

COMPLETE SCHOOL STORIES FOR ALL—AND EVERY STORY A GEM!

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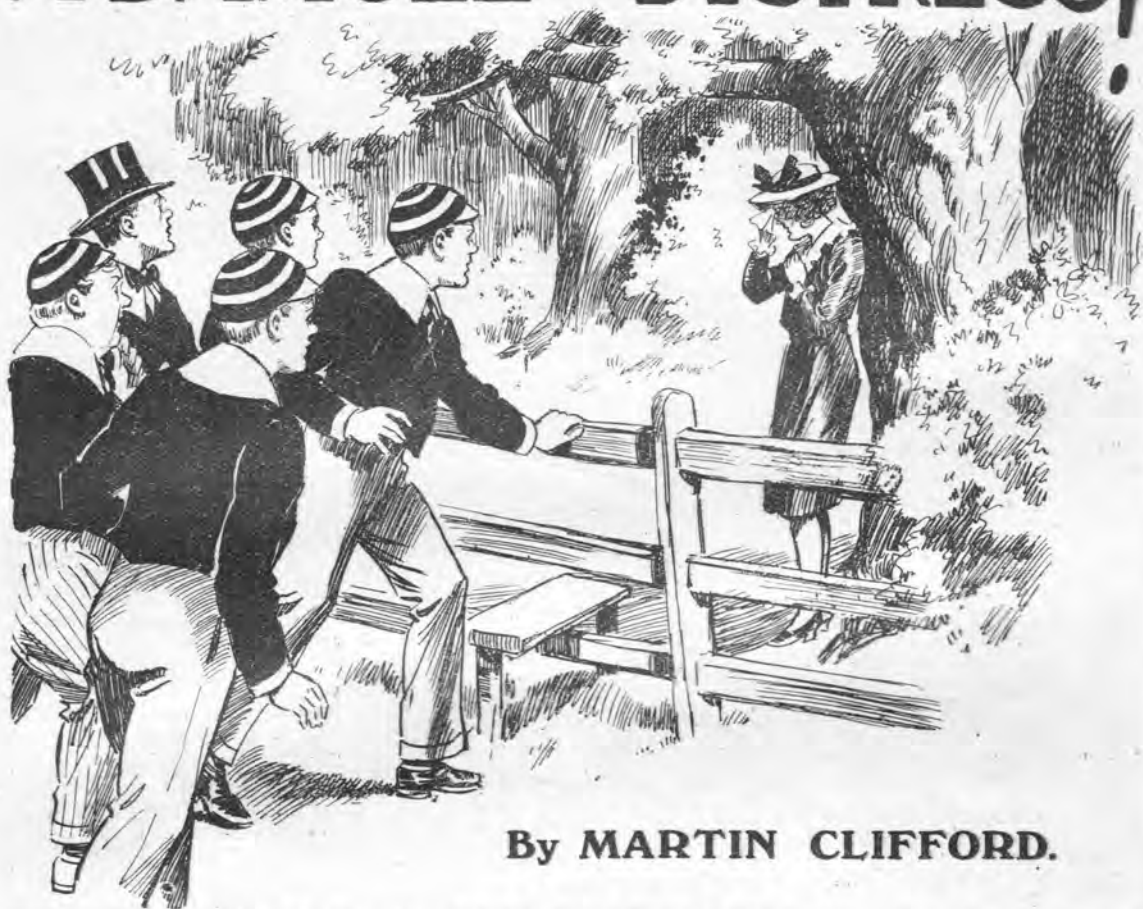
The GEM ^{2d}



*"Fly With
me, Gussy!"*

THE ST. JIM'S LADIES' MAN IN DISTRESS! A Funny Incident from This Week's School Story—INSIDE.

A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS!



By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

There was a sound of distress as the juniors halted at the stile. It was a sob from the feminine form standing under the oak-tree. "Poor little gal!" murmured D'Arcy. "Come on!" said Tom Merry. "It's the damsel in distress."

CHAPTER 1.

Extremely Mysterious!

"TOM MERRY—" "Sorry, can't stop!" "Blake, old man—" "Sorry, Figgy, can't stop!" "Dig—" "Can't stop a minute, Figgins! Sorry!" Figgins of the Fourth stood and stared.

He was astonished. Morning lessons were over at St. Jim's, and the Shell and the Fourth Form had been dismissed at the same time. School House boys and New House boys crowded in the Form-room passage. Figgins, the great chief of the New House juniors, and Kerr and Wynn, the famous "Co.," were chatting in the passage when Tom Merry passed them, and Figgins hailed him.

But Tom Merry was evidently in a hurry, and so were Blake and Digby. They disappeared into the quadrangle, leaving Figgins staring.

"Those School House bounders seem to be in a mighty hurry to-day," said Figgins. "I suppose there's something on. Something up against us, very likely."

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"Perhaps it's a feed," suggested Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "If it is, I hope you fellows won't pick on an injudicious moment like this for a House row. There are times when the two Houses ought to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, you know."

Figgins sniffed. "Yes; at feeding-times, I suppose," he said. "You fat boulder! Hallo, here comes Gussy! We'll ask him what's going on."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House, came by with his elegant saunter. He did not look in a hurry; but then, he never did look in a hurry. Hurry was not in accordance with the graceful repose which D'Arcy assiduously cultivated.

"Gussy, old man!" called out Figgins, as he passed.

"Sowwy, I can't stop, Figgy, deah boy," said D'Arcy.

"Look here!" exclaimed Figgins, exasperated. "What's going on?"

"I am, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went on, and disappeared into the quadrangle. Figgins looked red and wrathful, and Kerr and Fatty Wynn grinned.

"It's a jape of some sort," said Kerr. "They're going to hold a meeting, I

suppose. Here come Manners and Lowther."

Manners and Lowther, Tom Merry's special chums in the Shell, came along with linked arms and an air as if the Form-room passage belonged to them. Figgins gave Lowther a dig in the ribs as he passed, and Lowther gasped.

"Ow, you ass!"

"Where are you fellows going?" demanded Figgins.

"Out!" said Manners.

"I mean, what have you got on?"

"Clothes!"

And Manners and Lowther walked away with that unsatisfactory response.

Figgins & Co. were very puzzled.

It was evident that there was something afoot among the juniors of the School House, and what could it be if not a jape up against the New House?

The rivalry between the two Houses at St. Jim's seldom slept. It had never yet been satisfactorily settled which was Cock House at St. Jim's. Both Houses claimed the title, and the dispute was likely to last as long as the school itself. But, to do them justice, the juniors, if not the seniors, tried to settle the matter. If House rows and japes without end could settle it, certainly it should have been in a fair way to being settled.

And this plain proof that there was something "on" among Tom Merry & Co. naturally raised the suspicions of the heroes of the New House.

—STARRING THE EVER-POPULAR CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.

Three Shell fellows of the School House came along—Bernard Glyn, Clifton Dane, and Harry Noble, usually called Kangaroo. They were walking quickly towards the door when Figgins stepped into their path.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed.
"Can't!" said Kangaroo. "We're in a hurry!"

"Sorry—can't stop!" said Glyn.
"Pressed for time!" said Clifton Dane, the Canadian.

"Look here, you silly asses," said Figgins wrathfully, "what does all this mean?"

Kangaroo & Co. exchanged a wink and seized Figgins with great suddenness and sat him down on the floor.

Then they hurried out of the House, leaving him sitting there and gasping.

"Oh!" gasped Figgins. "Ow!"
Kerr and Wynn helped their leader up. Figgins was in a state of great exasperation by this time.

"We'll jolly well know what's going on!" he exclaimed. "Let's follow the next silly ass who comes by in a hurry."
"Good!"

"Here comes Reilly!"
Reilly of the Fourth had evidently been detained in the Form-room a few minutes. He came out and ran down the passage in a hurry, and out into the quadrangle. And after him went Figgins & Co.

The Irish junior did not notice them. He hurried round the School House and stopped at the door of the woodshed, and knocked three times. Figgins & Co., keeping under cover of the big elm, near the corner of the House, watched him curiously. Then came a knock from the inside of the woodshed door, and then Reilly knocked again, twice.

Then the door was opened, and Reilly passed in. The door was immediately closed again.

"My only hat!" muttered Figgins. "It's a giddy secret society, I suppose, with secret signs."

"Looks like it," said Kerr.
"Then we're on to it!" said Figgins, with a grin. "We can give the same sign that Reilly gave. Come on!"

The New House chums lost no time. Tom Merry & Co. were evidently engaged upon some extremely secret business in the woodshed, and the New House juniors meant to know what it was all about. That it was something up against their House, they felt certain. Figgins & Co. hurried up to the door of the woodshed and gave three distinct knocks.

Knock, knock, knock!
There was a sound of movement within. There were evidently a good many School House juniors in the woodshed.

Knock!
It was the reply from within.
Figgins knocked twice again, as he had seen Reilly do.
Knock, knock!
The door swung open.

Jack Blake of the Fourth was door-keeper, and he swung the door open wide without a suspicion. Figgins & Co. passed in. Then Blake gave a yell.

"Look out! New House cads!"
"Kick them out!"
"Yah! Spies!"
"Yaas, wathah!"
"Look here!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Oh—"
There was a rush from within. Many hands seized the three New House juniors, and they were swung off their feet and hurled forth, and bumped down

on the ground with three loud, distinct bumps.

"Oh, oh, oh!"
Then the door of the woodshed was slammed, and a bolt shot into place. Figgins & Co. were shut out!

CHAPTER 2.

Figgins & Co. Drop In!

"GENTLEMEN!" said Tom Merry.

Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell and leader of the School House juniors in their many alarms and excursions against the juniors of the rival House, stood upon a bench in the midst of the spacious shed.

Nearly a dozen School House juniors were standing round him, and all of them were looking keenly interested.

"Gentlemen of the School House—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Adsum!" said Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!" said Monty Lowther, rapping upon the bench with a cokenhammer. "Order! Don't interrupt the honourable chairman—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Silence in class—I mean, in court! Order!"

"In the circus—"

Bang, bang, bang!

That interruption came from the door. Figgins & Co. were evidently not gone. As they could not get admission to the mysterious meeting

Tom Merry's newly-formed Legion of Honour were ready to brave any danger to help a damsel in distress—but what they had to "brave" left them in distress!

they were making their presence known in that way. The door of the woodshed shook under their vigorous assault.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

Crash, crash!

"Bai Jove, we can't heah Tom Mewwy if they keep up that feahful wow!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pewwaps we had bettah go out and give them a feahful thwashin'!"

"Hold on!" said Blake. "I think I can shift them!"

He took a pea-pistol from his pocket and stepped to the window. The window was on the same side as the door, and it was open. Blake leaned out of the window with the pea-pistol levelled. It was already loaded with peas.

"We'll stir 'em up, anyway!" Figgins was remarking. "I say—Oh! Ah!"

Whiz!

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Oh! My ear! I'm stunned!"

"It was a wasp—Ow! Yow!"

"It's that fathead Blake with a pea-pistol!" roared Figgins, catching sight

of the grinning School House junior at the window. "Ow! Go for him!"

Figgins & Co. rushed up to the window. Blake met them with a hot fire, and Lowther, Manners, and Kangaroo chimed in with their pea-pistols behind him.

Figgins & Co. backed away; it was a little too warm for them. They dodged the stinging peas, and ran round the woodshed.

Blake turned from the window with a chuckle.

"Gentlemen, the rioters are dispersed, and order is restored," he said. "The proceedings can proceed."

"And the proceedings proceeded."

"Gentlemen—" said Tom Merry.

"We've had that," said Herries of the Fourth, with some show of impatience. "Would you mind coming to the point, Tom Merry? I've got to go and feed my dog Towser."

"Order!"

"I've called you together—"

"We know that!" murmured Glyn.

"Come down to business!"

"On a most important matter—"

"Now we're getting warmer," said Digby.

"We've got on to a stunning wheeze in our study," went on Tom Merry, with a gleam in his eyes. "Manners, Lowther, and I have talked it over. It will take us leagues ahead of the New House—they've never thought of anything of the kind."

"Oh, good!"

"Yaas, wathah! I should wegard that as wippin'!"

"Therefore, I have called you together, as the leading spirits among the School House juniors—"

"Hear, hear!" said the meeting heartily.

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I have called you to suggest—"

Creak!

Tom Merry paused.

That loud creak had come from the roof of the woodshed.

"It's all right," said Blake. "Go on!"

"Those blessed New House bounders have got on the roof," said Monty Lowther. "They can't get in that way—the trap's fastened."

"Yaas, wathah! Go on, Tom Mewwy!"

"Gentlemen, my suggestion is this—"

that we form—Oh!"

Creak!

Crash!

"Yaroooh!"

There was a terrific rending as the roof gave way, and three flying forms came whirling down upon the meeting.

The weight of Figgins & Co.—especially Fatty Wynn—had been a little too much for the woodshed roof.

CHAPTER 3.

"T.M.L.H.!"

"OH!"
"Yawwooh!"

It was a very sudden and very startling interruption.

Figgins & Co. sprawled in the midst of the meeting, and the meeting was scattered right and left.

Wild yells rose on all sides.

"Oh! Ow!"

"Help!"

"Yah!"

"Groogh!"

"Pway dwag that heavy wottah off!" moaned Arthur Augustus

D'Arcy, who was reclining on his back, with Fatty Wynn across his chest. "I am bein' suffocated and cwushed, and my twousahs will be wined!"

"Ow!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Groogh!"

The juniors sorted themselves out. Figgins & Co. had effected an entrance into the woodshed, but not exactly in the way they had wished. They were in the grasp of the enraged School House fellows now.

"Bump the bounders!" gasped Blake. "We'll teach them to interrupt an important meeting—I mean, not to interrupt one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dwag this heavy wottah off! I am cwushed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn was dragged off the swell of the School House. Arthyr Augustus D'Arcy staggered to his feet, gasping.

"Bai Jove! Look at my clothes!" he gasped. "Taggles does not keep the floor of this woodshed clean. My twousahs are mudday. Look!"

"Oh, blow your trousers!" said Monty Lowther crossly.

"I wufuse to do anything of the sort. I shall have to go and change my clothes before dinnah, so I am afraid I shall not be able to remain any longah."

"Hold on, Gussy—"

"I am sowwy, deah boy; but it is quite imposs!" said D'Arcy firmly. "I must weilly change my bags before dinnah, you know."

And the swell of the Fourth unbolted the woodshed door and departed.

"Oh, never mind Gussy," said Tom Merry; "we'll leave him out of it! Gentlemen—"

"Sorry," said Herries. "I've got to go and feed my bulldog. It would be bad for Towser if his meals were left."

"Look here, Herries—"

"Good-bye!" said Herries.

And he departed. Tom Merry was very red.

"Well, we'll leave both those silly asses out!" he exclaimed. "Look here, kick those New House bounders out, and we'll go on—"

Figgins & Co. were marched to the door in the grip of many hands. They struggled, but struggling did not avail them. They were kicked out and the door was slammed.

"Gentlemen!" said Tom Merry.

"Not going to begin at the beginning again, surely!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn, in dismay.

"Order!"

"Gentlemen, I have the badge of the society to show you."

"Eh?"

"What society?"

"You're getting a little mixed," grinned Blake.

"Oh, rats! Look here, look at this! It's the badge of the society that's going to be formed of School House juniors—all New House cads barred!"

Tom Merry held up a small object which glistened in the light.

The meeting looked at it with great curiosity.

It was a small metal button, with a pin attached to fasten it on to a jacket. Four letters were engraved upon it: "T.M.L.H."

"T.M.L.H.!" said Jack Blake, in wonder. "What on earth does that mean?"

"Too Many Lunatics Here!" suggested Kangaroo.

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry turned very red.

"You ass!" he exclaimed wrathfully.

"It's nothing of the kind!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"T.M.L.H.," said Digby thoughtfully.

"I know—Tom Merry Likes Herrings!"

"You—you fathead!"

"Faith, and I've got it!" exclaimed Reilly. "T.M.L.H.—Tom Merry Looks

Horrid!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you silly asses!" growled Lowther, rapping on the bench.

"I've got it!" yelled Glyn. "I've

guessed it! T.M.L.H.—Take Monty

Lowther Home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Isn't that it?"

"No, you silly fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll tell you what it means, if you'll stop jawing for a second!" yelled Tom Merry. "T.M.L.H. means—"

"Take Monty Lowther Hout!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"

"T.M.L.H. means—Tom Merry's

Legion of Honour," gasped Tom Merry.

"What!"

"My hat!"

"Sure you don't mean Tom Merry's Legion of Horrors?" suggested Kangaroo. "I'm thinking of your study-mates."

"Why, you ass—" roared Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Gentlemen, it is a stunning scheme! It will completely take the shine out of the New House bounders. The Legion of Honour will consist of chosen

spirits—"

"Then it will be a rummy concern,"

said Kangaroo.

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Tom Merry. "Chosen spirits from the best of the School House. No one will be eligible for admission unless he has distinguished himself in some way."

"That's rather a good idea," said Kangaroo, becoming serious. "How has a chap got to distinguish himself? Would it do to go out into the quad with a fool's cap on, or with a false nose?"

"Ass! Every member of the Legion of Honour has got to do some noble deed, or a daring deed, or a generous action, or something of that sort, and when he has done it the committee of the Legion of Honour will decide whether he is suitable for admission. Every member of the Legion of Honour will be entitled to wear this badge as a distinction. I think the thing will catch on; and perhaps, if the New House chaps are meek, we'll let them into the Legion. Why, if the idea catches on, my sons, it may spread outside St. Jim's, and number millions in the course of time!" said Tom Merry enthusiastically.

"Hurrah!"

"And we shall have the giddy glory of having started it—"

"Bravo!"

"Only keep it dark for the present, until we've got it fairly going," said Tom Merry warningly. "Those New House bounders would think nothing of bagging the wheeze and working it off as their own. We fellows form the nucleus of the society. We'll meet in my study this evening, and select the committee and draw up the rules."

"Good egg!"

A bell rang in the distance.

"Hallo! There's tiffin!" said Digby.

"Come on!"

"Wait a tick!" said Lowther, rapping.

Digby shook his head.

"T.M.L.H.," he said solemnly.

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"Tom Merry Looks Hungry!" said Digby.

And he ran out of the woodshed.

The rest of the meeting followed him. The scheme of a junior Legion of Honour in the School House was undoubtedly an excellent one; but dinner was a most important function to hungry juniors, and for the moment the great meeting and its important purpose was shelved.

But over dinner, and after dinner, Tom Merry & Co. discussed the matter with great keenness, always taking care to sink their voices if any New House fellows came near.

And the curiosity of Figgins & Co. was excited to the highest pitch.

CHAPTER 4.

The Honourable Members!

TOM MERRY & CO. and Blake & Co., together with Kangaroo, Dane, Glyn, and Reilly, entered Study No. 10 that evening, and closed the door behind them.

"Now, then," said Tom Merry—"about the committee."

The door was opened.

Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth looked in, and nodded cheerfully to the juniors.

"What's on?" he asked.

"Oh, buzz off! No admittance except on business."

"But what's all the giddy mystery for?"

"For us," said Monty Lowther politely, and he pushed the Fourth Former out and closed the door, and the key was turned in the lock.

"Now," said Tom Merry, taking a book out of the table drawer and opening it, "this is the book of membership. I've got it all ready. Every fellow who joins the Legion has got to sign his name here and adopt the motto of the Legion—'Honour Bright.'"

"Good egg!"

"What's the subscription?" asked Herries.

"No subscription," said Tom Merry promptly. "Money's not wanted. It's just a legion—the Legion of Honour, and members have the right to wear the legionary badge. No need to have a whole set of rules to sign, like some giddy leagues. 'Honour Bright' is enough. A chap who lives up to that will be all right."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Every fellow who joins the Legion has got to justify his membership by proving himself worthy within a certain date after joining," said Tom Merry.

"Any old thing will do, so long as it's a good deed—a brave action, or an act of kindness, or a big score for your side at cricket, or a win on the river—anything that's to a chap's credit will count. And the committee will decide, and the editor's—I mean, the committee's—decision is final."

"Well, it sounds to me all right," said Blake thoughtfully. "It's a score over the New House bounders, anyway. They've never thought of anything of the kind. I suppose a chap who downs Figgins & Co. will be eligible for the honour of membership?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes, rather!"

"Good egg! I suppose you were thinking of asking me to be president?"

"No fear!" said Tom Merry emphatically.

"Weally, Blake," said Arthur

Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "I weally think there is a more suitable person pwsent."

"Yes, rather!" said Kangaroo. "You are thinking of a Cornstalk about my size, Gussy?"

"I am not thinkin' of anythin' of the sort—"

"Of course not!" said Reilly. "Faith, and Gussy is a-thinkin' of me all the time!"

"Weally, Weilly—"

"Sure, I'm thinkin' of myself, anyway, entirely," said Reilly cheerfully. "It's an elegant president I should make."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bernard Glyn. "You want a business man to run a legion, and you can't do better than have a chap from Liverpool."

"Rats!" said Clifton Dane. "If the thing is to have any go, it will have to

"Might let some of them into the wheeze!" Blake suggested.

