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THE  
**EMPIRE**  
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A COSY TEA-PARTY.

**COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS**

A New and Interesting Story for All.  
— BY —  
**MARTIN CLIFFORD**

Tom Merry and Co's Preparations.  
**W**HEALY, Lowther—  
"Look here, Tom Merry, I've got no more handkerchiefs," said Lowther. "I can't find any, Tom! You're a villainous duffer!"  
Tom Merry, having finished dusting, tossed the decidedly grimy handkerchief back to its owner.  
"There you are, Monty, my boy." Lowther took the handkerchief and looked warlike; but as he saw the end of a cambric handkerchief peep-  
ing out of D'Arcy's pocket, his frown changed to a grin. He crept gently and quietly behind the swell of St. Jim's.  
Tom Merry and Manners watched keenly.  
Lowther suddenly seized the elegant of the hostler, and pulled him back to the hostler, upon the hearthrug. D'Arcy gave a yell, the toast went

in one direction, and the fork in another.  
"Ow! Weally—"  
Lowther, quick as thought, jerked D'Arcy's handkerchief from his pocket, and rammed the soiled one in its place, and then dragged D'Arcy to his feet.  
"Sorry, old man," he said.  
"But Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You utah ast! I weally think I fearbous duffah! I weally think I fearbous duffah!"  
The swell of St. Jim's had not the slightest suspicion of the change made in the handkerchiefs. He was made in the handkerchiefs. He was thinking only of his rumpled jacket and his dusty trousers. He glared at Lowther with great wrath.  
"You utah ast!"  
"Eh, ha, ha!"  
"But Jove!"  
D'Arcy made a step towards the humors of the Shell. Monty Lowther retreated through the doorway, laughing.  
"Here, don't forget that toast."  
Lowther exclaimed Manners, as D'Arcy made a movement to pursue Lowther down the passage.  
"Weally, Manners—"

"You'll be late with it for tea."  
"Oh, vevy well! I will give time," said Arthur Augustus. And he returned to his occupation.  
The swell of St. Jim's made round after round of toast. His face was steadily growing to a beetroot colour from the heat of the fire; but he smelt manfully to his task, and the pile of toast on the plate on the fender grew and grew.  
Meanwhile, Tom Merry and Manners laid the cloth and set out the crockery—rather a crinkled and varied array of crockery. Tom Merry eyed it with a very doubtful expression.  
"Nip along the passages, and see what you can get, Manners, old man," he exclaimed.  
"High you are!" grumbled Manners.  
And he went. He returned in about five minutes laden with various crockery-ware. He also had a large Delt jug containing a bunch of big roses.  
"By Jove, that's nice!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I never thought of having flowers in the study, but it

will look ripping. Where did you get them?"  
"Borrowed 'em from Kildaro's study."  
"Kildare there!"  
"No."  
"Tom Merry laughed.  
"I hope Kildare won't miss them," he said.  
"Oh, he's not the chap to cut up rusty before girls!" said Manners easily. "Afterwards, it won't matter. Look here, we shall want some chairs."  
"Get 'em from somewhere."  
Manners departed. There was the sound of a soft voice in the passage. D'Arcy jumped up off the fender, very hot and perspiring.  
"But Jove, the gals, you know!"  
"As to in Tom Merry's Study, COUSIN ETHEL and Dolores came along the Shell passage, escorted by quite a little crowd of juniors. They arrived at the doorway of Tom Merry's study. The study really looked very cosy, freshly dusted as it was, with a bright fire burning and the tea table laid, glowing with crockery of every colour and

pattern. Tom Merry met his visitors with a cheerful grin, and D'Arcy with a blush. The blush was caused by the heat of the fire during the toast-making operations.  
"Please come in," said Tom Merry. "I'm afraid you will find it a little crowded."  
"Oh, no!" said Ethel.  
"Not at all," declared Dolores. Her black eyes took in the whole study at one glance, and she wondered in her mind why Cousin Ethel chose to have tea in that poky little room— poor Tom Merry's study—instead of in the big, airy room in the Head's house.  
But a gentle smile remained on Dolores's red lips while she was making these mental criticisms, and no any idea of what she was thinking. More than once there had been an odd expression in Kerry's eyes as he glanced at the Spanish girl.  
"We've got rather a decent spread pattern. Tom Merry met his visitors with a cheerful grin, and D'Arcy with a blush. The blush was caused by the heat of the fire during the toast-making operations.  
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New Readers should turn to the foot of next page.

A New and Interesting Story for All. (Continued from the front page.)

# COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOL DAYS

## A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S CHUM

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"this time," Tom Merry remarked, with a smile, "and Gussy had made heaps of toast."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How hot you look, Arthur!" Ethel exclaimed, with a smile.

"Hai Jove, yaas!"

And Arthur Augustus took out his handkerchief, and wiped his warm brow.

Then there was a shriek of laughter in the study.

"D'Arcy had wiped a trail of grime all across his aristocratic features, and the change in his aspect was simply startling."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Wally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I entirely fail to see what you duffers are cackling at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look in the glass!" gasped Cousin Ethel.

"Hai Jove, Ethel—"

"Look in the glass!"

Arthur Augustus obeyed. Then he gave a jump.

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some faithful ass has put the wrong handkerchief in my pocket!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Hai Jove, I'll give the wretch a fearful thrashing!"

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

The two girls were laughing as heartily as anybody. D'Arcy gave one more look into the glass, and then rushed from the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Figgins. "I know Gussy will be the death of me. I wonder who played that little game on him."

"I wonder!" said Monty Lowther, who had come into the study with the crowd. "It was rough on poor old Gussy. Hallo! What's that?"

There was a wild tramping and crashing in the passage, and Manners came tearing up with a chair under each arm, and dashed into the study with his prizes.

After him came Hansek and Jones minor at top speed.

"Step him!" yelled Hansek.

"Step him!" roared Jones.

"Well—"

They halted in the doorway at the sight of the two girls, and blushed.

