fondly out of her deep brown eyes, and Handforth felt embarrassed.

"You are all wonderful!" exclaimed Mercia softly. "Was I not right when I placed thee in my bodyguard, good Handforth the Bold? Praise for one is scarcely fair, for ye are all deserving of the same praise. I am in complete amaze by all these swift happenings."

"We shall soon be back in North-estria, princess," said Irene cheerfully. "And then we shall be safe again. But, oh, hasn't it been worth all our worries and anxieties? My hat, what a gorgeous day we've had!"

A Shock for Guntha!

THE galley swung out of the inlet and bore round the frowning rocks towards the open lake.

Even from a short distance it seemed that the vessel was really and truly in command of pirates. All the figures that could be seen on the deck were ill-dressed ruffians, and many of them were cracking their whips with seemingly practised skill.

True, the oars were being wielded clumsily, and now and again there was confusion among the slaves. But this was not very surprising, considering that the chained pirates were resisting continuously. Moreover, they were not accustomed to the big sweeps of this big galley.

Up and down the gangway the former slaves were whipping all those pirates who resisted or who cursed. The brutes were receiving a taste of their own medicine. And the St. Frank's fellows made no attempt to interfere. They knew that these pirates deserved the lash.

They had to set their course more by guesswork than anything else, for there was no sign of Guntha's ship when once they had swung round the island. But they knew that the vessel must be somewhere in the direction of Gothland.

To ask Siegan for directions was futile, for if he answered at all he would probably lie. So the great galley set out, trusting to luck. And at just about the same time the motor-boat, with Nelson Lee and Dorrie on board, was starting off from the North-estrian coast, bound for the island in mid-lake.

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"It's our only course now," Nelson Lee was saying. "Things seem to be going wrong generally, for I can hear the motor misfiring."

"The motor?" repeated Ethelbert the Red, staring.

"Yes, the engine."

"I'll go and have a look at the works," said Lord Dorrimore. "We've got enough juice, because we filled the tanks before we started out. It'll just about put me in a cheerful mood if the old bus peters out."

He went to look at the engine. Fortunately, there was no lack of petrol in North-estria, for when the airship had crashed she had done no damage to her great supply tanks, and these had been over two-thirds full.

While Dorrie tinkered with the engine Lee kept a sharp look-out ahead. This search was presenting many difficulties. At last definite information had been gained that the royal barge had been seen going out upon the lake in company with a great galley. But none could say which direction they had taken, although it was assumed that the vessels were making for the pirate islands.

So the motor-boat was now dashing off in chase.

Lee wanted to have a hundred ships in this affair, for then something might be accomplished. But the slow North-estrian vessels were practically useless in such an enterprise. This one motor-boat had to suffice, and Lee had grave fears that the captives had already been taken well over towards Gothland.

"You see, it's so confoundedly difficult," he said, turning towards Ethelbert. "We might go right across to Gothland and miss them by a mere mile or two. We might search this lake for days without happening to strike the exact spot. From this low level the horizon is limited—it's not as though we were on a yacht, with a high deck. We're almost on a level with the water, and our horizon is confined to a mile or two. And this lake is forty miles across."

"Let us, at all events, search these accursed islands," said Ethelbert anxiously.

And in due course the islands drew near. Dorrie had patched up the engine, and it was now operating at full power. Lee did not hesitate. He drove the motor-boat straight into the low cave entrance, with Lord Dorrimore at the machine-gun.

"Better switch on the searchlight, eh?" said his lordship.

"Yes, do so," replied Nelson Lee.

A powerful searchlight was fitted up in the bows of the motor-boat, and at the touch of a switch the great beam shot out. And as the boat glided into the gloomy cave the interior was dazzlingly lit up.

"See!" shouted Ethelbert, pointing. "The royal galley!"

"By gad, he's right!" said Dorrie. "She's here, Lee!"

"Yes, but where are the boys?" exclaimed Lee. "And what of the pirates themselves? There's no one here, Dorrie—the place is deserted!"

