

FREE WAR PLATE

Magnificent Photogravure
of the Charge of the
Ninth Lancers with this
week's

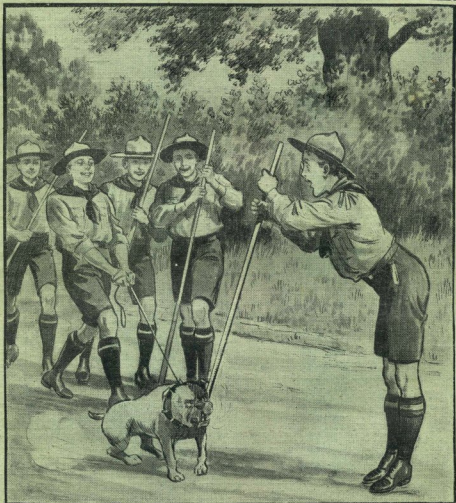
ANSWERS

—
Complete
Stories
for ALL,
and
Every
Story
a
GEM.
—

The GEM LIBRARY

No.
348.

Vol.
9.



“KEEP HIM OFF!” “Look out, Cussy!” roared Blake. “He’s after your clobber!” “Drag him off!” yelled D’Arcy. “Gerraway, you beast!” (An amusing incident in this week’s grand long, complete school tale.)

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE

WHAT A LARK!

At an East End school one of the teachers, having explained the meaning of the word "paraphrase," asked the class to paraphrase Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark."

With much feeling, he declaimed the first lines:

"Hail to thee, blithe spirit!

Bird thou never wert."

There was a scratching of pens, and one little fellow ceased, with the air of having accomplished something.

"Well, Tommy, what have you put?" asked the teacher.

In a shrill voice, Tommy piped out:

"Watchez, skylark! Yer never was a bird!"—Sent in by W. Craft, Toddington.

APPRECIATING THE DANGER.

"I have great pleasure in announcing, gentlemen," said the professor to his class of students, "that to-day I have been appointed honorary physician to his Majesty."

With one accord the students shouted:

"God save the King!"—Sent in by T. Connell, Glasgow.

AN INCOMPLETE TOILET.

Little Tommy went to church with his mother to see the baby baptised, as he had never witnessed such a function before.

Everything went well until the minister lifted up the water and poured some over the child's face.

Little Tommy looked on in wonderment; then, going over to his mother, he said quite innocently:

"Mamma, where is the soap?"—Sent in by Andrew Baillie, Glasgow.

ONE OF THEM.

The tourist had dropped into a small restaurant in a country town, and remained to lunch on a meat-patty—a monstrous fare which the establishment was noted. At the first bite, however, he complained about the crust. The proprietress, astonished at anyone not liking his patties, said angrily:

"Young man, I was making patties before you were born!"

"Is that so?" replied the tourist. "Then I suppose this is one of the first you ever made!"—Sent in by J. Winter, Southampton.

OVERHEARD AT THE MANGÈVRES.

Instructor: "Now, what is strategy? Give me an illustration."

Recruit: "Why, when you don't let the enemy know that you are out of ammunition, but just keep on firing!"—Sent in by Edward Marsden, Southend-on-Sea.

HOW THEY APPEARED.

"By feeling the bumps on your head I can tell you exactly what kind of a man you are," said the phrenologist.

"Faith," replied Pat, "O' b'elave it wud give yo more av an idea p'wast sort av a woman me wulfo is!"—Sent in by Miss Julia E. McInnes, Glasgow.

TO FIT THE CRIME.

Magistrate (severely, to youth who has been arrested for playing football in the street): "I sentence you to three weeks in the second division!"

Prisoner: "Say, gov'nor, can't yer make it three months in the Southern League?"—Sent in by Miss A. O'Mani, Brixton.

APPROPRIATE.

The attorney for the gas company was making a popular address.

"Think of the good the gas company has done!" he cried. "If I were permitted a gun, I would say, in the words of the immortal poet: 'Honour the Light Brigade!'"

Voice of a consumer from the audience:

"Oh, what a charge they made!"—Sent in by S. H. Paddon, Carlisle.

NOTHING EXTRAORDINARY.

Charlie: "There was a splendid trick done last evening. I saw a man actually turn a handkerchief into an egg!"

Billy: "That's nothing! I saw a man only about a week or two ago turn a cow into a fiddler!"—Sent in by W. Mackay, Victoria, British Columbia.

ALSO IN THE TRADE.

"Well, Tom," said the doctor, who had been rather rudely crossed from his afternoon nap, "what's wrong with you?"

"I've sprained my wrist rather badly, sir," explained the village blacksmith.

The doctor examined the wrist, and looked grave.

"John," he called to his surgery assistant, "go upstairs and bring me down that phial on the table."

With indignation in his face, the blacksmith started to his feet.

"Fie!" he yelled. "No, you don't! If this hand's got to come off, you'll use a knife or an axe!"—Sent in by A. Delaborstrie, Finsbury Park.

THE RUSTIC BETROTH.

A farmer, steering a drove of pigs across the lane, met a group of superior young men, and one bright City youth endeavoured to entertain his friends with some fun at the agriculturist's expense.

"I say, my man," said he, "do you know that a person in time grows to look like the animal he tends?"

"Yes, now, you don't say so!" returned the yeoman.

"Well, then, I suppose you people have just left off keeping monkeys?"—Sent in by W. Mahoney, Peckham.

MID SHOT AND SHELL.

P.-c. Murphy came staggering into the police-court with Michael Gunn—and Gunn was drunk.

"Pleaz, yer worship, I found this man outside the court-yard, drunk. He sws his name is Gunn, and, bebad, yer worship, he's loaded!"

The magistrate frowned.

"Gunn," he said, "you are discharged!"

And the report was in the papers next day.—Sent in by W. S. Grey, London, W.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED.

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the sender will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED—The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in other wise than on postcards, will be disregarded.

PUBLISHED IN TOWN
AND COUNTRY EVERY
WEDNESDAY MORNING



COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

SCOUTS TO THE FORE!

A Grand Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



Herries came panting up, to find the bulldog sniffing at an object that lay on the ground at the foot of the tower. Towerer had made a find at last! (See Chapter 10.)

CHAPTER 1. Taken by Surprise!

TING-TING-TING!

BZZZZZ!

The captain of the Shell Form at St. Jim's was cycling at a scorching speed towards the school. Dusk was falling, and Tom Merry had barely time to get in before looking-up. A contingent of troops, en route for Southampton, to embark for Belgium, had passed through Wayland Junction, and Tom Merry had ridden over to see them pass, and to join in the cheering. And he had left himself scarcely time to get back to St. Jim's for call-over.

BZZZZZ!

As the junior came whizzing down Rylcombe Lane at top speed, he caught sight of a figure ahead under the dusk of the trees. It was that of a man, coming towards him, and moving strangely in his walk as he moved. The man was coming along the middle of the narrow lane, with an almost staggering gait, and Tom Merry's first impression was that he

was intoxicated. But intoxicated or not, Tom did not want to run him down, and he jammed on his brake as he rang his bell.

As the cycle slackened down, the man lurched directly in front of it, and Tom Merry had to jump off to avoid a collision.

"Can't you keep out of the way!" exclaimed Tom angrily. "I'm in a hurry!"

But his anger faded away the next moment. As he looked at the man, he could see that he was not intoxicated, but was overcome with fatigue.

He was a man of about thirty, well-built and muscular, with a blonde face and a fair moustache, and a foreign look. His clothes were covered with mud and dust; his face wet with perspiration, and scratched and soiled as if he had been forcing his way through the tangled thickets in the wood. He turned an almost stupid look upon the junior, and panted for breath.

"My hat! You look done up!" said Tom, his kind heart touched at once. "What's the matter with you!"

"Ach! I'm tired!"

Next Wednesday:
"THE ST. JIM'S ARMENI!" AND "A BID FOR A THRONE!"

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Tom started.

"You are a German!" he exclaimed.

The man bit his lip hard. He spoke excellent English, but his involuntary exclamation had given him away.

"No—yes!" he muttered. "Yes, it is so! But—I am fainting from hunger."

"What are you doing here?" asked Tom.

"I must go to—the town to register myself, and—and I have lost my way," said the man thickly. "I cannot go further; I am exhausted. And I am hungry."

"I've got some chocolate," said Tom. "You're welcome to it."

The German almost snatched the packet of milk chocolate that the junior drew from his pocket. The wolfish manner in which he devoured it showed that his statement was true.

Tom Merry regarded him curiously.

From the distance came a sound on the road—distant but clear, the staccato beat of a horse's hoofs.

The man gave a start and listened.

"Nothing to be afraid of," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Don't be alarmed. So long as you report yourself, nobody will hurt you."

The man did not reply. He peered back along the road through the thickening dusk, listening tensely to the approaching hoof-beats.

Then he suddenly swung back towards Tom Merry. What happened next followed like a flash.

Tom Merry was seized in a sudden powerful grasp, and almost before he realised that he was attacked he was swept off his feet, and hurled into the hedge.

He crashed there, and rolled down into the ditch, sending a splash of water into the road as he fell.

"Oh! Groogh! What—oh!"

Tom Merry scrambled furiously out of the muddy ditch. He was soaked and smothered in mud from head to foot.

"You rötter!" he roared. "I'll—I'll—"

He broke off in almost speechless fury.

His bicycle had gone spinning across the road as he was hurled away; but the German had picked it up, leaped upon it, and was pedalling away. Crouched awkwardly upon the machine, which was too small for him, the German vanished down the lane in the dusk, and as Tom Merry stared furiously after him, he disappeared round the nearest corner.

"My hat!"

Tom started at a run in pursuit, squelching out mud at every step, but after a minute or two he gave it up. He knew that it was impossible to overtake the cyclist.

"The rotter! The thief! What the deuce—"

Pat-pat-pat-pat-pat!

Tom Merry span round.

Two mounted constables had come in sight, under the duck of the trees. They reined in their horses as they caught sight of Tom Merry.

They glanced sharply at the drenched and muddy schoolboy.

"Has anyone passed you?" exclaimed one of them quickly.

"Yes," said Tom. "Are you looking for anyone?"

"A German—he has passed you?"

"Yes."

"Good! Which way did he go?"

"He's collared my bike?"

"Hang it! He will get away after all!" exclaimed the eccentrics angrily. "Which way did he go? Quick!"

"The first corner; towards Abbotsford?"

"Come on!"

The two horsemen dashed on, swept round the corner, and vanished from sight, and Tom Merry was left standing alone in the lane, with a pool of water gathering round his feet.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated the junior.

And in a far from cheerful mood Tom Merry started to tramp towards St. Jim's.