"Oh, sorry!" gasped both of them; and fled.

Manners panted, and set down the chair.

"Got 'em!" he gasped.

"Enough, now!" asked Blake.

"Yes, if you two chaps sit on the window-sill."

"Good! We can do that."

Cousin Ethel was placed in the best chair, and Dolores in the next best, at the table. The armchair had been hung out into the passage to leave one room for the junior, who seated themselves round the table, or about its noon, or at the windows. There were ten boys and two girls in all, and the party was large for the size of the study; but it was no use quarrelling with the accommodation.

Arthur Augustus came in, with his face freshly washed, and clean as a new pin, looking newly swept and garnished, so to speak. A general grin greeted his reappearance, and he replied to it with a lofty stare through his eyelids.

"You don't mind sitting on the window-sill, do you, Gussy?" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh! I—I mean, not at all, dear boy!"

"Hats!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Here's your chair, Gussy, next to Miss Pelham. Sit down, old man!"

"Thank you vevy much, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry had arranged D'Arcy's place next to Dolores. D'Arcy was the greatest lady's man at St. Jim's,

and he knew Dolores better than the other fellows. And Ethel was quite satisfied with Figgins looking after her. Tom Merry thought his arrangement rather diplomatic.

The tea was made, and its pleasant scent pervaded the study. Cousin Ethel poured out the tea.

There was a cheerful fire of chatter round the tea-table. Football was naturally the topic, and for some time it was hardly noticed that Dolores was very silent.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was entertaining her with an account of the goals he would have kicked if it hadn't happened that he didn't kick them. He observed at last that Dolores was relying only in monosyllables, and toying with her teaspoon.

"Another cup of tea, dear gal!" he asked.

"No, thank you!"

"May I pass you the cake?"

"Thank you, no!"

"Speaking of cake," said D'Arcy, "reminds me of a wathah good stowey. There was a fellow named Wobinson—I forget whether his name was Wobinson or Wadellif, but it doesn't really matter—and he had a cake on his birthday. It was a vevy large cake with plums, you know. Are you fond of plum-cake, Miss Pelham?"

"No," said Miss Pelham.

"It is vevy nice," said D'Arcy.

"Well, this fellow Wadellif—or Wobinson—I forget which, but it is not vevy material to the stowey—had a plum-cake on his birthday. He had a few friends."

"Pass the water-ses, D'Arcy!"

"Certainly, dear boy!"

"And the salt."

"Here you are."

"Oh, Gussy can't kick for taffee!" Fatty Wynn was saying. "Why, if he'd put the ball at me like—like a New House chap, I should have had to play it over the bar."

"Well, Wynn—"

"That would have been a corner for you, though," added Fatty Wynn reflectively. "I don't suppose it would have been much use to you chaps."

"Oh, wats?"

"Cressie, it. Fatty!" grinned Figgins.

"Order! Pass the sugar!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyes into his eye, and gave Fatty Wynn a withering glance, which was quite wasted upon Wynn, who was just then leaning in great delight upon the cake. D'Arcy turned back to Dolores.

"I was tellin' you about my friend Wobinson," he remarked.

"Were you?" said Dolores.

"Yaas, wathah! About a birthday cake, you know."

"Indeed?"

D'Arcy was discouraged.

He did not pursue the story of Robinson, or Radcliff, and the birthday cake. He tried Miss Pelham on several other topics, but found them all uninteresting to her. The swell of St. Jim's became a little silent himself towards the end of the meal. He was discouraged. If the young lady wouldn't talk herself, and wouldn't listen to him when he talked, there were difficulties in the way of a conversation.

Cousin Ethel glanced at her friend once or twice. Dolores coloured

under her glance, and made an effort to be cheerful and chatty, and succeeded to some extent. But the tea was nearly over now, and ere long it finished, and the crowded company in the study broke up.

"Hai Jove!" D'Arcy confided to Tom Merry. "I weally don't think I get on vevy well with Miss Pelham, you know."

"No," said Tom Merry.

"No, I was tellin' her the stowey about Wobinson and his birthday cake, you weneuhah!"

"Yes, I remember," said Tom, rather hastily.

"It's all wight," said Arthur Augustus, with some dignity. "I wasn't going to tell you ovaah again, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry. "I'm Peckham seemed quite bored, and I didn't finish tellin' her the stowey."

"Go hon!"

"Don't you think it's wathah weneuhah?"

"Simply amazing!"

And D'Arcy adjusted his monocle, and gave the hero of the Shell a very dubious glance. But after that D'Arcy did not inflict very much of his society upon Dolores Pelham.

"I want another chap to come with me in the trap when I dvice the girls home," he said to Blake, a little later. "Would you like to come, dear boy? I have a pass from Kildare for two, on purpose."

Blake grunted.

"Of course, I'd like to come," he said.

"Then come, dear boy."

Blake shook his head.

"No," he said heroically, "take Figgins."

D'Arcy started.

"Yes, Figgins?"

"Hai Jove! Do you think Figgis is wathah struck with Miss Pelham, pawpaws?" said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hai Jove! It's barely poss, that she might have preferred sittin' beside Figgis at tea," said D'Arcy slowly.

"She was awfully bored with you, you know, it seems odd that anybody should prefer Figgis; but there's no accountin' for tastes, is there?"

"Not at all," said Blake.

"If you'd like to let Figgis come instead of you, Blake, I'll take him."

"Do!" said Blake.

"Vevy well!"

And while the girls were gone into the Head's house for their coats and hats, D'Arcy approached Figgins, who was standing chatting with Kerr and Wynn, with a somewhat lugubrious expression upon his honest face.

"Figgins, old man!"

"Hallo!" said Figgins, rather gruffly.

"I was wonderin' if you'd care to come in the trap to St. Fueda's," said D'Arcy. "Blake thinks you might like to."

Figgins jumped.

"Me?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah, dear boy!"