It did not take long for them to discover this fact. The grotto was abandoned, and the royal barge was empty and deserted. The absence of the big galley was significant—for this proved, beyond doubt, that the prisoners had been transferred on to it and were being taken elsewhere. Gothland! It was obvious!

So once again the motor-boat went out in search, but with little hope. For by this time it seemed that the royal captives must be in the hands of the

enemy. Little did Nelson Lee imagine what was really taking place!

For at that very time the pirate galley was bearing down upon Guntha's waiting ship. Guntha the Crafty was filled with pleasant anticipation. He watched the galley's approach with acute satisfaction, and he no longer had any doubts regarding Siegan's story. For here came Siegan with his prisoners!

On board the galley the St. Frank's fellows were acting with caution.

Deliberately they had placed Princess Mercia, Prince Oswy, and the girls in a prominent position on the high poop, where they could be seen distinctly by those on the enemy ship. And the bows of the galley were kept head-on, so that none of the Gothlanders could gain a clear view of the galley's lower decks.

Thus, Guntha had every reason to feel pleased, for he could see those royal prisoners long before the galley drew close. He could see them huddled together, frightened-looking and timid. He did not know that this was a mere trick to entrap him.

Handforth, Nipper, and the other fellows were taking anxious stock of the enemy ship. They meant to capture her, if possible, but they weren't quite sure of her size or strength. But now they were approaching they were reassured. Guntha's vessel was not so very formidable, and there did not appear to be many men aboard. At all events, her decks were well nigh deserted.

"We'll chance it!" growled Nipper. "We'll sweep up and board the beggar before they can guess our intention."

The prospect of returning to North-estria with such a prize was alluring, and none of the fellows could resist it. Such a feat would provide a fitting round-up to the day's adventures.

And so, when the galley swept majestically alongside, friendly grappling irons were cast across, and the Gothlanders had no suspicion of what was coming. Guntha's eyes were upon the princess, and his elation knew no bounds. How Kasker the Grim would honour him for this tremendous triumph!

And then, like the burst of a thunder-clap, came the shock.

From every part of the galley men were sweeping on board the Gothlander vessel—and boys, too! All were armed with swords.

"Surrender!" went up the shout. "Surrender, and we will spare you!"

Guntha started forward, his eyes ablaze.

"A trick!" he raved. "By my bones! A foul and dastardly trick!"

The clash of the fight was already beginning, but it was not likely to last for long. For this ship contained men who were mostly injured, and the rest had no fight left in them. They were already demoralised by their recent experiences, and the very nature of this new surprise unnerved them.

"There he is!" yelled Handforth triumphantly. "Come on, you chaps!"

Guntha was swept off his feet before he could even draw his sword, and he disappeared beneath a pile of shouting fellows. And Guntha's downfall in the first minute of the fight was enough.

The rest of the Gothlanders crumpled up.

Triumphant!

WITHIN five minutes the victory was established.

After the first Gothlanders had gone down the rest surrendered—abjectly. The schoolboy

pirates had done well, for not only had they captured an enemy ship, but they had seized Guntha the Crafty—one of Kassker's right-hand men. And now for Northestria!

Fully fifty of the released slaves were left on board the captive, to act as a prize crew. Every Gothlander was disarmed, and the majority, indeed, were packed below and locked up. Only sufficient men were kept at the sweeps.

"By jingo, we've had some excitement, but everything's ended all right," grinned Reggie Pitt happily. "We've got the whole gang of pirates, an enemy ship, and an enemy commander! Who said we couldn't join in the actual fighting?"

"This is what comes of sending us off with the princess—so as to be out of all the fun!" said Handforth, grinning. "As a matter of fact, we've had more of the fighting than any of the others, I'll bet. And we've come out on top, too. Good luck to St. Frank's!"

"Rather!" said Nipper. "But now we've got to skedaddle back. We can't take any more chances—especially with the princess on board."

"Chances!" echoed Handforth. "We could capture a dozen Gothland ships, if we liked—with no chance about it, either. What's the good of being pirates if we don't set to work? I vote we raid—"

But he was shouted down.

"No, old man, we've got to deliver the princess safely," said Nipper. "Besides, I've got a sort of feeling that I could do with a meal. How long is it since we ate? Six hours, or six days?"

