

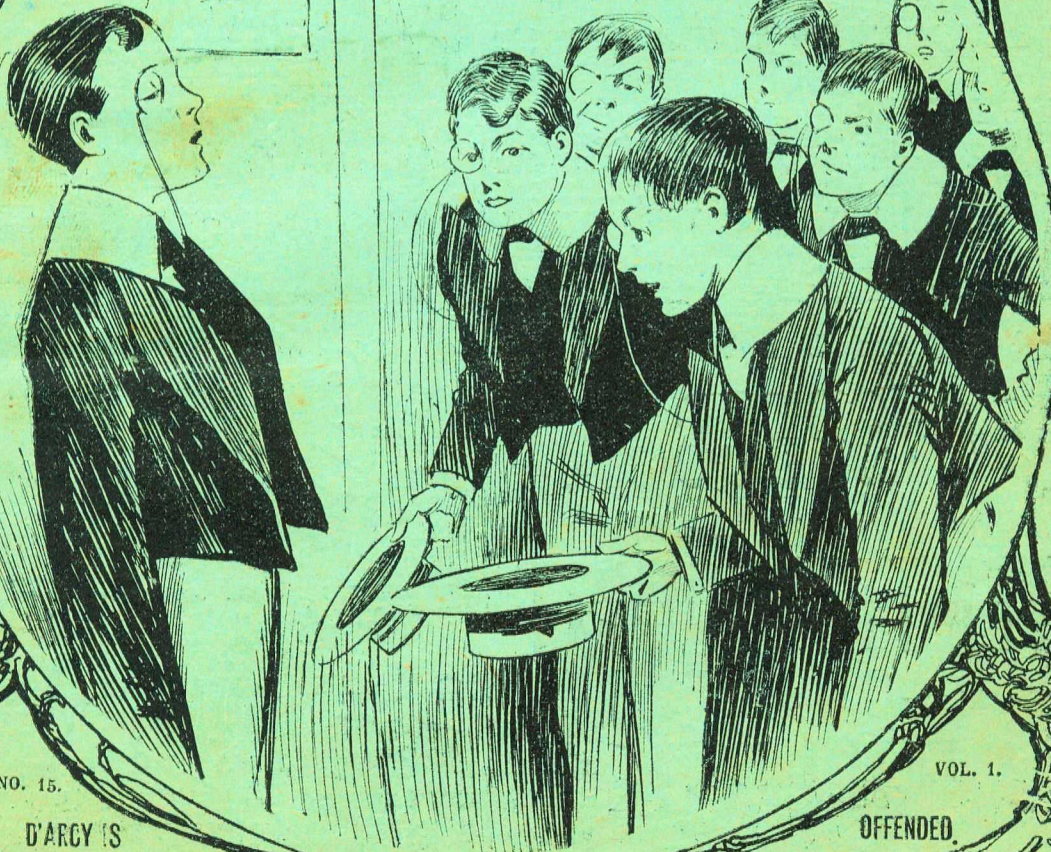
SPLENDID TALE OF TOM MERRY.

THE
GEM
LIBRARY **1**^d
(NEW SERIES.)

TOLD ON THE TELEPHONE.

A
GRAND
TALE OF
TOM MERRY

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



NO. 15.

D'ARCY IS

VOL. 1.

OFFENDED

I SAVE YOU POUNDS




Not pence—not shillings—but **POUNDS**, and you can select any bike you like. I supply on easy terms of payment: **SWIFT, COVENTRY-CHALLENGE, HUMBER, ROVER, PROGRESS, PREMIER, TRIUMPH, CENTAUR, and SINGER** Cycles pounds cheaper than the Makers or their local Agents. **RUDGE-WHITWORTHS** from **£3 15s. Cash. Sent on approval. 12 Years' Guarantee.**

Edw. O'Brien, Ltd. A High-Grade Coventry Cycle
 £3 12s. Cash, or 6s. Monthly.

THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER, Dept. 145, COVENTRY

WRITE FOR LISTS NOW. **Prompt delivery**

MOUSTACHE




A nice manly moustache positively **grows in a few days** at any age by using "**MOUSTA**," the **only Guaranteed Moustache-Former**. Acts like magic on the smoothest faces. Boys become men. **Remember—We Guarantee to return your money in full** (including postage expenses) if not **entirely successful**, so that if you receive no benefit you are not one penny out of pocket. Box sent (in plain wrapper) for **6d.** stamps. Do not delay, but send at once to—

J. A. DIXON & Co., 42, Junction Road, London, N

ROYAL AJAX

WITH CLINCHER TYRES.



EASIEST MONTHLY PAYMENTS. CARRIAGE PAID. Wonderful Second-hand Bargains.

Write to-day for our Magnificent **ART CATALOGUE, post free Best & Cheapest Firm.**

BRITISH CYCLE MFG. CO. (1901), LTD.
 (Dept. J.C.), 1 & 3, Berry Street, Liverpool.

A GENUINE LEVER SIMULATION

GOLD WATCH FREE SKILL.

Send No Money.

N	O	L	O
N	E	D	E
N	L	U	B

In this diagram you see three lines divided into sections, with a letter in each section. The letters have to be so arranged that each line spells the name of a well-known city. A **MAGNIFICENT WATCH** (Ladies' or Gent's) will be sent entirely free of charge, providing you are correct and conform to our one condition. **REMEMBER—It costs you nothing to try.** Send your attempt on a sheet of paper, together with a stamped address-envelope, so that we may tell you if correct. Address: **IMPERIAL SUPPLY CO. (Dept. 2), 42, Junction Road, London, N**

SIMPLY TO GET IT ON THE MARKET.

5,000 genuine 1/2-plate, or 2 1/2 by 2 1/2, **CAMERAS ABSOLUTELY FREE** to all sending 9 stamps for samples of our famous Photographic Materials. Catalogue Free.—Hackett's Works, July Rd., Liverpool, E.

Read about

SPECS

the

VENTRILQUIST

in

PLUCK

Now on Sale. Price 1d.

Rudge-Whitworth

Britain's Best Bicycle



75 MODELS
10 YEARS GUARANTEE

A Post Card brings this Book.

Let the first pillar box you pass remind you to write—to-day—for the new 1908 Rudge-Whitworth Art Catalogue. It is a beautiful book, of great value to every cyclist. It fully illustrates and describes all the latest improvements—variable gears, feather-light roadsters, all-steel flush-joint frames, patent rust-proof celluloid finish, etc.

The New 64-page Art Catalogue describes 75 models of 1908 Rudge-Whitworth's, from **£3 15 6**; or **7/-** monthly P. cl. ing and geari. ge free. Ten Years Guarantee. Post free from **RUDGE-WHITWORTH, Ltd. (Dept. 331) COVENTRY.**

LONDON: 230 Tottenham Court Road, W.C.
 160 Regent Street, W. 23 Holborn Viaduct, E.C.

FOR 2/6 MONTHLY



we supply you with this world-famed 30/- Veracity™ Lever Watch, jewelled movement, compensation balance, bold dial, dust-proof cap over works, solid silver cases. A high-class piece of mechanism that will keep true time and last 20 years—it is a good, strong watch that you will be proud to own.

SEND 2/6 TO-DAY

pay a further sum on delivery and 2/6 monthly, and you have the watch to wear while paying for it.

SEND FOR CATALOGUE POST FREE.

LUCKY STAR
 MASTERS, Ltd., 97, Hope Street, RYE. Only 1s.

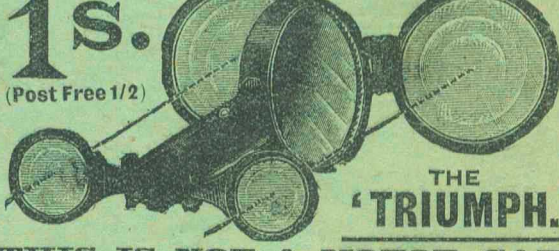
MOUSTACHES.



This engraving shows you clearly how, by using Mr. DALMET'S POMADE, you may obtain magnificent Moustaches at any age, even at 15. Latest scientific discovery! Contains Asiatic herbs. Gives Moustaches to all! Age no object! No more boys! No more smooth lips at 30 years of age! All smart! Send at once **three 1d. stamps to Mr. P. DALMET, 42, Gray's Inn Road, 42, London, W.C.**, for a box, plain cover. Sent at once, as Mr. DALMET could die with his secret. **Trick. Approved. Recommended to all. Price 3d.**

1s.

(Post Free 1/2)



THE 'TRIUMPH.'

THIS IS NOT A MOTOR-CAR, but nevertheless a new and clever invention. A companion indoors and out. Folds flat for pocket, extends to 4 by 4 ins. Field Glasses, Marine Glasses, Opera Glasses, Reading Glasses, and Magnifying Glasses; also Mirror, Telescope, and Compass all contained. Offered at **1/-** and 2d. for packing and postage. Write for our gratis and post-free Catalogue of thousands of other "Bargains by Post." Full satisfaction or full 1/2 refund.

PAIN BROTHERS (Dept. 99L), Presents House, Hastings (ENG.)

THE 'VARIETY' CAMERA.

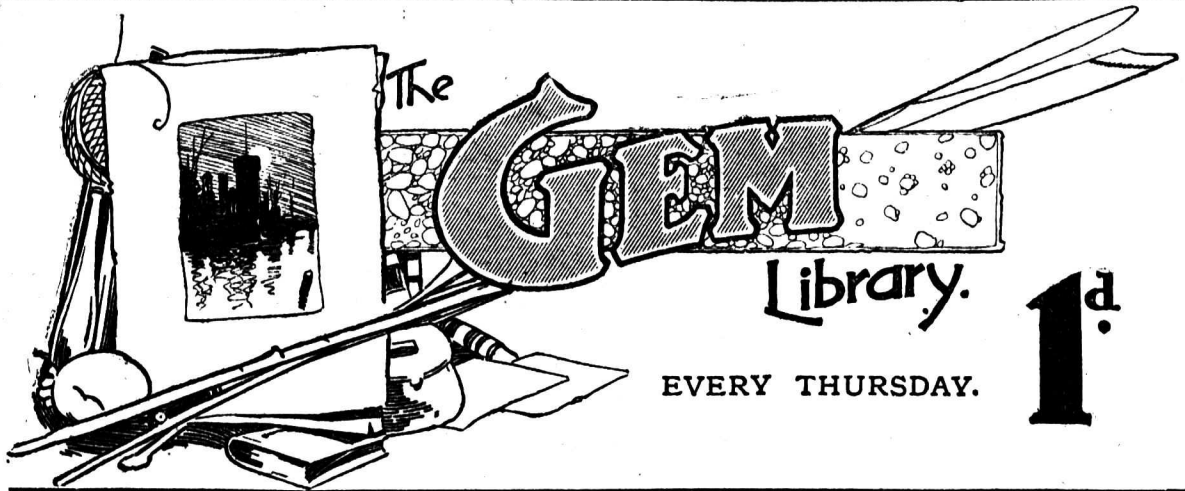
A Guinea Camera for 3s.



Will take photographs 4 1/2 by 3 1/2. Good enough for an expert or a beginner. Be up-to-date and buy one. Every Camera guaranteed. Our Catalogue of Cameras and Novelties, 1d.

IRONMONGER (Dept. 25), Station Road, ILKESTON.

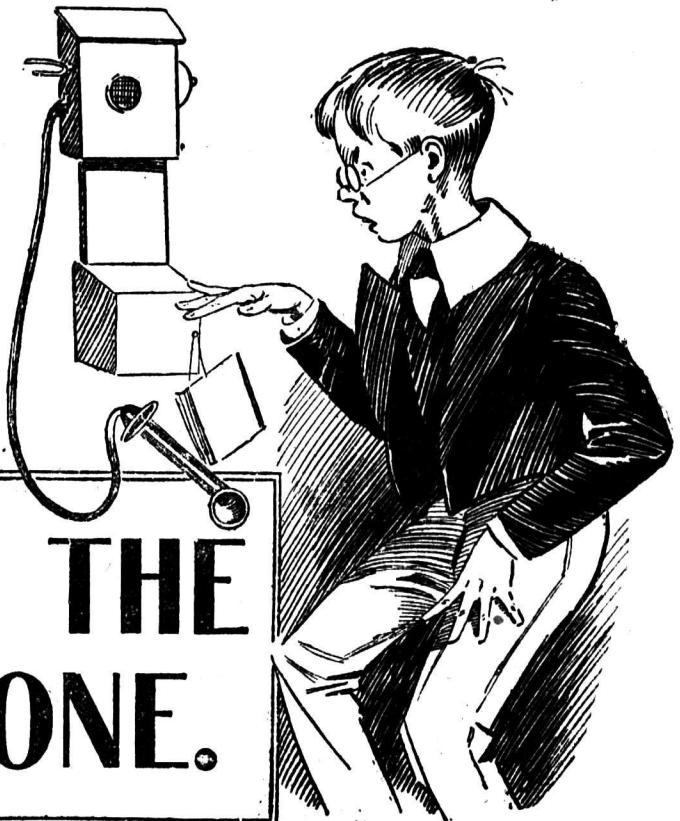
NEXT THURSDAY: "THE DETECTIVE'S PUPILS." A Splendid Tale of Tom Merry & Co



Complete Stories for
Everyone, and Every Story
a Gem!

Splendid School Tale
of Tom Merry & Co.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



**TOLD ON THE
TELEPHONE.**

CHAPTER 1.

Skimpole's New Scheme!

"I'll tell Tilly on the telephone."
Skimpole was humming that to himself as he came down the passage in the School House at St. Jim's.
"Hallo, Skimpole—"
"I'll tell Tilly on the telephone!"
"I say, Skimpole—"
"I'll tell Tilly on the telephone!"
"Skimpole, you ass—"
"I'll tell Tilly on the— Ow!"
Tom Merry brought his hand down with a powerful smack on Skimpole's shoulder, and the brainy man of the Shell Form started out of his brown study.
"Ow! You startled me, Tom Merry!"
Tom Merry looked at him severely.

"What do you mean by going about mumbling and with your eyes shut?" he demanded.
"The fact is, I was thinking," said Skimpole. "I've got a new idea."
"Something about a telephone—eh?" said Tom Merry, with a laugh.
"Yes, exactly. I'll tell Tilly on the telephone—I mean, I'll tell Figgins on the telephone—"
"What are you talking about, Skimpole?"
"My new idea. You see—"
"I see. You've got a new idea?"
"Yes, and—"
"A really ripping, first-class idea?"
"Yes, and—"
"And you're going to explain it to me?"
"Yes, and—"
"Then I'm off."
"I say, Merry—Tom Merry—"

ANOTHER TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

But Tom Merry was gone. Skimpole rubbed his prominent, bony forehead, and stared after him through his spectacles. Skimpole was brainy, and he was simply crammed with ideas, but his ideas as a rule were not popular in the School House at St. Jim's. He had theories on Socialism, Determinism, and all sorts and conditions of "isms." Whenever he had a new idea he was eager to tell it to someone. But his House-fellows were by no means equally willing to listen. His study-mate, Gore, had threatened to brain him with a cricket-stump if he ever mentioned any word ending in "ism" in the study they shared. Skimpole felt that he was a misunderstood genius, but he was wary of the cricket-stump.

"H'm! Merry does not seem curious about the matter at all," murmured Skimpole. "But I must have someone's assistance in carrying out the idea. Perhaps Lowther or Manners would be willing to help."

Lowther and Manners, Tom Merry's chums, were standing in the hall, looking at the cricket notices on the board there, when Skimpole sighted them and bore down upon them.

"I say, Lowther—"

"No, you don't," said Monty Lowther, promptly walking away.

Skimpole turned to Manners.

"I say, Manners—"

"Do you?" said Manners, and he walked after Lowther.

Skimpole rubbed his forehead again. He always did that when he was in a thoughtful mood, and some fellows said it was with the view of helping his brain to work; that useful organ being very slack in its functions.

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole. "It seems curious that a really good idea should go bogging like this. I suppose I had better go along to Study No. 6."

And a minute later Herbert Skimpole was tapping at the door of Study No. 6, that famous apartment in the School House at St. Jim's shared by the chums of the Fourth Form—Jack Blake, Digby, Herries, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Come in, farhead!"

It was the voice of Jack Blake. Skimpole opened the door and entered. The chums of Study No. 6 had finished their preparation, and were chatting together, and they all left off and stared at Skimpole as he came in.

"Hallo, Skimmy!" said Blake, as cordially as he could.

"I want to speak to you chaps—" began Skimpole.

"Sorry, but we're just going out—"

"It's too bad," said Digby; "but we can't stop."

"Come on!" said Herries.

"Weally, there is no such tewwific huvwuy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House. "I weally considah it necessary to be polite to a visitah, even if he is a feahful boah like Skimpole—I do weally. Suppose we give the silly ass a few minutes, you know, deah boys."

"Oh, very well!" said Blake resignedly.

"Go on, Skimpole," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly.

"Twy not to boah us more than you can help, deah boy."

"I have been thinking—"

"Oh, of course, in a case like that we're called upon to do something," said Blake. "What have you been thinking with, Skimpole?"

The brainy man of the Shell ignored this question.

"I've been thinking, you kids, about the St. Jim's Parliament and so on. The elections are over now, and the school parliament is elected—"

"We know that, Skimmy—"

"But I was not elected to a seat, owing to the prejudice prevailing at St. Jim's against all really good and new ideas."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I am not complaining, for as a true Socialist I must uphold the freedom of election, even if I suffer by it—"

"Bwavo!"

"But I really think it would be a good idea to form another constituency among the fellows, and have a by-election, so that I could get into the school parliament—"

"Rate!"

"But that is not my idea. With the stress of business that will come with the opening of the school parliament, it seems to me necessary that there should be methods of more direct communication between the School House and the New House."

Jack Blake stared.

"Blessed if I see how communication can be more direct than it is now," he said. "The New House stands almost opposite to the School House, on the other side of the quadrangle, and it's only a couple of minutes' walk across."

"Oh, Skimmy has a new idea!" said Digby, with a grin.

"It's a wheeze for shifting the New House across the quadrangle, and putting it next door to the School House."

"Ha, ha!"

Skimpole shook his head.

"Nothing of the sort, Digby. It would be impossible to

do so. My idea is to connect the two Houses by means of a telephone."

"A what?"

"A telephone," said Skimpole. "I have dabbled in that sort of thing myself, and know just how simple it is. You know, we had a toy telephone rigged up in the common-room once, and could speak to fellows in the gym."

"I remember."

"Well, I was thinking of putting up something on a bigger scale. It would be easy enough to run a wire to the New House. It could be supported on the wire that is already up, for that matter. We could have a receiver in Figgins's study in the New House, and another in mine—"

"But you're not a member of St. Jim's Parliament."

"I think I ought to be appointed Secretary to the Government, pro. tem., till there is a by-election."

"H'm!"

"Anyway, the telephone is a ripping idea. We're not allowed in one another's Houses after a certain hour, and with the 'phone we could talk up to any hour at night. We could make arrangements over the wires without the trouble of crossing the quadrangle. The doctor has the telephone in his study, and I don't see why the Lower Forms should not have one also."

Blake nodded.

"There's something in that. If you want to rig up a telephone, Skimmy, I haven't any objection."

"Yaas, wathah! Let the boundah have his own way, by all means."

"Then, as you like the idea, I'll fully explain my plans," said Skimpole, sitting down. "I can make the whole thing clear in half an hour. In the first place, we shall want—Where are you going, Herries?"

"Got to go and feed my bulldog," said Herries, quitting the study.

"Well, in the first place there will have to be a general whip round to cover the expenses, but don't be alarmed—that won't be more than a few pounds—Where are you going, Digby?"

"I'm going to see if it's raining."

"It's not raining—"

"I'd rather see for myself, thank you!" And Digby walked out of the study.

"Well," said Skimpole, "when the funds are raised, you can leave the purchasing of the materials to me. We shall require a—Are you going, Blake?"

"Yes; there's something I forgot to say to Digby."

"But—"

But Blake was gone. Skimpole fixed his eyes on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I'm glad to see you take a deeper interest in the matter than those chaps, D'Arcy," he remarked. "Now, in the first place we shall require a—D'Arcy! Gussy! I say!"

But the swell of the School House had followed his chums. Skimpole looked round the deserted study, and rose to his feet with a sigh.

"This is really very rough," he murmured. "I suppose I had better go and speak to Figgins & Co. about it."

And the brainy man of the Shell descended to the quadrangle and walked across to the New House. Figgins & Co.—Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn—were standing on the steps of the New House when Skimpole came up.

"I say, Figgins—"

"Hallo!" said Figgins.

"I've got a new idea."

"Have you?" said Figgins. "You won't tell it to me, will you, old chap?"

"I've just come across to tell you—"

"Then there's only one thing to be done," said Figgins, making a rapid sign to the Co.

The next moment Skimpole's cap was jammed over his eyes, and he was bumped down in a sitting posture on the steps. Figgins & Co. walked away, and Skimpole stared after them with a bewildered expression.

CHAPTER 2.

The First Meeting of the St. Jim's Parliament.

SEVEN o'clock boomed out from the clock tower of St. Jim's, and Tom Merry rose and laid down his pen in the study he shared with Manners and Lowther in the School House.

"Time we were off, kids," he remarked.

Lowther yawned as he closed his book.

"Oh, right you are! The session opens at half-past, doesn't it?"

"Yes; but we want to be in time."

"Rather!" said Manners. "As we take the leading place in St. Jim's Parliament, we have to be on the spot at the

start. I hope those young bounders in Study No. 6 will see things in their proper light, and back us up."

Tom Merry looked a little worried.

The juniors of St. Jim's had lately taken on a new "wheeze," which had caught on at once at the school. A school parliament, on the lines of the venerable institution at Westminster, had been elected. Constituencies had been formed, a certain number of fellows forming each constituency, which was named after the biggest or most important place represented by any member of it. Each constituency elected a member to St. Jim's Parliament, and the House numbered twenty members in all, including all our old friends—the Terrible Three, Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co. Skimpole had been unable to find support, and he was left out, but he was still hoping for a by-election.

The first meeting of St. Jim's Parliament was to take place in the wood-shed. This was only temporary, until more commodious accommodation could be found.

The School House and the New House at St. Jim's had ceased from their usual rows to take an equal interest in the election. But it was certain that the keen House rivalry would revive again within the walls of the wood-shed.

Tom Merry would not have cared for that, for there were twelve School House members of parliament to eight of the New House, and, therefore, the School House ought to have had the majority. But the School House members were divided among themselves.

Jack Blake claimed to be the leader of the School House juniors, a claim which the Terrible Three regarded as absurd. It was extremely probable that Blake would want to be the head of the party in parliament, and that would certainly lead to a split.

A split in the School House ranks meant the majority to the New House, for the New House members were solid under the leadership of Figgins.

"We'd better speak to Blake before we get to the meeting," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I'll put it to him plainly that if we don't stick together, Figgins & Co. will take the lead in the House, and that ought to convince the most obstinate bounder."

"It's a good idea," said Manners. "But Blake is awfully obstinate."

"Well, we can only try."

The Terrible Three quitted their study, and looked into Study No. 6 in passing. That famous apartment was empty, but in the hall downstairs the four chums were talking together, and Tom Merry bore down upon them. Blake was looking at his watch.

"About time we got along to the wood-shed, I think," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hallo, you kids!" exclaimed Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Who are you calling kids?" asked Blake, with dangerous politeness.

"Sorry—I meant cads! But I want to speak to you before you go to the meeting. It's rather important!"

"Oh, fire away!"

"You know that there are twelve School House fellows in the St. Jim's Parliament—" began Tom Merry.

"Yes; and that gives us the majority."

"If we stick together."

"Well, we ought to do that," said Blake. "It's no good falling out with one another, and letting the Government fall into the hands of the New House chaps."

Tom Merry brightened up considerably.

"That's what I was thinking, Blake!" he exclaimed.

"I'm jolly glad to see you take the same view of the situation that I do. If twelve School House members stick together, they can run the show. Figgins & Co. will have to form the Opposition."

"That's the idea."

"Then I can depend upon you fellows to back me up?"

"Eh?"

"I say I can depend upon you fellows to back me up?"

"There seems to be a slight mistake somewhere," said Blake pleasantly. "I thought you were proposing to back me up."

"Nothing of the sort!" said Tom Merry warmly. "As for the School House juniors, I naturally take the all have a School House party in parliament."

very heavy one, I have always been under the impression that "Yaas, wathah" of the School House juniors. Perhaps I was

wathah a god be contwived, doubt on that point," said Monty Lowther. Uppah Forms, You fellows are practically new boys here!"

"Something," exclaimed the Terrible Three indignantly. "Something," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You think of it, th'at's been at St. Jim's long, and it is weally like in his study an' look for you to think of wunnin' the show!"

"Ha, ha!" have you been here yourselves?" asked Tom "It would be silly. You came a few weeks before I did, I

"Anyway, you can't get out of the undoubted fact that I am leader of the School House juniors."

"Rats! And many of 'em!"

"Now, come, Tom Merry; do be reasonable! If you back me up against the New House party, we shall run the show, and I will give you a post in the Cabinet!"

"Catch me! As your elder, I cannot possibly follow your lead!"

"Elder! About a couple of days my elder, I suppose!" snorted Blake.

"Two months and seven days!"

"Well, then, you're old enough to have more sense! It isn't that I specially want to take all the fat for myself, but I couldn't trust School House affairs to your management!"

"I certainly couldn't consent to follow the lead of a Fourth Form kid!"

"And I jolly well tell you—"

"Pway don't get excited!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I can suggest a third alternative—a weally wippin' way out of the difficulty, deah boys!"

"What's that, Gussy?"

"Suppose you both waive your claims in my favah? I am the last fellow in the world to put myself forward in any way, but what you require for a parliamentary leadah is a fellow of tact and judgment, and so—"

"Oh, ring off!" growled Blake.

"Cheese it!" grunted Tom Merry.

"I wefuse to wing off! I absolutely decline to cheese it!" said D'Arcy, screwing his eyeglass into his eye, and surveying the two disdainfully. "I am suggestin' a weally wippin' way out of the beastly difficulty, and if you do not immediately adopt it, I weward you as a pair of extwemely silly asses! You would have the great satisfaction of knowin' that the management of the School House party was in the most capable hands poss., and also—"

"Shut up, Gussy!"

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

"Well, we sha'n't agree, and it's a quarter past," said Tom Merry. "This question will have to be threshed out within the walls of parliament."

"Good!" said Blake. "Mind, if Figgins becomes Premier, it will be all your fault!"

"All yours, you mean!"

"Oh, don't argue! Let's get to the meeting!"

And the School House juniors went down the steps. Other members from the School House were on their way. Reilly, the Irish member, who represented Belfast, joined them, with Harrison, the member for Manchester. At the door of the wood-shed they encountered Figgins & Co.

Figgins greeted them with a cheery grin.

"Hallo! I see you're in time. The doors are closed at half-past seven, and all late members have to stay out in the lobby."

"Bai Jove! Where's the lobby?"

"Oh, you imagine the lobby!" said Monty Lowther. "You can fix up anything with the aid of a little imagination."

"Of course, you can," agreed Figgins. "There's Lowther imagines that the feeble piffle he works off on us is humour, and it's quite a mistake, of course! All due to imagination!"