It was pretty evident that the German who had taken his bicycle was a suspicious character, and that the police wanted him badly; and Tom had unintentionally provided him with the means of escape.

"Some blessed eye!" growled Tom Merry. "And he's got my bike! I suppose I shall get it back—some time, when they catch him. If I'd only known! And now I shall be late for calling-over."

There was no doubt whatever about that. The school gates had long been closed when Tom Merry reached them. He rang merrily at the bell, and Taggles came down to open the gates.

"My heye!" said Taggles, as the muddy and bedraggled junior came in. "My heye! Nice goings on, I must say!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Tom Merry crossly.

"Which you are to report yourself to Mr. Railton at once," said Taggles, as he slammed the gates; "and which I open—"

Tom Merry did not wait to hear what Taggles hoped—
THE GEM LIBRARY, No. 368.

probably something not very pleasant for the Shell fellow. He tramped on crossly towards the School House.

In the lighted doorway of the School House of St. Jim's, Manners and Lowther were lounging, looking out over the dusky quadrangle. They were waiting for their chum to come in.

"Hallo!" yelled Lowther, as Tom came up the steps into the light. "What on earth have you been doing with yourself? Started business as a mud-collector?"

"Br-r-r!"

"Been taking a swim with your clothes on?" asked Manners.

"Oh, rats!"

"You've missed calling-over, you duffer," said Monty Lowther. "Railton wants to see you in his study. What the dickens!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, as Tom Merry came in. "Bai Jove! You look watah wet, deah boy! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry glared at the hilarious Fourth-Former.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded.

"You, deah boy," said D'Arcy cheerfully. "You look watah funny, you know. Pway don't come neah me, you are very mudday! Have you been wotlin' in a ditch, deah boy? Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything funny in it," growled Tom Merry. "But if you think it's funny to be smothered in mud, you can have some fun, you ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, keep off—ow, you wotah—groogh—yawooh!"

Arthur Augustus gave a yell of horror as the Shell fellow rushed upon him, and seized him, and hugged him as if he loved him. Mud and slime from Tom Merry's clothes were liberally transferred to the immaculate "clobber" of the swell of the Fourth, and Tom Merry rumbled his hair with muddy hands.

"Ow—ow—you awfil wotah—you—ow!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweat Scott! I—I—I'll—"

Tom Merry released the swell of St. Jim's, and walked on to Mr. Railton's study, feeling somewhat consoled; but he left Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in a state of mind that was almost homicidal.

CHAPTER 2.

Keeping the Peace.

MR. RAILTON, the Housemaster of the School House at St. Jim's, wore a portentous frown as Tom Merry presented himself in his study.

Certainly it was a little unusual for a junior to present himself there in such an extraordinary state.

"Merry," ejaculated the Housemaster, "what does this mean? How dare you come here in such a—a—a disgusting state?"

"Sorry, sir," said Tom Merry meekly. "I was told to report myself at once, sir!"

"Quite so. But how came you in that state, and why have you missed calling-over?" demanded Mr. Railton.

"I've been chucked into a ditch, sir," said Tom.

"You have been—what?"

"I—I mean, thrown into a ditch, sir," said Tom. "I've been over to Wayland on my bike to see the soldiers off, sir."

"Oh! You mean that you have had an accident on your bicycle?" said Mr. Railton, his frown relaxing.

"Not exactly an accident, sir. I met a German chap on the road, and he took me by surprise, and pitched me into the ditch, and collared my bike," said Tom. "I had to walk back, so I got in late, sir. I'm sorry."

"Bless my soul! Then your machine has been stolen?"

"Yes, sir."

"A German, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me exactly what has happened," said Mr. Railton, his frown quite gone.

Tom Merry explained his unpleasant adventure, the Housemaster listening with great interest. When he had finished Mr. Railton took up a newspaper, and turned to a marked paragraph. A photograph was reproduced there.

"What was the man like, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton.

"A German chap, sir—a young man with a blonde moustache," said Tom. "He seemed quite done in, as if he's been going on for a long time. Those two mounted hobbles—ahem—I mean, policemen, were after him—"

"Was he anything like this?"

Mr. Railton held out the newspaper, and Tom Merry looked at the photograph reproduced there. He started as he

looked at it. It was the face of the German he had met in Rycombe Lane.

"That's the man, sir."

"Then he is close at hand here!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "With your bicycle, he may escape the constables who were in search of him; but—" The Housemaster rose, and crossed quickly towards the telephone in his study. "I must communicate this at once to the police!"

Tom Merry whistled softly.

"Is he a well-known character, sir?" he asked. "Would you mind telling me—"

"The man you have seen, Merry, is undoubtedly Franz Kleinach, a German spy, who was discovered a few days ago in Southampton."

"By George!"

"He succeeded in escaping from the police, then," added Mr. Railton. "Unfortunately, he was able to take with him the papers he had obtained, including plans of the harbour works. These papers must be still upon him, as he has had no opportunity of sending them to any of his accomplices, and, naturally, he would not destroy them. If he should succeed in sending them out of the country, the harm done may be very grave. For several days the police have been searching for him, but as yet he has contrived to elude them. I fancy, from what you have told me, that he is very nearly at the end of his tether now, however. He cannot escape long. You may go, Merry; you are excused for missing call-er."

"Thank you, sir!"

And Tom Merry left the study, while the Housemaster rang up the police-station in Weyland.

Tom proceeded to the Shell dormitory, his most pressing need at that moment being a bath and a change of clothes.

Then he came down to his study to a very late tea.

Manners and Lowther were busy with their preparation, but they suspended that important business as Tom came in.

"Look out!" said Lowther, raising a hand in solemn warning. "Thomas, my son, you are in danger. You have spoiled the clothes of the one and only Gussy, and he is looking for your scalp!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Never mind, Gussy; I've got some news for you fellows. And I've got an idea—"

There was a tap at the study door, and it opened, and an eyeglass gleamed into the room. Behind the eyeglasses was the characteristic face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form.

"Is that wottah heah?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sulkily.

"Only one rotter here," said Tom Merry cheerfully, "and he's only just come in. And the sooner he goes out again the sooner I can get on with my tea!"

"I was alludin' to you, Tom Merry! You have uttally wained my clobber with your wotten twick, and I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Go hon!"

Arthur Augustus advanced into the study, looking very warlike. He had changed his clothes since his encounter with Tom Merry, and was looking his usual spotless self once more. He pushed back his immaculate cuffs, and carefully removed the eyeglass from his eye.

"Are you wendy?" he asked.

Tom Merry grinned, and retreated round the table. Manners and Lowther rose to their feet, also grinning. The swell of St. Jim's was in deadly earnest, but the chums of the Shell persisted in taking him humorously.

"Pway don't win away, Tom Merry," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I have remarked that I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'! I regard you as a beast. I trust you will not put me into the ridiculous posish of chasin' you round the studay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you come heah?" roared Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry shook his head behind the table.

"No fear! You're too dangerous!"

"If you are afraid—"

"That's just it—I'm trembling with fear!" Tom Merry explained. "You don't know how terrible you look when you are roused, Gussy. If they were to shove you in front of the Germans now, there would be a general scamper to get back across the Rhine!"

"You uttah as!"

Arthur Augustus made a rush round the table.

Tom Merry dodged, and fled round the study, with the infuriated swell of St. Jim's in hot pursuit. One of Monty Ebbwether's long legs came in Arthur Augustus's way, and he rolled over, raising a cloud of dust from the study carpet.

"Wow!"

"Dô that again," said Lowther seriously. "Blessed if I know you were such an acrobat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus jumped up, breathing fury.

"You uttah wottah, Lowthah! You did that on purpose!"

"Go hon!"

"I will give you a feahful thwashin' as well as Tom Merry—"

"Mercy!"

"You—you wottah!"

And, giving Tom Merry a rest, Arthur Augustus rushed at Lowther. This time one of Manners's legs came in the way, and the swell of St. Jim's once more reposed on the study carpet.

"Gwooh! Mannahs, you feahful beast—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will give you a thwashin', too!" yelled Arthur Augustus, scrambling to his feet. "I will thrash the whole beastly studay! Wow!"

"Line up!" gasped Monty Lowther, in great alarm. "Shoulder to shoulder in time of danger! Line up!"

The Terrible Three of the Shell lined up, grinning. But Arthur Augustus never counted odds when his dignity was at stake. He rushed to the attack, and was immediately seized and swept off his feet, in the grasp of three pairs of powerful hands. His head swam as he was whirled into the air and kept there.

"Gwooh! Lemme go! Put me down! You-ow!"

"Put him down," said Tom Merry—"hard!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus was put down—with a bump! Then he was swept up into the air again, his arms and legs flying wildly.

"Ow! Help! This isn't fair play, you wottahs! Wow-ow!"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yawooh!"

"I'm afraid Gussy will have to change his clothes again," murmured Lowther. "How jolly lucky that he has such an extensive wardrobe!"

"You uttah wottahs! Welease me—"

"Not until you promise to keep the peace, and apologise for your intrusion," said Tom Merry firmly. "Now, then! Are you sorry?"

"Certainly not! I—"

Bump!

"Are you sorry now?"

"Oh, cwunbs! Yaas, wottah! Yaas!"

"Do you apologise?"

"No!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Certainly not! I—I mean, yaas, if you like! Certainly!"

"Will you keep the peace?"

"Yow! No! I am goin' to thrash you all wound!"

"If you don't keep the peace, there will be only pieces to keep," said Monty Lowther humorously. "You can have it in the singular or the plural, just as you like. Bump him!"

"Hold on, you wottahs! I will keep the peace."

"Good egg! Then there is nothing more to do but to chuck him out!" remarked Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was deposited, gasping, in the passage, and the Terrible Three closed the door upon him. The door was opened the next moment, and a red and excited face was thrust in.

"You uttah wottahs! As I have given you my word, I will not thrash you—"

Thanks!

"But I regard you as beasts—"

"Go hon!"

"And as beastly wottahs and bwites—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I considah that you are funks—"

"Bravo!"

"And I look upon you with despish—I mean contempt—"

"Hurrah!"

Slam! Arthur Augustus's plain expression of opinion having failed to produce any effect whatever upon the equanimity of the Terrible Three, he retired from the study, and closed the door after him with unnecessary force. And the chums of the Shell smiled sweetly, and proceeded to discuss Tom Merry's adventure with the German spy, and the great idea which he had thought of in connection with it—an idea which Manners and Lowther received with great enthusiasm.

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 348.

NEXT WEDNESDAY—"THE ST. JIM'S AIRMEN!" A magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 3.
The Meeting of the Scouts.

JACK BLAKE of the Fourth Form paused before the notice-board in the School House, and gave a whistle.