"Feels like six weeks," said Tommy Watson.

Browne was confronting the princess. "We have the honour to present you with a captured enemy ship, your highness," he was saying graciously. "We now propose to speed for Westwold—where, I fear, there is a certain amount of anxiety."

"I am lost for words," confessed the princess happily. "I knew ye to be youths of great resource and courage, but these exploits have surpassed all my expectations. Ye are truly youths of a great nation!"

Before Browne could answer, a shout went up.

"Look! The motor-boat!" yelled somebody.

"Hurrah! It must be Mr. Lee!"

Nipper jumped.

"We'd better signal—and do it quickly, too!" he exclaimed. "They'll mistake us for a pirate—and they've got a machine-gun on board."

"Oh, corks!"

"Let's signal the surrender, and make 'em think we're real pirates!" grinned Handforth. "Up with the white flag, you chaps!"

A signal of some kind was found, and it was frantically waved. And on board the motor-boat the approaching searchers were surprised—and suspicious.

"They're surrendering—even before we fire a shot!" said Lee. "We had better go cautiously, Dorrie!"

"My dear man, don't you believe it!" said his lordship. "They're scared—they've heard of us. The very sight of this motor-boat is enough to put these pirates into a funk. Ye gods and little fishes!" he added, in a shout of joy. "Look! It's the princess—and she's waving!"

"Thank Heaven!" murmured Lee.

Ethelbert the Red was too anxious and relieved to make any comment. Even now he feared that some mishap might occur. The motor-boat swung

round, and drew alongside the galley. And, as it did so, a number of the pirates raised their arms.

"Hallo, Mr. Lee!" went up a united shout. "Cheerio, Dorrie!"

"Good glory!" gasped his lordship.

"The boys!" exclaimed Lee. "Well, upon my soul! These—these pirates are our own boys, Dorrie!"

"Of all the infernal young monkeys!" roared Lord Dorrimore. "I'll tan their hides for this trick, confound 'em! But, by gad, they're a set of plucky youngsters! Good luck to 'em for their spirit!"

"It's all right, gov'nor!" sang out Nipper from the galley. "The princess is safe, and so is Prince Oswy! We've got lots of prisoners, and we're just off to Westwold!"

Dorrie shook his fist.

"Wait until I get at you!" he shouted. "What's the idea of foolin' us like this?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A shout of laughter went up, and Dorrie was obliged to grin. Three minutes later he and Nelson Lee were in the midst of the triumphant juniors, and Ethelbert the Red was breathlessly inquiring of the princess if she was safe and well.

It was Nipper who briefly told Lee the facts. Browne wanted to be spokesman, but he was shouted down, in spite of the fact that he was a commander. The fellows were hungry, and they didn't want to wait all day while the loquacious Fifth Former told the story.

"That's about all, sir," concluded Nipper, when he had given the main facts. "There's Siegan, chained to that oar—and we've collared Guntha the Crafty, too. Another blow for the Gothlanders—eh?"

Lee looked at the fellows with sparkling eyes.

"Boys, you've done splendidly!" he said simply. "Against extraordinary difficulties, you have conquered all along the line. Your efforts have been magnificent!"

"Hold on, sir!" said Nipper, with a frown. "This isn't our act at all—it's the girls! All the honours go to Doris and Winnie."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the rest of the fellows. "Three cheers for Doris and Winnie! They're the heroes of the hour!"

"They're talking nonsense, Mr. Lee," said Winnie uncomfortably.

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"On the contrary, they are talking with singular truth," he said. "It seems to me that you have all done your share in this exploit, and you may be sure that Northestria is as proud of you as I am."

Lee thereupon gave orders, while Lord Dorrimore went back to the motor-boat. The galleys were got under way, and headed in triumph for Northestria.

The Schoolboy Pirates!

THE pirate galley, with her great oars flashing evenly, swept out of the rocky inlet and rounded the spur of the island. It was three days after the triumphant return of the St. Frank's juniors with their pirate prisoners.

The galley was a big vessel, with raised decks at either end and a long gangway running down the centre. Slaves were at the oars, and a number of pirates in nondescript costumes lounged about the decks.

