

# 'THE TERRIBLE THREE'S TOUR!'

The

# GEM

# 1<sup>d</sup>

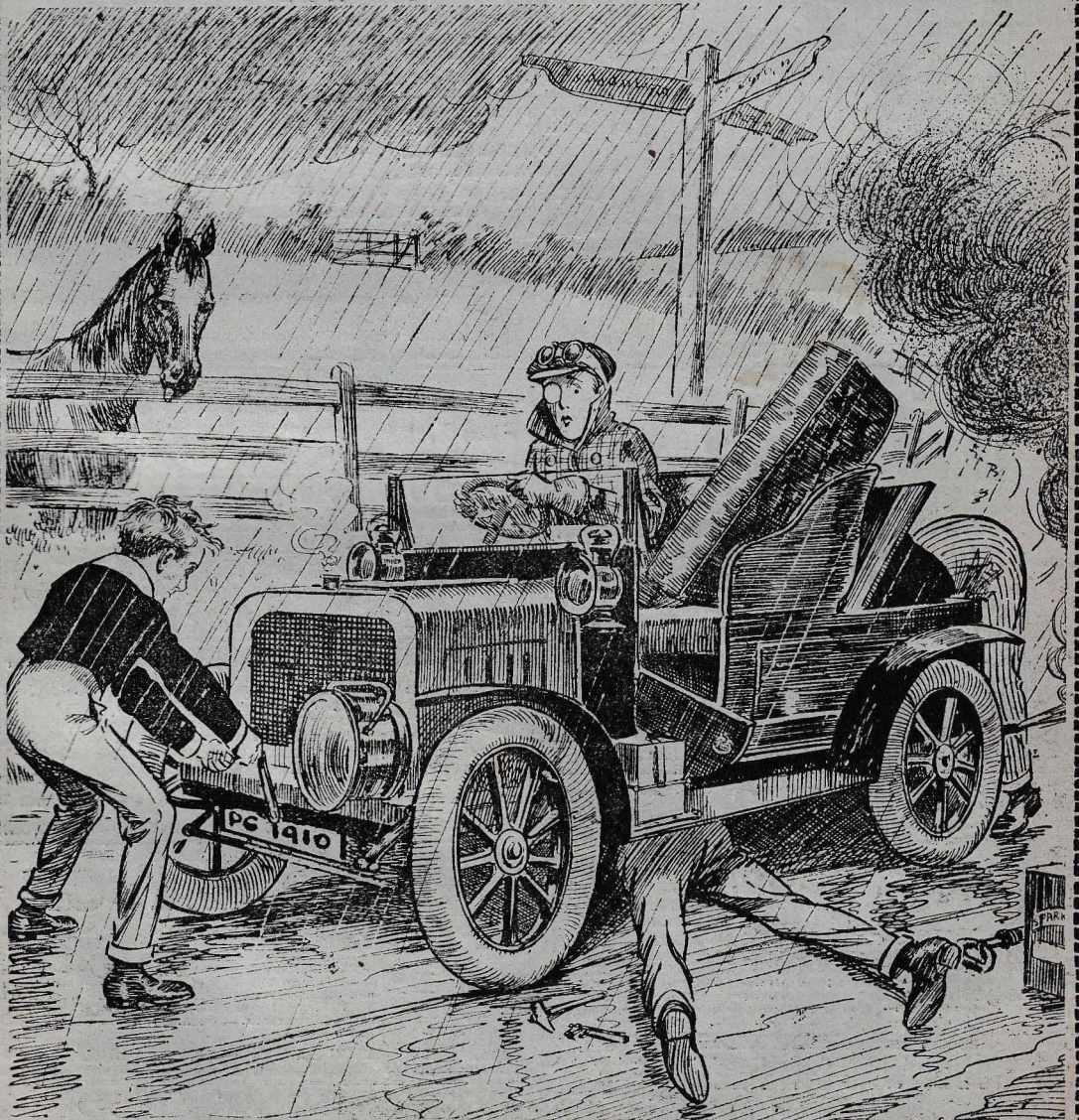
LIBRARY NO. 105.

VOL. 4.

Grand Long  
Complete  
Tale.

## *A Tale of the Terrible Three.*

by  
MARTIN  
Clifford.



## MOTORING AT ST. JIM'S!

# £760 CASH PRIZES FREE

EVERY DAY 40 READERS OF THIS PAPER RECEIVE £1.  
SEND NOW! IT COSTS YOU NOTHING TO TRY.  
SEND NO MONEY.

## 1st PRIZE.

Every morning to the first 40 readers of this paper who send for our Special Bargain List we will give absolutely free a sovereign. We mean 20s. sterling—20s. in money.

**CONSOLATION PRIZES.**—To every person after the first 40 we will send a handsome 18-ct. Gold-finished Brooch set with lovely gems, or a very handsome Fountain Pen. The only condition we make is that if you win a First Prize you must purchase goods from our Special Bargain List to the value of 4/3 or upwards, or if you win a consolation prize you must give away three of our Lists to your friends.

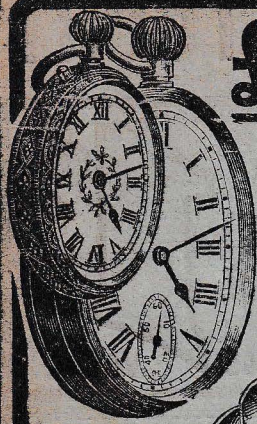
We are also giving away quite free 12 Ladies' and Gents' High-Grade Bicycles, particulars of which will be sent with price list. Our object in giving away these Prizes is to induce people to mention us to their friends and so obtain a large number of new customers quickly.

**REMEMBER!** You are sure to win a cash or consolation prize in return for 1d. expended in postage. Should any dispute arise, our decision must be accepted as final. Anyone sending more than one application will be disqualified. Bargains from 1s. to £20.



We Supply

- ACCORDEONS, 6/3
  - WATCHES, 4/3
  - SILVER WATCHES, 7/6
  - PHONOGRAPHS, 7/3
  - GOLD RINGS, 4/3
  - FUR SETS, 11/6
  - TEAPOTS, 8/6
  - ROLLER SKATES, 9/6
  - BOOTS, 8/6
  - WEDDING RINGS, 8/3
  - CRUETS, 8/6
  - FIELD GLASSES, 7/9
  - TROUSERS, 6/6
  - UMBRELLAS, 8/6
  - CINEMATOPHGRAPHS, 6/9
- etc., etc., etc.



CASH PRIZES. WRITE NOW.



THE WELLINGTON WHOLESALE SUPPLY CO., LTD.  
(Dept. 9), 9, Linden Arcade,  
High Road, Chiswick, London, W.

Cut Out & Send this

### PRIZE COUPON

or send a postcard

TO THE WELLINGTON WHOLESALE SUPPLY Co., Ltd.  
(Dept. 9), 9, Linden Arcade, High Road, Chiswick, London, W.

DEAR SIRS,—Please send me your wonderful Bargain List in accordance with your Special Offer mentioned above.

Name .....

Address .....

## FRETWORK

Send us three penny stamps, and we will, as an advertisement, send you a SHILLING PARCEL of our novel Art Fretwork Designs, including a 6d. book of 13 dainty small designs, and two 3d. sheets of large designs. Address: Secretary, NATIONAL FRETWORKERS' ASSOCIATION, 63, Farringdon Street, London.

**TEN DAYS' FREE TRIAL**  
PACKED FREE. CARRIAGE PAID.  
**MEAD Coventry Flyers**  
Warranted Fifteen Years. Puncture-Proof or Danlop Tyres; Coasters, Speed Gears; Latest Improvements, &c.  
From **£2. 15s.** CASH OR EASY PAYMENTS.  
500 Shop-fitted and Second-hand Cycles from 15/-  
Write for Free Art Catalogue and Special Offer on Sample Machine. Agents wanted at once.  
**MEAD CYCLE CO., Dept. 103B**  
11, Paradise Street, LIVERPOOL.

## 6d. DEPOSIT

This Handsome Phonograph, with large Flower Horn and Two Records, complete, will be sent to any address on receipt of 6d. DEPOSIT and upon payment of the last of 13 weekly instalments of 6d. Two 1/- Records are given free. Send for Price List of Latest Models.—**The British Mfg. Co., P 24, Great Yarmouth.**

**VENTRILOQUISM.** Anyone can learn this Wonderful, Laughable Art. Failure impossible with this book, containing over 20 pages of easy instructions and amusing dialogues. Post free. 6d.; gift book included free. Thousands delighted. "Hypnotism" 1/2.—**G. WILKES & CO., Stockton, Rugby.**

## A REAL LEVER SIMULATION GOLD WATCH FREE

The four lines of letters in this square stand for two boys' and two girls' names. We guarantee to send you **Absolutely Free** one of our famous simulation 18-ct. Gold Watches (ladies' or gents') if you send us the correct names; but you must comply with our condition; and promise to show the Watch to your friends, as we wish to advertise our goods. It costs you nothing to try, so send at once. A postcard will do.—**THE LONDON GENERAL SUPPLY ASSOCIATION (Dept. A), 72, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**


G	J	K	A
E	T	R	B
T	K	E	A
S	O	R	E

## BLUSHING.

**FREE.** to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to my postago to Mr. D. TEMPLE Specialist, 8, Blenheim Street, Bond Street, London, W.

**IF YOU WANT Good Cheap Photographic Material or Cameras, send postcard for Samples and Catalogue FREE.—Works: JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL.**

**CURE PIMPLES**  
Buckheads, Bitches, Sores, Eruptions, Spots, &c which make you ashamed of your face & injure your prospects in life. **Dr. ROSE'S FACE PERLES** do this. Send 6d. p.o. for Health Guide & Trial Gift Box.  
**Free**



## SOLID GOLD WATCHES FREE. 12 CARDS WIN A PRIZE.

To advertise our grand new series of Pictorial Postcards, which include real glossy gelatine Cards, best glossy Comics, Love Scenes, etc. (no rubbish), we will give to any person selling or using same at One Penny each a grand free present as per our list. Same includes real Gold Watches, Silverine Watches, etc., Melodions, Concertinas, Harps, and other Musical Instruments, Ladies' and Gents' Jewellery of all kinds, Cutlery, Toys, Cinematographs, Roller Skates, etc. We give you a present even if you can sell no cards at all. Send a postcard at once with your full name and address. **SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU.**  
**THE CARD CO. (70 Desk), WILLESDEN JUNCTION, LONDON.**

**A Real Simulation**  
**GOLD WATCH FREE.** In this puzzle you see three lines of letters. These have to be so arranged that each line spells a Girl's Christian name. A MAGNIFICENT WATCH, Lady's or Gent's (guaranteed 5 years), will be sent free of charge to readers of this paper who solve this puzzle and conform to our condition. IT COSTS YOU NOTHING TO TRY. Send your answer, together with stamp, that we may send you result. All failing to do this will be disqualified. **SEND NOW.**  
**"BARGAIN" WATCH CO. (6 Dept.), 39, Cornwallis Rd., London, N.**

## DON'T READ THIS

unless you want to win a real simulation GOLD WATCH (guaranteed five years). All sending us the correct number of squares in this puzzle (count all squares, whether lines cross or not) will receive FREE a genuine Watch, as above, provided the condition which we send is complied with, and that a stamp be enclosed with answer for result. We require the Watch to be shown to friends to advertise our goods.—**THE PREMIER WATCH CO., Dept. G, 37, Cheapside, London.**

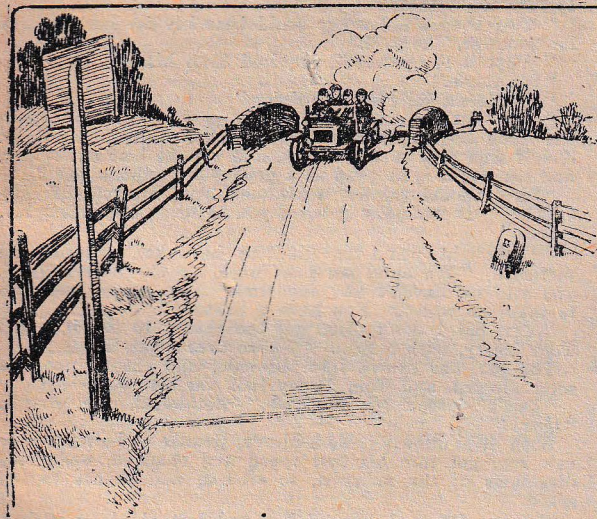


EVERY THURSDAY

The **GEM** LIBRARY

COMPLETE STORIES

FOR ALL AND EVERY STORY A GEM!



# THE TERRIBLE THREE'S TOUR.

*A Splendid Long Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.*

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

A Surprise for Tom Merry.

"**A** ALLO!"

"What's that?"

"Funny!"

Three several exclamations broke from Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners, and like one the Terrible Three rose and went to their study window.

"My eye!"

"Isn't she a little beauty!"

"Ripping!"

"Like a new pin!"

"Look at her bonnet!"

"And her hood!"

"Just suit us down to the ground!"

Tom Merry opened the window overlooking the quad., and the three juniors leaned out and peered down eagerly at the object of their admiration.

"There's old Figgy and his crowd coming across!" exclaimed Manners.

"Yes, and Blake & Co., too," added Monty Lowther. "Look at Jack Blake trying to appear unconcerned. It's as much as he can do to keep from running."

"Figgy'll get there first!" shouted Lowther. "His long legs don't look as if they were moving very fast, but he does cover the ground. I wonder who she belongs to? She is a little beauty, and no mistake!"

"Rather!" commented Manners enthusiastically. "What?"

Tom Merry grunted. His sunny face was rather overclouded, but he soon recovered his good spirits.

"I don't envy the lucky beggar she belongs to," he said, "but, my word, if she belonged to us!"

Manners and Monty Lowther grinned appreciatively. Words were useless, and the three leaned further over the window-sill.

The scene in the quad. below was an animated one. In the centre of a ring of juniors, mostly Third-Formers, stood a natty little, dark red motor-car.

She vibrated gently, with her engine going at quarter speed, and the afternoon sun glistened on nickel-plated fittings and lamps.

The juniors were filled with admiration, and Curly Gibson,

of the Third, hung round the side of the hooter, eyeing it with longing eyes and itching fingers. He would have given his best top to press the tempting, black rubber bulb; but he was an inmate of St. Jim's, and if mischief-loving, was not ill-mannered.

A young man clad in a leather coat occupied the driver's seat, and he glanced at the crowd of juniors with a smile. His eyes settled on a freckled, faced Third-Former.

"This is St. James's College?" he inquired.

Wally D'Arcy looked surprised. It had not occurred to him that there existed some benighted individuals who had never heard of the old college. But his hesitation was only momentary.

"Yes, this is St. Jim's. Do you wish to see the Head—Dr. Holmes? He's away."

The young man in the leather coat shook his head.

"Well, no, not exactly," he said. "I wish to see Master Merry."

"Tom Merry!"

Jack Blake, who was just behind D'Arcy minor, heard the name, turned quickly, and looked up at the Terrible Three's study window.

The rest of the juniors and the new arrival did likewise, and the three chums looked down in astonishment at the sea of upturned faces.

"What the dickens is the matter with them?" muttered Manners. "Hi! D'you want me, Jack Blake?"

"No, not you, old son!" shouted the leader of Study No. 6. "This gentleman is inquiring for Tom Merry."

"Eh? What?"

"Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry's head promptly disappeared, and half a second later the open window was left empty.

When the three came rushing down the steps, the motorist drew an envelope from his pocket.

"Buck up, Tom Merry!" cried Jack Blake, little aware of how near the truth he was. "Here's your new motor-car just arrived!"

A curious smile played round the corners of the stranger's mouth as he stepped from the car and handed the envelope to the chief of the Terrible Three.

The group of juniors were as still as mice.

A feeling of excitement was in the air.

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

Tom Merry took the envelope and looked at the motorist inquiringly.

The young man seemed to enjoy the junior's surprise. "I think I should open the letter," he said, after a long pause. "That will explain matters."

"Hurry up, for goodness' sake!" muttered Monty Lowther, as Tom Merry turned over the sealed envelope slowly in his hand. "Open it, fathead!"

"This is some giddy jape!" whispered Tom Merry. "Anyhow, here goes!"

The sound of the envelope being torn was distinctly audible to all in the dead silence.

Monty Lowther and Manners leaned forward eagerly as their chum drew out the letter.

Tom Merry glanced quickly at the few lines of writing. A bright flush of colour spread over his face. His hand dropped to his side, and he gazed at the smiling motorist in blank amazement.

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Trial Trip.

"My aunt!" shouted Jack Blake. "What's the matter with you, Tom Merry? Stuck dumb, or what?"

"No, it's my uncle, not aunt," replied Tom Merry.

"Your uncle? What d'you mean?" cried Manners.

"Look and see!"

Tom Merry gave the letter to his chums. They seized it eagerly.

Monty Lowther thumped Tom Merry on the back. Manners gave a howl of delight.

"It's his!" he shouted.

"Who's?" demanded a chorus of voices.

"Tom Merry's!"

"What!"

"Fact! His uncle in America has sent it. Hooray!"

"Hip-pip-hooray!"

"Bravo!"

"Good old Tom Merry!"

The assembly of juniors broke into wild cheers, and nearly everyone insisted on shaking hands with the lucky junior.

In his excitement Figgins seized the motorist's hand, and pump-handled vigorously.

At last the excitement died down a little, and there was a chance for everyone to examine the little car in detail.

By this time, however, nearly all the members of both the School House and the New House had assembled in the quad.

Juniors and even some of the lordly Sixth stood ten and twenty deep round the hero of the hour and the new motor.

Those in the front rank were pressed close up against the car, and late arrivals shouted loud inquiries as to what was up.

The young man who had brought the car turned to Tom Merry.

"I think, perhaps, it would be as well if we went for a little run. We shall get swamped otherwise. Can you get off?"

"Oh, yes; it's a half!"

"Well, jump in, then."

Tom Merry hung back for a moment.

"All right!" exclaimed Manners and Monty Lowther in unison. "Go on. You can take us for a run another time."

"No need to wait!" exclaimed the motorist, quick to seize the reason for Tom Merry's unwillingness. "We can squeeze three on the seat, and another on the step. By the way, my name is Evans."

"This is Monty Lowther, and this Manners," said Tom Merry promptly.

Then, nothing loth, the juniors climbed in after the driver, and it was not such a tight fit after all.

Tom Merry was seated next to the motorist, and he eyed the manipulation of the two little levers under the steering-wheel with interest.

It was a British made car, and his experience of motor-engines had been confined to Lord Eastwood's big 40 h.p., which was an imported car.

The driver pressed a pedal with his left foot, and the juniors in front of the bonnet drew back as the engine accelerated.

"Ready?"

"Right!"

The driver sounded his hooter, and the little car glided forward through the lane made by the juniors. Out into the centre of the quad, and then in a half circle, towards the big gates.

"See you later, Jack Blake!" shouted Tom Merry, as they swept past.

"Right-ho!" cried the leader of Study No. 6. "We can't all come at once. So long!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

NEW STORY BOOK

THE EMPIRE LIBRARY.

On Sale: TUESDAY, FEB. 15th.

Taggles, the school porter, came out from the lodge as the car passed into the road, and he grunted disagreeably as Manners waved his hand jauntily.

"Ta-ta, Taggy!"

"Ugh!" growled the porter. "Young himp! If I was the 'Ead I'd make 'em work halves and hall. I'd—"

What Taggles would have done in such an unlikely event is lost for ever, for he vanished into his cottage, and communed in privacy.

From the college the little red car sped along the Rylcombe road, and the first two or three miles were covered in silence.

At the fourth mile Manners uttered an exclamation of pleasure.

They had just topped a stiffish hill on top speed, and despite the extra load she had skimmed the road like a bird.

"She's a stunner!"

The driver nodded and smiled as he shut down the throttle to take the descent.

"Yes; there's not many could beat her for her size and horse-power," he said.

"What is the power?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Six horse."

"She seems jolly easy to drive."

"Yes; but you'll find that simple as she is you can't take the same liberties that you can with a high-powered car. You'll soon pick it up, though, and get the best out of her, and her worst is as good as a good many other's best."

"So I should think!" exclaimed Tom Merry enthusiastically. "It was jolly good of you to bring her down, Mr. Evans."

"I thought you'd be glad to have her," replied the motorist. "We only had your uncle's cable yesterday, so, you see, we haven't lost any time. Now, would you like to take the wheel? You have a licence?"

"Yes, but I don't often get the chance to use it," said Tom Merry, with a grin. "Shove over a bit, Monty."

The car was drawn into the side, and the change was soon effected, and Tom Merry took the steering-wheel.

"Don't forget your clutch," cautioned the driver. "Good!"

With little difficulty, Tom Merry, strange as he was to the new car, got into his first speed and changed, under the directions of the motorist, to second, and thence to top speed.

The car behaved beautifully, and buzzed along with a rhythmic purring of her engine.

Mile after mile was covered, and St. Jim's College receded further and further behind the fascinated trio.

At last Mr. Evans looked at his watch.

"Well, I don't know about you three," he said; "but I have to get back to town, you know, and I believe the trains are not very frequent."

"We'll turn back at once!" cried Tom Merry. "By jingo, we've come over thirty miles, and it's only four o'clock now!"

Monty Lowther gave a low whistle.

"Close on eighteen in the hour Tom Merry, and that's not allowing for the ten-mile limit when we came through the villages."

Tom Merry laughed gaily.

"At that rate," he said, "we've got time to get some tea. There's a train at six-thirty, Mr. Evans; will that do?"

This proposal was readily agreed to, and Tom Merry brought his car to a standstill close to a little farmhouse.

"Looks a likely place," said Manners. "I'll go and see."

The Fourth-Former ran up the path and tapped at the door.

A rosy-cheeked country woman appeared in the entrance, and her greeting was one of true, country welcome.

Perhaps Manners' frank face had something to do with it, but that is neither here nor there.

He returned triumphant.

"Come on!" he cried, as he reached the gate. "Tea will be ready in two ticks. It's a cosy little place, and I'm hungry!"

"So am I!" echoed Monty Lowther.

"And so am I," added Mr. Evans. "Better shut off your engine, Merry. It's only a waste of petrol to keep her running."

A final gentle cough, and the engine stopped. Then, with many a backward glance, the Terrible Three followed the motorist into the farmhouse.

Truly, Manners had been correct in his description, and the tea-table, already laid, looked very inviting set, as it was, in the old oak panelled parlour.

A bright fire was burning in the big, open grate, and it was a merry party that sat down to tea and hot toast.



"Jolly hard luck I call this," growled Manners. "I think we'd better call out the rest of the Form when we get back and bring the car home in bits!"

"Our luck is in to-day and no mistake!" exclaimed Manners, as he heaved a sigh of content.

During the meal, the talk was all about motors, and the three made the better acquaintance of their new friend, and as he looked at the happy young faces he did not regret the impulse that had led him to leave his duties in town, and bring the car down himself.

Young as he was, Mr. Evans was the head manager of one of the biggest firms in London, but he was not old enough to have forgotten his own schooldays, and it was with a feeling of regret that he settled their modest score and gave the word to return.

"This is my treat!" he cried, as Tom Merry put his hand in his pocket. "No; I insist! One of these days I'll come down to St. Jiu's; you can stand me a feed in your study."

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Manners. "We'll raid old Taggy's shop, and have a record bust-up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The junior's blunt description raised a general laugh, and with cordial good-bye's to their obliging hostess, the party broke up.

Tom Merry ran to start the engine.

He gave the starting-handle a dozen vigorous turns.