There was a new notice on the board, and it was in the hand of Tom Merry, captain of the Shell, and leader of the School House juniors. And it was a notice of unusual interest, and several fellows gathered round Blake to read it.

"The ink on the paper was hardly dry as yet. 'At' but!" said Blake. "What's the little game? What are these Shell bouncers up to now?"

"Meeting of the scouts," said Herries thoughtfully.

"Like Tom Merry's cheek to call a meeting without consulting Study No. 6," said Digby. "But I suppose we'd better go."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I decline to give any countenance whatever to anything" pronounced by those wottahs."

But the general opinion of the juniors who read the notice was that they would go. There was evidently something "on." The notice ran, in large letters:

"NOTICE TO SCHOOL HOUSE SCOUTS!

"Important meeting to be held in the junior common-rooms in the School House immediately after prep.

"All members of Boy Scout patrols belonging to the School House are expected to come.

"No new House bouncers need apply, as this thing is above their weight.

"Great National Service to be rendered, to help whack the Germans. School House Scouts are requested to RALLY!

"Only members of Boy Scout patrols admitted. Other fellows are requested to keep off the grass. Any fellow other than a Boy Scout shoving himself into the meeting will be ejected on his NECK!

"MOST IMPORTANT! RALLY, RALLY, RALLY!
"Signed) TOM MERRY."

"Looks as if there was something on," remarked Kangaroo of the Shell, with a whistle. "But I'm blessed if I can see how we're to help whack the Germans. We'd all like to have a go, but I don't see how it's to be done."

"Tom Merry's talking out of his hat, as usual," grunted Levison of the Fourth; "and I can tell you that I'm going into the common-room if I choose."

"You're not a scout," said Blake, with a look of strong disfavour at the end of the Fourth.

Levison sniffed.

"No time for such rot!" he said, with a sneer. "But I'm jolly well not going to be kept out of the common-room."

"Rot, did you say?" remarked Blake. "Are you asking for a thick ear, Levison? Because if you want one, I'm ready to oblige you with one."

"And I with another!" growled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah; and I'll give you another!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy warmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any reason for cacklin', Blake."

"Well, I don't quite see how Levison could have three thick ears at once," said Blake. "I thought two at a time was the limit."

"I'm going into the common-room," said Levison, with a scowl; and he lounged away.

"We'd better go," said Blake, looking round. "I dare say Tom Merry's talking out of his hat, but we'd better go. If there's anything on, we may be able to take it in hand, and make a success of it."

"Hear, hear!" said Herries and Digby at once.

"Yaas, wathah! I nevah thought of that," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "If there's anythin' to be done, it's up to Study No. 6 to do it."

And the chums of No. 6 proceeded down the passage to the junior common-room, whither a good many other juniors followed them.

The door of the common-room was open, and in the doorway stood the Terrible Three. Levison of the Fourth was engaged in a warm argument with them.

"I tell you I'm coming in!" he roared.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Only scouts admitted!" he explained placidly.

"Rot! Have you bought the common-room, you fat-head?"

"No; only borrowed it."

"I tell you, I'm coming in if I choose!"

"Better not choose, then," said Monty Lowther. "This is a private and most important meeting of the School House scouts, and we don't want the bizney to get over to THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 348.

the New House, and have Figgins & Co. chipping in. Outsiders are not admitted."

"Rats!"

Levison strove to shove himself through the doorway. Levison felt that he had right on his side. Any junior was at liberty to use the common-room, and Levison did not mean to be "done" out of any of his rights. Not that he had any business there, but it was not his way to be obliging if he could help it.

"No admission!" said Tom Merry sharply.

"Boah!"

"Outside!" said the Terrible Three together.

And Levison came whirling back along the passage, and rolled at the feet of Blake & Co. as they came along. Blake cheerfully trod on him, and passed on, and Herries and Digby followed his example, and entered the room. Levison picked himself up, gasping, and shook his fist at the Terrible Three. But he did not make any further attempt to get into the forbidden room. He had had enough.

"Well, what's all this rot about?" Jack Blake asked cheerfully, as he walked in.

"Meeting will be addressed when complete," said Tom Merry. "Half an hour allowed for all members of scout patrols to roll up."

"But what's on, fathead?"

"Haven't you read the notice?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Great national service to be rendered by the Boy Scouts of the School House—heaps of honour and glory, and one in the eye for the New House bouncers! Isn't that good enough for you?"

"Yaas; but—"

"Here they come," said Tom Merry cheerfully, as Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn of the Shell trooped in. "Pass along, you fellows! Hallo! You're not admitted. Mellish, you're not a scout."

"Oh, rot!" said Mellish of the Fourth. "I'm coming in."

"Your mistake—you're not."

"Look here—"

"No time to waste. Buzz off!"

"Sha'n't!"

Bump! Percy Mellish rolled along the passage, and joined his chum Levison in a similarly dusty condition. The two cads of the Fourth Form scowled furiously at the Terrible Three, who smiled sweetly in return. Reilly and Kerruish of the Fourth came along, and then Hammond and Lumley-Lumley and two or three more fellows of the Fourth and the Shell. Then came Wally of the Third—D'Arcy minor—with Joe Frayne and Curly Gibson and Jameson of his Form. Tom Merry regarded them doubtfully.

"Hallo! What do you young shavers want?" he asked.

Wally glared.

"Whom are you calling young shavers?" he demanded warmly. "We've come to the meeting, of course. Ain't we scouts?"

"A'bsen! Yes, I suppose you are," admitted Tom Merry.

"I don't know whether fags are any good, though. This is a serious business."

"Ass! We're coming in!"

"Well, you can come in—D'Arcy minor, Frayne, and Gibson," said Tom. "Jameson can't come—he's a New House chap."

"Why can't I come in?" demanded Jameson. "Ain't I a scout?"

"Yes; but this is a School House affair. No New House bouncers need apply. Haven't you read the notice?" said Tom Merry severely.

"Oh, that's rot, you know!" said Jameson.

"Cut off!"

"Rats!"

"It's time for you to be in your own house, anyway, or you'll be locked out," said Tom Merry. "Cut off, I tell you."

"More rats!" said Jameson determinedly. And he pushed on after Wally and Curly and Joe Frayne. Instantly the guardians of the portal seized him, and hurled him forth. Jameson yelled as he rolled along the passage.

"Wally, you—you rotters! Yow!"

Wally looked out of the common-room after him.

"Better cut off, Jimmy," he remarked. "Time for you to be in your house, anyway, or you'll have Ratty down on you. Good-night!"

"Groo-hoo!" mumbled Jameson. And he limped away furiously.

"Any more coming in?" asked Jack Blake. "Ain't it about time we got to business? We shall have Kildare after us to get to bed soon."

"Yaas, wathah! You are wastin' time, deah boys."

Tom Merry looked into the passage. No more juniors were in sight, and apparently all the scouts who wanted to come to

the meeting had arrived. The captain of the Shell closed the door.

"Lock it," said Manners. "Can't have any interruptions."

Tom Merry locked the door.

Then he advanced to the table and picked up a ruler and gave a sharp rap.

"Gentlemen, the meeting is now open!"

"Time it was!" remarked Blake. "You've been long enough about it."

"Order!"

"What's the little game?" demanded Kangaroo.

"That's what I'm going to explain. Silence for the chair!"

"Who's chairman?" demanded Blake.

"I am, of course!"

"Who made you chairman?" Blake further wanted to know. Apparently he had a thirst for information.

"I did," said Tom Merry calmly. "Gentlemen and Scouts, the meeting is now open!"

"We've had that!" murmured Digby.

"Silence, please!"

"Yaas; but—"

"The meeting is now open!" roared Tom Merry.

"For goodness' sake, put on a new record!" implored Blake.

"That's the third time we've had that one!"

"Hs, ha, ha!"

"Any silly ass talking rot at this meeting will be chucked



"Here, hold that rope!" yelled Gibson, as he felt himself slipping. He bumped into Wally D'Arroy, sending him rolling down the slope, to fall into the pool at the bottom of the pit with a splash. "Oh! Grooh!" gasped Wally.

(—see chapter 9.)

cut!" exclaimed Tom Merry, eyeing the Fourth-Former sternly.

"Better begin with yourself, then," yawned Blake.

"You're the only silly ass I've heard talking rot, so far."

"Yaas, watah! I considah—"

"Gentlemen, the meeting is now—"

"Open!" grinned Kangaroo. "Good! We'll take that as settled. Now cut the cackle and get on to the horses."

"This meeting has been called," said Tom Merry, breathing hard, "for a most important purpose. The Boy Scouts of the School House have a great and unique opportunity of rendering a national service."

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, you are aware that this country is now plunged into the greatest war in history—a war compared with which the Napoleonic War hides its diminished head—"

"compared with which the South African War was little more than a football match," said Tom Merry eloquently. "At such a time every Briton who is worthy of the name is willing and ready to do his little bit."

"Hear, hear!"

"Every fellow here, like every man in the kingdom who is

worth his keep, would like to do something to help—something a bit more substantial than flag-wagging and speaking patriotic songs," went on Tom Merry. "Unfortunately being schoolboys, we can't have a hand in what's going on. If we offered our services to the War Office, they would—"

"Smile!" suggested Blake.

"Ahem! They would refuse. The Boy Scouts of St. Jim's have got to go on grinding Latin in the Form-rooms while Tommy Atkins is fighting at the front—doing all the hard work, and facing all the danger, while we hang on here in safety. If this war had come a few years later, we could have volunteered for active service; but the Kaiser has rushed it on."

"Perhaps he'd heard about us, and rushed it on our purpose!" suggested Monty Lowther, with owl-like gravity.

There was a chuckle from the meeting, and Tom Merry turned sternly upon the humorist of the class.

"If you are funny again, Lowther, you'll get chucked out," he said. "This is a serious matter. Gentlemen, I know you all feel as I do—that it's simply sickening to be doing nothing while so many brave fellows are giving their lives for their country and the old flag. Therefore, this meeting has been

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called. A unique opportunity offers for the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's to take a hand and help."

"How!" demanded the meeting, with one voice. The juniors were keenly enough interested now.

"That's what I'm going to explain," said Tom Merry. The captain of the Shell had succeeded in impressing the meeting at last, and there was a hush of breathless expectation as Tom Merry proceeded to unfold his plan.

CHAPTER 4. When Duty Calls.

TOM MERRY paused dramatically, and looked round upon the meeting.

There was a hush in the junior common-room. In the general silence a slight sound might have been heard outside the door, as if someone were lingering there. But the meeting of the School House Scouts were too intent upon their leader just then to notice it.

"It was Wally of the Third who broke the silence.