"We've got enough to begin," said Tom Merry. "There are eleven of us. Eleven is a good number to start a league of any kind, and we can let the others in afterwards. Not till we get all the badges from Rylcombe, and put 'em on. If a hint of this gets out, Figgins & Co. will bag the idea, and we shall be done. They can't do that after we've appeared in public with our badges on."

"Hear, hear!"

"Put your names down here—"

Bang! Bump! Bang!

The juniors signed their names in the book of membership, thereby becoming members of Tom Merry's Legion of Honour, and entitling themselves to the initials "T.M.L.H." after their names. Meanwhile, the exasperated juniors in the passage were thumping on the door.

—in the handwriting of its owner. There was a general grin. Each of the members had voted for himself for president of the legion.

"That won't do!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Vote again, and voting for oneself is barred."

"That's all vewy well for you chaps, deah boys, but it pwevents me fwom votin' for the most appwopwiate candidate."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

Bang, bang!

"Buck up and vote," said Tom Merry, "and then we'll wade out and smash up those noisy bounders in the passage!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors voted again. Four votes came out for Tom Merry, four for Blake, and three for Kangaroo.

"We tie!" said Tom Merry. "If you care to step out—"

"I was just going to suggest the same thing to you," said Blake blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leave it to be settled by the fortunes of war," said Kangaroo. "Chap who downs the New House first becomes president of the legion."

"Yaas, wathah! That's a wathah good ideah!"



"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "my suggestion is that we form—Oh!" Creak! Crash! There was a terrific rending as the woodshed roof gave way, and three flying forms came whirling down upon the meeting. The weight of Figgins & Co. had been too much for the roof!

be run by a Colonial, and it's between Kangy and me."

"Wats!"

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Peace, my children, peace! I—"

Crash!

"My hat! Who's there?" roared Blake, as the door shook under a heavy assault from the passage.

"I am!" roared back the voice of Crooke of the Shell. "What's the giddy secret about?"

"Buzz off!"

"Rats! We're not going to be left out!"

"Open the door, Tommy!" roared Gore of the Shell.

Thump, thump, thump!

There was evidently a big crowd collecting in the Shell passage. The juniors of the School House were curious as to the mysterious meetings being held by Tom Merry & Co., and they meant to know what they were all about.

The juniors in the study were growing exasperated, too.

"Now, about the president!" said Blake.

"That's settled!" said Tom Merry.

"I'm president!"

"Oh, come off!" said Blake, with a snort. "You know jolly well it ought to be a Fourth Form chap!"

"Why ought it?" demanded Manners. "Because—because—well, it ought, you know. What's the good of arguing about a thing that's perfectly obvious?"

I propose myself as president!"

"I oppose it!" said Manners.

"Put it to the vote!" said Blake warmly.

"Every fellow write down the name of the chap he votes for, and then show up the papers on the table here."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors were busy with pencils and slips of paper for the next few minutes. Then the slips were shown up. Each name appeared precisely once

"I'm agreeable!" said Tom Merry.

"Let it go at that. We shall have the badges down to-morrow, and we can parade in the quad with them on. Now, let's get out and wipe up the passage with those bounders."

"Hear, hear!"

The noise in the passage was deafening by this time. A yelling crowd of juniors were hammering at the study door, while several kept watch towards the stairs to herald the approach of masters or prefects, who might be drawn to the spot by the disturbance.

Bang, bang! Crash!

"Open this door!" roared the voice of D'Arcy minor—the famous Wally of the Third Form.

Tom Merry unlocked the door quietly. He threw it open suddenly, and Lumley-Lumley and several other

fellows who were shoving at the door rolled into the study.

"Charge!" roared Tom Merry.

And the legion charged.

They rushed right through their assailants, sending them whirling to the right and left, and, with loud howls, the enemy fled, and Tom Merry & Co. were left in triumphant possession of the passage.

CHAPTER 5.

From Information Received!

THE curiosity upon the subject of the mysterious T.M.L.H. was growing keener and keener among the juniors of St. Jim's. It was almost at boiling-point the next morning.

So far, all the fellows knew of the wheeze was that it was represented by the letters T.M.L.H., but what T.M.L.H. might stand for, nobody knew. Guesses were made incessantly, but they did not come anywhere near the facts.

Even Mellish was in the dark about it, and Mellish generally found methods for finding out things.

But after morning school that day, the consignment of badges arrived from Rylcombe, and then the members of the Legion appeared with the badges on.

Eleven juniors paraded the quadrangle solemnly with the badges pinned to their jackets, bearing the mysterious symbols, T.M.L.H.

A big crowd gathered to stare at them.

The members of the Legion of Honour rather enjoyed the importance they had so suddenly attained, and they were in no hurry to explain.

Seniors as well as juniors were curious on the subject, and Knox, the bully of the Sixth, undertook to make the juniors explain what it all meant. If Kildare or Darrell had asked them, the juniors would have answered cheerfully at once; but they did not like Knox, and he did not have a courteous way of inquiring, either. The bully of the Sixth stopped them in the quadrangle with a frowning brow.

"What does this foolery mean?" Knox demanded.

The juniors stared at him.

"What foolery?" asked Tom Merry sweetly. "If you are alluding to your own remark, Knox, I don't know what you mean."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox scowled.

"I don't want any of your cheek!" he growled. "What are you wearing those badges for?"

"They suit our complexion," explained Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does T.M.L.H. mean?"

roared Knox.

"Taggles May Leave Home," said Monty Lowther.

"What?"

"Can't do more than answer your question," said Lowther blandly. "It means that, as well as a lot more things. That will do for you. But if you don't like it, I can give you another rendering. Try My Lovely Ham! How do you like that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox turned purple.

"You young rotters!" he shouted.

"Will you answer my question?"

"I've answered it," said Monty Lowther. "But I'll give you another answer if you like: T.M.L.H.—Take My Last Hegg."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

The angry prefect looked as if he would charge at the legion for a moment, but he realised that it would probably have damaging results for himself, and he refrained, and stamped away in a very bad temper.

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

Knox went into the School House with a scowling brow. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley followed him in, and looked in at the door of his study. Knox scowled at him.

"What do you want, you young rotter?" he growled.

"I—I say, Knox," said Lumley-Lumley hesitatingly. "I—I—" he paused.

Knox picked up a cricket stump.

"Do you want me to give you a whaling, the same as I did yesterday?" he inquired.

Lumley-Lumley's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Thanks, no," he said. "Look here, Knox. I can tell you something, if—if you won't regard it as sneaking, or mention it to anybody."

Knox put down the stump.

"About Tom Merry and those other young rotters?" he asked.

"I guess so."

"You know what T.M.L.H. means?" asked Knox.

"I guess I can tell you."

"What does it mean?"

Lumley-Lumley glanced very mysteriously out into the passage, and closed the door, and came towards the prefect on tiptoe. Knox could not fail to be impressed by his manner. It was evident that Lumley-Lumley had something of the greatest importance to communicate.

"You won't let anybody know I've told you, Knox?" asked Lumley-Lumley, with a troubled and hesitating look.

"Of course not."

"Honour bright?"

"Yes, yes!"

"You see, I guess you ought to know, as a prefect, so that you can interfere if you think fit," said Lumley-Lumley.

"If you report the matter to the Head, as I suppose you will, you promise not to mention my name as having given you the information. If the fellows knew I had sneaked, I should have a rotten time."

Knox's eyes gleamed.

"You can rely on me," he said. "What is it? I'll keep your name dark, and I can tell you that I can make it worth your while in a good many ways to keep me posted in what goes on in the Lower School."

"I guess so. But I'm pretty nervous about telling you this, I reckon."

"I will protect you, if necessary," said Knox. "You can rely on me, and I'll keep your share in the matter a secret. What are those young villains up to? Is it some scheme against the prefects? If it is, I shall be able to get Kildare down on them."

"I guess you're right."

"What is it, then? What does T.M.L.H. mean?" asked Knox eagerly.

"It's a secret society!" said Lumley-Lumley, sinking his voice to a deep whisper. "Of course, I don't reckon they really mean to commit murder."

"What?"

"But it's founded on those lines, you know. And there's never any telling what kids may do when they start playing the goat in this way," said Lumley-Lumley, with owl-like gravity. "If they don't mean mischief, what does Tom Merry carry a pistol in his pocket for?"

Knox jumped.

"A—a pistol!" he gasped.

"Yes."

"Have you seen it?"

"I guess so."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Knox. "I know this kind of thing has happened—young fools forming criminal societies through seeing films of such things. But—"

"If you know what they call their society—"

"What is it? What does T.M.L.H. stand for?"

"The Murderers' League of Hate!" said Lumley-Lumley solemnly.

"My hat!"

"You never know what this kind of thing will lead to," said Lumley-Lumley, with a wise shake of the head. "That's why I considered it my duty to report the matter to you. Things of this kind ought to be stopped before it gets the young duffers into mischief."

Knox's eyes glittered.

"You are sure about the pistol, Lumley?"

"I guess so. You can see it through the cloth if you look at Tom Merry's jacket."

Knox strode to the door.

"I say, don't mention my name!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley in alarm. "I don't want to be called a sneak, you know."

"That's all right," said Knox. "But I'm going to take that young criminal to the Head before he has time to do any harm."

And he strode from the study. Tom Merry & Co. were on the steps of the School House, surrounded by an inquisitive crowd, when the prefect strode out. Knox dropped his hand on Tom Merry's shoulder.

"Come with me, you young rascal!" he said.

Tom Merry started back.

Knox's hand slid over his pocket, and he felt, beyond a doubt, the hard outline of a pistol in the inside pocket of the junior's jacket. That was proof enough.

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Tom Merry.

"Follow me!"

"Follow me—follow me 'ome!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are to come with me to the Head at once!" said Knox savagely. "All of you—all the boys who are wearing that badge! I know what it means now!"

"But—but I say, Knox—"

"Follow me at once!" shouted the prefect.

"Oh, all serene!"

And the legion followed the excited prefect into the House, wondering. They left the crowd in a buzz behind them.

CHAPTER 6.

No Luck For Knox!

DR. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, was seated in his study, chatting with Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, when there came a knock at the door.

"Come in!" said the Head.

Knox opened the door and strode in. His excited face drew a glance of surprise from the Head and the School House master. But they looked more surprised still when eleven juniors, of the Shell and the Fourth, meekly followed the prefect into the study.

Dr. Holmes rose to his feet.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed.

"What is the meaning of this—this invasion? I trust that nothing is wrong, Knox?"

"Something is very wrong, sir, and I considered it my duty to report it to you, and to bring these juniors before you, sir," said Knox.

"Dear me!"

"May I make a remark, sir—"

"Silence, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, sir, certainly! But I have not the slightest idea why Knox has brought us here in this ridiculous manner!"

"Same here, sir!" said Blake.

Knox smiled unpleasantly.

"You will soon know," he said.

"This is very extraordinary, Knox," said the Head, a little severely. "You have brought eleven boys to me, and they are certainly eleven of the best boys in the House. I cannot forget, Knox, that you have sometimes made quite frivolous complaints against some of these juniors before."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Tom Merry.

Knox flushed.

"This is a very serious matter, sir, and I hope to make it clear that you have been deceived in the character of these boys, sir."

"I do not think you will make that clear very easily, Knox," said the Head, with a slight curl of the lip. "However, you may proceed."

"Would you approve, sir, of a secret society being formed among the juniors of this House on the lines of criminal organisations?"

"Bless my soul, certainly not!"

"Stay!" said Mr. Railton. "There are many societies in the junior Forms, I think—the Fourth Form dramatic society, and the cricket club, and the hobby club, and the debating society. All these are very harmless, Knox."

"Indeed they are," said Dr. Holmes.

Knox could not repress a sneer.

"This is not a society of that sort, sir," he said. "What do you think of a society among the juniors known as The Murderers' League of Hate?"

The two masters started violently.

"What!"

"Absurd!"

"Absurd or not, sir, these boys have made a club, or society, with that title," said the prefect. "I have received the information from a junior, whose name I have promised not to mention."

"You should not encourage sneaking and tale-bearing among the juniors, Knox," said the School House master.

"Decidedly not!" said the Head.

"I do not, sir; but this is a special case. The junior in question was alarmed by the wickedness he had discovered, and he thought it his duty to give information. These boys have formed a league called The Murderers' League of Hate—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And their leader, Tom Merry, has already obtained a pistol, which he carries upon his person," said Knox.

"Bless my soul!"

"In the circumstances, sir, I think you will say that I have done right in bringing such a matter to your notice," said Knox.

"Certainly, Knox—most decidedly—if the facts are as you have stated them," said Dr. Holmes. "But I feel convinced that these juniors are too sensible, and too healthy-minded to indulge in such a foolish freak."

"We haven't, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Then you deny the statement made against you, my boys?" asked the Head.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Right off," said Bernard Glyn. "I don't know where Knox has got his information from, sir, but somebody's been stuffing him."

"Stuffing him up to the chin, sir," said Clifton Dane. "It's all rot from beginning to end!"

"Yaas, wathah! Uttah wot, sir!"

Knox gave a sneering smile.

"I expected them to deny it, sir," he said. "They will all do that, of course. But I have two incontrovertible proofs which they cannot deny. One is that Tom Merry, at this very moment, is carrying a pistol in his pocket; and the other is that they wear badges inscribed with the initials of their society. Tell Merry to turn out what he has in his inside pocket, sir."

Dr. Holmes turned a stern gaze upon the captain of the Shell.

"Is it true, Merry, that you have a pistol there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Merry, you dare to carry a deadly weapon upon you in this school!" the Head exclaimed, in utter amazement.

"It is not very deadly, sir."

"Place it on the table before me."

"Certainly, sir!"

Tom Merry drew the deadly weapon out from his inside pocket, and placed it upon the table before the Head. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton looked at it and smiled. It certainly was a pistol, and made of polished and shining metal, but it was only made to discharge peas by means of a spring, and could not be considered deadly.

Knox gave a jump as he looked at the pea-pistol.

"Well," said Dr. Holmes, with a smile, "I do not see any harm in that weapon, Knox. It is certainly not so dangerous as a catapult. Have you any more convincing proofs to give?"

Knox breathed hard through his nose. In his intense dislike of Tom Merry & Co., and his eagerness to catch them on the hop, as it were, he had swallowed the information laid against them, and had taken for proofs what would hardly have satisfied a prefect more keen to do justice than to gratify a personal dislike.

But, after all, there were the initials on the badges. They could not be denied. There they were, under the very eyes of the Head.

"Yes, sir," said Knox. "Look at the badges these boys are wearing."

Dr. Holmes put up his glasses and looked at the badges.

"Very nicely designed!" he said.

Knox bit his lip.

"You see the letters inscribed on them, sir?"

"Yes. T.M.L.H."

"They are the initials of their secret society, sir—The Murderers' League of Hate, as they call it!" said Knox triumphantly.

Dr. Holmes looked startled. It was indeed a strange coincidence, to say the least of it. He looked hard at Tom Merry & Co. The juniors were smiling.

"What does this mean, Merry?" the Head asked sternly.

Tom Merry grinned.

"I don't know who gave that information to Knox, sir," he said; "but, whoever it was, he was pulling his leg. Those initials can be made to stand for lots of things. They really stand for Tom Merry's Legion of Honour."

"What!" gasped Knox.

"It's a new wheeze, sir," said Tom Merry modestly. "Chaps who play the game, sir, and so on, are admitted to the society. The motto is 'Honour Bright.' We've only been keeping it secret for a bit, till we get the badges out, in case the New House bounders—ahem!—I

mean, the New House chaps, should bag the wheeze, sir."

"Yaas, wathah! Knox is an ass, sir!"

"It's not true! They're not speaking the truth, sir!" gasped Knox, utterly dismayed as he beheld his house of cards, as it were, falling round him in this way. "I don't believe them, sir! I don't believe a word of it!"

"I'm sorry for that, Knox," said the Head dryly, "because I believe every word of it. It is all evidently quite true."

Knox's jaw dropped.

"Oh, sir!"

"I am afraid you are very suspicious, Knox, and very much inclined to believe the absurdest stories," said the Head. "The explanation these juniors have given is perfectly satisfactory. I may say, too, that I consider a Legion of Honour an excellent idea for a boyish society—a very excellent idea indeed! You may go, my boys. Knox, you have wasted my time and given these boys trouble for nothing. Kindly be a little more careful on another occasion!"

And the Legion of Honour filed out of the study. They gave Knox a cheerful grin in the passage, but Knox did not respond to it. He strode away with a brow like thunder, and went to look for Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. But that humorous youth was keeping very carefully out of the way of the enraged prefect, and Knox did not succeed in finding him.

CHAPTER 7.

Figgins & Co. Mean Business!

F IGGINS of the Fourth gave an emphatic grunt.

"Well, it's out at last!" he growled.

Kerr nodded.

"Yes, and we never guessed it. And, owing to that ass Knox, it's been taken before the Head, and the Head has approved; and those School House bounders have roped in lots of kudos from that."

"We shall have to put a spoke in their wheel!" growled Figgins. "We're not going to let them score. What do you think, Fatty?"

"Too much sugar," said Fatty Wynn, with a shake of the head.

"What!" exclaimed Figgins, in astonishment.

"Too much sugar!"

"What are you talking about, you fat duffer?"

Fatty Wynn looked up from his cake in surprise.

"About this cake," he said. "I thought at the time you were putting in too much sugar, but Kerr said—"

"Oh, you ass! Look here, we're talking about that giddy Legion of Honour in the School House. Blessed if I know how Tom Merry thought of it! It's a ripping idea! And, do you know, they're going to make president the chap who distinguishes himself by downing us—US!"

"They won't get their president in a hurry, then!" said Kerr. "We're not going to be downed! And I've got an idea."

"What's that?"

"A rival legion!"

Figgins shook his head.

"No good, Kerr, old man. They'll simply say we've plagiarised from them. A rival legion would fall flat."

"Yes, if we ran it seriously; but I mean a comic legion," said Kerr. "We can have a banner, and buttons plastered all over us, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We can call it the Button Brigade, or something of that sort," grinned Kerr. "It will turn the cackle against the School House. The fags will jump at the idea!"

"Good egg!" said Figgins heartily. "Let's call some of the chaps in, and we'll work it out."

"Right-ho!"

"Put that cake away, Fatty!"

"I'm putting it away, Figg!"

"Ass! I mean, put it away in the cupboard!" roared Figgins. "We've got business to attend to. We've got to down the School House!"

Fatty Wynn took a fresh mouthful.

"It's all right, Figg. I can talk while I eat. When you're going to think anything out, you know, it's always best to lay a solid foundation. And I get jolly hungry in this July weather, you know!"

"Br-r-r!"

The special followers of Figgins & Co., in their little wars with the School House, gathered willingly enough in the study.

Many of them were feeling sore over the score the School House juniors had made with the Legion of Honour, and they were very keen to get on to a scheme which would have the effect of putting the Terrible Three in their place.

Pratt of the Fourth and Thompson of the Shell, and Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, and several other fellows came along.

Fatty Wynn continued operations on the cake. It was a very large cake, and Fatty Wynn was a very large eater, so they were well matched, and the cake was likely to last as long as the council of war.

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen had on an expression of great and generous patience and forbearance. They were the rival leaders of the New House juniors, but they were willing to follow the lead of Figgins & Co.—if Figgins & Co. had anywhere to lead them. But they felt that they were making a generous concession in this, and they looked it.

"We want you fellows to back us up," Figgins remarked.

"Go ahead!" said Redfern airily. "I could suggest a better idea!"

"What's that?"

"For you fellows to back us up!" said Redfern innocently.

"Exactly!" said Lawrence and Owen together.

"Oh, don't play the giddy ox!" said Figgins warmly. "You fellows are new boys in this school, and it's your place to back up our old hands!"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Reddy—"

"All serene!" said Redfern. "I only said rats on general principles. I'm ready to back you up if you can pull Tom Merry & Co. down off their perch. That's fair!"

"Good!" said Figgins. "We're going to work up a rival legion, and make them look a lot of asses. Do leave off munching that cake, Fatty!"

"I can't swallow it without masticating it, Figg," said Fatty Wynn, in a tone of surprised remonstrance.

"Leave off eating for a few minutes, then!" roared Figgins.

"Oh, don't ask impossibilities!" said Redfern. "Take it out in the passage on the mat, Fatty, and worry it there!"

"Look here, Redfern, if you want a thick ear—"

"Blessed if I see how we're going to down the School House at this rate!" said Redfern. "Let's get on with the washing!"

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Kerr was at the table, with a camel-hair brush in his hand, with which he was scrawling on a sheet of paper. He held up the paper, and the juniors read the initials that were daubed upon it in big letters:

"T.M.L.H."

Under it, in small letters, was the explanation:

"Tom Merry's Lunatics' Home."

Redfern grinned.

"Good! That will make 'em sit up!"

"We've got to get a dozen fags, and shove these badges on 'em!" said Kerr, chuckling. "They can parade in front of the School House when Tom Merry & Co. come out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we'll all be hanging on, in case there's a House row over it—as I expect there will be."

"Good egg! We'll call up the forces!"

"And mind you keep an eye on me for the word of command!" said Figgins impressively.

Redfern cocked one eye thoughtfully at Figgins.

"Well, I don't know about that," he remarked. "Wouldn't it be better for you to keep one eye on me?"