The car remained as still as a block of wood.

Mr. Evans thoughtfully attended to the petrol and switch. Then one turn of the handle did the trick.

"It's just as well, Merry," observed Mr. Evans drily, as he got in, "to turn on your petrol and switch first, or else I'm afraid you'd have some difficulty in starting without the aid of a horse."

Tom Merry blushed and frowned at Monty Lowther's grinning face.

Then they started on the return journey.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Terrible Three are Interrupted.

**T**OOT!"

An hour later the little red car turned the bend into Rylcombe village. There was plenty of time to get to the station, but, nevertheless, Tom Merry was looking rather worried.

He slowed down to the ten-mile limit with a thoughtful expression on his face.

A difficulty had occurred.

**NEXT  
THURSDAY;**

**"HONOUR BRIGHT."**

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

By  
**MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

The others were talking animatedly, and for the time being did not notice his distraction.

Suddenly Monty Lowther stopped in the middle of a sentence, and eyed his chief intently.

"Hallo! What's wrong, Tom Merry?"

"Where are we going to put her?" blurted the chief of the Terrible Three.

"Put her?"

"Yes, of course. We can't leave a car like this in the quad. all night."

"Jingo, I'd never thought of that!" said Manners.

"Have to get Taggy to let you put it in the Head's coach-house," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Myes! I can see Taggles doing that," replied Tom Merry grimly. "He's the nice, obliging sort of chap that would. Besides, the Head's away."

"P'raps he'll be back when we return," said Manners hopefully. "In any case, you'll have to see him. My eye—"

Manners stopped abruptly, and the Terrible Three looked at one another in silence.

Their unspoken thought was—would the Head let them keep the car?

The very idea was enough, and Manners and Monty Lowther looked as grave as their chief.

Mr. Evans sized up the situation.

"Look here," he said; "there's a garage down there. We gassed it a minute ago. Why not leave the car there until the morning—until you have seen your head-master—eh?"

"Splendid!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "But what about you? It's some distance to the station."

"Oh, I shall be all right! A walk will do me good. Besides, I want to stretch my legs. Turn round here, and I'll go back with you to the shop and see that everything's all right."

Tom Merry obeyed gratefully enough.

A car weighing something over half a ton was not a thing for a schoolboy to be stranded with, and in the absence of Dr. Holmes all sorts of difficulties might crop up.

The man at the little country cycle-shop—the garage consisted of a disused stable—touched his cap as he recognised the three juniors, and Mr. Evans soon made arrangements for the night's lodging for the car, and backed her safely in.

It was dusk when all had been made snug, and he shook hands with the three juniors.

"Good-bye!" he said. "I'm glad I came down."

"So are we!" cried the Terrible Three, heartily and with one accord. "Good-bye, sir!"

"And don't forget to come to tea with us," added Manners.

"I won't," replied Mr. Evans, with a laugh. "I'll come right enough. Good-bye for the present!"

The genial motorist strode away in the gloom, and the Terrible Three made for the footpath across the fields to St. Jim's.

"My! What a day it's been," said Manners, as they crossed the stile, and the lights of St. Jim's shone in the distance. "Sha'n't we have some ripping times!"

"My word, yes!" agreed Monty Lowther. "Tom Merry will forget all about his old chums now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry burst into a happy laugh.

"Somebody's looking for a thick ear," he said. "Come on; I'll race you to the gates!"

Manners and Monty Lowther pelted after their chief.

Across the last field, down the lane they sprinted, turning into the gates of St. Jim's in a bunch.

"Wow!"

"My hat!"

"What the dickens!"

At the precise moment when the Terrible Three whisked round the corner in the dark, Jack Blake and Digby were coming full speed in the opposite direction.

There was a collision.

Jack Blake gave a yell of surprise, and a howl of pain went up on the part of Digby, who received the top of his leader's head in his chest.

The three came down with a bump, and Manners and Monty Lowther sprawled over the squirming mass of legs and arms.

"Who is it?" yelled Jack Blake, pushing the toe of a boot out of his mouth. "Let me gerrup! I'll scrag—I'll

Wow!"

Jack Blake yelled again as a hand grabbed him by the ear.

"Leggo! Wow!"

"Oh, it's you, is it!" said Digby's voice. "I made sure it was Tom Merry. They've come back!"

"Come back!" snorted Jack Blake. "So I should think. Hallo! Where's the car? You haven't had a smash-up already, have you?"

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 105.

The absence of the car took the member of Study 6's attention from his bruised and ruffled condition.

Three figures vanished into the night, and the only reply Jack Blake received was the patter of feet, fast growing fainter in the distance.

"The rotters!" howled Jack Blake. "The—the howling rotters! Come on, Dig!"

Digby came along promptly, but the pair might just as well have tried to chase the wind.

When they arrived in sight of the college entrance-hall there was not a sign of the Terrible Three.

The light from the hall streamed out on a pair of angry, flushed faces.

"Why didn't you collar them?" grunted Digby.

"Collar them!" sniffed Jack Blake. "I like that. Why didn't you, instead of hanging on to my ear like that?"

Digby ignored this pointed remark.

"I suppose it was Tom Merry & Co.!" he said meekly, as they mounted the steps.

"Of course it was!" snapped Jack Blake.

"But the car!"

"Oh, blow the car! It couldn't have been anyone else; all the others are in, including Gussy. I'm going to their study."

Simmering with a desire for vengeance, Jack Blake and Digby marched up the stairs and down the corridor.

Without ceremony, they bounced into the Terrible Three's study.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Monty Lowther were busily writing.

Jack Blake gasped.

Tom Merry looked up with a genial smile.

"Come in, you chaps—don't knock. Take a chair."

"Take my hat!" shouted Jack Blake. "What d'you mean by biffing into us like that?"

"Yes, what d'you mean by it?" howled Digby.

"Biff!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laying down his pen and gazing at Jack Blake with an air of innocent surprise.

"Biff!"

"Yes, biff!" snapped Jack Blake.

"Biff!" echoed Digby, turning up his cuff. "B-i-f-f!"

"'Biff,' did you say?" inquired Manners. "I say, Monty, do you think they're at all dangerous?"

Monty Lowther picked up a large bottle of ink, and eyed it reflectively.

"Really, I don't know," he said slowly. "Perhaps a little of this applied to the nape of Digby's neck might revive him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry roared with laughter at the expression on the indignant Digby's face.

"Let us try peaceful methods first," he said. "Suppose you sit on Blake's head, for a start?"

"Look here!" shouted Jack Blake, as a doubt crossed his mind. "Did you, or did you not biff into us?"

"Not!" said Tom Merry promptly.

The leader of Study No. 6 gazed at Digby in despair.

The Terrible Three were not in the habit of telling lies, and yet there was a suspicious grin on Tom Merry's face.

Suddenly Digby gave a jump.

"What's that!" he shouted excitedly, pointing an accusing finger at Manners' collar.

"That!" replied the latter, looking down. "That! Oh, very likely that's where you planted your clumsy hoof!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

The Terrible Three roared with laughter.

Jack Blake turned a dusky red.

"But—but—" he stammered.

"Yes?"

"You said you didn't biff into us!"

"Exactly," said Tom Merry quickly. "A slight mistake on your part."

"What!"

"From our point of view," exclaimed Tom Merry, "you biffed into us—not us you. See?"

"Well, I'm blessed!"

Jack Blake first looked angry, then the humour of the situation struck him, and he burst out laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Digby joined a little later, and peace was restored.

"I say, though," exclaimed the leader of Study No. 6, "how did you get on—have a smash-up, or what? Where's the car?"

"One thing at a time," replied Tom Merry. "We haven't had a smash-up 'or what,' as you call it, and the car is at the village. We found we could not make room for it in the study."

"Oh, you're too funny for words! What did you leave it in the village for?"

"Couldn't help it."

"You see," said Manners, with an air of resigned patience, "we decided that the Head might object to having his carriage turned out of the coachhouse in his absence, and we did not think it advisable to—"

"Oh, stop that!" cried Jack Blake. "So you've left her in the village?"

"You've guessed it first go!" said Tom Merry. "We have left the car in the charge of a responsible person at Rylcombe village until such time as we can acquaint the Head of her arrival and make due and proper provision for her keep—"

"Are you going to stop fooling?" interrupted Jack Blake. "Tell us about the run, and stop rotting!"

"Spiffing!" said Monty Lowther laconically.

"Ripping!" agreed Manners.

"Fine!" said Tom Merry.

"Is that all you have to say?" said Jack Blake sarcastically.

"Oh, no! Beautiful!"

"Scrumptious!"

"Splendiferous!"

"Is that better?" inquired Tom Merry. "Does that convey to you a correct idea of the state of affairs?"

Jack Blake sniffed and turned to go.

"Come on, Dig! There's something the matter with these three. I'm off!"

"Your rocker?" inquired Manners, opening the door politely.

Jack Blake and Digby glared, but as they passed out the Terrible Three were very close together, so warfare was prevented.

"We had them beautifully that time!" said Tom Merry, with a grin, as the door closed.

"Quite right too!" commented Monty Lowther. "We didn't biff into them any more than they did into us! Hallo! Back again?"

The study door had opened gently, but it was not Jack Blake! A boy in spectacles, with a large and bumpy forehead peered in.

It was Herbert Skimpole, the amateur Socialist.

"Hallo, Skimmy!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Good-evening!" said the amateur Socialist politely. "I came to see—"

"Yes? What?"

"I hear you have recently acquired a motor-car. I am sorry to say I was unable to come down this afternoon, but I was busy with some work for Mr. Linton, and—"

Manners coughed loudly.

"Sorry to hear you were busy," exclaimed Tom Merry, "but so are we just at present. We have some pressing work to do for Mr. Railton."

"Dear me, that's a great pity!" exclaimed Skimpole. "I wanted to talk to you. I thought possibly that I might be of some assistance to you. As a Socialist—"

"What! You don't mean to say you're going to help with our impots?" cried Manners. "Good for you! That's what I call true Socialism!"

Skimpole took off his large glasses, and wiped them carefully.

He blinked for a moment at the Terrible Three.

"It was not that quite," he said. "I came to explain to you the principle of petrol motors. I have never driven a car myself," he went on modestly, "but I have read a great number of books on the subject, and as I have a theoretical grasp of all the intricacies of a motor-car, I can explain to you all about your new car."

"That's very kind of you, Skimmy!" said Tom Merry gravely.

"Awfully—awfully!" said Manners.

Skimpole bowed.

"I shall be ready to-morrow morning at seven," he said.

"What!"

"I shall be ready at seven."

"What for?"

"To demonstrate to you the principles of—"

"But we are going for a run!" said Tom Merry quickly.

Skimpole beamed. He was an unsophisticated youth.

"All the better, Tom Merry. While we are driving along I shall be able to demonstrate the working of the cylinder. I believe you can drive, but it is a purely mechanical action on your part. In reality, you are all quite ignorant of—"

"Must do something to stop him," muttered Manners, as he let the poker fall on the fender with a clatter. "He's like the little brook!"

"As I was saying," went on Skimpole, "you do not understand these matters thoroughly, but with me by your side, everything will be made clear."

Tom Merry stared at the amateur Socialist in silence.

"Well, of all the cheek!" he gasped at last.

"I beg your pardon?"

Tom Merry shook his head hopelessly.

Manners and Monty Lowther stepped forward as one. Gently, but firmly, they took Skimpole by his skinny shoulders, and propelled him towards the door.

The amateur Socialist struggled feebly, but although he wriggled, first one foot and then the other went waveringly towards the passage.

"I—I haven't finished! I—"

"Yes, you have," said Manners soothingly. "You have—I can assure you you have."

Tom Merry grinned, and was obliging enough to open the study door.

The amateur Socialist found himself on the mat. He turned and surveyed the stout oaken door, and then, with a ponderous frown on his brow, drifted down the corridor.

"Another madman got rid of!" cried Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha! He's a well-meaning little worm, but he wants a gag!"

Tap!

"Who's that?" shouted Tom Merry. "You locked the door, didn't you, Monty?"

Monty Lowther shook his head.

"No," he replied in a whisper, "you know I didn't. The key's been missing since last Saturday."

Then Tom Merry groaned, and made a dart for a chair.

He was too late! The study door had opened.

The swell of St. Jim's entered.

"My congwatulations, deah boy!" he said. "I knocked at the doah, but weceivin' no wepely, I—"

"We're awfully busy, Gussy!" interrupted Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle with his best air of dignity.

"I offah you my congwats, Tom Mewwy, and I considah youah weception as unbefittin' that of one gentleman to another!"

"Rats!" muttered Manners.

"Did you speak, Mannahs?" said the swell of St. Jim's, turning sharply. "Did I hear you say 'Wats'?"

Manners grinned cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus advanced threateningly.

"Unless you apologise, I shall administah a feahful thwashin'!"

Tom Merry stepped forward hastily.

The swell of St. Jim's was a different thing to Skimpole, and the study table was already rocky on two of its legs.

"Consider the apology made, Gussy," he cried.

"Vewy well, I accept," said Arthur Augustus. "I accept by pwoxy."

"And thanks for your congratulations," added Tom Merry.

The swell of St. Jim's bowed, but made no move to go. Indeed, he seated himself in the armchair, and settled himself comfortably.

The Terrible Three exchanged a look of hopeless despair. Tom Merry sat down at the table and took up his pen.

Arthur Augustus crossed his legs and surveyed the tip of his patent boot with a complacent air.

For a while there was silence.

"Undah the circs., deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's at last, "I shall be pleased to take you undah my wing, an' put you up to any winkles. A motah wequiahs a lot of bwain powah to compwehend."

Manners stuffed his handkerchief in his mouth.

Monty Lowther poked the fire vigorously.

Tom Merry looked anything but impressed.

Arthur Augustus waited until Lowther had finished with the poker, and then, placing the tips of his fingers together, leaned back in his chair, and regarded the chief of the Terrible Three with an expression of inquiry on his aristocratic face.

"Well?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

The swell of St. Jim's sat bolt upright.

"You don't seem vewy much impressed," he observed.

"I considah you fail to appreciate the value of my remarks. But we will go for a wide to-mowwow befoah bwakfast, and you will be able to acquiah a gwreat deal of infoahmation frow the mannah of my dwivin'."

Arthur Augustus paused expectantly.

"You're a jolly good driver," said Tom Merry.

Manners and Monty Lowther started.

The swell of St. Jim's looked gratified.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And you can handle a car like one o'clock."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And you know all about motor-cars."

"Oh, yaas!"

"Everything!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But there's one thing you can't do."

The swell of St. Jim's opened his mouth, but did not speak.

The rest of the Co. behind his chair grinned.

"Bai Jove, an' pway what is that, deah boy?"

"You can't drive my car," said Tom Merry decisively.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Don't be so wedic., Tom Mewwy!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. "Of course I can dwive youah cah!"

"No, you cannot."  
 Manners and Lowther chuckled with glee.  
 "Do I compwhend you to say that I am incapabile of dwivin' youah motah?"

"You've hit it."  
 "But I wefuse to tolewate so uttably wediculous a wemark."

"All right, then!"  
 "Do you sewiously mean that, Tom Mewwy? Why, I can dwive anythin'."

"I dessay."  
 Arthur Augustus looked puzzled.  
 "But you can't drive mine," went on Tom Merry.  
 "Why?"

At last the direct question had come. There was a twinkle in Tom Merry's eye.

"Because I sha'n't let you," he said promptly. "I'm not going to run the risk. If you have any advice to give," he added blandly, "kindly write it down and—and post it. The matter will receive my earliest attention."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Wottahs!"

The swell of St. Jim's bounced to his feet, and then changed his mind. He had not finished yet, which was unfortunate for him, for when he sat down again the chair was no longer there.

He reached the floor with a bump that shook the study.  
 "Ow!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners leaned over the back of the chair he had so opportunely but quite innocently removed, and shrieked with laughter.

Arthur Augustus was up in a jiffy, and, gasping for breath, he made a dive for Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther collapsed him low, and the pair rolled on the floor.

"Wottah! Wefuse me!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are wuinig my waistcoat, you outwageous wottah! I shall wefuse to speak to you. I— Wescue!"

Manners sprang to the rescue, and between the pair of them the struggling D'Arcy was rolled clear of the table.

Monty Lowther promptly sat on his legs, and Manners on his neck.

"Wow! Wottah! I shall—"

"The ink-bottle, please, Tom Merry!" said Manners.  
 Tom Merry advanced.

Out of the corner of one eye the swell of St. Jim's saw him coming. He gave a wail of anguish.

"Now, then!" said Tom Merry, in a business-like tone of voice. "Where will you have it?"

The bottle was held at a dangerous angle.

"I w-won't have it. I—I—I wefuse. Wottahs! We—"

"Will you have it in the neck or shut up?" shouted Tom Merry, shaking with laughter.

"I—I we—"

"Will you shut up?"  
 A spot of ink splashed past D'Arcy's nose.

He was silent instantly.

"That's better. Now, will you promise to behave yourself like a little gentleman?"

The captors wriggled with delight.

"I—I we—"

"Will you promise?"

"No; I—"

Another spot of ink descended.

"Yaas," spluttered the swell of St. Jim's, "I pwomise."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you go quietly?"

"No; I— Yaas!"

"Good! Let him go."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Directly Manners and Monty Lowther got up, the swell of St. Jim's, looking anything but his usual self, scrambled to his feet.

He glanced at the Terrible Three indignantly.

"Now," said Tom Merry, wagging a warning forefinger, "don't forget your promise!"

"Allow me!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, opening the study door.

Arthur Augustus gave another glare of unutterable things, gulped, and stalked into the corridor.

He vanished without a word.

## CHAPTER 4.

## Figgins Brings Some News.

TAP!

Not two minutes after the retreat of Arthur Augustus, there came another knock.

Tom Merry looked up impatiently and glanced at the door.

"Why the dickens didn't you put a chair against it, Manners?" he said reproachfully.

"How could I?" cried Manners. "We're sitting on them all."

"Oh!"

Figgins's homely face came round the edge of the door.

"May we come in?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Oh, I suppose so!" grunted Monty Lowther. "This is a sort of instalment plan."

"Yes, come in!" cried Tom Merry. "What is it?"

The three members of the New House, Figgins, Fatty Wynn, and Kerr, trooped into the little study.

There was a look of suppressed excitement on Figgins's face; but as there had been several visitors in that study with suppressed expressions on their countenances, the Terrible Three, although observant of the fact, were not greatly impressed.

Fatty Wynn looked at the table, but as nothing in the eating line appeared thereon, he sank into the armchair with a disconsolate sigh, and shut his eyes. He would have much preferred Tom Merry to have received a big hamper full of good things than a motor-car.

For a moment there was an awkward pause.

There was something to be said, but after the events of the past hour the Terrible Three waited for the visitors to open the ball.

"How do you like your new car?" said Figgins at last.

"Very much," said Tom Merry.

Figgins shuffled his feet uneasily.

"Seen Gussy?" he said at last.

The Terrible Three grinned.

"Yes, we have seen him," replied Tom Merry.

"Come and go," added Manners.

"Did he say anything?" inquired Figgins.

"Yes, he did," exclaimed Monty Lowther promptly.

"He said too much."

"Did he tell you about—?" The long-legged member of the New House blushed. "Did he tell you about—?"

"About what?" cried Tom Merry impatiently.

"About Cousin Ethel?"

"Cousin Ethel! What about her?"

"Tell us quick!"

Fatty Wynn opened his eyes and blinked sleepily.

"She's coming over," said Figgins.

"When?"

"Next Saturday."

"Bravo!"

"We'll take her for a run."

"Just what I thought," said Figgins awkwardly. "I thought I'd let you know."

"Jolly good of you!" cried Tom Merry, quick to understand Figgins's unselfishness. "I dare say we can make room for you. That young rascal Gussy never said a word about it."

Figgins flushed with pleasure.

"Coming, Kerr?"

"We'll take you all for a run," exclaimed Tom Merry. "bit by bit. But you'll have to starve Fatty for a fortnight or so; it's only a six horse-power, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn woke up.

"Finished?" he grunted, heaving himself out of the chair.

"By Jove, I am hungry!"

There was no reply forthcoming to this remark, so he lumbered after Kerr and Figgins.

"Good-night," cried the Terrible Three, "and thanks very much, Figgys, for the news!" added Tom Merry.

"You're a brick!"

The sound of the New House trio's footsteps died away down the passage.

"Now," cried Tom Merry, "no more callers to-night. I'll sit on a box and wedge my chair under the handle. There!"

"Now they can all come!" said Monty Lowther. "Oh dear, I wish I'd finished!"

"So do I," grumbled Manners, with a yawn. "I'm as tired as a—"

Tap!

The Terrible Three made no reply. Their pens scratched away industriously.

Tap!

The Terrible Three made no reply. Their pens scratched away industriously.

Tap!

The Terrible Three made no reply. Their pens scratched away industriously.

Tap!

## ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

NEW STORY BOOK.

THE EMPIRE LIBRARY.

On Sale: TUESDAY, FEB. 15th



The handle of the door was tried.  
 "Can I come in?" inquired a voice.  
 "It's Glyn," said Manners, in a low voice.  
 "Sorry you can't!" shouted Tom Merry. "We're busy!  
 See you in the morning!"  
 "Rats!"  
 "Same to you, and many of 'em!"  
 There was silence again in the corridor, and the three resumed work.  
 Bang!  
 "Who's that?" roared Tom Merry.  
 "Me!"  
 "Who's me?"  
 "Clifton Dane!"  
 "We're busy!"  
 "But I won't keep you a minute. I—"  
 "Not a second, old chap! We're busy!"  
 Clifton Dane departed.  
 For ten minutes the three had an uninterrupted time.  
 Tap!  
 Tom Merry did not reply.  
 Tap, tap!  
 Still no answer.  
 Bang!  
 Crash!  
 "Stop kicking that door!" shouted Tom Merry. "Who is it?"

Somebody coughed.  
 "Who is it?" repeated the chief of the Terrible Three.  
 "Mellish!"  
 "Of all the cheek!" exclaimed Manners.  
 "Scoot!" roared Tom Merry. "We're busy!"  
 Mellish, the sneak of the school, bestowed a vicious kick at the door and ran off.  
 "Little rotter!" grumbled Monty Lowther. "I expect he only came to cadge for a ride in the car."  
 Lowther was not far from wrong, but as Mellish had gone, there was no means of verifying the truth.  
 After this, at irregular intervals, there was a series of taps from Herries, Reilly, and, last of all, from Gore, but they one and all departed unsatisfied.

The Terrible Three had made up their minds to "sport the oak," and they did it thoroughly, as neglected impositions led to detention, and such a state of affairs, with a brand-new motor-car only waiting to be taken out, could not be tolerated for a moment.

At seven-thirty Tom Merry threw down his pen.  
 Manners and Monty Lowther followed suit at seven-forty and forty-five respectively.

"Good!" cried Tom Merry, who had occupied his start in stirring the dying embers to a blaze. "Now for some supper, and then bed!"

"What about the doctor?" inquired Manners.  
 "Oh, yes; I'd forgotten! Better see him to-night and get it over. I think I'll show him uncle's letter. It'll be a good way of breaking the news."

"We'll come with you, if you like," volunteere Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his curly head.  
 "No, thanks!" he said, with a laugh. "I don't expect I shall want holding up, or anything of that kind. I'll fortify the inner man first, though. What have we got?"

Manners made a pilgrimage to the cupboard.  
 Monty Lowther cleared a corner of the table by the simple expedient of pushing the litter of exercise-books pell-mell into a heap.