"Look here, Figgins—"

But Figgins had entered the House of Commons. The members followed him in. The wood-shed was a commodious place, considering, and the juniors had shifted back the faggots, gardening implements, and other impedimenta which Taggles, the school porter and general hand, kept there. Benches had been arranged for the members to sit on, on the two sides of the wood-shed, separated by a gang-way in proper style.

"This looks all right," said Tom Merry. "Of course, we shall have to get better quarters later on; but these will do for the first session."

"Unless Taggles comes along and turns us out," suggested Monty Lowther.

"If Lowther is going to be funny," said Blake, "I move that we turn him out before the start! I can stand anything but Lowther's jokes!"

"I second that motion!" said Digby emphatically. "If we let him go on he'll start making puns and asking conundrums next, and we shall have to stop him, so we may as well stop him now."

"Oh, don't be asses!"

"I shall move that no jokes, real or alleged, be made within these walls," said Figgins. "Life isn't worth living if Lowther is going to be funny."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, take your seats!" said Tom Merry. "I believe it's usual for the Government to be decided upon before a general election—it's according to the party that's returned to power. But we haven't settled that yet. We shall have to put it to the vote. Therefore, I propose—"

"What authority have you got for proposing anything?" asked Blake.

"Well, I suppose somebody must make a start."

"That can be left to me. I propose—"

"Rats!" said Figgins. "I propose—"

"Bai Jove, we shall nevah get on at this wate! If you fellows want to pwopose things, take it in turns, or else leave it to me!"

"Good!" exclaimed Reilly. "You are wasting time!"

"Who's wasting time?" asked Blake.

"You are!"

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Reilly?"

"Rats!"

Blake made a motion towards the member for Belfast. Reilly squared up in a businesslike way. Tom Merry pushed between.

"It's not in order to quarrel within these walls!" he exclaimed.

"Bosh! We've had rows in the wood-shed before now."

"This isn't a wood-shed on the present occasion; it's the House of Commons."

"Oh, I forgot! I'll meet you again presently, Reilly!"

"Sure, and I shall be ready for you!" said the member for Belfast.

"Oh, wing off, deah boys, and let's get to business!" said D'Arcy. "We want a beastly Speaker, you know!"

"Yes. Mr. Railton has consented to be honorary Speaker, but we want a working one, too. Now, who's for Speaker?"

"I propose Digby," said Blake.

"Hands up for Digby!"

Nobody had any objection to Digby for Speaker, and so Digby was duly selected. Then D'Arcy had something to say.

"What pwice a speech fwom the thwone, deah boys?"

"A what?"

"A speech fwom the thwone. You can't open parliament in the pwopah style without a speech fwom the thwone."

"There's something in that," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "But we must wait till the Government is settled. Of course, there is going to be a School House Government, and a New House Opposition."

"Something of the sort," said Figgins; "only vice-versa!"

"We have the majority."

"But you don't all vote together."

"I hope Blake will see reason—"

"I hope Tom Merry will see reason—"

Figgins chuckled.

"Then you're jolly sanguine, both of you, to hope anything of the sort. My idea is that a New House Government should be formed, and that New House politics be adopted by this parliament. The New House members are in favour of making me Premier."

"That doesn't say much for their taste, does it?"

"No personalities are allowed within these walls," said the Speaker. "I call upon the honourable member to withdraw his honourable observation."

"You're starting your functions jolly early, Dig."

"Within these walls I am Mr. Speaker!"

"Mr. Rats!"

"The proceedings cannot proceed until the member for York proceeds to tender an apology."

"Bai Jove, what a lot of proceedings!"

"Oh, cheese it, Dig!" said Blake, the member for York.

Digby's countenance assumed a severe and lofty expression. It was evident that he meant to fully uphold the dignity of his position as Speaker of the St. Jim's House of Commons.

"I call upon the honourable member for York to withdraw his unparliamentary expressions," he said; "otherwise I shall have no alternative but to commit him to the charge of the sergeant-at-arms."

"Oh, draw it mild, Dig! This is a nice way to talk to a chum."

"Chums are not recognised within these walls."

"I don't see that being in a wood-shed makes any difference."

"You are now in the House of Commons."

"My mistake. I know I'll jolly well give you a thick ear when I get you in the study again if you put on any more side, Dig!"

"Call the sergeant-at-arms!" said Dig. "The member for York will be confined in the clock-tower for unparliamentary language."

"Look here—"

"You're in the wrong, Blake," said Tom Merry. "Apologise to Mr. Speaker."

"I'll see Mr. Speaker—"

"Withdraw."

"Look here—"

"Order!"

"Withdraw!"

"Well, I withdraw any unparliamentary expressions I may have used," said Blake. "I really feel the most profound respect for Mr. Speaker."

"Hear hear!"

"The member for York must withdraw his remark reflecting upon the taste of the New House members of this parliament," said the Speaker, with unrelaxing brow.

The member for York snorted.

"Oh, very well, I withdraw everything. Is that all right?"

"Certainly, if the honourable member for Bristol is satisfied."

"Oh, I'm satisfied," grinned Figgins.

"Good! The proceedings can now proceed," said Mr. Speaker.

And the proceedings forthwith proceeded.

CHAPTER 3.

An Unparliamentary Interruption.

TOM MERRY rose to his feet. He caught the Speaker's eye, and proceeded. The other juniors eyed him with a steady stare.

"Mr. Speaker—"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther, rather prematurely. They were not likely to be backward in backing up their chum and leader.

"Order!"

"I move that a Cabinet be selected from the School House members!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted the School House members.

"Rats—rats!" yelled the New House juniors.

"Order!"

"Divide!" shouted Blake. "Vide—vide!"

The division was taken. Naturally enough, on such a motion, all the School House members voted with Tom Merry.

The Speaker looked them over, and declared that the Ayes had it. Figgins grunted.

"Never mind," he murmured to Kerr. "When it comes to forming a Government, they'll begin to row among themselves, and that's where we come in."

And the member for Glasgow nodded assent.

"These are the Government benches," remarked Tom Merry. "We are the Government. The next question to settle is, which is Prime Minister among us?"

"That's easily settled," said Blake promptly. "I'm Prime Minister."

"Weally, Blake, I think—"

"Rats to you, Gussy!"

"Weally—"

"Of course, I'm Prime Minister," said Tom Merry.

"Put it to the vote."

Figgins rose to catch the Speaker's eye.

"I beg to ask whether it is in order for the Government to settle their own personal questions of precedence within these walls?" said the member for Bristol.

The Speaker looked puzzled.

"No," he said at length, "it's not in order. Tom Merry ought to take a back seat—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"That language is unparliamentary!"

"Rats!—So it is for a Speaker to mix himself up in a dispute!"

"Hear, hear!"

"If you criticise the conduct of the Speaker, Tom Merry, you will be committed to the custody of the sergeant-at-arms!"

"Look here—"

"I tell you—"

"And I tell you—"

At this juncture the door of the wood-shed opened, and Taggles came in. He stared in amazement at the sight of the House of Commons.

"Why, what the—"

The Speaker rose, and pointed to the door.

"Get out!"

"What? Get hout? I like that! Get hout of my own wood-shed!"

"Strangers are not admitted to the debates of the St. Jim's House of Commons," said the Speaker severely.

Taggles looked at him dazedly.

"He's orf his 'ead," he murmured—"clean erf!"

"Get out!"

"Look 'ere, what tricks are you young rips hoo to in this 'ere shed?" said Taggles. "Get hout, all on you, at once!"

"Depart!"

"I ain't goin' to depart if I knows it. You're goin' to get hout—"

"Bunk!"

"Blessed if I don't report yer all to the 'Ead," said

Taggles, "a settin' round in my wood-shed like a lot of 'ens!"

The St. Jim's House of Commons turned red with wrath. To be compared to a lot of hens sitting on the benches was a little too much for the members.

"Get out!" roared twenty voices.

"I hain't a-goin' to get hout!" said Taggles. "I've come 'ere to saw wood, and I'm goin' to saw wood, young gentlemen; so the sooner you get hout the better."

"I commit this rude and obstreperous person to the custody of the sergeant-at-arms!" said the Speaker.

"Orf 'is 'ead—clean orf 'is 'ead!"

"Are you going?"

"No, I ain't!"

Tom Merry rose.

"I move that the House resolve itself into a committee to deal with this question," he exclaimed, "and that the committee forthwith proceed to eject this rude and disrespectful person."

"Hear, hear!"

"The Ayes have it," declared the Speaker.

The House rose as one man, and rushed at Taggles. The alarmed school-porter skipped out of the wood-shed with surprising agility.

"Orf their 'eads," he gasped—"clean orf their 'eads! A settin' round like a lot of 'ens, and clean orf their 'eads!"

"Duck him in the fountain!"

Taggles dashed off at top speed, with the House of Commons in pursuit. The alarmed porter, fully persuaded that the juniors had taken leave of their senses, dashed into his lodge, and slammed the door and locked it.

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

Taggles looked out of the window. He had a poker in his hand, and his face was pale.

"Go away, you young rips!" he shouted. "I'll report you to the 'Ead, a settin' round in my wood-shed like a parcel of 'ens!"

"Look here, Taggles—"

"I'll report yer!"

"Oh, it's no good talking to him," said Figgins. "We shall have to find a new place of meeting, that's all. The wood-shed's done in."

"The box-room in the New House is really the place," remarked Kerr.

"You mean the disused study in the School House," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Nothing of the sort."

"We shall have to find a new meeting-place, anyway," said Tom Merry, "and somewhere where we sha'n't be in danger of interruption. We might have been passing the most important measures when that ass Taggles hopped in."

"I fancy we've done enough meeting for this evening, anyway," said the member for Cardiff, otherwise known as Fatty Wynn. "I know I'm jolly hungry. I didn't have much tea; only a beef-steak pie and a few sausages and potatoes and some jam-tarts. I get fearfully hungry in this May weather. Come on, Figgins!"

And Fatty Wynn started towards the New House. The first meeting of the Parliament of St. Jim's was over.

CHAPTER 4.

Jack Blake, Prime Minister.

S KIMPOLE was standing in the hall when the School House boys came in. He immediately came towards them.

"I say, where have you chaps been?"

"First meeting of the St. Jim's Parliament."

Skimpole looked reproachful.

"And you didn't tell me."

"You're not a member."

"Still, I ought to have been there. I could have advised you upon many points of parliamentary procedure. Never mind. At present I am thinking about the telephone idea. Have you thought anything further about it?"

"Not a word," said Blake.

"Now, look here, Skimmy—" said Tom Merry. "But it's a really ripping idea," said Skimpole. "If we all have a whip round to raise the money, it won't come very heavy on each, and your fellows are not usually mean."

"Yaas, wathah! I have been thinkin', deah boys, that it's wathah a good idea to have the telephone put up if it can be contwived," said Arthur Augustus. "It will show the Uppah Forms at this school what the Fourth Form can do."

"Something in that," said Blake. "When you come to think of it, there's something rather taking in the idea of a telephone between the houses. We can ring up Figgins in his study and rag him over the wires."

"Ha, ha!"

"It would be a novelty," said Digby. "I don't see why

we shouldn't go in for it, if it can be worked. But can it?"

"Oh, I'll answer for that!" said Skimpole confidently. "I've got a relation in the business, and I can get the things cheap. I've studied the thing in the holidays, and I know just what we want."

"Well, it would be great fun, anyway," said Tom Merry.

"Shall we go in for it, chaps?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't mind," said Blake. "If it's a subscription of about five bob apiece, it won't break us, I suppose?"

"Of course, it won't," said Skimpole, "and I dare say it can be worked for less than that. Of course, the amount of subscriptions depends upon the number of subscribers."

"Yes, I suppose it would," said Lowther sarcastically.

"Can you work things like that out in your head, Skimpole?"

"Certainly, Lowther," said Skimpole, who was never known to see a joke; "that is quite simple. You see, if each—"

"You'll have to ask Figgins about it," said Tom Merry.

"You can't knock holes in the walls of the house, either, or the powers that be will be on your track. Are you thinking of taking the wires down the chimneys?"

"Certainly not; they can be taken in at the window."

"That means leaving the windows open."

"Which is very good for the health," said Skimpole.

"But I could bore—"

"Yes, by Jove, you could! You always do."

"I could bore—"

"Could you bore Figgins as much as you do us? If you could, go and do it. It will serve the New House boulder right."

"Really, Digby—"

"If he dies under it we'll club up for the funeral expenses," said Blake.

"I wish you would be serious."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway be sewious, deah boys!"

"I could bore—"

"My hat! There he goes again! We know you could, and do, and nothing will stop you," howled Blake.

"I could bore a hole in the window-frame for the wire, and so the window would not have to be left open."

"Oh, I see! Are you thinking of asking the Head's permission to put up the 'phone?"

"Oh, no. He would only refuse, so it's no good asking him. I shouldn't like to do anything against his wishes."

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, go and speak to Figgins about it, and if he comes into the thing, we'll back you up too."

"Thank you, Merry! I have no doubt that Figgins will take up the idea when he knows that I have your support."

And Skimpole went off, looking very pleased.

"It's not half a bad idea, when you come to think of it," Blake remarked. "It will be awfully good fun telephoning to the Now House. But I expect Skimpole will make a muck of the thing. He generally does."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We've got to get the question of the leadership of the School House party settled, before the next meeting of parliament," Tom Merry remarked. "Have you decided to do the reasonable thing yet, Blake?"

"Certainly! I stand to what I said."

"B'r'r'r! The only thing is, then, for the School House members to meet and settle the question. We're all here, so we may as well go into the club-room at once and get the question settled."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The members for the School House ascended to the club-room. It was a disused study in which the Merry Hobby Club were allowed to hold their meetings. It was rather a large room, but twelve juniors pretty well filled it.

"Now," said Tom Merry, "we are agreed upon one thing, we don't want the Government to fall into the hands of Figgins & Co."

"Hear, hear!"

"But if we split our vote, Figgins will have the majority."

"Sure and he will!" said Reilly.

"Therefore we must all stand together under a common leader."

"If you back me up—" said Blake.

"I call upon you all to back me up," said Tom Merry.

"Not because I'm particularly set on being Premier, mind you, but because I want the thing to be a success."

"I call upon you to back me up," said Blake, "not because I'm afflicted with any desire to stand forward myself, but for the good of the cause."

"Sure, and you're both very generous and unselfish!" Reilly remarked. "Suppose, as you really don't want to put yourselves forward, you both stand down, and allow a fellow from Belfast, say, to become Premier?"

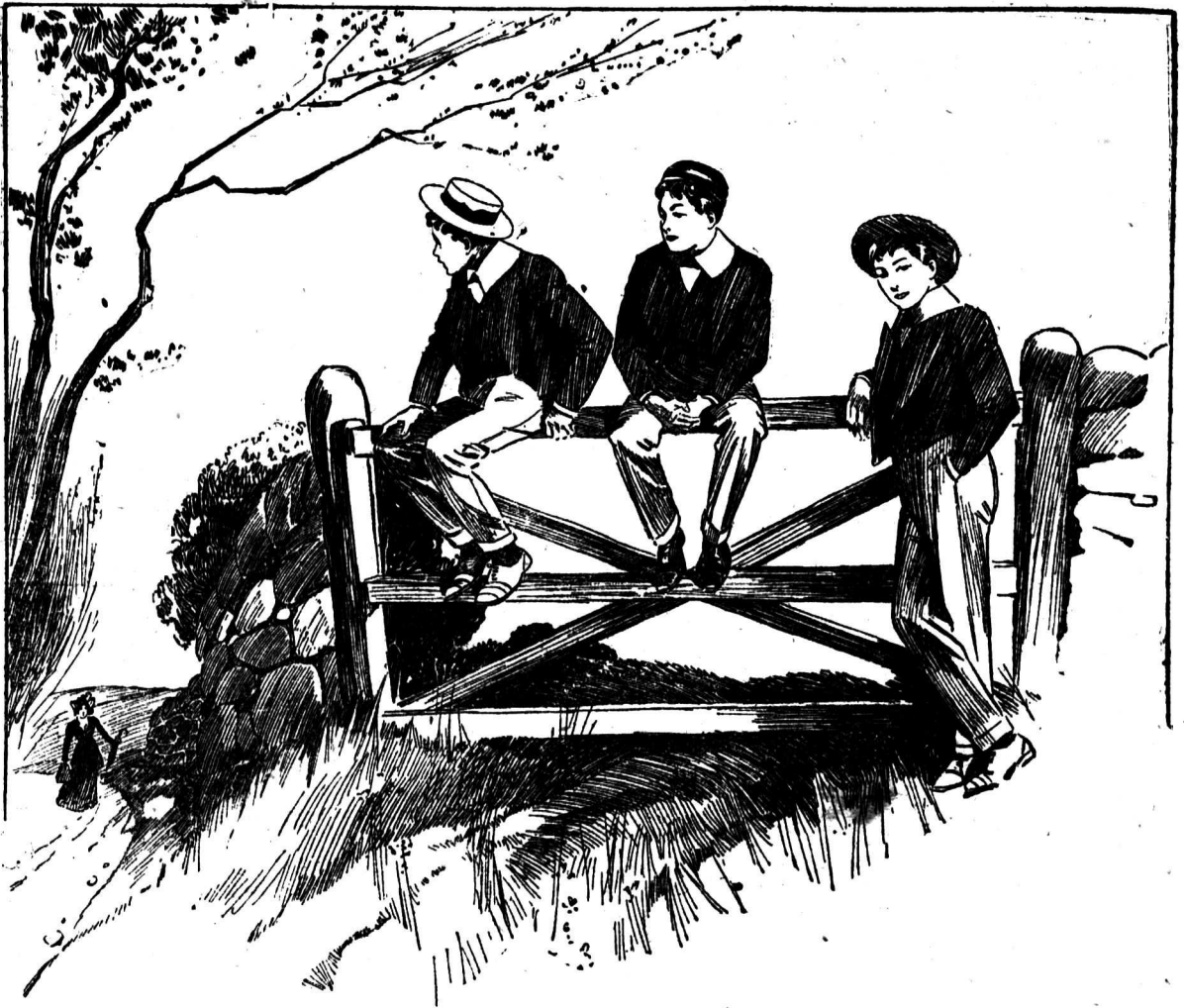
"Impossible!" said both the intending Prime Ministers at once.

"Faith, and I don't see why!"
 "Well, you see—"
 "Well, you see—"
 "The fact is," remarked Harrison, the member for Manchester, in a thoughtful sort of way—"the fact is, they're a pair of conceited bounders."
 "Look here, Harrison—"
 "Look here, Harrison—"
 "It's an old saying that what Manchester thinks to-day, all England thinks to-morrow," said Harrison. "What I say is, that a Manchester chap ought to be Premier."
 "I suppose you wouldn't put Manchester before Liverpool?" said Manners sarcastically. "I represent Liverpool, and—"
 "I jolly well should!"
 "Then you're a jolly ass!"
 "Order!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Order! Shut up!"
 "Yaas, wathah! Ordah, deah boys! The dispute could be settled in the most satisfactory way by makin' me Pwemiah. I would give you all posts in the Cabinet, and then ewyone could be satisfied."
 "Ha, ha!"
 "I think that's wathah a good ideah—"
 "Now, look here—"
 "You are intewwuptin' me, Tom Mewwy!"
 "Yes, I know I am, Gussy. Look here, you chaps, it's no good talkin'—"
 "You're doing a jolly lot of it, though," Herries remarked.
 "It's no good talkin'," repeated Tom Merry. "The Premiership lies between Blake and myself, and outsiders are barred."
 "Now you're talking sense," said Blake, cordially enough.
 "Well, so long as it comes to the Fourth Form—" said Reilly.
 "So long as it comes to the Shell—" said Manners.
 "There you go again!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "You are weally makin' a personal mattah of what you should wegard as a question of great public intewest."
 "The only way is to put it to the vote," said Reilly.
 "Hands up for Tom Merry as Premier and leader of the School House party in St. Jim's Parliament."
 Five hands went up, belongin' to the five Shell boys in the meeting.
 "There you are! Now hands up for Blake!"
 There were seven hands raised this time, being the number of representatives from the Fourth Form. D'Arcy hesitated about putting his up. He was still firmly persuaded that in the interests of the parliament as a whole he ought to be Premier. But he was loyal to his chum, and he voted for Blake.
 Blake gave a satisfied grin.
 "What do you say now, Tom Merry?"
 "Well, I admit, of course, that you have the majority of mere numbers," said Tom Merry. "The majority of talent and intelligence is unquestionably on my side."
 "I wegard that we mark as dis pawagin' to the Fourth Form."
 "Rats!" said Blake cheerfully. "Anyway, it's the majority of numbers that counts in parliamentary proceedings. Talent and intelligence don't count for anything in the real House of Commons, as you know very well."
 "Yaas, wathah! Blake is Pwime Ministah, deah boys, unless he chooses to do the weally weasonable thing, and wesign the post to me."
 "No fear!" said Blake.
 "I am speakin' for the good of the cause."
 "Sure, and ewery ass present seems to be doing that!" Reilly remarked.
 D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass and gave the member for Belfast a withering glare.
 "Are you alludin' to me as an ass, Weilly?"
 "Order there!"
 "I insist upon Weilly explainin' on the spot whethah he was alludin' to me as an ass, or whethah he was not alludin' to me as an ass."
 "The question is not in order," said Digby. "I rule that—"
 "Pway what have you got to do with wulin' anything?"
 "I'm Speaker—"
 "You are only Speakah within the walls of the woodshed—I mean within the walls of the House of Commons. On the pwesent occasion you are nobody."
 "Quite right!" said Tom Merry. "The cheek of some kids in the Fourth is simply amazing to me, and—"
 "What's that?" roared half a dozen voices.
 "Withdraw!"
 "Rats!"
 "Withdraw!"
 "Oh, we'll withdraw!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Come on, kids, and let these Fourth Form youngsters run away and play!"
 "Look here, Tom Merry," exclaimed Blake, "hold on! I've been elected leader by the majority of the School House members of parliament—"
 "The majority of mere numbers."
 "Bosh! I've been elected leader by the majority that counts. Am I to depend upon your support in forming a Government? I am willing to allot you a seat in the Cabinet?"
 "Well, if I have first choice—"
 "Oh, come, don't be an ass!" said Blake warmly. "I must provide for my own friends first, like a real Prime Minister."
 "Well, what am I to be?"
 "Lemme see! We might make you President of the Local Government Board, or something of that sort."
 "Not good enough," said Tom Merry decidedly. "Unless I am made Secretary for India, at least, I shall not be satisfied, and I shall be unable to conscientiously support this Government."
 "If there's a split the New House party will turn us out of office on a vote of want of confidence," said Blake. "I appeal to your patriotism."
 "Well, at present I shall support the Government," said Tom Merry, after some consideration. "I reserve the right to form an independent party if I choose. I can plough a lonely furrow if I like, I suppose?"
 "You can go and eat coke if you like," said Blake politely. "So long as we stand together against the common enemy, I'm satisfied. We have stirring times before us. If Skimpole gets in on a by-election, we shall have the advancing tide of Socialism to face."
 "Ha, ha!"
 "Then there's the Irish party to be dealt with. If Reilly demands Home Rule—"
 "Faith, and I—"
 "Upon that question the Government reserves its opinion," said Blake. "I am in favour of granting to Ireland all that can be granted, while keeping in mind the necessity of safeguarding the Empire. I admit the reasonableness of Unionist views, while at the same time acknowledging the justice of Irish aspirations."
 Tom Merry laughed.
 "My hat! I believe you were born for a Prime Minister, Blake," he said admiringly. "You couldn't have put it better. And I suppose you admit the absolute correctness of the Conservative attitude, while at the same time sympathising fully with the undeniably just claims of Liberalism?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You don't understand politics," said Blake, with a sniff.
 "Come on, you chaps; let's get to No. 6 and draw up a programme of the New Government."
 And the School House members left the club-room.

CHAPTER 5. The Telephone.

SKIMPOLE was very busy the next day or two. The amateur Socialist had taken up the idea of the telephone in deadly earnest. The interview with Figgins had proved a success. Figgins & Co., when the matter was once explained to them, rather fancied the idea of direct telephonic communication with the rival House. They anticipated exchanging badinage with the School House fellows over the wires.
 "You see, we can slang the rotters a treat, and they can't get at us over the wires," Figgins observed sagely. "That will be rather a novelty."
 "They can slang us back," observed Fatty Wynn.
 "I know they can; but when it comes to slanging, I fancy we can keep our end up, and a little bit over," said Figgins.
 "True!"
 "Besides, it will be a joke to ring Skimpole up, and make him explain something about Socialism, and leave him talking to nobody," chuckled Kerr.
 "Good idea. He may exhaust his vocal capacities that way, and become a little less of a bore," Figgins agreed.
 So the New House Co. paid up their subscription to the telephone fund, and Skimpole was entrusted with the task. The other juniors took the matter more or less as a joke, but Skimpole was in deadly earnest. Whenever he got an idea into his head, he was in deadly earnest over it, for a time at least. And he had taken up the matter of the telephone quite seriously.
 As he said, the matter was not so difficult as it looked. His relative in the line of business supplied him with the necessary materials at cost price. Skimpole knew how to put up the apparatus, and, as he said to Tom Merry, "there you are!"



"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "Here comes my old nurse!"

Getting the wire round the roofs of the mass of buildings that formed the ancient college, from the School House to the New House, was the most difficult part of the task, and was accomplished at the risk of several necks. Fortunately, none were broken. Tom Merry & Co. helped Skimpole to the fullest extent in the work, and it was a proud moment for all of them when the installation was complete.

The work had been done secretly. It was of no use taking the masters or prefects into their confidence; they all felt that.

"It's quite possible that something may go wrong with the telephone, or perhaps with the Head's wire," Tom Merry remarked. "He would be prejudiced against any telephone fitting being done by juniors, in case."

"Yaaa, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Stwiotly speakin' the Head would have no wight to interfere with us; but mastahs at schools assume all sorts of wights."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes, and if the Head knew that Skimpole had used his wire as a support for this new one I fancy he would be annoyed."

"It was the simplest way of supporting my wire," explained Skimpole. "I really don't see why the Head should object."

"Suppose something goes wrong?" said Lowther.

"Nothing can go wrong; I fixed the thing up myself."

"That's all very well, but things do go wrong in the best regulated telephones."

"They won't go wrong in this case," said Skimpole, with conviction. "If there were any defect, it would be more likely to show in the Head's wire than in ours, so it's all right. I've taken care of that. But, as you say, it's more

judicious to say nothing about the matter to the masters. It will save argument."

And so the secret was kept.

When the work was done, and the juniors had an opportunity of testing the wires, they were all in an eager mood. Even the business of the St. Jim's Parliament had been neglected in the interest of the telephone-fitting.

"I'll get into my study," said Figgins, "you can ring me up, and we'll have a little talk over the wire to test the thing."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry.

"Er—right-ho!" said Skimpole. "As telephonist, I, of course, operate the instrument."

Tom Merry slapped him on the shoulder.

"Not at all, old chap. We're going to do the right thing. You've had most of the trouble of putting up the 'phone, and I'll take the job of testing it."

"But I'd really rather—"

"Yes, I know how unselfish you are, but I'm not going to take advantage of it. Come on, kids, let's go and have a jaw to Figgins."