"Look here, Reddy—"

"Look here, Figg—"

"Oh, shut up, both of you!" said Kerr impatiently. "Don't spoil a good jape by ragging one another now. Let's get to business!"

"Well, Reddy says—"

"Figg says—"

"Shut up!" roared Kerr. "Get on with the washing!"

"Good! I'm ready, if Fatty's finished eating!" said Redfern cheerily. "I'm finished!" said Fatty Wynn, with a sigh. "I've got a rather good idea, you chaps. Before we carry out that wheeze—it's a jolly good wheeze—suppose we—"

"Well?" demanded Figgins.

"Suppose we go round to the tuckshop and have some ginger-pop? Eating cake always makes me feel thirsty."

Figgins and Kerr did not reply to Fatty Wynn's suggestion in words. They rushed at him and seized him, and bumped him on the floor of the study. The fat Fourth Former roared:

"Ow! Yarook!"

"Now, ring off!" gasped Figgins.

"Ow! You ass, Figg—"

"Dry up! Now, then, you chaps, let's get this wheeze going!" said Figgins, somewhat heatedly. "If Fatty Wynn says another word, shove him out of the study!"

"Oh, I say, Figg— Oh!"

Fatty Wynn spun out into the passage and the door slammed after him. It was evident that Figgins & Co. were in deadly earnest, and that such trifles as cake and ginger-pop were not to be allowed to interrupt their schemes for "downing" the School House juniors.

"Ow!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "The asses! Yow! The fatheads! I'm jolly well going to have that ginger-pop, all the same!"

And he went and had it, while in Figgins' study the scheme was elaborated, with many chuckles, for covering the T.M.L.H. with confusion.

CHAPTER 8.

The Japers Japed!

"M Y hat!" Monty Lowther uttered that sudden exclamation.

He was standing at the window of the study in the Shell passage

in the School House, and a loud roar of voices from the quadrangle had drawn him there to look out.

Manners was developing films in his daylight developer, and did not take the trouble to look round at Lowther's exclamation. When so engaged he would probably not have looked round if an earthquake had travelled to St. Jim's. But Tom Merry looked up from the Latin lines he was writing out.

"What's the row, Monty?"

"Those New House asses!"

"What's the game?"

"Looks like a procession!"

Tom Merry joined his chum at the study window.

There was a big crowd in the quadrangle in the blazing July sunshine. Tom Merry knitted his brows as he heard the roars of laughter, and saw the procession advancing from the direction of the New House.

A dozen fags were walking in solemn procession, with faces preternaturally grave, and with huge placards, daubed in red ink, pinned to their chests.

The placards bore the inscription:

"T.M.L.H."

Tom Merry's Lunatics' Home.

T.M.L.H."

The fellows in the quadrangle were yelling with laughter.

The ridiculous procession "processed" past the School House with gravity.

Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. and a big crowd of New House juniors followed, grinning.

"The rotters!" exclaimed Tom Merry wrathfully. "They're making fun of the Legion of Honour! Look here, Manners!"

"Oh blow!" said Manners.

"Come here, you ass!"

"I'm developing!"

There was a yell from the quad as Tom Merry and Lowther were seen looking out of the window. Outside the School House, Blake & Co. were standing, looking very red. The absurd procession halted under Tom Merry's study window.

"Here we are!" sang out Jameson.

"Tom Merry's Lunatics' Home!" roared Pratt.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen," said Thompson of the Shell, "we are a new society! Anybody who takes a Tom Merry lunatic home is eligible for membership!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We are raising subscriptions to buy a set of strait-jackets for Tom Merry's lunatics!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. Kangaroo dashed into the study. His face was wildly excited.

"Do you see them?" he yelled.

"Yes, rather!"

"It's got to be stopped, and stopped now, or the whole school will be cackling at the giddy Legion of Honour!"

"Let's call up the fellows and charge them!" exclaimed Lowther. "Come on, Manners!"

"Bosh!" said Manners. "I'm developing!"

"Look here—"

"Can't I'm developing!"

"We've got to do something!" shouted Clifton Dane, dashing into the study. "Look here, I've got it!"

"What have you got?"

"Look!"

Dane held up a large garden squirt, the property of Taggles, the porter.

"They're parading just under this window!" he said, with a grin. "Get a bucket of water, and shove some red ink in it, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can have some pyro, if you like," said Manners, without looking up. "Don't come near me! There's a bottle on the shelf."

"Good egg!"

Lowther dashed out of the study, and returned in a few seconds with a pail half-full of water. Pyro and red ink were dashed into it liberally. It was no time, as Lowther remarked, to think of expense.

Tom Merry took the big squirt and filled it with the terrible mixture. Then he stepped to the open window, keeping the squirt out of sight.

"Put the pail close here!" he muttered.

"Right-ho!"

"I think we'll make 'em sorry they came over here to be funny!"

Tom Merry leaned out of the window, still keeping the squirt concealed. There was a yell from the jokers of the New House.

"Here he is!"

"Here's Tommy, the Chief Lunatic!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry did not reply. He brought the huge squirt suddenly forward and levelled it. Before the New House procession knew what was coming, the muzzle was bearing full upon them, and there was a whiz-squish!

Squish!

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

"Yowwpp!"

"Gerrooh!"

The beautifully coloured fluid fell out in a shower as it descended upon the procession. The placards were spotted all over with mixed colour, and so were the procession. There was a chorus of yells.

"Quick, Tommy, before they cut!" gasped Lowther.

"What-ho!"

Tom Merry drew a fresh charge into the squirt, and whizzed it out of the window. It splashed the procession from end to end. They gouged liquid from their eyes and noses, and roared—and so did the School House fellows, upon whom stray drops fell thickly.

"Bai Jove!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You uttah asses! You are spoilin' my jacket! You are wuinin' my collah! Ow!"

"All for the good of the cause," chuckled Jack Blake, retreating into the shelter of the porch. "Go for 'em, Tommy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Retreat!" yelled Figgins. "Ow! Oooooooooooh!"

A fresh jet from the squirt caught Figgins fairly in the face, and he staggered back, gasping.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lowther. "It will be some time before Figgins gets that colour out! Ha, ha, ha! Go it, Tommy!"

Whiz! Squish!

The procession had broken up by now.

The processionists, drenched with water and pyro and red ink, retreated in wild confusion across the quadrangle, with dangled placards and wild yells and gasps.

Kerr shook a frantic fist up at the study window, but only for a moment. A fresh charge caught him on the nose, and splashed over his face, and he retreated, puffing and gasping.

Fatty Wynn was caught in the ear as

he fled. Figgins & Co., with a beautifully rainbowed set of complexions, dashed off, and the rest of the New House juniors followed them out of range of the squirt.

The laugh was on the side of the School House now. Tom Merry leaned out of the study window and brandished the squirt.

"Come on!" he shouted. "I've got some more here!"

"Ow!"

"Groogh!"

"Beast!"

And Figgins & Co. retreated in wild disorder across the quadrangle. They left the School House crowd almost in hysterics.

CHAPTER 9.

Friends in Need!

MR. RATCLIFF, the Housemaster of the New House, was looking out of his study window. He saw the retreat of the New House juniors, and he was at the House door by the time the discomfited heroes of the New House reached it.

Figgins & Co., looking extraordinarily weird with their new complexion, came in, gasping, and met their Housemaster face to face.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff, his sour face pink with anger. "Stop!"

Figgins groaned.

"Ratty, by gum!"

Mr. Ratcliff glared.

"Figgins! Kerr! Wynn! How dare you get yourselves into this state?"

"We—we didn't do it, sir!" gasped Kerr.

"Ah!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "You have, then, been the victims of a trick—a practical joke! Tell me the name of the boy who did this immediately."

Figgins & Co. looked at him. Mr. Ratcliff was not a pleasant man, and it seemed to the juniors that he was always trying to get them to sneak about one another. In the School House two or three of the masters had seen what had happened, and they had only smiled about it. Not so Mr. Ratcliff. That gentleman was always looking for trouble.

"Do you hear me, Figgins?" rapped out the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir," said Figgins. "I hear you!"

"Tell me at once who committed this outrage?"

"It—it wasn't an outrage, sir," Figgins explained laboriously. "It was only a jape, sir."

"A what?"

"A—a joke, sir."

"Indeed! Do you think it is a joke to come into the House in that disgraceful state?" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "Go and clean yourselves at once, and then come down to my study."

"Yes, sir."

And Figgins & Co. went disconsolately up to the Fourth Form dormitory to clean themselves—a task which was not easy, and did not result very successfully.

When they came down and presented themselves before Mr. Ratcliff in his study, their faces still had a peculiarly mottled expression, and Mr. Ratcliff's eyes glittered as they rested upon the juniors' countenances.

"Is that what you call cleaning yourselves?" he demanded.

"We've done our best, sir," said Figgins.

"It won't all come off, sir," said Kerr.

(Continued on the next page.)



MAKE THE JESTER SMILE
AND WIN HALF-A-CROWN!

Send your Joke to The GEM Jester, 5,
Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

DOING HIS BIT.

The plumber was working and his new boy assistant was looking on. The latter was learning the trade, and this was his first day.

"Say," he inquired, "do you charge for my time?"

"Certainly," came the reply.

"But I haven't done anything."

The plumber had been inspecting the finished job with a lighted candle, which he handed to his helper.

"If you've got to be so darned conscientious," he said, "blow that out!" Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Saunders, Francove, Nethercour Gardens, Ramsgate, Kent.

[HERE'S HOPING.

Teacher (during arithmetic test): "I hope I didn't see you look at the next boy's paper, Brown?"

Brown: "I hope you didn't, either, sir!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Williams, 15, Biggin Way, Upper Norwood, London, S.E.19.

MISUNDERSTOOD.

An indignant mother called at the school to see the headmaster.

"I want an apology from the teacher who called my son a dirty elephant in front of the class this morning," she said.

The teacher was called.

"But you are mistaken, madam," he said, in surprise. "All I said was that your son was a disturbing element." Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Andrews, 42, The Grove, Southend-on-Sea, Essex.

GENEROUS.

Office-boy (to employer, a Scotsman): "Will we get paid for the bank holiday, sir?"

Employer: "No, no: I paid you for the last Two Minutes' Silence!" Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Green, 49, Clifton Park Avenue, Raynes Park, London, S.W.20.

REQUEST AND REPLY.

A college boy wrote to his father asking for money in the following way:

"Roses are red,

Violets are blue;

Send me ten pounds

And I'll think of you."

The father wrote back:

"Some roses are red,

Others are pink;

Enclosed find ten pounds—

I don't think!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. White, 21, Robert Street, Sandwell, South Australia.

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"We've rubbed awfully hard, sir," said Fatty Wynn dismally.

Mr. Ratcliff sniffed.

"Very well. Understand me; if you lay a complaint against the boy who has treated you in this manner, I will see that he is properly punished; but otherwise I shall regard this as impertinence on your part."

Figgins' lip curled.

"We don't want to complain of anybody, sir," he said.

"Very well, you will take five hundred lines each!"

"Oh, sir!"

"And you will go to the Form-room at once, and write them out, and bring them to me by eight o'clock," said Mr. Ratcliff. "If you do not bring them to me by then, I shall double them. Go!"

"Yes, sir."

Figgins & Co. left the study in dismay. "The awful old bounder!" murmured Figgins, in the passage. "He knows jolly well we can't get five hundred lines each done by eight o'clock, unless we grind away like clockwork. He wants us to sneak about Tom Merry."

"Awful cad!" said Fatty Wynn. "What about tea?"

"There won't be any time for tea, ass!"

"Jolly lucky I had that cake, after all, then."

Figgins & Co. went on their way, not rejoicing. Redfern met them in the quadrangle, and grinned.

"You look lovely!" he remarked.

"Was Ratty ratty?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Figgins crossly.

"But I say— Oh!"

The exasperated Co. seized Redfern, sat him down violently in the quad, and walked on. They went into the Form-room and got out papers and pens, and started dismally upon their lines.

It was a miserable ending to their little jape upon Tom Merry's Legion of Honour.

They were grinding away at the lines in the Form-room when Tom Merry & Co. looked in. The School House fellows grinned at Figgins & Co.'s mottled expressions.

"That a new thing in make-up?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, get off!"

"What are you doing lines for?" asked Tom Merry.

"Old Ratty!"

Tom Merry looked concerned.

"Not because of that little jape?"

"Yes, you ass! All your fault!"

"Well, it was all your own fault; you shouldn't jape the Cock House at St. Jim's," said Manners, with a shake of the head.

"Oh rats!"

Tom Merry came into the Form-room.

"How many lines?" he asked.

"Five hundred each, to be handed in at eight, or doubled!" growled Kerr.

"Phew!"

"Buzz off and let's get 'em done! We don't want to be kept in for a half-holiday; and that's what Ratty will do if he gets half a chance."

"And I'm getting hungry," said Fatty Wynn pathetically.

"Gentlemen!" said Tom Merry, looking at Manners and Lowther.

"This is where we come in!"

"It's where you get out if you don't want an inkpot buzzed at you!" growled Figgins.

"Gentlemen—"

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"Shut up, and let's get on! Can't write while you're gassing!" yelled Figgins.

"Gentlemen, as members of the Legion of Honour, we are called upon to help these kids out!" said Tom Merry. "You remember the motto of the Legion—'Honour Bright.'"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther.

"It is up to us to lend a hand to fellows in distress, especially as it is partly our fault. We were going out to play cricket till dark."

"We are!" said Monty Lowther significantly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We were!" he said firmly. "Gentlemen of the Legion of Honour, it's up to us to live up to our motto. We've got to help these chaps get through their lines."

"Oh!" said Manners.

"M-m-m-m-m!" mumbled Lowther.

"No good belonging to a Legion of Honour if you don't live up to it," said Tom Merry. "Wire in and help!"

"What about the cricket?" said Lowther.

"Blow the cricket!"

"But, I say—"

"Honour bright, you know," said Tom Merry. "It's up to us. Wire in, and make your fist as like theirs as possible, in case Ratty reads the lines."

"I say, that's jolly decent of you!" said Figgins.

"That's the motto of the Legion of Honour!" said Tom Merry loftily. "We'll get through your lines in next to no time. It won't do to take them in before eight, or Ratty will smell a rat; but you can come and feed in our study till eight, when the lines are done."

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Wynn heartily.

"Good egg!" said Figgins.

And the Terrible Three sat down to work. It was rather a wrench, for they had been looking forward to a pleasant game on the cricket field in the July sunshine; but, as Tom Merry said, it was "up to them," as members of the Legion of Honour.

And they played up nobly.

The lines, with double the number of fellows working at them, were finished at half-past seven, and then the six juniors adjourned to Tom Merry's study and discussed cake and lemonade till nearly eight.

"It's jolly decent of you chaps," said Figgins, as they rose to go. "And I'll tell you what, we'll let the giddy Legion of Honour alone after this, and there won't be any more japes on that subject. It's a jolly good idea, anyway."

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry, with equal cordiality. "Look here, we'll make it eligible for New House chaps to enter—you can all come in, if you accept the conditions."

"Good! Long live the T.M.L.H.!" said Kerr.

And the three juniors went back to their own House, armed with their completed lines.

Mr. Ratcliff looked at them sourly as they brought the lines in. Figgins & Co. looked very meek and very serious, and they brought in the lines just on the stroke of eight. And as even Mr. Ratcliff could find nothing to grumble about, they escaped from the study without any further trouble.

CHAPTER 10.

An Appeal for Help!

TOMMY, the page, grinned as he met Tom Merry coming out of the Shell room the following morning.

"Skuse me, Master Merry—" he began.

"Go it!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"I dunno whether this letter is for you, Master Merry," said Toby. "I've took it up to Mr. Railton, and he laughed and said that it wasn't for him. He told me to come to you."

"Laughed, did he?" said Lowther. "Let's see what he laughed at, Tommy."

Tom Merry took the letter, and then he laughed, too, and turned red.

"Yes, it's for me," he said. "Thank you, Toby!"

"Orright, Master Merry."

And Toby retired, grinning.

Jack Blake and his chums came along from the Fourth Form Room, and they stopped as they heard Tom Merry read out the address on the letter.

"To the President of the T.M.L.H., School House, St. Jim's," read out Tom Merry.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "Letter for me?"

"No fear! It's for me!"

"Don't be an ass, Tom Merry!" said Blake warmly. "If that's a letter for the president of the Legion of Honour, it's for me!"

"Rats!"

"Now, you fathead—"

"Now, you duffer—"

"Weally, deah boys!" remonstrated D'Arcy. "Open the lettah; pewwaps it contains somethin' that concerns the whole Legion."

"Yes; that's a good idea!" chimed in Kangaroo.

Tom Merry opened the letter.

He whistled a little as he looked over it, and his face grew amazed.

"Great Scott!"

"Something interesting—eh?" said Blake. "Who is it from?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Isn't it signed?" demanded Herries.

"No; only 'One in deep distress.'"

"That sounds good," said Manners. "Read it out."

"It's an appeal for help," said Tom Merry, looking very puzzled. "Somebody has heard of the Legion of Honour, and is appealing for help."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors looked at one another with very satisfied looks. The fame of the Legion of Honour was evidently spreading, and they felt themselves a company of gallants already, called upon to defend beauty in distress.

"Is it from a gal?" asked D'Arcy.

"It seems so."

"Bai Jove! Then we shall have to play up, of course. Pway wead it out!"

"Not here," said Tom Merry cautiously. "Don't want the whole giddy school to hear it. We'll have a meeting in the woodshed."

"Good! Call up the legion, then!"

And the various members of the Legion of Honour were called up, and they gathered in the woodshed in a state of great expectancy.

"Gentlemen of the Legion of Honour," said Tom Merry, standing on a bench, "although the legion has only been in existence a short time, we are already called upon to play up to our title and motto."

"Hear, hear!"

"Someone in distress has already

heard of us, and has called upon us for aid."

"Bravo!"

"Of course, we're bound to give it. The business of the Legion of Honour is to help people who are in distress."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Read out the letter!" shouted Kangaroo.

"Get it off your chest, Tommy!"

"Buck up!"

"Very well!" Tom Merry cleared his throat with a little preliminary cough. "Listen."

"Order!" called out Lowther.

"To the President of the Legion of Honour," Tom Merry began.

"That's me!" said Jack Blake promptly and ungrammatically.

"Shut up!"

"Order!"

"Dear Mr. President—I beg you to excuse me for addressing you, when I am a stranger to you, but I am sorely in need of help."

"Oh, good!" said Digby.

"Don't interrupt!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway don't intewupt, deah boy!"

"Who's interrupting now, fathead?"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead. I—"

"Order!" roared Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Shut up, Gussy," said Kangaroo imploringly. "We can't wait for you to finish, because we have dinner in less than an hour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

Blake and Herries seized Arthur Augustus, and by threats of instant bumping induced him to remain silent. Tom Merry went on reading the letter.

"I am sorely in need of help. Will you help a persecuted girl to escape from her bitter enemies? I beg of you to aid me; and in the hope of seeing you, I will wait under the big oak by the stile in Rylcombe Lane at half-past eight this evening. Do not fail me, I implore you, in the name of the motto of your Legion. ONE IN DEEP DISTRESS."

"Bai Jove!"

"Is that all, Tom Merry?"

"That's all," said Tom Merry.

"I suppose it isn't a rag?" said Kangaroo.

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"Well, it looks like a girl's handwriting," said Tom Merry, showing the letter round. "Look at it yourselves."

The members of the Legion of Honour examined the letter with keen attention. There was no doubt that it was a feminine handwriting.

"Looks genuine," said Blake. "But who can she be?"

"Nobody we know, I suppose?" Clifton Dane remarked.

"I suppose not, or she'd have signed her name," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I think, as president, that we ought to go and help her."

"I think so, as president, too," Blake remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We shall have to get passes out at half-past eight," said Lowther. "We can't all go."

"No; I suppose we three had better go."

"How are you bound to go, you ass?" demanded Kangaroo.

"Speaking as a fellow of tact and judgment, a fellow with some delicacy will be wequiahed to deal with a mattah of this sort," said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"We can all go, I think," said Bernard Glyn. "We can ask different prefects for passes, and each of us keep dark about the others."

"Good egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! That's a good ideah. Bettah keep this lettah dark, or we shall have a crowd of youngstahs comin' wound."

"Then it's settled we're to go?" said Tom Merry, looking round at the meeting.

"Yes, rather."

"But it might be a New House jape," said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rats!"

"We'll take Figgins & Co. into it," said Tom Merry, with a sudden inspiration. "Figgy said he wasn't going to jape the legion any more, and he's a fellow of his word. But if we take them into it, they'd be on their honour to own up if it was a jape."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the meeting broke up, and Tom Merry & Co. went in search of Figgins & Co.

They found them, and it was soon evident that if the letter was not genuine, at all events Figgins & Co. had nothing to do with it. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn entered most heartily into the matter, and they agreed to ask Monteith, their head prefect, for passes out that evening. And during the afternoon the Legion of Honour were thinking very much of the new enterprise which seemed to promise them a thrilling adventure.

CHAPTER 11.

The Veiled Young Lady!

IT wanted a few minutes to half-past eight when quite a little crowd of juniors left the gates of St. Jim's and made their way down Rylcombe Lane.