"Oh, I say, Gussy, this is awfully decent of you," Figgins exclaimed.

"Not at all, dear boy. I shall be davin' you, you know, and there ought to be somebody to talk to the girls, of course. I'm sure you'd like to have a dvice with Miss Pelham," said D'Arcy honourably.

"Miss Pelham," said Figgins vaguely. "Oh, yes, of course, I'll come with you, Gussy, and I think it's vevy decent of you."

"Not at all, dear boy."

And Figgins dashed off for his coat and cap.

Oh, Sir.

"Quite wathah, dear gal!"

Cousin Ethel and Dolores came out of the Head's house, wrapped in their coats for the drive home to St. Fueda's. Both of them looked very charming, and many of the fellows gathered round envied D'Arcy and Figgins that drive.

Figgins came racing up with his coat on.

"Right!" he gasped. "Here I am!"

Dolores looked at him.

"Are you coming?" she said.

"Yes," said Figgins, his enthusiasm considerably damped by Miss Pelham's tone. "Gussy has asked me, and—"

"We do not be glad," said Cousin Ethel.

"Why, of course," said Dolores, with a charming smile.

And Figgins recovered again.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Figgins will talk to you while I dvice, you know. I'll let you dvice comin' back, Figgis; but while the ladies are in the trap, I think we had better take every care."

Figgins laughed; he didn't want to drive, of course.

"All right, old lid!" he said.

"Quite wathah, dear gal!"

"Quite," said Cousin Ethel.

The juniors gathered round. There were many good-byes to be said. Ethel had said good-bye to Mrs. Holmes and the Head; but there were quite a crowd of juniors in the trap to see her off.

"Good-bye, Cousin Ethel!"

"Good-bye!" said Ethel brightly.

"And thank you all so much for the pleasant afternoon we have had."

"It's you that's made it pleasant, Cousin Ethel," said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the Shell fellow.

"Hai Jove, Tom Merry, I weneah that as a wathah grand remark!" he said. "You do not often express yourself so well."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, if you pass it, it's all right, Gussy," he said.

"Yaas, wathah! You see—"

"Good-bye, again," said Cousin Ethel.

She waved her hand from the trap. Dolores did not wave her hand. Perhaps she thought she did not know the juniors of St. Jim's well enough.

D'Arcy took the ribbons, and the trap moved off through the dusk, the lamps gleaming out ahead as he drove away.

Tom Merry and his chums looked after them as they went. When the pleasing lights of the trap were lost in the darkness of the road, the juniors turned back to the house.

"What a ripping girl Cousin Ethel is," Tom Merry remarked.

"Yes, rather," said Blake. "How do you like her friend?"

Tom Merry paused for a moment before replying.

"Well, any friend of Cousin Ethel's must be nice," he said at last.

And Blake nodded, and it dropped at last.

Dolores—little thinking, and still less caring, what impression she had made upon the St. Jim's fellows—sat in the cushioned seat, with her coat about her and the thick rug over her knees, for the night was cold. All Arthur Augustus's attention was given to the noise for the country road was almost pitchy dark, and he had to think wholly of his duties as a driver. Figgins was left to entertain the two girls during the drive—a thing that it was difficult for Figgins to do. For though Figgins, in his best honest heart, regarded all girls with a feeling akin to veneration, and worshipped Cousin Ethel in particular, still that did not help him as a conversationalist. In fact, Figgins—like many fellows who can do things—did not excel as a talker. He felt it incumbent to talk now, however, and he manfully did his best.

"Jolly game, wasn't it?" said he.

Cousin Ethel smiled in the darkness. She knew that Figgins would talk, and she knew that he would talk foot ball; because it was the subject that interested him of all others, and he generally assumed all the rest of the world to be so equally interested in the subject. But Ethel knew what Dolores, already bored to death with the afternoon's game and the talk about it.

"Yes," said Ethel slowly, thinking of some means to change the talk to a subject more agreeable to Dolores. "I should like to know you and see another match?" Figgins said eagerly.

"I would," said Ethel, "if you could arrange it." We can easily arrange it," said Figgins. "Miss Pelham is fond of seeing a good game. What do you suppose?" he asked, at an afterthought.

"It had been light enough, he would have seen Miss Pelham's lip curl. But luckily it was too dark."

"Oh, yes!" said Dolores.

"We do not like to hear Dolores say so. She knew that Dolores disliked the mention of the subject. Yet Dolores called for some remark, and Ethel would not judge her friend harshly."

"You like to see the fellows play footer?" Figgins said.

"I have vevy seldom enjoyed anything like that," said Dolores.

"How good!" exclaimed Figgins, in his honest, unassuming way. "It will be such a pleasure to see, Miss Pelham, if you will come over with Cousin Ethel next time."

"Oh, I shall surely come if Ethel will bring me," said Dolores softly.

"I think so, Jim's is a grand old place. I love it."

Figgins was feeling very happy. He felt that he had not liked Miss Pelham hitherto as much as she deserved. She was evidently a nice girl now, and quite worthy to be a friend of Cousin Ethel's.

Ethel smiled.

To her candid mind every one of Dolores's remarks was unimpeachable; she knew that they could not be sincere. But she could not very well hint as much to Figgins.

So she said nothing. She would imagine some party to a game in which Figgins was to be made a fool of.

That was evidently Dolores's object. It amused her wathah, wathah, wathah to take this advantage of Figgins's unsuspiciousness.

And the boys are all so nice," said Dolores deliberately. "Especially that nice boy with the handsome blue eyes. What was his name?"

"Tom Merry?"

"Oh, no! Are his eyes blue?"

"Why, they're as blue as the sky," said Figgins, in astonishment.

"Are they really?" said Dolores curiously. "No, I mean the good-looking boy who was standing near us, and did not play."

Figgins wrinkled his brow.

"A School House boy?" he asked.

"He had a carnation in his coat."

"Why, that was Mellich!"

"What a pretty name!" said Dolores.