There was no wheel to this galley, but a great tiller aft, and two of the pirates were manning it, one on either side; and here there was a wide deck, where the commander could obtain a

full view of the entire ship in front of him.

One of the figures, burlier than the others, turned to the helmsmen.

"Two points starboard!" he said curtly.

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied one.

"Absolutely!" said the other. "Starboard what? In good old plain English, to the right, laddie! Kindly shove the tiller your way, Watson, old bean!"

Watson shoved, and the other helmsman went over with a crash as the heavy rudder caused the tiller to swing violently round.

"Sorry, Archie!" grinned Tommy Watson. "My mistake!"

"Good gad!" gasped Archie, as he picked himself up. "I'm absolutely ready to do my jolly old trick at the rudder, dash it, but this biffing-over stuff is hardly in the contract—what?"

The burly figure turned and surveyed the helmsmen.

"That's about enough of that!" he said sternly. "If you lubbers can't control the tiller properly I'll have you put in irons!"

"Rats!" said one of the lubbers.

"Did you say 'Rats' to me, Tommy Watson?" roared the other.

"Yes, I jolly well did! And you can go and eat coke, too!" snapped Watson.

"Who do you think you are, anyhow?"

"I'm the skipper of this ship!"

"Just another of your delusions, Handy, old son," said Watson.

"Nipper's our skipper, and you're just one of the crew. So if you think we're going to take orders from you, there must be something wrong with your works!"

Edward Oswald Handforth took a deep breath.

"Am I the captain of the bodyguard, or am I not?" he roared.

"You're not!"

"What?"

"Of course you're not," repeated Watson. "Why rake up old history? We all left the bodyguard days ago, and now we're sea scouts."

"How the dickens can we be sea scouts on a lake?"

"Oh, help!" groaned Watson. "You know what I mean, you chump! It's our duty to scour the lake up and down, and to keep our eyes open for any enemy activities. Nipper's our skipper, and we're fed-up with your rot!"

"Why, you—you insubordinate rotter!" thundered Handforth. "If you talk to me like that again I'll make you walk the plank!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey approached, and Pitt shook his head.

"Poor chap, this pirate business has got into his head," he remarked sadly.

"That's the worst of Handy—he always takes things so much to heart. I believe he thinks he's a real pirate—and that we're actually living in the Middle Ages!"

"Seems like it," agreed Jack, eyeing Handforth warily.

Edward Oswald sniffed.

"Thank goodness, I'm capable of fitting myself into my environment!" he said tartly. "This is a pirate galley, and we're supposed to be pirates. This country is like a slice out of medieval England—so I'm living the part. You chaps, poor fateheads, are still St. Frank's fellows—and you seem to have an idea that the bell will ring for lessons every minute."

Reggie Pitt chuckled.

"I think Handy must be the reincarnation of some bloodthirsty buccaner of the Spanish Main!" he grinned. "He takes to this lake piracy as a fish takes to the water."

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to water! It's not a bad idea, Handy, but we've got to remember that it's only a pose—a bluff—and that our real job is to keep an eye on the enemy's movements."

Handforth turned aside, frowning. "Well, I'm skipper!" he growled. "I don't want any arguments, and you chaps had better clear off to your posts! Helmsmen, another point to starboard!"

Tommy Watson obeyed—not because he thought that such a move was necessary, but because it saved all argument. As a matter of fact, it was immaterial which direction the galley took, for she had just come out of her lair on an aimless cruise—to patrol the lake in search of information.

The galley was entirely in charge of Nipper & Co. of the St. Frank's Remove. True, there were Boots and Christine of the Fourth, and Willy & Co. of the Third included in the party—but they hardly counted in the eyes of the others. This was essentially a Remove enterprise.

The "slaves" at the oars were all loyal and true—men who, just recently, had been slaves in real earnest, but who were now living a life of ease and luxury compared to their former torture. The galley only cruised for an hour or two at a time, and then returned to its base.