There were a round dozen of them. The Terrible Three, and Figgins &



Tom Merry brought the squirt suddenly forward and levelled it. Before the New House procession knew what was coming, the muzzle was bearing full upon them. Squish! "Ow! Oh! Yowwp!" Figgins & Co. roared as the fluid splashed over them in a shower.

Co., and Blake and D'Arcy and Herries of Study No. 6, and Kangaroo and Reilly and Clifton Dane were there. The others had failed to obtain leave out of gates, and had had to remain behind. But undoubtedly the Legion of Honour were in sufficient force.

Twelve able-bodied juniors of the Fourth Form and the Shell were surely sufficient to rescue one damsel in distress.

Exactly what kind of distress the damsel was in, the juniors did not know. She had said that she had enemies, who persecuted her, and that was quite enough to make the legionnaires thrill with indignation.

Half-past eight was sounding from the chimes in Rylcombe when they reached the stile. Within the wood was thick dusk, and it was very shadowy in the lane.

The crowd of juniors halted at the stile and looked over. The big oak was a well-known landmark. It stood just within the stile, beside the footpath.

There was a soft sound of distress. It was a sob.

The juniors heard it distinctly.

It went directly to the soft heart of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Poor little gal!"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry. "It's the damsel in distress!"

He vaulted over the stile and hurried towards a feminine form standing under the oak. So far as Tom Merry could see, it was that of a girl about his own age. She wore a black veil, so that it was difficult to tell what age she really was; but a thick cluster of flaxen curls escaped from under her hat, and proved that she was still young.

Sob!

Tom Merry raised his cap. The juniors all raised their caps, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who swept off a silk topper in his imitable way.

"Excuse me, miss!" began Tom Merry. "We—we—"

"Pway allow me to explain, Tom Mewwy—"

"Better leave it to me," said Blake. "We received a letter to-day, miss, signed by 'One in Deep Distress.' It was addressed to me as president—"

"It was sent to me as president of the Legion of Honour, miss," said Tom Merry. "If you are the lady who wrote—"

"I am!" said a low voice through the veil.

"Good! We're here to help you, miss."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Whatever it is, we'll handle it," said Kangaroo. "Will you tell us what's the matter?"

Sob!

"Perhaps the young lady's hungry," said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "I've got some sandwiches in my pocket—Ow! What blessed idiot shoved his hoof on my foot?"

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Kerr fiercely.

Sob!

The sound of weeping from behind the thick veil moved the juniors deeply.

"I hope we shall be able to help you, miss," said Tom Merry anxiously. "We're ready to do anything."

"Or anybody!" said Monty Lowther. "Pway confide in us, deah boy—I mean, deah gal!"—said D'Arcy kindly. "You can speak to me as a fathah, you know!"

A peculiar sound came from under the veil. Had not the young lady evidently

been in a state of deep distress, the juniors might have fancied that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's remark had caused her to chuckle. But that, of course, was impossible.

"Will you help me, indeed?" came in a distressed tone from under the veil, followed by another sob.

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry sturdily.

"I have enemies—bitter enemies!"

"Bai Jove! Pway tell us where we can find them, and I undahtake to give them a feahful thwashin', deah gal!"

"I am fleeing from them," said the distressed voice, "but they are hunting me down!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Where shall I find refuge?"

"Better apply to the police," suggested Kerr, who was always practical. Sob!

"I dare not!" murmured the girl. "I must hide from them! But where shall I hide from them in safety? I implore you—I beg of you! Take me to the school and hide me there!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors looked at one another in dismay.

Helping a damsel in distress was one thing, but concealing a young lady in the school was another. It was hardly likely to be allowed at St. Jim's.

"H'm!" said Tom Merry. "Wouldn't it be better for your father and mother to know, miss?"

"I have none!"

"Poor gal!"

"I have no home—I have no family!" said the girl tragically. "I am the last of my race! And when I am dead, my wicked uncle will inherit my vast estates!"

"Bai Jove! But how can you have a wicked uncle if you have no relations, miss?"

"He is my only relation, and he seeks me now to take my life!" the veiled female sobbed. "Even at this moment his minions are searching for me, and if I am found my life will pay the forfeit!"

"Bai Jove! That's wotten!"

"But the police!" urged Tom Merry.

"I dare not enter the village again! I dare not remain here! I was foolish to send to you! Far wiser would it be to end for ever the sorrows of the wretched Clara de Vere in the dark waters of the river! But it is not yet too late!"

And the girl made a movement as if to go.

"Hold on, my deah young lady!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's all wight! We'll take you to the school!"

"Yes, yes, if you are really in danger," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Come along at once!"

"But it will bring danger upon you if you befriend me," said the veiled girl.

That was exactly the way to make the juniors determined, as perhaps the mysterious damsel was aware.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Figgins. "We're not afraid."

"Wathah not!"

"We'll ask the Head's advice about it," said Tom Merry. "Come along to the school at once, and—"

"Hark!" exclaimed the girl, with a convulsive start, as a low whistle sounded through the wood. "The signal!"

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors started, and listened. It sounded strangely weird and ghostly,

the low, clear whistle sounding and echoing among the dark underwoods.

"Wh-what is that?" muttered Herries.

"The signal of my foes. It shows that they are on the track!" said the veiled girl hurriedly. "Fly—fly! Leave me to my fate! You are bringing danger upon yourselves by lingering here!"

"Wats! We won't go without you!" said Arthur Augustus sturdily. "This way, deah gal!"

"You will save me?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, how can I ever repay you?" exclaimed the veiled young lady, falling upon Arthur Augustus' neck, and winding her arms around him. "My noble preserver!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My brave defender!"

"Welease me—I—I mean, just so, deah gal! But—but there's no time to lose, and—and—"

"You are right!" The veiled young lady released D'Arcy from her embrace. "Lead on, my brave preservers! Let us fly!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors hurried out into the lane with the veiled young lady. Arthur Augustus prudently dropped to the rear.

"I don't want to criticise the conduct of a lady, especially of a lady in distress," he confided to Blake. "But, weally, I think that that young lady is wathah wemonstwatative! I would wathah Tom Mewwy walked with her!"

And Blake chuckled.

Twice again the mysterious whistle sounded from the wood as the legion hurried towards St. Jim's with the rescued young lady in their midst. It sounded from the wood on the left, and from behind the hedge on the right, and it seemed to haunt the party all the way to St. Jim's.

There was no doubt that the enemy were tracking them down, and keeping out of sight in the trees and hedges all the time.

It was not till they were at the gates of St. Jim's that the whistles died away. The gates were closed, but Tom Merry rang Taggles up, and the school porter came down, grumbling, to the gates and opened them.

He stared at the sight of a veiled female form.

"My heye!" murmured Taggles, in wonder. "Who's that?"

"Don't ask questions, my son," said Tom Merry. "Come in, Miss de Vere."

"My heye!" murmured Taggles.

And he closed the gates after them as they came in, wondering whether he ought to report to the Head the fact that Tom Merry & Co. had brought a stranger into the school.

Ten minutes later the bell rang again, and Taggles again growled and grumbled his way down to the gates.

This time it was Lawrence and Owen of the Fourth who presented themselves with smiling faces, and passes signed by Baker of the New House.

"Where's Master Redfern?" growled Taggles. "He went out with you?"

"Hasn't he come in?" asked Lawrence blandly.

"Oh, perhaps he's come in without your seeing him," suggested Owen.

"Which wot I says is—"

"Good-night, Taggy!"

"Young himps!" murmured Taggles, and he locked the gates again. And although Redfern, so far as Taggles knew, had not come in, strangely enough, the school porter was not troubled with any more rings at the bell that evening.

CHAPTER 12.

Gussy in Distress!

TOM MERRY & CO. crossed the dusky quadrangle with the veiled young lady.

They had rescued her from her enemies—there was no doubt about that. But what they were to do with her now they hardly knew.

Don Quixote, in his career as a knight errant, was hardly ever in a more difficult position.

"Better ask the Head about what we'd better do," said Figgins.

The young lady uttered a cry.

"No, no. Keep my presence here a secret, I implore you!"

"But, you see—"

Sob!

"My dear young lady—"

Sob!

Figgins looked helpless. What was to be done with a young lady who used the truly feminine reply of a sob to everything?

"I implore you to keep the secret! I beg of you! On my knees—"

"Oh, don't!" exclaimed Tom Merry hastily as the distressed young lady lunged herself on her knees at his feet. "Pl-please, gerrup! We'll do anything—everything—"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, hurrying forward and assisting the young lady to rise. "Anything in the world, deah gal. Pway don't distress yourself."

"You promise me?"

"Yes."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hide me!" murmured the veiled young lady. "This brave youth shall stay with me." She tightened her grasp upon the arm of Arthur Augustus. "He shall never leave me! When my enemies are overcome I will reward him with my hand."

"Bai Jove!"

"Where the dickens shall we hide her?" murmured Tom Merry. "This is rather a bigger order than we expected."

"Distressed young women don't give all this blessed trouble in novels," murmured Kerr. "I think I'll go and get my prep done!"

And Kerr disappeared.

"I've got to feed Towser," remarked Herries.

"Look here, Herries—"

But Herries was gone.

"What price the woodshed?" suggested Figgins. "We can't get her into the House without being seen, that's a cert."

"Good! It will do for the present, anyway."

And the veiled young lady was guided to the woodshed.

Figgins lighted a lamp to illuminate the shed and the young lady sank down upon the bench and sobbed. Sobbing seemed to be her chief accomplishment. She made Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sit down beside her.

The swell of St. Jim's was too polite to resist. But he looked very uneasy as he sat down with the young lady's arm through his.

"My dear, noble protectors!" murmured the veiled lady. "How can I thank you? Here I can remain in safety till my enemies are overcome."

"Bai Jove!"

"I am hungry."

"Oh, good!" said Fatty Wynn. "We'll soon get you something to eat, miss. You'll feel better when you've had a bit of a feed. I always say it's best to lay a solid foundation; and a chap gets jolly hungry in this July weather, too!"

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling



Hallo, everybody! "How fast can a battleship go?" asks Digby. A "knotty" problem! Just heard of a Wayland man who has been racing pigeons for thirty years. Wonder if he has ever beaten them? "What is a pessimist?" asks Blake. A pessimist is a fellow who goes to a palmist to have his misfortune told. A reader says his work is tracing next-of-kin. The heir-restorer. Blake says lemonade is the best thing to counteract seasickness. The answer's a lemon. I hear a Scot, aged 70, cycled over 300 miles in five days. Weel, a-w(h)ee! Films are now being made in all colours. Hope they won't make us "blue." Headline: "Saxon Cudgel

Found in a Marsh." An old stick in the mud. "There are certain professions in which it is fatal to wander from the straight and narrow path," observes Mr. Lathom. Tight-rope walking, for instance. "Yes, trade must be improving," said the spectator, during the village cricket match. "That's the third time in two years that Soggins has heard his shop bell go, and had to run off and serve a customer!" Italian troops were dispatched to Abyssinia. We hope they were all "registered." Skimpole says he won't enter for the high-jump, because it isn't Leap Year. "This is an age of change," says Mr. Linton. Yes, small change. Oh, you heard about the man who boarded the admiral's flagship, and asked to see his gun licence! Skimpole says if there is any more bodyline bowling, why not streamline the batsmen? "My cricket bat is simply rotting," says Crooke. Time to stop the rot! As the "Wayland Courier" reported: "It won him first prize—£10,000." The sort of pride nobody would mind putting in his pocket. Then there was the chap who joined the Navy to see the world, and they put him in a submarine. "See" you on the sunny side, boys!

And Fatty Wynn hurried out, and the rest of the juniors, feeling more fitted to deal with the commissariat department than the distressed female, followed him, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's sat looking very unhappy. The young lady sobbed chiefly as an occupation of her time while the juniors were gone, and D'Arcy's heart was deeply touched. But he was very glad when Tom Merry & Co. came in again, bearing a large basket.

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

The young lady ate with an excellent appetite of the good things placed before her. Danger and distress had evidently done her no harm in that respect. The juniors pressed good things on her from all sides, feeling that that was the least they could do. And she did them more than justice.

Tom Merry & Co. were growing more uneasy every moment. It was getting near the time for them to turn up in their House to go to bed, and certainly they could not stay out after bed-time. But what was to be done with their protegee?

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully, "I wish you'd let us confide the whole mattah to the Head, Miss de Vere. Mrs. Holmes would take care of you then."

"Oh! Never—never!"

"Othahwise, I weally don't see what is to be done. You see—"

"You will not desert me, Arthur!" murmured the young lady, in soft tones, and her arm glided round the neck of the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus sat as if he were turned to stone.

His face was crimson and his ears looked as if they had been set on fire.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

"Hear me! I love you!"

"Wh-what?"

"I love you! Fly with me, and I will endow you with the title and estates of De Vere! The ancient castle of Mouldy-acres, the village of Backrent—all are mine, and shall be yours, Arthur, if you will fly with me!"

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Gussy has been mashing the lady while we went for the grub," murmured Monty Lowther. "Oh, Gussy, Gussy!"

D'Arcy caught the whispered words.

"Weally, Lowthah! I wegard that as a wascally insinuation! I have not been doin' anythin' of the sort! I twust I am uttally incapable of takin' advantage of the twust of an unpwotected female!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The young lady is ovahwought," said D'Arcy. "She is not aware of what she is sayin'—"

"Arthur," sobbed the young lady, "I love you!"

"Weally, my deah gal, this is wathah shockin', you know!" said Arthur Augustus, greatly scandalised. "Pway welease me!"

"Arthur!"

"I object vewy stwongly to havin' arms wound my neck, and, besides, you are disawwagin' my collah! I—"

"Fly with me, Gussy—I mean, Arthur!"

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort!" Sob!

"Bai Jove, this is howwible, you know!" said D'Arcy, twisting his head round in the young lady's arms and casting a very distressed look at Tom Merry & Co. "I weally feel quite 'a loss! This sort of thing thwows me into a fluttah! I—"

"Fly with me!"

"Imposs!"

The young lady jumped up.

"Then I will fly alone; and never, never more will you hear of the unhappy Clara de Vere!"

She rushed to the door of the woodshed.

"By Jove! My deah young lady," said D'Arcy feebly.

"I—I say—" stammered Tom Merry. The young lady turned in the doorway.

"It's all right!" she said, in quite a different tone of voice. "I haven't far to go—only as far as the New House, you know. By the way, I got the girl at the confectioner's in Rylcombe to write that letter. Good-bye, Gussy! Ta-ta, you fellows!"

There was a roar of surprise and rage from the juniors.

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The young lady pushed up her hat, removed a wig and veil, and disclosed the laughing face and merry eyes of Redfern. Then "she" fled.

"Redfern!"

"Done!"

"Spoofed!"

"Bai Jove!"

"After him!" shrieked Tom Merry. "Squash him! Bump him! Scalp him! After him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors rushed from the woodshed in frantic pursuit. Across the quadrangle the door of the New House slammed. Redfern was gone, and when Figgins & Co. went into their study they found a black skirt, a flaxen wig and a veil on their study table. And Figgins & Co. jammed them into the fire with feelings too deep for words. And over in the School House Tom Merry & Co. raged.

CHAPTER 13.

Up a Tree!

REDFERN smiled when he met the School House fellows the next day; but Tom Merry & Co. did not smile. They were going into class, so there was no chance to bump Redfern; but they promised themselves that pleasure later.

Redfern tapped Arthur Augustus on the elbow as the Fourth Form went in.

"Gussy, old man!" he murmured.

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and gave the humorist of the New House a freezing look.

"Weally, Wedfern—" he said.

"Have you rescued any damsels in distress?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Lawrence and Owen.

"You uttah ass!"

"Fly with me!" murmured Redfern.

Arthur Augustus elevated his aristocratic nose and marched into the Form-room.

"You awful spoofer!" murmured Jack Blake. "We'll bump you bald-headed after lessons! You just look out for squalls!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Redfern only grinned.

He knew that it would behoove him to look out for the vengeance of that exasperated Legion of Honour; but he did not seem to be afraid.

During morning lessons the New Firm made many little sly allusions to the affair of the rescued damsel when Mr. Lathom's attention was otherwise engaged, and by the time the Fourth were dismissed, Blake & Co. were in a state of great exasperation, and promising the three humorists all kinds of things.

After morning lessons Redfern & Co. strolled into the quadrangle; and they were stalked there by the enraged legion.

"Let's get 'em into a quiet place and bump 'em!" said Tom Merry.

"Good egg!" said Blake.

Redfern & Co. seemed to be playing into the hands of the avengers. The whole legion tracked them across the quad and round the Houses, and finally Redfern & Co. disappeared behind the chapel. There they were quite secluded, and the hour had come!

Tom Merry & Co. came round the chapel wall with a whoop.

They halted suddenly.

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence were talking quite peacefully with Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth. Reddy had evidently known that the Fourth Form master was taking a stroll

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there, and he had been leading the avengers on.

Mr. Lathom gazed in astonishment at the crowd of juniors as they came whooping round the chapel.

"Dear me!" he said.

Tom Merry & Co. looked very sheepish.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir!" said Tom Merry, turning very red. "I—I didn't know you were here, sir!"

"Wathah not, sir; we didn't mean to startle you, sir!"

And the legion beat a hasty retreat.

"The boulder was only leading you on, Tom Merry, you ass!" growled Blake, as the juniors escaped out of sight again.

"Leading you on, you mean!" grunted Merry.

"Look here——"

"Look here——"

And the vengeance of the New Firm was postponed.

Redfern & Co. smiled at Figgins as they came in to dinner in the New House.

A good many other fellows were smiling, too. The whole school knew by this time about the veiled damsel who had been rescued by Tom Merry & Co., and they seemed to think it was funnier than it appeared to the juniors concerned.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon at St. Jim's, and after dinner, Redfern & Co. strolled out of the school gates. Jack Blake saw them go, and hurried off to his comrades with the news.

"We've got 'em!" he announced.

"Come on!"

"What about cricket?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake snorted.

"Blow the cricket! Haven't we got to make the young bounders show a proper respect for the Legion?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They've got to be bumped—and bumped hard, and made an example of!" said Figgins. "We shall have all the giddy fags getting their ears up, otherwise!"

"Quite wight, deah boy!"

"Oh, all serene!" said Tom Merry. "Which way have they gone?"

"Down to the towing-path."

"Come on, then!"

"I expect they'll be dodging us," said Herries. "Wait a minute while I get Towser. Towser will track them down if they try to dodge us. You remember how splendid he is at following a trail."

"Weally, Hewwies, I object to Towser. That wotten bulldog has no respect what-ever."

"Look here, you ass——"

"For a fellow's twousahs——"

"I'm going to fetch him," said Herries.

And he did. Arthur Augustus eyed the bulldog very suspiciously as Herries brought him up. D'Arcy distrusted Towser. Herries often declared that Towser hardly ever bit anybody, but that was really not quite reassuring. The crowd of juniors hurried down to the towing-path, Herries in the lead with Towser.

Tom Merry & Co. looked very grim as they followed on the track of the New

Firm. For once Figgins & Co. and the School House juniors were firmly united. It was necessary to make an example of Redfern & Co., and the juniors debated their punishment.

Arthur Augustus suggested tar and feathers, or, as he called it, "tah and feathahs." But as tar and feathers were not available, that idea had to be given up. But, as Monty Lowther remarked, a good coating of mud from the nearest ditch would answer the purpose equally well.

Redfern & Co. were sighted in the distance on the towing-path. They caught sight of their pursuers, and instead of looking alarmed, Redfern only kissed his hand to them.

"Run the bounders down!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

And the whole crowd broke into a sprint.

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen broke into a run, too. They were making for the old bridge, and they reached it easily ahead of their pursuers. Redfern jumped on the parapet of the bridge to wave his hand to the pursuers, and then the three fugitives disappeared across the bridge.

Tom Merry & Co. ran on. They had a suspicion that Redfern & Co. were deliberately leading them on a wild-goose chase, as an afternoon's amusement. But they intended to make the



"Buck up, Reddy!" called Tom Merry. "We're com his strength was giving way with the weight of the hel and the boat sh

New Firm properly sorry for themselves before the afternoon was out.

They crossed the bridge, and scanned the wooded shore on the other side for the fugitives. Redfern & Co. had disappeared among the trees, but from the wood came the sound of a clear whistle. It was the same as the mysterious signal whistle which had startled the juniors in Rylcombe Wood the previous evening, and they looked at one another sheepishly when they heard it.

"The awful wottahs!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"They're leading us on!" growled Kangaroo.

"We'll have them soon! Come on!"

The juniors scrambled and stumbled and ran along the rough, wooded bank of the Rhyl. Glimpses were caught of Redfern & Co. occasionally in the wood, and when they were lost sight of, the whistle was heard again as if to guide them.

Tom Merry & Co. were growing very much exasperated. The New Firm were deliberately making fun of them and their pursuit; they realised that now.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy suddenly. "We've missed them! Listen!"

The whistle sounded again behind the juniors. They had evidently overshot the mark. They halted, and turned back, and plunged through the under-woods again, and again the whistle sounded.

Tom Merry stopped.