"Jam!" exclaimed Manners, dumping a three-pound pot of black currant down with a bang.

"Hum! There's not much more than glass there, so far as I can see!" observed Tom Merry.

"Better put a drop of hot water in," suggested Monty Lowther, "and call it a hot drink! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Manners, with his head in the cupboard. "Here's a few biscuits and a paper bag. A mite of cheese and—"

"Well, you can have the mite; I'll have the cheese!" cried Tom Merry. "Anything else?"

"I believe—"  
 Manners paused dramatically.

"What?"  
 "I believe— Yes! There's a tin of pineapple!"

"Hooray!"  
 "And a tin of sardines!"

"Bravo!"  
 Manners brought his treasures forward with the proud air of an Arctic explorer.

"Any bread?" inquired Monty Lowther anxiously.  
 "Bread? Rather!"

Half a loaf was forthcoming from the bottom of the cupboard, and the Terrible Three drew up their chairs.

"Where's the tin-opener?"

Manners darted back to the cupboard and went down on his hands and knees.

He rummaged about for some seconds.  
 "Buck up!" cried Tom Merry.

"Buck up, indeed! That's all very well!" retorted Manners, looking up. "I believe you had it last to open the back of the clock with!"

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"Did I now? Yes; I believe I did, now you come to mention it. It must be on the mantelpiece, then."

A search was made among the various odd-and-ends, but there was no tin-opener.

"Where can it be?"  
 "Another time you'd better tie a bit of string on it and sling it round your neck!" grumbled Manners. "I'm famished!"

"Got a knife, somebody?" inquired Tom Merry suddenly.

"Knife?"  
 "Yes; a pocket-knife!"

"Not if I know it!" declared Manners. "I'll starve rather! I remember what happened before. The beastly thing broke, and—"

"So it did!" interrupted Tom Merry hastily. "Where can that tin-opener be? Have a look in the coal-scuttle!"

Monty Lowther looked. By the simple means of emptying the contents of the scuttle on the hearth.

Manners gave a shout.

"Here it is!" he cried. "Jolly dirty, too!"

"Soon wipe that off!" said Tom Merry. "Here!"

"That's my camera cloth!" howled Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rather your camera cloth! Fancy allowing a little thing like that to stand in the way of two starving fellow-creatures!" declared Tom Merry, with a laugh. "Well, here you are, then! Polish it up with this!"

"That's a bit of my copy for the 'Weekly'!" shouted Manners, grabbing the precious sheet of paper. "Don't be an ass all your life, Tom Merry!"

"Very well, then!" said the latter, with a sigh. "We must find the duster, that's all! You know we can never find it!"

For a wonder, they did; and, what was more surprising, it was a clean one.

After that, things progressed at a rapid rate, and the three sat down to their supper.

"Which shall we start on—fish or fruit?" asked Lowther.

"I don't care!" said Tom Merry. "I'm hungry enough to eat both together!"

"I'm going for this!" declared Manners, helping himself to three chunks of pineapple. "It can't make any odds either way, so far as I can see. Steady with the sardines, Tom Merry; I want some of those!"

"Oh, all right, my child, you shall have some!" cried Tom Merry. "After you with the bread!"

The Terrible Three pegged away in silence.

Sardines, pineapple, and bread disappeared as if by magic.

"That's better!" declared Manners, when the last crumb of bread had gone and the tins were bare. "I feel as fit as a fiddle now!"

"Not half bad!" said Tom Merry, with a laugh. "It's wonderful what you can do when you're hungry. I only hope you don't have the nightmare in the middle of the night and take me for a sardine. Now, don't be personal!"

Manners sniffed.

"There was a tin of pineapple—" he said significantly.

"Yes, and it is not!" cried Tom Merry. "Well, I'm off to find the Head. Where's that letter?"

The chief of the Terrible Three plunged his hands into his pockets. After the sixth try he brought out a crumpled envelope.

"Looks as if it wants dry cleaning and ironing out!" said Lowther, with a grin. "Hadn't you better take the tongs with you? The Head's rather particular about his hands, you know."

"Don't you try to be funny, Monty!" said Tom Merry, smoothing out his letter. "That's not dirty, my son; it's only a little oil!"

"Let's hope you don't find trouble, then!" commented Manners. "So-long, then; we'll cut! See you in the dormi.!"

"Right-ho!"  
 Tom Merry departed. Ten minutes later he entered the dormitory.

The chums were already in bed.

"Well?" demanded Manners, sitting up.

"Well?" echoed Monty Lowther.

"What's the good of a well without any water?" said Tom Merry, sitting down on the side of his bed.

"Oh, rats!"

"What did he say?" demanded Manners.

"Nothing!"

"Not a word!"

"Don't rot!"

"Fact!"

"What d'you mean?"

"What I say."

"We don't want to know what you say!" growled Monty Lowther. "Buck up; I'm cold! What did the Head say?"

"I've told you—not a single word!"

The pair glared at their chief.

Tom Merry grinned cheerfully as he dropped the last boot on the floor with a bump.

"D'you mean to say——" commenced Manners.

"Of course I do! He hasn't come back!"

"Ugh!"

"Fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Night-night, you chaps!" said Tom Merry, a minute later, as he snuggled down between the sheets. "You needn't trouble to rock me to sleep to-night, Manners. Call me early, and we'll go down to the village before brekker!"

The prospect of a trip before breakfast somewhat mollified Manners and Lowther, and their "Good-night!" was almost amiable.

## CHAPTER 5

### A Night Expedition.

"YES, sir!"

Tom Merry woke up with a start. He blinked round the dark dormitory sleepily.

"Funny thing," he muttered. "It must have been the pineapple, but I made sure I heard the Head speaking. My hat!"

"Merry!"

Tom Merry peered at the dormitory door. It was half open, and a dim figure stood in the doorway.

It was the head-master himself!

"Yes, sir?"

"I want you! Don't make a noise!" said Dr. Holmes, in a low voice. "Put on your clothes and come down to my study, please!"

The door closed silently.

"My—my hat!" muttered Tom Merry, as he slid out of bed. "I wonder what he wants?"

Still wondering, he dressed in the dark, and, holding his boots in his hand, crept across the dormitory.

On the mat outside the door he sat down to put them on.

A light glimmered behind him.

He looked up with a start.

Mr. Railton, the House-master, in dressing-gown, and with a bed-room candle in his hand, looked down at him.

"Good, Merry!" he said, in a whisper. "Capital! I think the Head wants you to cycle to Codicote for the doctor."

"The doctor!"

"Yes. Mrs. Holmes has been suddenly taken ill."

Tom Merry finished lacing his boots in record time.

Mr. Railton led the way to the head-master's study. Dr. Holmes was pacing up and down.

"Thank you, Tom Merry. You have lost no time! I want you to cycle over to fetch the doctor. You know the way well?"

"Rather—yes, sir!" replied Tom Merry eagerly. "I can get there and back in under the hour!"

"Ask him to come over at once," went on the head-master. "I fear it is most urgent, and pray be care——"

But Tom Merry had gone.

"A good boy that—a wonderful lad!" said the doctor. "You think he will be all right, Railton? I hardly like——"

"I would trust Tom Merry a good deal further than that, sir," replied the House-master, with a faint smile. "You can be sure he won't fail you."

"Thank you, Railton. No; it is good of you, but nothing can be done until the doctor comes, but I shall be glad if you will rouse the housekeeper."

As the head-master mounted the stairs, a light twinkled for an instant from the darkness without, and rapidly disappeared.

Tom Merry had started.

He was on a mission of urgency, and he pedalled along vigorously.

A mile from the college there was a long, steep hill, and he bent forward and pressed each pedal down with all the strength of his young muscles.

He went up in grand style. Then something happened.

Snap!

His chain had broken!

He jumped off and examined the mischief. The chain was broken in two places. The strain had been too much.

Tom Merry looked about him in despair. He had still more than eight miles to go.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

Flinging the useless machine in the ditch, he started to run. If he had had to crawl it would have been just the same, for he had a good dash of the bulldog breed in his veins, and Tom Merry in earnest was a different being to Tom Merry the leader of mischief and fun.

He panted heavily as he reached the top of the hill.

"I said an hour," he muttered, "and it will take me longer than that to get there. Of all the rotten luck!"

The junior pelted down the hill at breakneck speed. Suddenly he stopped.

"My hat!" he cried aloud. "What an ass I am!"

He turned sharp to his left and made a bee-line across a ploughed field. Rylcombe was only half a mile distant, and he had remembered the car!

The going was not easy across the fields, but he plodded manfully on, and in record time he clattered down the silent village street.

He was gasping for breath when he reached the cycle-shop, but he tugged at the bell, and thumped vigorously at the shop door.

At the second pull the bell-knob came away in his hand, but it had done its work, for a window over the shop opened.

"Who's that?" demanded a sleepy voice.

Tom Merry could scarcely speak.

"Me!" he cried, in a hoarse whisper. "I want the car!"

"The car!"

The cycle-maker was fully awake now.

"Nonsense, Master Merry! Why, it's past two o'clock!"

Tom Merry panted heavily and leaned against the door.

"I tell you I must have it!" he shouted. "The Head sent me!"

"The Head!"

"Yes. Mrs. Holmes is ill!"

The cycle-maker's head went in with a jerk, and after a time that, short as it was, seemed like an hour to the anxious junior, a thread of light shone under the door, and there came the rattle of bolts.

"I had a smash-up, Mr. Wilkes," explained Tom Merry.

"Started on my bike. Broke the chain. Oh, do be quick!"

"All right, Master Merry," said the man. "I'll do what I can, but it ain't no manner of good rushing these things. Better come this way."

Tom Merry followed close on the man's heels, and they went through the back and flung open the stable doors.

Despite his anxiety and hurry, Tom Merry could not help a feeling of pride as the light from the lantern caught the car.

He wanted to take her out straight away.

"No," said Mr. Wilkes firmly. "Let's see that everything's all right first. Ah, I'm glad I looked! There's only about a pint of petrol in her! You light up, Master Merry, while I get a can."

After this Tom Merry had to admit the reasonableness of the cycle man's caution, and he busied himself with the lamps. The acetylene headlight refused to light.

"Never mind, I can get along with the others."

"No, you can't, Master Merry—not down them dark lanes! I'll charge it in two minutes!"

Mr. Wilkes was as good as his word, and he pattered about on the cold flags in his slippers feet like lightning.

A gurgle came from the generator.

"Now!"

Tom Merry struck a match, and a beam of light shone out with blinding radiance.

Mr. Wilkes chuckled.

"That's better!" he exclaimed, as he walked round and carefully examined the vital parts. "Now you can start her up!"

Tom Merry gripped the starting-handle, and whirled it round. The engine began to cough, and in a second or two settled down to a gentle tuff-tuff.

Tom Merry climbed into the seat and released the brake. At last he was ready.

"Now, you will be careful, Master Merry?" said the cycle-maker anxiously. "There's one or two nasty turns, and the roads are very greasy. It's been raining since you came in."

"All right, Mr. Wilkes!" cried the junior, gripping the steering-wheel. "I'll be careful, and thank you very much. I'm jolly glad I've got that light on! Good-night!"

"Good-night, Master Merry!"

Tom Merry's idea of carefulness might have caused some people to turn green with fright; but he knew the road well, and if he did take the turns at a speed of twenty miles an hour, he had a nerve like steel, and the risk of a smash-up was very remote.

In twenty minutes he was at Codicote and pulling at the doctor's night-bell.

"Hallo!"

Tom Merry jumped as a hollow voice sounded close to his ear. He had failed to notice the mouth of a speaking-tube beneath the bell. It communicated with the doctor's bedroom, and it was the medical man himself speaking.



At the second pull the bell-knob came away in Tom Merry's hand, but it had done its work, for a window over the shop opened. "Who's that?" demanded a sleepy voice. "Me!" cried Tom Merry, in a hoarse whisper, "I want the car!"

"Can you come at once, please?" said Tom Merry, with his mouth to the aperture. "It's urgent!"

"Who is it?" snapped the hollow voice.

"Tom Merry."

"Tom what?"

"Tom Merry, sir, from St. Jim's."

"Are you ill?"

Tom Merry was so taken back that he nearly laughed.

"Oh, no, sir!" he cried anxiously. "No; it's Mrs. Holmes."

The tube was silent.

Tom Merry heard a bump, and then somebody came shuffling down the passage. The door opened suddenly, and the familiar face of the little doctor peered out.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed. "So it's you, is it? Who is with you? You've got a car—that's capital! Who's driving?"

The doctor fired off his questions like shots from a gun, and without waiting for Tom Merry's reply darted into his consulting-room.

He returned with a bag.

"Put that in the car, Tom Merry. I'll be with you in a moment."

Tom Merry stowed the bag away in the recess at the back

of the car, and when he turned the doctor, fully-dressed, was coming out of the house.

He bustled up to the car.

"Who's—where's the driver?" he cried.

"Here, sir!"

"Where?"

The doctor turned round as if on a pivot.

"This is not a time for joking, Tom Merry! I'm surprised at you! I—"

"I'm not joking, sir," protested Tom Merry. "I can drive all right."

"You!"

"I brought her over, sir. I'm an awfully careful driver."

"Well, well! Bless me!"

Without another word the astounded little man got in, and Tom Merry started off at a pace that made the doctor sit back and cease all conversation. He gained confidence as he saw the skilful way Tom Merry handled the car, but beyond a faint "Bless me!" he offered no remark until they pulled up at the entrance to the college, and then he only uttered the word "Capital!"

The head-master and Mr. Railton were walking up and down outside. They hurried to the side of the car.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

"Thank goodness!" said the head-master. "We did not expect you for at least another hour! I suppose Merry happened to meet you on the way? I didn't know you'd gone in for a car!"

"Haven't thought of such a thing, Holmes!" exclaimed the doctor briskly. "How's the patient?"

"Much easier!" replied the Head. "Much better, I am glad to say!"

"That's good! Shall we go up?"

"Yes, certainly!"

The two gentlemen departed. Tom Merry was left waiting in the car.

"I should think you might go to bed now, Tom Merry," said Mr. Railton. "The doctor can drive himself back all right, I expect!"

"I don't think he can, sir," said the chief of the Terrible Three demurely. "You see—"

The House-master frowned.

"Nonsense, Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Railton sharply. "Of course he can drive his own car!"

Tom Merry remained silent.

"I don't think he can, sir," he said at last. "You see, it isn't his own, and—"

"I fail to see what that has to do with it!" said Mr. Railton. "By the way, what has become of your bicycle?"

"Left it in the ditch, sir."

"In the ditch!"

"Yes, sir."

"What in the world for?"

"Broke my chain, sir, on Rylcombe Hill."

"What, going?"

"Yes, sir."

"But how did you get to Codicote, then? Did the doctor meet you?"

"Oh, no! I went to fetch him."

"But you couldn't possibly have run all that way!"

"Oh, no! I was driving."

"Driving!" cried the House-master. "Ah, I see! You hired a pony and trap at Rylcombe village. Very good idea!"

"But I didn't hire a pony and trap!" exclaimed Tom Merry hastily. "I drove the car from the village."

Mr. Railton eyed the junior steadily.

"Pray explain yourself."

"Well, you see, sir, it's like this. I—we—my uncle—"

"Better take a little rest," suggested the master; "I fear you are over-excited. Perhaps you had better go straight to bed. I will explain to the head-master. I am sure he will excuse you—and you have done wonders!"

"This is my car, sir!" blurted Tom Merry desperately.

Mr. Railton stared at the junior as if he believed him to be suddenly bereft of his senses.

"Your—your car, Tom Merry!"

"Yes, sir, my uncle sent it over this afternoon, and we left it in the village for the night. I didn't have a chance to tell you, and the Head was away. I—"

"You had better explain now, then," said the House-master. "This is most extraordinary!"

Tom Merry launched into an account of the day's adventures.

Mr. Railton smiled at the breathless history.

"Well," he said, "you must consider yourself a very lucky boy, and I must really commend you for the way in which you have acted. You had better acquaint Dr. Holmes with the circumstances of the matter. In any case, you'll have to wait, or the doctor will not be able to return to-night."

Tom Merry smiled to himself. He would not have minded if he had to travel to and fro from Codicote all night.

"Gracious! It's three o'clock!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Dear, dear! You must be cold and tired after your journey! I'll get you some hot coffee!"

The kind-hearted master sped up the steps three at a time. The head-master was coming down the stairs as Mr. Railton crossed the entrance-hall. He looked puzzled, and he went straight out into the quad.

"Merry!"

"Yes, sir!"

"There is some misunderstanding somewhere. The doctor has decided to remain here until the morning, and he tells me this is not his car. He seemed to be under the impression that I had sent it!"

Tom Merry got down from his seat and handed the head-master his uncle's letter.

Dr. Holmes read it by the light of the lamp. He pondered deeply, and for once he was at a loss for what to say.

Mr. Railton came out from the college, and took in the situation at a glance.

"You'll find coffee and cake in the library, Tom Merry. If Dr. Holmes will excuse you—"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

NEW STORY BOOK.

THE EMPIRE LIBRARY

"To be sure," murmured the Head—"to be sure! Go at once, Merry."

With an appealing glance at Mr. Railton, the junior ran off.

"Do you know anything about this, Railton?" demanded the Head.

"Well, a little," replied Mr. Railton, with a smile.

"But Merry's uncle must be—"

"An eccentric?" suggested the House-master.

"A Fourth-Former with a motor-car!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes.

"It is certainly unusual," said Mr. Railton, "but I really don't see any great objection, except that of finding a place to keep it."

Dr. Holmes shook his head doubtfully.

"You're—you're—if you pardon my saying so, Railton," said the Head a trifle testily, "too lenient—too—"

The House-master bowed stiffly. Dr. Holmes saw the action, and his face changed.

"No, I don't quite mean that, Railton. I must think this over. We will leave the matter until the morning. Meanwhile tell Merry to house his car in my coach-house. Good-night, Railton!"

Tom Merry laid down his empty cup as Mr. Railton entered the library.

"The doctor is staying until the morning," said the House-master, ignoring the inquiry in the junior's eyes, "and Dr. Holmes has commissioned me to tell you to put your car in his coach-house—"

Tom Merry's eyes sparkled.

"For to-night," concluded Mr. Railton. "No; I have nothing more to tell you. Dr. Holmes will probably see you himself in the morning. Now hurry up—there's a good chap—and get to bed as quick as you can!"

The junior gathered heart from the House-master's tone of voice rather than his words, and the little red car was soon safely stowed away beside the head-master's brougham.

The two together looked very much like a cock-robin and a solemn owl.

"May I have the key, sir?" inquired Tom Merry, as the House-master locked the coach-house door. "She'll want a clean up in the morning."

Mr. Railton laughed.

"You can have the key, certainly," he said; "but I shouldn't think you will be up very early. It's nearly four o'clock. Good-night!"

"Good-morning, sir!"

Without disturbing his chums, Tom Merry crept into bed, and directly his head touched his pillow he went off to sleep.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Lowther and Manners are Surprised.

"AH! Oh! O-oh!" At six o'clock Manners woke up and stared sleepily at the grey dawn showing through the dormitory window. He gave another prodigious yawn.

"Oh-o-o-oh!"

Monty Lowther stirred uneasily.

Manners turned round and surveyed his study mate speculatively.

A glorious opportunity presented itself.

Lowther was now lying on his back with his mouth wide open.

Manners became very wide awake.

He skipped nimbly out of bed and tiptoed to the wash-stand.

# SANDOW'S BOOK FREE!

Just published, a new book showing how Sandow won Health and Fame, beautifully illustrated, and explaining how every man and woman can obtain robust health and perfect development 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.

On Sale: TUESDAY, FEB. 15, 1910

He returned with a piece of soap and a wet sponge.

The former he dropped deftly between Monty Lowther's teeth. The latter he retained in his hand until he had got into bed again. Then, with careful aim, he dropped it over the unconscious sleeper's face, and instantaneously snuggled beneath the bedclothes.

"Gr-r-r-r! Ach! Br-r-r-sh!"

Monty Lowther woke up. His teeth met in the soap. A horrible taste was in his mouth.

He leaped, spitting and spluttering, out of his bed.

"Ah! Oh! Ge-pr-r-r! Bah!"

The junior capered about the floor, executing a solitary sort of mad, Dervish dance.

Not a movement came from Manners' bed.

He lay as still as a mummy.

In his mad whirl Monty Lowther barked his shins on Tom Merry's bed and gave a howl of pain.

The chief of the Terrible Three awoke with another yell.

"What the dickens are you up to, Monty?" he growled.

"Up to!" howled Monty Lowther. "Up to, indeed! I like that! I've barked my shins, and my mouth is full of beastly soap!"

"W-what!"

"Soap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther was literally foaming at the mouth, and for the fraction of a second Tom Merry had feelings of misgiving.

"I say——" he commenced, raising himself on one elbow.

"You—— Ha, ha, ha! It is soap!"

"Of course it is!" roared Monty Lowther. "I'd like to know who——"

Just at this moment Manners opened his eyes and gave an elaborate stretch.

Monty Lowther watched him intently.

Manners saw him out of his half closed eyes, and promptly turned over again, and pretended to go to sleep.

Lowther wiped the corners of his mouth, looked at Tom Merry, and then at the floor.

From the floor his gaze travelled to Manners' bed.

Tom Merry leaned out of bed and followed Monty Lowther's gaze.

There was a line of spots of water leading from Manners' bed to Lowther's.

Tom Merry grinned.

Monty Lowther looked grim.

He was trying to think of something to do with boiling oil, but he fell back, or, rather, yanked backwards towards the water-jug.

The manner with which he scanned the water-jug and glided to the side of Manners' bed was worthy of a Red Indian.

Once there, with the jug nicely poised, he wasted no time.

The cold douche descended like an avalanche, and Manners gasped and floundered like a stranded eel.

He was soaked!

And the worst of it was he knew he deserved it.

"You—you shr-shrieking ass! You—you—you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry roared with laughter as Manners grabbed a towel, and scuttled out of the dormitory in the direction of the bath-room.

"Ha, ha, ha! About the best thing he could do! Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther, feeling better after his retaliation, joined in the laugh, and started to dress.

Presently, looking very rosy, Manners returned.

He studiously avoided any reference to the recent deluge.

"Going to Rylcombe before brekker?" he inquired pleasantly. "Half a tick; I sha'n't be a minute!"

Tom Merry and Lowther were nearly dressed, but Manners was attired in record time, and close on their heels when they left the dormitory and descended the staircase.

The early spring sun was pouring down on the deserted quad, when the three came out.

"What a morning!" cried Manners. "What a time for a run!"

"My word, yes!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Hallo! Where are you going?"

Tom Merry looked back over his shoulder and laughed.

"Just round here," he said.

Manners and Lowther followed in silence.

"Has he gone dotty?" muttered the former, as Tom Merry passed through the little gate leading to the Head's private ground. "We shall get scragged if we get collared here! My eye!"

"What in the name of goodness is he doing?" muttered Monty Lowther. "That's the coach-house!"

"He's got a key, too!" said Manners. "Of all the cheek!"

"Surely——"

Tom Merry swung back the big doors.

Manners and Monty Lowther gasped.

The sight of the car fixed them spellbound.

"It——"

"It——it——"

They ran forward.

Tom Merry grinned.

"But," commenced Manners weakly—"but——"

Tom Merry's grin grew broader.

"Hold me up!" gasped Monty Lowther. "I can't make head nor tail of this! What? When? Why? Oh, hang!"

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What's all the excitement about?"

"What's it all about?" yelled Manners, suddenly finding his voice. "What's the giddy wheeze?"