"But really Merry—"

"That's all right," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "You can rest from your labours, Skimmy, while we test the telephone."

And Tom Merry rang up Figgins.

Somewhat to the surprise of the juniors, the call was answered. The telephone was working.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo!"

"Are you there?"

"Yes, fathhead!"

"Is that Figgins?"

"Of course it is. Don't you know my voice?"
 "No; I thought it was a bullfrog or something croaking into the instrument."

A kind of growl was audible from the other end.

"Hallo, hallo!"

"That you, Tom Merry?"

"Yes; who are you?"

"Kerr!"

"Oh, I thought it was a different croak! Did you dig up that voice?"

"Oh, go and eat coke! Put us on to Skimpole."

"Skimmy! Skimmy! You're wanted!"

"I am here," said Skimpole, taking the receiver from Tom Merry.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that you, Figgins?"

"No, it's Kerr. Is that Skimpole?"

"Yes."

"Will you explain to us the first principles of Socialism, Skimmy?" came Kerr's voice through the instrument. "It will be about the most thorough test you can put the instrument to. If it will stand that it will stand anything!"

"Certainly," said Skimpole.

"Go ahead, then."

Skimpole went ahead. Tom Merry & Co. stood round chuckling. Skimpole talked into the receiver as if he were on a platform. For fully five minutes he talked, working off words seldom found outside dictionaries and propagandist literature. He had been at it for five minutes when Figgins & Co. walked into the study.

Skimpole dropped the receiver with a gasp.

"Figgins!"

"Hallo!" said Figgins cheerfully.

"Kerr! I thought you chaps were at the other end of the wire."

"So we were. Did you think you were talking to us?"

"I certainly thought—"

"Quite a mistake," said Figgins blandly. "We only put you on to test the telephone, you know. Have you been at it long?"

"Really, Figgins—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wogard that as weally vewy funny, Figgins!"

"Well, you ought to know," said Figgins. "You ought to be a judge of fun, being such a funny merchant yourself."

"If you intend that remark in a dispawagin' sense, Figgins—"

"Rats! I say, the telephone is a great success. We shall be able to ring you fellows up when it's time for the St. Jim's Parliament to meet."

"Will you?" said Blake grimly. "You mean that I shall be able to ring you up? I am Prime Minister in this parliament."

"Oh, really, Blake, don't be an ass, you know!"

"I am Prime Minister," said Blake. "I have the support of nearly two-thirds of the members of parliament, including the Irish Party."

"That's all very well—"

"Exactly. The parliament will meet again to-morrow, and we'll ring you up to let you know the exact time," said Blake loftily. "There are several important measures to be proposed from the Government benches, and some announcements to be made concerning Ministerial appointments."

"So you rotters are sticking together after all?"

"We have effected a coalition for the purposes of administration," said Tom Merry.

"My hat! Skimpole couldn't beat words like those!"

"The School House will form the Government, and the New House the Opposition," said Blake. "The Minister of War will propose to-morrow to declare war upon Rylcombe Grammar School, and the Minister of Education will move that all the New House kids be compelled to wash their necks of a morning—"

"The Minister of Education will get moved himself if he moves that," Figgins remarked. "I shall move that the Prime Minister be awarded a thick ear, too!"

And Figgins & Co. walked out.

Blake gave Tom Merry a freezing glare. The hero of the Shell was chuckling.

"There's nothing to laugh at in Figgins's absurd remarks, Tom Merry," said the Prime Minister of St. Jim's severely. "Come along, chaps. I shall send a Whip to each of you bounders when the meeting is called, and you will be expected to turn up."

And Blake departed with his nose in the air.

Monty Lowther gave a chuckle.

"My hat! Blake is taking the job on seriously, and no mistake. I never thought of Parliamentary Whips, but, of course, it's the thing!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "By the way, I am goin' to be Secretary of State for Education, you know, and I

have some gweat weforms to pwopose—especially in the dwess department. A wescolution passed by St. Jim's Parliament will have some weight in the coll, you know, and I hope to see a gweat impwovement in the dwess of the membabs and the school generally."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "I suppose you'd like to see all the lower Forms sporting fancy waistcoats and eyeglasses?"

"Wathah not! That would be goin' a twifle too far."

"By Jove, it wouldn't be a bad idea, though!" Monty Lowther remarked to Tom Merry, as the chums of the Shell walked away to their own quarters. "It would be a ripping joke on Gussy—and you can get eyeglasses cheap."

The telephone bell rang as Skimpole was left alone in his study. The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's hastened to answer the call.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo! Is that Skimpole?"

"Yes."

"Would you mind giving me an exposition of Socialism—something really full and complete, that will give me a good idea of the subject?"

"Really, Figgins—"

"I'm not Figgins; I'm Pratt."

"Oh, Pratt! Certainly I shall have very great pleasure in enlightening you upon this most important subject, Pratt."

"Go ahead, then!"

Skimpole was soon embarked upon a stream of explanation. After about five minutes it occurred to him that Pratt was very quiet, and he broke off to call him. There was no reply to his call.

"Pratt! Pratt! Are you there, Pratt?"

There was no reply.

Skimpole hung up the receiver with an annoyed expression. It was evident that Pratt had been "pulling his leg." A few minutes later the telephone bell rang again.

"Hallo!" said Skimpole into the receiver.

"Hallo! Is that Skimpole?"

"Yes. Who are you?"

"I'm French."

"What do you want, French?"

"I'm curious to know something about Socialism. Would you mind giving me a full and really graphic description of Socialistic belief?"

"I should be very pleased, French; but I am afraid that this is intended as a joke. I cannot, however, as a true Socialist, neglect any opportunity of making a convert to the sacred cause. Socialism is the golden rule applied to everyday life; the sun-burst of freedom and happiness after long centuries of darkness; the— Are you there, French?"

There was no reply.

It was evident that French, after getting Skimpole started, had basely deserted his receiver, and was leaving Skimpole to talk to the desert air.

"This would be really exasperating to any but the most enthusiastic propagandist," murmured Skimpole, as he hung up his receiver. "I really— Dear me, there is the bell again! I suppose it is French who has come back."

"Hallo! Hallo!"

"Hallo! Who is that?"

"I'm Jimson."

"What do you want?"

"Since hearing your ripping speech the other day, I've been very curious on the subject of Socialism," said Jimson. "Would you mind explaining to me over the wire the first principles of Socialism, and the Socialistic theory of political economy?"

"I should willingly do so, Jimson; but I am afraid you are dealing with the subject in a light and jesting spirit, and, therefore, I cannot undertake to enlighten you over the telephone. But I will willingly come to your study in the New House, and bring my books on Socialism with me, and we will spend a pleasant couple of hours together examining the rudiments of Socialism—"

"You'll do what?"

"I'll come over to your study in the New House, and bring my books on—"

"If you do, you'll get brained with a cricket bat!" said Jimson. And he rang off.

Skimpole did not go over to the New House to Jimson's study. But for a time, at least, he was not called up again on the telephone.

ANSWERS

CHAPTER 6. The Eyeglasses!

THE Prime Minister of the St. Jim's Parliament sat in his study with knitted brows. Great thoughts were evidently moving in his mind. Blake was taking his position seriously, and he meant to make the office of Prime Minister respected, if it could be done by the exercise of ministerial authority.

"Anything on?" asked Herries, looking at his leader's knitted brows.

"Don't interrupt the meditations of the Premier!" said Digby, in a chiding voice. "You don't know what vast questions of politics and diplomacy he may be revolving in his mighty brain."

"Yaas, wathah! If you are in any difficulty, Blake, don't mind askin' my advice. I'm always willin' to help you youngstahs out of a fix!"

Blake's brow did not relax.

"There will be a meeting of St. Jim's Parliament on Saturday afternoon," he said. "I have reason to suspect that the Opposition intend to give the Government some trouble."

"Bai Jove!"

"Figgins intends to propose some measure which will have the effect of dividing the School House vote. Something to make a row between the Shell and the Fourth, you know, which will set the Shell members against us, and then the New House minority comes to the top."

"Rotten!"

"I have appointed D'Arcy and Herries whippers-in to the party," said Blake. "I had better write out their instructions."

"Why not give 'em by word of mouth?" asked the practical Herries.

Blake froze him with a glare.

"Are you going to begin to argue with the head of the Cabinet, Herries?"

"Well, you see—"

"In important cases the instructions must be given in writing."

"Oh, very well! It's all one to me!"

"Give me a pen, Dig, will you?"

"Here you are; my fountain-pen!"

"Now," said Blake, "we must make sure of Tom Merry turning up to the meeting. He isn't so likely as the others to fall into Figgy's little trap, and he will keep those Shell-fish in order, perhaps. You have to see to that, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Blake wrote on a slip of paper, and handed it to D'Arcy. The swell of the School House read the slip carefully.

"Don't forget the whip for Tom Merry on Saturday!"

"Am I to keep this?" asked D'Arcy innocently.

Blake glared.

"Do you think I have written it out for fun?"

"But I can wemombah quite well."

"Never mind what you can remember; you've got your instructions from the head of the Cabinet in writing, and you've got to take care of them."

"Oh, vewy well!" said D'Arcy. "I haven't the slightest objection, I'm sure. Anythin' to oblige a friend!"

Blake wrote on another slip of paper, and handed it to Herries.

"Whips for all the Fourth Form members on Saturday."

Herries looked it over.

"Am I to keep this?"

"Yes, ass!" roared Blake.

"Oh, all right! No need to be rude about it!" said Herries, as he stuffed the slip into his trousers-pocket.

"Anything for Dig?"

"Of course, not; Dig's Speaker!"

"Oh, yes; I forgot! Have you any more questions of high politics to think out, and any more instructions to give in writing, or shall we go for a turn in the gym?"

Blake rose to his feet.

"Come along!" he said.

The cares of State had rolled from his shoulders, and he was a Fourth Form junior again.

The chums of Study No. 6 walked out into the quadrangle. There was a group of juniors at the door, and all of them were chuckling.

"Anything on?" asked Blake, looking at them.

"You'll see!" grinned George Gore. "I say, Gussy, what price eyeglasses?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye, and gave Gore a calm survey through it.

"Did you address me, Goah?"

"Yes, Gussy! What price eyeglasses?"

"I wogard your wemak as fwivolous and impertinent!" said D'Arcy, with hauteur. "Pway come on, deah boys!"

The chums walked on, leaving the juniors chuckling. Blake was rather puzzled. But he soon saw the reason of the merriment.

Half a dozen youngsters of the Third Form were solemnly parading in the quad, with eyeglasses stuck in their right eyes, and as soon as they saw D'Arcy they fell into line with him.

Arthur Augustus looked at them in amazement.

"Bai Jove, there is a cunwious sight, Blake!" he remarked. "I suppose there is somethin' w'ong with the sight of those youngstahs all of a sudden."

Blake grinned.

"Perhaps," he replied. "I wonder whose idea this is? I say, young Curly, what have you got that window-pane in your eye for?"

Curly, of the Third, screwed his monocle—which was made of plain glass—tighter into his eye, and stared at Blake.

"Are you—aw—alludin' to my monocle?" he drawled.

"Yes, you young ass!"

"It is—aw—a present from Monty Lowther—aw—"

"Oh, I might have guessed that those Shell rotters were at the bottom of it!" said Blake. "Never mind, Gussy; imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, you know!"

D'Arcy stared at the grinning youngsters.

"I wogard the whole pwoccedin' as impertinent!" he exclaimed.

"Did you address me?" demanded Curly haughtily.

"You young wascal—"

"Oh, come on!" said Blake. "Let's get into the gym!"

"Weally, Blake, I am in wathah a quandawy! I cannot allow this gwoss impertinence to pass unpunished!"

"Wade in and lick the lot of them, then!"

"Yaas; but ought I to lick these youngstahs, or to lick Lowthah for puttin' them up to this gwoss impertinence?" said D'Arcy.

"Is that a conundrum?"

"Pway be sewious!"

"My dear Gus, you must work this out in your own head," said Blake. "I can't help you with problems of that sort. Come on, kids; I'm going into the gym!"

And Blake, Herries, and Digby walked on, leaving Arthur Augustus in an undecided frame of mind. Finally he followed them, and Curly of the Third, and his comrades promptly followed him, strutting in imitation of D'Arcy's graceful walk.

A yell of laughter came from a dozen directions, and Arthur Augustus turned red.

"You young wascals!" he exclaimed, turning round. "How dare you treat me with such gwoss diswospect and impertinence?"

"What's the matter with you?" said Curly, in an aggrieved tone. "Can't a chap wear a—aw—monocle if he likes, without you chipping in?"

"You impertinent young wascal—"

"Rats!" said Curly. "Sorry—I mean, wats!"

D'Arcy made a stride towards the Third-Formers. They promptly melted away; but they did not go far. They were evidently out for fun, and Arthur Augustus keenly realised how extremely undignified a figure he would cut if he started chasing the elusive fags around the quadrangle.

He stopped to reflect. And as he stopped the fags came round again, eyeglass in eye, with solemn features, as if bent on anything but a joke.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye, and looked at them witheringly.

"You impertinent young wascals—"

"Aw—did you address me?" said Curly, from a safe distance.

D'Arcy, with a frown upon his aristocratic brow, strode off towards the School House. Right in he went, and right up to the study of Tom Merry, where the Terrible Three were doing their preparation. He threw open the door and strode in.

The chums of the Shell looked up.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Manners pleasantly. "Is it a custom to come into a room without knocking, in the slum you were brought up in, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus turned crimson. Any reflection upon his manners touched him in his tenderest spot.

"I beg your pardon, Manners—"

"I should think you do!"

"And yours, Tom Merry—"

"Granted!" said Tom Merry. "Good-bye!"

"I have come here to thwash Lowthah!"

Monty Lowther rose from the table, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Certainly!" he said. "What are you going to thwash me for, Gussy? Let me know before you slay me."

"You have incited the Third Form fags to treat me with gwoss diswospect!"

"Imposs!" exclaimed Lowther. "They would never do it! They would be awed into immediate trembling submission by a glance from the monocle of the one and only Augustus!"

"I wegard you as an impertinent wottah!" said D'Arcy. "You have supplied the fags with eyeglasses—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "And incited them to tweat me with gwoss diswespect in the quadwangle—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You may wegard it as a laughin' mattah, Lowthah. But I wegard it as a gwoss impertinence. The fags will keep up that silly joke till they have bwoken all the eyeglasses—"

"Very likely! Ha, ha, ha!"
 "And that is why I came here to administah to you a feahful thwashin', Lowthah. Are you weady, you wottah?"
 "But I say, Gussy—"
 "Of course, if you wish to apologise—"
 "Not at all. But I plead extenuating circumstances," said Lowther, with a grave and solemn manner.

"There can be no extenuatin' circs. in a case of gwoss impertinence like this, Lowthah. I wegard you as a wottah!"

"I did it for your good!" pleaded Monty Lowther. "I thought that possibly if you know how great an ass you were, you would try to become rather less of an ass—"

"You are addin' insult to injuw," said D'Arcy. "Pway stand aside, you two fellows, and keep out of the way while I thwash Lowthah!"

And Arthur Augustus rushed valiantly to the attack. Whatever might be the weaknesses of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, he had heaps of pluck, and he would have tackled any odds to avenge an insult to his dignity. He closed with Lowther, and they went reeling and staggering round the study in a deadly embrace. Tom Merry and Manners stood looking on, shaking with laughter.

"Go it, Gussy!" shouted Manners. "Ha, ha, ha! Get his napper into chancery!"

"Yaas, watah! I shall give him a feahful thwashin'!" panted D'Arcy.

"Bravol! Lowther, you're as good as dead! Can I have your fishing-rod when you are laid in the cold ground?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The combat suddenly ceased. D'Arcy had staggered against a chair, and fallen, and he plumped on the carpet with Monty Lowther on his chest.

"Ow," gasped the swell of the School House—"ow! You are wumplin' my waistcoat feahfully. Get up! Monty Lowthah, I insist upon your gettin' up immediately, so that I can wise and give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners. "That's cool, if you like!"

"Lowthah, you howwid wottah—"

"Will you apologise if I let you get up, and make it pax, Gussy?" asked Lowther, taking a comfortable seat on the chest of the fallen swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus struggled and wriggled in vain.

"Certainly not!"

"Oh, very well! Give me my books over, Tom; I'll do my prep. here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I uttahly wefuse to allow you to do your pwep. on my beastly chest!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I insist upon your immediately weleasin' me!"

"Will you make it pax?"

"No—ow—ow—yes—perhaps I will, if you apologise!"

"Not much!"

"Then I will waive the apology. You are uttahly spoilin' my beastly clothes! Pway awise, you wottah, I make it pax!"

The grinning Lowther rose. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy picked himself up, looking very dusty and dishevelled. He adjusted his monocle and glared at Lowther.

"I must let you off that thwashin' as I have made it pax!" he exclaimed. "But pway wemembah that I wegard you with feahful contempt!"

And the swell of St. Jim's strode from the study, leaving the Terrible Three convulsed.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry's Letter Home.

TOM MERRY rose from the table a quarter of an hour later.

"Aren't you fellows finished yet?"

"No," said Lowther. "Don't wait for me."

"That's all right. I've got to write to my old governess," said Tom Merry. "I'll write the letter while you finish."

Tom Merry was a good correspondent so far as his old governess was concerned. In spite of many peculiar little ways, Miss Priscilla Fawcett was a lovable old soul, and Tom Merry was very fond of her. He dutifully wrote his

weekly letter, and dutifully read the much longer letter he received in return. While Manners and Lowther were finishing their prep, he wrote to Miss Fawcett.

"Anybody got an envelope?" he asked, when he had finished.

Nobody had. Tom Merry put the letter in his pocket and rose. Stationery was not kept in large stocks by the juniors, and somebody had lately borrowed all Tom Merry's envelopes and forgotten to replace them. As Tom rose he caught sight of a slip of paper on the floor.

He stooped and picked it up. He stared a little as he read what was written on it.

"Don't forget the whip for Tom Merry on Saturday."

"What on earth is this?" he exclaimed. "I suppose Gussy dropped it when you were waltzing with him, Monty. 'Don't forget the whip for Tom Merry on Saturday.' What the dickens was Gussy carrying that about for?"

Lowther chuckled.

"It's his instructions from the Prime Minister, I expect."

Tom Merry comprehended.

"I see; a whip to the meeting on Saturday," he said, laughing. "Gussy would have the Prime Minister on his track if it were known that he had lost his written instructions. I'll give this back to him when I see him."

And Tom Merry thrust the slip into his pocket.

The Terrible Three went out into the quadrangle. The May dusk was falling, but some of the Shell were playing leapfrog, and Tom Merry and his chums joined in. It was nearly dark when Tom Merry came in, and remembered the letter in his pocket destined for Miss Priscilla Fawcett at Huckleberry Heath.

"By Jove, I nearly forgot!" he exclaimed. "Have you got an envelope, Walsh?"

"Yes, in my study," said Walsh. "You can have it if you like. I've only had some fish-bait in it—"

Tom Merry sniffed.

"Thank you! I want it for a letter to my governess."

"I've got some new ones," said Reilly. "I'll get you one if you like."

"Thank you, kid!"

Reilly brought the envelope, and Tom Merry extracted a stamp from one of his pockets, borrowed a fountain-pen to address the letter, and hastily thrust the letter into the envelope, and cut across the quad just in time to catch the collection at the school letter-box.

"That's done," he remarked, as he came in breathless but satisfied. "Miss Fawcett will get it by the first post to-morrow morning now at Huckleberry Heath."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came along the passage. He haughtily ignored Lowther, carefully nodding only to Tom Merry and Manners.

"I say, Tom Merwyy—"

"Hallo, Gussy! Have you come to apologise to Lowther?"

"Certainly not. I shall wefuse to wegard Lowthah as a gentleman until he apologises to me," said D'Arcy. "But for the fact that I have been constwained to make it pax, I should now administah to him a weally feahful thwashin'."

But what I wanted to say to you was, have I left a slip of papah in your study? I have missed it fwom my beastly pocket, and I can't find it, and it has occurred to me that it might have dwopped on the floor while I was chastisin' Lowthah!"

Lowther stared.

"While you were—what?"

"It s-emed to me that the boot was on the other foot," grinned Tom Merry. "Perhaps I was mistaken. I did see a slip of paper on the floor, Gussy, and I guessed that it belonged to you. Here it is!"

Tom Merry went through his jacket pockets in search of the slip of paper, but did not find it. He looked rather puzzled. He went through the pockets again with the same result.

"I say, did either of you chaps notice which pocket I put that slip of paper in?" he exclaimed.

"I didn't," said Lowther. "Wasn't looking."

"Same here," said Manners.

Tom Merry felt in all his pockets in turn. But the valuable slip of paper containing the written instructions of the School House Whip failed to appear.

"I'm sorry!" said Tom Merry. "I put it in my pocket to return it to you, Gussy, and now it's gone. I suppose I dropped it when I was playing leapfrog. I'll go and have a look in the quad, if you like."

"Not at all, deah boy; it's weally of no consequence!" said Arthur Augustus. "Blake will be exasperwated when he knows that I have lost his written instwuctions, but aftah all, that is not a mattah of gweat consequence. He can easily wite them out again. By the way, in case I forget to tell you to-mowwow, don't forget to turn up at the

meetin'. The New House boundahs have some wheeze on for splittin' our beastly majowity, and bwingin' in the Opposition, or somethin' of that sort."

"Oh, we'll have our eye on them!" said Tom Merry. "We'll turn up, never fear!"

And Arthur Augustus, still frigidly unconscious of Monty Lowther's presence, walked away. Two or three Third Form fags appeared out of various corners with monocles in their eyes and walked after him.

Lowther chuckled.

"They're keeping up the joke," he observed, as D'Arcy's voice was heard in the distance threatening the fags with condign punishment. "The laugh is against Gussy this time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young wascals—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 8.

A Surprising Telegram.

DR. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, stood in the Sixth Form class-room, with a telegram in his hand and an expression of almost idiotic bewilderment upon his face. It was Saturday morning, and the Head had been conducting the Sixth Form upon an interesting excursion into Greek roots, when that telegram arrived. The amazement of the Head as he read it was visible to the whole class.

"Dear me!" murmured the Head, adjusting his glasses and reading the telegram again. "Dear me, there must be some strange mistake! Dear me! Kildare, I leave you in charge here for a few minutes."

"Yes, sir," said the captain of St. Jim's.

The Head left the Sixth Form-room and went in search of Mr. Railton, the housemaster of the School House. Mr. Railton was always his right-hand man in a case of difficulty. Mr. Railton was taking the Shell that morning, and it was to the Shell class-room that the Head proceeded.

"Can you spare me a minute, Mr. Railton?"

"Certainly, sir!"

The Shell looked on with interest as the two masters consulted together in low tones. There was evidently something the matter, from the doctor's worried expression, but the tones of the masters were too low for the boys to hear what was said.

"Read that telegram, Mr. Railton," said Dr. Holmes. "It is really most amazing. Can you understand it?"

The housemaster read the wire.

"Handed in at Huckleberry Heath at 9.30. Please postpone punishment till my arrival. Am coming immediately.—P. FAWCETT."

The housemaster and the headmaster looked at each other in equal astonishment.

"Can you understand it, Mr. Railton?"

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"I have not the faintest idea what it can mean, sir."

"It is from Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess and guardian," said the Head. "But what can it mean?"

"That is a mystery. Can she have an idea in her head that you intend to administer some punishment to Tom Merry?"

"How should she imagine so?"

"I cannot guess. Tom Merry is not the sort of lad to write complaints to his governess; and, besides, there is now, I believe, no question of punishing Merry."

"Certainly not, so far as I am concerned."

"He is very frequently in hot water," said Mr. Railton, with a smile. "But of late he has been very busy with a school parliament the juniors are getting up, and he has had no time to break any of the college rules. His conduct has been quite exemplary, in fact. I cannot understand this."

"I remember once there was a wire sent to Miss Fawcett by a mischievous lad, which brought her post-haste to the school," said the Head, after a pause. "This may be the result of some trick of the kind."

"I should not be surprised."

"I suppose there is no way to prevent her coming?" murmured the Head. "She may have started by now, and a telegram to Huckleberry Heath would get there too late."

"Unfortunately, that is very probable."

The Head sighed slightly. He liked and greatly respected Miss Priscilla Fawcett. But he had sometimes found the good lady very trying in her visits to the school.

"I—I should be glad if this visit could be—er—postponed," the Head remarked. "If Miss Fawcett has already started, it is too late; but—"

"I do not know how frequent the trains are from Huckleberry Heath," said the housemaster, "but I remember that Miss Fawcett is on the telephone. There may be time to ring her up before she starts. A wire would have to be sent from Rylcombe, and would be pretty certain to get there too late, but on the telephone—"

The Head brightened up.

"You are right, Mr. Railton. At all events, I will ring Miss Fawcett up immediately, and if she has not already started, I may be able to explain in time."

And the doctor hurried away. In a few moments he was at the 'phone in his study, but to his amazement there came no answer to his call. The vagaries of the young lady at the exchange were familiar enough; but in this case it was evident that there was something wrong with the wire, and that communication was off.

"Dear me," said the Head, as he laid down the receiver, "this is most annoying! My last chance of stopping Miss Fawcett is gone. The good lady will have a long and tiresome journey for nothing, and I—ahem!"

The Head sent for Taggles, and instructed him to immediately procure a man to examine the telephone and attend to it, and then he returned thoughtfully to the Sixth Form-room. The man was not long in arriving, and he found nothing wrong in the Head's study, and pursued his investigations further, and when the boys came out after morning school they saw him on the School House roof at work with the wire.

Tom Merry laughed as he glanced up.

"That's some of Skimpole's work," he remarked. "Something wrong with the Head's telephone."

"Impossible!" said Skimpole, who was craning his neck to look up. "I have really not interfered with the Head's wire, except to use it as a support for mine, where the two wires cross, you know."

"Ha, ha! There's something wrong with it, at all events."

"That is not my fault. I was very careful."

But the Terrible Three laughed again. They were pretty certain that Skimpole was at the bottom of the trouble, though the amateur telephonist of St. Jim's was certain of the contrary. Skimpole stood watching the man at work, while the chums of the Shell strolled out of the gates of St. Jim's. It was a fine May afternoon, and the leafy lanes tempted them. But Skimpole's thoughts were not in the leafy lanes or on the sunny river. He was thinking of the possibility of a by-election of the Parliament of St. Jim's, and he went to his study a little later to write out a speech he had been thinking of to be delivered to the electors.

Skimpole sat at his table, scratching his nose and chewing the handle of his pen, when the telephone-bell rang.

"Dear me," said Skimpole, "I hope this is not a joke from the New House again! It is very annoying to be interrupted while composing a speech. The woes of the down-trodden millions cry into the air for redress—"

Ting-ting!

Skimpole, with patient resignation, took up the receiver.

"Hallo!"

"Allo! Har you there?"

Skimpole looked surprised.

"Dear me, that is not Figgins's voice. It is the voice of a person who misplaces his aspirates. Surely—"

"Har you there?"

"Yes; I am here."

"All right now?"

"Eh?"

"All right now, miss?"