"Pile in, old chap!" said Wally.

Tom Merry frowned at the cheery interrupter, but he piled in.

"Gentlemen, I will come to the point at once."

"Time you did!" murmured Wally.

"Yess, wathah!"

"While I was coming back from Wayland this afternoon," pursued Tom Merry impressively, "I had an adventure. I fell in—"

"Into a ditch!" said Blake.

"Yass; we all saw the state you were in," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"I tell you I fell in—"

"We know you fell in," said Blake. "We saw you come in covered with mud, and looking like—like goodness knows what! Got on to the point!"

"You ass! I fell in with a German—"

"Did he get as muddy as you did?" asked Blake.

"Muddy! No! I—"

"But if he fell into the ditch with you, he must have got wathah muddy, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with a pizzled look.

"You crack ass! He didn't fall into the ditch with me!" roared Tom Merry, losing patience.

"Pwasy excuse me. You said he did."

"Ass! I didn't say anything of the sort!"

"Well, you said you fell in with him, which amounts to the same thing, I presume."

"Tom Merry glared.

"I fell in with him in the lane," he exclaimed—"I mean, I met him!"

"Oh!" said Blake. "Is that it? If you'd say what you mean, we should get to bizney much quicker."

"Yass, wathah! If Tom Merry persists in wandewin' from the point in this mannah, I fesh we shall nevah get to bizney, deah boys."

"Silence!" Tom Merry rapped on the table with the ruler.

"I fell in with a German—that is to say, I met him. He took me by surprise and pinched my bike, and scooted with it. There were two mounted policemen after him, but I don't suppose they've caught him. He got away, I think."

There was a buzz of interest now.

"When I reported it to Railton, he told me the man was a German spy who'd scooted out of Southampton, with plans and papers and things on him, and with the boobies after him."

"Tom Merry continued. "There was his chivvy in the paper, so there's no doubt about it. The man who pinched my bike is Franz Kliehiser, a German spy badly wanted by the authorities, who's got valuable plans and things in his pocket, and is trying to get away to Germany with them. If the rotter does get away, it may mean the blowing up of the heaviest works at Southampton, or something of the sort—bombs dropped in the right places by some of their beastly Zeppelins, perhaps. It's awfully important for the beast to be caught."

"Bai Jove!"

"The police have been after him for days, but he's given them the slip," said Tom Merry, getting animated. "He may give them the slip for dogs' ages yet, and in the meantime he may find some way of passing on his papers to some other scoundrel. That's got to be stopped. He's in this neighbourhood, we know that. I've been reading the newspaper report, too. Every way towards the sea is guarded, every road is watched, every railway-station is on the alert for him. His only chance is to skulk about the country in hiding, and this part of the country is about the safest he could find—plenty of woods, and so on. Now the police are all very well in the way, but I've got an idea that it's up to us."

"Us!" ejaculated Kangaroo.

"Us!" repeated Tom Merry firmly. "That's where the Boy Scouts come in."

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"Oh!"

"We can't go to the front," pursued Tom Merry, "we can't have a whack at the enemy; but we can do something—we can search for that villain and lay him by the heels. That's my idea."

"Great Scott!"

"He's skulking in hiding somewhere in this neighbourhood," went on Merry. "If we find him, it's a big service to the country. He can't be here without accomplices. If he passes on those papers to another rascal, all the damage will be done. It would be no use catching him after that. Hanging him, or whatever they do to beastly spies, wouldn't be much good if he's passed the papers on to another rotter who's sneaking them away to Germany."

"Right!"

"Therefore I propose that the Boy Scouts of the School House should turn out to-morrow in force and hunt him down."

"Hear, hear!"

"If the boobies catch him, well and good. If they can't we may. And the more the merrier. It's a half-holiday to-morrow afternoon. I propose that immediately after dinner the scouts turn out. We'll beat the woods in all directions, explore every nook and cranny, and get on his track. And if we find him—I mean, when we find him—we'll lay him by the heels, and have those papers off him."

"Hear, hear!"

The meeting was enthusiastic at once. It was a suggestion that exactly "jumped" with the ideas of the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's. Every fellow there felt the natural but vague longing to "do something" to help on the national cause—the great struggle of civilisation against the barbarian herds of the North. And here was something that they could do.

To hunt down and capture a foreign spy in the possession of valuable secrets—that was something. As for the risk of hunting down a desperate and unscrupulous scoundrel, nobody argued, the scouts did not think of that for a moment. If they had thought of it, it would not have made any difference.

A loud cheer rang through the common-room.

"Hurrah! We're on! Hurrah!"

"Let's ask the Head to let us off morning lessons, and start early," exclaimed Blake.

"Yass, wathah!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I've thought of that! But it won't do! There's a certain amount of risk—"

"Blow the risk!"

"Yes, we can blow it, but the Head wouldn't blow it," said Tom. "It's barely possible that Dr. Holness might take a look at the matter as we do; he might think that the risk was too much for us. Least said soonest mended. When we bring the beast in, tied up, he can't do anything but pay us compliments."

"Good!"

"Then it's agreed," said Tom. "All the patrols will turn out."

"Yes, rather!"

"What about the New House?" asked Kangaroo.

"Figgins & Co. would like to be in this."

"I dare say they would; but this is a School House wheeze," said Tom Merry. "I don't want to disparage Figgins & Co., but I really think that this job is a bit above the weight of the New House."

"Right!"

"Yass, wathah!"

"Besides, there are plenty of us," continued Tom Merry. "We can turn out in dozens. There will be enough of us to track down the rotter, if he's still in the neighbourhood, and I believe he is."

"He may be caught already," suggested Bernard Glyn practically.

"If he is, we shall know by the paper in the morning. But I don't think so. Anyway, if he isn't we're going to hunt him down."

"Hear, hear!"

"I've got a paper here with his photo in it. You can all look at it, and then you'll know his chivvy if you meet him."

"Hand it over."

The newspaper was passed eagerly from hand to hand, and the juniors keenly studied the hard, crafty face of the German spy depicted there.

"I shall know that chap again," said Kangaroo. "If he had any sense he'd share off that moustache somehow."

"He had it on when I saw him," said Tom Merry. "We'd know him, anyway, with or without his moustache. He speaks English like a native—lots of those rotters do. Gentlemen, it's up to us to catch him."

"What ho!"

"Think of the honour and glory for the School House

scouts, and what a dot in the eye it will be for the rival show if you yank him out."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, we'll have him!" said Herries confidently. "I suppose you didn't think of collaring anything belonging to him when you were with him—a cap or a handkerchief, or anything like that?"

Tom Merry stared.

"I certainly didn't," he answered, "and I don't see what use it would be, anyway."

"It would make the thing a dead cert, that's all."

"How!" demanded Tom Merry. "We can't track a man down by his handkerchief or his cap can we?"

"No; but Towser can."

"Towser!"

"My bulldog Towser," explained Herries confidently. "You know what a dab Towser is at following a track—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Cheese it!"

"Rats!"

Herries snorted. The other scouts were not at all impressed with Towser as a tracker; but Herries's faith in the wonderful powers of his bulldog was complete and touching.

"Well, I'm jolly well going to take Towser with me!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewies—"

"Bosh!"

"Rats!"

"I'm going to take him," roared Herries wrathfully, "and you'll jolly well see! Even without a cap or a handkerchief or anything, I dare say Towser will be able to pick up his track, if you take us to the exact spot where you met the villain."

"Wats! I object to Towser comin' along with the Curlew Patrol," said Arthur Augustus. "That beastly bulldog has no respect whatever for a fellow's twousahs."

"You can object till you're black in the face," said Herries. "Towser is coming. And you can go and eat coke! If that villain is found, it will be Towser that finds him. Towser's got heaps of intelligence. Towser knows a rotter at once when he sees one. You remember when Levison first came here I could hardly keep Towser from biting him."

"He, he, ha, ha!"

"Oh, blow Towser!" said Tom Merry. "You can take him if you like. Gentlemen, it's settled—after dinner to-morrow we all turn out. And mind you keep it dark—we don't want the New House bounders to get on to this. Figgins & Co. would be quite capable of chipping in and collaring our German spy."

"Mum's the word!" agreed the scouts.

"Not a syllable outside this room."

"Not a giddy whisper."

"Gentlemen, the meeting is over."

Again there was a slight sound at the door. But when Tom Merry unlocked and opened the door the passage was empty, and the captain of the Shell had no suspicion that there had been a secret listener. But Levison of the Fourth was crossing the quadrangle in the dusk, with a sneering smile upon his thin lips. The secret of the School House scouts was not so safe as they supposed.

CHAPTER 5. Levison's Reward.

"HEEK!" growled Figgins.

The brow of the great Figgins was thoughtful and wrinkled.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the famous Co. of the New House at St. Jim's, were in their study. They had finished their preparation, and it was getting near bedtime. But Figgins was not thinking of bed. He was thinking hard, but of anything but bed. Jameson of the Third had provided the New House junior leader with food for thought.

Jameson, so unceremoniously excluded from the meeting of the School House scouts, had departed in wrath for his own House. He had promptly imparted to George Figgins the information that Tom Merry had called a meeting of the School House scouts, from which New House fellows were carefully excluded. And that piece of information was quite enough to make Figgins of the Fourth extremely thoughtful.

The rivalry between the two Houses at St. Jim's was very keen—in cricket, in football, and in nothing more keen than in scouting. All the best fellows in both Houses were enrolled in the scout patrols, and in scout work the rival juniors were very keen to get ahead of one another.

Therefore the cloud upon the brow of the great Figgins, if Tom Merry & Co. were planning some secret "coup," Figgins & Co. did not want to be "left." It was up to them to find out what was "on," and to go one better—if they could. Unfortunately, there seemed to be no means of finding out. To take over a party of New House fellows and

"rag" the meeting would have afforded some satisfaction, but no information whatever.

Figgins thought it over, and Figgins frowned, but he had to admit that he was in the dark, and likely to remain there, which was excessively exasperating.

Even Kerr, the keen and canny Scottish junior, was at a loss. He could not imagine for what purpose Tom Merry had called that sudden and important meeting of the School House scouts.

As for Fatty Wynn, he was not thinking about it at all. He was loyally ready to back up his leader in any enterprise planned by the great Figgins. But just now he was devoting his special attention to a large rabbit-pie, and there was an expression of placid enjoyment upon his fat face.

"Cheek!" repeated Figgins morosely.

Kerr nodded sympathetically. He agreed that it was like Tom Merry's cheek. But he could not suggest what was to be done.

"What do you think, Kerr?" demanded Figgins.

Figy had great faith in the powers of his canny Scottish chum; indeed, it was an open secret that Kerr furnished the brains of the Co.