Still Ethel did not speak. She knew Mellich was called the lad of the Fourth at St. Jim's. Dolores had not recalled two words, and she certainly had a peculiar taste as she considered him handsome. But Dolores had noticed that there was no love lost between Mellich and the girl who was standing near us, and she was prying Mellich now. Figgins would never have dreamed of it. That a girl could deliberately try to raffle his temper by prying a fellow he disliked might never have occurred to Figgins as possible. Why should Dolores want to raffle his temper, as far as Mellich was concerned?

"I dare say it's a pretty name," said Figgins very wisely.

"Is he a friend of yours?" asked Dolores.

"Well, you see, he's a School House chap."

"But you have friends at the School House?"

"Oh, yes!"

Dolores laughed.

"But you do not like Mellich, I see. Of course, it is not because it is so good-looking; I am sure that wouldn't raffle you?"

"Blow it! I can see that he's good-looking," said Figgins. "I've never heard anybody say so before. Why, stand him beside Tom Merry, or Blake, or Kerr, and he'd look nothing!"

Dolores laughed again.

"Not at all, dear boy. It's not because it is so good-looking; I am sure that wouldn't raffle you?"

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Dolores laughed again.

Ethel Cleveland is a new girl at St. Fueda's, and on her first day at school attracted by the personality of Dolores Pelham, a high-spirited girl of Spanish descent. Ethel subsequently saves Dolores from deep disgrace, and the two become firm friends. Ethel one afternoon takes

**GLANCE OVER THIS,** Dolores over to St. Jim's College, where Arthur D'Arcy, her cousin, is at school, and the Spanish girl is introduced to all Ethel's boy friends. The two girls watch a football match between the rival houses of St. Jim's—the New House and the School House, after which they are

invited to tea in Tom Merry's study. The juniors

EMILY'S SCHOOLDAYS A TALE OF TOM MEYER'S COACH BY MARY CURRIE

"I haven't said that I don't, Miss Pelham." "But you don't!" "Well, no, I don't." "Ethel could not touch Dolores's hands as she wanted to, without knowing that she was giving a signal. That would not have done."

"No, you are not late," she said. "Come in, Ethel. Dear me, how pale you look! Was it very cold in the trap?" "Oh, no!" said Ethel quickly. "Figgins glanced at her hastily. Now that they were standing in the light he could see that Cousin Ethel's look of eager alarm melted."

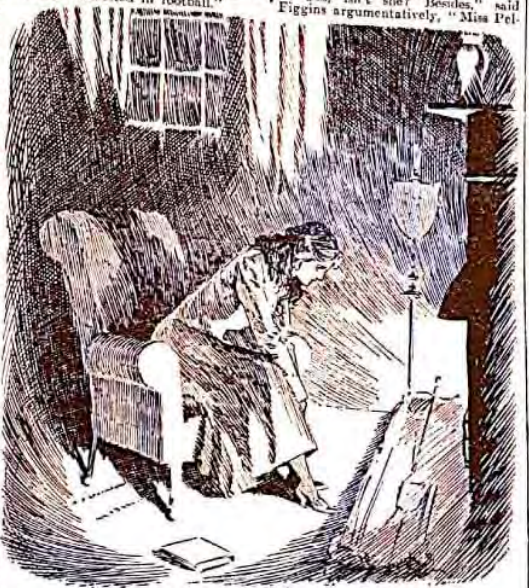
Dolores made just sufficient remarks to keep Figgins in full time. Figgins, in the innocence of his heart, imagined that Ethel and Dolores were both as intensely interested in the topic as he was himself. Ethel, indeed, would have been as likely to hear Figgins talk later. But she knew that Dolores was only drawing Figgins out, and she knew how difficult Dolores found it to stifle her yawns, even while she was amusing herself at Figgins's expense in this way.

Figgins jumped down to ring the bell, and the old porter of Mrs. Freda's came to the gates. He was an old soldier, with a wooden leg, and although he still carried himself with some military correctness, his movements were very slow, and Figgins rang three times before he appeared. He was old and stout, with a white beard, and a pair of twinkling eyes. "It is all right, corporal," said Cousin Ethel. "You know us."

"That's all right, then." "I remember she didn't say much this time, as it happens." "No!" "But perhaps she was tired." "Very likely," assented D'Arcy. "Miss Pelham was very interested." "Good!" "She doesn't seem to know much about football, but she's eager to learn, and she likes the idea of coming over to St. Jim's for another football match."

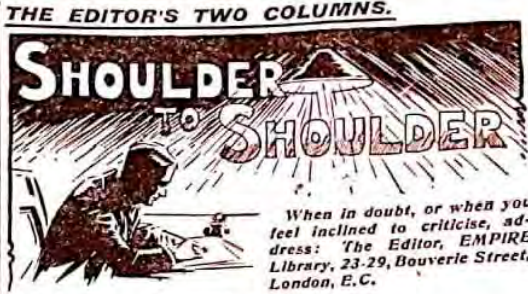
"That was a wippin' drive here, Figgins," he remarked. "The horse was not able to help you." "That's all right, Gussy." "I trust you did not bore the gals too much?" "Oh, we had a jolly talk!" said Figgins. "Miss Pelham is awfully interested in football."

"Wala!" "What?" "I-I mean, she is, is she?" said D'Arcy, "busying herself with the reins. Quite a slip of the tongue on my part, dear boy. Gee up, there—gee up!" "We had a ripping talk," said Figgins, rather warmly. "Very good, dear boy."



Cousin Ethel sat looking into the fire, lost in thought.

THE EDITOR'S TWO COLUMNS.



When in doubt, or when you feel inclined to criticise, address: The Editor, EMPIRE Library, 23-29, Bouverie Street, London, E.C.

"TWO LITTLE WAIFS." OUR new story will start in next Wednesday's issue, and I feel sure that the author, Reginald Wray—I dare say well known to many of you—will score a distinct success, for

POSTCARDS. The Empire Library forms a link between all readers who owe kinship to the Mother Country by means of the WIDE-WORLD POSTCARD EXCHANGE.