"There is some misapprehension," murmured Skimpole. "I do not know who this person is, but I cannot imagine why he should call me miss."

"All right?"

"Yes; I am certainly all right!"

"Right-ho! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye! But—"

But the unknown speaker had rung off. Skimpole hung up the receiver in bewilderment.

"I really cannot understand this," he murmured. "It must surely be a joke of someone in the New House, or else someone has used the telephone, imagining that it was connected up with the exchange. Ah, yes, that must be it! And that accounts for him addressing me as miss. But why should he ring up the exchange to ask the young lady if she is all right? Perhaps he is her sweetheart, or something! But I do not really quite understand it."

However, more important matters claimed Skimpole's attention, and leaving the mystery unsolved, he returned to his pen and paper, and was soon deep in the composition of the speech which was to enlighten the St. Jim's electors of the important subjects of Socialism, Determinism, and several other "isms."

CHAPTER 9.

Miss Priscilla is Alarmed!

"MY hat!" It was Tom Merry who uttered the sudden exclamation.

The Terrible Three were sitting on the top bar of a gate in Rylcombe Lane when Tom Merry suddenly caught sight of a figure approaching from the direction of the village. Familiar enough was the figure to the eyes of the hero of the Shell.

"My hat, it's my old nurse!"

It was indeed Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and the good old lady was evidently in a hurry. Her bonnet was tied on awry, and her general appearance was not nearly so neat and prim as was usual with her. She was coming up the lane at a great rate, and the sight would have been comical but for the earnestness and solemn purpose in her perspiring face.

"Coming to see you, Tom," said Manners. "Didn't you know?"

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"I hadn't the slightest idea."

"That's curious! She looks as if something were wrong," said Monty Lowther. "Alarmed for your health, I expect, and coming down with a special bottle of cod-liver oil."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Or perhaps a box of Purple Pills for Peculiar People."

Tom Merry slid off the gate.

"I'm going to meet her," he said. And he ran up the lane towards the hurrying old lady.

Miss Fawcett caught sight of him, and uttered an exclamation of joy.

"My darling Tommy!"

The next moment he was clasped in her arms.

"My sweetest child! And they were going to whip him, then! Never, never, while his old nurse is there to protect him, the sweet boy!"

Tom Merry struggled. Miss Priscilla Fawcett was a dear old soul. But she never would realise that Tom Merry was growing up. To be hugged in public and called a dear boy at fifteen was not exactly gratifying to the hero of the Shell.

"Dear Miss Fawcett—"

"But they shall not whip him, then!"

"I—"

"I came down instantly. You have not been whipped yet?"

"Whipped? No!"

"Then the doctor had my telegram in time! Oh, I have been in such a flutter!" said Miss Fawcett. "I caught the first train down from Huckleberry Heath; but the journey is so long, and I was afraid that you might have the whipping before I arrived, though Hannah wired immediately to the doctor. Thank goodness I am in time, my darling child! And there was no vehicle at Rylcombe Station, and I have hurried—"

"My dear nurse—"

"But you are safe now, my darling—you are safe now, with your old nurse to protect you," said Miss Fawcett.

Tom Merry was scarlet. Manners and Lowther had turned their heads away from the affecting scene. Miss Fawcett thought it was due to their emotion, and she respected them for the manly tears which compelled the two juniors to put their handkerchiefs to their faces. But Tom Merry knew very well that they were struggling desperately not to yell with laughter in the presence of Miss Fawcett.

"Come on with me!" exclaimed Miss Priscilla. "Come to the doctor, and I will see that you are not whipped, my darling! You are not strong enough to bear punishment, my sweet boy."

"But, my dear—"

But Miss Priscilla hurried him on. Tom Merry gave in, feeling that it was best to get Miss Fawcett inside the school as soon as possible. Fellows were gathering round to look on, and a scene of pathos in public was a horror of horrors to Tom Merry, as to most boys.

As soon as they were gone, Monty Lowther threw himself down upon his back on the grass beside the lane and yelled.

"Oh, hold me, Manners!" he gurgled. "I know I shall break something! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can't!" gasped Manners. "I want somebody to hold me! Oh, my darling child, and did the naughty school-master want to whip him, then! Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho! Poor old Tommy!"

"Poor old Tommy! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry hurried on towards the school with Miss Fawcett. What had brought the good lady so suddenly down to St. Jim's he could not imagine. Fellows looked at them as they progressed across the quad, and Figgins & Co. raised their hats to Miss Fawcett with great politeness and lurking grins. Study No. 6 were on the steps of the School House, and they took off their caps courteously.

"It is a weal pleasaah to see you again, Miss Pwiscilla," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway allow us to welcome you to St. Jim's!"

"Yes, rather!" said Blake. "We are so glad to see you, and so is Tom Merry. Doesn't Merry show it in his face, kids?"

"He do—he does," said Digby.

"I'll punch your head presently," said Tom Merry, in a fierce whisper.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I must see the Head immediately!" exclaimed Miss Fawcett. "Where is the Head? My good man, show me in to the Head immediately, please!"

"The 'Head is just going to 'is lunch, ma'am."

"I am sure he will excuse me. Show me in at once."

And Miss Fawcett, who was not to be denied or delayed, was shown forthwith into the presence of the Head of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry would gladly have escaped, but Miss Fawcett had tight hold of his hand, and he had to accompany her, whether he liked it or not. He stood with scarlet cheeks in the presence of the doctor.

"Ah, good-morning, Miss Fawcett!" said the Head, shaking hands with the visitor. "I am—er—glad to see you. Won't you—er—sit down."

"Oh, Dr. Holmes, I am so glad my telegram reached you in time!" exclaimed Miss Fawcett, sinking into a chair. "If you had whipped Tommy in the present delicate state of his health, the results might have been terrible."

The Head glanced at the study, well-set-up junior, the champion athlete of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, and smiled slightly. Nobody but an anxious old nurse could possibly have imagined Tom Merry to be delicate.

"My dear Miss Fawcett—"

"Oh, Dr. Holmes, allow me to beg of you—to pray of you—not to whip Tommy—at least, until he is stronger—"

"My dear Miss Fawcett—"

"The result would certainly be very serious. It might cause shock to the system, and Tommy is very delicate. You must not judge by that deceptive flush in his cheeks."

"My dear nurse—"

"My dear Miss Fawcett—"

"Promise me—oh, promise me that you will not whip him, dear Dr. Holmes!"

"But I had no intention of doing so," exclaimed the amazed Head. "Whipping is not a punishment in vogue at this school, in any case. Boys are caned, and sometimes flogged. But there is no question of punishing Merry at all."

"But—"

"There is evidently some mistake. Is it possible that you have been the victim of some absurd practical joke, Miss Fawcett?"

The old lady looked amazed as well as relieved.

"But—but I came to this conclusion from the slip which Tommy enclosed in his letter to me, which reached me this morning—"

The Head looked severely at Tom Merry.

"Is it possible, Merry, that you are the cause of—"

"Certainly not, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "There was nothing in my letter, that I know of, to cause Miss Fawcett to—"

"But this is it," exclaimed Miss Fawcett, extracting a slip of paper from her bag, and passing it to the Head. Dr. Holmes adjusted his spectacles, and looked astounded as he read: "Don't forget the whip for Tom Merry on Saturday."

"Bless my soul! What can this mean?"

He had read the sentence aloud, and so Tom Merry understood. The junior involuntarily burst into a laugh. Dr. Holmes looked at him.

"Merry—"

"If you please, sir, I can explain," said Tom eagerly. "That slip got into the letter by mistake. I wondered what had become of it. I suppose when I put it in my pocket it went into the folded letter, and then I posted it—"

"But what does this mean?"

"Oh, it's a whip, sir! It belongs to D'Arcy, and it's his instructions to see that I don't miss the meeting of St. Jim's Parliament to-day."

The Head looked puzzled.

"The St. Jim's Parliament!"

"Yes, sir; it's a House of Commons got up among the junior Forms, on the lines of the real one, but with improvements—"

"Ahem! I understand now! I remember Mr. Railton telling me something about it. You see, Miss Fawcett, it is all a mistake."

"Thank goodness," gasped Miss Priscilla—"thank goodness! I did not quite know what to make of the slip, but I concluded that it was an instruction to some under-master to punish darling Tommy on Saturday, though I could not

think how it had come into my dear child's possession. Then my terrible alarm was without foundation?"

The doctor smiled.

"Quite without foundation, Miss Fawcett."

"I am so glad. But as you know, dear Dr. Holmes, Tommy's health is so delicate that I was afraid——"

"Yes, I fully understand——"

"I came away in so great a hurry that I had time only to snatch up a bottle of cod-liver oil to bring to Tommy——"

The Head took pity upon the crimson junior.

"Yes, yes, all is explained now. You may go, Merry."

"Thank you, sir!"

"One moment, Tommy darling. Take the cod-liver oil. Have you finished the pills I sent you last week?"

"Oh, no; there are quite a lot left!"

"I hope you are not neglecting to take them regularly, my sweetest. Six before and after every meal, and nine on going to bed, and others during the day whenever you feel a desire to take them."

"I remember perfectly——"

"Remember to take the cod-liver oil regularly. And, my child, do take care not to get your feet wet——"

"I will take care——"

"And do not be reckless in those terrible scrummages at cricket, Tommy darling. Remember you are not strong, and let the other boys take all the goals if they wish when you are playing cricket. Your precious health must come before everything."

"That is all right, dear. I never try to take goals at cricket, and I never will," said Tom Merry, making that promise with a clear conscience.

"That is my own darling boy!"

"You will lunch with me, Miss Fawcett——"

"Certainly, Dr. Holmes, thank you very much. I shall return to Huckleberry Heath by the next train, much relieved in my mind."

It was possible that Dr. Holmes was much relieved in his mind, too. Tom Merry quitted the study. Miss Priscilla arranged the strings of her bonnet.

"I left Laurel Villa in too great a hurry to leave any instructions," she said. "Could you telephone after lunch and instruct Hannah to have the trap at the station to meet me, dear Dr. Holmes?"

"With pleasure, madam."

"Thank you so much. I am afraid I have quite startled you by this sudden visit——"

"Oh, not at all!"

"But I was so terribly alarmed for my darling Tommy——"

"Oh, yes, I quite understand——"

"You know, he is not strong. And he is so reckless. His father was the same, poor dear Thomas. You know, he was killed by the Afghans, and they cut him down with their dreadful swords; but I am sure he would have recovered if he had been more careful of his health. And my darling Tommy——"

"Yes, but lunch——"

"The sweet child will not acknowledge that he is delicate——"

"No, but lunch," said the hungry doctor.

"I had to be so careful of him during his childhood——"

"But lunch——"

"When he had the measles——"

"Lunch is served, sir!"

And the Head escaped at last from the harrowing particulars of Tom Merry's early career.

CHAPTER 10.

A Strange Talk on the Telephone.

TOM MERRY rejoined his chums with a very rich colour in his face. Lowther and Manners made no allusion to Miss Fawcett, but it was easy to see that they were suppressing a strong desire to chuckle. Tom Merry explained the cause of the old lady's sudden visit to St. Jim's, and the chums of the Shell agreed that it was all D'Arcy's fault. They went in rather late to dinner. When the meal was over, Skimpole went up to his study again, and the Terrible Three followed him there.

The amateur Socialist was already busy when they came in. He was poring over a paper pamphlet with the imposing title of "Determinism; a Treatise upon the Theory that every Effect is the result of a Cause, and that every Cause is the Producer of an Effect." The brainy man of the Shell looked up as the chums came in, and stuck his pen behind one of his large ears.

"Do you want to speak to me, Merry? I am rather busy just now, looking up points for my election speech——"

"But the elections are over——"

"I am expecting a by-election, which will give me the opportunity of carrying on my propaganda work within the

walls of St. Jim's Parliament. The more I study the subject of Determinism, the more I am convinced that a man consists wholly and solely of himself and his attributes, and that his surroundings have an influence over him exactly proportioned to the extent of their effect upon him. This is the remarkable discovery which is the root of the theory of Determinism——"

"Ring off, old chap! I mean, ring on——ring on to Figgins. We want to ring him up for the parliamentary meeting——"

"I thought Blake was going to do that——"

"Blake can go and eat coke——"

"Can he?" said a voice at the door, and the chums of Study No. 6 looked in. "I thought you kids might have the cheek to usurp my functions, so I came along. As Primo Minister in St. Jim's Parliament, I call the members together."

"Yaas, wathah! I should stand upon my wights as Pwima Ministah if I were Blake! I vegard these persons as——"

Ting-ting!

"Hallo, there's Figgins & Co. started ringing us up!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I'll just see what the——"

"No, you won't," said Blake. "I'll just see——"

"I tell you——"

"Now, look here——"

Skimpole stepped to the telephone and took up the receiver.

"Hallo!"

"I wish you would attend to my call a little more promptly."

"Hallo, Figgy is in a hurry!" remarked Blake, who was close enough to Skimpole to hear what was said. "But that doesn't sound like his voice, either."

"I was delayed, as I was busy upon a speech," said Skimpole. "I am sorry to have kept you waiting, but it really doesn't matter."

"What do you say?"

"I say it really does not matter."

"I shall complain of this impertinence."

"Oh, rats!"

"What!"

"I said rats."

"I-I-I——"

"If you've got anything to say, say it; if not, ring off."

"I-I——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Skimpole. And he hung off.

"Good-bye, Dr. Holmes! Thank you so much, and—— Oh, yes; you telephoned to Huckleberry Heath, did you not, to tell them to have the trap at the station?"

The Head was looking a little flustered as he shook hands with Miss Fawcett.

"Er—I rang up the exchange," he said; "but I was not put on to your number. I was replied to with the grossest impertinence. I am afraid that the operator must be intoxicated, or something of the sort. I will ring up again a little later—— Or, rather, I will send a wire to Huckleberry Heath, which will answer the purpose."

"Thank you so much, Dr. Holmes! I must say good-bye to my darling Tommy."

Tom Merry was not to be seen; but someone remembered having seen him go to Skimpole's study, and he was sent for. He came down in haste to say good-bye to his old governess. Miss Priscilla kissed him on the forehead before a crowd of keenly-interested juniors, and impressed upon him the importance of not getting his feet wet, or struggling too strenuously after goals at cricket, and then drove off to the station.

Tom Merry returned to Skimpole's study. His chums were awaiting him there, and Blake was vainly endeavouring to ring up Figgins.

Dr. Holmes, after seeing Miss Priscilla Fawcett off at the door, returned to his study, still looking very flustered.

He intended spending the half-holiday preparing examination papers, but he had barely settled down at his desk when the telephone bell rang.

"Dear me!" murmured the Head. "I suppose they are ringing me up to explain about the intoxicated operator."

He took up the receiver.

"Hallo, hallo!" came from the other end.

"Hallo!"

"Oh, you're there, are you?"

"Yes," said Dr. Holmes, rather surprised by this mode of address; "I am here."

"Why the dickens didn't you answer the call before, then, you ass?"

The doctor nearly dropped the receiver.

He had known of carelessness and impertinence at the telephone exchange, but he had never been addressed "like that before."

"What——what did you say?"

"I said why didn't you answer the call before!"
 "If you have rung before, I was not aware of it. I have been absent from my study."
 "Well, you shouldn't be, when I'm talking to you. Never mind! It's the woodshed again at three o'clock."

"What!"
 "Deaf?" said the voice. "I say it's the woodshed again at three o'clock."

"What—what—?"
 "My hat! The chap's deaf or silly. The—woodshed—again—at—three—o'clock! Understand that?"

"No—n-n-no—I don't think I quite understand. There is some mistake somewhere! Are you the exchange?"

"The what?"
 "The exchange?"
 "Don't be an ass, old chap! You know who I am, so what's the good of making little jokes about the exchange? Don't be a silly ass!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Doctor.
 "Well, are you coming?"

"Eh?"
 "Are you coming?"
 "Coming where?"

"To the woodshed, fat-head!"
 "I—I think there must be some mistake. I am convinced that there is some mistake. I must be speaking to the wrong person. Do you know whom I am?"

"Ass! What are you getting at now?"
 "I am Dr. Holmes."

"Oh, don't be funny!"
 "I am Dr. Holmes, of St. James's Collegiate School."

"Why don't you say you are the Kaiser, or W. G. Grace, Figgy?"

The Doctor gave a jump.
 "Bless my soul! The operator must be under the impression that he is speaking to Figgins. Hallo! Do you think you are speaking to Figgins, of the Fourth Form?"

"I know I am, cuckoo!"
 "This is really remarkable!"

The Doctor hung up the receiver, and rang for his manservant, whom he sent to fetch Mr. Railton. The housemaster of the School House came in in a few minutes. He looked in some surprise at the Head's flustered face.

"Is anything wrong, sir?"
 "Something is certainly wrong, Mr. Railton," said the Head. "You see the telephone bell is ringing. I should be glad if you would answer the call, and tell me what you make of it. I am utterly astounded."

Mr. Railton, looking somewhat mystified, took up the receiver.

"Hallo! Who are you?"
 "I'll show you who I am when I meet you in the woodshed," said a voice. "I've had about enough of your little jokes!"

The housemaster staggered.
 "What do you mean by ringing off before I had finished?" the voice went on. "If you are looking for trouble, you've only got to say so."

"Dear me!"
 "Can't you answer, fat-head? Are you deaf, ass? Or are you dumb, duffer? Haven't you got a silly tongue in your silly head?"

Mr. Railton looked astounded.
 "I never heard anything like this in all my life," he gasped.

"I think I may say the same," said Dr. Holmes. "There is either an intoxicated person or a madman at the telephone exchange."

"Who are you?" demanded Mr. Railton. "Whom do you think you are speaking to?"

"You know jolly well whom I am! I'm the Prime Minister, and I'll give you a thick ear when parliament meets!"

"My—my word! This is most amazing!"
 "Are you coming to the meeting, chump?"
 "Wh—what meeting?"

"In the woodshed, ass! If you don't jolly soon answer, I'll come over to the New House and wipe up the floor with the lot of you!"

A light of comprehension dawned in Mr. Railton's eyes.
 "Dear me! I thought I knew the voice. It is Blake, and he thinks he is speaking to someone in the New House. But

"You amaze me! There is no telephone in the New House—"

"I have heard to-day that some mechanical genius in the School House has lately connected the two houses by telephone," said Mr. Railton. "Is it possible that the wires have become connected, or something of that sort?"

The Head passed his hand across his brow.
 "Dear me! I knew nothing of that."

Mr. Railton spoke into the telephone again.

"Hallo!"
 "Hallo, you New House rotter!"
 "I am Mr. Railton."
 "Oh, are you going to be funny again?"
 "Don't you know my voice, Blake?"

"Well, it's something like Railton's, but I suppose you're Kerr. Kerr can imitate any chap's voice. No good trying to take me in, Kerr."

"I am Mr. Railton, and I am in the Head's study. I command you to come here immediately."

"Yes, I'm likely to go into the Head's study and get a licking for my cheek, to please you, Kerr!"

"I tell you I am Mr Railton—"
 "Oh, cheese it!"

The housemaster laughed involuntarily. It was impossible to be angry, when it was quite clear that Blake firmly believed he was talking to a New House junior.

"Where are you, Blake?" he asked.
 "You know jolly well that I'm in Skimpole's study."

Mr. Railton turned from the telephone.
 "Blake is speaking from Skimpole's study, sir," he said.

"Will you send James to fetch here everyone who is there at present? That will clear up the matter."

"A good idea," said the Head.
 And James was promptly dispatched upon his errand. In five minutes a sound of many footsteps was heard in the passage; and the grinning James opened the door, and ushered in eight rather scared-looking juniors.

The Head surveyed them severely.
 "Blake, I understand that you were talking over the telephone just now."

"I—I was talking to Figgy in the New House, sir."

"You were talking to myself, and then to Mr. Railton, on this telephone."

"I—I—I—"

Blake was too astounded and alarmed to say more. But Tom Merry came to the rescue.

"Blake didn't know, sir," he said; "we have a telephone from Skimpole's study to the New House, and Blake was talking to Figgins. We couldn't understand the answers we got. We thought it was Figgins or Kerr pulling our leg—I mean joking with us."

"How could your telephone possibly have become connected with mine?"

Skimpole looked puzzled.
 "It is impossible, sir!" he exclaimed. "I put up the wires most carefully."

"Then that is why my telephone was out of order this morning!" exclaimed the Head.

"Impossible, sir! I was too careful for anything like that to happen—"

"It is evidently the case," said the Doctor; "yet the workman, when he had finished, told me that he had spoken through to the exchange, and that it was all right."

Skimpole gave a jump.
 "Ah, that explains!"

"Explains what, Skimpole?"
 "Why, sir, the stupid ass—I mean the man must have connected up the two telephones by mistake. Somebody spoke to me this morning, and I thought it was Figgins larking, as he addressed me as miss—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "It was the repairing chap speaking through to the exchange."

"I suppose now that it must have been. I said that I was all right, though I did not understand his inquiry—"

Mr. Railton was trying not to laugh. Even the Head could not help smiling.

"It's all the stupid fellow's fault, sir," said Skimpole. "He certainly ought not to have connected up the two wires. Of course, as a Determinist, I do not blame him for being stupid. It is evidently due to the combined influences of heredity and environment—"

"That will do, Skimpole. As it is all a mistake—"

"I hope that you couldn't think I meant to talk like that to you, sir," said Blake, very red in the face; "I'd sooner bite my tongue off. I thought I was talking to old Figgins all the time, and that he was larking. I am very sorry—"

The Doctor smiled.
 "I accept your apology, Blake. But I must ask you to kindly take down the telephone. You may go."

And the juniors, extremely glad to escape so cheaply, went. When the door closed, the Doctor and Mr. Railton burst into a hearty laugh. And Tom Merry went over in person to the New House to inform Figgins of the time for parliament to meet.

THE END.

(Another splendid story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled "The Detective's Pupils." Please order your copy of "THE GEM" LIBRARY in advance. Price One Penny.)

The Second Long Complete Tale.Grand New Series.

THE TAMING OF THE TURK ::

Being
the Account of the
Adventures of
**ALAN
WAYWARD.**

CHAPTER 1.

The Weaving of the Net.

"I **THOUGHT** we were going to Bagdad," said Alan Wayward, in a tone that testified to more than a little ill-humour.

"Have we not been travelling there for the last two months?" retorted his companion, a white-bearded sheikh.

"Rats!" ejaculated Alan, rising and staring gloomily over the distant vistas of spring verdure that was mantling the bleak ranges of the Sipan Dagh. "Rats, and many of 'em! For the last two months we've been bouncing round these mountains mopping up a crew of greasy bandits."

The two were seated in the abandoned stronghold of Kasim, the robber-chief, on a gaunt spur of the Sipan Dagh overlooking the Lake Van, southwards, and commanding a view westwards of the valleys and gorges and uplands that rose gradually into the range of the Ala Dagh, where Hassein and his daughter Mirame ruled over the wild and indomitable clan of the Haideranli.

A week had gone by since the sheikh and his disciple in the way of wisdom had accompanied the splendid old chieftain and his daughter from the blazing ruins of the slave-trader of Foliat to their mountain stronghold, and still the sheikh lingered in the lonely retreat, while Alan Wayward fretted and fumed at the forced inaction.

"I don't care what comes in the way, as long as I can get a smack at it," he replied morosely, fingering the glittering blade of his battle-axe, which he had been engaged in cleaning, and pulling the ear of the huge wolfhound at his side with an abrupt carelessness of caress that drew a blink of red wonder from Clok's inquiring eyes.

For Alan was in a very ferocious mood. Despite his great service in rescuing Hassein's daughter from the clutches of the slave-merchant, Mustapha, and despite even Mirame's promise to himself, and her entreaties to her father, the haughty chieftain of the Haideranli had remained obdurate.

"I have spoken!" he said emphatically. "Twenty thousand lances must he have, and cattle and sheep that my barns cannot feed during a week. Not till then will I hear his suit."

The verdict had been hard for the impetuous soul of Alan Wayward, for Mirame was very fair, and the adventures and deadly peril the two had gone through together had linked the hearts of the two in an enthusiasm of hope that thwarting whipped to rebellion. But the ancient chieftain cared as little for rebellion as he did for sighs. He locked his daughter up in the women's quarters during the three

days that he laid himself out with a perfect grace to entertain his guests, showing a fine and courteous blind eye to the moodiness of the young love-lorn English giant. To make matters the more unendurably aggravating for the lovers, the sheikh, contrary to all expectation, had not only supported Hassein's decision, but shown himself peculiarly apt at treating Alan's humours thereon with pitiless sarcasm.

"Verily," he jibed, as they made ready for departure from Hassein's castle, "if there is a solace for these aged eyes, it is to see a lusty youth puling like a sick calf after a wench. Yet think not my heart is adamant. It bleeds for thee, oh disciple of wisdom! When I was a tender youth of fourteen, I, even I, Jelaluddin, prophet of Bagdad, sighed and sickened thus after a mature matron who cooked sweetmeats in the tent of the father of Beni Mahmoud. Yet when my mother had spanked me with a cudgel, the scales fell from my eyes, and I perceived that all love is vanity."

He listened gravely while Alan exploded into a volley of English, then wagged his long white beard.

"Even so did I, too, use strange and empty words," he said placidly. "Wait me, I pray thee, at the gate. While thou takest leave of the regiment Hassein hath given thee, I have a word for the chieftain apart. We rest fifteen days in Kasim's stronghold," said the sheikh, as he joined the chieftain on the steps of the great hall, whence he had just taken leave of Alan, "for on our road to Bagdad there is a work to do for Allah."

"If thou needest help, send to me," said Hassein, with a fine smile; for he knew that when the "prophet of Bagdad" set out to do work for Allah, it was a certainty that hard blows would abound.

"Nay!" said the sheikh gravely. "The young lord, my disciple, is a host in himself, and though I chastise his pride, yet wital he hath much wit, and is valiant and skilful in war. The golden eagle will not cry to the grey falcon for aid."

"It is well," said Hassein stiffly, for the grey falcon was the emblem of his house. "The cattle and the slaves and spoil we took from Idrin and Kasim and Mustapha shall rest here and fatten ten days on me. On the fifteenth day the portion that is due to him as captain in the Haideranli shall be conducted to the valley beneath Kasim's old den, and there await his orders. For in good truth he hath well merited his full share."

"Even so," replied the sheikh, taking a scoop of snuff. "And forget not, I pray thee, to add thereto of thy own the ransom twice told of thy daughter. For verily, save for him and his valour none of thy clan could match, the hope

of thy house were now either a brigand's bride or a slave-trader's plaything."

For a moment Hasein had glared at him as if he would slay him.

"Thou art my guest," he said icily, "and thy comrade awaiteth thee. The ransom shall be paid. I bid thee farewell." And he had stalked away, flushed and in furious ill-humour.

The sheikh withdrew, chuckling, and joined Alan at the gates, where an escort of fifty lances from his own regiment waited to accompany him on the road.

"What doest thou?" he asked, as he saw Alan dismounted and gazing up at the latticed windows overlooking the courtyard of the portcullis.

Alan did not answer. His eyes were fixed on a lattice that was gently opening, and next moment a red rose, cunningly bound round with alternate threads of green and crimson and gold, fell from above. He caught it as it fell, and stood as one spellbound gazing at the hand still lingering on the delicate fretwork of the lattice. Then the lattice opened an inch wider, revealing Mirame's face. For one second her eyes looked into his, then the window was slowly, slowly closed.