Kerr shook his head.

"Blessed if I know," he said.

"What do you think of it, Fatty?"

"Ripping!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Eh?"

"Topping!"

Figgins stared at him.

"Ripping! Topping!" he repeated. "What are you talking about, you fat duffer!"

"This pie, of course," said Fatty Wynn innocently. "I say, Mrs. Taggie's does make ripping rabbit-pies. Her steak-and-kidney pies are good, but the rabbit-pies are simply a dream. Won't you have some, Figgy? Don't bother if you don't want to; I can finish it. But you fellows are welcome to your whack," said Fatty Wynn nobly.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Look at the crust!" said Fatty Wynn. "Look at the gravy! Look—"

"You—you fat porpoise!" yelled Figgins. "I'm not talking about rabbit-pies. I've a jolly good mind to bonnet you with it! I— Oh, come in, fathead!" growled Figgins, as a tap came at the door.

Levison of the Fourth entered the study. The Co. looked at him in surprise. They were not on good terms with Levison—very few fellows were, as a matter of fact. And it was a late hour for a School House fellow to be visiting the other house.

"Hallo!" said Figgins, not very cordially. "What do you want?"

"Heard the news?" said Levison carelessly.

"What news?"

"Then you haven't," said Levison. "It's about the German spy whose chivvy is in the papers. Tom Merry met him—"

"Oh, we heard all about that!" said Figgins. "He collared Tom Merry's bike. Lucky for the rotter it wasn't a New House chap he had to deal with."

Levison grinned.

"You weren't at the meeting?" he remarked.

"No!" growled Figgins.

"Then you won't be in the hunt to-morrow."

Figgins stared at him.

"What hunt?" he demanded.

"They're calling out the School House scouts to hunt for that fellow," said Levison. "Tom Merry believes he is still skulking in the neighbourhood, and they're going to have a grand hunt for him to-morrow afternoon. That's all."

Figgins & Co. gasped. Even Fatty Wynn turned his attention from the rabbit-pie.

So that was the secret!

The mystery of that meeting within locked doors, which had so worried the mind of the great Figgins, had been completely revealed by those few words from Levison of the Fourth.

"So that's it!" ejaculated Kerr.

Figgins rubbed his hands. "That's the little game!" he exclaimed. "The bounders, to think of keeping it dark from us! So Tom Merry thinks the man is still about here, and means to let the School House have the giddy joy of capturing him! We'll see!"

"We'll see—rather!" chuckled Fatty Wynn. "This is where the New House scouts come in."

Kerr looked suspiciously at Levison.

"Hold on!" he said curtly. "Young Jameson told us that only scouts were admitted to the meeting. Levison's not a scout. I don't see how he can know anything about the matter."

"Oh!" said Figgins. That had not occurred to him.

"Perhaps the boulder has come over here to pull our leg—what?"

Figgins crossed to the door, and Levison looked decidedly uneasy as the sturdy junior put his back against the door. If the cad of the Fourth had come there with a cock-and-bull story to take in the Co., he was not likely to escape without punishment for his presumption.

"It's straight!" said Levison. "That's what they mean to do."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I do know."

"You weren't at their meeting?"

"Not exactly."

"Then you're only gassing," said Figgins darkly. "Pulling out leg—what? Collar him! We'll teach him to take us in!"

Levison backed away.

"Look here, I tell you it's straight!" he exclaimed. "I heard the whole thing from beginning to end!"

"How did you hear it if you weren't at the meeting?" demanded Figgins, to whose simple mind that appeared an utter impossibility.

"I was outside the door," growled Levison.

Figgins stared at him.

"Do you mean to say that you listened at the keyhole?"

"Well, I did."

"You—you utter rotter! You played the dirty card-dropper, and then come over and told us!" ejaculated Figgins. "Why, it's as bad as making us parties to your rotten tricks!"

"Rotten cad!" said Fatty Wynn.

"You were jolly glad to hear it, all the same," sneered Levison.

"Well, perhaps we were glad to hear it; but that don't alter the fact that you were a rotten wretch, and you had no right to tell us what you heard at a keyhole," said Figgins severely. "We don't allow dirty spies to tell us their tales. You are a first-class rotter! Collar him!"

"Look here, I came here to do you a good turn!" howled Levison in alarm.

"You came here to do Tom Merry a bad turn, you mean," said Kerr, "and you've put us in the position of benefiting by dirty sneaking and spying. Bump him!"

"Hold on! I—"

"Collar the cad!"

"Bump him!"

"You rotters! Yow!" roared Levison, struggling furiously in the grasp of Figgins & Co.

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Help! Yah!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Oh crumbs! My hat! You beasts! Gerrooooh!"

"Now chuck him out!" said Figgins severely. "Outside, you wretch!"

Levison went whirling out of the study, and the door slammed after him. The sneak of the School House picked himself up and limped away, with feelings too deep for words.

In Figgins's study the Cox of the New House looked at one another in silence.

"Serve the rotter right!" said Figgins. "But what he's told us is true, I suppose. Those School House benders are going after the German spy, and they want us to be left out. Are we going to be left?"

"No jolly fear!"

"Right!" said Figgins thoughtfully. "Having properly punished Levison for telling tales to us, I think we have a right to act upon the information received. Besides, it's a really important matter. That villain Kleinsch ought to be captured. I think you'll agree with me that it's a job rather above the weight of the School House fellows."

"Yes, rather!" agreed the Cox heartily.

"It's up to us to take it on!" said Figgins decidedly. "It will be a national service if that villain is laid by the heels; and those School House chaps can't do it. This is where the Wolf Patrol comes in."

"Hear, hear!"

And before the Fourth-Formers went to their dormitory the members of the Wolf Patrol of the New House were apprised of their scheme, and they entered into it heartily. On the morrow the School House scouts—as yet unknown to themselves—were to have rivals in the field.

CHAPTER 6.

Towser Takes the Lead.

TOM MERRY & CO. were very anxious to see the paper in the morning.

As a rule, the juniors did not bother their heads about newspapers. Excepting for the Head's "Times," and Mr. Railton's "Daily Mail," few or no newspapers were seen in the school. But all that had been changed by the outbreak of the war.

Everybody was keen for war news, and fellows often cycled over to Wayland to get the latest evening paper. Consequently, it was easy enough for Tom Merry to get hold of a paper in the morning, and he scanned it eagerly to ascertain whether there was any news of the capture of Franz Kleinsch.

He found the photograph of the German spy reproduced there, with a paragraph announcing that the man was still at large, but that a cordon of police was drawn about the district where he was known to be lurking, and that therefore his capture was only a question of time, perhaps only of hours.

Tom drew a deep breath of relief as he read it.

From one point of view, of course, he would have been very glad to read that the rascal had been laid by the heels. From another point of view, he was glad that the scouts of St. Jim's had a chance of showing what they could do.

Anyway, there the fact was—the man was still at large, and it was up to the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's to run him down.

And the youthful heroes prepared themselves joyfully for the task.

The Curlew Patrol, which was composed of the Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 5; the Jackal Patrol of the Third Form, led by Wally; the Kangaroo Patrol, of which Noble of the Shell was leader, all were ready for their task.

And quite unknown to them the Wolf Patrol of the New House, composed of Figgins & Co., and Redfern and Owen and Lawrence, was also ready to take the field.

Morning lessons seemed an unusual bore to the eager Scouts. They were very keen to be on the trail.

But morning lessons were over at last. Immediately after dinner the Scouts changed into their Scout costumes. As the hunt was to go on, if needed, until the latest possible moment that the juniors could remain out of gates, the Scouts were careful to pack sandwiches into their wallets, and provide themselves with cold tea. They had a hard afternoon's work before them, and there was no time to leave off for meals.

The Scouts did not march forth in a body, as they usually did on the occasion of a "run." It was necessary to keep the expedition dark.

The Jackals went out first, minus one of their number, for Jameson, being a New House fellow, had to be left out. After the Jackals had disappeared the Kangaroos strolled out of the school gates.

Then the Curlews prepared to start.

Herries had fetched Towser from the stables, much to the disgust of Arthur D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's gave the bulldog a wide berth. Towser's playful habit of taking a "nip" occasionally did not please Arthur Augustus at all. Arthur Augustus was a very elegant scout, and he was very careful indeed about his "clobber."

Tom Merry looked round as the Curlews crossed the quadrangle.

There was no sign of Figgins & Co.

Tom had expected the New House fellows to spot them, and to ask awkward questions, and he was glad that the Co were not in evidence.

He little guessed where they were.

"Here we are," said Blake, as they left the school behind, and marched down the road. "Figgins & Co. have been caught napping this time."

"Yaws, wraith!" said Arthur Augustus, with great satisfaction. "The boundhills will look wathah green when we bring that German wottah in—what?"

"Yes, rather."

"Exactly where was it you met him, Tom Merry?" asked Herries anxiously.

"Oh, rats!" said Tom. "No good beginning the search there. We shan't be likely to find him on the road."

"Not us, but Towser—"

"Blow Towser!"

"Look here," said Herries wrathfully. "My bulldog's going to have a chance. Take us to where you met the rotter, and see if Towser can pick up the trail."

"Weally, Hewicws—"

"Oh, all right!" said Tom Merry resignedly. "It won't waste much time. Anything for a quiet life. Come on!"

And instead of taking to the woods immediately, as the Jackals and the Kangaroos had done, the Curlews marched down the lane to the spot where Tom Merry had encountered the fugitive German the previous day.

"This the place?" asked Herries, as Tom Merry halted at last.

"Yes, here we are."

"Where were you standing when he pitched you into the ditch?"

"I'm right on the spot now."

"And where was the German?"

Tom Merry tapped the precise spot with his staff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Towser made an irresistible plunge forward, and buried his nose in the fried fish.

The tramp made a cut at him with his cudgel, but Tom Merry caught his arm in time, and stopped the blow.

"Lemme alone!" shouted the tramp. "Think I'm going to let that blooming dog scoff my blooming dinner?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind the dinner," said Herries. "Skillily is good enough for you, you scoundrel!"

"Don't you call me no names, you young 'ound—"

"Collar him, you duffers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You collar me, and you'll get your 'eads jolly well busted in!" said the tramp. "Who are you, anyway? Young rascals, I says! Lemme alone! And somebody's got to pay for that there fish! I give sixpence for it."

"Don't keep it up," said Herries, with a watchful eye on the tramp, in case he should make a sudden attempt to bolt. "We know you."

"Well, I don't know you, and I don't want to!"

"We know, you can speak English—and you can't take us in like that," said Herries disdainfully.

The tramp stared at him, as if wondering whether the junior had taken leave of his senses.