"Where on earth are the bounders?" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh rang out almost above Tom Merry's head.

He looked up in amazement.

Then he saw Redfern & Co. The three New House juniors were comfortably seated on a great branch of a tree that grew out over the waters of the Rhyl. Almost at the end of the great branch they were ensconced among the boughs that forked off from it, quite at their ease. Below them flowed the deep, swift waters, but the New Firm did not seem to be at all uneasy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors gathered on the bank under the tree, and gazed out at the trio reclining among the twigs out over the water.

"Well, here we are, up a tree!" said Redfern cheerfully. "You've got us!"

"Yaas, wathah, you boundahs!"

"You've only got to come and fetch us!" said Redfern sweetly. "We're ready to be fetched. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Owen and Lawrence.

The crowd on shore stared grimly at them. If they could only have got to close quarters with Redfern & Co., there were enough of them to have eaten the New Firm. But how to get at them—that was the question. One fellow only could crawl at a time along the giant bough, and a struggle there would be extremely perilous. The Rhyl was very deep in this place, and there were swift and treacherous currents under the high banks. A fall into the water would be fatal to any but the best of swimmers. The pursuit of the exasperated legion was evidently checked.

"You bounders!" roared Figgins. "Come down!"

"Not this afternoon!" sang Redfern softly. "Some other afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We're going to have the rotters down!" said Blake resolutely. "They've got to be made an example of!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come down, you rotters!"

"Come down, you outsiders!"

"No fear!" said Lawrence. "We're waiting to be fetched!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll come and fetch you, if you don't come!"

"Come on, then!"

Blake stepped towards the trunk of the big tree.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "It's too jolly dangerous. You might fall into the water, old man, and be swept along into the Pool before you could say rats."

"I'm going, all the same!" growled Blake. "I'm not having a New House bounder chipping me! I'm going to yank 'em down!"

"New House what?" demanded Figgins warmly.

"Bounder!" said Blake.

"Look here, Blake!" said Figgins, pushing back his cuffs. "I—"

"Peace, my sons, peace," said Tom Merry. "Look here! If anybody goes, I'd better go. Wants a good swimmer, in case of acci-

dents."

"Well, I'm the best swimmer here," remarked Blake.

"Oh, don't be funny! I—"

"As a mattah of fact, deah boys, I'd bettah go. The pwopah place for a D'Arcy is leadin' in time of dangah, you know!"

"Rats! I'm going!"

And Blake made a jump for the tree, and clambered up into the lower branches. Redfern grinned, and produced a pea-pistol from his pocket.

"Come on!" he called out. "You'll have to face the fire! Here's one for your nose, Blakey!"

Whiz!

"Yow!" roared Blake.

Redfern was a dead shot with a pea-pistol. The pea landed exactly on the specified spot, and Blake clapped his hand to his nose and roared. He could not retain his hand on the tree at the same moment, and he dropped off the trunk on his back in the grass.

"Oh! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll tell you what," said Herries. "We'll send Towser along the branch to clear them off, you know. Towser'll manage it easy enough."

"Rot! He wouldn't go!"

"Towser'll do anything I tell him!" said Herries defiantly. "Now then, Towser, old man! Fetch 'em, fetch 'em!"

Herries lifted his big favourite into the lower branches of the tree. Towser submitted quietly, and curled himself up in a fork of the tree, apparently imagining that Herries intended him to go to sleep there.

"Go on, Towsey!" said Herries, shaking him. "Fetch 'em, boy! Go for 'em!"

Towser yawned.

"He won't go!" growled Digby.

"He will go!" roared Herries, exasperated. "My bulldog will do anything I tell him."

"He can't walk along the branch, you ass!" said Clifton Dane.

"He can, you chump! Towser can walk a tightrope if he likes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries snorted. To Herries there was nothing in the wide world that Towser could not do. He climbed into the lower branches of the tree, and pushed the bulldog along the big branch that Redfern & Co. were perched on.

Towser appeared to regard it as a game, and he made a playful snap at Herries' cuff, and took a mouthful out of it.

"Let him come down!" yelled Tom Merry. "He'll fall into the river. Dogs can't climb like cats, you duffer!"

"Rats!" retorted Herries. "Towser can!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Go on, Towser! Fetch 'em, Towser, old man! Go for 'em!"

Towser growled. He was out on the thick branch now over the water, but he declined to go any farther. Farther on the branch grew narrower, and the foothold was certainly not adequate for a dog of Towser's size. Herries urged and persuaded and expostulated in vain. Towser declined to go any farther, and he had apparently quite made up his mind on the subject.

He squatted on the branch, and refused to budge.

"I told you he wouldn't go," said Digby.

Herries growled.

"My bulldog isn't one of those sneaking brutes that do exactly as they are



Redfern could not call back; he needed all his breath, for he was on his shoulders. The juniors pulled their hardest, and the shining water.

told," he retorted. "Towser isn't going to be bullied by anybody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind he doesn't fall coming back," said Tom Merry. "I—"

"Oh, rot! Towser isn't a clumsy brute— Oh, my hat! Towser!"

For even as Herries was speaking, Towser's foot slipped, and he shot down with a sharp yell into the water.

"Splash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries scrambled down angrily from the tree. As Towser could swim, of course, he had no uneasiness about his dog, and he was not alarmed. But the fellows on the bank soon saw that Towser was not so safe as his master imagined. Either the fall had dazed him, or he had been seized with cramp. He seemed to be making hardly an effort; and a whirl of the current swept him out into the stream, under the end of the long bough, and he was whirled away almost in a twinkling. There was a shout of alarm from the juniors.

"Towser—Towser!"

"Great Scott! He'll be drowned!"

"No, he won't!" sang out Redfern. "I'm going in for him!"

And, without even waiting to tear off his jacket, Redfern put his hands together, and dived from the branch.

CHAPTER 14.

Redfern to the Rescue!

SPLASH!

Redfern shot into the water and disappeared.

Lawrence and Owen on the bank, and the crowd of fellows on the bank, watched breathlessly. There was evidently something wrong with Towser. He was being swept helplessly away, with hardly a struggle on his part. Redfern came up to the surface, and struck out boldly in the direction of the dog. The swift current bore him on, as it was bearing the bulldog. In a few seconds both of them were far away from the spot where the juniors were standing.

Herries rushed towards the steep bank, but Blake caught him and dragged him back.

Blake's face was very pale.

"It's no good, Herries," he muttered.

"You couldn't swim to him from here."

"I'm going to try."

"No good, old man. Let's get along the bank, and get a boat out."

Herries nodded, and the juniors raced along the bank. Lawrence and Owen scrambled down from the tree, and ran with them. It was not only Towser that was in danger, but Redfern. For in the wide, deep Pool the waters were swift and dangerous. There had been more than one serious accident in the Pool; and since the last a boat had been always kept there.

But the boat was on the school side of the river, and to reach it the juniors had to run down to the bridge and get across, and race along the opposite bank.

There was not a moment to lose.

Tom Merry & Co. tore along the bank towards the bridge as fast as they could go, and tore across the bridge, and then dashed breathlessly to the spot where the old boat was kept moored.

Meanwhile, Redfern, swimming splendidly, had reached Towser. The bulldog had been twice under, and was evidently exhausted. Redfern's strong grip upon his collar brought him up as he was sinking again.

"Got you, old boy!" murmured Redfern. "All right now?"

He looked over the shining, flurried water to the bank. He had hardly noticed where he was going in his haste to reach the sinking bulldog; but he saw now that he was past the bridge, and out in the wide, circling waters of the Pool. Back to Redfern's mind came the recollection of the day when he had fought for life in that Pool, holding the exhausted Tom Merry in his arms—and a shiver went through him. Narrowly he had escaped death then. But this time—

Yet he did not think of letting the bulldog go. He held on to Towser, and swam, battling with the current as well as he could.

There was a shout along the river. Some of the juniors were in the boat now, and two sturdy pairs of arms were at the oars, and they were pulling with the current—pulling as they had never pulled in a boat race on the waters of the Rhyl.

"Buck up, Reddy! We're coming!"

Tom Merry's voice came ringing along the river. The first four juniors to reach the boat had piled into it; the rest were running along the bank and keeping pace with Redfern as he whirled along.

Redfern could not call back; he needed all his breath.

Towser, with great intelligence, realised what Redfern was doing for him, and he placed his paws on the back of Redfern's shoulders, and kept them there, leaving both the junior's hands free.

"Row like the dickens!" gasped Tom Merry.

The juniors pulled their hardest.

The boat seemed to shoot along the shining water. It shot past Redfern, and half-turned, and Tom Merry leaned over and grasped the collar of the swimmer.

"Got him!"

Redfern grinned faintly.

"Thanks! Get Towser in!"

Herries leaned over and seized Towser, and dragged the heavy, exhausted bulldog into the boat.

Tom Merry and Lawrence and Figgins helped Redfern in.

The junior sank down in the bottom of the boat, panting feebly in a pool of water. His face was very white.

"Lucky you got here!" he gasped at last. "Poor old Towser! He was jolly near a goner!"

"You were jolly near a goner, too!" said Lawrence.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Redfern cheerfully. "I only want a change of clothes! I'll give you fellows another run back to the school!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"We'll let you off the bumping!" he said.

The juniors pulled to the shore, and Redfern was helped out of the boat.

Although he made light of the matter in his usual cheery way, he was too spent to walk by himself, and the juniors helped him back to the school.

Kildare met them as they entered the gates, and he stared at Redfern in surprise.

"What on earth's happened?" he asked.

"Reddy went in for Towser," explained Figgins. "It's all right. He's only wet."

Kildare grinned.

"Yes; he looks wet," he said. "Take him into the House and put him to bed at once, and tell the House dame."

"Here, I'm not a giddy invalid!" roared Redfern, in alarm. "I'm not going to be coddled, and I'm not going to have any gruel!"

"Take him in!" said Kildare.

And Redfern was rushed into the New House; and, in spite of his remonstrations, he was tucked up in bed, with a hot water bottle at his feet, and any number of blankets over him, and he was left in charge of the House dame.

It was a couple of hours later when the juniors were allowed to come in to see Redfern. The hero of the New House was sitting up in bed with a basin of gruel by his side.

He grinned rather forlornly at his visitors.

"I've got to stay in bed till the evening," he growled. "Nice way to spend a half-holiday, ain't it? How's Towser?"

"All serene," said Herries. "He was a bit queer at first, but I've had the vet to him. He's all right now. I—I say, Reddy, old man, I'm awfully obliged to you. It isn't every chap who'd risk his life to save a dog. You're a splendid fellow!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Redfern. "I'm not taking the gruel, and I'm jolly well not going to have any rot, either! Ring off!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"We were going to make an example of you this afternoon, Reddy," he said. "But, instead of making an example of you," continued Tom, who had evidently prepared a little speech for the occasion, "you have made an example of us—no, that isn't it—I mean you have set an example for us to follow, and—"

"Hear, hear!"

"The opinion of all the members of the Legion of Honour is that you have played up splendidly, and—and deserved well of your country—I mean St. Jim's, and we all say that a chap who plays up like this ought to be a member of the Legion of Honour—"

"Hurrah!"

"We therefore make Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen members of the Legion of Honour," said Tom Merry solemnly, "and, moreover, as the chap who has most distinguished himself, and set an example of pluck to all the chaps, we elect Redfern president of the Legion of Honour—"

"Hurrah!"

"Carried unanimously!" said Blake heartily. "Redfern is president! Three cheers for the giddy president!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Redfern rose to the occasion.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you do me great honour! I accept the presidency of the Legion of Honour, and will always try to set you a noble example. Watch me, and do as I do, and you will be all right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But seriously, I'm jolly glad to join," said Redfern, "and though I don't think I deserve to be president, I'll do my little best. That's all I can say."

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "I quite approve of the remarks of my friend Weddy. As soon as he gets up, I propose that we have a weally wippin' feed to celebrate the election of the first pwsident of the Legion of Honour!"

And the motion was carried nem con.

(Next Wednesday: "TOWSER'S TWIN!"—a ripping long yarn of fun and adventure, featuring Bernard Glyn's latest and amazing invention.)



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

HALLO, chums! Here we are again, all merry and bright, in another issue of the GEM! Our story programmes always bring in many letters of praise from GEM readers all over the world, but just recently my mail has been particularly heavy, much to the dismay of our office-boy, who has had to work a little harder than usual opening the letters! He now only spends ninety per cent of his working time reading the GEM and "Magnet"!

As a point of interest, I will just quote from one or two letters. G. J., of Surbiton, says: "The GEM is now giving us the finest stories the old paper has ever published." That's praise indeed, considering that the GEM has been going for about twenty-eight years. My Surbiton chum goes on to say that he would like longer St. Jim's stories. Well—who knows?—his wish may be granted soon.

Here's another reader's opinion. He is R. Scheckle, of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. After congratulating Martin Clifford, Frank Richards, and E. S. Brooks on their wonderful stories, he remarks: "Wouldn't it be 'posh' if the GEM was published twice a week instead of once?" It would be posh for readers, but the poor authors and artists would find it rather hard work! However, my Colonial chum must take consolation in the fact that another grand number will be on sale next week!

"TOWSER'S TWIN!"

This is the title of next Wednesday's St. Jim's yarn, and, as perhaps you have guessed by the title, it brings into the limelight once again Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor. It is some little time since he made one of his mechanical marvels, but he certainly makes the bell ring with his latest effort, which is a very lifelike imitation of Herries' bulldog. The coming of Towser's twin results in some jolly fun and japing, which, coupled with the scheming of two rascals to rid the school of Towser I, makes a tip-top yarn that you will enjoy immensely.

"THE HUNGRY REBELS!"

Besieged by a dozen roughnecks, and

not a scrap of food in the school! That's the position of the Packsaddle rebels in the next thrilling yarn of Frank Richards' great series. It is a serious plight for the cow town schoolboys, and already one or two of them are talking of surrendering. Can the rebels hold out longer without food? It is very doubtful, although most of them are as determined as ever. Look out for their further adventures next week.

Our popular serial, "The Secret World!" is drawing to a conclusion, and in the next chapters the St. Frank's adventurers bid good-bye to Northestria. But their return journey from the strange land is fraught with peril, and it's touch and go whether they get through to the Arctic or become bottled up in the great tunnel in the mountains.

To wind up this programme, Monty Lowther is in good form again with "Just My Fun"; and the Jester awards more half-crowns for readers' jokes. You may be a winner!

MEET MR. SMITH!

Talking about Herries' bulldog just now reminded me of an animal of the same breed which recently made a trip by air all on its own. Let me introduce you to Mr. Smith, who is a very proud bulldog to-day. He was one of the entrants in a dog show in Glasgow, and walked away with seventeen trophies! Having accomplished that excellent performance, he embarked in a plane to return to his owner in London. But he had to leave his prizes behind—there wasn't room for them. However, the bulldog was quite happy in the plane, and curled up to have a sleep on the flight to Croydon. He was quite unconcerned about his passage through the air.

THE SPIDER LIVES AGAIN!

Crawling along close to a river, the spider, if it had only known, was heading for the adventure of its life. For

the greedy eyes of a trout were watching its every movement. Suddenly, as the spider ventured nearer the river, up bobbed the trout, and its mouth closed over the spider in a flash. That, one would say, was the finish of the poor spider; but it was then that Fate took a hand. An interested spectator of the trout's movements was an angler. He watched it swim towards the line; then it spotted the bait, and snapped at it. It was the trout's last bite—it was hooked! When it was landed, the angler, interested to see what it had eaten, opened it up. As he did so he was astonished to see the spider emerge and scuttle away for dear life! It must be the first spider to enter the stomach of a live fish and live "to tell the tale."

SCHOOL REBELLIONS!

Our "Packsaddle rebellion" series has prompted a reader to write and ask me if there have ever been any real revolts in Public schools. There have been many in years gone by, but nowadays such incidents are very rare.

Five or six years ago there was a spot of bother in a country school for the same reason as that which started the Packsaddle rebellion. The popular headmaster was asked to resign, so all his boys came out on strike in sympathy. They didn't actually rebel, but they refused to do any work. Eventually the affair was settled amicably.

Much more serious was the rebellion which broke out many years ago at Winchester. The boys had had their leave stopped, and so they decided on a barring-out. First, with the aid of sympathetic townspeople, they got in a supply of food, and then barricaded themselves in their rooms. Vigorous efforts were made to drive them out, but the boys more than held their own. They threatened to burn down the school unless their terms were acceded to! This threat, however, rather defeated its object, for the military were called in to end the rebellion.

Winchester was also the scene of another barring-out which in some respects resembles the Packsaddle affair. It started through the scholars being punished for holding a firework display which they had previously been forbidden to do. The incensed boys promptly began a barring-out, but, like the cow town schoolboys, they had no time to lay in food supplies. In consequence, the authorities took no action. They knew that hunger would soon make the rebels tamely surrender. They were right. The hungry boys at last came out of their barricaded rooms, and each one received another thrashing.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Reporter: "To what do you attribute your longevity?"

Centenarian: "My what?"

Reporter: "Your longevity."

Centenarian: "I ain't never had no such complaint!"

THE EDITOR.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Miss Mary C. Ellis, 85, Amohan Street, Rotorua, New Zealand; girl pen-pals; age 17-18; England, South Africa, China, etc.;

PEN PALS COUPON

6-7-35

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THE REBELS OF PACKSADDLE ARE ON A STARVATION DIET IN—

NO SURRENDER!



With his friends dragging him from within and the enemy pulling him from without, Dick felt as if he was coming into two pieces. He jerked up his free foot and kicked backwards, and Yuma Dave gave a terrific roar as the schoolboy's boot crashed on his jaw.

The Hungry Bunch!

HOW about eats?"

"Nix on the eats!" said Slick Poindexter.

"Nix on the eats?" gasped

Pie Sanders.

"Jest nix!"

"Pie" Sanders—so called at Packsaddle School because of his great parking powers where pie was concerned—gazed at Slick. The quirt from Bill Sampson, or the cane from Elias Scadder, would not have hurt Pie so much as a shortage on the "eats." Pie's face grew long.

Other fellows in the cow town school were hungry as well as Pie. In the excitement of the "rookus" that was going on at Packsaddle the bunch had rather forgotten "eats." But as the sun set over Squaw Mountain, after a lively day, they had to remember that detail.

More than twenty fellows were in the cow town schoolhouse. The doorway on the porch was strongly barricaded with desks and benches; the windows were shuttered, and had planks nailed across them. The rebels of Packsaddle were holding the fort.

But the fort was not provisioned. There had been no time to think about that when Job Wash, chairman of the school committee, arrived with his forces to put down the rebellion. The bunch had been lucky to pack into the timber schoolhouse and hold it against the gang of roughnecks that Mr. Wash had enlisted in the cause of law and order. But it was as Slick said, "nix on the eats." There were absolutely no "eats" to be had.

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Dick Carr, looking from a chink in a cracked shutter, scanned the playground in the red glare of the sinking sun. Job Wash could be seen standing at the door of Small Brown's cabin, talking to the Packsaddle teacher. His men had gone into the chuckhouse to supper. Chuckhouse, cookhouse, bunkhouse were all in possession of the enemy. Tin Tung, the Chinese cook, had hit the horizon, and the toughs of the cow town cooked for themselves—and seemed to be having a good time. But for the schoolboys holding the fort in the schoolhouse it was "nix on the eats."

"Oh, great gophers!" groaned Pie. "Great jumping gophers!"

"I'll say it's fierce!" remarked Slick. "I sure could pack away a few boiled beans—and then some!"

"You said it!" agreed Mick Kavanagh. "I'll mention that I could eat the hind leg of a Mexican mule."

"They got us!" said Poker Parker. "I guess old Wash is wise to that, too. We got to talk turkey."

"Can it!" snapped Slick. "This bunch ain't talking turkey, not by a jugful—not till they send Bill back!"

"Never!" said Dick Carr. "Aw, you piefaced geek!" hooted Slim Dixon. "You figure that we can stick here all night without any eats."

"All night and all to-morrow and all the week!" said the tenderfoot of Packsaddle determinedly. "We're not giving in! We've turned out their precious new headmaster—Scadder; we've told Job Wash that we're standing by Bill Sampson, and we mean it—every word."

"Eats," said Pie, "is eats!"

"You're a day-boy," said Dick;

"you can cut out if you like and dodge that crowd and get home."

"Pack it up!" snapped Pie. "You figure I'd let the bunch down? I ain't throwing you down, you gink!"

"Here comes Mr. Brown!" called out Hunky Tutt.

Small Brown, the teacher, came across the playground, his horn-rimmed spectacles gleaming back the rays of the Texas sun. The bunch crammed the window, where a broken shutter, partly boarded over, gave them a view outside. Poker picked up an inkpot.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Dick Carr. "We're not up against Brown. Leave him alone."

"I guess I can get his headlights from here!" said Poker.

"Guess again!" snapped Dick, and he knocked the inkpot from Parker's hand.

Small Brown advanced very unasily. It was clear that Job Wash had sent him to speak to the rebels, not caring to risk his own fat and portly person within the reach of missiles. Small Brown did not like the task, but he did not venture to disregard the chairman of the school committee. He blinked and stared like a scared rabbit as he came towards the building.

"Boys!" squealed Small Brown, blinking at the faces packed at the window.