The sheikh gave a derisive sniff, and poked Alan in the ribs with his staff.

"If thou wilt not have thy regiment sport a wench's petticoat for its banner," he jibed, "get thee to horse. Thy fellows without are all a-grin."

So they had ridden away from Ala Dagh, and for seven long days the sheikh had disciplined the chafing spirit of his disciple by keeping him in all ignorance of his plans, while railing at him the while for the moroseness of his moods.

But now, angered at Alan's sullen reply, the old sheikh rounded on him in a sudden blaze of scorn.

"Knowest thou not," shouted the sheikh, now fairly roused, "that the byways of Allah make the high-road to wisdom, thou cycle of purblind vanities? And when we have fulfilled the will of Allah in punishing with death Idrin and Kasim and that vile dog of Foliat, when Rastan wanders blind and fire-scorched a beggar in the bazaars, when Saponyadi roams the Ala Dagh forgotten in the bellies of many wolves, shall Hadir Bey sit at Bitlis in his pride, and say that Allah winks at his iniquity, that he lifted his hand against the prophet of Bagdad, and lo, the prophet has fled like a dog to the desert?"

"Oh, if you are on the track of Hadir," said Alan, with a somewhat shamefaced grin, "I'm your man! I've not forgotten the way he bottled us up with Ahmed and his bride. I'm sorry I've been such a bear. Of course, you're quite right, but—"

"Swallow thy 'buts,' thou mule in obstinacy!" cried the sheikh, only half appeased. "By the beard of the Prophet, if thou givest me another indigestion with thy mooning, I will find another disciple, and drive thee with my staff to that man, old Hasein, and bid him find thee place among his kitchen wenches."

"For a man of wisdom, thou art strangely full of speech," said Alan slyly.

"Thy correction is merited, my son," said the sheikh, with a sudden and unexpected show of humility. "And since I have erred, I will even discipline myself, and for three days will eat only a little cake of flour, moistened with a little water. And since thou art the cause thereof, thou shalt share my fast, and purge thy offence also. Wherefore, oh Clok, thou noble hound, whom I in my wrath did unjustly smite, behold thou profest by our mortification." And as he spoke the sheikh lifted from the triangle a great joint of half-cooked venison that was roasting before a fire of logs, and flung it to the hound.

Alan made a wry grimace, but he did not think of contesting the verdict. The few months he had passed with the sheikh in his voluntary discipleship had been punctuated with many such unexpected disciplines. And despite the impetuosity of his nature, despite his stubborn pride and proneness to mutiny, Alan Wayward was unflinchingly loyal to his promised word. He had promised to obey the sheikh for five years, moved by an impulse he had never succeeded subsequently in explaining, save by the magnetism of the old man's personality, which, in their first dramatic interview, when the sheikh had stood between him and certain death, had seemed to promise a life of strenuous adventure. And he had given his obedience with an unflinching loyalty, which had endeared him more than he had any notion of to the mysterious prophet, who, apparently without resources or following, excited so great a veneration and exercised so undoubted an authority among all the tribes and districts through which they had hitherto passed. Only the sheikh knew what projects he was planning for the young man, whom he was growing to regard as the son Allah had given him in his old age, to replace those taken

years ago. And the sheikh was set to keep the secret locked in his bosom, till he should prove and test how far the worth of the young man might be relied on, and to what dignity his obedience might soar through the days of countless little trials, or the hours of big endeavour. For in the sheikh's philosophy, the beginning of all wisdom lay in the perfecting of the spirit of obedience.

"Nevertheless, tell me, oh wisdom," said Alan, swallowing his grimace, "how thou proposeth to punish Hadir of Bitlis?"

"He is old and covetous, and in his avarice he is cunning withal," answered the sheikh musingly. "A very wary man, and quick to smell traps, and careful how he leaveth his house and entereth it. Yet he loveth money, and luxury and a full stomach are over-pleasant to him. Wherefore his correction shall be by paying much for great discomfort and little provender."

"I shouldn't imagine Hadir will readily consent to that," laughed Alan. "After all, he wasn't so very outrageous, sheikh, and he didn't bear malice for the drubbing we gave him."

"He gave false justice," said the sheikh sternly, "and coveted Zillah, the wife of Ahmed. Yet since such are human frailties, and often sorely press even a good man, and because he is neither a murderer like Kasim, nor a treacherous assassin and full of evil like Idrin and Mustapha, his punishment shall be measured and paternal."

"Good biz!" said Alan. "What's the gentle treatment to be?"

"We will waylay him unawares," said the sheikh, in the same pious tone, "and bring him hither. Three days shall he starve, eating and drinking naught but the meditation of his own iniquity. By the end of three days so fat a man will be very hungry, perhaps even faint withal, and it will seem to him that his life is flowing out of his toes and fingers, so that all his wealth shall seem as nothing to him in comparison to a little bread. Then for three days more he shall pay very dear for very little, yea, much money for a morsel of crust. And the seventh day I will correct him with my staff, and send him home. So, perchance, he shall learn a little wisdom, and keep his feet in the path of justice."

"The punishment seems to fit the crime all right," said Alan. "But before you cook your goat, O sheikh, you've got to catch him; and Hadir isn't an easy sort to trap. How is it to be done?"

"The tiger of the desert is not an easy beast to trap," retorted the sheikh; "yet the bleating of a young kid will blind his eyes, and his own appetite will outvie his cunning. Rememberest thou, Selim, that brother of Abdullah the Bokharian, who helped us baffle the treachery of Kasim?"

"Of course," assented Alan.

"He hath a sister," went on the sheikh, "who hath taken service with the English lady we rescued from Kasim."

"Mrs. Adair!" exclaimed Alan. "I thought she had gone home."

"Her child fell sick of a fever, and she rested at Mush," explained the sheikh; "and there Felut Pacha housed her with honour, and there Hadir Bey saw her, and there each week he rides in the vain hope of winning her for wife. Nor will he take nay."

"The old vampire!" cried Alan.

"Wherefore," went on the sheikh, "Allah sent two plans into my head, whereof one may fail, but the other must certainly not fail."

"The first plan is thus: To-morrow Hadir rides by the passes of the Karzan Dagh to Mush. Thither we travel presently to find the sister of Selim, who awaits us. Selim himself bears news even now to Hadir that the English lady rides to-morrow with her maid to visit the great written-stone in the forest of the Karzan Dagh. Now, Hadir is a discreet man. If he would capture the English lady, he will take with him but a few picked slaves. Wherefore, when he sees the maid riding in the forest, he will push on, thinking to find her mistress near. So we shall fall on him and capture him, and the slaves, being but slaves, will flee."

"Houp-la!" cried Alan exultantly. "A hunt, and a man-hunt to boot! Verily, O sheikh, it was worth a week's waiting; and I have been a fool to grizzle."

"Thou art a truthful youth," said the sheikh between two scoops of snuff. "See, down the pass! Selim comes, and one with him, whom I know not."

"By Jove," cried Alan, "it's old Abdullah! But they have a half-hour's climb yet. Time enough and more for the unfolding of their second plan, sheikh."

"One sufficeth till it be proven futile," said Jelaluddin. "Those children of iniquity will be hungry. Cut a haunch of venison, and put it to roast, that they may eat, while I make two cakes of flour for thee and me."

CHAPTER 2.

A Day of Surprises.

THAT the sheikh had rightly gauged the nature of the bey was evident enough, when Selim, in accordance with his instructions, had at last gained an interview with Hadir, and stood facing him in the great audience-chamber, on the left of the corridor giving into the inner courtyard of the ancient castle of Bitlis.

Some fifty years of age, with a wizened countenance alert with weasel-craft, abnormally stout and squat, the Bey of Bitlis listened greedily to Selim's tale. Like all Bokharians, the brother of Abdullah was an artist in the spinning of a fairy-story; and, despite a lengthened cross-examination, he had never one varied a hair's-breadth in any one of the hundred-and-one lies he had told.

"Now, tell me," said the bey, as a final test, "what purpose hast thou in betraying the mistress of thy sister?"

"My sister is young, very pretty, and very ambitious," said Selim promptly. "As waiting-maid to the Ingeliz lady, her life is retired and sad. Whereas, if the lady were the wife of the bey, surely Sifaze would find much to amuse her."

"Thou art a serviceable dog," said the bey genially, "and meritest reward."

He was stretching out his hand to a drawer in the table before him, when the door at his back opened. He turned angrily, but paused, as he noted the flushed, triumphant face of his lieutenant.

"What wantest thou, Dilawer?" he asked.

The lieutenant bent down and whispered in his ear, and in measure as he spoke the little monkey-eyes of the bey clicked and glistened, and his sallow, wrinkled face flushed and paled.

"Ha, ha!" he chuckled, stepping to the drawer. "Thou comest just in time. I was going to reward this dog for an idle tale. Nevertheless, he did his best. Give him ten piastres, and send him forth, Dilawer. I will go and visit thy prisoner."

He trotted out, shambling his way along, and left Selim face to face with the lieutenant, who for a long minute looked at him hard.

"I have seen thee somewhere, fellow," he said at last; and as Selim was about to protest, he added quickly: "Ah, I have thee! It was thou who didst flee on the dromedary of Yusuf the day Rastan led us to the capture of that cursed sheikh and his thrice-acursed English devil. Gu—"

But Selim did not wait for the rest of the cry that would have summoned the guards. He leapt on Dilawer with a bound so swift and unexpected that the lieutenant measured his length under the shock, and before he had time to recover, Selim had forced his kepi half down his throat, and, kneeling on his chest, had strangled him into insensibility; then, drawing him behind the bey's table, Selim proceeded to bind him hand and foot with yard after yard of twine. He worked quickly and in fear of his life, for any moment he might be disturbed. There was not an inch of the old castle he did not know, for before he had joined Kasim, the bandit chief, in the mountains, he had passed seven years of captivity as a slave in the bey's service.

But none disturbed him, and he completed his task by rolling the dapper little Turk in a soft Persian rug, slinging him over his shoulders, and marching boldly out of the door by which the bey had passed, into the long corridor which gave right and left.

He turned his back on the left-hand passage, which led to the outer courtyard, and, keeping to the right, reached a tapestry which concealed a door giving on to a side street in the rear of the castle. Through this he passed unchallenged, till he reached the bridge, where the bazaar was in full swing. There the sight of a man carrying what seemed a bundle of rugs was too common to attract attention, and he kept on his way across the bridge, turned down an alley, hired a donkey-cart, flung his burden into it, and made straight for the quays on the border of the lake.

Twenty minutes later Dilawer, the lieutenant, was lying in the bottom of a canoe, which Selim was leisurely paddling towards Adeljiras, a village at the base of the Sipan Dagh. It was a long row, and it was not till midday that Selim drove his boat ashore in a retired cove, and gave a shrill whistle that was answered almost immediately by the appearance of Abdullah, to whom he had given rendezvous in this spot.

"Has it gone well?" asked Abdullah.

"Hoo! It might have been worse," grunted Selim, as he cast aside the rug and revealed the distorted, infuriated features of the Turkish officer, and explained to the astounded Abdullah what he had done.

"Yet wherefore have brought him hither, oh, my brother?" grumbled Abdullah, drawing him aside. "It is not well to kill a bound man. And thou mightest with much greater ease have left him where he was in the bey's room,

and laden thyself with the good gold pieces the bey was about to give thee."

"That also I did not forget," said Selim, with a grin, as he showed a capacious pocket in the inside of his jerkin, bulging with yellow coins. "I took for seven years of service, and if there is more, on counting, than due interest, may Allah count it to me for good-fortune. But yonder doli I brought, for we must find out what news it was that changed so quickly Hadir's mind; for, indeed, I



Grasping its stout oaken haft, Alan thrust his axe upward till the broad, razor-edged blade bit deep into the grooving of the coping.

suspect that he hath forestalled the plot of the prophet of Bagdad, and made captive the English lady herself."

But Dilawer offered an inexorable silence to all their questions, and laughed at all their threats, till the two, exasperated, looked at each other in despair.

"Let us bear him to the sheikh," said Selim at last.

Abdullah shook his head sombrely.

"Shall I first make acquaintance with a wise man by confessing I am a fool?" he growled. "Bear him hither to the stream, and we will see what power water and drowning and the pangs of death have on his stubborn tongue."

For the next ten minutes Dilawer had a very bad time of it, for he was laid on his stomach, with his head and shoulders over the running stream; and, while Selim sat on the small of his back, Abdullah thrust his head under water, and held it there till the spasmodic jerkings of the legs told of the drowning-point.

"Wilt thou tell the news thou broughtest the bey?" asked Abdullah, as he lifted the lieutenant's head, and gave him breathing-time.

And each time Dilawer refused Abdullah remorselessly plunged his head again in the icy, suffocating water. But with the fifth request Dilawer sullenly gave in, and was allowed to rise.

"See thou speakest the truth," said Abdullah, "for if thou variest therefrom by a word, I will sit by thee a week, and bathe thy head till thou diest of fear of the next dipping."

Dilawer was a brave man, as he had shown on a previous occasion; but he quailed at the threat, though his gorge rose at the insolence of it.

"Ye are dogs and sons of dogs!" he said. "And though I speak to-day, it is that I may live to tear thy traitor-tongues out, and see ye flayed!"

"Inshallah!" said Abdullah placidly. "We await thy news. Hast thou captured the English lady who was at Mush?"

"I have," assented Dilawer. "Last night I took her from under Felut's very nose, as she walked at dusk in his garden. And now she is safe, lodged in Hadir's castle, and before another sun dawns will be his bride."

"Where is she lodged?" asked Abdullah, unmoved.

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders.

"Am I a eunuch," he asked, "that I should penetrate the harem of Hadir, and see to a lady's bestowal? If thou wouldst know, go ask the keeper of the harem, to whom I delivered her."

"That is a little matter," said Selim, grinning. "I was not page with Hadir Bey for nothing. I know her lodgings, in the rooms beneath the roof, behind the wall that faces the armoury."

"It may be; I know not," shrugged Dilawer. "Now loose these bonds, and let me free."

"Softly—softly!" chuckled Abdullah. "To-night at least thou resteth in the mountains. Yet if thou hast spoken truth, to-morrow, or the next day, thou shalt, perchance, go unharmed."

Together the two sturdy mountaineers bore the raging Turk up the narrow gorge, and, guided by Selim's knowledge of the range, which, with Kasim's band, he had roamed for many years, they soon found a cave, where they bestowed their prisoner. Then, after relashing his hands and feet, and gagging him afresh, they rolled a rock before the mouth to keep out wandering wolves or wild cats, and made their way at top speed towards the stronghold where the sheikh was awaiting them.

"Hoo! My lord has grown a man!" was Abdullah's greeting, as, after flinging himself on one knee before Alan, and kissing his hand, he rose and scanned the young giant, his black eyes glistening with gladness and admiration.

"It does my eyes good to see thee again, Abdullah!" said Alan. "But, now, let us hear Selim's tale, for I see that the sheikh is bridling his impatience."

Selim told his tale with all the verve and glory in impudence with which his boyhood in a palace had endowed him.

"It was well and boldly done," said the sheikh, when the narrative was concluded. "Yet thou didst wrong in taking the gold, for we are not robbers! Wherefore, thou must render to me now all that thou didst take, that I may restore it to Hadir Bey."

"Yet fear not," he went on, as Selim, with a very black brow, drew handful after handful of gold from his jerkin and dropped it in the pouch the sheikh held out. "If I restore what thou didst wrongfully take, it is that the justice of Allah may more fruitfully demand of the bey the price of thy services. And perchance thou shalt then find thou didst undervalue thyself."

The sheikh thrust the bag of gold beneath his long, green tunic, looked from the wheaten cake in his hand to Alan, and then to the roasting haunch before the fire.

"We will postpone the fast, my son," he said, with a twinkle in his eyes, as he pocketed the unsavoury cake, "for we have much work to do before the night is out. Let us fall to and eat, and hold counsel the while."

It was a behest Alan did not require repeating, and, as they tackled the steaming venison, they discussed plan after plan for the release of Mrs. Adair.

"The simplest way," said Alan, "is to go to Angus Hamilton, the consul, at Van. Hadir dare not refuse his demand for her freedom."

"He dare and would," said the sheikh. "To demand our release was easy enough, but to demand a woman from the harem not even your Ingeliz consul could do; nay, nor the

Padischah himself! Moreover, it would spoil my plans. We must release the lady secretly; and so Hadir, finding her gone, and gaining news that she is again at Mush, shall fall into our trap. Saidst thou not, Selim, that she would be lodged in rooms beneath the roof, and opposite the armoury, where I and my disciple defied all Hadir's troops?"

"Even so, my lord," replied Selim; "for there Hadir Bey ever confines the new captives of his harem. Nor may any man hope to reach it from within or without, for there is no stairway thereto save through the harem; and the barred windows of the room look down upon the inner courtyard, where there is ever a guard."

"Recallest thou, my son," said the sheikh, turning to Alan, "how Ahmed the Armenian climbed through the window of the armoury and descended the side of the castle to the roofs of the street beneath, and brought Hamilton Effendi to our aid?"

"Quite well," said Alan. "Yet, though I might succeed in climbing by the vines and creepers and mouldering stonework, my shoulders could not hope to pass that narrow embrasure."

"Verily, thy wit had been keener hadst thou fasted," said the sheikh contemptuously. "Didst thou gain the armoury, what would that profit, seeing a four-foot wall lies between its corridor and the lodging of the lady?"

"Ah!" said Alan, flushing a little. "Thou meanest that I should gain the roof, cast off the tiles, and force a way in?"

"Even so," assented the sheikh, with a click of the eyelids that was his superlative of approbation.

"Good wheeze!" said Alan. "Thou w'd better be going. With the moon dead, the night will be dark; and if we want to release Mrs. Adair before that fat little monkey Hadir terrifies her into marrying him, we should make the attempt without losing an hour."

Under the sheikh's tutelage, Alan had learnt the trick of the bent knee lope, common to the Eastern coolie, and good for seven miles an hour for hour after tireless hour. Through by-paths and hidden gorges they trotted on, taking without a pause leaps and declivities that would have made the fell-racers of Cumberland gasp with amazement. Reaching Adeljiras by sunset, they hired rowers, and by nine in the evening were threading their way through the lightless, closed bazaar. On leaving the bridge, they turned to the right and kept on between a line of silent houses and the river, which, rolling in innumerable cascades and rapids at the bottom of the outlying spurs of the Karzan Dagh, was screened on either bank by avenues of poplars. On their left, above the roofs of the houses, towered the great rock on which the castle was built, and it was at the last of its octagonal towers that the party halted, in a deep recess, where the base of the rock formed the limit of the street.

At Adeljiras they had provided themselves with three hundred feet of half-inch cord and a roll of twine. The last of these Alan attached by a noose to his neck, and strapping his battle-axe tightly slantwise on his back, faced the grim task before him. In the black darkness, it seemed a dread and impossible feat for any man to perform, and, had he not known that Ahmed the Armenian had descended that way, even his reckless courage might have flinched.

"Leave thy axe," whispered the sheikh, as Alan stepped from Abdullah's bent shoulders on to the flat, stone-covered roof of the last house in the street.

"I may need it," Alan whispered back. "One never knows."

Next moment he had thrust his hands far up among the tough branches of the creepers, and had begun his ascent. For the space of thirty or forty feet the watchers crouched on the roof-top could follow his progress, but thereafter he was lost in the blackness.

Alan Wayward never forgot that climb. To see was impossible. He had nothing on which to rely, save coolness, patience, and sense of touch. Here and there he was forced to pause, where the creeper yielded to his tentative pull, and to work his way laterally till he could grasp some stouter branch, or find firmer foot-purchase in the crevices of the great stones.

Once, for a dread moment, as he hauled himself up, thirty feet from the top, the vine gave beneath his weight, and he swung downward, twirling round for a full twenty feet, till the haft and blade of his battle-axe caught in a tough clump and stopped his descent, holding him, as it were, trussed up like a fowl, his back to the wall, his face turned skyward.

It took him ten long minutes to worm himself into position again, and taxed to the uttermost all his indomitable tenacity to still the quiver of his muscles as he recommenced his upward journey.

He trusted no longer now to the creepers, but made his way from crevice to crevice, careless that his fingers were torn and bleeding, and that the muscles above his ankles were knotted with cramp.

He was as one mad in the fury of a struggle for life as,

six inches from the crumbling coping at the top, he hung with arms outstretched to the cracking point, his nails dug into the rotten stone, with one foot firmly planted in a hole, while the other clawed in vain for some purchase-point. But purchase-point there was none, and, for a long moment, as he returned his seeking foot to its latest resting-place, the sweat poured down his face and his soul sickened with apprehension.

Then, as from a great distance, his own answer to the sheikh's last words came back to him: "I may need it."

Gingerly, and with infinite caution, he withdrew his right hand and, inch by inch, lowered it till it reached the strap fastening his battle-axe, and worked it slowly loose.

Painfully, and with many a trembling pause, he worked the axe round till it lay between him and the wall and he could grip its haft with his teeth while he cast loose the strap. Then, grasping its stout, oaken haft, he thrust it upward till the broad, razor-edged, curved-pointed blade bit deep into the grooving of the coping.

Three times he essayed it, to see if it would bear his weight, and finding it stood the test, he clenched his teeth, and, releasing his foothold, pulled himself up by one arm till his chin was on a level with his fist and his other hand had got fair grip of the broad coping.

A moment later, those below saw for a second his long legs sprawled against the sky, and then he vanished over the edge, to lie prone for a long minute on the flat roof, drinking in the air with short, panting gasps, while every muscle and nerve in his body shuddered and quivered like a smitten harp-string.

It was the matter of only a few minutes to let down his ball of twine, haul up the rope and make it fast at one end, and prepare the noose and seat at the other.

He took his bearings carefully. He had passed the embrasure that served as window to the armoury ten feet below the point where he had gained the roof. His old acquaintance with the armoury, and the corridor leading to the wall and stairway beyond, was ample to give him a fair appreciation of the location of the lodging where, according to Selim, Mrs. Adair was likely to be.

The octagonal shape of the tower, moreover, left him little room for doubt, for, after making allowance for the armoury and its gallery, there was only enough space left for a room of moderate size. In the centre of this space he began to work. The unroofing was no difficult task, the flat tiles being simply overlaid and kept in place by heavy stones. These he removed over a square of four feet, revealing beneath the rough-hewn planking that lay transversely on the rafters.

Like the tiles, these were unnailed, and in two minutes he had forced three of them aside, slashed away the tapestry beneath, and was looking down into the upturned, terrified face of Mrs. Adair. He had brought a length of rope with him, and, making it fast round the planking, he swung himself into the room.

"Don't be afraid," he said, as he saw that Mrs. Adair did not recognise him—which, seeing that his face was blood-stained and covered with dust, was not to be wondered at—"I'm Alan Wayward. I've come to rescue you."

"Thank God!" murmured Mrs. Adair.

"Quick!" said Alan, as he moved a table under the opening. "If I stand on this, I can lift you through. That will be easier than hauling you up by the rope."

He handed Mrs. Adair on to the table, and was about to follow her, when a key turned in the door and Hadir Bey stood on the threshold, gazing at the two, rage struggling with incredulity in his eyes.

Alan did not give him time to express his sentiments. With one bound he was on him, and while one hand fastened in a strangling grip on his throat, with the other he wrenched free the key, and shut and locked the door.

Too terrified to resist, and half-choked by Alan's grip, the bey was gagged with his own resplendent turban, and bound hand and foot with the gaudily-hued scarf that gilded his paunch.

"This is a bit of luck I didn't expect!" said Alan, grinning. "I'll lift you up first, Mrs. Adair, and then shove up this monkey; we want him badly. I'm going to let you down to Jelaluddin. Selim and Abdullah are there, and will see you safely back to Mush. But, I beseech you, don't say a word to the old sheikh that I've nabbed our friend here. I want to surprise him."

"All right," said Mrs. Adair, with a laugh; "I won't give the surprise away."

They were on the roof in three minutes, and, though Mrs. Adair shuddered and shut her eyes when she saw the descent she had to make, she made no protest, and let Alan bind her firmly to the bar serving as seat and lash her own scarf round and round the rope and her body. The forethought of Abdullah had provided a pulley, improvised out of a boat-roller, which Alan clamped firmly to the inner

edge of the coping and kept in place with his feet. And so, squatted on the roof, he let Mrs. Adair over, and paid out the rope, foot by foot, till its sudden slackening and three short tugs signalled to him that she had safely landed.

Nor did the sheikh tempt Destiny by keeping her lingering.

"Get thee quickly with Selim," he said, as he let her to the ground from the roof. "Abdullah waits thee with horses, to take thee to Mush. Yet let not this adventure spoil our plans. Send thy maid riding in the woods to-morrow, as was agreed. For verily Hadir Bey, finding thee gone, will hasten to Felut Pacha to make his peace. And so he will come into my hands."

"Sifaze shall be there," said Mrs. Adair, with a little ripple of laughter.

The sheikh watched her disappear down the road, and then turned to gaze with amazement at the bound and huddled figure of Hadir Bey himself, whom Alan, less careful of his passage, had let down at a run.

"Hoo!" grunted the sheikh. "What a man is this disciple of mine!"

He looked up, trying to pierce the darkness, expecting to see Alan's form swinging downwards along the rope. But even as he looked, the sound of a great outcry arose from the room, with shots, and the clamour of voices, and the clash of steel with steel.

For Alan, chuckling over the descent of Hadir, had nearly been surprised. And the cause thereof was none other than Dilawer, the lieutenant, who had worked free from his bonds, and escaping from the cave in the Sipan Dagh, had hastened to the palace, to warn his master that his captive was in peril of rescue. Hearing that Hadir had already gone up to the room under the roof, he had sent the eunuch there to summon him, and he, gaining no reply to his knocking, had burst open the door, and seeing the table and rope and hole in the roof, had summoned the harem guards, climbed through the opening, and fallen on Alan, just as he had picked up his battleaxe and was preparing to descend.

For a few moments the issue hung in the balance, and indeed, Alan, too; for pressed by the sudden rush, he was in imminent danger of being hurled backwards over the coping. But the darkness and his trusty axe were good allies, and as the biting steel whirled backwards and forwards, the white-robed eunuchs fled before it; two of them taking snapshots as they ran. Alan wasted no words, nor blows. He knew that the sound of the shots would rouse the palace patrols, and almost inevitably lead to the discovery of the rope, and that his life depended on his agility during the next few seconds. One after the other he smote the eunuchs down into the room beneath, kicked the boards into place, and piled the stones upon them. Then, sure that no effort of theirs could raise the planks at the end of their finger-tips, nor gain a ladder in time to cut away the rope, he leapt back to the coping, and swinging down, hand over hand, landed safely by the side of the sheikh, just as a troop of soldiers swung round the angle of the castle and advanced down the street.

The sheikh, scenting danger, had already lowered Hadir Bey into the street, and conveyed him into the shade of the poplar avenue bordering the river. And as the young giant, with a chuckle of laughter, leapt from the roof to his side, he hurried Alan there.