"TWO LITTLE WAIFS" seems to me one of the best tales of its kind that I have ever read. The main characters in the story are Phil Fernay and his sister Lucy.



The funny man's idea of happy expressions.

Another character in our new story which will appear in the next issue is Peter Shoreliffe. Peter always has a laugh on his happy face and a merry word for the downhearted.

All desiring to exchange postcards should fill in the form below, and address: Editor, EMPIRE Library, 23-29, Bouverie Street, London, England.

Now, having told you this much about the story which will appear in these pages next Wednesday, will you take my word for the rest, and make a special point of ordering your copies of the EMPIRE Library in advance?

Name..... Address..... DESIRES TO EXCHANGE POSTCARDS WITH A READER IN (Only one place to be written here.) Please write very clearly. No. 58.

LETTERS FROM MY READERS. It is impossible for me to answer individually all the letters of congratulation I have received about the story in the EMPIRE Enlarged Library, but I can, and do, thank you all for your kind appreciation and the help so many of you have given me by recommending this paper to new readers.

THIS GOOD TURN. In return for your interest in this paper, I can only say that, apart from doing my best in the matter of providing you with good stories—stories that you like—I shall be pleased to help you in any way I can with advice, information, or good counsel, by post.

Some few letters, of course, that are of general interest I can answer in these two columns; but, as you will see, space is so limited that I suggest that the better way is for all my correspondents to enclose in their letters to me a stamped, addressed envelope.

You will notice in this issue two new features, one being a little short story of popular Gordon Gay, and the other a series of five pictures by our comic artist. I should very much like to know what you think of Gordon Gay and Wandering Willie. If you do not feel inclined to write me a long letter, then just drop me a postcard.

CAN YOU WRITE A LIMERICK? Most of you can make a good Limerick, or can remember a good one that you have heard. Well, send it up on a postcard addressed to

- 35th LIST. F. Weston, Devonport, New Road, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury, England, wishes to exchange postcards with readers in Australia, New Zealand. W. G. Tyler, 20, Fishery Road, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, with London, England; Paris, France. W. H. Hutton, 153, Lordship Road, Stoke Newington, London, N., England, with U.S.A., British Colonies. J. Forrest, 174, Gt. Hamilton Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow, Scotland, with India. H. Bridgeman, 23, Norlington Road, Leytonstone, Essex, England, with North Wales. C. G. Rose, 34, Lark Row, Bishops Road, Cambridge Heath, London, England, with United Kingdom. T. Whiff, The Grove, Plumstead, London, S.E., England, with Wood Lane, England. Miss G. Stenson, 43, Curzon Street, Vauxhall, Birmingham, England, with England. J. H. Costello, 72, Calliope Road, Devonport, Auckland, New Zealand, with France, Germany, England. Miss G. Turner, Bella Vue Hotel, Kidsgrove, Stoke on Trent, England, with Yorkshire, England. Miss M. Priestman, 3, Bridge Terrace, Heathcote London, England. J. Large-Hill, 8, George Street, Uxbridge, London, England, with New Zealand, France, South Africa.

A NEW STORY.

# THE LAND OF THE BLACK

A TALE OF  
Harold Saxon's Adventures in Search of the Tree of Strength.  
By F. ST. MARS.

**MORR HAS TAKEN PLACE.**  
Harold Saxon, gentleman adventurer, with the two Harrings—father and son—making an expedition into Central Africa in search of the strength of the semoedevs—of the nature of which he has already written—by Gonawonga, a native of his two sons.

And Harold shook his head. "Had to tell. About till a greater fear comes along, I suppose." He was scanning the dense shades of the trees, which always grew straight up, as if trimmed that way and by man. He seemed preoccupied with all at once. Once or twice he pulled up his horse and look hard at the trees, and once, also, he sent Loyal in among the shadows, but Loyal came out again without finding anything.

"What's the matter? Lost anything?" Jim asked, after a bit. "No; only I was wondering if these Morrians are watching us by any chance. You know how they did last time."

Jim shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, I take it that's in the con- sideration," he replied. "Only I wonder how our porters'll behave when they get to know their people as well as I can see all round 'em."

"Well," said Harold, "I don't mean to have them all over our camp at night this time like they were last. You know those electric bells and wire I've brought? They'll just be 'em. I've brought 'em, just to help guard us. If we stretch the wire round and attach it to the bells, no one can very well enter the camp without knocking against a wire and making the bells ring."

"No; that's a useful dodge, but look 'ere now!" Jim was pointing ahead. "Never mind about those things. Did you ever see a sight like this 'ere? Talk about Drury Lane pantomime! This is a pantomime—a blessed wonderland, if ye like!"

"Rather a creepy one, though," finished Harold.

The clearings, as has been said, ran all round the belts of timber, so that the whole somewhat resembled a great river cut up with innumerable rocks and islands. Thus they were always able to walk in the open, and never once penetrated the shadows of the mighty trees smothered with mass upon mass of vines, creepers, ferns, festoons of bearded moss, and flowers of every colour—mostly purple—over and around which flew birds and insects of rainbow hues.

But it was not this that Jim meant. It was the sights ahead—the sights as they turned each bend of the gloomy black trees. Now it would be a herd of elephants, tusks gleam-

ing in the sunlight, uncertain whether to charge or remove. Mostly they rumbled. Once they didn't, and one was removed from the herd from attacking the prey, the caravan.

Then it would be one of the giant black bears that Stanley wrote about, a glossy black animal, bounding all the length of the forest, and a rhinoceros smothered in black mud from wallowing in pools by the black river.

From the rocks and ravines, as they passed them, rose voices and scores of jet-black ravens and crows, and whilst huge black vultures circled continually overhead, circles of "Yes," said Harold, "we've reached the Land of Black again. We've got to keep our eyes skinned. Now begins the most dangerous part of the journey. What has gone before doesn't count. Nobody knows what may happen at any moment now."