"How did she come here?" cried Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You didn't go out last night!"

"And you haven't been out this morning!"

"Wrong again, Monty!" cried Tom Merry. "I went out on special bis. at two o'clock this morning!"

"Two o'clock!"

"Two o'clock!"

The astounded pair sought relief in indignation.

"And never said a word!" shouted Manners.

"A mean trick!" cried Monty Lowther.

"Fancy letting his pals down like that!"

"Please I went on private bis. for the Head!" said Tom Merry meekly.

At this fresh announcement there was another outburst.

"You deserve to be bumped!"

"Where did you go?"

"And what for?"

"I went to Codicote for the doctor!"

"To Codicote! My hat!"

"Who was ill?"

Tom Merry suddenly grew very serious.

"Mrs. Holmes! She was taken bad in the night, and the Head himself came and fetched me. He told me not to make a row."

"Oh!" exclaimed Manners and Monty Lowther, somewhat appeased. "Why didn't you say so before, then?" went on the latter. "And was she any better? Tell us all about it!"

Tom Merry gave a detailed account of the morning's experiences.

"So you left your bicycle in the ditch!" cried Manners. "My word, we are getting extravagant! Chucking bikes about like mere trifles!"

"I'll send Binks to find it," said the chief of the Terrible Three quickly. "Anyhow, it isn't of much account! It was only an old crock, as you know. Now, let's chuck jawing, and push her out! Shall we give her a clean up?"

Manners brightened up considerably.

"Rather!" he shouted. "That's a ripping idea. Heave-ho!"

"My eye, but she is a weight!"

"Brake's on!" cried Tom Merry. "That's better!"

"My word, she is in a state!" exclaimed Manners, when they had pushed the car out into the yard. "Just look at her! Simply covered in mud!"

Monty Lowther ran into the coach-house and fitted up the carriage hose.

"I say," he cried, when he came out, "is the Head going to let you keep her in here always?"

"Dunno!" replied Tom Merry. "Railton said he'd see me in the morning."

"Hum! Don't much like the sound of that!" grunted Manners. "Still, it's no good worrying! Turn on the tap, Monty!"

"Don't believe it's on!" cried Monty Lowther, picking up the nozzle and examining it intently. "It's off at the——"

Swish!

"Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther dropped the hose like a red-hot poker, and leaped back in dismay.

The thing fell to the ground, wriggling like a live thing.

Tom Merry dashed up from the rear, and, like a hero of old, captured the enemy.

"Hooray!"

Manners gave an ironical cheer.

"Did you speak?" inquired Tom Merry, turning off the tap at the nozzle, and holding it at the "Ready."

"N-no!" cried the junior, dodging behind the car.

"I thought somehow that I'd made a mistake!" retorted Tom Merry, turning on the tap again, and playing the water in approved fashion on the muddy body of the car. "Now

then, Monty, don't stand gaping there like a fish! Get a sponge, old chap, and rub her down!"

Lowther gave up wiping his face, and set to work.

The Terrible Three laboured with a good will, and by the time the first bell rang, every speck of mud had vanished, and the car looked as good as new again.

The wash-down was followed by a vigorous course of polishing, and in the absence of dusters the Terrible Three used their handkerchiefs.

It was hard work, and their knuckles found a lot of sharp corners, but elbow-grease and enthusiasm made up for a lot of things, and in twenty minutes the little car shone like one of D'Arcy's newly-polished patent boots.

The Terrible Three heaved a mutual sigh of content as they stood back and admired the result of their efforts.

The second bell rang, and brought an end to their contemplation.

The hose was coiled up, and in a trice the precious car was backed tenderly into the coach-house again, and the door carefully locked.

The three reached HaK just as Blake & Co. came down.

"Morning!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "You're up very early. Couldn't you sleep?"

"Not very well," replied Tom Merry, truthfully enough, "so we just went round to the coach-house and gave the car a rub up."

Jack Blake stared; but there was no time for inquiries, and he filed in with the rest for morning prayers.

The great hall was filled.

Contrary to custom, the head-master's place was still vacant. Such an occurrence was most unusual, and when, after the lapse of a minute or so, Mr. Railton emerged from the head-master's private door, a ripple of murmuring voices sounded through the hall.

Mr. Railton went straight to Dr. Holmes's place, and prayers proceeded.

Before the last amen had died away, the House-master held up his hand.

"Wait!" he said. "I have a few words to say to you on behalf of the head-master."

Not a boy moved. Some of the Third-Formers even held their breath.

What was the matter?

## CHAPTER 7.

### A Telegram.

"SOME of you may be aware," said Mr. Railton, "that a grave calamity has visited the college."

Mrs. Holmes had a serious attack of illness last night; and although the crisis has passed and danger averted, her physician enjoins absolute rest, and in consequence of this Dr. Holmes has decided to give the school a whole holiday."

The House-master paused.

As a rule, such an announcement would have been greeted with uproarious cheers. There was neither sound or movement.

Mr. Railton looked steadily along the rows of serious faces.

"Further," he resumed, "I am desired to express the head-master's wish that no boy feel restrained from taking full advantage of the enforced vacation, and thoroughly enjoying himself. Thanks to the enterprise and promptitude of a member of the Shell, the illness was taken in time, and the only thing now required is absolute rest for the next twenty-four hours. That is all."

During breakfast there was scarcely the clatter of a teacup, and after the meal the boys crept silently away.

By common consent, Jack Blake & Co., the Terrible Three, and Figgins & Co. met under the great elms on the further side of the quad.

They were joined by Clifton Dane, Glyn, and Harry Noble.

The low hum of voices arose, and plans were discussed.

Strange to say, the juniors could hit on no satisfactory programme. The unexpected had caught them unawares.

"Blest if I know what we can do!" exclaimed the leader of Study No. 6. "Footer is off. Everything is off. By the way, who was the distinguished member of the Shell referred to?"

Tom Merry blushed.

Manners and Monty Lowther took up the tale, and their chief's early morning motor ride developed into a sort of up-to-date Dick Turpin record.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Jack Blake heartily. "Jolly plucky of you, Tom Merry. I couldn't have done better myself. But, all the same, we're no forrader. Hasn't anybody got an idea of some sort? I never came across such a set of duffers in all my puff. Here's a whole day, a whole whacking

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

holiday, and no one can hit on a wheeze. I think the best thing we can do is to all go to bed."

"If it were summertime——" commenced Digby.

"Oh, rats!" cried Jack Blake. "It isn't summer, so what's the good of starting out on that tack?"

"I said 'if,'" retorted Digby indignantly.

"More rats!"

"I was going to suggest——"

"Wait until the summer comes again," exclaimed Tom Merry. "You'll think of a wheeze for Christmas then, perhaps."

"Couldn't we get up a picnic?" suggested Fatty Wynn hopefully.

There was a titter of laughter. The Falstaff of St. Jim's looked round in surprise.

"I think it's a jolly good idea of mine," he said emphatically.

"Oh, marvellous!"

"So original!"

"We'll have six!"

"Bright idea!"

"Let's stand one another a picnic."

"I don't see anything to cackle about!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn.

"Neither do I," said Manners.

"Look here——" shouted Fatty Wynn.

"Shut up!" interrupted Figgins promptly. "You're getting excited. You don't want to bellow like that. Look quietly, and don't think so noisily."

"Quite smart for Figgy, that," said Monty Lowther.

"I know, let's put it to the vote."

"Put what to the vote?"

"Why, the wheeze, of course."

"But we haven't got one!" cried Jack Blake, in exasperation. "We'll vote each other an ass, and you can take the prize."

Monty Lowther tried hard to think of a suitable retort, but failed dismally.

Decidedly things were very flat.

Ragging was off.

Study feeds were off.

Everything seemed to be off.

Clifton Dane, Glyn, and Noble linked arms and did the only practical thing.

They went off

"So long!" said the boy from Liverpool. "When you bright lot of sparks think of something, you can let us know."

Ten juniors watched them go in silence.

"I shall get in a wage!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus suddenly.

"Hallo! You woke up!"

"Don't be wude, Blake. I wefuse to——"

"Shut up!" said Jack Blake crossly. "Things are bad enough as they are, without you making silly, fatheaded remarks."

"Blake!"

The swell of St. Jim's put all the concentrated tone of annoyance into his voice, but the leader of Study No. 6 was singularly unimpressed. He stuck his hands in his pockets and ignored D'Arcy's glare of righteous anger.

Arthur Augustus stalked over to Blake and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Oh, run away and play!" grunted the latter.

"I wefuse. I——"

"Oh, don't, then; stay where you are."

"I wefuse. I——"

Suddenly the swell of St. Jim's stopped and stared across the quad.

"Bai Jove!"

The others followed the direction of his gaze.

A boy with a telegram in his hand was coming towards them.

Ten juniors woke up simultaneously. At last something was going to happen.

They stepped forward in a ragged line.

"I expect it's for me!"

"No, me, you mean!"

"Go on with you! It's mine!"

"No, it isn't!"

"I'm expecting a telegram!"

"You get out!"

"Sha'n't!"

"Don't shove!"

"Hand it over!"

"The wiah is for me, deah boys!"

"Rats!"

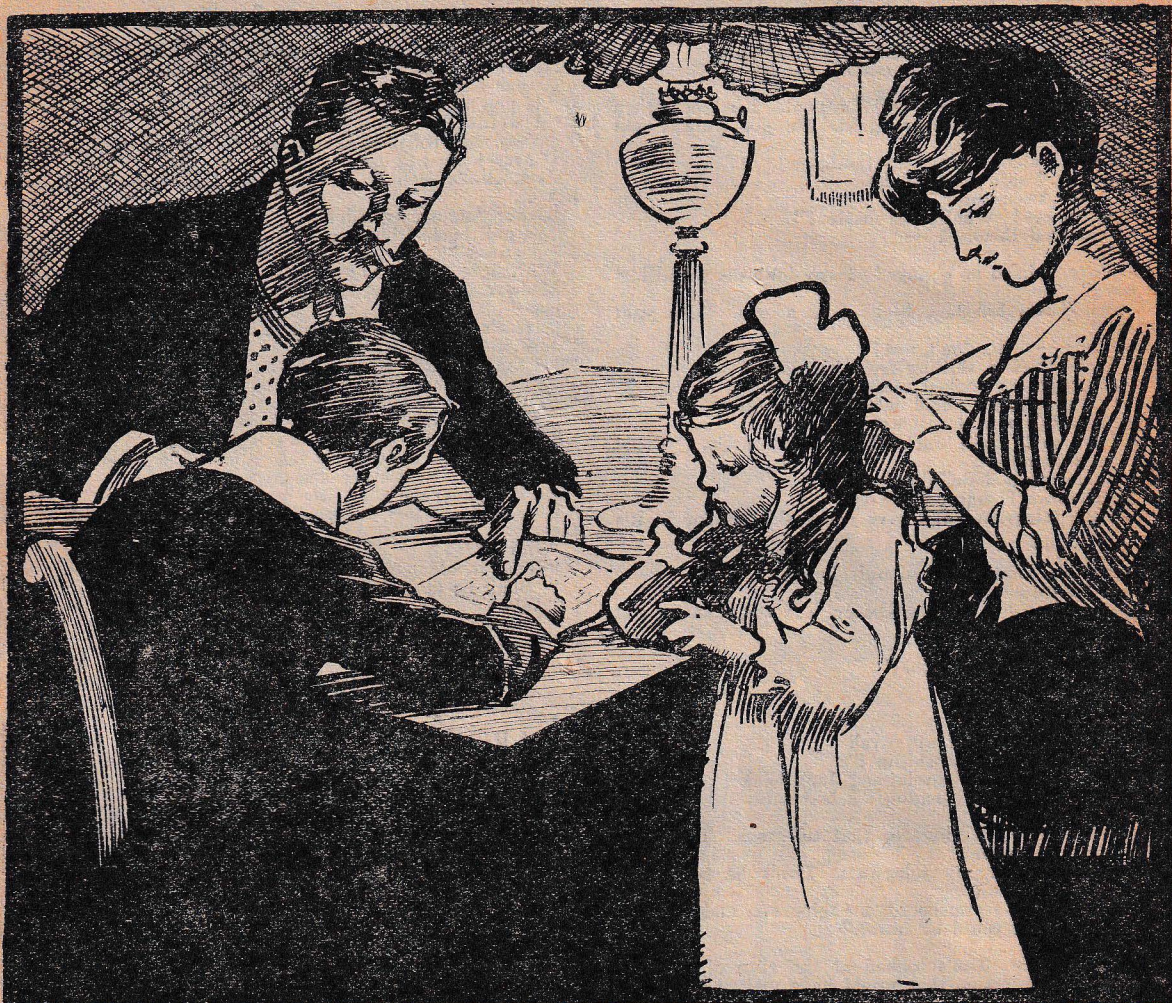
"I shall——"

"More rats!"

The telegraph boy looked rather alarmed as the Fourth-Formers swarmed round him.

They were like a pack of hungry wolves.

# IT WILL BE WELCOMED—



## IN EVERY HOME!

Order  
To-Day

### "THE EMPIRE LIBRARY," The NEW Story-Book.

Containing a Long Complete Tale of \_\_\_\_\_  
GORDON GAY, The Schoolboy Actor.

### Price One Halfpenny.

On  
Sale: **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY the 15th.**

"Give it to me!" shouted Jack Blake. The boy put the buff envelope behind his back. "It's for Master D Arcy!" Nine mouths opened with dismay. The swell of St. Jim's looked triumphant, and took the telegram with a lordly air, and fumbled in his pocket. The messenger grinned expectantly. Arthur Augustus was always royal in his tips. The swell of St. Jim's drew out his hand. It was empty. He tried the next pocket, and the next. First one, then the other, and then all over again. He got frantic, and turned pale.

The others watched him impatiently. "Hurry up!" said Jack Blake. "I— My twousahs!" "Your trousers! What's the matter?" "I—I changed them. I—"

"Well?" "Bai Jove, I have no change! Pway lend me a shilling, deah boy!" "Not me!" retorted Jack Blake, with a grin. "It's your telegram!" "Yes, but— Oh, don't wot!" Jack Blake drew a shilling from his pocket. The telegraph boy looked relieved. The swell of St. Jim's held out his hand eagerly. "Thanks, deah boy; I will return it!" "Half a mo!" said Jack Blake deliberately. "What about that telegram?"

The others grinned delightedly. "The telegwam!" gasped D Arcy. "Yes; the telegram. If I give you a shilling for it, it's mine." "Ha, ha, ha!" The Terrible Three laughed unfeelingly. Arthur Augustus gasped. He was feeling his position keenly, and this was the last drop in his cup of bitterness.

"Youah telegwam!" "Quite so! Isn't that right?" "Yes." "Rather!" "What-ho!" There was a chorus of approval. "But I will return the shillin'!" "Oh, no, you won't!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "I refuse to lend you a shilling! Lending's a bad habit!" "But—"

"I'll give you a shilling for that telegram. There you are; that's a fair offer!" "I wefuse to sell, my telegwam. Don't be so widie., Blake!" "Very well, then; you keep your telegram, and I'll keep my bob! Nothing could be fairer."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The swell of St. Jim's looked at the ring of grinning faces with an expression that would have melted a heart of stone.

But they only grinned the more. "Vewy well; I shall return to the coll., and—"

"Collar him!" Jack Blake gave the word. Arthur Augustus was held immovable. They all caught hold of him by some portion of his anatomy. The swell of St. Jim's was powerless. "You wottahs!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "You boundahs!" "He, he, he!" "W'etches, welease me!" "Not if we know it!" "You've got your telegram!" "But I can't wead it!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Pway—"

"Rats!" Arthur Augustus ceased to struggle. Jack Blake looked alarmed. "This won't do!" he muttered to the chief of the Terrible Three. "If the image gets a stubborn fit on him, we can hold him until the middle of next week. I shall have to wake him up a bit. I believe that's a wire from Cousin Ethel."

Tom Merry grinned as Jack Blake bent down behind the swell of St. Jim's, with a pin in his hand. Arthur Augustus woke up with a vengeance, and one leg broke loose.

Digby rolled over on his back. "Now we've got him on the move," said Jack Blake, "we

can do something. Look here, Gussy, if I lend you a bob, will you read that telegram aloud?"

"No! I wefuse! I—"

Jack Blake, stood before the captive, and held up the pin.

"We shall resume the torture, then!" "Wottah!"

A brilliant idea occurred to the leader of Study No. 6. He drew a cake of Indian ink from his pocket. Arthur Augustus watched him in alarm.

"If you won't be reasonable—"

"I wefuse!"

"Very well, then, we shallattoo you on—on your nose!"

D Arcy looked abhast.

Jack Blake seemed as if he meant it. He came a step nearer.

Arthur Augustus quailed.

The pin touched his nose.

"I agwee!"

With sighs of relief the juniors released their prisoner.

If Jack Blake's threat had failed, they would have been done.

"Here's your bob!" exclaimed the leader of Study No. 6.

"Now, don't snatch!"

"I shall no longah considah you in the light of a fwieud!"

shouted the swell of St. Jim's, crimson with outraged dignity.

"You are a wottah!"

"You'll get over that nasty feeling presently," said Jack Blake easily. "Now read the telegram!"

Grinning with delight, the telegraph-boy departed.

The juniors gathered round Arthur Augustus.

He tore open the envelope.

Like morning mist before the sun, the angry look left his face.

"Bai Jove!"

"Read it, old son!" said Jack Blake.

"Shall be at Rylcombe, 2.30."

"Who?"

"Why, Cousin Ethel, of course!"

"Bravo!"

## CHAPTER 8.

### An Interview with the Head.

"WELL, that's something, at any rate!" cried Tom Merry. "Eh, Figgy? I suppose this is instead of Saturday. What a bit of luck!"

Figgins blushed. Somehow his homely face always did light up when Cousin Ethel was mentioned.

"What shall we do?"

"Go and meet her?"

"Get up a tea-party!"

The juniors chattered eagerly. The coming of their girl-chum had sent their spirits up with a bound.

"I shall go to the station," said D Arcy, with dignity.

"And I shall pwobably bwing my cousin to St. Jim's."

"Probably!" said Jack Blake, with scorn. "My eye! I should think you would!"

"I shall think the mattah ovah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"You think! My word, Gussy, anybody would believe, to hear you talk, that Cousin Ethel belonged to you!" cried Manners.

"Do you think you're going to keep a ripping cousin like her all to yourself?"

"Hear, hear, Manners!"

"No fear!"

"We'll see to that!"

Tom Merry gave a shout.

All eyes turned upon him.

"We'll meet her in the motor!" he cried.

Manners and Monty Lowther gave a whoop of joy.

"Jolly good idea!"

"Splendid!"

Jack Blake & Co. looked glum.

Figgins shuffled his feet uncomfortably.

The swell of St. Jim's surveyed Tom Merry with a haughty air.

"I shall wefuse my permish!"

Tom Merry laughed, then his face clouded.

"It's jolly rough on you chaps," he said. "I forgot. I was only thinking how pleased she would be."

"That's all right, Tom Merry!" cried Jack Blake generously. "It's a good idea. Too good to spoil, because you can't carry the whole lot of us! Hallo! What d'you want?"

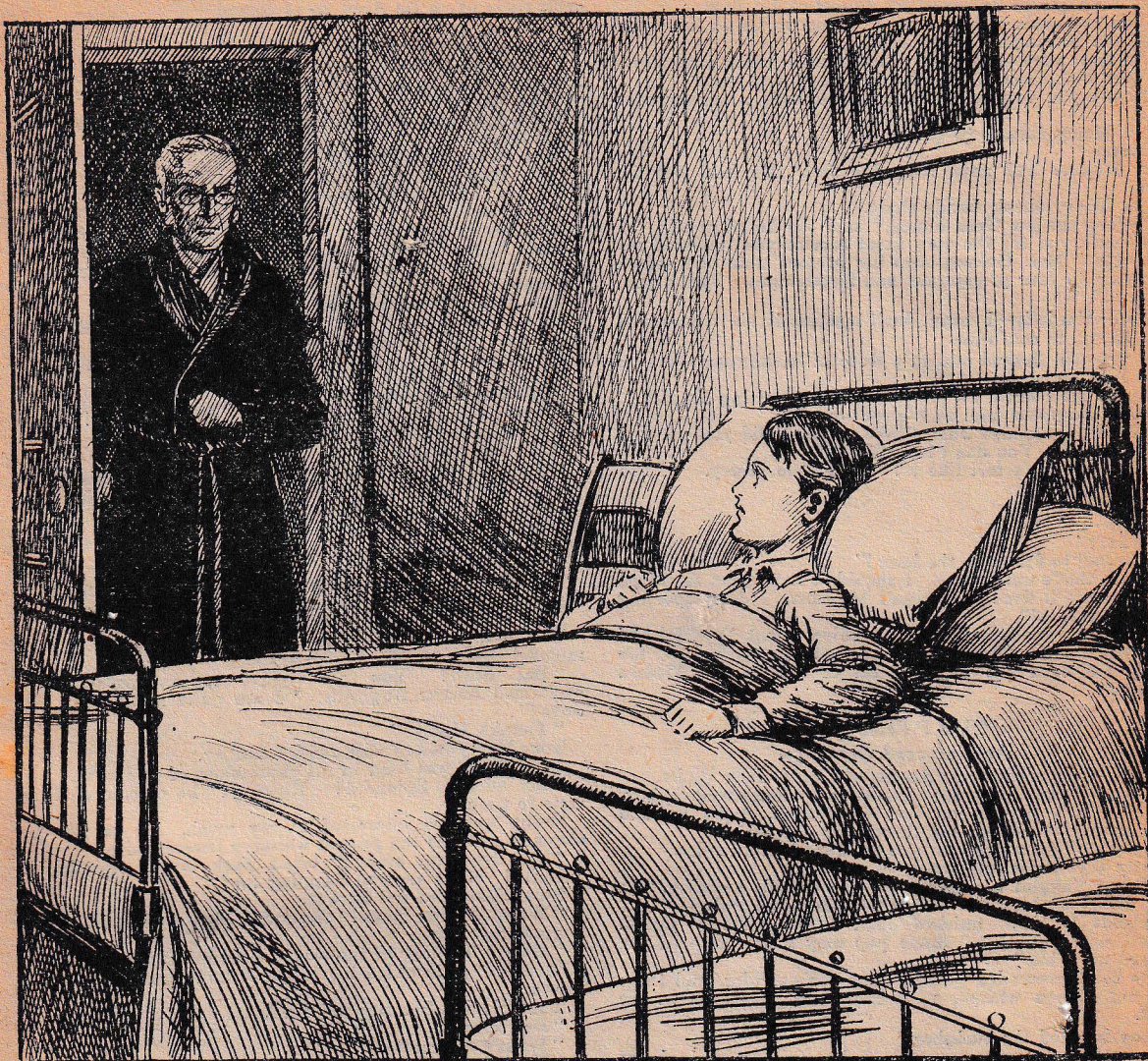
"Not you!"

D Arcy minor strolled up.

"Tom Merry here?" he inquired, looking anywhere but in that worthy's direction.

"Cheeky young imp!" muttered Jack Blake, stretching out a hand. "Come here!"





"Merry!" "Yes, sir!" Tom Merry peered at the dormitory door. It was half open, and a dim figure stood in the doorway. It was the head-master himself!

"Not to-day, thanks!" cried Wally, dodging away. "Oh, there you are!" he went on from a safe distance. "The Head wants you!"

"The Head!"

Having delivered his message, Wally sprinted off. The assembled Co.'s looked at one another.