"Below is a ford," said the sheikh. "Heave that little fat man on thy shoulder, and we will run in the shadow of the trees, cross the river, and gain the Karzan Dagh."

Alan lifted the bey to his shoulder, then paused and listened.

"We are headed off," he said. "See!"

As he spoke, from the far end of the street, another company of soldiers were advancing at the double, preceded by runners waving resined torches, that threw a bright glare over the road and stream, and showed up distinctly the forms of the sheikh, and Alan laden with his squirming body.

A howl of fury and exultation went up from the two companies, who came charging down on the little group, certain of capturing them.

"Behold, it is written that Hadir's punishment is not for to-day," said the sheikh, as he plucked the gag out of the bey's mouth, and severed his bonds with his dagger, a proceeding which gained Alan a violent kick in the small of his back, followed by a scream for help from the infuriated dignitary.

"Now," said the sheikh, measuring the distance separating them from the soldiery, "take that monkey by his throat and heels, and curl him round thy head, thou man of muscle, and follow me. The river is but shallow, and will not more than touch thy armpits. Nor will they dare to fire for fear of hitting their bey."

Alan rocked with laughter as he followed the sheikh's advice, and stepping into the water, kept close behind him. For one moment the bey's claw-like hand menaced Alan's

eyes, but a firm pinch on his gizzard made him think better of it. The manoeuvre was speedily understood on the bank they had quitted, and at a word of command fifty men flung themselves into the stream, in the desperate effort to gain the opposite bank before the fugitives and head them off. But they had neither the stature nor the start of the sheikh and Alan, and the swift current swept them off their feet, causing them to abandon their rifles and weapons in a fight for life. So by the time the sheikh gained the bank and fell flat, there were not more than ten men straggling along, with swords between their teeth, twenty paces behind.

"It is a pity we may not keep him," he said. "But the mountains are not near enough. These ten there would head us off, and their comrades already pass by the bridge. Wherefore, my son, lift that evil and covetous man high above thy head, and cast him very far into the stream. So while his soldiers are fishing for him, we will go on our way in peace."

Alan bent his back to the task with a will, and Hadir Bey, shot out as by a catapult, somersaulted twice in the air, and landed a good six feet, spreadeagled on the water, beyond his horrified guards.

The sheikh and Alan did not wait to see what happened, but putting the poplars between them and the spitting musketry on the opposite bank, they took to their heels, heading down stream for the gorges of Karzan Dagh, followed for half a mile by a scattered and ever more distant volley of bullets.

"Hoo!" grunted the sheikh, as, two hours later, in a retired defile of the mountains, Alan recounted all that had happened. "It was a great occasion Allah sent thee, my son. And hadst thou used thy wit as well as thy muscle, surely Hadir were with us now; for in truth thou shouldst have closed the opening when thou hadst returned to the roof."

CHAPTER 3.

One Ambush—and Another.

"**B**EHOLD!" said the sheikh complacently, pointing to the pass beneath. "Did I not divine aright? Hadir rides to make his peace with Felut."

"His face looks nice and clean, too!" grinned Alan. The two were lying on a ledge of rock, high above the pass through the Karzan Dagh, which, some miles out of Bitlis, cleaves the wild ranges, to descend on to the road that links Mush with Hazro and Diabekir. On a rock a little below them, Selim and Abdullah lay flat, watching the slow progress of Sifaze, Selim's sister, as, mounted on an ass, she was leisurely riding through a fringe of trees, in full view of the pass, fifty feet below.

"He bites—he bites, the fat flounder of the waters of Bitlis!" jibed the sheikh, as Hadir Bey reined in his horse and scanned intently the form of the Bokharian maiden.

"He is riding with a precious small escort," muttered Alan. "Six zaptiehs and a pack mule! Yet Selim reported that he never took less than fifty."

"Hast thou forgotten the tale that Selim dangled yesterday before his eyes?" asked the sheikh. "Thus does he reason: 'If I go not to Felut,' hath he said, 'and take a royal present with me, much noise will be made of this affair. But if I go, Felut will look upon it as a pleasantry, and wink the other eye. Moreover, if Selim reported truly, the Ingeliz lady will take her ride as she projected. For not only are all the Ingeliz more obstinate than a blind mule, but she, thinking I shall be very afraid, will fear nothing. For which reason, my son, I bade the Ingeliz lady, last night, alter nothing of our plans.'"

"Hadir must be more of an ass than I thought," muttered Alan, as he watched the bey turn his horse from the track, and, followed by his zaptiehs, mounted the slope into the wood where Sifaze had disappeared.

The watchers lay motionless, every nerve strung to anticipation. For Sifaze was well drilled in her part, and her task was to lead on, once the bey was following, straight up the mountain, and into the defile which gave, by a narrow ledge past the rocks where the ambushers lay concealed. Should Hadir follow, Selim and Abdullah were to lie "perdu" till the girl and the bey passed, and then to hold the ledge against the following zaptiehs, a task easy enough for two resolute men on so tortuous and narrow a path, where even a stumble would entail a certain dive into the precipitous abyss that yawned on the right of the ledge. It was reserved for Alan and the sheikh to capture Hadir in the gorge that lay at the end of the defile, when his retreat had been doubly cut off, and he would be obliged by the roughness of the ground either to abandon his pursuit or dismount.

"He must be an infatuated fool!" whispered Alan, as Sifaze urged her donkey onwards past the rocks where the two lay. And Hadir, apparently careless now of escort, spurred his horse in pursuit, with never a glance behind.

"Doth not appetite ever blind vision?" said the sheikh sententiously. "Come, let us follow him!"

They glided down into the path, followed by Clok, and arrived in the gorge just in time to see the bey urge his horse alongside Sifaze's donkey and seize its bridle.

"Where is thy mistress, girl?" he asked. "She resteth at Mush, in the house of Felut Pacha," answered Sifaze demurely, with a tilt of her dimpled chin.

"Then why comest thou here?" demanded the bey angrily. "To gather flowers for the Ingeliz lady," said the girl, pointing to the mass of crocuses of every hue that gemmed the sward.

"Greeting, oh, Bey of Bitlis!" said the sonorous, mocking voice of the sheikh at his side.

Hadir Bey turned his head and stared coldly into the sheikh's luminous eyes.

"I trust his Excellency is better for his bath?" laughed Alan. And was, in turn, greeted with the same cold stare.

At the same moment, from down the pass, a couple of shots rang out, followed by a shout, and after a moment's pause, by a terrific volley.

"Holy Jacob," said the sheikh, with a swift glance around, "that was never the roise of six guns!"

"I expected ye," grinned Hadir, sitting unmoved. "Since dawn my scouts have shadowed ye. Below are fifty sharpshooters. Above are fifty more. That way is the precipice. Yonder is the unscaleable rock. I return thy greeting, prophet of Bagdad, and attach thy person for treason and complicity in a sacrilegious entry into my harem. And for the English dog," he added, suddenly baring his yellow teeth at Alan, "thou shalt bathe in slow drops of fire to purge thy crime!"

As he spoke he put a silver whistle to his lips and blew a shrill blast on it. On the instant, from the head of the gorge and the slope on the further side, there burst a scattered company of soldiers, who advanced at the double towards the little group two hundred yards away.

It was a crucial moment, and the eyes of the sheikh and his disciple met in a long glance full of meaning and comprehension. It was obvious to each of them that the bey, arguing from the fact that they had spared his life the night before, had concluded that he might safely rely on his office and a display of overwhelming force to obtain the prompt surrender of the ambush he had so cunningly baffled.

For Dilawer had no sooner made his report than Hadir had realised that Selim, the messenger, was one and the same as Selim, the refugee slave, who, with his sister, Sifaze, had escaped five years previously and never been traced. To divine, from these two facts, the ambush that awaited any pursuit of the Bokharian girl the next day, was, to the wily old Turk, like divining a bee from its buzz. And he had laid himself out to countermine the plot with all the astuteness that thirty years of artifice had lent him, and all the cold frenzy of wrath and outraged pride that the indignities of the last night provided.

Yet, despite his astuteness and the thoroughness of his preparations, Hadir Bey was far from fathoming the craft and wisdom of the sheikh, or the audacity and strength of his disciple. For though he gave them full credit for the plot of the night before, yet it never entered into his head that any two men in their senses would take on a hundred armed soldiers in the open. Such a conclusion, however, was telegraphed from the eyes of the sheikh to the eyes of Alan, which as plainly replied, "Right you are!"

Whence it arose that there was no man in all Asia more surprised than the bey when the sheikh jerked his stout staff with such a clout under his knee that Hadir fairly rolled from the saddle into Alan's ready arms, that closed round him in a grip that made his ribs creak, and changed the bellow in his throat to a strangled squeal.

"Go ahead!" said Alan, as, stepping back, he dangled the bey over the edge of the precipice, holding him by the throat at arm's length with an iron grip under his chattering jaw.

Then, as the sheikh flung himself over the horse, lifted Sifaze up behind him, and clattered down the pass, Alan grinned into the faces of the halted soldiers, half a dozen of whom had their rifles levelled at Jelaluddin's back.

"At the first shot," he shouted, "I drop your bey into the abyss. Tell them," he went on genially, to the terrified governor—"tell them to shoulder arms and return to your palace."

Hadir issued the command in a shrill squeal that was ludicrously enough punctuated by the chattering of his teeth, and his captor waited, smiling derisively, as the company sullenly withdrew into the trees, and his keen eyes noted the glitter of many a steady barrel covering him. He faced them calmly, and retreated, backing down the pass, dragging the suspended bey after him, careless how his bones bumped the outjutting crags, till a sharp turn hid him from view.

Then, slinging the bey, more dead than alive, over his

shoulder, he raced with great strides to the ledge where he had lain an hour ago in ambush. Here he had expected to find the sheikh, for behind the boulder the cliff broke away in a drop of some seven feet to another ledge, along which, by creeping carefully, a man might gain a goat-track threading a savage gorge, which ran down, precipitous yet practicable for an experienced mountaineer, to the slopes overlooking the village of Alchlai, on the borders of Lake Van.

But of the sheikh there was no sign, and Alan's heart misgave him as he heard from below a great clamour and a thunder of exultant yells. With feverish haste he bound and gagged the blaspheming bey, and, leaving Clok on guard, leapt down into the pass, there to halt, stupefied, and for a moment irresolute.

For, racing for dear life up the path came Abdullah, with a trail of thirty soldiers in swift pursuit, while from up the pass the company that had retired was pelting down, attracted by the roars of triumph from below.

"Back, back, my lord!" panted Abdullah, as he approached.

"The sheikh—what of the sheikh?" yelled Alan.

"I think he has won through!" gasped Abdullah, scrambling up the rock, where Alan, relieved by the news, promptly followed him, while the soldiers, toiling up, and racing down, gathered, uncertain, before the narrow fissure that separated the boulder from the cliff.

"Quick my lord!" urged Abdullah. "They will not long delay. Let us not burden ourselves with this carrion. The mountain is sown with troops. I pray thee give me thy hand, that I may reach footing on the ledge below."

Alan looked regretfully at the bey. But the urgency of his peril was too grave, too immediate, to admit of delaying flight by such a burden along the dizzy, difficult way of the ledge below.

"Yet will I not leave thee for the jackals, oh, astute one," he said. "For thy soldiers tarry so, I fear they may depart with whole skins rather than risk the pricking of my axe. Wherefore thou shalt this once again return to them."

He picked him up as he spoke, and, poising him on the top of the great round boulder overlooking the pass, gave him a gentle shove, which sent the unhappy bey rolling and bumping into the arms of his stupefied braves.

Then, satisfied from their shouts and yells, that the bey had arrived in safety, any side up, Alan followed Abdullah over the ledge, whistled to Clok, who came down sliding like a cat, to land on all-fours. In single file they crawled forward along the two-foot ledge, which in parts narrowed to ten or eleven inches, and had barely reached the shelter of the gorge beyond, when Hadir's soldiers, led by the bey himself, appeared on the little plateau they had left.

"Come on, old mountain-cat," said Alan cheerily to Abdullah, as he saw one after the other of Hadir's men drop to the ledge, and, agile as goats, negotiate the perilous path. "A stern chase is a long chase, and they know not the way, nor can they keep pace with our long strides. Yet, tell me as we run, what the sheikh did, and why he ventured down the pass instead of taking this way of escape."

"In good truth, because he had no choice," said Abdullah, with a grin. "Selim and I were guarding the pass at the angle thou didst appoint, where only two men at most can pass, when we heard him clattering down. We had but time to blot ourselves against the rock when he rode past us like the wind, and ere I could stop him, Selim, crying, 'He goes to death!' leapt after him, and, catching his stirrup-iron, raced on alongside. The soldiers in the pass were swept, some into the gulf, some ground into the rock, and some, again, smitten down by the mighty staff of the prophet."

"For the horse was mad, my lord; and, foaming at the mouth, with bit in teeth, was galloping as if upon the plains. And from far down the pass, I heard the soldiers flying before it, screaming out on its madness, and crying that the prophet had bewitched it. Then, as I shook with laughter, a rush of soldiers swept upon me, and I fled and joined thee, even as the great shout rose from the valley-land below."

"I don't half like that shout," said Alan. "There was too much triumph in it. It sounded as if the sheikh were captured."

"Better him than thee!" grunted Abdullah.

"What meanest thou, dog?" said Alan angrily. "I would give my life to save him from hurt!"

"Let my lord keep his soul in peace," retorted Abdullah drily. "In all Asia, there is no follower of Mahomet who dares raise hand against the Prophet of Bagdad."

They raced on in silence for the next two hours, skirting the uplands above Alchlai and Adeljiras, and making for the more savage loneliness of the Sipan Dagh. It had been their intention to take boat at Alchlai, and ease their legs at the expense of their arms. But as they approached the lake they saw that a great cordon of boats was drawn in a half moon from Bitlis towards the cove at the foot of Kasim's old

stronghold, and Alan, with a chuckle of derision, had headed northward.

It was an arduous march, even to their tired limbs, this eight hours' trot across the wildest country in the world. And it was with a feeling akin to despair that, on reaching Kasim's stronghold, Alan found no sign or word of the sheikh.

"We will eat and bathe and rest an hour, Abdullah," he said, after moodily reflecting a while; "then we must go forth and seek news of Jelaluddin."

But they had no need to go forth, for they were but half-way through their meal when Clok's low growl brought Alan challenging to the edge of the cliff, overlooking the spiral pass beneath.

"It is Selim," said Abdullah, "and with him is Sifaze. Yet I see not the prophet."

Alan ground his teeth in rage as Selim blurted out his news.

"The sheikh a prisoner!" he echoed.

"And thou livest!" added Abdullah bitterly.

"Had my death befriended him," said Selim proudly,

"I should not be here."

"Relate what passed, and be brief!" snapped Alan.

"When the prophet came down on us—" began Selim.

"We know all that," interrupted Alan. "Begin where the soldiers gave that shout of triumph."

"It was over the moment of disaster," said Selim. "We were almost free of their lines, and racing along the bank of the river, when an accursed zaptieh—may jackals rend him—fired at the gallant horse, and, striking his fetlock, brought him headlong to the ground. Over his head shot the prophet and Sifaze, and as the powers of Sheitan manœuvred it the holy man fell full among the last line of the soldiers, who fell on him like wolves, and at a word from their officer lifted him, all senseless from his fall, and throw him across a horse. Thereon the whole troop formed round him, and waiting not, spurred hard along the pass towards Bitlis. Then, as I picked up Sifaze, a dozen soldiers rushed on us, and, taking my sister in my arms, I leapt into the river; and being whirled away by the current and diving deep, we were not struck by any of their shots. We made for the shore far down, and with a few gold pieces I kept back from the prophet yesterday I bribed a farmer to hide us among the sacks of flour he was taking into Bitlis. And there we learned that the sheikh was held prisoner in the palace on a charge of treason to the Padishah, and sacrilege, and that this night a hundred men ride hither to capture thee, my lord. Wherefore I and Sifaze, having now no money left, and not daring to go near the lake, which is everywhere patrolled with armed guards, fell on a sleepy muleteer, and leaving him gagged, borrowed his mules and rode hither."

"Good!" said Alan. "We will eat and refresh ourselves, while Clok keeps guard. After which, we will first smite the hundred men, and then go and take the sheikh from the castle of Bitlis."

"Hoo!" grunted Abdullah. "That indeed will be a task!"

CHAPTER 4.

To the Rescue of the Sheikh.

"It is time, my lord! They come!"

Abdullah had whispered the words into Alan's ear, and alert as a wolf to the signals of danger, the young Englishman was wide awake in a second. A glance at the stars sufficed to tell him that midnight was passed, and as he stretched his great limbs and felt the suave elasticity of his muscles, he blessed the tactics of the foe which had left him undisturbed during four hours of solid sleep.

He followed Abdullah to the look-out, where Selim lay watching.

Up the spiral pass Hadir's soldiers were climbing, led by Dilawer, the lieutenant. Two hundred of them the watchers counted.

"Three men and a maid can never hold out against that host!" said Abdullah glumly. "We shall be caught and roasted. Hadir Bey hath strange dungeons in Bitlis."

"If need were," said Alan grimly, "two men might hold this fort against twice the number, as thou shalt presently see, old croaker. But it is not my purpose to waste time fighting here. A plan is in my head for gaining the release of the sheikh, and before dawn we must be on the Karzan Dagh."

"Have we wings to fly?" growled Abdullah. "How shall we escape when our road lies through those hounds of Hadir down below?"

"That ye shall soon see," said Alan. "Awaken, Sifaze, and come with me, the three of you."

"Nay, but one had better stay to watch," protested Abdullah.

Alan caught him a buffet on the shoulder that sent him reeling to earth.

"If thou darest argue with me, thou grumbling camel!" he growled. "Knowest thou not that though the pass seems but short, yet by reason of its winding and its steepness none may gain the top under two hours' toil? Those men of Dilawer's will not be in touch for a long hour yet."

"Even so," grunted Abdullah, rubbing his shoulder; "wherefore did I say that one should remain here. For in hurling down rocks upon them as they come, they would greatly be delayed, and their numbers much diminished."

"Thou hast other work to do," said Alan briefly. "Come!"

He led them across the broad plateau, which on every side was flanked with caves, to the furthest angle, where in a small cave Sifaze lay sleeping. The girl sprang up, alarmed at their footsteps, and gave a shrill cry as she saw herself surrounded by three figures, indistinguishable in the darkness.

"Peace, fool!" said Abdullah fraternally.

Alan reached up to a ledge, and took down a bundle of resined torches, which Selim speedily kindled. In the flare he pointed out to them a black hole in the far corner of the cave.

"Behold!" he said. "By there we gain the top of the cliff, overlooking the stronghold. It was Kasim's way of retreat, but I discovered it when we destroyed the bandit, and in order to make good my flight with the Lady of the Haideranli, I and the sheikh rolled stones into it, so that now it is blocked. Much of the way I have cleared during the last week, and have made therein a cunning chamber, walled around with rocks. Follow me, and I will show ye what is left to be done."

He led them up the long slope, till they were confronted by what seemed to be an impassable mass of fallen rock. But stretching his hands aloft, Alan pushed on a rock, near the ceiling of the tunnel, and the rock swung inward, revealing a cavity through which a man might easily squeeze. Climbing up by the boulders, Alan passed through, and the others, following, found themselves in a great cavern, whose further exit was blocked by a like contrivance.

"Here a man may lie hidden for weeks," said Alan, as he rolled the rock back on its grooved pivot, "and none guess how he escaped. Moreover, if perchance some skilled in engineering were to pierce the first barrier, there would be time to fly by the second. Through this we must now pass, for the exit at the top is still blocked."

Passing in the same manner through the second barrier, they came at last to a great boulder, around the edges of which could be seen the glimmer of the starlit night.

Alan pointed to some great logs and rollers lying at the foot of the boulder.

"There is your task," he said. "Inch by inch ye must force the boulder up, Sifaze advancing the pins to stay it, as Abdullah and Selim lever it upward. Work and pause not. I go to hold back Hadir's men. When ye reach the open, call me from the top, and I will join ye."

Hadir's troops were toiling up the last spiral when Alan reached the look-out. Between them and the plateau lay a straight and very steep ascent for about one hundred and fifty yards, one side of which was bounded by the precipice, and the other by sixty feet of sheer rock, grown here and there with tufts of coarse grass, and here and there dotted with some stubborn bush, whose roots had found shelter in a crevice.

At the head of the ascent a great pillar of stones was raised, blocking the angle that gave on to the plateau, the pathway narrowing there from a ten-foot way to a space scarcely thirty inches broad.

Behind this pillar Alan, taking his stand, waited till the soldiers had all trailed into the straight ascent, then waved a handkerchief as flag of truce.

Dilawer, halting his troop, came forward to within ten paces.

Alan had a great liking for the Turkish officer—a liking born of his daring and soldierly courage in that awful hour of slaughter, when from behind the armoury door in the castle of Bitlis Alan and the sheikh had routed troop after troop of Hadir's picked men, while Dilawer, cool as if in a drawing-room, directed unmovable the futile assault.

"Hearken, O Dilawer!" he said, showing his head above the pillar of rocks. "Get thee back before it is too late. If thy men advance, this avalanche of stones shall sweep them into the abyss. And I would not slay so many brave men in so poor a cause."

"My orders," replied Dilawer calmly, "are to take thee. And take thee I will, dead or alive. Yet as thou art a brave man, I would advise thee to seek a sword-point, for

the punishment of him who hath violated the sanctity of the harem is no light thing to bear."

"I thank thee," mocked Alan. "Yet if thou livest to see Hadir again, tell him that the punishment of him who stealeth an English lady from the roof of his friend will be measured and memorable."

Dilawer saluted him gravely, withdrew to his men, and waved them on to the attack.

Alan waited till they were within fifty yards, then, taking the topmost stone from the pillar—a round lump of granite large as an elephant's head, he hurled it down. It caught the ground twenty feet distant, bounded, struck again, and gathering velocity leapt like a live thing among the throng of crowded legs climbing the ascent, fraying a passage through the first ten ranks, till stopped by the crossed rifles of those in the rear.

Then, before they had recovered from their confusion, another and a larger rock was hurtling among their legs, and after that another and yet another; and then in close succession four great boulders, forming the pillar's base, came crashing down upon the broken ranks, sweeping those still erect into the abyss, and to those already down finishing the work of their predecessors.

At the rush of the second stone Dilawer had leapt like a cat at a tuft of grass in the cliff above his head, and, grasping it, had swung his hand to one above, and thence to a tough shrub, whence he howled directions to his men to stand firm and shoot.

But their bullets only flattened against the crashing rocks, and in two minutes the terrible avalanche had swept the path, and the survivors, flinging away their guns, were fleeing down the pass in panic terror.

White with rage, Dilawer leapt into the path, and with drawn revolver advanced on Alan.

"Ingeliz devil," he yelled, as he halted and took aim, "you at least shall die!"

But Alan had kept an eye on the officer, and as the latter had leapt into the pass he had plucked from the rock a thorn-shrub, with its spreading root garnished with dry clods. And before Dilawer had brought his revolver to the level, Alan had hurled the shrub full at him, and leapt aside. The revolver cracked again and again, despite the galling thorn branches that braceleted the officer's wrist, and the shower of dry earth that had sprinkled his eyes. But it cracked in vain; for in far less time than it takes to tell, Alan, after his side-leap, had sprung round the angle, gained the plateau, and, with Clok close at heel, had raced into the cave of the tunnel.

By the time Dilawer had regained his sight, and, careless in his fury, dashed after him, the plateau was deserted, and he sought in vain among its many caves, to turn at last baffled from the fallen rocks in the tunnel and retrace his steps towards Lake Van and Bitlis.

Alan, meanwhile, had passed by the rock-chamber, and arrived at the exit in time to lend a hand to the two toiling Bokharians, who were almost cracking their backs in the futile effort to lever the huge stone up the last foot of the steep way.

"Hold fast thy levers to each side, ye lamb-jointed, water-kneed sluggards!" he cried.

And as they obeyed him he bent, and, thrusting his hands beneath the boulder, slowly straightened his back, the mass of granite coming up with him, till, with a forward lunge, he rolled it free of the mouth.

"Hoo!" shouted Selim and Abdullah in chorus, while Sifaze gazed at him with wide, shining eyes.

"Verily, thy back is of brass and thy arms of Damascene steel!" said Abdullah.

"The two of you might well have done it," growled Alan, "if ye had not feared the bulk. But what of this maiden? We have far to go, and must travel fast."

"Fear not," said Selim. "Sifaze is as a young doe, and on the mountains will outrun the grey goat. It is better that she return to Mush."

"Will my lord reveal his plan?" asked Abdullah, in his most deferential tone, when Alan in a few words had recounted how he had disposed of Hadir's troops and baffled Dilawer.

"Rememberest thou," replied Alan, "that as we fled down the Karzan Dagh yesterday I pointed out to thee the spoor of a bear and two cubs?"

"A black bear, lame in the forepaw," assented Abdullah.

"And doubtless Selim hath informed thee," went on Alan, "that Hadir Bey hath a great love for collecting wild animals, which he keeps in the closed garden beyond his palace. This, then, is my plan. We will follow the spoor of the bear, kill the old one, and seize the cubs. Then thou and Selim, taking the disguise of Arab beggars, shall lead the cubs to Bitlis. Hadir will himself lead thee to the cages where the bears shall be placed. Meanwhile, I will gather men and horses, and wait beyond the wall of the

garden. Once within, ye will let loose the cubs, and while the keepers are chasing them ye will fall on Hadir, and pass him over the wall, while we, mounting the wall, cover the keepers with guns. Ye will follow, and before the alarm can be given we shall be far on the road to Alchlai, whence we shall bear the bey to the rock-chamber. Then we will treat for his liberty against that of the sheikh's. Is the plan good?"

"It is very good," grinned Selim; "and though there be some risk, it is small. Yusuf, the shepherd, will give us disguises; and not even Dilawer would think us fools enough to seek the searching of his eyes."

"Forward, then!" said Alan.

The dawn was grey in the sky when, in the gorge below the ledge by which they had escaped the previous day, they picked up the spoor of the bear, and after following it for more than two miles came in sight of the huge beast lying on its back in front of a cave, with its two cubs gambolling around it.

The bear sniffed their presence at the same instant, and lurched to its feet with a menacing growl, and a pat right and left with its paw that sent the cubs scuttling into the cave.

"By Jove, it's a shame to go for it!" said Alan, admiring the picture the great beast made, as it stood gently rocking before its lair, its nose high in air, its little, wicked eyes searching the woods right and left.

But Clok left him no alternative. The wolfhound had a weakness for bear-flesh, and he remembered the succulent feed he had had near that same spot a few months previously, when Alan had slain a great male, which was doubtless the mate of the mother now before them.

Clok feared nothing on four legs, and, unseen by his master, he had crept round through the trees, and even as Alan spoke he leapt from the ledge above the cave on to the bear's back, and buried his great fangs deep into its neck. With a roar of rage and pain the monster reared on its hind-legs, and lurched backwards against the rock, endeavouring to crush its enemy.

But Clok was nimble as a weasel, and he writhed away in time to save his back without loosening his grip. But in doing so he got his hindquarters within reach of bruin's paws, and the two ponderous forearms of the bear closed round him in a deathly grip, and its jaw gaped above the hound's half-cracking spine.