"Spill it, old-timer!" said Slick Poindexter encouragingly.

"Shoot!" grinned Mick.

"I have a message from Mr. Wash! Unless," said Small Brown, "you surrender at once—"

"Can it!"

"Pack it up!"

"Unless you surrender at once, Mr. Wash and his men will remain here

—THIS THRILL-PACKED STORY OF WESTERN SCHOOL ADVENTURE!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

until you do so!" squealed Small Brown. "As you have no food in that building you cannot continue these—these reckless and rebellious proceedings. I advise you to return to your duty."

"Ain't Mr. Wash sending us no supper?" grinned Slick.

Small Brown blinked at him. "You will have nothing to eat!" he answered. "If you do not surrender now you will be compelled to do so to-morrow. You will be starved out."

"Great gophers!" groaned Pie Sanders.

"Tell Mr. Wash from us that we'll chuck it as soon as Bill Sampson comes back!" answered Dick Carr. "Bill's our headmaster, and we're not standing for any other—least of all that worm Scadder! We're holding on till Bill comes back!"

"We want Bill!" roared Slick.

"Bill, or nobody!" yelled Mick Kavanagh.

"Mr. Sampson has gone back to the Kicking Mule Ranch," said Small Brown. "The school committee are determined not to reinstate him here, and that Mr. Scadder shall be headmaster of Packsaddle. I advise you—"

"Can it!"

"Beat it while you're safe. Mr. Brown!" said Slick. "We want Bill, and we're sure standing for Bill till the cows come home."

"And take that with you!" hooted Poker Parker, who had picked up the inkpot, and he took aim through an opening of the planks nailed over the window.

Dick Carr grabbed his arm in time, and the inkpot fell to the floor. Mr. Brown turned and bolted like a rabbit. A yell followed him, but nothing more dangerous. All the bunch knew that Small Brown wanted Bill back as much as they did. Nobody was going to hurt Small Brown. Only Poker wanted to—and he was stopped.

"You doggoned tenderfoot!" howled Poker, turning on Dick Carr. "I guess you ain't running this hyar bunch!" And he hit out at the tenderfoot of Packsaddle, and Dick gave a yell as a set of hard knuckles landed on his nose.

The next moment Poker staggered under a fist that crashed into his eye, and landed on the floor with a terrific crash.

Slim Dixon made a jump at the tenderfoot. Dick's left met him as he came, and he rolled headlong across Poker.

"I'll say that was some sockdolager!" said Mick admiringly. "That tenderfoot sure can hit! Get up and have some more, Slim!"

But Poker and Slim seemed to have had enough; they moved away, scowling, when they got up. Small Brown was out of range now. He rejoined Mr. Wash at the door of his cabin, and the glare of wrath that the fat storekeeper turned on the schoolhouse showed that he was receiving the defiant answer of the rebels. A long, thin man joined in the discussion at the cabin door—it was Elias Scadder, the new headmaster. He had arrived to take over control when Mr. Wash put him in possession. But even with a dozen of the roughest and toughest bullwhackers in Santanta County to back him Mr. Wash was not able to put him in possession yet. And the Packsaddle bunch figured that he never would be.

Food in Sight.

NIGHT fell on the valley of the Rio Frio.

Packsaddle School had seen some exciting times since first a number of prominent citizens of the cow town had met in conclave and founded it and appointed Bill Sampson headmaster. It had never been a quiet spot even when Bill Sampson was there to ride herd over the bunch. But it had never seen such an exciting time as now.

Often and often the unruly bunch had kicked when Bill was there to rule them. They had to be ruled with a hard and heavy hand, and they knew it, and in fact were rather proud of it. But Bill had never had any trouble like this—anything like it. It was a man's job to handle that bunch, and Bill Sampson was the man for the job. Elias Scadder, it was plain, wasn't—even with the backing of fat Job Wash and most of the school committee.

Pie Sanders groaned over the absence of "eats"; Poker and Slim were sulky and discontented. But nearly all the bunch were determined—and the most determined of all were Dick, Slick, and Mick.

There was no supper that night for the bunch.

Across the playground they could see the lights from the chuckhouse, where

The Packsaddle bunch are going to keep on kicking until they get back their cowboy headmaster—and once again, in this gripping yarn, their enemies discover that they can kick all too hard!

Hair-Trigger Pete, Yuma Dave, Tanglefoot, and the rest of Mr. Wash's roughneck crew supped and smoked, and wound up by roaring out a chorus more suitable for the Red Dog Saloon than Packsaddle School. After which, the roughnecks turned into the bunks in the bunkhouse, left vacant now by the bunch, and Mr. Wash and Mr. Scadder were accommodated in Small Brown's cabin. Evidently, the enemy intended to remain on the spot, and besiege the rebels in the schoolhouse till they surrendered.

Probably Job Wash figured that they would be in a surrendering mood by morning. Healthy fellows, accustomed to the open air, had healthy appetites, and there was no doubt that already they were all hungry. By morning they would be ravenous. Then they would give in—and would receive such a terrific thrashing all round that they would not be in a hurry to rebel again against Job's specially selected headmaster.

That was how Job mapped it out, and Job, the most obstinate guy in Santanta County, was going to remain on the spot till it happened, leaving his store on Main Street, Packsaddle, to the care of his assistants. Job reckoned that if there was a guy in Texas who could bring that bunch to heel, he was that very guy!

It was a long night to the bunch.

They had few fixings for camping in the schoolhouse. In the quarters formerly occupied by Bill, there were a bunk and blankets—but one bunk and

half a dozen blankets did not go far among more than a score of campers.

But the Texas schoolboys were used to roughing it—and Dick Carr had learned to do the same since he had come to Packsaddle. Slick Poindexter slept like a top on bare planks, with his head pillowed on a box. Dick did not sleep quite so soundly—still, he slept. If fellows awakened, it was not so much the hard beds as the inward emptiness that did it. Pie Sanders opened his eyes and groaned regularly every half-hour.

As Pie was a day boy, he could have cut off home, where there were plenty of "eats," and it was really heroic of Pie to stand by the bunch in the circumstances. But he did it! But when he slept, he dreamed of boiled beans and bacon—and when he woke, he thought of pumpkin-pie. It was not a happy night for Sanders.

At the earliest gleam of dawn the bunch were up.

Every fellow was too hungry to want to bed down any longer. Pie rooted through Bill's quarters in the faint hope of discovering something in the nature of canned foods.

Mick Kavanagh took a notch in his belt and pressed both hands to the spot where he fastened the buckle.

"I'll tell a man I'm sure as empty as a drum!" said Mick. "It sure is fierce."

"You hungry, Carr?" asked Poindexter, with a dismal grin.

"Famished!" said Dick.

They looked from the broken shutter. Small Brown had come out of his cabin and was trotting in the playground, every now and then turning his horn-rimmed glasses towards the schoolhouse. Nobody else was up yet—on the enemy's side.

Poindexter put his hand through a gap, and waved to the Packsaddle teacher.

Small Brown came cautiously towards him.

"Say, you Brown!" called Slick.

"Shall I tell Mr. Wash you are giving in?" called back Small Brown.

"Giving in nothing!" snorted Slick.

"Say, you Brown, we sure are short of the eats in this shebang! You sling us a few canned beef and beans, while them roughnecks are snoozing, say!"

Small Brown blinked at him, hesitating.

He was anxious for the rebellion to be over on almost any terms, for he went in constant terror of Hair-Trigger Pete and his gang. And he believed, like Mr. Wash, that hunger would soon force a surrender.

But his sympathy was on the side of the bunch in standing for Bill, for he knew what Mr. Wash did not know, that there never would be order at Packsaddle till the six-gun schoolmaster came back.

And Small Brown was not a bad-hearted guy, and he could feel for a crowd of hungry schoolboys cut off from all food supplies.

He hesitated, but at last he nodded.

"I will do my best, Poindexter," he answered.

"Say, that little man is the right stuff, I'll tell all Texas!" exclaimed Slick, as Brown went away towards the cookhouse, adjoining the chuckhouse across the playground.

Every face in the bunch brightened. Breakfast was the most pressing need, if they were to hold out. If Small Brown got through—

"Hope he gets us the eats!" breathed Pie Sanders.

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From the window the bunch watched breathlessly. Small Brown came out of the cookhouse after what seemed an age. He carried a grip in one hand, packed full, and the schoolboys could guess what was in it. Pie Sanders' eyes danced.

"Eats!" he breathed.

Small Brown blinked uneasily towards his cabin where Mr. Wash and Scadder still slept. There was no sign of them so far. Still more uneasily he blinked towards the bunkhouse, where Hair-Trigger Pete and his gang were camped. They did not seem to be stirring yet. Then he came trotting towards the schoolhouse, with the grip in his hand, the tails of his coat flying in the wind in his haste.

He was hardly a lasso's length away when a burly figure with a red beard appeared in the bunkhouse doorway.

It was Hair-Trigger Pete, the first of the roughneck crowd to turn out. Pie gave a groan.

"Pipe that bullwhacker! He's sure spotted Brown! Great gophers!"

Hair-Trigger, looking out into the morning sunlight, stared blankly at the sight of Small Brown trotting across the playground with a bag of canned foods. He stared—he glared—and he rushed out.

"Say, you geek, what's that?" he roared.

"Burn the wind, Brown!" shrieked Poindexter.

"Pronto!" roared Mick.

"Pull in, you gink!" roared Hair-Trigger, tearing in pursuit.

Small Brown blinked round in alarm at the roar of the bullwhacker. He almost tottered over in his alarm. The schoolboys watched him, in an anguish of anxiety. Only a dozen yards away there was the supply of food—and they were all famished.

Dick Carr dragged at one of the nailed boards across the window. It came down, leaving room for a fellow to get out.

"Pronto, Brown!" yelled Slim.

But Small Brown stood rooted for some moments. Then, as if making up his mind, he rushed on towards the schoolhouse, the burly roughneck almost at his heels.

He was hardly ten feet away when Hair-Trigger Pete reached him. The burly ruffian let out a heavy boot, which landed on Mr. Brown's coat-tails and sent him crashing.

"Urrrrrr!" spluttered Small Brown as he hit Texas. The grip shot from his hand, and its contents rolled on the ground—cans of beef, cans of beans, cans of peaches—all sorts of canned provender. The bunch gave a groan of dismay.

Dick Carr slipped from the window and dropped outside. In a twinkling Slick and Mick dropped after him, and after them Pie, Hunky Tutt, and Bud Dunn. The rest packed the window and watched.

Brown Gets the Boot!

S MALL BROWN yelled like a run-over dog.

Hair-Trigger, having sent him sprawling with that hefty kick, turned on him to give him a few more of the same.

Small Brown had heaps and stacks of book-knowledge, but with his hands he was a poor fish. He could not have tackled one side of Hair-Trigger Pete. He sprawled and roared and howled, while the roughneck kicked him, and kicked him again.

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Busy with applying boot-leather to the Packsaddle teacher, the ruffian did not observe the schoolboys dropping one after another from the window.

Half a dozen of them came at him with a rush.

"Wake snakes!" roared Hair-Trigger as the half-dozen cinched him and rushed him over. "Carry me home to die! Yoop! Hyer, boyces—say, you turn out—say, you wake up, you dog-goned geeks—say—whoop!"

But the rest of the gang were still in their bunks. No doubt Hair-Trigger's frantic yells reached them; but they had no time to turn out and come to his aid.

Seconds were precious, and the schoolboys did not waste one. Hefty as Hair-Trigger was, six husky fellows handled him, and he rolled over, struggling and roaring, hammered and punched and pommelled till almost every ounce of wind was knocked out of him.

Then Pie Sanders, leaving him in the hands of the others, rushed for the "cats."

He grabbed up can after can. He did not stay to pack them in the grip; he hurled them in at the window. The first can of beef caught Poker Parker on the nose as it whizzed in, and Poker retreated from the window with a fiendish yell. Then the rest stood clear, as can after can whizzed in.

Small Brown sat up, set his spectacles straight and blinked dizzily. He had done his best, though his best did not amount to a whole lot. He sat and gurgled.

Hair-Trigger rolled and roared, struggled, punched, and kicked; but the five fellows who had hold of him gave him hard measure. They thumped him, and banged his head on the ground, stamped on his legs, and generally reduced him to a state of breathless wreckage. Every one of them had two or three hard knocks from the ruffian, but they did not heed them. Hair-Trigger, powerful ruffian as he was, was soon a mere heap of breathlessness and aches and pains.

But by that time his associates had taken the alarm. Yuma Dave stared out of the bunkhouse and yelled to his comrades. Out from the doorway rushed the whole crew of roughnecks.

In the doorway of Small Brown's cabin appeared Job Wash and Mr. Scadder, staring.

"Beat it!" panted Slick.

Leaving Hair-Trigger sprawling and gurgling, the schoolboys dashed back to the window. Pie had hurled in the last of the cans, and had head and shoulders into the gap between the planks at the window, his friends within helping to drag him in.

Pie rolled inside, headlong, and Hunky Tutt and Bud Dunn after him. Mick was the next, and then Slick, Dick Carr remaining till the last.

There was no danger from Hair-Trigger—he was winded to the wide, gurgling spasmodically on the earth. But the roughnecks, racing across the playground, were close at hand—Yuma Dave ahead of the rest, his outstretched hand almost touching Dick's shoulder.

"Quick!" yelled Pie from within.

"Pronto, you geek!" gasped Slick.

He reached out a hand to the tenderfoot.

Dick plunged in head and shoulders, and Slick grasped one arm, Mick the other, to drag him right in. But at the same moment Yuma reached him and grasped one of his legs.

"I guess you're cinched, buddy!" grinned Yuma

And he closed his grasp with both hands on that leg and dragged.

"Pull him in!" yelled Mick.

"Lend a hand here, you 'uns!" roared Slick.

Many hands grasped Dick at the top end, by his arms, his shoulders, his ears, his collar, even his hair. The bunch were not going to let the enemy get him if they could help it.

A fearful howl came from Dick Carr.

With his friends dragging him from within, and the enemy dragging him from without, he felt as if he was coming into two pieces.

Luckily he had one foot free.

He jerked it up and kicked backwards blindly. Yuma Dave gave a terrific roar as the schoolboy's boot jolted his front teeth. He let go Dick's leg, clapping both hands to his mouth. He figured, for a moment, that his jaw was broken, and his teeth driven down his throat. It was not so bad as that, but it felt like it, and Yuma was too busy for a moment to hold on to the tenderfoot of Packsaddle.

Dick, dragged in, rolled inside the school-room. He bumped on the floor, yelling. Outside, Yuma was yelling, too.

"Faith, we got him!" exclaimed Mick jubilantly. "We sure cinched you, Dick—I'll say I had yere hair in both hands, and I'd sure have kept it if they'd got the rest of ye—" "You blithering idiot!" yelled Dick Carr.

"Say, ol'-timer, what's biting ye?"

"You've pulled my hair out by the roots, you howling ass!" yelled the tenderfoot of Packsaddle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howly Mike, and is it grousing ye are?" exclaimed Mick indignantly. "And me holding on to yere mop like death to a nigger!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick scrambled to his feet, feeling his head tenderly. He had been saved from capture by the enemy, but it had been a painful process. He rubbed his head and grunted.

Outside, Yuma was rubbing an aching jaw, and gurgling strong words. Hair-Trigger staggered to his feet. Small Brown was scuttling back to his cabin, perhaps wishing that he had never horned in.

Most of the roughnecks were within range of the window, and five or six of the bunch began hurling inkpots and other missile—and the enemy promptly retired across the playground.

Pie Sanders was already opening cans.

There was breakfast, after all, for the hungry bunch. Canned beef and canned beans went down at a great rate.

Dick, Slick, and Mick, as they chewed beef, looked from the window. They were rather worried about Small Brown. Mr. Brown had hoped, and intended, to convey that much-needed supply of food to the rebels unseen—but he had failed in that. They wondered what was going to happen to Mr. Brown. It was certain that Job Wash would be as mad as a hornet at the action of the Packsaddle teacher in aiding the bunch.

It was soon clear that Job was as mad as a hornet—or madder!

The fat man was talking to Small Brown outside his cabin, and his enraged voice carried across the playground to the ears of the schoolboys.

Job was purple with rage and brandishing fat fists at the Packsaddle teacher as he talked.

"You ornery geek!" yelled Job. "You owl-eyed, pie-faced polecat! You figure the school committee is paying your salary to back up them young geeks agin their noo head-master! You're fired, you pesky pie-can—fired, do you hear, you ornery guy? Beat it! Hit the trail! Get out of this school and stay out! Get me!"

Job yelled to his men.

"Put that guy out on the trail, pronto! Boot him a few!"

The roughnecks were only too willing to obey.

They rushed at Small Brown.

With a squeal of terror, the Packsaddle teacher streaked for the gate. After him rushed the rough mob, roaring with laughter.

"Poor old Brown!" gasped Slick.

"Put it on, Brown!" yelled Slick Kavanagh.

"Hit it, ol'-timer!" roared Hunky.

and this hyer jamboree is going on till we get Bill! And don't you forget it!"

Hot!

DICK CARR watched with an intent eye.

"They're up to something!" he said.

"Bet on that!" said Slick Poindexter. "But I don't get it!"

"I guess Job is wise to it that he's slipped up on starving us out!" grinned Mick. "But what's his game now?"

The day was wearing on. A dozen cans of beef and beans was not a large supply for a score of fellows, but it was enough to see the bunch through the day.

There was no more to come, it was true, but for the present the bunch were able to hold on—and they were holding on. And they figured that Job was getting impatient.

tired of the job, and vamoosed. But some of them remained, and Mr. Wash and Scadder were still to be seen. Dick Carr guessed that some new move was coming from the enemy, but he could not guess what it was.

"Say, look, you'uns!" exclaimed Slick suddenly.

From the direction of the gate came the toughs who had gone out some time ago. Evidently they had not gone for good. They came in, carrying in their midst a felled tree-trunk.

The branches had been lopped off, leaving a log a foot thick and twenty feet long, so heavy that half a dozen of the gang found it weighty to carry.

Dick Carr whistled. One glance was enough; he knew for what that log was intended. It was a battering-ram!

"Howly Mike!" ejaculated Mick in dismay. "I'll say that galoot Wash is no slouch! I guess them desks will start tumbling when they get going with that piece of timber."

"You said it!" muttered Poindexter.



As the roughnecks came on with the battering-ram, a bully beef can whizzed from the rebels' defences and caught Hair-Trigger on the chin. He gave a roar of rage and staggered back. But the roughnecks charged on, and the log was brought to bear on the barricade. Crash! The whole structure rocked under the terrific shock.

Small Brown was hitting it in great style. Bareheaded, his hair flying in the wind, his coat-tails streaming behind him, Small Brown flew. The bunch could not help him—there was only safety in flight for Mr. Brown!

Luckily that was Small Brown's long suit. His feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground as he flew.

The gate was shut and barred, and the rough crew behind him counted on cinching him there. But terror lent Small Brown wings. As he reached the shut gate, he rose to the leap like a bronco.

Over the gate flew Small Brown, clearing it by an inch, stumbling and rolling over in the trail outside.

But he was on his feet again in a twinkling, and streaking down the trail to the cow town. The roughnecks stopped at the gate with a howl of disappointment. A runaway bronco had nothing on Small Brown as he went down the trail. He vanished.

"I guess he's a good little man, and we're standing for him," said Slick. "He's coming back when Bill comes—

He had counted on surrender that day; but if he was going to starve out the bunch, he had to wait—and from the expression on his face when they sighted him in the playground they reckoned that Job was not in a mood to wait.

And it was clear, as they watched in the afternoon, that something was being planned by the enemy.

Hair-Trigger Pete and his gang had already learned that they could not carry the schoolhouse by assault, defended by the bunch. The latter would rather have welcomed a fresh attack to break the monotony with a little liveliness. They had no doubt about being able to defend the barricade in the doorway.

Desks and forms and other furniture were stacked there, with planks, from interior walls, nailed to them. The gang had tried it and failed, and they were welcome to try again, if they had a lurch to do so.

Now a number of roughnecks had gone out at the gate, and some of the bunch wondered whether they had

"They got us!" said Poker Parker.

"Aw, can it!" growled Slick. "They ain't got us yet, not by long chalks they ain't, and I'll say there'll be cracked cabezas afore they horn into this hyer shebang."

The roughnecks dumped down the log at a little distance from the schoolhouse porch, out of range of missiles.

There the whole gang gathered round it with grinning faces. There was a sour grin on Job Wash's fat face as he gave his men directions. This was the big idea that the chairman of the school committee had thought of. And the bunch had to admit that it looked like a cinch.

Once they were at close quarters, Hair-Trigger Pete and his gang were too tough a proposition for a bunch of schoolboys. And once the barricade was knocked away, they would get to close quarters.

Dick Carr set his teeth.

"We're fighting it out!" he said. "You said it!"

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The bunch gathered behind the barricade in the doorway of the school-house. Every hand grasped a weapon—a ruler, a pointer, a cudgel, or a quiet. There were going to be hard knocks, given and received, when the barricade was down, and the Packsaddle bunch braced themselves for the fray.

"Here they come!"