He held up his finger as he spoke. From somewhere over the trees came a deep, booming, drumming sound.

"Voolla," said he; and they knew that night they pitched camp in the very centre of the forest, clearing they could find. They had to watch for goodness alone knew what from horrors might come as well as the dark, especially near cover.

The porters went about with their teeth chattering, and collected enough firewood for three camps.

"They're afraid—my word, they're afraid!" I don't wonder at it—'and if I do!" said Jim. "I wonder I'm 'ere I wish I were 'ome—straight I do!"

But Harold laughed, as he superintended the placing of the cases of ammunition on a floor for his tent. He always did this, for ammunition and guns were vital to their very existence, and he liked to have them where he knew they were safe.

Each case was made up into a package of from fifty-five to sixty pounds weight, which is the load for an African black porter to carry. Harold was picking up these loads by ones, twos, and threes and fours, and without an effort placing them as he wanted them placed.

Then something went wrong with the top of his tent-pole, and catching one of the heaviest porters—a man weighing little under twelve stone—round the waist, he laid him by his things straight, as one would hold up a little child, to see the King pass, over the heads of a crowd.

And later one of the horses became restive, pulled its jacket up, and dragged one man that hung on to its rope some way before he let go, and knocked another flying who tried to stop it. Then it came by Harold, going for all it was worth.

Harold missed Harold leaped. Harold caught the beast's head-rope in his right hand. Then Harold stopped, digging his heels into the ground as he did so. So did the horse stop. He stopped with a jerk that flung him sliding on his back, kicking, and wondering what on

earth or under it had happened. The end of that rope might have been fastened to a mountain, but it wasn't. Harold had hold of it, that was all.

Jim, who was getting used to these little miracles, merely shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Somebody again," granted he, and by his pipe.

But the chief and his sons looked on in interested amazement, watching Harold's every movement, for to them strength was the greatest asset of life; they admired it beyond all things. Next to strength, they admired craft and skill, with weapons. Harold had all these gifts, and his strength was greater than the strength of any two men they had ever heard of; therefore he was a person to be much respected—almost worshipped. I believe they would have followed him to the death, and I know Gonawonga twice offered him the governorship of half his kingdom.

Little did Harold know, however, how soon he would have need of that strength. He spent the evening fixing up his electric wires, and went to sleep confident that nobody—not even the Morrians, than which no human beings are more perfect—"creeps"—could enter the camp unannounced.

Alone!  
Harold awoke suddenly with that feeling one has at lone when there is a cat in the room. He could not tell how long he had been asleep—probably hours.

It was very still. All was quiet. Nothing seemed to have happened.



Harold dug his heels into the ground, and the runaway horse stopped with a jerk that flung him kicking on his back.

There was a yellow moon burning outside, he could see it through the flaws of the tent, for he had taken good care to arrange his arrival at Morr coincident with a moon. He had no wish to "do" Morr in the dark. It was a bad enough place even in the light of open day.

Harold lay wide awake, his breath coming rather quickly, uneasy, alert—yet he could not tell why. Then he became aware of a shadow, black as the night itself, creeping flat to earth across the moonlight.

The shadow passed as he caught up his rifle—it happened, luckily, to be his powerful .35 Winchester—and there was another shadow.

Harold sat up. "What the blazes are they?" he muttered to himself.

He sat and stared, and as he stared, he saw more shadows—long, sinuous, infinitely slowly—move across the moonlight. Then he put on his glasses. It required minutes for the air was tingling to one's knees, but as it was still as death, the side was quite ready to be a yawn, and he was quite ready for anything.

Suddenly Loyal, who was lying asleep just outside the tent because of the heat, gave a yell—not a bark, but the heat, gave a yell—not a growling, a yell. And there were growlings, much deeper than any Loyal could make, and the sounds of a scuffle.

Harold was at the door of his tent in a single bound, and as he sprang, it seemed to him as if the night, He about him got up and ran away. He was conscious of much of a hurry to stop to investigate. Something that must have been standing at his head and dived under the side of the tent, and something else went out on the other side. He half saw, half guessed, as he leaped, that shadows running, like the shadows of men.

Arrived at the tent door, he peered out, and instantly looked straight into the glaring eyes of a black leopard—and a mighty big one at that.

Harold was always quick and catlike in his movement, and never more so, possibly, than now. His rifle was at his shoulder and the shot fired in no more time than it takes to snap one's finger. He did not know aiming. He rarely did. Simply he stared hard between those great staring eyes, as the leopard crouched for a spring, and, throwing up the rifle, and without looking at it, or removing his gaze, fired at the full moon, and the bullet, weighing 250 grains, crashed straight through between the eyes to the brain. Forthwith the leopard stood on end, spun half round, and fell backwards—dead.

It was a beautiful shot, but Harold had no time to rejoice at it. Loyal was at death grins with another black leopard, and others were all over the place.

Bang! went the rifle, and the second leopard left Loyal and began running round in circles.

Harold had no time to take further notice of him, for out of the tail of his eye he was aware of something hurtling at him through the air. He spun round like any top, and fired, springing aside on the shot. The result was to bring a springing leopard down heavily at his feet. But it was only wounded in the fore paw; before Harold could fire again it was upon him.

Followed a wonderful sight. Harold sprang again to one side, but the beast crooked out its unwounded paw, much as you will see a cat do with a mouse at home, and tripped him, and he fell. Even as he fell, however, Harold's lightning-like brain was at work, and, twisting in mid fall with an eel-like twist, he thrust the stock of his rifle between the great, crooking jaws of the beast.

(A very interesting statement of this splendid story next week.)

replied he hated, and Henry would be cast out. But shortly after he died, Arnold, who had heard of his state, was returning to England, was wrecked in the cargo-boat he was travelling upon—for he was poor—and was drowned at sea, with his wife and—as was supposed—his child.