"Shoot not!" yelled Alan to Abdullah, who, with levelled rifle, was aiming into the brute's maw.

He had dashed forward as he cried out, and as Clok, alive to his danger, changed with lightning-like swiftness the grip of his teeth from the nape of the neck to bury them into the exposed throat, his master swung aloft his terrible axe, and brought the keen blade crashing down on bruin's skull. Through fur and bone it shore its way, cleaving sheer through the brain. Outward jerked the paws, clawing savagely for a second at the air. Then, with a great lurch, the bear fell forward, the last spasm of its beating paws hurling Clok a good dozen feet away.

"Hoo! The good axe!" shouted Abdullah; and, followed by his brother, he leapt the fallen body and dived into the cave.

The cubs, for all their eloquence in swearing, were an easy capture; but it was in vain that the two Bokharians pleaded for time to skin the mother, urging its great value.

"Forward, ye sons of usurers!" Alan said, driving them on with the haft of his axe, while Sifaze mocked them with her laughter. "Would ye talk of a bear's skin, when the skin of the prophet of Bagdad is in danger?"

So forward they went, perforce, Clok sharing in their grumbling, and eyeing with red eyes, while his tongue licked his chops, the two sash-swathed bundles borne by Selim and Abdullah.

It was an hour later that they gained the route to Bitlis, on the spot where they had seen the bey halt the previous day, and turn aside to follow Sifaze.

"Steady!" said Alan, as they were about to leave the shelter of the trees. "Who is this that comes running along the road from Mush?"

"I know him," whispered Sifaze eagerly. "It is one Hundi, the carrier of the letter-writer of the mosque in Mush, who also is a crafty man and a spy of Hadir's."

"In that case," said Alan coolly, "we will know the cause of his hurry, and the contents of the letter in his pouch."

They waited till the man was almost abreast of them; then, springing out, they seized him, and hurried him into the woods.

"Stop thy gibbering, fool!" said Alan, as the man's teeth chattered in terror. "We will not hurt thee if thou but speakest the truth. Whence comest thou?"

"From the letter-writer of the mosque at Mush," chattered the carrier, "bearing word to Hadir Bey."

"I would see that word," said Alan; and, despite the

man's cries, he plucked away his pouch and extracted the letter it contained.

Stripped of its Oriental courtesies and titles, the letter ran thus:

"The Englishwoman lodging with Felut Pacha leaves at noon to-day, to wait at the grotto at the foot of the Karzan Dagh, facing the road to Hazro, where she trusts to meet Hamilton Effendi, of Van. For she hath written to him bidding him send thither an escort, who shall see her safely to his consulate, as she fears to travel by the caravan lest thou shouldst purchase its leader and obtain her betrayal. But her letter repositeth with me, and I have caused a message to be sent to her in the name of Hamilton Effendi to say that he will send the escort. Let your Excellency, then, use discretion and dispatch, and exciting not too much suspicion by taking soldiers, himself, with the slaves of his harem, lie in wait for the lady. So shall he recover the pearl that was lost. Moreover, I have bought the zaptiehs who shall accompany the lady to the grotto, and once she is there, they will all leave her, and return, taking with them also her horse. I send the message by the hand of Hundi, whom thou knowest."

"A very pretty little plot!" mused Alan, as he finished deciphering the letter.

For some minutes he stood reflectively regarding the face of Hundi, who, careless of his scrutiny, was looking with eager, covetous eyes at the bear cubs.

"Why desirest thou the cubs?" asked Alan suddenly, as all the opportunities offered by the letter suggested themselves to him.

"Nay, my lord, I coveted them not!" cried the runner.

"Thou liest!" said Alan. "Speak the truth, or—"

"Be not angry, my lord!" cried Hundi. "It is true that my eyes looked on them with longing. For I am poor, and I love a maid I may not wed without much money, and that at this trade I cannot gain. But had I such cubs as those, I would train them, and go from fair to fair, and make money quickly, so I should return and buy a vineyard, and marry."

"Wilt thou gain the cubs and ten pounds in gold?" asked Alan.

"How so?" asked Hundi, his eyes gleaming.

Alan twisted the missive into its original shape, and handed it back to the man.

"Bear that to Hadir Bey," he said. "Say nought of this encounter, and return hither. If Hadir Bey acts as the message bids him—and unless thou betrayest us he will so act—the cubs and the gold shall be thine."

"Behold, for one cub alone," said Hundi, "I would willingly betray Hadir Bey into years of torment. Five years have I borne him letters, yet never hath he given me so much as a piastre. Moreover, he hath cast his evil eyes on the fairness of the maid I love. Wherefore, if bearing the letter and keeping discreet my tongue will be for the hurt of Hadir Bey, lo, even will I bear it for no cub at all!"

"Then get thee gone," said Alan, "and use thy best speed. And as earnest of our bargain, take now the five gold pieces. When thou returnest, join us in the wood above the grotto, facing the road to Hazro."

Hundi salaamed, pocketed the gold, and, bounding into the road, sped away towards Bitlis.

"But if thou givest him the bears," growled Abdullah, "what then of thy plan?"

"A good plan must ever yield place to a better, thick-head!" replied Alan cheerfully. "We go towards Mush, and, by the staff of the Sheikh Jelaaluddin, I promise thee that when the sun sets this evening Hadir Bey shall be lodged in the chamber between the rocks in Kasim's stronghold on the Sipan Dagh."

"Hoo!" grunted Abdullah. "Art thou also a prophet?"

CHAPTER 5.

The Sheikh's Second Plan.

"WHAT are you doing? Stop! Come back at once!"

Mrs. Adair stood at the entrance to the grotto, on the cross-roads where the routes to Mush and Bitlis and Hazro join, calling after the twenty zaptiehs who had conducted her, and who were now riding back along the road at full gallop, and leading, too, her own horse.

"Do not be afraid, Mrs. Adair," said a voice at her elbow. "I will take care of you."

"You, Mr. Wayward!" cried the Irishwoman, stretching out her hands with a gesture of joyous relief. "Really, I shall begin to think you are destined to be my saviour."

"For this time, at any rate," laughed Alan, and explained to her the treachery of which she was the object.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Adair. "It is all the fault of that wild old prophet of yours!"

"How all his fault?" asked Alan, amazed.

"Because, four days ago," replied Mrs. Adair, "he sent a message to me begging me to write the letter I did to

Mr. Hamilton, and to send it by the letter-writer of the mosque. And he prophesied such dreadful ills to me, if I refused, that I was frightened, and promised."

"Oh!" said Alan. "That was his second plan, then?"

"What are you talking about?" said Mrs. Adair, rather frothfully.

"I will explain presently," said Alan. "Time presses now. I want you to lend your hat and cloak to Sifaze here. You yourself must come up into the woods, and travel on under Selim's guidance. That dust you see along the road in the distance towards Bitlis is our friend Hadir Bey."

"Anything to escape that wretch!" cried Mrs. Adair, snatching off her light dust-cloak and her hat, which Sifaze immediately donned.

"Get well into the grotto, Sifaze," said Alan, "and don't be afraid. No one shall hurt you."

"I am not afraid when my lord is near!" said Sifaze, with a look that drew a little mocking laugh from Mrs. Adair.

"Sure, and if you make that pretty child fall in love with you," she teased, "what will your princess be saying?"

"You let the princess alone!" said Alan gruffly, as he hastened Mrs. Adair up the mountain-side, and lifted her on to the mule that Selim held in waiting among the trees.

"Oh, faith, she's only a woman!" laughed Mrs. Adair. "But do tell me what you are going to do, and what you mean by the sheikh's second plan?"

"We are going to trap Hadir Bey, and punish him for his misdeeds," said Alan, with a grin. "The sheikh had formed two plans, and he would not tell me of the second. The first miscarried, and the prophet himself is a prisoner. But it seems that his prophetic instinct was not at fault, anyhow, for I fairly stumbled into the thick of his second plan; for you can see that he meant to use you as a lure to bring Hadir Bey, with only a few slaves, here to catch you, and to be fairly ambushed by us. And, of course, the fact that the sheikh is a prisoner, and that I am supposed to be besieged in Kasim's old stronghold, will make that monkey of Bitlis feel that he has the game properly in his hands. And look! There's the proof of it. He's only got four of his old white-gowned harem servants with him. Lucky I intercepted that note, wasn't it?"

"Bless you!" said Mrs. Adair fervently. "I think I'd like to get along. But I do hope you'll catch him this time."

"We shall!" said Alan grimly. "Push on quickly, and trust to Selim! Don't halt a moment till you get to the Sipan Dagh. Then stay in the rock-chamber Selim will show you, and don't budge from it till I come."

He watched the two depart, and turned to greet Hundi, who, panting and nearly breathless, came toiling up the hill.

"He comes!" he gasped. "Nor does he suspect anything. The lieutenant—Dilawer—he hath sent to hold the pass to Kasim's haunt. And behold, for the first time, the piastra he threw me for my letter!"

And throwing the piece on the ground, Hundi spat on it, then jumped on it, grinding it into the earth.

"The bears and the gold are thine," said Alan, as he handed over five pounds, and made a sign to Abdullah to surrender the cubs. "Now go, and delay not lest thy neck pay thy tarrying!"

"Come, Abdullah!" he went on, as Hundi sped through the woods. "We will get to the rock above the grotto, and prepare the gag and nooses for Hadir Bey."

The entrance to the grotto was in the Mush road, which bent almost at right angles to the route from Bitlis. The grotto itself ran some twenty yards into the mountain, and was topped by a great block of rock, seamed with jacinth and red quartz, and overgrown with shrubs that lay thick with white blossom beneath the spreading verdure of a giant beech.

It was among the shrubs, on this ledge overhanging the road, that Alan and his henchman wormed their way till they reached the very edge.

"Art thou there, Sifaze?" whispered Alan, bending his head over the ledge to see within.

"I am here, my lord!" replied Sifaze.

"In a few minutes they will be here," went on Alan.

"Pull the veil about thy face, and be as one lost in admiration of the stalactites. If, perchance, Hadir evade my grip, and enters the grotto, get thee to the further end; and when he follows thee, throw into his eyes the pepper I did give thee, then rush on him and trip him up. But if thou seeest that my grip fails not, then do not tarry, but mount his horse, and join us here in the glade above the ledge."

"I will do as my lord says!" replied Sifaze, with a little ripple of laughter.

"Hist!" whispered Abdullah, who was keeping a look-out from the Bitlis road.

Alan drew his head back swiftly, and not too soon; for

two of Hadir's eunuchs came whirling round the angle in a cloud of dust, dashed past the grotto, with a keen glance into the interior; then, wheeling their horses a hundred yards beyond, rode up the hill, and galloped through the woods, searching the shades with alert, practised eyes. They passed not twenty paces from where Alan and Abdullah lay, and Clok, with his master's hand tightly pressed on his snarling muzzle.

"Hoo!" whispered Abdullah, as the scouts rejoined the road further back. "The monkey of Bitlis remembereth the ambush of yesterday!"

But the report of his scouts had evidently satisfied Hadir Bey that no traps were being laid for him. Indeed, so certain was he that the sheikh was safe in a dungeon and Alan well bottled in Kasim's old haunt, that he had sent forward his scouts, not from any fear of ambush, but rather to make sure that no spies of the letter-writer lurked in the vicinity to bear inconvenient witness to their master, whose artistry in blackmail was of the sort to inspire precautions.

"Wait ye here," he said to his escort, "and stir not till I call thee. Perchance, I shall prevail on the Ingeliz lady to consent to our marriage; and, in that case, I would not have her made fearful by your ugly black faces. So see that ye stir not till I blow two blasts on my whistle."

The boy rode forward at a leisurely walk, ruminating over the manner of his address. In the thick dust of the road the hoofs of his horse made no noise, and he grinned maliciously, as, anticipating the surprise he was about to effect, he reined his mount in beneath the overhanging roof, and, stretching out his hand, threw the reins over the fork of a jutting branch and prepared to dismount.

It was at that moment that Alan Wayward's hands fell, fastening round the bey's throat in a throttling grip that choked back the shrill squeal of terror it evoked. Madly the bey tore at the tightening grasp, and dug his heels round the ribs of his horse. Against the giant strength of the Englishman the struggle did not last a second. The bey parted from his horse as if shot from a catapult, and the next moment was lying on his back amid the bushes, while Abdullah stuffed the "poire d'angoisse" into his gaping mouth, and slipped over wrists and ankles and knees the ready nooses. Then Abdullah produced a sack from the pack on his shoulders, and head first into it the Bey of Bitlis was thrust, and the mouth tied firmly round his feet.

"Good!" said Alan, as he peeped over the boulder, and saw Sifaze, mounted astride the bey's charger, urging it gently round the side of the grotto, up the hill.

Two minutes later the boy was strapped across the horse's haunches, and the little cavalcade was moving swiftly through the trees. They followed the course of the torrent, mounting by the path down which the sheikh had ridden in his mad tilt. And so jubilant were they in their success that, versed in woodcraft though they were, yet neither Alan nor Abdullah gave a thought to the fact that in two places, at least, the path commanded a full view of the Bitlis road, quarter of a mile below.

Their attention was, however, drawn to the fact by a sudden shout from below, and they turned to see the Nubians, with swords waving aloft, set their horses at the steep bank, and spur them violently forward in pursuit.

"It is a pity to destroy such noble beasts," said Alan; "yet our captive demands it. Try thy skill, Abdullah, and make those fat blacks dismount. If they will follow us, they shall, at least, have a run for their money. Yet see, Abdullah, that thou slayest not the slaves!"

He left Abdullah to his task, and pressed on ahead with Sifaze, quite unconscious of the tender glances and troubled sighs that sentimental maiden was wasting on him. But, though the Bokharian was a true shot, and sent his four steeds to their happy hunting-grounds with no more pain than a bullet through the brain involved, the Nubians were to prove themselves less slothful than Alan had dubbed them.

They took up the chase on foot, and with a verve and speed that sorely tempted Abdullah to disobey Alan's command. He was beginning, however, to have a mighty respect for his chosen master's behest; so, relieving his feelings with a volley of strange metaphors, he took to his heels, and reported progress to his master.

By this time they had reached the great boulder that guarded the descent into the perilous way they had passed the day before, and the Nubians were still a good five hundred yards behind.

"Lower thou Sifaze over the edge!" commanded Alan to Abdullah, "Then lower the bey to her, and return here to me!"

As Abdullah obeyed, wondering, Alan stripped the horse of bridle and stirrup-leathers, and, giving it a spank on the haunches, sent it at a wild gallop down the pass, up which the Nubians were toiling. Then leaping to the boulder he watched its progress.

He had divined, rightly enough, that the slaves would not withstand such a charge in so narrow a path, but he was hardly prepared for what followed; for, as the horse, wild with freedom, galloped down on them, one of the Nubians leapt clear into the abyss, to sink into the river far below. One panted against the rock received a flying kick in the ribs that sent him after his comrade. But the other two fell flat on their faces, judging rightly that so well-trained a steed would instinctively jump an obstacle rather than risk tripping over it. And as the horse justified their expectations, and left them scathless, they sprang to their feet again, and rushed up the pass, gaining the boulder just as Abdullah, joining Alan, presented the muzzle of his rifle to their astonished eyes.

"Lay down your swords," said Alan, "or ye are dead men! Now advance!" he said, as they obeyed sullenly.

He motioned them forward to the edge of the cliff, overlooking the ledge where Sifaze stood by the bey in his sack, the point of his battle-axe and the muzzle of Abdullah's rifle providing all the argument that was necessary to overcome their first show of reluctance. For a moment Alan stood strapping together the stirrup-leathers into a stout noose, and linking this to the doubled bridle.

"Now, ye children of folly," he said, "since ye would follow your master, you shall even have the pleasure of carrying him. Descend ye to that ledge, and slip this noose here over the sack, in which your master lies. Then, creeping forward, the foremost of you shall bear him on his back, while the one coming after shall keep the looped bridle over his shoulders. So he shall be in no danger of falling."

It was in vain the Nubians jabbered. They were prodded over, and whacked into obedience, and with Abdullah leading, and Alan bringing up the rear, the party negotiated in safety the dizzy way, and landed in the gorge beyond. There, Alan cut a rough litter, and placing the bey and Sifaze on it, drove the Nubians to the handles; and continued his route.

"Verily, my lord," said Abdullah, with a wide grin, "this was a very wise and great device of thine; for, indeed, my heart sank as I thought that it would be my lot to bear that little monkey all the way up the Sipan Dagh!"

Hour after hour they plodded on, till, as night fell, they halted near the secret defile by which they must pass to gain the heights above Kasim's stronghold.

Here Alan drew Abdullah a little aside.

"We must not take these slaves up the secret way," he said. "And I am puzzled what to do with them. If I let them go, they will lead Dilaver and his men here, and they may nose out the way up the rocks to the tunnel entrance on the cliffs."

"Let my lord but ask them what they will do, if thou sparest their lives," said Abdullah, grinning.

In answer to the question Alan put, the slaves shrugged their shoulders.

"Flee!" said one. "What else? If Hadir Bey should ever return, our lot would be the bastinado and the gallowes. And if we return without him, torture and the bow-string await us. If thou sparest us, our only hope of life is in flight far to the south."

"Then take these pieces of gold," said Alan, passing them a handful, "and flee while ye may, for it will be many days ere Hadir Bey sees Bitlis again!"

The Nubians waited no second bidding, but, grabbing the gold, bolted along the way they had come, nor did anyone at Bitlis ever ascribe their disappearance to anything but the battle-axe of the "Ingeliz devil" that was bewitched by the prophet of Bagdad.

"Alas," sighed Abdullah, "after all, my back must bear that burden, and for the stiffest part of the journey!"

"Nay," replied Alan; "I dare not risk his precious life

on that spineless back of thine! If thou wert to fall, the sheikh would be doomed. Pass that bridle round my shoulders, and make the sack lie level on my back. Keep thou behind me, so that if I overbalance, or lose my footing, he may fall on thee, and not be hurt!"

"In good truth," grumbled Abdullah, "I like this task even less than the other!"

The climb through the defile was almost precipitous, and it taxed all Alan's great strength to reach the top. But it was reached at last, and, in obedience to their signal, Selim thrust down the bar that held the grooved rock, and the party joined Mrs. Adair in the room Alan had built in the tunnel.

"But where is the bey?" cried that lady, looking from one to the other, under the flare of the torches.

"Excellency," said Alan, as he slit the sack open, "behold the lady thou didst set out to see! She graciously permits thee to offer thy salutations!"

CHAPTER 6.

Taming the Turk.

"JELALUDDIN and thou shall hang in chains!" was all Hadir Bey's response to Alan's greeting, when at dawn next day the Englishman intimated that he could not provide his guest with breakfast before the arrival of the sheikh.

The Turk was on his dignity, and, even in the trying circumstances of his presentation to Mrs. Adair the night before, he had borne himself with an air of unabated pride that had stirred the Irishwoman to admiration. Nevertheless, he was very hungry, and eight hours of a woollen gag had left him with a thirst there was no gaining.

But he had asked in vain for water, and even Mrs. Adair had futilely pleaded in his behalf.

"He gets neither bito nor sup till the sheikh be here," had said Alan. And the better to effectuate his sentence, he had banished Mrs. Adair, under guard of Sifaze, to the upper portion of the tunnel, with instructions to the Bokharian girl to keep a sharp look-out, and at the first sign of danger retire on the rock-chamber.

Himself, with Abdullah, had passed the night in alternate watches remaking "the pillar of hurling," as the sheikh called the pile of stones Alan had demolished to the undoing of Dilaver's troops.

In addition, they had built up along the edge of the plateau half a dozen V-shaped, crescent-flanked heaps of rocks, that a man might hurl alone down into the pass in case the troops should advance in force—a probability that was by no means remote when the bey's prolonged absence should give rise to speculation and search.

But, as yet, no signs of immediate assault were visible, and when dawn brought back Selim from a reconnoitring expedition on which Alan had despatched him, the Bokharian had reported that the road was clear as far as the lake; the shores of which were, however, being closely patrolled.

Throughout the morning the three men toiled unremittingly, piling up stones till all the ledge was a-bristle with great cairns.

"Unless they find the way up the rocks to the cliff above," said Selim at noon, "not all the troops at Bitlis could take the stronghold, with us three guarding it."

"And even then," rejoined Alan, "they could not. For I have a keg of gunpowder in the tunnel, and if they gain the cliff, the tunnel shall take them a little nearer the sky!"

"That is all very well for you men," said Mrs. Adair; who, with Sifaze, had been transferred at dawn from the tunnel to a cave in the plateau; "but I don't want to stay here for a week, only to be blown up at the end of it. My little girl is sick at Mush, and she will be fretting for me. At all hazards, I must get down to Van. Surely, Mr. Wayward, since Selim reports all clear as far as the lake, I might venture, with him as guide, to make for Arjish, at the head of the lake. And once there, I could hire some cart, or mule, or even a donkey, to go on to Van and Mr. Hamilton."

"If you'd rather do so," said Alan, "I don't see any objection. In fact, it would be better; for we may have fairly lively times here, and if we did happen to go under—well, Turkish soldiers don't stand on ceremony in the moment of a victory dearly bought."

"Then, for goodness' sake, man, let us be going at once!" cried Mrs. Adair, with a shudder. "If ever I get out of this wretched country I'll never leave the shores of England again!"

"More haste, less speed," said Alan calmly. "Selim must first go a little way and scout. Clear off, Selim," he went on, turning to the Bokharian. "See how the land lies towards the lake. You needn't go far, for you must take the route towards the Ala Dagh, and then turn southward

SANDOW'S BOOK FREE!

the first published, a new book showing how Sandow won Health
of Fame, beautifully illustrated, and explaining how every
him, n and woman can obtain robust health and perfect develop-
ment by exercise.

SPECIAL OFFER.

To every reader who writes at once a copy of this book
will be sent free.

Address: No. 17, SANDOW HALL, BURLEIGH STREET,
STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

NEXT
THURSDAY.

"THE DETECTIVE'S PUPILS."

A Double-length Tale of
Tom Merry's Schooldays.

along the further slopes of the Sipan, and make Arjish by a detour."

While Mrs. Adair controlled her impatience and Selim departed on his errand, Alan paid another visit to the bey, whom he found in a much more amenable spirit.

"If I give thee an order for the release of that accursed prophet," he snarled over his swollen tongue, "wilt thou give me to eat and drink?"

"Neither bite nor drop," answered Alan stonily, "till the sheikh be here."

"But I am dying, dog!" howled the bey, suddenly purple with fury.

"There is moisture enough in the rock," said Alan, "to keep thee alive for a week. If thou wouldst eat and drink, sign the order for the sheikh's release. The sooner he is here, the nearer thou wilt be to thy desire."

"Give me paper and pen," moaned the bey, unable to endure longer the sight of Alan, who was slowly peeling an orange.

"They are here," said Alan, producing both, with a bottle of ink, and loosening the bonds on the bey's arm.

"Order to the officer in charge of my household," scrawled the bey feverishly, "to release at once, under pain of death for delay of even a minute, the Sheikh Jelaluddin, and give him safe conduct where he will.—Signed, HADIR, Bey of Bitlis."

He pushed the paper to Alan, who pocketed it.

"I will give thee all the rings on my hands for that orange," groaned Hadir.

"Neither bite nor sup till the sheikh be here," replied Alan, unmoved.

"Then may dogs eat thy bones!" shrieked the bey. "Get thee gone!"

"Sign first a safe conduct for my messengers," said Alan.

The bey, speechless with rage, obeyed. And Alan, unfastening his bonds, rejoined Mrs. Adair.

"The monkey of Bitlis is clamouring for nuts," he said. "In grace of which I have not only the order for the sheikh's release, but a safe conduct that will shorten your journey and enable you to go straight down to Alchlai and take boat to Van."

"Faith; you're a jewel of a boy, and that's a fact!" said Mrs. Adair. "But you're an inhuman monster, all the same. Sure, you might give the poor man a wee drop of something. He must be parched with the thirst."

"It can't be done," said Alan. "He's on the punishment-list, and he's got to stick it out. Ah, here comes Selim; and from the look of him I should say he's in a considerable funk!"

And Selim was, for he had escaped by the skin of his teeth a cunning ambush of six sharpshooters, planted aloft on the walls of the cliff above the pass among the stray bushes.

"The valley is filled with men," he reported, "and Dilawer roams from post to post like a leopard cat snarling after its mate. If the Ingeliz lady go down now, she goes to certain capture."

"Give me the safe conduct and the order for the sheikh's release," cried Mrs. Adair. "I am not afraid. I will ride alone to Dilawer. He will not dare disobey the orders."

"You can't go down alone," said Alan. "Selim will be right enough with the safe conduct."

"Then let us start now," insisted the impulsive little Irishwoman. "I don't want to wait here till those villains come up. A bold face is half a battle."

Alan looked at her fluffy golden hair and delicate, baby visage, and laughed outright.

"Good ould Oireland!" he mocked. "All the same, I think you're right, Mrs. Adair. But as Abdullah is the more experienced man of the two, I will send him with you instead of Selim; for Selim and his sister might possibly be treated as the runaway slaves they are, and therefore outside the protection of even a safe conduct. And to make matters a little more certain, I will write at the bottom of Hadir's order: 'If the safe-conduct be not respected, the bey will pay the penalty—eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth.' That, I think, will calm even Dilawer's zeal."

Alan saw the two to the mouth of the pass, and, taking leave of Mrs. Adair, ran along the ledge of the plateau, and, leaning over, hailed the soldiers in ambush below, his voice carrying through the crisp, mountain air, clear as a bell.

"Hadir Bey sends to Dilawer two messengers under safe-conduct!" he bellowed.

The cry was taken up and echoed down the lines, whence the lieutenant presently emerged at a gallop, to rein in his horse brusquely as he sighted the figures of Mrs. Adair and Abdullah leisurely proceeding down the pass. A quarter of an hour later they had joined him, and, as Alan saw his courteous salute and watched him help Mrs. Adair to a horse and form an escort round the two, he breathed a sigh of relief.

For a few moments he lingered, till they were lost in the trees encircling the path to the lake. Then he rose, and made his way to the chamber, where Hadir Bey was following his advice and holding his parched tongue against the damp rock.

"The messengers have gone, Excellence," he said. "I have sent Mrs. Adair and my henchman, and have just seen your lieutenant, Dilawer, receive them and accompany them towards the lake."

For a long minute the bey glared at him, like one bereft of his senses.

"You have sent her to Dilawer?" he screamed at last.

"Why not?" asked Alan, somewhat startled and alarmed.

For all answer the bey, with an inarticulate gasp of rage and despair, turned and licked feverishly at the rock, nor could Alan persuade him to any explanation.

The hours dragged on wearily, and when midnight came and still no sign of the sheikh's approach was made, Alan's alarm deepened into the keenest anxiety.

Dawn found him haggard-eyed and fevered with impatience. In his quandary, he sought Hadir again, resolved to make him explain his strange cry of the previous night.

But Hadir was too incoherent to afford explanations.

"The sheikh—the sheikh!" was all the infuriated and half-delirious bey could scream. And he screamed it for all he was worth; so that it took Alan a long half-hour to explain that neither sheikh nor messenger had returned, and that he feared treachery.