"Course I can speak English!" he said. "What kinder lingo would you expect me to speak—Dutch or Eycetalian?"

"German, you rotter, as you are a German!"

"Me a German!" gasped the tramp. "Me, Bill 'iggins, a blooming German? I'll teach you to call me a German!"

And the tramp, forgetting all about his fried fish in his indignation at being called that insulting name, made a rush at Herries.

The Curlews closed round him, and collared him just in time. Bill 'iggins struggled fiercely.

"Lemme get at him!" he yelled. "Me, a German! Me, Bill 'iggins, a blooming German! I'll show him whether I'm a German! Why, I'll smash him! I'll jump on his 'ead! I'll skin him into little bits! German! Ugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake. "It's all right, old man—it's only a mistake. We're looking for a German spy who's hiding about here, that's all."

"He called me a German—"

"Apologise, Herries!" shouted the juniors.

"I'm not satisfied yet that he isn't a German," said Herries, whose faith in Towser was, however, a little shaken. What Towser had been tracking down was only too evident now. And Bill 'iggins was evidently a tramp of native production.

"I'll satisfy yer!" growled Bill 'iggins, giving him a deadly glare. "I'll satisfy yer whether I'm a blooming German or not, you insulatin' young 'ound!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's get off," said Monty Lowther. "Towser's tracked down the fried fish and eaten it, and we've finished here."

"Who's going to pay for that fish?" yelled Bill 'iggins wrathfully.

"Herries is," grinned Blake. "Pay up, Herries—and then take that dog home and chain him up! Pay up!"

"Look here—"

"Pay up!" shouted all the scouts together.

And Herries, yielding to the voice of the majority, and not really doubting any longer that Towser had, for once, made a mistake, handed over a shilling to the justly-indignant William 'iggins.

"And now apologise, you ast!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "You have used an insulatin' expression to Mr. 'iggins, and you owe him an apology."

"Oh, rot!"

"Apologise!" howled the scouts.

"Look here—"

Mr. 'iggins threw his battered bowler on the grass, spat upon his hands, and squared up to Herries.

"You leave 'im to me," he yelled. "I'll teach him to call me a German! I'll larn 'im manners! I'll—"

"Well, if you ain't a German, I'm sorry I called you one," growled Herries, as the laughing scouts dragged back Mr. 'iggins.

"Well, don't you go for to do it agin'," said Mr. 'iggins darkly, "and you keep your dog-off rot. 'Ere, I've got to go and get a new dinner, all through you and your dog. Vastin' the time of a 'ard-working man. Ugh!"

"Yas, it's vewy hard," agreed Arthur Augustus. "Perhaps you will do me the honouh of acceptin' this half-crown, deah boy."

"Sir," said Mr. 'iggins. "You're a gentleman!"

And he did Arthur Augustus D'Arcy the honouh of acceptin' the half-crown, without the slightest delay.

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Mr. 'iggins, with a final scowl at Towser, slouched away through the wood and disappeared.

"Lot of time wasted," said Manners. "If we're going to look for that rotter, it's about time we started."

"We have started, haven't we?" demanded Herries. "Give Towser a chance, and he will—"

"My only hat! Do you think we're going to stand Towser any longer?" howled Blake. "We're fed up with Towser—right up to the chin! Take him home and bury him."

"Yas, wathah!"

"Look here, Towser—" began Herries.

"Hang Towser!"

"Blow Towser!"

"Bury Towser!"

"Boil Towser!"

And with those injunctions, the Cadets marched into the wood, leaving Herries frowning, disappointed with the failure of his famous bulldog, but still quite convinced that if the German spy was caught at all, it would be through the wonderful powers of Towser. But the rest of the Curlews were quite fed up with Towser, and they intended to prosecute their search without any further aid from him.

CHAPTER 8.

"Signal"

"A HEAD of those bouncers, anyway," said 'iggins, with satisfaction.

The Wolves were in the wood.

The reason why Tom Merry had seen nothing of 'iggins & Co. was because the Wolf Patrol had started before any of the Curlews, Jackals, or Kangaroos left the School House. 'iggins believed in being on the scene early. Immediately after dinner, while the School-House fellows were making their final preparations, 'iggins & Co. had slipped out of the gates, and started for the wood. And the six New-House juniors had lost no time in getting to the scene of operations.

They were first in the field.

If the German spy was lingering and lurking somewhere in the deep shades of Rycombe Wood, on the slopes of Wayland Hill, or along the reaches of the shining Ryl, 'iggins & Co. had the best chance of unearthing him.

But they had a wide range of country to search over, and it was a little difficult to decide where to start.

"If we only knew where the bouncer was likely to be," said 'iggins musingly. "If he's hiding, I suppose he'll choose the thickest part of the wood—what?"

"Most likely," agreed Redfern.

"There's the old poscber's hut, right in the heart of the wood," said Lawrence. "We might make for that first."

"Might as well," said 'iggins, a little doubtfully. "Of course, it's possible that he ain't in the neighbourhood at all. He may have got clear away on Tom Merry's bike! Just like a School House duffer to let him capture a bike!"

"But he'd have been seen!" argued Owen. "He's being searched for up and down the whole countryside. More likely he hid the bike somewhere when he'd got away from the mounted police, and took to the woods."

"And he must have got something to eat, too," said Kerr. "He can't live without food. And he might trap rabbits in the wood."

Now that they were fairly started upon the quest, 'iggins & Co. felt that they had taken on a "large order." They had little or nothing to guide them, and if they came upon the track of the German spy, they felt it would only be due to luck. Still, there was always a chance—and, anyway, they could do their best.

The Wolves headed for the deserted hut in the heart of the wood, which had, once upon a time, been the dwelling of a poacher, so the story went. Through tangled thickets and underwoods they took their way, and came at last in sight of the ruined and dismantled little building. All was quiet as the grave in the midst of the deep woods.

'iggins made a sign to the Wolves to halt.

"Quiet, now!" he murmured. "He may be hiding there, or he may not. If he is, we don't want to alarm him. See?"

"Yas, O king!" murmured Redfern.

"Shush!"

"Right-ho! I'm shushing! Shush yourself!"

"Look here, Redfern—"

"Shush!" said Owen. "You'll alarm him, 'iggins, if you shout like that!"

'iggins glared at his followers, but he contained his wrath with an effort, and trod on softly and silently through the thickets towards the overgrown remains of the old hut.

'iggins was the first to reach it, and he peered in at the aperture where the door had once been. The interior of the hut was shadowy and deserted.

"Not here!" said 'iggins, disappointed.

"Let's have a look round," said Redfern.

The Wolves entered the hut, the earthen floor of which was thick with weeds and grass, save where a square stone covered the entrance to a cellar. The hut was certainly unoccupied, save by themselves. But Kerr gave a soft whistle, as he pointed to the flat stone in the middle of the earthen floor.

"Look there! Somebody's been here!"

"My hat! Camping out!"

The stone had evidently been used as a fireplace. Dead and cold embers lay upon it, and close by was the skin of a rabbit and broken bones. Someone had cooked a rabbit over a fire of twigs there, that was certain. But whether it was the lurking spy or some tramp it was impossible to tell so far.

"Keep back near the door," said Kerr. "We may find tracks."

"We don't know the size of his feet," said Owen.

"All the same, we can find out something from the sign, if there is any sign. Don't trample on the floor."

"I'll have a sandwich outside," said Fatty Wynn obligingly. It was not very long since Fatty Wynn had eaten his dinner, but he was quite ready for a sandwich.

Kerr did not reply. He was on his knees, scanning the earth about the flat stone with keen eyes. The roof of the old hut had long been demolished, and it was open to the weather, and the earth was moist from a fall of rain the night before. There was every chance of finding tracks if the scouts had the skill to detect them—and the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's were well up in that branch of their work.

"Look here!" murmured Kerr.

Figgins bent over him.

"A footprint!" he said.

"Yes!" Kerr traced it with his finger. "A good-sized boot, and a well-made one! It's been planted here since the rain last night, or there wouldn't be a track at all."

"Might have been anybody's boot," said Lawrence from the doorway.

Kerr shook his head.

"It mightn't! It's a man's boot, not a boy's. Who ever comes to this lonely place?"

"Well, tramps do."

"But tramps are not well shod," said Kerr. "There are several more tracks, but this one is quite clear, and you can see it was a well-made boot that made this mark, not a squeaky, clod-hopping boot like a tramp's. Look at it!"

"By Jove, you're right!" said Redfern, carefully examining the track. "It wasn't a tramp's clodhopper that made that mark."

"No fear!" agreed Figgins.

"The man who cooked a rabbit here this morning was a man who wore good boots," said Kerr, rising. "Men with good boots—men who are not tramps—don't usually breakfast off a rabbit cooked over twigs without anything along with it."

"It's our man!" said Figgins.

"How do you know the rabbit was cooked this morning?" demanded Owen. "It might have been last night."

"The embers haven't been wetted by the rain. It rained till after dawn. You can see that the floor is still damp, but the embers on the stone are quite dry."

"Topping!"

"Somebody—somebody who wasn't a tramp—camped here last night, and cooked a rabbit for his brekker this morning," said Kerr. "I don't think there can be much doubt who it was, either."

"Then the question is, when did he go, and where did he go?" said Redfern.

"That's what we've got to find out."

"What about looking in the cellar underneath?" asked Lawrence. "You know there's an underground passage from here to the old castle—I've heard so, anyway."

"He's not there. That stone could not have been raised without the embers falling off it, fathead."

"Oh!" said Lawrence.

"We'll take measurements of that track, and look for it again in the wood," said Figgins.

"Hear, hear!"

And the juniors quitted the hut, with gleaming eyes and beating hearts. They felt that they were on the track.

They little dreamed that as they left the hut a pair of glittering and desperate eyes watched them from the foliage of a tree overhead. Scanning the earth for tracks, the Wolves did not think of looking upward. They little dreamed that desperate eyes were upon them, that a desperate hand was grasping the butt of a revolver.

The Wolf Patrol were nearer to their quarry than they dreamed.

But as they moved further and further away, conversing in whispers and scanning the earth for signs, the hand that

grasped the revolver relaxed its grip, and the man hidden in the trees drew a deep, deep breath.

"Noch nicht!" he muttered to himself in German.

"Not yet! But the case of Franz Kleinach, spy of the Kaiser, was growing desperate, and he knew it!"

CHAPTER 9.

Wally Makes a Discovery!

"YOW-OW-OW-OWL!"

"Yow-ow-ow-owl!"

That weird cry sounded over the gory expanses of

Wayland Common.

Exactly what it was and what had produced it a stranger would have been puzzled to say. But any member of the Jackal Patrol of the Third Form at St. Jim's could have explained. It was the signal cry of the redoubtable Jackals.