Talbot started.

"You guess now?" said the squire grimly.

"I—I think— But go on—go on!"

(To be concluded.)

## In the Land of Morr.

The rocks themselves gradually changed to biscuit-colour, and then to grey, and finally to black. Black as coal they were, and like coal. They were like glass black glass. Under foot powdered and splintered and crackled like glass. Moss covered the ground in wet places, especially near the river, and ran black but clear, and was good to drink.

The trees became huge forest black as the rocks. Harold thought they were always scattered, as before, nor did they grow in impenetrable forests reaching for miles. They grew in masses, smothered in vines and ferns, with open spaces between and around green as green could be.

The country was hilly, and the trees tall and green clothed it all.

"All just like it was before," said Harold, as he rode at the head of the column with the others. "How do you men seem to take it, Jimmy?"

"Take it like a dose of rhubarb," replied Jim, who had just ridden up to the tail end of the column.

"Well, but the fear of your friend Harrison on his little toothpick?" Jim had christened the chief's tooth-pick, and so it was always called afterwards—"only, as I see, the fear of worms two keeps 'em beggars from 'blanking' down their loads an' doin' 'em in."

"You! Question is, 'ow long'll the fear 'old 'em, 'Arnold?' the squire one asserted.

## A SHORT INSTALMENT FOR MY OLD READERS.

### REVIVALS OF SKITS

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

The Squire's Secret.  
LET the police know," he went on. "I'm going to tell them everything now. Let them arrest him—don't let him get away."

"I don't," said Talbot. "Repertory never be arrested, for he has such a terrible accident last night that he will be a dead man before this morning."

"I have a start. You will come down now, and—"  
The squire touched Talbot upon the shoulder, and nodded.

"I wanted to see you, Talbot," he said, without waiting for either to speak. "My time is short, and I have a good deal to say. Dr. Bayley thinks that I shall live till midnight, but I feel that I am close to the finish."

The squire smiled grimly. Arthur looked at him. The grim smile lingered on the haggard face.

"You think it curious that I should venture to ask anything of you, Talbot, after what has passed—after what I have done? You are quite right—"

"I was not thinking so," said Talbot quietly. "You have injured me, but I would do anything I could to help you. I am not one to hear malice—especially at such a time."

"I know it, and that is why I shall ask—I shall—I shall have pity on my brother, who loses everything."

"I—I do not understand."  
"I will explain. Come nearer; my voice is faint, and my strength is going. Nurse, give me something to drink. I must speak before I die. He wetted his lips with the glass. He turned to Talbot again. "Talbot, turned to Talbot again. "Talbot, you do not know and what you are not know about to learn."

Talbot nodded; he could not trust himself to speak.

"Years ago," said the Squire of Lynwood, "before you were born, Talbot, there were two brothers at Lynwood—Arnold the elder, and Henry the younger, my father. They lived with their uncle, the then Squire of Lynwood. The elder—the heir—quarrelled with his uncle, and left the place, and never returned. He had married against his uncle's will, and was cast off during the old man's lifetime, though, as the estates were entailed, they were bound to come to him when the uncle died."

Talbot nodded again. He wondered what this could have to do with him; and he felt a light was breaking through the darkness that had long shadowed the secret of his life.

"The younger brother, my father, according to his wish—the lady who the

old gentleman had in the first place selected for the elder. He was a dutiful nephew, and he knew upon which side his bread was buttered. The old squire could not cut off the entail, but he was determined that the Lynwood estates should come to the nephew whom he loved. How was it to be done? He fell into his last illness—a fatal one, but lingering; he lay for two years in the shadow of death, brooding over the thought that when he was gone the estate would go to the

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replied he hated, and Henry would be cast out. But shortly after he died, Arnold, who had heard of his state, was returning to England, was wrecked in the cargo-boat he was travelling upon—for he was poor—and was drowned at sea, with his wife and—as was supposed—his child.

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"You guess now?" said the squire grimly.

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(To be concluded.)

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NEW STORY OF THE SCHOOLBOY ACTOR

GORDON GAY'S CHRISTMAS JOKE



A Tale of Rylcombe Grammar School by Rasper Howard

CHAPTER I.

Tadpole Makes a Resolution.

I HAVE decided... "Toast, please, Taddy!" "I have decided..."

"My dear fellows—" he began... "Ha, ha, ha!" "My dear asses—" "Ho, ho, ho!"

Gordon Gay grinned... "Wait and see," he whispered... "While Tadpole was gazing in rapture at his canvas the juniors turned to the door..."

Gordon Gay noticed his expression and grinned... It was Christmas Eve, and the schoolboy actor and his friends of the Fourth Form—Jack and Harry Wootton and Horace Tadpole—were discussing a hearty breakfast in the Head's dining-room at the Grammar School.

Lane and Carboy, of the Fourth Form, were also of the party who were spending Christmas as the guests of Frank Monk, the headmaster's son, in the otherwise deserted Grammar School.

"Never mind, Taddy! have another try," remarked Frank Monk, with a laugh. "What have you decided?"

"I have decided to make an important resolution for the New Year," said Tadpole, with the air of one making an announcement that might change the fate of nations.

There was a general grin round the table... "Good for you, Taddy! It's a bit precious, but let's hear your precious resolution!" exclaimed Gordon Gay.

CHAPTER 2.

Tadpole's Masterpiece.

FOLLOWING Tadpole's startling announcement, the juniors stared at one another in breathless silence. The next moment there was an unrestrained roar from six throats simultaneously.

So this was Tadpole's wonderful resolution!

Tadpole, in spite of his friends' efforts to unconvince him, persisted in regarding himself as an artist of supreme if unappreciated talents, and the juniors of Rylcombe Grammar School never knew to what wild heights his fancy would soar next.

But this latest of his, as Harry Wootton murmured hysterically, "fairly took the bun!"

The Grammar School genius drew himself up in intense indignation at the way the announcement of his great resolution had been received.