When they had captured the pirates, Nipper had seen no reason why they shouldn't retain their galley. The idea was quite simple. He had suggested to Lee that he and the other fellows should remain on board, dressed as pirates. They would cruise in the lake, and, if seen from afar, would be taken for a pirate vessel. But, actually, they were keeping their eyes open, and watching for Kassker's next move.

Nelson Lee had approved of the scheme, for it had seemed to him that the high-spirited juniors would thus be kept harmlessly occupied.

The galley's headquarters were on Pirate Island, in mid-lake—or, rather, in the great grotto which the island concealed. And so the St. Frank's juniors became a band of pirates, in charge of a great galley!

Of course, there had been a lot of preliminary preparations.

Large quantities of stores had been taken to the island, and the galley itself had been scoured from stern to stern by workmen. Furniture had even been taken aboard, and the juniors were given all the comforts they needed.

It had been Handforth's idea to have some special clothing made, and, as a result, some of them were attired in picturesque costumes which befitted their occupation, the others still wore their ordinary school clothes. From a distance they looked genuine enough pirates. And it was one of Nelson Lee's strict orders that the galley was to keep its distance always. In no circumstances was it to approach any enemy vessel; and it must always cruise in mid-lake, never approaching nearer than five miles from the Gothland shore.

In this way there was some chance that the boys might be useful. For they were provided with powerful telescopes, and thus had the advantage. During their cruises they could watch the enemy coastline continuously, and report any occurrence of especial interest.

In the event of a sudden alarm—the beginning, say, of a determined invasion—the galley was provided with powerful smoke rockets. These would not only be visible from the Northeastrian coast, but the devastating reports,

as they exploded in the air, would be clearly heard. But these rockets were only to be utilised in sudden emergency.

On the after-deck Handforth was pacing up and down and frowning.

"What's the trouble, old man?" asked Church, approaching him.

"Go away!" said Handforth.

"Look here—"

"Clear off!"

Church shrugged his shoulders, and strolled away and joined McClure, who was leaning over the bulwarks near by, intently watching his line. An improvised float was bobbing about in the foam from the easily moving oars.

Handforth glared bitterly.

"You rotter!" he called out. "What's the idea of ignoring me like this?"

"My stars!" ejaculated Church, turning. "Didn't you tell me to clear off? Didn't you order me to go away?"

"You don't think I expected you to obey, do you?" snapped the leader of Study D. "I want to talk to you chaps. Come here!"

Church grinned, and nudged his companion.

"Let's humour him!" he murmured.

"Rats!" said Mac. "I'm expecting a bite every minute—"

"You duffer! You'll get no bite while we're moving!" grinned Church. "I doubt if you'll get a bite anyhow; I've seen no fish in this lake."

"What about that frightful thing which nearly dragged Willy under?"

"Oh, well, if you're anxious to catch one of those for your lunch, you're welcome!" said Church sarcastically. "It was a monster—an awful thing that nearly put an end to poor old Willy! It put an end to all our ideas of bathing in this lake, anyhow!"

Handforth snorted. He was in very much the same position as Mohamet of old—since the mountain would not come to him, he was reluctantly compelled to go to the mountain. He strode across the deck and joined his chums.

"I'm fed-up!" he announced curtly.

"That's nothing new," said Church.

"You're always fed-up about something, Handy! What's biting you this time?"

"Nothing's biting me."

"Then what's the matter?"

"Everything!"

"Haden't you better be lucid?" suggested Church.

"Well, about this trip—this pirate stuff!" said Handforth gruffly. "That bouncer of a Nipper has pushed himself forward, and most of the chaps are accepting him as the skipper!"

"Sad, but true," admitted Church.

"Life's full of these worries, Handy. You ought to be philosophical—"

"I'm not philosophical!" roared Handforth. "And I'm not going to put up with this rot, either! I was captain of the bodyguard, and so it stands to reason that I should be captain of this ship!"

"Reason doesn't enter into it at all," said McClure. "Nine-tenths of the fellows prefer to be led by Nipper, and there's an end of it. He's a good scout, anyhow, and the right man for the job. He's got a cool head, and he doesn't enter into any rash undertakings."

"Haven't I got a cool head?" bawled Handforth violently.