The whole gang of roughnecks grasped the heavy log and lifted it. In the grasp of a dozen hefty men, it was easy enough to handle, heavy as it was.

They came on with a rush, heading for the doorway, Mr. Wash and Elias Scadder watching them from a safer distance.

Missiles flew through the openings of the barricade. A bully beef can, empty and rather jagged in its edges, caught Hair-Trigger Pete under the chin as he came within range. He gave a roar like an enraged buffalo, but he came on. With a rush, the log was brought to bear on the barricade in the doorway.

Crash!

The whole structure rocked under the terrific shock. Two or three of the desks smashed to fragments. The front end of the log was buried in the stack.

Through the interstices the bunch lunged with their weapons, but the assailants were out of reach. Grinning, the roughnecks jerked out the log, and retired for another charge.

"I guess that stack won't stand more'n one or two of them sock-dolagers!" said Pie Sanders ruefully. "They'll be at us then."

"Stick to it!" said Slick. "Every man's got to hit his durndest when they come on. Say, where's that guy Mick?"

Mick had left the bunch. Dick Carr stared round for him. It was not like Mick Kavanagh to ride clear when a shindy was on.

"Mick!" shouted Dick Carr.

"Aw, lave me be!" came back Mick's voice from Bill's room. "I guess I got something to surprise them hombres."

Dick ran across and looked into Bill's room. Mick was stacking pine chips into the stove, and it was roaring into the iron chimney. The long iron poker was sticking in the fire. To the safe end of it, Mick had bound a six-foot rail with a length of cord.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Dick.

"Aw, watch out and you'll see!" answered Mick over his shoulder. "Don't chew the rag when a guy's busy."

"They're coming agin!" shouted Poindexter.

"Come on, Mick, you fathead!" exclaimed Dick Carr, and he rushed back to the barricade.

Hair-Trigger and his gang were coming on again. They had retired to a distance to get force for the rush. Now they came on with the log, and it crashed on the barricade a second time, smashing desks and benches right and left. Half a dozen of the stacked desks rolled down, crashing, and the schoolboys had to jump clear.

They shouted defiance at the enemy. But they could do nothing else, and Hair-Trigger grinned at them, as his gang dragged the log back again.

"I guess you're getting yours, you young ginks!" shouted the red-bearded bullwhacker. "I'll say we'll be in that shebang in two shakes of a possum's tail. I guess you got it coming."

A whizzing inkpot caught him in the eye, and he yelled and retired. Once more the gang gathered at a distance for a rush with the battering-ram.

"I reckon that will work the raffle!" said Slick Poindexter coolly. "That stack won't stand against it! We got to scrap!"

"We're ready!" said Dick between his teeth.

"I should smile!" agreed Poindexter. "Stand to it, you guys, and wherever you see a cabeza hit it, and hit it hard."

"You bet!"

"Here they come!"

On came the roughneck gang, and the heavy log crashed again with a

thunderous crash! That did it! Right and left crashed the piled furniture, rolling and tumbling. The way was open to the roughnecks—they had only to scramble over and through the ruins of the barricade.

That was not an easy task with the way cumbered with broken and piled furniture, and the bunch standing ready to hit every head that came within reach. But the bullwhackers came on, with quirts in their hands for use as soon as they reached the defenders.

"Get them!" roared Hair-Trigger.

And he led the way, scrambling headlong through the wreckage, his men after him. Job Wash, at a distance, grinned with satisfaction. This was the finish, Job reckoned. A few minutes more, and the bunch would be down and out, and Scadder's cane, well laid on, would put them wise to the fact that it did not pay to resist the authority of the chairman of the Packsaddle school committee.

"Say, stand clear, you uns!" came a yell from Mick Kavanagh.

He came running out of Bill's room with the rail in his hands. At the end of the rail was the long iron poker—glowing red!

"Oh, great jumping Jehosaphat!" panted Slick. "Mick, you galoot—"

"Good man!" roared Dick Carr. He understood now.

The bunch gave Mick room. Holding the safe end of the rail in both hands, Mick Kavanagh thrust the red-hot poker through the piled wreckage of the barricade.

Hair-Trigger Pete was almost through the pile when the business-end of the poker jammed into his ribs.

The yell that came from Hair-Trigger might have been heard from the Rio Frio to the town of Packsaddle. "Yoo-hoo-hooop!"

Hair-Trigger roared and bounded. One more shove at the tumbling wreckage of the barricade would have brought Hair-Trigger through. But he did not give that shove! Hair-Trigger was a determined ruffian, but the most determined bullwhacker in Santanta County would not have stopped to argue with a red-hot poker jamming in his ribs. Hair-Trigger Pete bounded back, crashing into Yuma Dave and Tanglefoot, sending both of them sprawling on their backs.

Mick, grinning, lunged again. Three or four of the gang were within reach of the long rail with the poker fastened to its end. They did not remain within reach!

One touch of the glowing end of the poker was enough—more than enough!

A few moments ago the whole gang had been shoving and crashing through the wrecked barricade—and less than a minute would have seen them at close quarters, with the upper hand. But the lunges of the red-hot poker made all the difference. One tap was enough to send the toughest of the gang yelling out of reach.

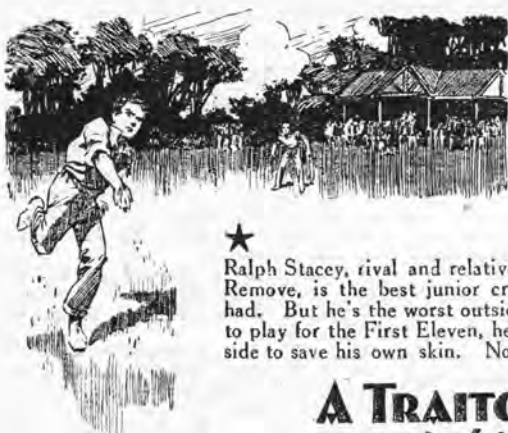
They packed in front of the porch, spluttering with rage, three or four of them rubbing places where the hot metal had touched, wriggling and howling like prairie wolves.

Job Wash, in the rear, waved his fat hands and yelled:

"Go on! Get in! Do you hear me? Go on at once!"

They heard him, but they did not heed. Hair-Trigger Pete, bent almost double, with a hand pressed to his ribs where the poker had poked, stamped away yelling. A flannel shirt was not

(Continued on page 23.)



Ralph Stacey, rival and relative of Harry Wharton, of the Remove, is the best junior cricketer Greyfriars has ever had. But he's the worst outsider for, after being selected to play for the First Eleven, he does not scruple to sell his side to save his own skin. No GEM reader should miss

A TRAITOR to his SIDE!

by FRANK RICHARDS

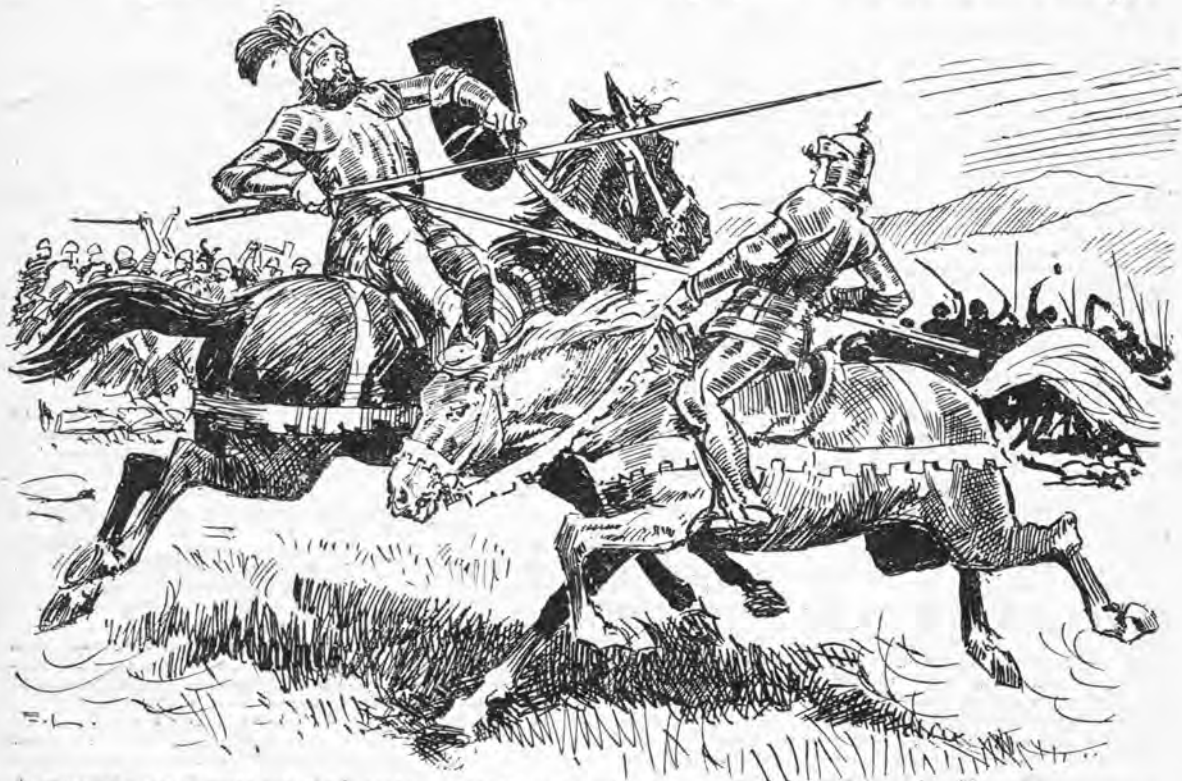
the grand school story of HARRY WHARTON & Co., which appears in to-day's issue of

The MAGNET

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The SECRET WORLD!



Handforth's lance, quite out of his control as his horse stumbled, swept clumsily round and caught in Kassker's armour as the two horses passed. The next moment the ruler of the Gothlanders was knocked off his horse and fell with a crash to the ground.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Handy Goes Into Battle!

THE big battle for supremacy in the secret world has just begun—a death-or-glory struggle between Northstria and Gothland, the two enemy countries of a hidden medieval land in the Arctic.

On the side of the Northstrians are the boys of St. Frank's, Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, and others, who were all marooned in the secret world. From a safe distance they watch anxiously the final fight, for on Northstria's victory depends their lives!

An outlet from the strange, almost-impenetrable land has been discovered, but the St. Frank's adventurers hesitate to take it until word is wireless to them from the British Government that help is on the way. For the outlet—an immense tunnel penetrating a mountainous barrier—leads out into the unknown snowbound wastes of the Arctic.

Edward Oswald Handforth, the impetuous St. Frank's junior, decides that he's going into battle, and although his chums try to prevent him, he breaks loose and makes a dash for it.

Within a moment Handforth was through the clump of trees and racing down the grassy slopes into the valley—well screened from all the other watchers.

Church and McClure were in a dreadful quandary. They hesitated for only a moment. If they shouted to the other fellows, precious time would be lost before the situation was appreciated. And by then, perhaps, Handforth would be out of sight. Handforth's chums reached the same decision simultaneously.

"Come on!" gasped Church. "We've got to drag him back!"

"Just what I was thinking!" muttered McClure. "Oh, the hopeless idiot!"

They burst into the trees, careless of whether they were seen or not, and raced down the slope in pursuit of their leader. At all events, they had kept their word—they had honoured their pledge. But they had made no promise to the effect that they would not drag Handforth back by force!

They ran madly, and they were only just in time, for Handforth was vanishing into a thick wood two hundred yards away to the left. And beyond this wood, the Northstrian second line was close at hand! Once through, Handforth would be in the heart of the battle!

"We've got to get him!" panted Church fiercely.

And they did get him, too! Before Edward Oswald had penetrated a dozen yards into the wood, two figures came charging on him from the rear, and as

he spun round he recognised his chums. They simply fell upon him and held him.

"Now, you madman, you're coming back with us!" said McClure harshly.

"What the— You silly idiots!" roared Handforth, in amazement. "Lemme go! I didn't tell you to come after me!"

"We know you didn't—but we're here," replied Church. "We'll give you your choice, Handy! You can either come back quietly, or we'll smash you to pulp and carry you back!"

"One or the other!" said McClure.

"Great Scott!" breathed Handforth. "Then—then you mean to prevent my going into battle, eh?"

"Yes, we do!" they declared in one voice.

"Oh, all right!" thundered Handforth. "We'll see about that!"

Church and McClure had seen their leader in a determined mood on many an occasion, but never had they seen him so ferociously bull-doggish as he was now.

He gave one tremendous heave, and his chums were flung aside like ninepins. And Handforth stood there, his eyes blazing, his fists clenched.

"Come on!" he roared. "You're going to smash me to pulp, are you? We'll see about that, as I said before!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,429.

"I'm going into this battle, but I never expected to fight my own chums as a preliminary!"

"Be reasonable, Handy!" urged Church. "Think of Willy and your sister! Besides, Mr. Lee gave orders—"

"I'm ashamed of Mr. Lee!" interrupted Handforth bitterly. "He's a fine commander-in-chief! He plans out this campaign, and then avoids the fighting at the last minute!"

Church and McClure blazed up.

"You rotter!" shouted Church hotly. "You know as well as I do that both Mr. Lee and Dorrie were as keen as mustard on leading the troops—but Ethelbert was against it. He wanted this engagement to be fought out between the Northestrians and the Gothlanders alone. Mr. Lee only relinquished the active leadership under protest! Are you trying to make out he's a coward—you slandering boulder!"

Handforth recoiled from that seathing outburst.

"You're right!" he admitted. "I apologise. After all, Mr. Lee is one of the best in the world, and Ethelbert is the chap to blame! But I'm not taking any notice of it; I'm going into this fight!"

"It'll be all wrong!" urged Church. "These Northestrians don't want us to be mixed up in this battle at all. It's their own affair, pure and simple—"

"Besides, what about the princess?" put in McClure, his eyes gleaming. "What about the lovely Mercia? She's as keen as mustard on you, Handy, and she'd be awfully upset if you got hurt—"

"Stop!" roared Handforth furiously. "All unconsciously McClure had settled the issue. The very mention of the fair princess aroused Handforth to fever pitch. Ever since the party had arrived, Mercia had expressed wonderful faith in Handforth's prowess as a warrior. What would she say when she heard that her hero had taken no active part in the engagement?"

"That's done it!" declared Edward Oswald. "I'm going!"

There was such a world of determination in his voice that Church and McClure waited no longer. With one accord they flung themselves at their obstinate leader, and he was nearly bowled over. And the next moment a terrific tussle was in progress.

It was over very swiftly.

In ordinary circumstances, Church and McClure, combined, could deal very effectively with their hot-headed chum. But just now Handforth was a giant. He flung them off. Dazed and dizzy, Church crashed in one direction and McClure in the other.

"I don't like doing it, but you forced me to it," said Handforth darkly. "I wanted to part friends—in case of accidents. But you've chosen otherwise, so you can go and eat coke!"

He swung off and vanished amid the trees. His unfortunate chums were too dazed to make any further move. They sprawled there, gradually recovering.

And Handforth pushed his way deeper and deeper into the wood, and emerged at last on the farther side. As he came out into the open again, he checked. He stood there, momentarily at a loss.

"By George!" he murmured breathlessly.

He had been impressed by the sight of the battle from the hilltop, but that view had been as nothing compared to the scene which now unfolded itself before his eyes. He was almost in the

heart of the battle. The men were fighting in long, serried ranks not a couple of hundred yards from him. The Gothlander flank had worked round, and a desperate fight was in progress close by. The air was filled with shouts and cries. Lances were flashing, and arrows were hissing through the air in all directions. Two of them, indeed, hit the ground near Handforth, their force spent. But they reminded him of how close he was to the fighting.

And now, for the first time, he really hesitated.

Dimly he remembered what Church and McClure had said, and it seemed to him that their warning had been justified. What chance would he have here? He was unarmed, he was not even wearing chainmail, and these Gothlanders were giant brutes who fought like savages.

But just at that moment Fate intervened. A Northestrian officer, a glitter with dazzling armour, came galloping out of the confusion on his great charger. He was only a dozen yards from Handforth when he sagged in the saddle, and fell to the ground with a jarring crash. The horse reared up, and then turned. There was something rather pathetic in the way in which the animal walked up and sniffed at the fallen rider.

Handforth did not hesitate a moment. He ran forward and bent down over the fallen officer. He removed his great helmet with difficulty. A pale, drawn face was revealed.

"Hurt?" asked Handforth anxiously. "Tis naught—a mere arrow in the side," replied the other with difficulty. "The accursed dogs found a chink in my armour, beshrew them! 'Twould be a relief, good youth, if thou didst withdraw the vile thing."

Gently Handforth turned the injured man over, and he shuddered slightly as he saw the arrow-shaft protruding from a gap in the armour. Blood was oozing forth, too. With set teeth Handforth grasped the arrow and withdrew it with a tug.

The officer gave a gasp of anguish and sank back unconscious. The sudden pain had been too much for him. Handforth, sickened, flung the arrow aside. And just at that moment he saw, out of the corner of his eye, Church and McClure emerging from the wood.

"Hi!" he yelled. "Come here—quick!"

The pair, bewildered by the close proximity of the fighting, ran up.

"Handy!" panted Church. "You can't stay here—"

"Help me to take this chap's armour off!" commanded Handforth. "He's winged—pretty badly, I think. Come on—no arguments!"

Church and McClure said nothing. They were ready enough to succour an injured man. With deft fingers they helped Handforth to remove the officer's armour, and within a few moments the unfortunate man was stretched out on the grass, as pale as death, and with blood still surging from that ugly wound.

"I'll leave him in your charge," said Handforth briskly. "There's a little pool in the wood—a spring. Get some water, bathe his wound, and make him as comfortable as you can. You fetch the water, Mac, and— Not you, Churchy! I want your help!"

McClure went off, and Church prepared to help the injured man.

"No, I want you here," said Handforth curtly. "You can see about this poor chap when Mac comes back. Lend a hand with this armour."

Church stared blankly.

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

"Put it on!"

"But—you don't mean—"

"D'you think I'm going to waste a chance like this?" said Handforth triumphantly. "Armour—lance—horse! Everything I need! By George, I'm sorry for this poor chap here, but if he had to be winged, I'm glad he was winged at this particular spot! It's my chance to go into the battle equipped in the right way!"

Handforth's Amazing Exploit!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH meant it, too!

"Think carefully, old man!" said Church huskily. "This chap was badly hit, and the armour didn't protect him very much, did it? If you go into the thick of the fighting—"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth. "It was just a fluke—a chance in a thousand. Lend me a hand with this breastplate. How the dickens do they wangle these silly things? I've a good mind to go off without bothering about the giddy armour."

"No!" gasped Church. "I'll help you!"

He could see that his leader was obsessed, and no amount of argument would turn him from his purpose. So Church helped, with eager hands, to fix the armour. If Handforth was really set upon going, he would stand more chance if he was thus protected.

"Now the helmet!" said Edward Oswald at last. "By George! Of all the clumsy apparatus! Steady on, there! You'll have my nose off! Whoa! Easy, you fathead!"

Somehow he managed to squeeze the helmet on his head, and then he discovered that he could see perfectly, although the visor was closed. With clanking footsteps he strode across to the waiting horse, and with Church's assistance he mounted. And just then McClure came back, carrying some water in a big, cup-like leaf which he had pulled from the undergrowth. He paused, wondering why Church was talking to this impressive-looking officer in armour.

"Where's Handy?" he shouted anxiously.

"I'm here!" replied Handforth, pushing up the visor and revealing his face. "You chaps had better attend to that wounded man, and then bunk back to the rest of the crowd. I'll join you later on, after I've had my smack at Kassker's lot!"

He closed the visor again, wheeled his horse round, and galloped off into the thick of the fighting. He had no fixed idea as to what he should do. But he knew where the battle was hottest, and his one idea was to get there.

He had not even taken a survey of the general situation. If he had done, he might have been greatly encouraged. For, without doubt, the Northestrians were slowly but surely gaining the ascendancy. The tide of battle had turned, and the invaders were fighting desperately to maintain their ground.

The Gothlanders' first line had been practically cut to pieces, and the second line was now hotly engaged. Owing to superior skill, the Northestrian bowmen had succeeded in cutting up the Gothlanders' chief army of assault. Kassker's picked troops were strewn over the battlefield, dead or dying, and many others were in full retreat.

Triumphantly the Northestrians were pressing on.

And Kassker the Grim, seeing how things were going, was determined to put an end to this retreat. On his great charger, he was plunging into the thick of the fighting, urging his men on. As in the days of old, these overlords led their own men into battle.

Kassker was a prominent figure in his special armour. His great frame, too, could not be mistaken. And although arrows hissed about him, and many of them struck his armour, he still rode on.

It was more by chance than anything else that Handforth caught sight of the enemy chief, and Handforth gulped. He had seen Kassker before—during a raid into Gothland—and he knew that armour well. Quite apart from this, Kassker had contemptuously opened up his visor, and his evil face, with its short, black beard, was clearly visible. That beard had been long at one time, but Nelson Lee had clipped it during that eventful raid.

"By George!" breathed Handforth. "Kassker himself!"