And Tadpole strode out of the breakfast-room.

For at least five minutes after their indignation clung had left them the juniors round the breakfast-table shrieked helplessly.

"My—my hat! Taddy really is too rich," murmured Frank Monk at last, winking his eyes with his handkerchief. "But we don't want to hurt the silly duffer's feelings. Let's go after him and smooth him down."

"Right—ho!" And the juniors trooped off to find the offended genius.

They discovered him, as they guessed they would, up in his bedroom, which he had rigged up as a sort of temporary studio as well.

He was contemplating an enormous canvas, roughly framed, which he had set up on two chairs. The canvas was covered with a large amount of paint of all colours, and took up a great part of the little room.

Tadpole drew himself up with an offended air as the juniors filed into the study with grave faces; but he was a good-natured and forgiving fellow for all his eccentricities, and, accepting their apologies with a good grace, he was soon beaming again.

"I was just looking over my pictures when you came in," he said, with a beaming smile. "It is the season for Christmas presents just now, of course, and I quite expect a buyer or two might drop in this afternoon."

"Rats!" murmured Harry Wootton softly, but not quite softly enough.

"Did you speak, Wootton?" asked Tadpole, putting his hand to his ear, while the other juniors frowned on the luckless Harry.

"I—I—I was just saying, of—of course," stammered Harry, "you never know when a—a buyer might come in, d-do you?"

Tadpole nodded his head in agreement.

"Quite right, Wootton! I have a feeling that a genuine buyer will drop in and buy one of my works this afternoon—perhaps my latest." And Tadpole indicated the enormous canvas with a wave of his hand.

Harry Wootton nodded his head like a clockwork Chinaman. He felt that he might have hysterics if this lasted much longer.

At the same time an observer might have noticed a gleam sparkle in Gordon Gay's eyes. Frank Wootton, in fact, did notice it, and he knew the schoolboy actor well enough to know that a "wheezo"

had suddenly come into his head.

"What is it, Gay?" he whispered eagerly.



Carboy and Lane looked at Tadpole's "masterpiece" in silence, and then turned away, weeping bitterly.

"What do you think candidly of my latest masterpiece?" cried the amateur artist, with enthusiasm.

Carboy and Lane returned reluctantly, and took a long and careful look at the fearful and wonderful daub on the big canvas.

Then, without a word, they turned on their heels and walked out of the room, their handkerchiefs to their eyes, weeping bitterly.

Their feelings were too deep for words.

CHAPTER 3.

Gordon Gay as "Mr. Robinson."

DEAR SIR,—I have heard that you have some pictures for sale, and as I am in the neighbourhood I will call in about three o'clock this afternoon

in the hope of being allowed to inspect one or two—Yours faithfully, W. ROBINSON.

The above letter was delivered to Horace Tadpole just after lunch, which had followed a good morning's tobogganing; for the snow lay thick on the countryside, and gave promise of a good old-fashioned Christmas-tide.

Tadpole blinked at the letter in high excitement, and read it aloud to the juniors.

There was a general whistle of astonishment.

"Plews!" "My hat!" "A real buyer at last, Taddy!"

Tadpole folded the letter with a smile of satisfaction.

"Yes, you fellows, I have no doubt Mr. Robinson will prove to be an extensive buyer of my works. I confess I am not surprised. My goodness! It's nearly half-past two already! I must go to my room and get my pictures ready for Mr. Robinson to see."

And Tadpole departed in great haste.

"Well, my hat! I never thought anyone would be ass enough to come and see that young spoofer's pictures!" said Frank Monk, with a perplexed grin. "We must be there to see the fun, anyway!"

"Just—just so, Mr. Tadpole. You—you are quite right. It's—it's a very good—er—cow. And how much do you want for this—er—masterpiece?"

Tadpole beamed again immediately. So he was not mistaken. Mr. Robinson was a real buyer. He considered deeply for a moment.

"Well—er—shall we say twenty pounds, sir?" he remarked at last, with the assumption of great earnestness.

The juniors gasped. To ask twenty pounds for Tadpole's feeble daub struck them as quite the limit in cheek.

Mr. Robinson nodded his head thoughtfully, while the juniors held their breath.

"I am afraid that's rather more than I want to give," said Mr. Robinson at last calmly. "I wanted one at about eightpence."

The onlooking juniors could stand it no longer. With sundry gasps and choking noises they rushed from the room, and a few minutes later Mr. Robinson emerged, staggering under the weight of Tadpole's "masterpiece."

The juniors watched him and his burden down the drive in grinning amazement.

"So you came to terms after all, Taddy?" asked Frank Monk, trying not to roar.

Tadpole turned a rather red face to the captain of the Grammar School juniors.

"Yes; I let him have it quite cheap," said Tadpole, with dignity. "As he was my first customer—"

"How much?" interrupted Harry Wootton.

"Half-a-crown," answered Tadpole, with a lofty air, strolling carelessly towards the door.

In the midst of the terrific roar of laughter that followed the genius of the Grammar School's departure, Gordon Gay strolled into the room.

He was grinning broadly, and marks as of grease-paint, such as actors use for making-up purposes, showed about his face and under his ears.

"Oh dear, Gordon Gay, you ought to have been in Taddy's room when Mr. Robinson came!" almost sobbed Frank Monk, helpless with laughter. "It was just great! Why weren't you there?"

"I was," remarked Gordon Gay calmly, "and I spent half-a-crown there!"

THE END.

The Adventures of Wandering Willie.



1. Wandering Willie, the tramp cat, sets out to find a home and someone to love him.



2. Coming across a house with one of its windows open, our pussy slipped inside, and decided to bestow his affections there—



3. Little thinking, as he lapped up a basinful of milk and some catmeat, that possibly he might not be wanted at all.



4. Such, however, was the case, so William, feeling rather annoyed at being told to "get," had a few words to say about it—



5. And then left, feeling fatter and with the thought that perhaps he had better look about for something else.

BRITISH