A summons to the Head meant good news or bad. It was seldom that any of the juniors had an interview without something happening.

What did it mean?

Tom Merry pushed his fingers through his hair. He remembered Mr. Railton's remark in the library.

The fate of his car hung in the balance.

"Better hurry up!" suggested Jack Blake.

"Right-ho! I'll get it over, whatever it is!"

"We'll wait for you in your study."

"Good! Sha'n't be long!"

"I say—" commenced Manners.

But Tom Merry had gone.

"I hope it's nothing to do with the car!" muttered the junior. "It'll be jolly rough if he has to send it back!"

Tom Merry tapped at the library door

Dr. Holmes' voice bade him enter.

"Ah, Merry! None the worse for your midnight ride?"

"No, sir; thank you!"

"Ah!"

The Head looked at the junior over his glasses.

Tom Merry met his glance frankly. He was prepared for the best or the worst.

"Well, I've decided to allow you to keep your car," said the head-master.

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"You can keep it for the time in my coach-house, but"—here the Head paused impressively—"you must give me your word of honour not to drive at a dangerous pace. I know you to be a skilful driver, but I think that you should limit your speed to, say, five or six miles an hour."

Tom Merry gasped.

He was too honest to conceal his surprise.

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"You think that too little, my boy?"

"Why, it's—it's a crawl, sir! I'm afraid I couldn't promise that, sir!" said Tom Merry impulsively. "At her best, she can do more than twenty!"

"Twenty miles an hour!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, in a tone of horror. "Decide me, what a terribly dangerous speed! Now, tell me, Merry, what do you consider to be a rate of speed over which you would have absolute control?"

"Between fourteen and fifteen, sir!"

The head-master drummed his fingers on his desk.

"You are quite certain that at fifteen miles an hour you would not be running any risk?"

"No more than at four, sir!" replied the junior promptly.

"Very well, then, Merry, I must leave it to you."

"Thank you very much, sir! I will have a speedometer fitted."

Tom Merry turned to go.

"Merry!"

Dr. Holmes had risen from his seat. He held out his hand.

Tom Merry shook hands shyly.

"Before you go, Tom Merry," said the Head gently, "I must thank you for the very great service you rendered me last night! Mrs. Holmes owes her present state of freedom from pain to your promptness and forethought. Thank you, my boy!"

"I—I—I'm jolly—I mean, don't mention it, sir!" mumbled Tom Merry, in confusion.

He was still flushed and in a state of excitement when he burst into his study.

True to their word, all the juniors were waiting for him.

Arthur Augustus had his big coat on.

"Well?" demanded Jack Blake. "How did you get on? Get scragged? You don't look like it."

"No; and don't feel like it!" cried Tom Merry. "I can keep the car!"

"Hooray!"

"Only——"

"What?"

"Limited to fifteen in the hour!"

"Well, that's not so bad. I shouldn't have been surprised if he'd made it five!" exclaimed Manners. "Jolly sporting of him, I call it!"

Tom Merry smiled, but said nothing about Dr. Holmes' first speed-limit. The memory of that handshake was too strong for even the slightest bit of fun at the Head's expense.

## CHAPTER 9.

### An Enforced Stoppage.

"NOW to resume our discussion," said Jack Blake.

"Oh, blow the discussion!" exclaimed Digby.

"It's getting on for ten o'clock. Let's go and have some ginger-beer; my throat's as dry as bone."

Digby's bright suggestion was acclaimed on all sides.

Fatty Wynn was jubilant.

"Dame Taggles has some new pies in this morning," he said, smacking his lips. "I've had some, only——"

"Funds is low," finished Jack Blake, with a laugh.

"Well, come on, then. Stone pop may make some of you freshen up a bit."

The band proceeded quietly down the corridor, and there was not even a whisper until they were right out in the quad.

They invaded the tuckshop.

Dame Taggles was engaged at her weekly washtub, so Taggles himself officiated behind the little counter.

It was piled with good things.

The sight of the pork-pies, all brown and crisp, made everyone feel hungry.

They all started giving their orders at once.

Except Fatty Wynn.

The Falstaff of St. Jim's wasted no time on words. He helped himself, and with a pie in each hand retired to a corner.

Taggles was careful to charge them to Jack Blake, and then, absentmindedly, to Tom Merry.

Taggles did not believe in making a mistake on the wrong side. He became quite amiable under the influence of good custom, and Manners afterwards declared that he once saw him smile.

"Shall we go for a run on the car?" suggested Tom Merry, when the feast was over, and even Fatty Wynn was on his last tart. "The only thing is how are we going to fix it? You can't all come at once!"

"I know!" cried Digby. "We'll draw lots!"

"No. I know a much better idea than that," said Jack Blake. "We'll take it in turns, from here to Rylcombe. Each in alphabetical order!"

"Not a bad idea, either!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha! You're B, aren't you?"

"I wasn't thinking of that!" cried the leader of Study 6 indignantly.

"No, of course, you weren't, old chap," replied Tom Merry. "It's jolly funny, though, isn't it?"

"But there's D'Arcy!" shouted Manners. "Surely he'd come first. Blessed if I know whether it would be A or D!"

"Call it A, then," said Jack Blake. "Any old thing, so long as we get a move on."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

"Of course, dear boy; I take precedence. My ancestors spelt their name De Arcy, so of course——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter.

"You are a funny ass!" gasped Jack Blake. "Tom Merry's not going to take your ancestor out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums only stopped laughing when they reached the coach-house.

Tom Merry unlocked the door.

"My aunt! He's got a key and all!" cried Jack Blake.

"My eye! She starts up well."

"Look out!"

Tom Merry brought his car out with a run that sent the juniors flying. Then, shutting down his throttle, he glided almost noiselessly past the Head's house, right to the school entrance.

The juniors streamed after him in a long line.

"Tell you what," said Tom Merry, as the first three came up. "We'll make a tour of the schools. Run over to the Grammar School first, and then to Highcliffe. What?"

"Good wheeze!"

"We'll make Monkey & Co. sit up!"

"And those cads, Carpenter, Snipe, and Larking!"

"We owe them one!"

"Not half we don't!"

"No! Look here!" exclaimed Tom Merry, leaning over the screen. "We're not going to have any ragging this journey. A nice friendly little visit, just to say how d'you do, and that's all. Now who's coming first? Suppose we say Gussy, Jack Blake, and Digby?"

"That's fair enough!"

"We'll go down to the gym, while you're gone," said Manners. "Mind Gussy doesn't fall off."

"All aboard, there!" cried Tom Merry.

The first batch of juniors clambered up. The next moment they were off.

"Bai Jove! You can dwive quite respectable!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I am quite astounded. Bai Jove!"

"Thanks, Gussy!"

Tom Merry bowed with mock humility.

Jack Blake was loud in his expressions of approval.

"My aunt! Splendid! Ripping!" he ejaculated from time to time.

Digby was too interested to say much. He sat on the step and watched the ground whizzing beneath him.

"She does nip along!" cried Jack Blake ecstatically.

"Hallo! What are you stopping for?"

Tom Merry did not answer.

"We're slowing down!" shouted Digby, as if he had made a great discovery.

"There's nothing in the way," observed Blake.

Tom Merry wrinkled his forehead and thrust his throttle forward.

That did it. She stopped dead.

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter?"

"Don't know," said Tom Merry grimly. "Better get out and see."

"You didn't do it on purpose, then!"

"Of course not!"

"Jolly good job we're not in sight of the Grammar School. We should never hear the last of it."

The four juniors eyed the motionless car.

"It's extremely fortunate, dear boy."

"What?"

"That I am with you. I will discovah the twouble instantah!"

"Fire ahead, then," said Tom Merry, with a grin. "Suppose you wind her up for a start."

"It will be all right, it is for a start," said Jack Blake cutely. "Show us your shover knowledge, Gussy."

The swell of St. Jim's removed his coat, turned up his sleeves, and gripped the starting-handle.

At the second turn he got the compressions all right, and gave a mighty pull.

The only result was a faint, sucking sound.

He tried again, and again. In fact, he turned the handle until the perspiration ran down his face.

"Bai Jove! The little wottah!"

"Let me have a go," said Jack Blake. "I'm stronger than you."

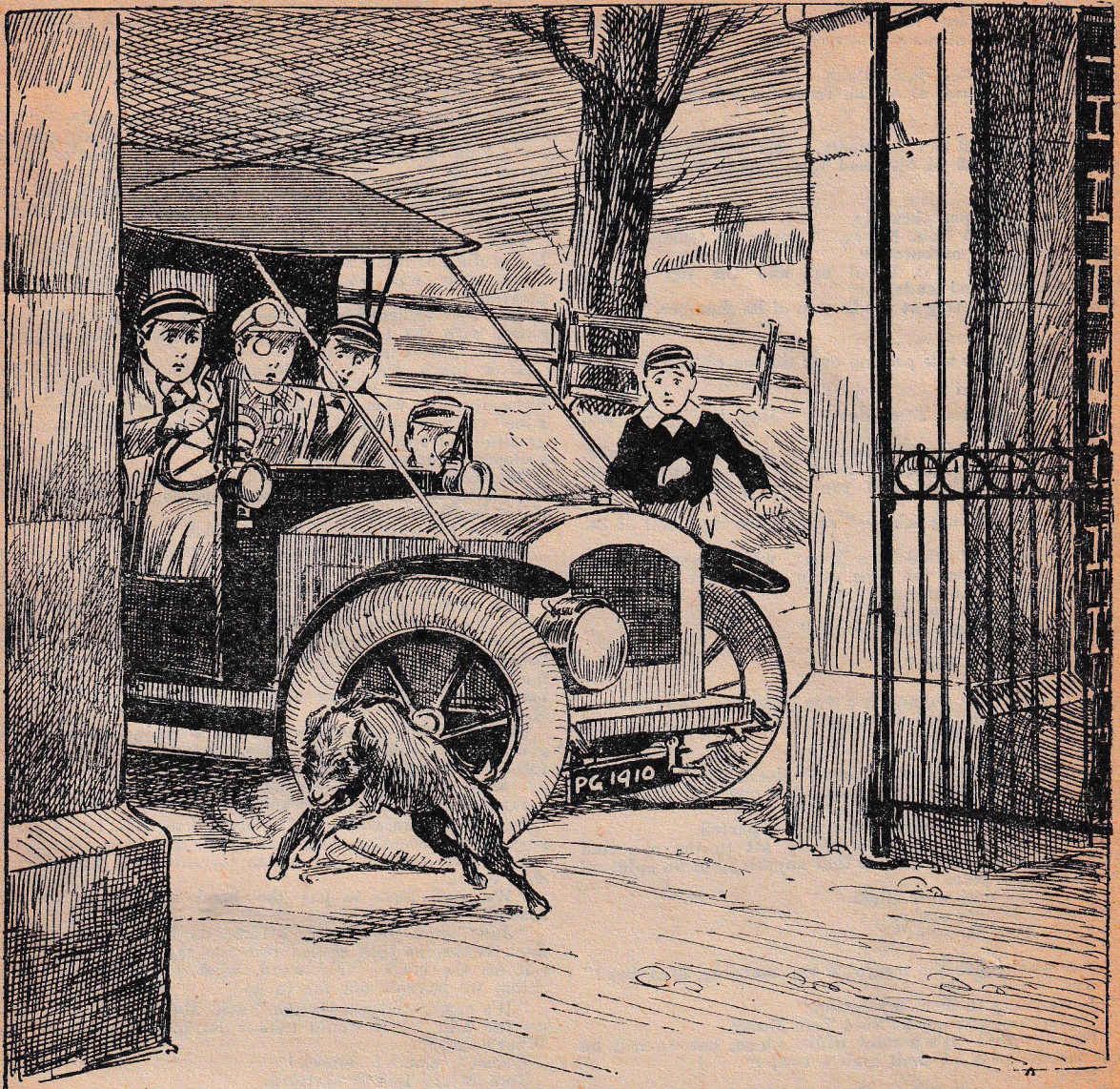
This put the swell of St. Jim's back up, and he fairly bristled.

"Wubbish! I shall twy again," he said, with a sniff.

Try he did, with a vengeance.

At last he had to give it up.

Jack Blake seized the handle eagerly, but although he put his back into it there was not the slightest sign of movement.



Tom Merry did the only thing that could be done to save Pongo's life. He whirled his steering-wheel sharply round, and jammed on both brakes.

"It's no good trying any more!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Let's have a look at the sparking-plug."

Up went the bonnet.

The swell of St. Jim's stepped forward hastily. He laid his hand on the brass thumb-screw.

"Wow!"

He drew his hand away as if he had been bitten.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the dickens is the matter with you?" exclaimed Jack Blake, in amazement. "Did you prick your finger?"

"Pwick my fingah! Wubbish! I got a shock—a feahful shock!"

Jack Blake looked incredulous.

"What, off that little screw!" he said, pointing at the top of the sparking-plug. "That can't— Oh! Ow!"

He had just touched it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!"

Then Tom Merry switched off the current.

"I'm surprised at you, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wottah! I believe you did it—"

"Shut up, there's a good chap," said Tom Merry. "Get me the spanner. We shall never get back at this rate."

The sparking-plug was removed and tested. It worked to perfection.

Tom Merry screwed it up again.

"Bai Jove!"

"What?"

"It must be the magneto!"

"There isn't such a thing, chump! Accumulators only."

The swell of St. Jim's thought again.

"Then it must be the cahbahwettah!"

Tom Merry looked doubtful.

"I don't like messing about with that thing," he said.

"Let's have a jolly good try again first."

Digby knelt down in the road.

"Perhaps something has got stuck underneath," he said valiantly. "I'll have a look!"

The juniors had not the faintest idea what he was going to look for, but it seemed to be the right thing to do. So before Tom Merry could protest he had wriggled beneath the car.

Tom Merry grinned, and took the precaution of jamming on the emergency brake hard.

"You get to the wheel, Gussy, and switch on. Don't touch the gear-lever, or we might start off. Dig's underneath. Now!"

Jack Blake gripped the starting-handle.

Tom Merry went to the tool-box at the back, and rummaged for the oilcan and screwdriver.

Bang!

"She's off!" yelled Jack Blake.

There was a burst of smoke from the exhaust-pipe, but that was all.

"Hoo—"

Digby scrambled out hurriedly. He was covered with dust, and the back of his head was a mass of grease and oil.

"Is she—"

The engine stopped abruptly.

"No go!" cried Tom Merry. "Come off, Gussy. We'll have a look at the carburettor."

The floor-board was lifted up, and the top of the carburettor removed tenderly.

The float was resting at the bottom of its chamber.

"Why!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was peering over the top of Tom Merry's shoulder.

"There's no—"

"Petrol!" shouted Tom Merry. "Jingo! I— Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to laugh at!" growled Jack Blake.

"There, I've been grinding away at that blessed handle about a million times, and you've forgotten to put the petrol in!"

"If it had been my cah—" commenced the swell of St. Jim's.

"Go it, Gussy!" cried Tom Merry, with a laugh. "Rub it in! What about the time when you forgot to put the plug back in your motor-bike—eh?"

Arthur Augustus was silent.

"Where can we get some petrol?"

"Rylcombe?"

"Yes, that's the best."

"Who's going?"

"Two had better go, and two stay," said Tom Merry.

"I'll go for one!" cried Digby.

"Good for you, Dig!"

"I'll make the other!"

"No you won't, Tom Merry!" declared Jack Blake.

"You're a silly chump, we know, but you and Gussy can stay and keep an eye on the car."

This was agreed upon, and the pair departed.

Arthur Augustus and Tom Merry sat in the car, and tried to show by their attitude that anything but an enforced stop had taken place.

For a while they were silent.

Presently D'Arcy spoke.

"I say, Tom Mewwy!"

"Yes?"

"You wemenbah the telegwam this morning, deah boy?"

"Yes."

"I am going to meet my cousin."

"Our cousin, you mean?" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, alright! It's a most widic ideah, but we will let that mattah pass. I shall hiah a twap!"

"Eh?"

Tom Merry eyed the swell of St. Jim's sharply.

"What's that?"

"I shall hiah a twap, deah boy," repeated Arthur Augustus easily. "Of course, that does not westwain you wottahs fwom comin' to the station with your cah; but, as a mattah of dig., Miss Cleveland will return with me. I think I shall take her for a twot wound if it's a fine aftahnoon. I believe it's goin' to be wathah wippin, don't you?"

"You—you—you image of wickedness!" roared Tom Merry. "You iniquitous young schemer! D'you mean to say that you've been sitting there hatching a plot to defraud us of Miss Cleveland? You reprobate!"

"I wefuse to be called a wewpobate, Tom Mewwy! Undah the circs., I shall wequest you to meet me in the gym. if you use such oppwobious expressions. I—"

"Rats!"

"I've—"

"Shut up! Here comes Jack Blake and Digby. I'll see what they have to say, and then we'll drive you to the nearest asylum. That is, of course, if there's anything left of you after you've been bumped. You're bound to be bumped first, you know!"

Arthur Augustus looked alarmed.

"I wefuse to be bumped!" he exclaimed, putting one leg over the side. "I—"

"Here, come back!" shouted Tom Merry. "You don't slide off like that! Woa!"

"You are wumplin' my waistcoat."

"Never mind about that; you'll get a strait one presently. Hi! Blake!"

Jack Blake and Digby came up at a run.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 105.

"Has he gone off again?" cried the former "'Cos, if so, I think we may as well truss him up and leave him in some field for the rest of the day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry explained D'Arcy's point of view.

Jack Blake promptly looked solemn.

"Quite out of the question!" he said decisively. "Of course we shall meet Cousin Ethel ourselves. Gussy can go for a ride by himself. Not a word, Arthur. You're ruled out of order!"

The swell of St. Jim's protested, argued, raged, but the three kept it up all the way to the Grammar School, Highcliffe, and all the way back to St. Jim's.

True, they only paid flying visits in each case, for Tom Merry did not think it wise to remain longer in the enemy's camp than was enough to exchange greetings—flying greetings.

They then returned to St. Jim's, and a general confab took place, with the result that Arthur Augustus and Figgins got their places in the motor.

After lunch, the car, laden with Figgins, Arthur Augustus, Jack Blake, and Tom Merry, started for Rylcombe, and when they arrived at the station and Cousin Ethel came tripping down the steps, Jack Blake won the gratitude of two juniors and the admiration of another by gallantly offering his seat.

Before they started off again, Cousin Ethel had to be told the history of the car, and then Figgins whispered a few words in Blake's ear.

"Then I'll walk back," he concluded.

"Right-ho, old son!" replied Jack Blake, as Tom Merry put in his clutch. "We'll change over when you come back. I'll meet you here with Manners."

Tom Merry piloted the motor to the little farmhouse where they had stopped with Mr. Evans, and Cousin Ethel's praises of both car and driver were fully justified, for she behaved in an exemplary manner. Not a hitch occurred to mar the trip, and it was with a feeling of pride that, four hours later, Tom Merry slowed up gently in front of Rylcombe Station.

There was five minutes to spare, and the juniors and their girl-chum chatted eagerly. They were full of plans for future excursions, and Cousin Ethel promised to come to so many outings and picnics that fulfilment of all the arrangements would have required a month of "halves."

Just as the train came in, it started to rain, but Figgins stuck to his intention, and Jack Blake and Manners got in.

Presently it began to pour in torrents, and Tom Merry shut down.

"We shall have to put the hood up, chaps, or get soaked!"

"Jolly good job it didn't come on before!" exclaimed Jack Blake, as they pulled into the side of the road and put up the hood. "My word, what a downpour! One thing, we haven't got far to go!"

"It's comfy enough, though," said Manners, as they sped up the hill. "It would take a lot of this to upset me. What's that?"

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Tom Merry looked alarmed.

"Some beastly thing's gone wrong," he said.

"Blessed if she isn't stopping!" cried Jack Blake. "It's not petrol this time, anyway!"

Tom Merry groaned. He did his best, but the pace became slower and slower.

The engine stopped.

The four looked at one another. It was getting late, and there would be ructions if they were not in by call-over.

They tumbled out into the rain, but although they spent half an hour in winding the handle until their arms ached, the engine refused to start.

Suddenly Tom Merry gave a shout of dismay.

"It's no good, chaps!" he cried.

"Why?"

"She's not buzzing! The accumulator's run down, and we're done in!"

"What are we going to do, then?" shouted Manners. "We can't push her home, and we must get back. Oh, this is rotten!"

A precious five minutes was spent in consultation, and at last they decided to abandon the car for a time. It was a lonely road, and there seemed nothing else to be done; but before they departed the juniors acted on D'Arcy's suggestion that they should make assurance that she would not be stolen, doubly sure, by removing the lamps and everything portable.

Jack Blake jacked up the back, and while the others were busy he removed one of the wheels.

"Well, I'm blessed!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the leader of Study No. 6 grinned gleefully. "I wonder you don't take the engine to pieces."

"Can't make too sure," replied Jack Blake sagely.  
"Ready?"

"Yes."

The little party trudged off, leaving the partly-dismantled car.

"Jolly hard luck I call this!" growled Manners. "I think we'd better call out the rest of the Form when we get back, and bring her home in bits."

For half a mile the four plodded along, then, without a word, Tom Merry turned round and retraced his steps.

The others stopped in amazement.

"Gone dotty!" exclaimed Jack Blake.

"What are you up to?" shouted Manners.

They ran after him.

Tom Merry sprinted ahead, and kept his lead until they were back again at the side of the car.

"What the——" panted Jack Blake.

Tom Merry pointed silently to a little black japanned box on the dashboard.

It was a portable electric light.

"Bai Jove!"

"Thump me, kick me, anything you like!" grunted Tom Merry. "I suddenly remembered. The thing contains an accumulator."

"Well, of all the chumps——" commenced Jack Blake. But he got no further, for he, too, remembered something. There was the wheel to put back.

In less than ten minutes everything was trim and taut again. Tom Merry exchanged the accumulators, and ran to the front.

It was as the sound of sweet music when the engine started off again.

"We shall do it now," cried Jack Blake, "and without exceeding that limit, either!"

"Taking things altogether," said Tom Merry, when, without further mishap, they came in sight of St. Jim's, "I think our little tour round has been a great success. I shall have to write to uncle to-night, and——"

Toot, toot, toot!

They were close to the gates of the college, and Tom Merry stopped talking as he turned out a bit to take the curve into the gates.

"In we go!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Hallo, who's that?"

A shrill and mocking "parp. parp" sounded ahead.

Some Third-Form kid.

"Young Wally!"

"I shall have to westwain that young bwothah of mine!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, peering ahead. "Bai Jove, he's got that w'etched mongwel with him!"

"Dunno which is the worse—*he* or Pongo!" grunted Manners. "Hallo! Look out!"

Pongo had suddenly taken it into his head to dart across the road.

The Third-Former's derisive imitation of Tom Merry's tooter changed to a cry of terror.

His four-footed chum was in terrible danger.

"Come back! Pongo! Stop!"

The dog seemed to be rushing to certain destruction.

The four juniors in the car turned white.

Pongo was right under their front wheels.

Jack Blake groaned.

But Tom Merry had all his wits about him. He whirled his steering-wheel sharply round, shut off his throttle, and jammed on both brakes. It was the only thing to be done to save the dog, and he knew what would follow.

Crash!

The sudden stop on the greasy road was too much, and the car simply skidded sideways.

Her bonnet struck the stone gate-pillar, and the shock nearly sent the three on the seat through the glass screen.

Manners was pitched off the step into the gutter.

"Wow!"

"Anybody hurt?" cried a man's voice.

"My hat! It's Railton!" muttered Jack Blake.

The House-master came running up.