Wally had invented it.

Wally of the Third declared that it was a cry similar to that of a live jackal; but as Wally had never seen a jackal it was possible that he had not approached very close to the original in his invention of a signal for his patrol.

However, the members of the patrol knew the cry, and it had the additional advantage of being quite unrecognisable as a jackal cry by anybody else.

"Yow-ow-ow-owl!"

"Wally's found something," said Curly Gibson.

"Looks like it," agreed Joe Frayne. "Kim on!"

And the fag scouts hurried in the direction of the signal. They could not see Wally, but his signal was being repeated loudly and shrilly. The Jackals had chosen the moor of Wayland for their sphere. Wally considered it very probable that the German spy, if he was in the neighbourhood at all, was hiding in one of the old quarries which rived the surface of the moor. In those abandoned pits there were nooks and crannies where regiments of German spies could have hidden—though certainly they would have run short of supplies there.

The Jackals came up from all quarters in response to D'Arcy minor's call.

"Where the dickens is he?" exclaimed Dobbs of the Third, meeting the others on the edge of a yawning pit. "I can't see him."

"Blessed if I can either!" said Frayne. "Where are you, Wally?"

"Yow-ow-ow-owl!"

"My hat, he's fallen in!"

"How?"

There was a steep slope from the scouts' feet down the side of the abandoned pit. The slope was thick with bushes, but the crumbling soil offered little hold. The fags gazed downward into the shadows of the pit. They succeeded in making out a broad-brimmed hat among the brambles a good distance below.

"That's you, Wally!" shouted Frayne.

"Yes, as!" came back Wally's voice, in sulphurous tones.

"Why don't you come and help a chap?"

"What are you doing down there?" asked Curly.

"Fathead! I've slipped down."

"Well, I must say that was an idiotic thing to do," remarked Curly. "I suppose we've got to get you out now. There really isn't any time this afternoon for acrobatic performances, young D'Arcy."

Wally made no reply to that remark; but if he had been within hitting distance of Curly Gibson his reply would have been decidedly emphatic.

"Lucky we've got a rope," remarked Dobbs.

"Jolly lucky, if Wally is going to play these tricks," agreed Curly, uncoiling a rope from around his waist. "You fellows hold the rope at this end, and I'll go down for him."

"Right—ho!"

Curly Gibson tied the rope about his body, under the shoulders; and Frayne and Dobbs and Jones mimus held it. Curly lowered himself down the steep slope, clinging on to the bushes with his hands, and digging his feet into the crumbling earth. He sent a shower of earth and stones downward before him as he went, and there was a wrathful exclamation from the patrol-leader below.

"You fathead! You've smothered me!"

"Bow-wow!" gasped Curly. "That can't be helped! You shouldn't get yourself into such a silly fix."

"I was looking for the German boat, you duffer! There was a track just by the edge up there. Of course, you hadn't any eyes to see it!" growled Wally. "I thought he might be hidden down here, and I crawled down. Now I can't get up again."

"Track of some blessed horse feeding on the common, most likely!" said Curly.

"Fatehead!"

"Here, hold on that rope!" yelled Curly suddenly, as he slipped and lost his hold.

"Whoosh! Bump!"

Curly Gibson joined his chum rather suddenly. He bumped into Wally, tore him from his hold, and sent him rolling down the slope right to the bottom of the old pit. There was a splash and a roar, as Wally splashed into a foot of rain-water at the bottom of the pit.

"Grough!"

Curly Gibson broundered helplessly at the end of the ropes the other three fellows at the top holding on manfully.

At the bottom of the pit, Wally splashed and gasped in muddy water, and spluttered furiously.

"Oh, you ass! I'm soaked! Oh, you fatehead! I'm smothered! Oh, you chump! I'm muddy all over! Oh, you burbling jabberwock!"

"Oh?" gasped Curly. "Why couldn't you hold on?"

"Oh, you fatehead! Oh, you—you chortling jesser!"

There was a laugh from the top. The three fags holding the rope seemed to see a comic aspect to the matter.

"Catch hold, for goodness' sake, and let's get you out!" called out Joe Frayne. "There ain't any time for slanging one another now!"

"Let me down lower, and I'll pull the duffer out!" called back Curly.

"My only Aunt Jane!" suddenly yelled Wally.

"What's the matter with you now?"

"Eureka!"

"Eh?"

"I've found it!"

"Found what—the spy?"

"No, ass, the bike—Tom Merry's bike!" shouted Wally.

"My hat!"

The scouts were excited now. From the shallow water at the bottom of the pit Wally dragged up a drenched, muddy, and broken machine. He knew that machine very well. It was Tom Merry's bicycle—the bike that had been taken by the German spy the previous day from the captain of the Shell.

Wally's eyes were gleaming now with glee. He did not mind the wet and the mud now. He had made a discovery.

The presence of the bicycle, evidently thrown into the old pit by the spy when he had finished with it, for concealment, showed that the rascal was still in the neighbourhood.

Good-humour was immediately restored. The rope was lowered down, and the bike tied on to it, and Frayne and Dobbs and Jones mimus pulled it up. Then Wally and Curly Gibson were helped up to the surface of the earth once more.

"Arcy minor squelched out mud and water as he trod, but he did not mind. The Jackals had met with a success.

"It's Tom Merry's bike, right enough," said Joe Frayne.

"Here's his name on the saddle!"

"Besides, I know the bike," said Wally.

"But what could the German have chucked it down there for?" asked Dobbs, in wonder.

Wally chuckled.

"Don't you see? He scooted on that bike, and got away from the mounted bobbies who were after him. But he found all the roads watched, and he had to take to the moor. As he couldn't get clear, the bike was no use to him; he had to take to hiding. Then he couldn't keep the bike. But if he left it anywhere, it would be found, and prove that he was still about here. So he pitched it into that old pit.

"Right as rain!" agreed Frayne.

"Of course, he didn't expect it to be found, pitched into a pit fifty feet deep, with a foot of water at the bottom!" grinned Wally. "He didn't know that the Jackal Patrol was going to be on his track—what?"

"But you only found it by accident," remarked Jones mimus. "If Curly hadn't biffed you over, you wouldn't—"

"Don't jaw!" said Wally sharply.

"We've found the bike, and that's enough. It proves that the German beast is still hanging about here. Tom Merry said that he was quite fagged out, and so he can't have gone far on foot. Besides, the ways can't be open, or he'd have kept on on the bike. The rotter may be skulking now within a hundred yards of us. My pippins, we're going to nail him!"

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"Hurrah for the Jackals!"

The fags eagerly scanned the ground for a trail, but there was no trail to be found.

The night rain had probably come since the German was there; but it was a great deal to have discovered for certain that he had been there at all, and the Jackals hunted indifferently for a sign.

"He must have tried to get away on the bike, and was headed off," Wally remarked sagely, after some time had been spent in vain searching. "I shouldn't wonder if he doubled back, and got into the wood. Let's get in that direction, anyway!"

The fags, a little discouraged now, but quite determined, headed for the wood. As they entered the trees, they heard the signal of the Curlews. Tom Merry and Lowther came through the thickets. The Curlews were spread out in the wood, searching for signs, after Tower's famous encounter with Mr. Bill Higgins.

"Found anything, you Shell bouncers?" asked Wally.

"Only a tramp, so far!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"What luck?"

"Lots?"

"Found your bike?" chirruped Frayne. "Proof that the rotter is hanging about here—what?"

"My hat! Tell us quick!"

Wally proudly explained the success of the Curlews.

"Be Jove!" said Lowther. "That settles it! The villain is still in this quarter, that's certain. Sure it was Tom's bike, Wally?"

Wally sniffed.

"Of course, ass! You can go and look at it if you like. It's only a mile or so from here. We left it in the grass!"

"We'll get it afterwards," said Tom. "Wally, my son, you've done jolly well!"

And Tom signalled to the Curlews to come together, and immediately acquainted them with the discovery made by the Jackals. And the scouts with renewed energy pursued their quest.

Kangaroo & Co., who were working further along in the wood, received the news, too. And the certain knowledge that the fugitive was in the neighbourhood "bucked up" the scouts wonderfully. Hitherto they had been guided chiefly by hope; but now they knew that their man was at hand—if they could only find him. And they were resolved to leave no stone unturned to run him down.

CHAPTER 10.

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing.

"**H** ALLO!" murmured Figgins. "Who's that?"

"Shush!"

Figgins & Co., working their way through the wood from the old hut, where they were assured they had discovered "signs" of the hidden German spy, came out into a dusky glade, treading lightly, and scanning the earth for signs.

Through the brambles across the glade Figgins spotted a battered bowler hat, evidently upon the head of someone who was resting there.

It looked like the headgear of some tramp; but Figgins did not intend to trust to appearances. Anybody who was found in the woods that afternoon was required to give an account of himself.

"Shush!" murmured Figgins. "Get round him, and surround him? Whoever he is, we're going to make sure of him. He may be our man!"

"Right-ho!"

And the Wolves stole softly through the thickets, making hardly a sound, and circling round the bowler hat, to cut off the escape of its owner in any direction.

The circle of scouts drew in closer and closer.

The bowler hat was hidden from sight now by the thickets; but Figgins had marked that it was close beside a big tree, and that tree was the objective of the Wolves.

And, with the caution and stealth of real wolves, the scouts of the New House closed in on the as yet unseen man.

Figgins pushed the brambles aside, and showed himself first, coming almost suddenly on the man.

He saw a ragged, dirty, unkempt figure, with a face thick with dirt, and a stubbly beard, torn and soiled clothes, battered

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The tramp looked up, and dropped the paper of fish, as Towser came leaping towards him. "'Ere, keep that there dog off!" he yelled. "Got him!" roared Herries. "He's in disguise!" (See Chapter 7.)

hat, and huge, cracked boots. Certainly those boots had never made the tracks Figgins had discovered in the poacher's hut.

It was more than an hour since Figgins & Co. had been in the hut, and they had not succeeded in discovering any tracks since; but they would have known them at once if they had found them.

The tramp—if he was a tramp—did not move as Figgins came through the bushes. He simply raised his head and stared at the junior, and went on munching a crust of bread.

"Hallo!" said Figgins.

"Hallo!" growled the man.

"Who are you?"

"Find out!"

"Ahem!"

The rest of the Wolves closed in round the tramp. If he had tried to get away, he would have been collared at once. But he did not seem to be thinking of anything of the sort. He scowled and munched his crust.

"Not our man?" grinned Redfern.

"Well, I can't say he looks much like him," confessed Figgins. "But he may be able to give us some information."

"Yes, rather!"

"Look here, my man," said Figgins, "we're hunting for somebody!"