He saw nothing of the turmoil about him. He gave no heed to the dangers. Here was Kassker, and, by an extraordinary chance, there seemed to be a channel through the human confusion. Handforth spurred his horse on instinctively, and he gripped his lance with a firm, fierce determination.

An opportunity to get to blows with Kassker himself!

That was the only thought that filled Handforth's mind now. He didn't seem to realise that the whole thing was due to sheer coincidence. How could he have known that Kassker would appear at this one particular spot? As events turned out, there was something providential in the immediate turn of events. And, Edward Oswald Handforth's

astounding luck did not desert him in this moment of stark peril.

For, without doubt, death was very near him then.

He didn't realise it; he didn't give the matter a thought. Here was Kassker, and that was enough for him! He was contemptuous of the hissing arrows, and as for the rest of the enemy, Handforth never saw them. He charged on, full tilt, and the next moment he found himself hurtling forward upon the supreme chief of the enemy forces.

All those about him momentarily checked in the battle. Kassker was leading a picked regiment of lancers, and they were thundering down upon the Northestrian infantry with devastating effect. In this particular section of the line the Gothlanders were stemming the retreat.

But all paused as Handforth's great charger galloped up. A gasp rose from many throats, for it was clear that this unknown Northestrian officer was to give battle to Kassker. And at the last moment Handforth flung up his visor, and his face was revealed.

"By the bones of Offa!" roared Kassker. "A boy! Pah! I make short work of such!"

At the same moment both he and Handforth charged. And if Edward Oswald had been close to death before, he was now on the very brink of it. He seemed to realise it, too. When it was too late, he knew that he was no match for this brutal warrior. His own lance was held clumsily, for he was no expert. Kassker, on the other hand, was coming at him with an inexorable purpose. His lance was ready for the death-thrust. Kassker was contemptuous of this boy who had dared to challenge him.

And it was at this critical moment that Handforth's luck revealed itself.

As Kassker's lance made its thrust, so Handforth's horse stumbled. The animal lurched sideways, and the lance shot harmlessly over the junior's head. But more than that. The Removite's own lance, quite out of his control, swept clumsily round, and caught in a portion of Kassker's armour as the two horses swept past one another.

A roar of consternation went up from all the watching Gothlanders.

For Kassker was knocked off his horse, and he fell with a crash to the ground. His lance snapped in two with a report like a pistol-shot. Handforth reined in, trembling from head to foot. At last he knew how foolhardy he had been. But it was too late to back out.

The Fall of Kassker!

"By George!" muttered Handforth, aghast.

He had wheeled his horse round, and he saw that scores of Gothlander cavalymen were practically upon him. They could have killed him on the spot, but Kassker's proximity saved him. None of those men dared act. They were startled, too, by the dramatic fall of their commander.

In the other direction, the Northestrians had rallied, and a mounted officer was thundering out his orders. Handforth dimly seemed to recognise the voice, and he glanced round and beheld Wynwed the Jovial.

Wynwed was in the act of snatching a bow from one of the Northestrian archers, and the next second an arrow was quivering on the string. Wynwed was taking aim.

(Continued on the next page.)

WIN THAT RACE!

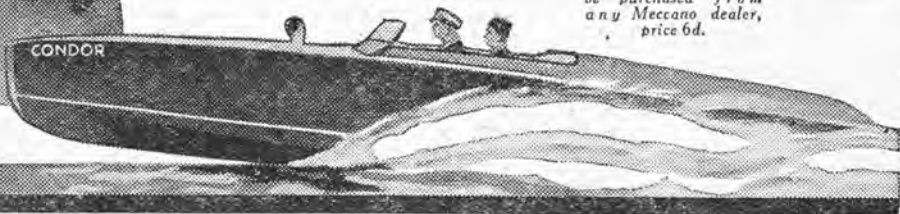
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Cursing horribly, Kassker the Grim had got to his feet, and was mounting his horse once more.

"By my soul, this puppy shall pay!" he thundered. "Kill him, ye fools! Nay, hold! That will I do myself!"

He swung his horse round, and the animal reared up with a shrill whinny of agony as his rider's spurs gashed deeply into his flank. And Wynwed's arrow came hissing across the intervening space at that crucial moment.

The rearing of the horse saved Kassker for the moment, for the shaft struck the unfortunate animal, and once again Kassker was flung off. For the beast reared madly. With a bellow of excitement Handforth flung himself from his own steed and rushed up.

Crash!

Handforth's right swept round and caught Kassker full in the face just as he had pulled himself to his feet for the second time. Handforth had told Church and McClure that he might use his fists, but he had never really believed that such a thing would be possible!

Kassker reeled away, and then the turning-point of the battle was decided. For Kassker's great charger, mortally hurt by that arrow, had reared for the last time. Kassker backed into the poor brute, and received the full weight of the horse as it crashed over.

There was a sickening sound of crumpling armour, and four of Kassker's close attendants rushed up, careless of death, and dragged the dying animal aside. A dead man was revealed.

Kassker the Grim had fallen!

There was something rather startling in the fact that here, in the thick of the battle, he should have been killed by his own horse and mainly because of his ill-treatment of the unfortunate animal. Wynwed's arrow had merely proved the last straw, for the beast had already been maddened.

One glance at the poor animal was enough to convince anybody of this, for both his flanks were torn to ribbons by Kassker's savage spurs. And there lay the chief of all the Gothlanders, the life crushed out of him by the dead weight of that falling mass.

"By my faith!" gasped one of the attendants. "He is dead!"

Kassker dead!

The word passed from man to man, and the shout was taken up all over the field of battle.

Handforth, rather dazed, found Wynwed by his side, and the kindly Northestrian was deeply concerned.

"Get thee gone, good youth!" he urged. "'Twas a wondrous deed, but thy peril is great—"

"Kassker's dead!" gasped Handforth. "And I—I sloshed him on the jaw!"

"Ay, 'twas that blow which settled the issue!" declared Wynwed. "For as Kassker staggered back, so he fell. But let us not talk, or these words will be our last!"

Somehow Handforth got on to his horse again. But he didn't make any attempt to get out of the battle, although his enthusiasm had evaporated. At close quarters he could see the grim, ghastly nature of this field. Dead and dying were strewn everywhere, and the plucky schoolboy was horrified. He wanted to get away—to breathe the pure air of the hilltop—but he wasn't going to show the white feather.

And a complete change had come about, too.

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Like a flame the news of Kassker's death had swept through the entire Gothlander army. Kassker's own cavalry, instead of charging to the attack, wheeled round and retreated. Without their leader they were a mere rabble. As they heard of Kassker's end, so they lost their courage.

And the Northestrians, quick to take advantage of the change, swept onwards along the entire line. Orders were being shouted by the mounted officers, and the men were eager to obey.

The enemy was on the run!

Down rushed the defenders, and the invading hosts were flung into further disorder. Before five minutes had elapsed the Gothlanders had ceased to be an army. As far as the eye could reach, the entire enemy line was in retreat, fleeing from their victorious conquerors.

Kassker was dead—and the Gothlanders had become a disorderly mob.

Kassker had held his men together by brute force—by an iron-fisted rule. And the sudden knowledge of his death was like the lifting of a sword from above their heads. Their desire to win had gone. And the Northestrian troops, sweeping upon them, proved too much.

The invaders were routed—fleeing madly.

On the hilltop the sudden, dramatic change had been noted by all. It had seemed to come all in a moment, without any reason. At one second the two armies were fiercely engaged, and then, like a miracle, the Gothlanders were running.

"Hurrah!" yelled Tommy Watson. "They're retreating!"

"Good gad! It's not a retreat. Laddies, it's a dashed rout, what?" exclaimed Archie Glenthorne. "I mean to say, a jolly old stampede, as it were. Three priceless old cheers, old bean!" They all watched, flushed with excitement.

And up the hillside at that very moment came Church and McClure. Handforth's chums had given the wounded officer over into the care of his friends, and they had been advised to get out of harm's way. They were safe, but their hearts were leaden.

"The Gothlanders are whacked!" said Church dully, as he turned and watched the great defeat.

"What does it matter?" muttered McClure. "Poor old Handy's gone!"

"It—it seems too awful!" said Church brokenly.

Not a doubt lingered in their minds regarding Handforth's fate. They had seen him charge into the thick of the fighting, and they had seen, in a confused sort of way, that affair with Kassker. Handforth had vanished amid the mix-up, and no sign of him had been seen since. It was only too clear that he had fallen during that crucial minute.

His chums knew that Kassker was dead—for the word had reached them clearly. Hundreds of voices had shouted out the message, and the reason for the stampede was clear to them.

But they didn't particularly care.

Handforth had gone—he was lost for ever. Later, perhaps, he would be picked up from the battlefield. And Church and McClure dragged themselves wearily up the hillside.

At last they broke through the trees at the top, and found everybody bubbling over with excitement and jubilation. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimer had returned from the ship at the first word of retreat, and were watching with intense satisfaction.

"That's one point settled, anyway," Dorrie was saying. "Within three or

four hours the whole circus will be over. Not many of those beggars will escape across the lake, I'll warrant."

"No, they'll be taken prisoners," agreed Nelson Lee. "Kassker's entire invading army, Dorrie—routed and cut to pieces."

"An' all your doing, old man."

"Nonsense," frowned Nelson Lee. "I may have helped in the training of these soldiers, but—"

"That's all right!" grinned his lordship. "You didn't plan the whole campaign, did you? You didn't give the Northestrian officers their full instructions, eh? You didn't—Hallo! What's the matter with these chaps? They don't look particularly cheerful!"

He was regarding Church and McClure. Others had seen the dejected aspect of the pair, too, and a crowd was gathering round them. For the moment the great scene below was forgotten.

"Anything wrong?" asked Nipper, as he seized McClure's arm. "Where's Handy? Where—Mac!" he burst out, a sudden suspicion coming to him. "You don't mean to say that Handy—"

"Yes!" muttered McClure miserably. "He went into battle—and we saw nothing more of him! He's dead! The poor chap's been killed!"

Handy the Conqueror!

"KILLED!"

"Handforth dead!"

"Great Scott!"

"Ods horrors and tragedies!"

"It's not true!" shouted Willy, running up and glaring fiercely at the two chums of Study D. "Where was Ted last? Why did you let him go? Why didn't you tell the rest of us?"

"One moment!" interrupted Nelson Lee quietly. "Church, McClure! Is it true that Handforth disobeyed my orders, and joined in the fighting?"

"Yes, sir," said Church unhappily. "We warned him before he went—"

"Then you knew of his mad enterprise, even before he ventured upon it?" asked Lee sharply.

"Yes, sir."

"Then why did you not get these other boys to help you?" demanded Lee angrily. "You know what a rash, impetuous youngster—"

"But he pledged us to silence, sir?" broke in McClure in self-defence. "He told us he had a secret, and he made us promise, on our word of honour, that we wouldn't give him away. But we thought it was only some of his usual rot—we never dreamed that he was planning to enter the battle!"

"It knocked us all of a heap, sir," said Church.

"In the circumstances, you would have been justified in calling for help—to hold Handforth on the spot by force," said Nelson Lee gravely. "However, I cannot blame you for keeping your word—on the contrary, I admire you for it. Let me know the exact details."

They all crowded round, listening eagerly as Church and McClure described the recent events.

"He went into the thick of the fighting, sir, and we lost sight of him just about the time that Kassker fell," finished up Church, in a husky voice. "Of course, we were a long way off, and we could only see the affair in general, but Handy didn't show up again, and then we came away. Everything was confusion and noise—and it was horrible, sir," he added, with a gulp. "I—I don't want to see it again!"

"Me, neither!" said McClure hoarsely.

"And Ted was in the middle of it?" said Willy Handforth, turning aside. "Who's game to come down with me?" he asked. "Who'll help me to find Ted on the battlefield?"

"I forbid anything of the sort, Willy," said Nelson Lee quietly.

"But it's all safe now, sir," urged Willy. "The fighting has passed on—the Gothlanders are in full retreat, and they'll be miles away by the time we get down—"

"That is not the point," broke in Lee. "I cannot allow any of you boys to go on such a mission. I will send a number of men down at once, and they will make a full search. Let us hope that Handforth is only wounded—although I fear that that is too optimistic a view. What a foolhardy boy! And yet, at the same time, what a proof of his spirit!"

"All these chaps have the same spirit," growled Willy. "I had it, too—only we're capable of holding ourselves in check. Ted's such an impetuous fathead that he needs chaining up at a time like this. Why didn't we think of it? Goodness knows, we've had enough lessons! He's always been the same!"

Nipper shook his head. "We're mostly to blame, you chaps," he said quietly. "We ought to have kept our eyes open. But we never imagined that Handy would be such a reckless ass. And you saw him right in the heart of the fighting, Mac?"

"Yes."

"You didn't actually see him fall?"

"Well, no."

"Then, begad, perhaps there's a chance," said Sir Montie. "We all know what a frightfully lucky chap he is."

"Oh, what's the good of kidding us?" asked Church bitterly. "Haven't I told you that he was in the very thick of the battle? How could he have escaped? Be reasonable! How was it possible for him to have—"

Somebody gave a sudden shout. "Look!" yelled the voice. "Who's this coming up the slope?"

Everybody ran madly to the top of the hill, where a good view could be obtained. A figure was ascending the long slope. But if any of the juniors had felt a momentary hope, it was quickly dashed to the ground. For this figure was in armour. He was obviously a Northeistrian officer—probably a slightly wounded man, who was coming out of the conflict.

"You idiot!" growled Fullwood, glaring at Jack Grey. "What did you want to shout like that for?"

"It wasn't me!" protested Jack. "De Valerie was the fellow who—"

"Wait a minute!" gasped Church, his face flushing. "Look! His walk! I'd be willing to swear—"

"Besides, that's just like the armour that Handy put on," broke in McClure. "By Jupiter! It can't possibly be—"

Look! He's waving!"

"It's Handy!" yelled Church frantically.

"Hurrah!"

"Handy's alive!"

"All this fuss for nothing!" said Willy indignantly. "Just like Ted to give everybody a scare! We might have known!"

Notwithstanding his indignant tone, Willy was far more relieved than he would even admit. Everybody was rushing down to meet that approaching figure, and nobody had any further doubts. The fellow was Handforth—without question. Nelson Lee and Lord Dormore glanced at one another rather grimly, and went down to meet him, too.

"Amazin'!" murmured Dorrie. "That's all I can say!"

They found a yelling crowd surrounding Edward Oswald. He regarded the fellows not only with astonishment, but with exasperation.

"What's all the fuss about?" he asked tartly.

"You're alive, Handy!" panted Church. "You're safe!"

"Of course I'm alive!" replied Handforth. "What else did you expect? Didn't I tell you that I should join you later? What's the good of me saying things if you don't take any notice?"

"But—but aren't you hurt?" demanded a dozen voices.

"Of course I'm not hurt, fatheads!"

"Yes, but you went into the thick of the battle—"

"What's that got to do with it?" broke in the leader of Study D. "How can anybody get hurt in this rigour? I'm like a giddy sardine in a tin! I'm perspiring from every pore, and I can't unfasten the beastly stuff. For goodness' sake, lend a hand, you asses!"

There were many willing assistants, and Handforth was soon relieved of the cumbersome armour. Even if the juniors didn't see it, Nelson Lee observed that Handforth, in spite of his heat, was looking pale and haggard. He had none of his usual bluster.

"You disobeyed me, Handforth," said Nelson Lee sternly.

"I know, sir—and I wish I hadn't," replied Edward Oswald. "By George, I've had enough, sir! I—I didn't think it would be so ghastly as all that! War's horrible, sir!"

"Unfortunately, war is sometimes thrust upon us, whether we want it or not," replied Lee. "I think you have

had your lesson, Handforth, so I'll say no more. To tell you the truth, my relief at seeing you alive is so great that I cannot find it in my heart to censure you."

Handforth looked grateful. "Well, anyway, sir, Kasker's dead, and the battle's won," he said quietly. "I've done my bit—I turned the tide of the whole engagement, so I'm not grumbling."

More Excitement!

"YOU turned the tide?" repeated Nipper curiously.

"Of course I did!" replied Handforth. "Didn't I slosh

Kasker on the jaw?"

"What?"

"Great Scott!"

"You punched Kasker!"

Everybody shouted at once, and Nelson Lee's eyes twinkled. He wasn't at all surprised to hear this extraordinary piece of news. It was just the sort of insane exploit that Handforth would indulge in.

"You are serious, Handforth?" he asked.

"Rather, sir," replied Edward Oswald. "I went for Kasker, you know, and I thought it was all up with me at first. But I biffed him off his horse with my lance—"

"Draw it mild, old son!"

"It's a fact!" retorted Handforth. "It was an accident, I'll confess, but I biffed him off, all the same! Then I jumped down and caught him a beauty on the jaw—one of my special rights!"

"Good gad!"

"Handy, you're a living wonder!"

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"And after that Kassker was killed," said Handforth sombrely. "I believe I was responsible, in a way. You see, that right of mine sent him staggering back, and his horse fell on him at the same moment. It was all over in a flash!" he added, with a shiver.

"Yes, but what happened?"

"I don't want to talk about it," interrupted Handforth. "I want to get to the ship—I want to have a bath. I'm going to change my clothes, and try to forget everything. That battlefield was too awful for words!"

"Handy the Conqueror!" said Reggie Pitt, with a chuckle. "He settled old Kassker, and if it hadn't been for that fluke the battle might have gone very differently. What a piece of luck!"

Everybody expected Handforth to brag—for, after all, he really had done something to brag about. But the leader of Study D never did what people expected of him. He was utterly subdued. His adventures on the battlefield had sickened him, and he did no crowing.

Within half an hour the entire party was on board the Spitfire, joyous in the knowledge that the battle of Donstank had been decisively won by Northestria. Unloosely turned up by this time, too—wounded in several places, but perfectly happy. He had been in the thick of the fighting, and had done sterling work with his trusty spear.

News came that the majority of the Gothlanders had surrendered. The Northestrians were finding it difficult to cope with the prisoners. A few remnants of the enemy had escaped inland, but were being rounded up. The rout was complete in every detail. The savage Gothlanders were quelled for all time, and Northestria's menace was dead.

A meal was the first item on the programme now, and nobody grumbled at the rough-and-ready fare which was provided. This ship was not equipped with luxurious saloons, and everybody was obliged to rough it, more or less. But even Irene & Co. were cheerful. They rather enjoyed the adventure.

And now that the battle was over, and the peril at an end, every mind was full of other thoughts. What of the chances of escape?

Nelson Lee made an announcement during the meal.

"I have said nothing before, but I think you had all better know the truth now," he declared. "Three hours ago we had an official wireless communication from the British naval authorities. A fleet of giant seaplanes is definitely setting out into the Arctic at once."

"Hurrah!"

"Then we're going to be rescued, sir?"

"The Navy's going to take us away from here!"

"We must not be too sure," warned Nelson Lee. "These seaplane pilots are brave men—they are risking their lives in this venture, for it is a very doubtful expedition. If we escape it will be almost providential."

"Are they coming right into the oasis, sir?"

"I have warned them to make no such attempt," replied Lee. "The pilots have received definite instructions. When they get near the vicinity of this volcanic region they will fly low, in an attempt to escape the eternal storms which rage in the upper air. It is their only possible chance of reaching us. They are setting off down the lake now, within the hour. We shall attempt to make the passage through the long tunnel."

"We shall do it, too, sir!"

"Rather!"

"Dorrie got through, so why can't we?"

"It doesn't follow, young 'uns," said Lord Dorrmore. "I was using the motor-boat, remember, an' I had a bit of a struggle against the current. It'll be touch and go with this old tub, if I know anything!"

(Escape from the secret world is at last in sight, but the return journey will be full of danger for the St. Frank's boys. Don't miss next week's thrilling chapters.)

NO SURRENDER!

(Continued from page 22.)

much protection against a red-hot poker, and Pete felt hurt.

"Go on!" yelled Mr. Wash. "Go on!"

But they did not go on. Instead of advancing, they retreated. Mick Kavanagh, grinning with glee, came forward, lunging with his surprising weapon, and the roughnecks backed and backed—and finally scuttled after their leader. Job waved his fat hands and yelled in vain! Mick Kavanagh had put paid to the attack, the batter-

ing-rain lay where it had been dropped, and the enemy were in full retreat.

"Our game!" roared Slick Poin-dexter. "Mick, old-timer, I'll tell all Texas you're a whole team and a cross dog under the wagon!"

"Good old Mick!" chuckled Dick Carr.

"Sure we've bated them!" chorled Mick. "We've bated them intirely, and so we have! And sure I'll keep the poker in the stove ready for them next time."

"I guess there won't be no next time," chuckled Slick.

"And Slick was right."

The attack had failed, and Hair-Trigger Pete and his gang kept their distance. Dick Carr and the rest of the bunch laboured at repairing the

barricade without interference from the enemy. The great log was dragged in by the triumphant bunch safe from the roughnecks. It would not be used against them again. Behind their defences, the Packsaddle bunch were still unbeaten!

And when the sun went down again on the cow town school Job Wash had to make up his mind that there was nothing for it but to starve out the bunch. But whether the chairman of the Packsaddle school committee was going to get by with that remained to be seen.

(The rebels won that round, but can they hold out much longer without food? Look out for "THE HUNGRY REBELS!"—next week's smashing story.)

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