"Are you right?" he shouted.

"Yes, I think so, sir!" replied Tom Merry, in rather a shaky voice.

"Thank Heaven!"

The juniors scrambled out.

Wally rushed at Tom Merry, grabbed him by the arm, and gulped. He could not speak at first.

"Jolly good of you, Tom Merry!" he gasped at last. "He—he would have been killed! He—— Oh, I'm sorry about the car."

"All right, kid, don't you worry!" exclaimed Tom Merry, giving the Third-Former a playful push. "I'd rather smash a dozen cars than run over Pongo! Bunk off now. Time all kids were in bed."

A hand was laid on his shoulder, and the chief of the Terrible Three looked up at Mr. Railton.

"I saw it all," said the House-master. "I'm proud of you, Tom Merry. You have a splendid nerve. I shall make it my duty and pleasure to place the whole facts before Dr. Holmes."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom Merry. "Of course, you needn't pile it on—I mean, you won't say anything about Wally's dog. It wasn't his fault, sir."

"It was nobody's fault, my boy," replied the master.

"Clearly a case of sheer accident; but the Head will have to hear all about it, otherwise I fear he will naturally prohibit the use of the car again."

"She'll be laid up as it is, sir."

"Is there much damage done?"

"Of course, I shall write to my patah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus as they examined the front of the car. "He will defray——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We'll send for Wilkes in the morning, and have her overhauled. I don't think there's really much harm done. A study whip round will cover that."

As examination proved, there was no serious damage beyond the bonnet; this was crushed and badly battered, and had to be sent away to Coventry before the chums could go motoring again.

"For the relief of a humdrum existence," said Manners, as he sat on the edge of his bed that night, "give me a moty-car. You never know what's going to turn up. Night-night, Monty. Don't forget to write up the account of Tom Merry's heroic deed for the 'Weekly.' Better call it 'Pongo's Peril.' Ha, ha! Wow!"

"I'll give you 'Wow!' if you don't shut up!" cried Tom Merry, coming behind and gripping his chum round the neck with one arm. "Now, then, are you——"

"Y-yes! Pax!" gasped Manners. "Pax, fathead!"

And pax it was, for that night, at least.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. next Thursday, entitled "Honour Bright," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy of the "Gem" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

# "THE MAGNET"

LIBRARY.

1D.

NOW ON SALE!

Contains a Grand Double-Length School Tale of Harry Wharton and Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT THURSDAY:

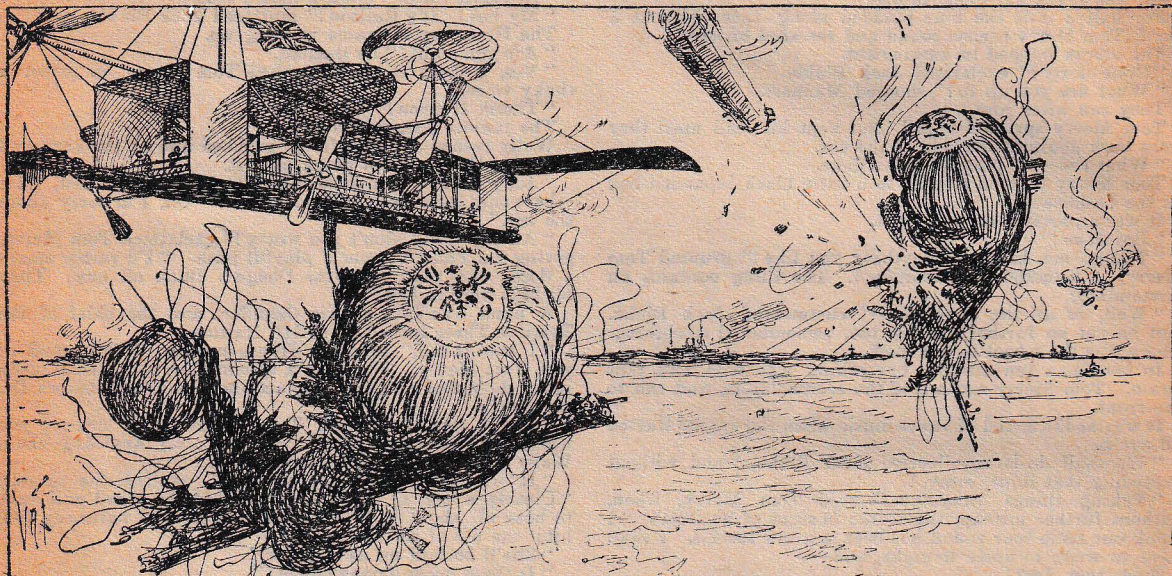
"HONOUR BRIGHT."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Please tell your Friends about this Story.

# A Powerful War Story—By JOHN TREGELLIS



## BRITAIN'S REVENGE

### THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS ARE:

**AUBREY VILLIERS**, nicknamed Sam Slick. A lad who has performed wondrous service for his country in her time of need, during the terrible invasion by the Germans.

**STEPHEN VILLIERS**, his brother. He is Sam's companion in all his exploits.

The two boys form part of the crew of the *Condor*, a wonderful airship invented by John Carfax. The airship has been brought quickly to Russia at the instigation of Harrington Carfax, the inventor's brother, who has a scheme for getting possession of the Tsar's person, in order to prevent Russia from joining Germany against England.

The scheme succeeds, and the hostile alliance is prevented. John Carfax then makes arrangements for proceeding with the *Condor* and her sister ship, the *Eaglet*, to assist the British forces at Oldesloe, where a battle is imminent. Harrington Carfax therefore leaves the *Condor*, to return to his home in Hampshire.

(Now go on with the story.)

### The Voyage of the Airships.

The others had no time to regret the loss of Harrington. They threw themselves into the work of getting the two airships ready for the voyage, and most had to be done to the *Eaglet* in her locked shed. The principal business was the storage, and, with great care and ingenuity, a very large quantity of picric acid and nitro-glycerine was put on board the *Eaglet*. She was regularly stacked with it. Carfax would not give the reason.

"She's a regular magazine of explosives!" said Stephen, when the work was done. "There'll be no room for any arms on board her."

"She will want none," said Carfax, coming out of the shed. "I hope the sky will remain clouded," he added. "It is important we should start directly in the dark, and that the *Eaglet's* departure shall not be noticed."

"Do you mean to say nobody knows the *Eaglet's* here?"

"None except ourselves. She arrived by night, as I told you, and has been closely guarded in this shed ever since."

The night fell quickly, and Carfax made his arrangements. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

The *Condor* was to rise up into the skies with her utmost speed, and await her consort.

She did so.

With her full crew aboard, she swooped away into the darkness as quickly and swiftly as a bat.

Two miles away, at a height of over two thousand feet, she poised and waited.

The *Eaglet*, twenty minutes later, glided out of her shed, and rose much more slowly. The *Condor* showed a small flashlight twice, and the *Eaglet*, making no reply to the signal, steered towards it, and halted close alongside her sister ship.

"Were you seen to leave?" called Carfax.

"I think not, sir," replied Dudley, from the *Eaglet's* bridge; "but if we were, they took us for the *Condor*. Nobody saw you go. We couldn't ourselves. It was so dark, and you were away like a flash."

"All right. Keep station twenty lengths behind us, and stand by to rise higher if we signal. Should the sky clear, we shall have to mount another thousand feet."

The two aeroplanes settled down to their voyage, the *Condor* not exceeding a speed of forty miles an hour, for that was the utmost pace at which the laden *Eaglet* could travel. Even so, Carfax said, her engines would never be fit for much again.

"I'm glad she's not likely to bump into us," said Stephen. "If that cargo of explosives got touched off, I should say it would shake half the stars loose, and chip chunks off the moon!"

There were neither stars nor moon visible, for that matter, and the long night voyage passed without incident. Both the boys turned in and slept early in the night. Carfax was somewhat anxious, for the reduced speed at which they had to travel gave them very little time to spare, and everything, he said, depended on their reaching the British lines before dawn.

When the boys were called it was still dark. The *Eaglet* was following like a dim shadow, and of the earth far below hardly anything could be seen, save for one or two narrow pencils of light that played to and fro.

"What are those?" asked Stephen.

"German military searchlights," answered Carfax. "We are right over General Von Strelsau's army. Oldesloe is

away to the left. Now we're passing over the River Trave. If it were daylight, you would see both the entrenched armies."

"By Jove! We've travelled better than I thought," said Sam. "You're going right over the top of them, sir?"

"Yes. We have no time to make a detour, for it will soon be day. It is too dark yet for them to see us or the Eaglet. Soon we shall be over General Blake's forces beyond."

For another ten minutes the two airships forged along, leaving the miles behind them, and the boys wishing greatly that they could penetrate the blackness and see what lay below. But the height was too great, even for night-glasses.

Presently the Condor halted, and the Eaglet ran close alongside her.

"We part here," called Carfax to Dudley, who was on the Eaglet's bridge. "You will go right on beyond the British position, twenty miles to their rear."

"Yes, sir."

"You have your full instructions. Your calculations have got to be absolutely accurate when you act. There must be no mistake."

"There shall be none, sir."

"Very good. Go ahead!"

The Eaglet sped along into the darkness, and the Condor waited till she had gone.

"We will now descend, and get what information we can from the general," said Carfax. "Stand by, Hugh?"

The Condor came down several hundred feet. She flashed a signal two or three times, and dropped lower yet.

A huge bivouac could dimly be made out stretching far beneath her, and, choosing her place as well as she could, she came lightly to the ground.

"It's the Condor! By Jove!" cried a staff officer, hurrying to the spot with an escort. "I knew it must be. Is that you, Mr. Carfax?"

"Yes. I want to see General Blake at once."

"I'll take you right to his tent. This way."

Carfax took Sam with him, leaving the others with the Condor, and they soon reached the guarded headquarters' tent.

General Blake, looking as alert and keen as ever, but very war-worn, welcomed them enthusiastically.

"This is a surprise!" he said. "I thought you were in the south, Mr. Carfax; and I know what splendid service you've done there. But there's no betting on where the Condor may turn up—eh? What news?"

"All has gone well so far. How do we stand here?"

Carfax and the general plunged into the details of the position, and held a short but very pithy consultation over the map.

"I know that the more I tell you the better," said Blake. "Knowledge is power in your hands. I hope for a big success here; but I'm outnumbered, and am not blind to the great risks I run. Privately, it's the German guns that do me. I cannot get at the beggars as I'd like, because of those batteries. We're under-gunned. I've shown you how things lie. But for that, I'd be across the river, with my bulldogs at Von Strelsau's throat. If I have to fall back, as you can see, it will be a disaster."

"Yes," cried Carfax. "But, with a fair field, I think I can clear those guns out of your way an hour after dawn."

"Do you mean that?" exclaimed Blake, rising.

"I do. There's no time to explain it now. A hint or two, that's all. If I miss my time, the chance is gone for good. Now, where can I lay the Condor unseen, right away behind the German position, so as I can watch? I don't know this country well. A small wood on the crest of a hill, and out of reach of their scouts, will do."

General Blake gave him the choice of two places at once, and they consulted two minutes longer.

"Very good," said Carfax, preparing to go. "If the Condor's still in existence—which will be quite certain—I shall be with you again about nine o'clock."

Accompanied by Sam, he returned quickly to the Condor, and away they rose again, higher than ever, and sped back to the southward over the German lines.

"By Jove! There's the east lightning!" said Carfax. "We're only just in time!"

Where the airship was going, the boys had no idea. She began to descend presently, and they saw the tops of pine-trees below them. Then, with great care, the vessel settled gently down among the trees, and rested on the ground.

"Take a stalk round, and see if the neighbour's clear," said Carfax.

Sam and Stephen left the car, and did some rapid scouting work through the woods and among the rocks. They returned and reported the place quite clear of all intruders. But where they were neither could have told.

The lightning dawn presently showed them. Slowly the

young day grew over the landscape, and they saw that the Condor was resting on the very fringe of a pine-wood at the top of a hill, a good long way behind the rear of the Germans. On the hilly plains below, Von Strelsau's entrenched forces were facing the river, beyond which lay the British legions.

"We're well at the back of them all," said Carfax, "and nearest the Germans. Good view, isn't it?"

Sam was amazed to see how vast were the numbers of the opposing armies.

Both had been reinforced heavily since he had left the North. As it became broad daylight, the battle opened, and soon the guns were beginning to roar on both sides.

### The Last Voyage of the Eaglet.

"Now you can see the German batteries, sir!" cried Stephen, "all in a line under the brow of the heights!"

It was true. There were many other guns, but the artillery that menaced the British troops most could be seen fairly plain from where the Condor was. Its formidable nature was evident.

"That's what we've got to tackle," said Carfax. "Look to your bomb-guns, Sam. Hugh, you'll be called on at short notice. I hope," he added, in a lower tone, "that I don't leave the Condor's bones yonder."

The sharp duel of the guns increased, and the German batteries kept up a continuous roar. The British Field Artillery was replying, and the vicious puffs from the shells dotted the air and the plain. On all sides the long roll of musketry poured forth.

"My word, aren't they hammering each other!" said Stephen.

"Blake is in a tighter place than he cared to own to me last night, it seems," said Carfax, half to himself. "If he—"

"Hallo! What's yonder?" exclaimed Stephen.

Far away in the sky, beyond the German position, and beyond the British, too, a tiny oblong speck could be seen. It was travelling rapidly, becoming nearer and larger, and soon it was seen to be an aeroplane.

"It's the Eaglet!" cried Sam.

"Yes, the Eaglet," answered Carfax quietly. "On her last voyage. I told you she would be sacrificed where she could do most good."

"Sacrificed? Why, she's going right over the Germans!" ejaculated Stephen, "and low down. Won't their guns reach her?"

"Surely," said the aeronaut, "we shall see, too, how those new rangefinders for bombarding ships will work in practice. The Germans have adopted them. But that is by the way."

His coolness amazed the boys. The Eaglet, at no great height, and at a moderate pace, came straight on towards the German position. The whole army was watching it, and the surprise and excitement could be guessed at.

"They'll think they've got her now!" cried Stephen.

"Yes," said Carfax. "But does it not occur to you whom they take her for?"

"For the Condor! For us!" exclaimed Sam, a light flashing in upon him.

"By James! They don't know there are two Condors out, of course!" said his brother.

"And they count on wiping us out," said Carfax, with a grim smile—"their greatest foe. A triumph to them, eh? See, they're at her now."

To the amazement of the boys, the Eaglet had halted. The great aeroplane hung poised over the German forces, motionless and silent, as if in menace.

Every gun in the whole army was turned on her. Consternation reigned on all sides, for the terrible defeats she had inflicted in the past were fresh in men's memories.

Yet, it seemed that they had her now. To their eyes, it was as if she had broken down, and could no longer manoeuvre. And the new rangefinders, directed especially against aeroplanes, were now in use against her.

The first shots went wide. Then a shell struck the after platform of the Eaglet, and wrecked it. Still she hovered, steady and silent, her fans revolving. Other shells went through the light part of her framework, and riddled it with holes.

"Good heavens, sir!" cried Sam, speech flung from him, in spite of himself. "Her crew! What of her crew? Can she do nothing?"

The aeronaut made no reply, but watched with a cool, impassive face. Then a shell struck the Eaglet's deckhouse full amid her freight of deadly explosives, and the end came.

There was a crash that seemed to split the very heavens apart, an explosion in mid-air, the blast of which shook the army below as reeds are shaken by the wind, and the Eaglet was blown into a million pieces.

### The Condor and the Batteries.

The roar of the explosion made even the framework of the Condor quiver, though she was a full mile and a half away. Used as they were to stupendous blows dealt in the war of giants, the young scouts were stricken speechless by the magnitude of this one.

At one stroke the big aeroplane was blotted from the sky, and the army beneath staggered at the force of the blow. Through the glasses the consternation among the Germans, especially those within the range of the explosion could be plainly seen. It had been too high up to cause much actual destruction, but the effect of it was none the less tremendous.

"She's gone! But what of the crew—Dudley and Marten?" cried Sam, for he felt the sacrifice was too cold-blooded, merciless though Carfax was. But nobody heeded Sam. The Condor was already lifting from the ground.

"They think they've rid themselves of us!" cried Stephen. "They believe it's the Condor they've wiped out!"

"They'll find their mistake now," said Kenneth quietly. "The guns, there!" ordered Carfax, in a ringing voice.

"Man the bomb-guns. To your places, Sam and Hugh!"

Up went the Condor over the tops of the pines, and then, with a swift rush, she made straight for the German position, like a wolf dashing down upon a herd of goats.

Carfax did not expose his vessel at first to the Germans, but glided across the valley at a low elevation, rising and falling with the conformation of the ground, and came behind the ridge of hills on the left, which now sheltered him from view of the enemy.

Gliding along behind the rearmost crest of these hills, he came up to the point where they ended. Then, skimming round the corner of the ridge, he darted right into the German position.

"Take the batteries, as I instructed you!" called Carfax sharply.

So quickly had the advance been made that the shock of the Eaglet's explosion was hardly over when the Condor showed herself. There was a pause, and then a great shout of amazement from the Germans.

They had believed their terrible enemy to be blotted out of existence, yet there was the airship herself right upon them, as if the exploded vessel had returned to life, and was striking a second blow. It was all done in the flash of an eye.

Not only was the Condor attacking, but instead of being far up in the skies, or poised over them as an easy mark for their artillery, she was right in their midst, and low down, hardly twenty feet above the ground. Moreover, she was moving at the speed of a fast railway train.

The vast entrenched army suddenly burst upon the view of the boys like a panorama. Almost before they knew it, they were skimming over the heads of hordes of riflemen and sections of Engineers and Sappers, swiftly as a swallow.

But it was the line of heavy batteries ahead, under the brow of the ridge that was the goal of the Condor. They had annihilated her sister ship, and now their turn had come.

Almost before a trigger could be drawn the airship was upon them. Stephen heard the shouting and the confusion, saw Carfax, as cool as a fish, upon the ridge, and Sam and Hugh standing tense and alert at the bomb-guns, the levelling-levers and cranks grasped in their hands.

The German batteries seemed to be rushing wildly towards them, so rapid and steady was the Condor's passage. The Prussian gunners could be seen hastily swinging their long barrels round, but the heavy guns were too cumbersome to meet such a swift attack at close quarters. The Condor was within eighty yards of the nearest within ten seconds.

"Fire!" cried Carfax.

The two centre bomb-guns spoke together, their deep, barking note drowning the shouting, and the heavy missiles struck their mark. The result was devastating. There was a roar and a flash, and the battery was scattered to the winds.

Guns and men were sent flying, and as the choking smoke cleared, the ruins of the battery could be seen through a yellow haze. The powerful bombs had done their work. The very earth was torn up, shattered wood and iron strewn the scene, and one long gun was sticking muzzle downwards in the earth a dozen yards from where it had stood before the shot.

The Condor's crew saw little of this. Before the noise of the bombs had died away, she had darted onwards through the smoke, and was hurling her missiles at the next battery, fifty yards beyond. The quick-firing bomb-guns did their work with the same deadly swiftness and precision, and the airship sped onwards to the next, her guns drumming ceaselessly as she went.

The confusion was fearful. From somewhere beyond a light shell was hurled at the Condor, followed by two others, but none touched her. The low-skimming vessel was a most difficult target to hit, and as she was right in the midst of

the position, the German shells were bound to deal destruction among their own side. The blows were dealt before the German general, half a mile away on the height, had time to realise what was happening.

"Keep cool! Let 'em have it, and shoot straight!" cried Carfax.

One of the German guns in the sixth battery was swung hastily, and discharged right in the Condor's face, as it seemed. But the aim was too hasty, for the big field guns are not intended for snapshots, and the big shell howled past the airship, missing her by a couple of feet. Next moment the gun and all its fellows were burst into scrap-iron.

The heavy bombs, that had blown solid boulders to pieces the day before at Tournay, made easy work of the batteries. To tell the tale of the Condor's onslaught takes some minutes, but the deed itself was a matter of seconds.

Like some great destroying angel she sped over the lines of batteries, hurling one after the other into eternity. Rifle bullets sang about her, rapping through her framework, or rattling on the wrought-steel plates, but the smoke and the speed she travelled gave her little to fear from these.

There were ten batteries, and of these the eighth was missed, only one gun in it being overturned. The ninth and tenth were demolished, as the others had been, and even as the final bomb was fired, the Condor put on her utmost speed, and left the stricken field behind.

Darting behind the ridge, she then made one of her mighty swoops skywards, and dwindled away into a speck before the foe could recover from the shock. She came, conquered, and departed in the time it takes to form up a column of horse, transport-waggons.

The guns of the eighth battery—the only one spared—made a desperate effort to align themselves in time, and hurled a couple of shells after her. They were not so very wide of the mark, but it was almost as hopeless as firing at a skyrocket to attempt to hit the Condor during one of her lightning ascents into the clouds. She mounted a full two thousand feet, and then slowed to a steady pace, and headed towards the British lines, her duty accomplished.

"Well done, gunners!" cried Carfax. "Sam and Hugh, my best congratulations! Your shooting was wonderful!"

"It was easy enough, sir," said Hugh; "the guns handle so well. I'm sorry we missed the eighth battery; I fear that was my fault. I jammed the centre bomb-gun, and had to change the left-hand one."

"I've seen the Condor do some extraordinary pieces of work," said Stephen, who looked quite dazed; "but I think that beats any. Von Strelsau has lost his guns, anyhow, and our general's worst trouble is wiped off."

"I hardly know where I am," said Sam, stepping back from the guns and wiping his forehead. His face was rather white. "Things have moved so quickly this last half-hour. The Eaglet—"

"Except for her destruction and the surprise it enabled us to give the Germans directly afterwards, we might not have done so well," said Carfax.

"It was touch and go, running right in among the enemy like that, and one shell striking home would have made an end—"

"Of the Condor, and the whole lot of us," put in Kenneth.

"As it was we were enabled to catch them on the hop," added Carfax. "I told you, I would make the Eaglet's end a useful one, since she was not worth keeping up."

"Yes, sir; and you have," said Sam rather grimly. "But I'm thinking of her crew. They were good chaps. I've nothing to say if the sacrifice was necessary, and human life doesn't count for much in war. But I think—"

Carfax smiled.

"There was nobody aboard the Eaglet," he said.

"What!" exclaimed Sam and Stephen together.

Kenneth laughed, and glanced at his fellow-assistant.

"How on earth did she go over the German lines in mid-air?" Sam asked amazed.

"It is simple enough. You know the perfection of our machinery, and the precision with which everything is done?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Neither Dudley nor Marten were on the Eaglet. They had their instructions. They came up to the back of the British lines just before daybreak. They knew the exact distance she needed to travel. The two of them then adjusted her machinery in such a way as to mount to a certain height, travel that distance, and then stop."

"By Jove! I see!" said Sam wonderingly. "Like a piece of clockwork!"

"Well, something in that way. Her fans, propellers, and engines were all adjusted. So they turned her loose, to rise and travel eight miles at a steady pace, which brought her over the centre of the Germans, with her load of explosives. Then she stopped, and the Germans' guns did the rest."

"It's an absolute stunner!" said Stephen admiringly.



"Then Dudley and Marten are all this time safe in the British trenches."

"Exactly!"  
"A fellow would have to get up early to catch you out, sir," said Sam, with a relieved smile. "I wish I'd known it an hour ago, for I was imagining our two friends were being blown to bits."