"Just about as cool as a volcano!" nodded Church. "No, Handy; this isn't in your line. You're a great chap in battle, and you can use your fists like a good 'un; but if you had control of this ship, you'd get us all captured by the enemy inside an hour!"

Handforth simply stared, speechless.

"By George!" he breathed at last. "Are you against me, too?"

"Of course not, old son," said Church affectionately. "We're with you to the last ditch; but with regard to this affair, both Mac and I think that Nipper is the right man—"

"Don't talk to me about last ditches!" hooted Handforth. "You're no chums of mine! Blow you! I'm captain of this galley, and I'm going to assert myself—now!"

"Go ahead!" said McClure.

Handforth was staggered by the recent insubordination. From his viewpoint, it was nothing less. For some utterly ridiculous reason the other juniors treated him as one of themselves. They called him "Handy," they chaffed him, they pulled his leg; they did everything, in fact, to prove that he was no higher in their esteem than anybody else.

And yet he was the captain—the leader!

To Handforth's amazement, to his undying indignation, he was becoming aware of the fact that Nipper was really in control of the reins. If any of the fellows wanted advice, they went to Nipper. If they were keen to know the orders for the day, they went to Nipper. And it was Nipper who always gave the orders, and planned out the cruises.

If Handforth suggested anything he was shouted down or laughed at, or treated with tolerant amusement. It was getting beyond all bearing. And Edward Oswald decided that the time had come for an alteration.

"Yes, I'm going to assert myself—now!" he repeated grimly.

He gazed over the galley and raised his hand.

"Hey, you fellows at the oars!" he thundered. "Cease rowing!"

The oarsmen glanced over their shoulders, looking rather puzzled, but they still kept up their regular stroke. They were all Northeastrians, ex-slaves, and proud to be in the service of these bold youths from the Beyond.

"Cease rowing!" repeated Handforth fiercely. "You rotters, if you don't obey me, I'll jolly well—"

"Hallo! What's the trouble here?" asked Nipper, as he appeared from the cabin. "All right, men—carry on! Handy, you'll only upset the men if you mess about like this."

"Mess about!" said Handforth thickly.

"What else do you call it?" asked Nipper.

A group of other juniors appeared, coming along the central gangway and congregating on the deck. They were all grinning. Somehow they had been expecting something of this sort.

"Who's commander of this ship?" asked Handforth fiercely. "That's what I want to know! Who's commander?"

"I can tell you who isn't—and that's you!" replied Nipper coolly. "So far as I know, there's been no commander appointed. We've just a free-and-easy crowd—scouts in the service of Northeastria. This galley isn't going into action, or venturing upon any raids, so we don't need a commander!"

Handforth pointed an accusing finger.

"That's just it!" he snapped. "This galley isn't going into action! By George, you've admitted it! This galley isn't going into action! Don't those words burn your mouth as you speak 'em?"

"Well, not to notice," smiled Nipper, humouring him.

"Then you're not fit to be commander!" retorted Handforth.

"Listen, you fellows!" he added, addressing the crowd. "I was captain of the bodyguard, and I want to be captain of this galley. Hands up, everybody in favour of my appointment as sole commander."

A yell of laughter was the only answer.

"Dear old boys, hands up, everybody in favour of appointin' Nipper!" sang out Tregellis-West. "I think it's a frightfully good idea to have this matter settled at once; I do, really! Who votes for Nipper?"

Every hand went up, and every face was grinning.

"Exactly!" said Sir Montie urbanely. "Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Handforth.

"Frightfully sorry, Handy, old boy, but there it is!" smiled Tregellis-West apologetically. "But you can't get away from that, can you?"

Handforth took a deep breath. "All right—go ahead!" he said bitterly. "I'm not a bit surprised; I expected something like this. The Princess Mercia appreciated my value; but there's plenty of truth in that old proverb, 'A prophet is of no account in his own country.'"

"You've had your fling, Handy, so you ought to be satisfied," said Reggie Pitt. "What's the good of getting excited, anyhow?"

"Isn't it enough to make anybody excited?" retorted Handforth. "My idea is to take advantage of this situation; I don't believe in frittering away opportunities."