"Pen—paper!" yelled the bey. And penning another, and more urgent, message, he handed it to Alan, with the signet-ring from his finger.

"Call one of my soldiers, and send him," gasped the bey. "And may vultures rend thee!"

Alan found little difficulty in persuading one of the beleaguering soldiers to undertake the mission, when once he had seen and recognised the bey's ring and signature, and knew the message was to be delivered to the officer in charge of the palace. The man sped away joyously enough, seeing that he was going to certain reward, instead of awaiting, as he had anticipated, a certain death.

That he had made good speed was evident enough, when, as night drew near, a bugle rang out the general retreat, the men fell back on the lake, and half an hour later the sheikh was seen toiling slowly up the pass, bearing a body over his shoulder.

Careless now of danger, Alan and Selim raced down to meet him, to halt dismayed as they saw that the body was that of Abdullah, senseless and limp.

"Greetings, my son!" said the sheikh calmly. "Thou hast indeed done well. I feared lest thou wouldst use thy strength against the castle, and, behold, thou hast used thy wit against the bey! Cease thy wailing, fool," he added sharply to Selim; "thy brother is not dead! And for proof thereof thou mayst bear the burden of him to the plateau."

"Where did you find him?" asked Alan anxiously. "I sent him yesterday, at noon, with Mrs. Adair, under safe-conduct of Hadir's, to secure thy release."

"And his safe-conduct and the order were crumpled in his hand," replied the sheikh, "when I stumbled on him in a patch of bracken on the fringe of the woods overlooking the lake. He had been smitten treacherously on the head from behind. But he hath a thick skull, and when he recovers he will doubtless enlighten us. Thou hast not given that monkey of Bitlis ought to eat or drink?"

"Neither bite nor sup has he had," answered Alan, "since we caught him at the place thy second plan had fixed, two days ago this noon."

"Ha, I divined that thou hadst stumbled on my bait," said the sheikh complacently, "yet would I hear the details of it!"

Alan regaled him with them, as they completed the ascent.

"It was well done," said the sheikh, "save the part that toucheth the women. For those thou oughtest to have sent straight on to Mush on the bey's horse. For wheresoever there be women, there broodeth foolish impulse and much miscarrying of considered consequences."

"Wilt thou see Hadir Bey?" asked Alan. "He is most anxious for thy presence, for I told him he might neither eat nor drink till thou wert here."

"Yea, I will see him!" replied the sheikh grimly.

The pride of the bey was all forgotten when he saw Jelaluddin's gaunt form drop into his rock-chamber, and wormed forward, grovelling.

"Thou art here at last," he moaned. "And now shall eat and live!"

"Thou shalt live, but not eat," said the sheikh pitilessly. "Nor food nor drink shall pass thy lips till to-morrow's noon. For long hath Allah sought thee to punish thy impieties. By greed hast thou sinned, and by fasting thou shalt be purged. Nevertheless, to-morrow at noon thou shalt eat a little bread and drink a little water, if thou art willing to pay for such luxuries."

The bey writhed, torn between rage and despair and fear.

"I will pay—I will pay!" he cried. "I will give thee an order on my treasury!"

"My men are tired, and one is wounded," said the sheikh coldly. "Hidden in thy bosom is thy secret store—much money in crisp Ingeliz notes, thou didst receive from Alexis, Governor of Tiflis, for the information thou didst sell to him concerning the army corps at Erzincan."

"Thou art a devil!" screamed Hadir, falling back in wild fear, his bound hands clutching at his breast.

"Five thousand pounds thou hast," pursued the sheikh, unmoved. "Also this bag of gold Selim took from thy drawer as wages for seven years' service, and which I now restore to thee. Hear now the price of thy meat. For a loaf of bread thou shalt pay one hundred pounds, and for a bowl of water nine hundred pounds. And thou shalt restore the wages unto Selim and the interest thereon, and a free pardon withal, and compensation therewith for the injury done to his brother, and a dowry to boot for his sister.

"And for three more days thou shalt rest here, and a loaf of bread and a bowl of spring water shalt be thy only fare. And on the fourth day, if thou wilt confess thy impieties and swear amendment, I will correct thee with my staff, and after that thou shalt go, and there shall be peace between you and me."

Hadir, crouching against the wall, gazed at the sheikh's stern, pitiless face with glazed eyes.

"Reflect thereon," said the sheikh drily; then slung on his heel, and left the bey to his meditations.

CHAPTER 7.

At Issues with Pride.

FOR the next three days the Sheikh Jelaluddin kept relentlessly to his word.

"Thou wilt ruin me," had moaned the bey, when, unable to resist the bread and water offered him at noon on the fourth day of his captivity, he had paid the thousand pounds demanded.

"Better ruin now, and a little water," said the sheikh drily, "than to thirst for ever with Sheitan."

So for three days the bey had grown thin on a loaf of bread and a bowl of water, paying each day his thousand pounds for the same.

"Now," said the sheikh, on the dawn of the fourth day of feeding. Abdullah hath recovered consciousness at last from the blow of thy lieutenant, and hath spoken. He is, moreover, a true man, and he recounteth that, when the Ingeliz lady joined Dilawer, he spoke her fair, and, providing her an escort, promised to see her to Bitlis, and find her rowers to take her to Van. But when they had gained the woods above Alhlay, he himself struck down Abdullah, even as he shouted the order, 'By the left! Gallop! To the summer residence of the bey!' Wherefore, thou eatest not till that lady also be released!"

"Dilawer shall pass by the bowstring!" snarled the bey. "I ordered nothing of all this! Give me paper and let me write, and thou shalt send Selim to the captain of my troops, and he shall release the lady and deliver Dilawer into your hands."

But, as it fell out, Selim had not far to go. For at Bitlis they had waited impatiently for the return of the bey, expecting that he would be released on the return of the sheikh. And when he did not arrive the officers of the household were divided in their counsel some arguing that to attack the stronghold again would be to endanger the bey's life, others urging that, even so, their own honour demanded the effort. And so they haggled two days away, till Dilawer, returning from the safe bestowal of Mrs. Adair in the bey's hill residence burst in on them like a whirlwind, and so flouted and jeered at the laggards that by the dawn of the seventh day of the bey's captivity a thousand troops moved out from Bitlis, and took the way to Sipan Dagh.

Selim, speeding down the pass, saw them from afar, and as he counted the host of them, his heart failed him, for he thought of his sister and the peril she was in. So, instead of advancing, he waited till the advance-guard had reached a point below him, and then, hailing them, he threw down the bey's note, which Dilawer caught in his own hands.

"Go, tell the bey," cried Dilawer, "that I come to release him, and to flay his captors! And if a hair of his head is hurt, the Ingeliz lady shall pay for it!"

Selim returned and bore the message to the sheikh, who heard it with a smile that became very grim as he pointed down the pass where the soldiers were debouching from the spiral into the straight way, and advancing in very scattered formation.

"Behold the vanguard of the doomed ones!" he said to Wayward.

"I'd enough of this kind of massacre the other night," replied Alan. "I am going to overturn a pillar on them, and

give them a warning. Then we will take Hadir through the tunnel, blow it up behind us, and treat for terms from the top of the cliff."

"Do as thou sayest," replied the sheikh.

And as he spoke, Alan hurled down the great cairn of stones, that swept the pass clean and drove back the oncomers in disorder. Then the sheikh, running along the edge of the plateau, pushed over the piled-up boulders, running from one to the other in quick succession, till the confused and mangled ranks beneath, believing that a good hundred men must be gathered above, wavered, and broke, retreating pell-mell down the spiral, deadly way.

But Dilawer, drunk with rage, shrieking to his men to come on, rushed up the incline, hurling taunts at Alan's retreating figure.

The Englishman, recognising him, sprang back into the pass, and ran down to meet him, his great axe gripped in his hand. Dilawer met him firmly. In all the Turkish army there was no finer swordsman than he, and twice his blade, turning aside the flashing axe, nearly glided through Alan's body. From below twenty soldiers had crept up, and stood watching breathlessly, while from above the sheikh bent over, cheering on his disciple.

So absorbed was he that he never noticed the crouching, creeping figure of Hadir, who was stealthily approaching him from the rear.

For Hadir, left alone with Clok, had felt his wits grow keen with fasting. The hound had become accustomed to him, and by dint of coaxing and offering his thonged wrists, he had succeeded in inciting Clok, always proud of his prowess in any task his master had taught him, to gnaw through the silken scarf. His hands once free, it had been the matter of a moment to unloose his legs, and form a running noose of the cord. Then, caressing the wolfhound's head, he had suddenly slipped the noose over its muzzle, drawn it tight, and reefed the end through his collar-ring. Snatching a sword from the wall, he had then crept warily out, and seeing the sheikh's absorption, had crept down on him, bent on hurling him over the ledge.

But if Clok could not bite he could bay, and he expressed his fury at the indignity offered him in a sudden furious howl that brought the sheikh to his feet. In an instant he had divined what had happened, and as Hadir aimed a vicious blow at him, he swung his staff, and catching the bey on the wrist, sent his sword whirling. Then began a scene that was to haunt Hadir's dreams for many months, for as he fled round and round the plateau the sheikh sped after him, and whacked him mercilessly with his cunning staff, till Hadir, sinking exhausted to the ground, howled for mercy.

Meanwhile, on the pass, the fight had gone fiercely, and Dilawer was gradually weakening and backing, the fear of death staring in his eyes.

"Twice I have spared thy life," growled Alan, as the swaying of his axe pressed the officer harder and harder, "believing thee as loyal as brave. But for thy traitor blow on Abdullah, and thy fouler treachery to a safe conduct, thou diest!"

And as he spoke he swung his axe down, and turning it round the fending sword, swung it upwards with a long, fierce, siantwise cut, that sent Dilawer hurtling over into the gulf.

A great cry of fear and rage rose from the soldiers, and a dozen rifles were levelled at Alan's breast.

But at that moment from below in the plains there boomed out the great battcry of the Haideranli.

"Hi-hoo! Hoo-ha-hai!" The thunder of it echoed along the pass, drawing the startled gaze of the soldiers, and of Alan, too, for a moment, to the sight of a thousand lances and a great train of slaves and cattle.

The soldiers wavered; and Alan, seeing their hesitation, sent ringing back the battle-cry, and charged down on them. But he had no need to strike, for before he could reach them they had turned, and were fleeing like goats down the pass towards the lake, where their comrades were already embarking. He retraced his steps, laughing, and joined the sheikh, in time to witness the final thwacking that brought Hadir to his knees.

"Dost thou confess thyself an impious and gluttonous man, full of vanity and lies and greed?" roared the sheikh, smiting on, all heedless of the supplications and groans of his victim.

"I so confess myself," howled the bey, squirming from one knee to the other, and utterly cowed.

"Dost thou swear by the beard of Mahomet to amend thy ways?" asked the sheikh, in a mollified tone.

"Yea, I swear!" moaned the bey.

"Wilt thou safely and honourably deliver the Ingeliz lady to Hamilton Effendi forthwith?" continued the sheikh.

"I will!" sighed Hadir.

"Then arise; thou art forgiven," said Jelaluddin genially. "And behold, in the cave at thy right is food and drink,

Refresh thyself, and depart in peace. Yet forget not that if thou failest in thy word the staff of Allah shall seek thee out, and smite thee sorely, yea, even more sorely. For though thou art in many parts a rogue, yet thou hast a leaven of justice in thy hide that whipping shall perchance fructify."

They parted with Hadir at the bottom of the pass, leaving him to continue his chastened way lakewards, while they, swinging to the left, passed through the saluting lines of Alan's own regiment, and bowed low before Hassein and Mirame.

But the princess scarcely returned their greetings. Her eyes were sparkling with anger, and her face cold with scorn.

"At my father's-bidding I am here," she said, in stinging accents of disdain, "to bring thee my ransom, twice told, oh Ingeliz lord. I knew not I was held so dear. Yet I trust thou wilt find the count pass even the expectation of thy demand."

Alan for a long minute stared at her in utter bewilderment. Then, catching sight of the sheikh's grinning countenance and air of paternal content, he suddenly divined the reason of his tarrying to talk with Hassein fifteen days ago. But though his heart raged with fury at the shameful position such trafficking had put him in before the eyes of his beloved, his pride rose in arms against the judgment that could so easily and disdainfully condemn him on suspicion and all unheard: and he met Mirame's gaze with eyes as proudly cold as hers, till beneath the chilling mastery of his level look the girl's lids quivered and fell.

"It is well, lady," he said calmly. Then, turning to one of the lieutenants of his regiment, he commanded: "Let the headmen of the slaves come hither."

"A prophet and a wise man," Alan said bitingly, as the slaves stood in a ring before him, "made a bargain in the dark for his friend. Thereby were ye made as a price for the ransom of one not all the stars in heaven could ransom. It is not meet that slaves should be held as ransom for a princess. Therefore, by gift of her freedom, I make ye and all your fellows free men. And the sheep and the goats and the cattle that ye have brought I give to you also, to be shared equally among you. And, moreover, that you may have land in your own right, lo, the prophet and the wise man hath four thousand pounds that he hath gained for you, and which he will now give unto Hassein, who shall buy land for you under the shadow of his castle, and portion it out to you in lots. So ye shall live under his protection, and cultivate his fields, and pay him tithes of your harvests, and fill his barns against the day when I shall return, and he shall be hard put to fulfil his answer to the suit he wots of."

He paused and fixed his eyes on the sheikh, who reluctantly and very obviously to his little liking, drew out the notes he had received from Hadir, and handed them to Hassein, who sat quite as amazed as the circle of gaping warriors thronging round at so unheard-of and reckless a largesse.

"Hassein, I commend the freemen to thy goodwill," went on Alan, in the same cold, ironic voice. "Lady, I bid thee farewell till that day I have just spoken of. Oh, man of much wisdom, who trafficest in the dark, comest thou?"

He bowed haughtily to Mirame and Hassein, and stalked away, with Clok at heel. The sheikh, without a word, followed him, while Hassein sat frowning and biting his great moustache, and Mirame with tremulous lips looked after him, a world of pride and entreaty in her eyes. To a great "Hoo!" of wonder and admiration, the two strode through the opening lines of the regiment, and retraced their steps up the pass.

Nor did Alan so much as once glance in the direction of the Haideranli, all the way up to the plateau, nor when he arrived did he even then turn his eyes in the direction whither his heart was dragging him; but sombre and silent passed into his cave, and proceeded calmly to eat the meat prepared there for him.

And the sheikh, observing it, frowned thoughtfully, and mused for many minutes.

"Hoo!" he muttered at last. "But it was well said, and cunning withal with the savour of my wisdom. Nevertheless, bread and water shall be his food for many days, for verily his heart is swollen yet with pride."

And so, while Hassein and his daughter retook their way, silent and abashed, back to Ala Dagh, Alan and the sheikh, joining the Bokharians on the ridge, hastened on the way to Mush.

And all the way thither Sifaze sang.

THE END.

(Another Splendid Story of Tom Merry and Alan Wayward next Thursday. Please order your copies of the "Gem" Library in advance. Price 1d.)

TEMPEST HEADLAND

The Only New and Original School Tale
By S. CLARKE HOOK.

READ THIS FIRST.

Billy Barnes, Cyril Conway, and Snowy White Adonis Venus are three great chums at Tempest Headland School.

Dr. Buchanan, the headmaster, finds them very troublesome pupils; as does also Herr Ludvig, the German master.

Venus is a black boy, and is taken as a fag by Graft. The end of the term arrives, and, after tantalising Venus for some time, Cyril informs him that they are to spend the holidays together at Cyril's home.

In trying to get his box downstairs by sliding it on the banister, Snigg loses his hold of it. The doctor and Cyril are standing just beneath when Venus sees it coming.

(Now go on with the story.)

Cyril's Narrow Escape.

There was no time for thought. It was a matter of life or death. Venus charged at his chum's back, sent him flying into the doctor's chest, and the pair of them were hurled upon Mopps, who was just bringing up Herr Ludvig's breakfast.

Mopps, the tray, the doctor, and Cyril went to the floor with a crash, but the crash they made was as nothing to the crash of that box, as it dropped into the hall.

One of the corners had grazed Venus' head, and given it a gash. Had he been a few inches farther back, he must have been killed. As it was, he scarcely felt the cut.

Mopps howled at the top of his voice, for he had not only got the eggs and bacon in his face, but also the contents of the coffee-pot down his chest, and that coffee was remarkably hot. The doctor was as calm as Cyril, and that was saying a good deal.

Cyril rose, waited till the doctor followed his example, then, bowing politely, said:

"Er—sorry, sir. Quite an accident. It shall not occur again."

Cyril's calmness was too much for Venus.

"Yah, yah, yah!" he roared. "It takes a mighty lot to upset dat boy. Yah, yah, yah! I hope you ain't hurt, sir. Hadn't time to tell you to get out ob de way. Tought I would gib you bof a little shove. It's all right, Mopps, you ain't hurt."

"Bust it!" hooted Mopps, leaping to his feet, and dancing about in a manner that caused Venus to howl worse than ever.

Dr. Buchanan glanced at the box, then, stepping into the centre of the hall, he looked up, to see Snigg's face over the balusters.

"I am extremely sorry at the little mishap, sir, but—"

"Come down, boy," ordered the doctor.

"As Conway has remarked, it was quite an accident, sir, and—"

"Come down!"

"And it is one that is not at all likely to occur again."

"Do you hear me, boy? Come here!"

"If you please, sir, I—I would rather remain here, if you don't mind. I see you—I don't exactly know what would happen, if I was—"

"Do you dare to disobey my command?"

"Oh, no, sir! I would never think of doing anything like that; only, if it was all the same to you, I would rather come down in, say, ten minutes' time, after you have got over the little mishap."

"I assure you it will be better for you if you come down at once."

Then Snigg came; and he kept about a couple of yards distance from the doctor.

"What were you doing with the box?"

"I was carrying it downstairs, if you please, sir, and all of a sudden something seemed to catch it. Just look at my clothes. Why, they are all over blood! Here, get out of it, you stupid nigger! You are bleeding all over my clothes."

"Now, I wonder how dat happened!" exclaimed Venus, who was standing on a white shirt. "Must be my noddle, I tink. Still, when I tink ob Mopps— Yah, yah, yah!"

"Come into my study, my lads," ordered the doctor, and Snigg did not consider the invitation applied to him.

(An extra long instalment next Thursday.)

Now on Sale!

4

NEW ISSUES

OF THE

"BOYS' FRIEND"

3^d.

LIBRARY.

No. 51. Expelled from His School.

A Grand School Tale, by CHARLES J. MANSFORD.

No. 52. Strongbold the Gladiator.

A Thrilling Tale of Romance and Adventure,
by HENRY ST. JOHN.

No. 53. Chums of Wycliffe.

A Splendid NEW School Story, by JACK NORTH.

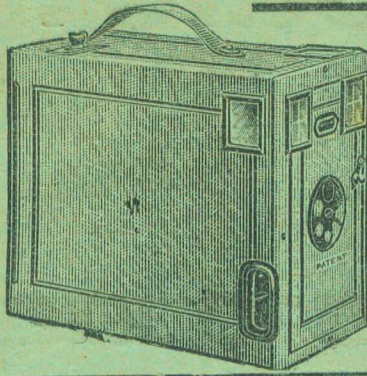
No. 54. Tiller and Tideway.

A Thrilling NEW Tale of Sexton Blake, Detective.

ASK FOR

THE "BOYS' FRIEND" 3^d. LIBRARY.

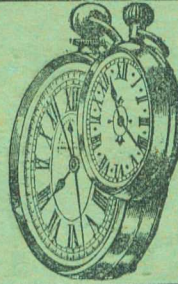
FOUR WONDERFUL BARGAINS



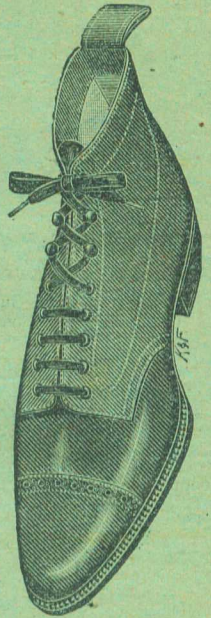
£2 2s. Camera and Outfit for 10/3.

SEND ONLY 9d. We send this magnificent 1-Plate Camera, complete with excellent book of instructions, to any address on receipt of 9d. deposit and upon payment of the last of 20 payments of 6d. each, making a total of 10/9 in all. A handsome present is given free. Postage of Camera, 7d. extra. Cash-with-order price only **10/3**.
Description: This perfect Camera is guaranteed made in London of hard wood and covered with waterproof leatherette, with leather handle for carrying. Fittings are heavily oxidized. Lenses very fine quality, rapid. Shutter over set for portraits or snapshots. Four stops, two brilliant lenses, one for upright and one for oblong pictures. **Outfit** consists of a packet of dry plates, packet developer, packet of gold toning and fixing, packet fixing salts, packet of P.O.P., well-made wooden printing-out frame, two dishes, ruby lamp, and packet of mounts. Send today, as the number is limited. Cheaper quality Cameras, usual price, 15/6, our price **6/6** cash. 7/- instalments, same terms.

WORTH £2 2s. SEND ONLY 6d.

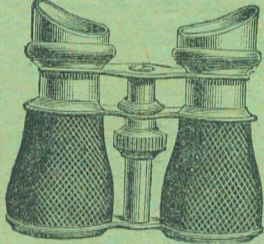


12/6 BOOTS 8/-.
Send Only 6d.



Just as an advertisement for our Boot Dept. we send a splendid pair of Ladies' or Gent's Boots or Shoes to any address on receipt of 6d. deposit and upon the last of 16 weekly payments of 6d. each, making a total of 3/6 in all. A handsome present is given FREE.
 Cash-with-order price only **8/-**. You can have either black or brown Boots or Shoes. Ladies may have lace or button, as preferred.

We send either of these magnificent Watches complete with Chain on receipt of **6d. Deposit** and upon payment of the last of 16 payments of **8/3** 6d. each, making a total of **8/6** in all. A handsomely chased, gold-finished, adjustable Pencil is given free. Postage and insurance of either Watch, 3d. extra. Foreign and Colonial orders, postage 1/- extra. Cash with order, **8/3**. These Watches are genuine **18ct. gold-cased**, jewelled movements, and perfect timekeepers. Guaranteed 10 years. Gent's are full-size Chronograph Stop Watches. Ladies' usual size and beautifully finished. Upwards of 6,000 testimonials are open to inspection at our offices. Send deposit at this price. Money returned in full if goods are not exactly as represented.



A 50/- Pair of Field Glasses 8/- (including Case),

We will send a pair of these magnificent Race, Marine, or Field Glasses, complete with an Imperial Russian Leather Case on receipt of **6d. Deposit** and upon the last of 16 weekly payments of **6d.** each, making a total of **8/6** in all. A handsome present will be given free. Cash-with-order price only **8/-**. Postage 4d. extra. **Description:** These handsome Race Marine, or Field Glasses are fitted with very clear, powerful lenses, with nickel eyeshades and slides, 30 miles range. As used in all late wars. Covered with Imperial Russian Leather, and sling case to match.

When writing please state clearly exactly which Bargain you require.

KEW TRADING ASSOCIATION, LTD. (Dept. 44), KEW.



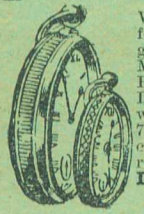
SAVE TRAM FARES which will obtain for you direct from our factory a high-grade lady's or gent's genuine British-made

COVENTRY CYCLE warranted six to fifteen years, packed free and carriage paid. Ten days' Trial allowed before purchase becomes binding. Every transaction in confidence. No deposit or references required. Thousands of testimonials from customers.

TRADE TERMS to a few riders in each district who apply immediately. Buy direct and save dealers' profits. Write at once for our large **Free Art Catalogue** and special offer on sample machine.

MEAD CYCLE CO. Paradise St., LIVERPOOL. LONDON: 19, Charing Cross Road. MANCHESTER: 162, Deansgate. GLASGOW: 168, Buchanan Street. NEWCASTLE: 23, New Bridge St.

FREE! ALL PRIZES! FREE!
SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU.



We give you **FREE ANY PRIZE** on our grand list for selling or using our Beautiful Postcards. You can gain Phonographs, Ladies' or Gent's size Watches, Musical Instruments, Silver Hall-Marked Umbrellas, Rifles, Footballs, Silverware, Cutlery, Cricket Bats, Real Diamond Rings, Cameras, etc., etc. Send us a postcard with your full name and address, and we will send you 72 of our famous Penny Pictorial Cards. Sell or use the cards within 28 days at one penny each, and we will reward you according to our list a grand **Free Prize**. It need not cost you one Penny of your own money. Write at once. Don't delay.

AGTE & CO.
 (Dept. A4), 85, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.



A CYCLE for 1/- DEPOSIT & 1/- WEEKLY.
 As an advertisement we will send to first 1,000 applicants our **£3 8s. Od. "ROYAL EMBLEM" CYCLE** for **1s. DEPOSIT**, and on last payment of 84 weeks at **1s.** making **£4 5s.** A HANDSOME PRESENT IS SENT FREE. Write for Illustrated Catalogue. **£3 15s. Od.** Cash Price.
ROYAL EMBLEM CYCLE DEPOT (C30), GREAT YARMOUTH.

HANDSOME MEN are those who are slightly sunburnt. Sunbronze gives this tint. Detection impossible. Guaranteed genuine. Post free (plain cover), 1/4. Sunbronze Laboratories, 32, Ethelbert Road, Wimbledon.

VENTRILOQUISM.—How to acquire this wonderful art. Success certain. Never fails. With Complete Dictionary, etc. Post-paid, 6d. stamps (halfpennies preferred) Catalogue Free.—**IRONMONGER, Great Bookseller, ILKESTON.**

2/- DEPOSIT

We send this High-Grade Free-Wheel Cycle, Mudguards and Tools, fully guaranteed, to any address on receipt of **2s. DEPOSIT**, and upon payment of the last of 22 monthly payments of 5s., making total **£5 12s.** Cash Price, **£5 5s.** Sent on approval. Cycles from 50s. Write for Catalogue.



ERSKINE CYCLE CO., Walthamstow, London.

WORK FOR ALL.
 We give a Nickel-Silver Timekeeper, or useful Umbrella (suitable for Lady or Gent.), or a Rolled Gold Ring, FREE to any person selling 48 Penny Pictorial Postcards within 21 days. You can sell them in an hour. Send name and address (postcard will do).—**BRITISH FINE ART CO., 115, Strand, London, W.C.**



A GENUINE LEVER SIMULATION GOLD WATCH FREE FOR SKILL

3 15 18 11 8 21 12 12

Each of the above spells the name of a great seaport in the United Kingdom. We have used figures instead of letters; letter A being No. 1, B No. 2, C No. 3, and so on.

SEND NO MONEY.
 Competitors are required to send a 1d. stamp and their solution on a sheet of paper, with their full name and address clearly written underneath (all who fail to do this will be promptly disqualified). We will send a beautiful simulation Gold Watch (good timekeeper) to every lady and gentleman who sends a correct solution to this puzzle, and complies with our one condition. IT COSTS YOU NOTHING TO TRY.
F. R. IRONMONGER CO. (Dept. 25), Station Road, ILKESTON.

Applications with regard to advertisement spaces in this paper should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.