"I would have told you," said Carfax, laughing, "only I did not think you would believe me simple enough to sacrifice two useful lives in a mere experiment, to say nothing of one of them being my son. No, no. I do not count the cost of a man's life—my own or others—if it must be sacrificed for the good of his country, but I do not waste two highly-trained aeronauts in such an affair as that. Another Eaglet is soon built, but good men are not so cheap."

"I ought to have known, sir. But, seeing her come up like that, it never occurred to me she could be without a crew. Well, we've had a brisk morning of it, and all at the cost of a few bullet-holes through the frames. Those guns are trumps, sir, as you said. Where are we bound now?"

"Back to General Blake, to get our next job."  
"He ought to be pleased with us," said Stephen.  
"Yes; we've rid him of his worst trouble, and he'll have a fair field now, though the odds are still against him in numbers. It'll be a hot fight, but I will back him to get across the Trave. Look! They're hard at it already!"

The Condor, indeed, was no sooner clear of the German position than General Blake's forces opened the ball again, and the two armies were soon hammering at each other furiously. The numbers engaged were immense, and the roar of musketry and drumming of machine-guns filled earth and sky.

### The Victory at Oldesloe.

The airship was now passing high over the river, and the boys looked eagerly down at the great panorama of the fight. The scenes were shifting rapidly. General Blake was moving more than half his forces steadily forward and outward in a well-planned manœuvre, and the Germans were strengthening their position.

"Look! Blake's got the Sappers down the river at last!" cried Stephen. "They're throwing pontoon-bridges across like anything!"

"He's lost no time!" said Sam enthusiastically. "He's the sort of chap to fight under. The Engineers couldn't do bridging work when all these batteries are able to sweep 'em down with shrapnel, but they've got the chance now. I'll bet the forces'll have each other at the bayonet's point within an hour!"

The great fight was waging fiercely now, and sections of the Royal Engineers, all at the same time, were bridging the river. They were under a galling fire the whole time, and many fell, but a battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment and four of the Fusiliers, and two other line regiments, together with many Maxims, were giving them all the protection possible.

General Blake's artillery kept the remaining German guns busy, and prevented them as much as could be done from shelling the Engineers. The Germans still had many light batteries left, apart from the heavy ones the Condor had destroyed, and as for the long trenches of riflemen they were blazing with musketry-fire all along the line on both sides.

Many of the smart Sappers fell, for the Germans strained every nerve to stop their work, as well they might, but the bridge-makers worked on through it all with indomitable pluck, while the battle raged on every side.

Even as the two scouts watched, however, the Condor completed her short passage, and wheeling high over the British forces, went to their rear and circled down to the earth.

General Blake, with his staff, had taken up his position on a high rise of ground, whence he could direct the whole operations. He was standing with his aide-de-camps and gallopers ready near him, the field telegraph close at hand, and was watching keenly through his binoculars, and giving his orders. Despite the great issue that hung upon the fight, he was as cool as Carfax himself.

The Condor came down at the back of the hill, out of reach of any stray shell that might cripple her, and Carfax and the young scouts at once joined Blake's staff.

"Welcome, Carfax!" cried the general, lowering his glasses for a moment. "I owe you and your youngsters a thousand thanks for what you have done! It was magnificent, sir! I never saw anything like it!"

"Glad to be of use, general. You'll have no further trouble with the batteries now," said Carfax.

"You've unlocked the door for me, sir," said Blake; "and I'll warrant you I'll carry the day now. They've still got their regular field-guns, but we can deal with those. Our colours will go forward soon."

He turned to give several quick orders, and the three

companions from the Condor watched the fight with absorbing interest for some time. So great a scale was it on that even Sam, used as he was to campaigning, could hardly grasp the plan of it. Yet the general handled it all as calmly as if he was playing chess, and found time to speak to his allies of the Condor between times.

"Are my two juniors, Dudley and Marten, both safe here?" asked Carfax, as soon as he could.

"Yes, your son saw me, according to your orders, just after he sent off that other vessel of yours, the Eaglet. I am getting used to your ways, Carfax, but I could hardly believe my—my ears. However, we saw for ourselves that the Eaglet brought it off all right, and we saw her blow up, too. By Jove, sir, we felt the shock of it even over here! Your assistants are with the heliograph on the next hill; but they'll be on their way here now they've seen you arrive."

Dudley and his companion, indeed, turned up a minute or two later, and Carfax congratulated them both warmly on the part they had played. There was little time now, however, to attend to anything but the battle itself, which was becoming more critical and exciting every moment. Sam, who was immensely keen on military tactics and strategy, watched every move with the greatest fascination. He was content, for once, to stand aside and watch; but Stephen's excitement and impatience were intense.

"Look! There are the Fusiliers pushing ahead," he cried, "and the Seaforth Highlanders up yonder on the left! They'll be in the forefront of it when the advance is made! Hang it, Sam, are we to stay here kicking our heels, out of it all?"

Sam himself was eager enough to push on and join one of the foremost corps, but the general shook his head.

"You've done your share," he said. "Be content with that. An extra couple of rifles will make no difference to the enemy."

"Yes," said Carfax; "I can't spare you two to be bowled over by bullets down at the front just now. You must stay here; I may want you at any moment."

The brothers had to obey, and they saw that Carfax was right. Stephen covered his impatience with a grunt.

"Besides, you would see nothing whatever of what was going on, except smoke and dust. From up here you'll see the whole of a battle that will be famous for the next five hundred years, and know you've had a big share in the winning of it. It won't last much longer if our lads get their chance."

"The German guns are slowing down! Our field batteries are pounding 'em!" cried Stephen, his glasses to his eyes.

The guns of the two armies were about equal now, but the British batteries were better handled, and changed their positions quicker. A furious artillery duel that lasted a full hour resulted in the gradual silencing of Von Strelsaus's guns.

Meanwhile, the rifle-fire on both sides was murderous, and the losses were heavy. The Germans were suffering most, however, and General Blake handled his forces with consummate skill, moving them forward place by place whenever they were able to gain ground.

By degrees, fighting his way by long-range fire, and by the use of his guns, he brought his army forward, so that it could the more easily and skilfully be thrown across the river for the final attack.

To describe every move and strategy of the great battle would take too long, save in a military text-book. General Blake was a genius in the art of war, and he made no mistakes. Enough it is to say that, with a force less in numbers than that of the Germans, he fairly outmanœuvred them and drove them back.

The losses on the enemy's side were terrific. Sam, watching through his glasses, saw the trenches devastated by the British shrapnel fire as soon as the German guns were silenced, and the lines of spike-helmeted infantry torn and broken by the rifle-fire from Blake's line regiments and Highlanders.

The Irish Fusiliers, as well as the Northumberlands, were sent right forward in a dangerous position on the left flank, and, having made it good, they poured such a hail of death into the three Hanover regiments next them across the river that the latter had at last to retire as best they could, after fearful losses. It was a sign for a general retreat.

The Germans, demoralised by all that had already happened, and getting it hotter every moment, could hold out no longer. More than one regiment was practically wiped out, and all had suffered heavily. They were still strong in numbers, though broken up.

"They're giving way," cried Stephen, "all along the line!"

"The time's come," muttered General Blake, with one last sweep round of his glasses. "Sound the advance!" he said aloud.

Clear and sharp the bugles rang out, each taking the call from the other all along the miles of front. The Seaforths,

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

in the place of honour, rushed down to the centre pontoon bridges with a cheer, their bayonets glittering in the morning sun. Hard behind them came the Welsh regiment, its ranks of hardy sunburnt Celts as keen for the fray as hounds on the scent of a deer.

They were met by a withering fire from the centre Prussian trenches, and a very pestilence of bullets swept the bridge. The khaki-clad soldiers of King Edward fell fast, but nothing could stop them. The foe was where they wished to find him—before their bayonets.

At the next bridge the Cheshires, Lincolns, and a battalion of Fusiliers were already dashing over in the face of a fire no less galling. But for the constant shelling of the Prussian trenches by Blake's guns no flesh and blood could have crossed those bridges in the face of such hosts. Even now, only such soldiers as the Empire breeds could do it, and they won their way across.

"They're over!" shouted Sam, one hand gripping his revolver convulsively, while he watched through his glasses.

"Oh, why aren't we there?"

The roar of the cheering as each regiment charged rose high above the musketry's rattle. It was not only in the centre that the attack was being made. Blake was moving both his flanks in with consummate skill far on either side.

On the extreme left the Irish Fusiliers had the place of honour, the most perilous spot in the whole advance. They won their way across the pontoons in the teeth of a storm of lead from a section of Prussian Maxims that had been brought to bear, and the bridges were strewn with dead. The gallant regiment would have been nearly annihilated, for it would not check or give back an inch, had not the British field-guns behind concentrated themselves on the Maxims, and silenced them with a hurricane of cordite shell.

"It's the last lap!" said Sam, quivering with eagerness. "They'll come to grips now! By James, what a fight!"

There was no holding back the British troops now. At all three points they poured over the river. The guns behind them ceased fire, lest they should kill friends as well as foes.

### The Messenger With Bad Tidings.

The Germans rose up to do battle. It had come to the cold steel at last. Cheer upon cheer, whole regiments shouting as one man, rang along the line of the advance. With a good grip of their bayonets, the men in khaki rushed up the slope to the trenches. They fell fast in the ragged fire that met them, and then the forces met.

It was a race between the Highlanders and the Lincolns to be first in the assault, and a few moments later they burst upon the Prussian trenches in one long wave of khaki and steel. Along the centre and the flanks the British regiments met the green-clad hordes of the Kaiser in a deadly struggle.

"The Hanover regiments are breaking!" shouted Stephen. "The Irish Fusiliers have got 'em by the short hairs! They're stamping them under foot!"

His quick eyes had caught the break on the front. There was a confused melee, where the Hanovers fought desperately with the Irish, and then the latter passed over the trenches like a billow sweeping over a breakwater, half their foes down and the rest scattering for their lives. Straight onward went the gallant Irishmen, to where the upper row of trenches lay, hardly checking in their rush.

The Scaforth's at the same time overwhelmed the centre trenches, and on each flank Blake's forces swept over the already shaken ranks of Von Strelsau's men. It was a day of ill omens for the Germans. Their boast, till then, was that they were the finest trained troops in Europe; but in the face of the men in khaki they could not make that boast good. They broke and scattered, after a desperate struggle to beat the British back.

Von Strelsau, from his post on the hill, saw that the day was lost, and that he must save what he could of his command. All along the plain the German bugles were crying "Retire!"

It was more than a retreat, it was a rout. The Kaiser's legions were pouring over the ridges in full flight. Even now General Blake had one last blow in reserve. Two extra pontoons had bridged the river half a mile to the right, and across these poured two squadrons of light cavalry.

Like a flash they tore across the open ground, and fell on the flank of the hastening Germans. In ten minutes four whole battalions were cut up and scattered. When at last the flying foe had made good their escape, fully one half of Von Strelsau's army were lying dead or wounded on the field. The trenches were piled and packed with dead, and the remnants of the German legions were pouring helter-skelter to the southward.

"The day is ours!" cried Sam. "We've taught them a lesson they'll never forget!"

"All's well!" said General Blake quietly, lowering his glasses. "Britain still holds the lead!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

NEW BOOK

THE EMPIRE LIBRARY.

On Sale: TUESDAY, FEB. 15th.

The victory gained, the remainder of the army, the reserves and transport, crossed the river, and a strong position was quickly taken up. General Blake, now monarch of all he surveyed, made himself master of the site the Germans had quitted, and threw out his advance parties and scouts to make ready for the forward march. His troops had well earned their rest.

The ambulances were quickly at work, and two civilian hospital corps were allowed in at once, for there was much for them to do. Then came the welcome bivouac, and the tired and hungry heroes were well content to lie and listen to the bubbling of the camp mess-kids on the fires.

The Fusiliers—to which regiment the two young scouts were supposed to belong, as far as they belonged to anything—were right up at the far end, so Sam and Stephen took their meal with the Seaforths.

The big Highlanders made them welcome, and the boys were bombarded with questions about the Condor. While they were resting, half an hour after the meal the airship herself turned up, Carfax and his crew bringing her over from beyond the river. She came in steadily, and settled to the ground near where General Blake and his staff had taken up their quarters.

"We'd better go over and see if we're wanted," said Sam; and the boys took leave of their genial hosts and departed. They found Kenneth and Hugh leisurely patching up some of the bullet-holes that had been made in the framework that morning.

It was just then that a messenger on a sweating and nearly fundered horse came spurting in through the lines, and hurriedly delivered a despatch to General Blake. The old soldier read it, and a frown grew upon his face. He struck his thigh with his fist impatiently.

"Confound it!" he said, under his breath. "This is a deuce of a fix!"

He stood thinking for some minutes, his frown growing deeper.

"No bad news, I hope?" said Carfax, who was standing beside him.

"Yes, confoundedly bad. We've had one big success to-day, and here's something of the other sort for a change," said the general, biting his moustache.

"Anything I can help in?"

"I don't see how you can. It's this way. Colonel Sherstone, who is acting as brigadier in command of three regiments and a battery, should have joined me by this afternoon with his men. I have a message to say he's held in check fourteen miles west of here by a much larger body of Prussians, and is in a very tight place indeed."

"That's bad."

"It is, because there's a strong force of German light infantry between him and us as well, and he stands a good chance of being wiped up."

"Can't you rescue him?"

"Yes, I can; but it will be a long job, and will interfere with my plans most fearfully. I ought to be pushing on to the south without fail. Besides, I can't split my forces up. We shall all have to go, and expose ourselves badly, too, from the nature of the country. It will give Von Strelsau a chance to get his own back. And yet I can't leave Colonel Sherstone to his fate, or lose the reinforcements he has for me."

Carfax nodded.

"I see. You're in an awkward fix."

"One that may make an immense difference to the campaign," said General Blake, with a heavy frown. And he explained to Carfax exactly how Sherstone was placed.

"Well, look here, general," said Carfax; "I will free Sherstone and his brigade for you, and clear the way for him to join you."

"By Jove! Can you do it?" exclaimed the general.

"I think so."

General Blake stared at him in astonishment. Then, biting his moustache in perplexity, he thought for a full minute.

"It's an immense responsibility for me to take," he said; "but be it so. I have learned to trust you, Carfax, and it seems to me there are no limits to the wonders the Condor and her crew can perform. I leave the matter in your hands, then, and I shall press on to the southward at once."

"Then there is no time to lose," said Carfax, striding towards the airship. "I bid you au revoir, general. Aboard with you, lads, quickly! Up with her, Kenneth, and away!"

The Condor rose, whirring into the clouds, and as the earth faded away below her Carfax turned to his crew.

"Lads," he said, "we must strain every nerve upon this errand, and not spare ourselves. Three thousand lives depend on us, and I have pledged my word to save this trapped brigade. We have to succeed or perish, for if we fail we can never look our countrymen in the face again!"

### To the Rescue of the Trapped Brigade.

"We're all with you, sir," said Sam; "win, or get wiped out! You know best. But is the Condor going to attack a whole brigade of the enemy singlehanded?"

Carfax nodded, and thrust the steering-lever still further over.

The Condor was rising, rising all the time. She was fully 16,000 feet up, and still mounting. Her head was turned to the northward, and she travelled at a speed that made the icy air cut like a knife.

"I knew I could depend on you," said Carfax; "no need to ask that. But I don't intend to leave the Condor's bones down yonder, either. I mean to pull Colonel Sherstone out of the mess."

"He's somewhere to the westward, isn't he, sir?"

"Yes; and I want to reach him if I can without being seen by the enemy."

"That'll be pretty difficult for the Condor."

"I think it can be done, according to the nature of the country. Look to your guns, Sam, and see that all's ready in case we need them. We may not."

The airship was at once prepared for a hard tussle, and everything was made ship-shape—airship-shape.

The confidence they held in her and her commander had never been shaken yet. All the same, the boys could not help feeling that Carfax had pledged himself to an undertaking which even he felt far from sure about.

Up to the present the Condor had done wonders on more than one battlefield, working in partnership with the armed forces of the Allies. As a scout, messenger, or gun-destroyer she had no equal.

But to attack with no troops behind her, to do the actual hard work of the fighting, was a new thing. Her guns were small, and only useful for a quick dash at short range.

Unless she dropped explosives from overhead, which she had pledged herself never again to do, her fighting value against a big force did not seem great. One well-directed shell that got home would end her career for ever.

"It looks a pretty big job, sir," Sam ventured to say, "and not much time to do it in, if Colonel Sherstone's not only to be saved, but to join the main army by the evening."

"It is as you say," returned Carfax coolly. "Have you any plan to suggest?"

"It's outside my weight, sir," said Sam, smiling.

"I believe that if we can clear Sherstone's path of the cavalry squadrons that are cutting him off, and shake up the Prussians in the front of him as well, he ought to be able to do the rest himself. But I know nothing of Colonel Sherstone. If we have to dry-nurse him it will certainly be hard work."

"Wonder whether he's a good commander? He's certainly got himself into a tight place."

"That's nothing against him," said Stephen. "If getting into tight places tells against a fellow, you and I are the biggest bunglers in commission, Sam, for we seem to do nothing else. It's getting out of them that counts. A chap must take risks, or he'll never do anything."

So far to the northward had the Condor reached that it looked as if she was going back to Schleswig. Of the army they had left behind, of the place they were going to, nothing whatever could be seen with the naked eye.

Carfax stopped the Condor, and mounted its largest telescope, an instrument of immense power, on its stand.

"We're out of all ordinary field-glass range," he said, focusing it, "which is the reason I've come so far this way. We can now reconnoitre without being seen, and it won't take long to cover the distance."

He scanned the farthest horizon to the southward, and made his observations quickly, the crew waiting eagerly to hear the result.

"It was no lie that Sherstone's in a tight place," said Carfax, after a short scrutiny. "I can see the Prussian forces who are attacking him beyond, and also the cavalry that prevent his moving eastward. But where he is himself I can only judge. I can see nothing of his forces."

"He'd taken cover among woods, hadn't he, sir?" said Stephen.

"Yes, I can see the wood and the six as that he's there, but nothing more. He's well ambushed. Now we know, we'll join him at once. Stand by to lower, Hugh!"

Down went the Condor, until she was almost touching the ground. The world of the sky was left behind. She was now in the midst of a quiet countryside, and a peasant, who was ploughing in a field close by, nearly fell down with astonishment as the huge machine suddenly appeared from nowhere.

The Condor made no halt. Away she went at the rate of a fast train, skimming over the ground at a height of a few feet, rising now and again to clear an obstacle.

It was a flattish, undulating country, and, as is usual in Germany, there were few hedges.

"Where shall we come out, sir?" asked Stephen.

"At the back of the woods where the British force is, and so outwards towards the rear of them. We shall catch them up from behind, you see. By keeping close to the ground, and being favoured by the trees, I hope to get there without being seen by the Prussians. We want to surprise them when we do start out. That's always useful."

Minute by minute the Condor flew onwards, paying no attention to the amazed and frightened folk she encountered here and there on the way. She flew over the head of a waygoer on the high roads, and its team promptly bolted. Herds of cattle stampeded in the pastures at the first sight of the airship. There were many incidents, but the crew paid no attention to them. Their attention was fixed on what lay ahead.

Presently the distant mutter of heavy firing was heard. It grew clearer and clearer every moment, and intermixed with it was the rattle of musketry. They judged it to be still some miles away, when suddenly a troop of Prussian Hussars were seen a few hundred yards away to the right.

They stared at the Condor in amazement, and then a shout was heard, and the troop wheeled, and galloped off at right angles to the airship's path, scurrying away as fast as their horses could go.

"The first of the cavalry," said Carfax, altering his course. "I thought we should see them about here. The main body of them will be away to the left."

He turned aside and followed the galloping horsemen swiftly.

It was not long before a large body of cavalry, two squadrons or more, came in sight on a stretch of low-lying ground, like a shallow basin among the woods and copses.

Carfax took one brief survey of them, and then turned away, and sped forward again in his old course.

"Uhlans and Hussars," he said. "A strong lot, too."

"They've seen us now, though," said Stephen.

"That doesn't matter. They aren't the Prussian force that attacking Sherstone; they are miles away in front. These are the cavalry that mean to catch the colonel on the hop, as you'd say, if he tries to escape this way. They won't be able to communicate with the other forces in time though they've seen us."

"Give them something to think about—eh, sir?"

"Just so. It will make the squadrons very jumpy, knowing we're in the neighbourhood. They didn't reckon on having to deal with us. Keep a good look-out now; we've got to enter the woods."

The firing in front was growing louder and louder, and the Condor's journey for the next mile was to Sam and Stephen one of the most surprising things she had ever done.

She threaded her way right through the woods themselves, low down near the ground, as skilfully as if she were a horse galloping through the timber. Carfax would not rise over the tops of the trees, lest the enemy should get a sight of him. The airship was travelling at half speed, and every moment it looked as if she must crash into some tree or other; but he steered her as easily as a bicycle.

The forest was cut through by wide, deep rides, and it was down these that the Condor turned and twisted on her way along. It was a strange journey, because, although a hot battle was raging not far in front, they could see nothing of it at all. Presently shells were bursting almost overhead, and a British picket suddenly came in sight of a clearing.

"Halt! Who goes there?" cried the officer in charge, as if he were stopping a cab or a market-cart; for it was some moments before the picket could realise that they were face to face with an airship in the thick of the forest.

Carfax halted his vessel.

"By George!" cried the astonished lieutenant of the picket. "Is that the aeroplane Condor? Are you Mr. Carfax?"

"Quite right. Where is Colonel Sherstone?"

"Five hundred yards to the front with his corps, near the end of the wood."

"How are things going?"

"Badly, sir, I'm afraid."

"We'll see if we can't alter that," said Carfax, bringing the airship to a rest in the clearing just beyond the picket, and stopping her engines.

"Down you get, Sam; I want you to come with me to the front. The Condor will stay here out of harm's way till we've decided on the plan of action. I must see Colonel Sherstone first. Keep a bright look-out, Kenneth; though you've not much to fear except a stray shell from overhead."

(Another long instalment of this thrilling story next Thursday. Please order your copy of "THE GEM" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.


NEXT THURSDAY!

"HONOUR BRIGHT."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

SOMETHING NEW!

Specially Printed for "Gem" Readers.



# THE EMPIRE LIBRARY

One Halfpenny

## Gordon Gay's Company

By PROSPER HOWARD.

## CHAPTER I.

## Introducing Gordon Gay.

"I'M going to start a proper theatrical company!"

The curly-haired, sunny-faced boy who was sitting on the edge of the table in the Fourth Form common-room at Rylcombe Grammar School, swung his legs and looked intensely earnest as he made this momentous announcement.

The buzz of talk in the common-room ceased suddenly.

"Eh? What's that, Gay?"

A pleasant-looking, rather lanky fellow, seemingly a year or so older than the first speaker, looked up and put the query.

Gordon Gay looked at him and smiled.

"I say, I'm going to start a proper theatrical company, Monk!"

There was a moment's silence as the eyes of the entire common-room were turned on the speaker in a stare which might have abashed a statue, but did not seem to have the slightest effect on its cheerful objective.

"You're going to what?" inquired Frank Monk at last, in measured accents.

Gordon Gay laughed in the light-hearted fashion that was peculiarly his own.

"You heard what I said; I'm going to start a proper theatrical company of my own, and make this dull old place wake up a bit!"

There was a general sort of gasp in the common-room at this calm assertion.

Frank Monk himself seemed hardly able to believe his ears.

For Gordon Gay had been at Rylcombe Grammar School but three short weeks, and by the unwritten law of schools, should have been content to be seen and not heard in his Form until at least half term. But not so Gordon Gay.