"What exactly would you do, then?" asked Nipper.

"I'd give orders to sail straight for Gothland!" retorted Handforth. "I'd raid the enemy's coast, and—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Nipper. "What about Mr. Lee's orders?"

"What orders?"

"We're not to approach nearer than five miles—"

"Wait a minute!" said Edward Oswald coldly. "If I had had any voice, I wouldn't have agreed to that rot in the first place! We're pirates, and it's our duty to act as pirates. We ought to be raiding Gothland every day, and routing out the enemy's secrets."

A yell of laughter greeted this statement, and Handforth had no idea that he had hopelessly given himself away. He was so infatuated with this new scouting duty that he actually looked upon himself as a pirate. He always took everything literally. Nipper, on the other hand, knew well enough that the whole thing was a pose, and that the galley was merely out for scouting purposes.

"It's no good, old son," said the Remove captain, shaking his head. "You're too hasty. You spoil everything by failing to curb your impetuosity. You'd raid Gothland, you say?"

"Action!" snapped Handforth, in defence of his policy.

"I agree with you about the action, but wisdom seems to be lacking," replied Nipper soberly. "My dear old chap, you'd get the whole crowd of us beheaded in the very first raid! Kassker has set a price on all of us, and if we once got into the hands of his soldiers, we'd be shown no mercy. Personally, I'm fond of action; but I'm not going anywhere near Gothland unless I'm forced to. I'm game enough for any excitement when it's necessary, but this galley isn't cruising about on the look-out for trouble. So the sooner

you curb your warlike spirit, the better."

And as everybody else agreed with Nipper's summing-up, Edward Oswald Handforth was left without a single adherent. Even his own chums were against him.

The Raft!

NEXT day the galley was again cruising on the bosom of the lake. She was now a good deal nearer to the Gothland shore, but well outside the five-mile limit.

However, the enemy shores were in clear sight, and through the telescopes and binoculars the juniors were able to examine the ground minutely.

They saw nothing to alarm them.

Gothland seemed to be very quiet and peaceful; but, after all, the galley was well down the lake, forty or fifty miles from the enemy capital.

This part of the country was remote from the war zone. But Nipper believed in taking observations everywhere, for he had a lurking suspicion that Kassker the Grim was secretly planning a big offensive.

Edward Oswald Handforth was very quiet; he had been very quiet ever since the previous day, and he had evidently accepted the situation with a good grace. Handforth, when all was said and done, was a true sportsman.

"Nothing doing," remarked Reggie Pitt, as he lowered his telescope.

"What did you expect?" asked Handforth tartly. "There's no sign of enemy activity, because Kassker's a beaten man. If all you fellows are thinking that there's going to be another battle—"

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all, it was a serious problem. Were they doomed to remain in this strange oasis for the rest of their lives?

Nipper shook himself.

"We don't want to think about that!" he growled. "Our job is to find out if Kasker's doing anything along these shores. Personally, I believe we're on a wild-goose chase. Kasker, in my opinion, is preparing a huge army well inland. When he makes his next swoop, it'll be sudden and dramatic."

Handforth started.

"Then why not take a trip inland, and see?" he asked.

"There you go again, you die-hard!" snapped Nipper. "We're not going inland, or anywhere near the coast, either. After we've patrolled this stretch of shore—keeping five miles out—we'll get back to our base."

"Oh rats!" snorted Handforth. "Do you like it! I'm fed-up!"

He marched below, and had a snack in the spacious cabin which formed the boys' feeding quarters while cruising.

When he came on deck again he had forgotten his annoyance. He found a number of fellows focusing their glasses on one particular spot.

"Hallo!" said Handforth. "What's happening?"

"Nothing," said Fullwood.

"Then what are they all staring at through the glasses?"

"Nipper thought he saw something floating on the water, a mile or two away," said Fullwood. "Only a tiny object—probably a piece of wood, or some wreckage. We're going in that direction now—although we can't go far."

Handforth sniffed.

"All this fuss over a bit of floating flotsam!" he said tartly.

"You never know, it might be jetsam!" said Church.

"You fathead! What's the difference?"

"Oh, a lot!" said Church, shaking his head. "Flotsam is stuff from a shipwreck, but jetsam is material that has been deliberately thrown overboard. I expect that's where they get the word 'jetsam,' you know—"

"Hold on!" snapped Handforth. "Is this a lesson, or what? And why the dickens can't we go much nearer? There's nothing in the way—it's all clear water."

"But we're within half a mile of the zone," explained Fullwood.

"The zone?"

"The five mile limit, you know."

Handforth gave an explosive snort of disgust.

"Five mile limit!" he barked. "Of all the absolute rot! Supposing that piece of wreckage is valuable? A sea-chest, full of gold? Mustn't we cross the five mile line even then?"

"It can't be a sea-chest full of gold," said Church, shaking his head.

"Why can't it?"

"Because a chest full of gold wouldn't float."

"If you're asking for a thick ear, Walter Church, I'll jolly well give you one!" roared Handforth. "Quibbling and arguing over trifles! I think we ought to steer straight for this piece of flotsam—"

"Or jetsam," said McClure.

"Flotsam!" howled Handforth. "Let's steer straight. Here, gimme those glasses, De Valerie! Give a chap a chance!"

But before Handforth could borrow De Valerie's binoculars, Nipper sang out to the oarsmen to put on speed, and to row straight ahead. The man at the tiller was ordered to keep a direct course.

"We shall be over the five mile line," said Watson.

"Can't help that," replied Nipper briskly. "In any case, there's no sign of another ship, and we shan't be far wrong, at the worst."

"But why the hurry?" asked Fullwood curiously.

"I'm not quite so sure about that piece of wreckage," replied Nipper. "It looks more like a little raft to me. And there's something bound to it, too—a huddled-looking shape. You fellows had better get ready for an unpleasant shock, because I have my suspicions about that thing. But we can't sheer off without making sure."

Nipper's words were by no means definite, but the others could easily guess at his meaning. They all watched that little floating object with fascinated interest.

Handforth gave a shout.

"It's a body!" he exclaimed tensely.

"Dry up, you ass—"

"I tell you it's a body—huddled up, and bound to that raft," continued Handforth excitedly. "I just caught a glimpse of a foot—"

"Then dry up about it," muttered Church. "The thing seems bad enough without you jawing. Let's wait until we know something for certain. It'll only be another minute or two now."

They had crossed the five mile limit some little time ago, and the raft, which had been only distinguishable through the glasses, was now clearly visible to the naked eye.

It seemed to be a roughly-made affair of uneven logs, roped together. Other ropes were visible, binding down the huddled form which lay in the centre of the raft. There was no sign of movement.

The galley was going easy now, and the shores of Gothland seemed surprisingly close. In this oasis the atmosphere was singularly clear and crystal, and one could see for long distances, so excellent was the visibility.

The low shores of the lake were of white sand—exactly like the seaside, except for the fact that thick forests grew closely down to the very beach in places. Elsewhere there were river inlets and grassy slopes. And here and there nestled a small village of picturesque red cottages.

This part of Gothland seemed to be very rural and sleepy—different from the busy, industrial, active country thirty or forty miles up the lake.

Not that the juniors were paying any attention to the coastline. They were confining their interest to this floating thing which was getting nearer and nearer.

Nipper had made quite sure that there were no enemy vessels about. And he felt justified in verifying his suspicions before turning away.

After all, there was very little danger.

For this galley, having been a pirate craft, was necessarily faster than any of the other native ships. In the event of an enemy approach, even by a fleet, the imitation pirates could speed away in perfect safety.

"It's a woman!" said Willy keenly, as he stood upon the bulwarks, in a very precarious looking position. "It's a woman, you chaps—bound to that raft!"

"Rats!"

"Don't be an ass, Handforth minor!"

"He's right," put in Nipper. "I saw it some little time ago, but I didn't say anything. Reggie, take the helm, and veer round gently. Tell the oarsmen to cease rowing, and let them be ready to back-water at the order."

(What is the meaning of the St. Frank's boys' startling discovery? More big thrills from this great serial next week.)



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