From the day of his arrival he had taken an active part in affairs of the Fourth Form, in spite of the disapproving attitude of his elders in the Form, and, as they considered themselves, his betters.

His independence was attributable partly to the fact that Gordon was an Australian boy, fresh from the land of his birth, whence he had arrived in England for the first time but a few weeks ago.

After a short stay in London, he had been sent off to the Grammar School, where Dr. Monk, the head-master, found that his education had been so far attended to in Australia that he had been able to put him into the Fourth Form at once. Gordon had quickly adapted himself to his new surroundings, and in the three short weeks during which the Fourth Form had known him when this story opens, he had kept them in a constant state of uncertainty as to what he would be up to next.

His hairbrained schemes, mostly in the form of weird and startling entertainments in aid of the various school funds, had caused the Fourth considerable uneasiness, owing to the amount of comment and criticism, not unmingled with ridicule, they had attracted from other Forms.

But his latest announcement, with which this chapter opens, struck them as almost reaching the limit; while the avowed object of it "to make this dull old place wake up a bit," coming as it did from a "new kid," fairly made the Fourth gasp.

Dull old place!

Why, was it not the first duty of every Grammarian, from the head of the Sixth down to the smallest fag, to maintain by word and deed that the Grammar School was the finest school in England or the world—at any rate, in public?

Privately, there might sometimes be a grumble or two about some small matter among the old, and therefore privileged, staggers.

But for a new boy to calmly designate the school a "dull old place" was unheard of, and the Fourth felt that such things must not be.

That is why there was a curious expression on Frank Monk's face as he looked from the bland face of Gordon Gay to the group of his horrified Form-fellows.

"What's up with you chaps?" asked Gordon cheerfully, swinging his legs to quicker time as he noticed the shocked expression of the Fourth-Formers. "Don't you like my idea?"

Frank Monk, who was the recognised leader of the Form, gave a gulp of indignation, and then felt inclined to laugh. Gordon's "nerve" was so amazing for a new boy that he felt quite taken aback.

Also, he was Gordon Gay. And the Grammar School, as a whole, had already learned that the sunny irresponsibility of Gordon Gay's nature had a fascination peculiarly hard to resist.

His name fitted him to a T.

His whole temperament was so unaffectedly gay that no one could be angry or annoyed with him for long.

But Frank Monk was a great stickler for etiquette, and he pulled himself together.

As Form captain it was up to him to teach Master Gay his place—or try to.

He frowned portentously.

"We think your idea is a blessed rotten one," he said deliberately. "And, besides—"

"You mean you do," put in Gordon, in nowise abashed by this candid criticism of his idea.

Monk frowned again.

"I mean we all do," he said with emphasis, looking round at his Form-fellows.

A growl of assent went up.

"And, what's more, we think it's like your cheek——" began a tall, rather aristocratic-looking youth.

But Gordon Gay interrupted again.

"It's jolly nice of you to say so, Van-boy," he said sweetly. "I think so too."

The aristocratic-looking youth turned red, and a subdued chuckle ran round the common-room. The aristocratic one's name was Carboy—and very proud of his name he was.

It was, as he was always ready to inform anyone who would listen, one of the oldest names in England, and Carboy did not appreciate Gordon Gay's version of it at all.

The Form, knowing it, chuckled. They could not help it. Carboy glowered round the common-room, and the chuckle subsided.

"Look here——" he began angrily.

"Certainly!" said Gordon Gay blandly.

Carboy choked.

The chuckle broke out afresh.

Frank Monk came to his chum's rescue hastily.

"Look here, Gay——"

Gordon looked at him with a twinkle in his blue eyes, but Monk went on hastily before he could be interrupted.

"We think your idea's absolutely rotten, all of us, but that's not the point."

"The point's the thing!" murmured Gordon, as Monk paused for breath before going on.

"The point is, that for a new kid to call the Grammar School a 'dull old place' is beastly, blessed cheek," continued Monk warmly—"beastly, blessed cheek, that's what it is! And we're not going to stand it!"

Gordon Gay glanced expressively at a form—a glance

which was not lost on the common-room—but said nothing. He only listened, with an air of resignation, to Frank Monk's growing indignation.

The serious air of the Form leader did not seem to impress the lad from Australia. He glanced calmly at Monk as the latter was clearing his throat preparatory to continuing his weighty remarks.

"Well, and what are you going to do about it, Monkey?" he asked encouragingly.

Frank Monk gave a gasp like escaping steam.

But he quickly recovered himself. He was a born leader, and although, as he confided to Carboy afterwards, "he felt like having a fit on the spot," he saw that the right thing to do was to meet Gordon Gay with his own weapons, as it were.

So he controlled himself with an effort, and turned to his Form-fellows with an assumption of carelessness.

"Do we know what we are going to do about it, chaps?" he asked.

Instantly there was a yell.

"Yes!"

"We do!"

"Bump him!"

A rush was made towards the table, but Gordon Gay was too quick.

He was, fortunately for him, nearer to the door than anyone else in the room. He was also on the alert, though he did not look it. He stopped the careless swinging of his legs, and with one bound was out of the common-room, banging the door to after him.

There was a shout from the Fourth.

"After him!"

"Seize the rotter!"

"Stop the villain!"

Frank Monk reached the door first of the pursuers.

With a wrench he dragged it open, and flung it back on its hinges, catching Carboy, who was just behind him, a terrific crack with it, and sending him flying.

There was a howl of anguish from Carboy as he went down; but Monk, in his excitement, paid no heed.

The next instant, however, Carboy's lamentations were completely drowned by the terrific uproar which burst forth.

After he had slammed the door to, Gordon Gay had just had time to hurl one of the passage chairs upside down in the doorway, in the hope of its impeding the pursuit somewhat.

And his hope was fully justified.

Impelled by his own eagerness and the rush of juniors behind him, Frank Monk crashed straight into the upturned chair, and went flying, and in a few seconds the door of the Fourth-Form common-room was chock-a-block with a wedged mass of struggling, yelling juniors.

Gordon Gay, as he fled down the passage, heard the turmoil behind him, and guessed what had happened.

And Gordon Gay chuckled!

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Gordon Gay Company.

GORDON GAY chuckled as he slackened his speed, and proceeded down the passage at a more sober rate.

Judging by the row that came from the Fourth-Form common-room, he guessed that he was safe from pursuit, for a time at least.

"Help!"

"Ow!"

"I'm being squashed!"

"Yow-wow!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

These and many kindred exclamations were wafted down the passage with the greatest distinctness, which was not surprising considering how much youthful lung-power was used in uttering them.

"I shouldn't be surprised if those noisy chaps aren't disturbing someone," murmured Gordon Gay to himself, as he strolled along.

Nor was he mistaken.

Half-way down the stairs leading to the lower corridor, where the Sixth-Form studies were situated, Gordon met Lawson, the captain of the school, coming upstairs four steps at a time, looking very wrathful, and clutching a cane in a businesslike grip.

Gordon glanced at him innocently.

"What on earth is that infernal row, Gay?" gasped Lawson. "Has the roof fallen in, or what?"

"Row, Lawson!" said Gordon, with a slightly puzzled air.

"Did you say row?"

"Yes, row—din—shindy!" roared Lawson. "What the dickens is that ghastly noise, you young ass?"

Lawson came to a standstill, and put out a hand to grasp

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 105.

Gordon by the shoulder. But the nimble Australian dodged past him down the stairs.

"I—I think I do hear something, Lawson," he acknowledged meekly, when at a safe distance below the irate Sixth-Former, and out of reach of his ready cane. He had to almost shout to make his voice heard above the fearful din. "I think it's the Fourth, Lawson!"

Lawson glared, and seemed uncertain whether to make a dash at the audacious Gordon or not. Finally, however, with a snort and a muttered "cheeky young sweep!" the captain turned and strode on upstairs, swishing his cane viciously as he went.

Gordon Gay chuckled, and continued his leisurely way downstairs. And when he heard the shouts and yells behind him change into a shriller note, and then subside perceptibly, he chuckled again.

He could imagine the effect that Lawson and his cane would have on the struggling mass of juniors wedged in the common-room doorway.

And the thought seemed to amuse him.

"I'd better keep clear of the common-room for a bit," he murmured to himself. "They may be a little huffy with me after this. I think I'll go along to the study."

He turned his steps towards the back staircase by which he could regain the Fourth-Form passage, and slipped into his study unobserved.

The Fourth-Formers at the Grammar School were allowed to have studies, three or four in each. They also shared a common-room with the Fifth.

The latter Form, however, considered it rather *infra dig.* to use the common-room, so that the Fourth usually had it to themselves.

For the present, Gordon Gay was sharing a study at the end of the passage, No. 13, with one other junior—a youth named Tadpole.

It was generally understood that the next new boy that came to the Grammar School would be put in with them; otherwise, the idea of a new fellow sharing a study with one other fellow only would have caused great indignation in the Form.

Tadpole was in the study when Gordon Gay slipped in.

Tadpole was a remarkable youth in many ways. Many of the Fourth-Formers openly declared that they would not be in the same study as Tadpole for untold gold. But this was no doubt an exaggeration.

Nevertheless, Horace Tadpole was certainly peculiar. So much could at once be read from his appearance. He was a thin, scraggy youth of about fifteen, with long, straight hair which almost reached his shoulders, and a very long nose. He was imbued with the idea that he was a great artist, and wherever he went he was always accompanied by an immense sketch-book, which he carried clutched tightly under his arm.

In pursuance of this idea he wore a huge bow tie.

But it was as an arguer that Horace Tadpole was chiefly notorious. He would, as the Fourth put it, "argue the hind leg off a donkey."

There was, in fact, nothing that he was not prepared to argue about, anywhere or at any time.

Consequently, he was generally avoided as a fearful bore.

But with all this, Tadpole was the most good-natured and simple of fellows.

He was always ready to lend a helping hand, at his own or anyone else's expense, to anyone in distress, and as a champion of the oppressed, or those whom he imagined, often quite wrongly, to be oppressed, he was positively in his element.

Consequently no one could possibly dislike him, and he was usually treated by his fellow-Grammarians with a good-natured tolerance.

When Gordon Gay quietly entered his study, Tadpole was seated at the table with his back to the study door, deeply engaged in some evidently absorbing task.

He did not turn round as Gordon came in, and the latter grinned as he noticed that he had evidently not been heard.

He tip-toed up to the absorbed figure, and glanced over its shoulder.

He watched for a moment, grinning silently.

Tadpole, as Gordon had expected, was sketching. Against the wall underneath the window the enthusiastic artist had arranged a kind of trophy consisting of a muddy football, a pair of equally muddy football-boots, a dilapidated hockey-stick, and an old cricket-bat. These beauteous objects, all of which belonged to Gordon Gay, he was busy depicting in his enormous sketch-book.

At the foot of the page was the touching legend:

"Well-tried Friends!"

As Gordon Gay's eyes fell on this last artistic touch he could contain himself no longer.

He burst into a roar right in Tadpole's ear, at the same time giving the amateur artist a terrific slap on the back.

The effect of the roar and the slap together was electrical.

Tadpole gave a smothered yell, and leapt up in the air with a start so violent that his chair went flying over backwards, and his pencil scored a jagged line right across his valuable drawing.

"Ow! Help! G-good gracious me!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Gordon.

"Good gracious! What on earth was that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon again. "It's all right, Taddy! It's only me!"

Tadpole stared at the convulsed Gordon Gay, gasping in helpless bewilderment.

The amateur artist did not seem to know for the moment whether he was on his head or his heels.

"I—er—really I—I was very much startled!" he gasped.

"Really, Gay—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You seemed to be a bit," grinned Gordon.

"Yes, indeed, Gay! And I regard it as extremely idiotic and reprehensible on your part to cause me to be so startled."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I regard you as an ass, Gay!"

"And I think you're a dummy, Taddy!"

"I was engaged in making a sketch which would undoubtedly have turned out to be a real work of art."

"Work of what?" shrieked Gordon.

"I say that the sketch would without doubt have turned out to be a real work of art," repeated Tadpole severely.

"I regard you as an irresponsible ass to interrupt me as you did! The sketch is ruined!"

"Rats! It's as good as it was before, Taddy!"

"Nonsense, Gay! Look at that great jagged line running right across it."

Gay glanced critically at the sketch.

"Didn't you make that on purpose, Taddy?" he asked gravely.

Tadpole gave him an indignant glance.

"Of course not, you ass! You made me do that when you startled me. You've ruined the sketch!"

Gordon looked again at the sketch, which was an extremely bad one.

"Can't you rub the line out, Taddy?"

"Certainly not! At least, the sketch would never look the same. You would rub a lot of the drawing out with the line."

"Would that matter much?" asked Gordon innocently.

"Of course!" replied the artist indignantly. "Anyone can tell you're not artistic, Gay. I tell you the drawing's ruined."

"Well, it doesn't matter much, anyway," said Gordon consolingly.

"Doesn't matter!" almost shrieked the amateur artist.

"Why, you ass, I've taken an hour and a half over that sketch! I should have had it finished in another couple of hours probably. And it would have been a masterpiece, too, I'm convinced. I should probably have made my name over that sketch."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay. "Why, you can hardly tell what the thing's supposed to be, anyway."

"Why, you inartistic ass!" exclaimed the indignant artist, snatching the precious sketch up and blinking at it in the light; for Tadpole was somewhat short-sighted, and had a habit of constantly blinking, though he did not wear spectacles. "What do you mean, you—you fearful Philistine?"

"Why, look at this thing for instance!" grinned Gordon, pointing with his forefinger over Tadpole's shoulder. "That's meant to be the hockey-stick, I suppose. It doesn't look a bit like a hockey-stick."

"Really, Gay, do not be absurd! That is a hockey-stick to the life."

"Ha, ha, ha! Why, you duffer, it looks more like a cricket-bat than a hockey-stick!"

A flash of triumph came into Tadpole's eyes.

He peered at the sketch more closely.

"On second thoughts, Gay," he said, "I think that you are right. That is the cricket-bat, and not the hockey-stick at all."

"Then what's this?" shrieked Gordon, almost hysterical with laughter. "What's this, you shrieking dummy, if that other thing's the cricket-bat?"

Tadpole stared at the object Gordon was pointing to for a minute or so.

"I—I suppose that must be the hockey-stick," he said at length, rather feebly.

Gordon Gay gave a roar.

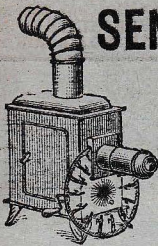
"That a hockey-stick, you—you duffer! Why—"

But Tadpole could stand it no longer. He glared at the hilarious Gordon, and snapped the huge sketch-book shut.

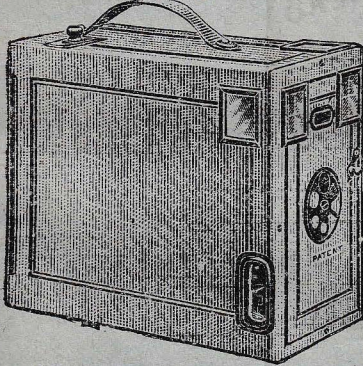
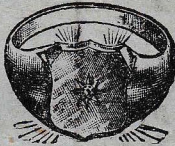
**(The continuation of this magnificent new story will be found in No. 1 of the "Empire Library," out next Tuesday.)**

# FREE FOR SELLING 12 PACKETS OF KEW SEEDS at 1d. per Packet.

## SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU.



**WHY NOT WRITE NOW?**



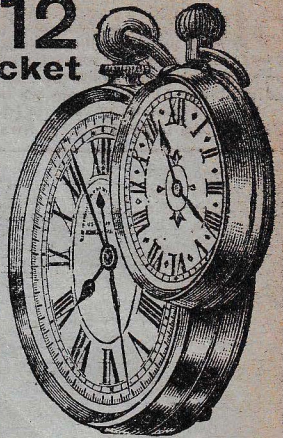
To further advertise our FAMOUS KEW SEEDS, which we have reduced to 1d. per packet, we give every reader of this paper a handsome present simply for selling or using twelve packets of KEW SEEDS at 1d. each. Our special 1910 Prize List contains hundreds of new **Free** gifts to choose from, including **Ladies' and Gents' Hall-marked Gold and Silver Watches, Chains, Rings, Purses, Dolls, Cinematographs, Brooches and Pins, Air Guns, Phonographs, Accordians, Cameras, Steam Engines, Skates, &c., &c.**

All you need do is to send us your name and full address (a postcard will do), and we will send you a selection of KEW SEEDS in Pictorial Packets to sell or use at 1d. each. When sold send us the money obtained, and we will immediately forward Gift chosen, according to the **GRAND LIST WE SEND YOU.** The Collection contains **Sweet Peas** in all the latest variety, **Mignonette, Sweet Williams, Asters, Stocks, Nasturtiums, &c.**; or **Radishes, Onions, Mustard and Cress, Lettuce,** and numerous other popular saleable seeds.

**Every packet fully guaranteed.**

**DON'T DELAY! START EARLY.** Send a postcard with your name and address to—

THE  
**KEW SEED CO., LTD.,**  
(Dept. A.), Kew Gardens, London, W.



**SIMPLY SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS**



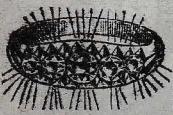
## FREE FOR SELLING 24 POSTCARDS SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU.

As an advertisement for our magnificent new range of Lovely Postcards we give every reader of this paper **ABSOLUTELY FREE a REAL DIAMOND Ring** (Lady's or Gent's), a Lady's Brilliant 5 Stone Orient **DIAMOND Ring** (both exactly as illustrated), a beautiful **Necklet with Pendant, a Bracelet or Long Guard,** for selling 24 Cards (Comic, Actresses, Views, &c.) at 1d. each.

Our Special Free Prize List also comprises **Ladies' and Gents' Watches, Roller Skates, Cinematographs, Sewing Machines, Dolls, Boy Scout Outfits, Phonographs, Clocks, Cutlery, Musical Instruments, etc., etc.**

Need not cost you a Penny of your own money.

All you need do is to send us your name and address, and we will send you per return an assortment of postcards to sell or use at 1d. each. When sold, send us the money obtained, and we will immediately forward you the gift chosen according to the list we send you.



**SEND NOW**

(a postcard will do) to

**ROYAL CARD CO.**

(Dept. 70), Royal Parade, Kew, London.



# SUITS ON EASY TERMS

For the small sum of 5/- monthly we will supply you with a good suit of clothes. Our Suits and Overcoats are cut to your own measurements, guaranteed good fit, good style, every bit good, good lining, buttons, and finish—Suits and Overcoats which make you feel comfortable and well dressed. Prices 24s. etc., or 5/- monthly. Patterns, fashion plate, and self-measure form Free. Write to-day.

Boots 13s; Tan Willow, 17s; or 2/- monthly. Boot Booklet FREE.

**MASTERS' Ltd., 97, Hope Street, RYE.**

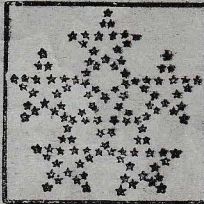


## ELECTRIC POCKET LAMP.

Superior 24 Model, size 3 1/2 by 2 1/2 ins. A useful invention and an Amusing Novelty. No danger. No matches necessary. You simply touch the Knob to produce a brilliant light. Price 1/- only. Sent post free for 1/2. Superior Reill Batteries, 7d. each, post free. Electric Scarf Pin for attaching to lamp, 3d., or both Lamp and Pin 1/4, post free. **FREE!** Illustrated Catalogue of thousands of other good novelties sent gratis and post free to any address in the world—**PAIN BROTHERS, Dept. U99, The 'Presents House,' Hastings (Eng.).**



## MONEY FREE Cash & Watches Given Away.



You can win £10 outright by finding all the stars in this square, or a beautiful watch if you come within seven of the correct number. There is no quibble. Each spot is a star, but it will take sharp eyes to find all. Note every star you see, and send result on a postcard with your name and address. We cannot give full list of prizes, rules, and conditions in this small advertisement, but we send them to you on receipt of your postcard. You try free. Don't send a penny. We tell you at once what you have won. **PUZZLE JUDGE, 2, Chapel Street, W.C. Dept 4**

## ROLLER SKATES 6d. DEPOSIT.

For a short time only we will send, as an advertisement, a limited number of our Celebrated Olympic Ball-Bearing Skates to any address, carriage paid, on receipt of 6d. deposit and upon payment of the last of 30 weekly instalments of 6d. A handsome present is given free. When ordering state size of boots. Price list of latest models sent free.—**OLYMPIC SKATE CO., MORLEY, YORKS.**

Applications with regard to advertisement spaces in this paper should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pluck" Series, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.

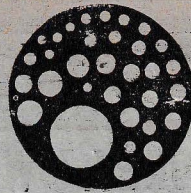
# CHALLENGE TO THE WORLD.

OUR WARRANTED TIMEKEEPER,

**2/9**

with a guarantee to keep correct time for three years, sent to any address on receipt of P.O. or stamps value 2/9 and 3 stamps extra for postage. To every purchaser during this month we give absolutely free a Mexican Silver Albert. All we ask is that you should recommend us to your friends.

SWISS WATCH IMPORTERS, 115, Strand, London, W.C.



A Real Lever Simulation

# GOLD WATCH

FREE will be given to all clever readers of this paper who count the circles correctly; but you must comply with our condition, and show the Watch to your friends. Send your answer, together with stamp, that we may send you result.—UNIVERSAL TRADING CO. (9 Dept.), 43, BLENHEIM ROAD, LONDON, N.

## The BOYS' FRIEND 3<sup>d</sup> COMPLETE LIBRARY

**3**  
NEW  
VOLUMES



ON  
SALE  
AT ALL  
NEWSAGENTS

Price **3<sup>d</sup>** each.

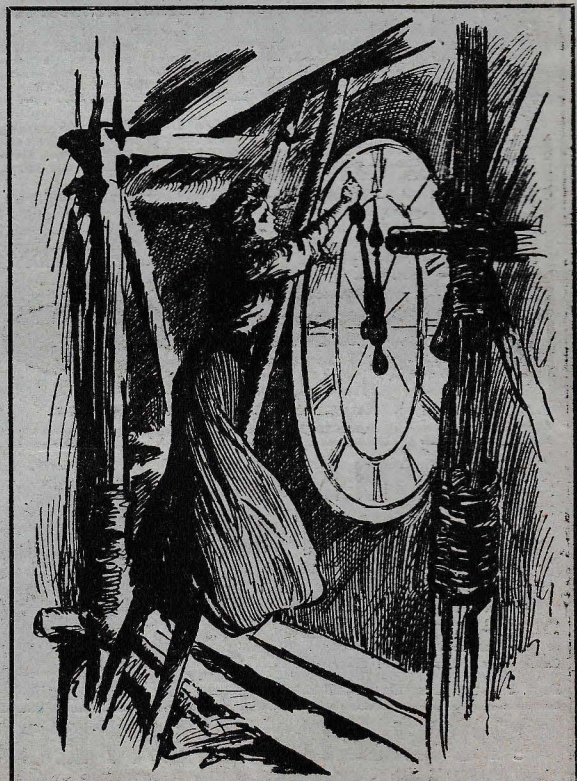
# THE ALL-FOOTBALL STORY PAPER.

The "Boys' Realm"

**FOOTBALL LIBRARY**  $\frac{1}{2}$ <sup>d</sup>

**JACK NOBLE'S BULL FIGHT**  
A TALE OF PELHAM SCHOOL

Look out for this attractive cover on the bookstalls. On sale Thursday, February 10th, One Halfpenny.



This picture represents an incident in "The Fatal Ace," the great new serial starting in this week's PENNY PICTORIAL.