"Are you?"

"Yes, a German! Have you seen any German in the wood?"

"No, I ain't!"

"Have you seen anybody at all?"

"Only you kids."

"Have you been about here long?"

"About an hour!" growled the tramp. "I'm trampin' to Wayland, and if you want to 'elp a pore man on 'is way, and you've got a shilling to spare—"

"I'll stand you a bob with pleasure, if you can give me any information," said Figgins. "Sure you haven't seen anybody?"

"I ain't."

"There's a German spy sneaking about the wood somewhere," explained Figgins. "We've got certain information that he was close to this spot to-day."

"Well, I ain't seed 'im."

"Sulky brute!" growled Redfern. "No good wasting time here, Figgie. Let's get on!"

"You might 'and a man 'one of them sandwiches," said the tramp, looking with almost wolfish eyes at Fatty Wynn, as the fat Fourth-Former helped himself from his wallet. "I ain't 'ad much to eat since I started out this 'ere mornin'!"

"Here you are," said Fatty.

"Thanks!"

"Quite sure you haven't seen anybody?" asked Figgins.

The tramp, seemingly a little better-humoured after the gift of the sandwich, assumed a thoughtful expression.

"Not any German that I knows on," he said. "I seed a man, now I come to think of it, but I don't know that he was a furriner."

"What was he like?" asked Figgins eagerly.

And the Wolves gathered round, keen and eager for information.

"Youngish man, with a fair moustache," said the tramp. "He said something I couldn't understand when I asked him to 'elp a pore man on his way. Might 'ave bin German, for all I knows on!"

Figgins's eyes gleamed.

"Anything like that?" he exclaimed, holding the newspaper with the photograph before the eyes of the tramp.

The ragged man scanned the photograph, and nodded.

"Yes, that's the man."

"Good! Which way did he go?"

"He was 'eading towards the hill when I passed 'im."

"Towards the hill," said Figgins thoughtfully; "Making for the ruined castle, perhaps. Thanks, my man! There's your bob!"

"Thanky kindly, sir. I 'ope as you'll find 'im, if so be as he's a foreign spy, as you says!"

"We'll do our best, anyway!"

"Come on!" said Keer cheerfully.

And the Wolves hurried off through the wood in the direction of Wayland Hill, upon the slope of which the ruined castle stood, more than a mile away.

As the juniors disappeared into the trees, the tramp looked after them, munching the sandwich Fatty Wynn had given him.

A strained and haggard look came over the dirty face, and a hunted, desperate gleam into the man's eyes.

If Figgins & Co. had seen him then, they would probably have suspected that the ragged man was far from being the commonplace tramp he affected to be.

"Mein Gott!" the man murmured to himself. "Mein Gott!"

He finished the sandwich, rose to his feet, and tramped slowly and heavily away, in a direction opposite to that taken by Figgins & Co.

His movements told of extreme fatigue; but he kept on with the dogged persistence of a man whose liberty, if not life, was at stake.

For the second time the Wolf Patrol had been very close to the man they sought, and without suspecting it.

CHAPTER 11. Rough on Mr. Higgins.

"COO-EY!"

"Coo-ey!"

It was the signal of the Kangaroo Patrol.

That cry, brought by Noble of the Shell from the far-off Bush-country, sounded through the dusky woods, and drew the Kangaroo Patrol together.

Kangaroos, Curlews, and Jackals gathered, as the quick repetition of the cry showed that a discovery had been made.

Tom Merry was the first to reach Kangaroo, who was giving the signal. The Cozistalk was kneeling beside a still form, half hidden in the grass, which he had dragged from a thick mass of brambles.

Tom Merry's face paled as he ran up.

"Good heavens! What—"

"Bad business," said Kangaroo.

"My hat! It's Higgins!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he looked down at the haggard face, streaked with blood, of the invisible man.

"You know him?"

"It's the tramp—the fellow Herries' bulldog ran down a couple of hours ago."

"Poor chap! He's met something worse than Herries' bulldog since then."

The scouts were crowding up, and they gazed in alarm and horror at the unfortunate Bill Higgins.

"Bai Jore! He's had a frightful blow!" muttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"And his clothes have been taken!"

"Poor chap!"

"Who on earth could want his ragged old clothes?" ejaculated Digby.

"Who?" Tom Merry gritted his teeth. "Who but a German spy? A change of clothes was what he wanted more than anything else!"

"My hat!"

Tom Merry knelt beside the inflexible tramp.

Bill Higgins had been stripped almost to the skin, and his clothes taken. There was a big black bruise on his forehead, and blood was oozing from under his thick and frowzy hair. Evidently he had received a terrible blow on the head, which had deprived him of his senses, and he still showed no sign of returning to consciousness.

Tom Merry examined his injury. His training as a Boy Scout had given him some slight skill in surgical matters.

"He—he's not dead!" stammered Manners.

"No."

"Thank goodness for that!"

"But he's had a fearful whack on the head—from the butt of a revolver, perhaps," said Tom Merry. "There's not much doubt who struck the blow; but he will tell us when he recovers. Get some water—quick!"

Tom Merry dashed water into the face of the invisible man.

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man, and washed the ugly wound and bandaged it. Signs of returning animation came into the dirty and haggard face of the tramp.

"Hello! Here are some clothes—not his, though!" Blake exclaimed, dragging several articles of clothing from the depth of the bushes.

"The German clobber," said Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked at the clothes. They were torn and soiled and damp; but he recognised them as the clothes Franz Kleinach had worn the previous evening, when he had encountered the German spy in Rylcombe Lane.

"That settles it," said Blake. "It was the German who knocked this poor chap on the head—for the sake of a change of clothes."

"He will pay for this, along with the rest, when he's laid by the heels!" growled Monty Lowther. "Hallo! The chap's coming to now!"

The unfortunate Mr. Higgins opened his eyes, and blinked wildly round at the sympathetic faces of the juniors.

"My heye!" he murmured. "My 'ead! Oh lo'!"

"Drink some of this," said Tom Merry, holding a tin cup of cold tea to his lips.

Mr. Higgins drank, and shivered a little. No doubt he was accustomed to a stronger liquid than cold tea.

"Thanky!" he murmured. "My 'at! Where is he? Where is that desprit villain? I'll smash 'im! I'll 'ave his 'ears off!"

"The man who hit you?" asked Tom.

"Yes. Where is he?"

"That's what we want to know," said Tom. "It's the man we're after?"

"'Allo! Where's my clothes?" exclaimed Mr. Higgins, sitting up in the grass in astonishment. "You don't mean to go for to say that the villain 'ave stolen my clothes?"

"He has; but he's left you his own," said Blake, with a grin. "You'll benefit by the exchange, I should say!"

"Ow! My 'ead!" said Mr. Higgins. "The foreign scum! I wish I could get at 'im! I'd teach 'im to 'it a man from behind and steal his clothes, I would!"

"How did it happen?" asked Tom Merry.

Mr. Higgins put his hand to his bandaged head, and groaned.

"I 'ardly know," he replied. "I was takin' a bit of a rest, when somebody jumped on me out of the bush, and afore I knew wot was 'appening he had clubbed me on the 'ead. I just saw that 'e was a fair-looking chap—like a German furrier—but I 'adn't time to see much, nor to say a word. After I got that clump on the 'ead, I didn't know what was 'appening!"

"It was Franz Kleinach, the spy," said Tom. "Here are his clothes to prove it. You'd better shove those clothes on, Higgins, and go direct to the police-station, and tell them what's happened—as soon as you can walk."

"I can walk all right," mumbled Mr. Higgins, staggering to his feet. "Which I've got a fearful 'eadache, that's all. Many thanks to you young gentlemen! Oo!"

"One of us had better see him to the police-station," said Blake. "It's up to scouts to do good turns, anyway!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Right-ho! D'Arcy is detailed to take this man to Rylcombe Police Station, and look after him. The rest of you follow me!"

Arthur Augustus started. The task of piloting a dirty and frowzy tramp was not at all to the taste of the swell of St. Jim's. And Arthur Augustus had very grave doubts as to whether matters would go well in his absence.

"Woolly, Tom Merry—" he ejaculated.

"Nuff said! Take your man off!"

"But weally, you know, I am needed here. Undah the cires, it would be bettal to detail the least useful scout for that dusty, deah boy."

"Exactly—that's what I'm doing," explained Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttal ass—"

"Scouts are not allowed to call their patrol-leaders asses," said Tom Merry severely.

"These painful truths should be kept dark," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up! Gussy, take your man away!"

"Undah the cires—"

"March!"

Tom Merry & Co. marched, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was left alone with the unfortunate Mr. Higgins. But the swell of St. Jim's had a kind and tender heart, and he offered an arm to Mr. Higgins, and helped him away through the wood, considerably to the tramp's surprise.

"Which you're a gentleman, sir," said Mr. Higgins.

"Thank you, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus piloted Mr. Higgins away as cheerfully as he could, but with great misgivings in his heart as to what would happen in his absence.

CHAPTER 12.

The Curlews Make a Capture.

THE afternoon was growing old, and the scouts of St. Jim's were growing tired. But they did not slacken.

That half-holiday was their only chance of hunting for the German spy; and if they did not capture him that Wednesday afternoon, he was not likely to remain at large until the following Saturday, their next half-holiday.

Now or never was the time!

So the scouts kept on determinedly, resolved to leave no stone unturned in carrying out their self-appointed task.

But the range of their search was wide, and numerous as they were, they could not hope to cover the whole ground in one afternoon.

They had been lucky so far. They had discovered for a certainty that the German spy was somewhere in the wood, his clothes, as Monty Lowther remarked, had been captured, and the next thing was to capture the man himself. But that was not so easy.

Up and down through the dim aisles of the wood the scouts hunted, but they could not find the trail of the man they sought.

It was no longer Franz Kleinach in his own person that they were looking for—it was a man disguised as a tramp. It was in vain that they sought him, however. The hours passed, and dusk descended on the woods.

The Curlews came with slow and fatigued steps towards the old poacher's hut, which Figgins & Co. had searched earlier in the afternoon. The search was to finish there.

If the spy was not in that locality, there was no time to carry the hunt further. It was necessary to return to St. Jim's for calling-over.

As the Curlew patrol—minus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—came up to the old hut, Tom Merry uttered an exclamation.

"Someone's been here!"

"Footmarks, by Jove!" ejaculated Manners.

The scouts were on their knees at once examining the tracks.

"Not our man!" growled Tom Merry. "These are kids' boots. Some of the scouts must have been here—these 'all."

"I don't think the Kangaroos or Jackals have been this way," said Blake, puzzled. "But certainly these ain't a man's footprints. Let's look into the hut."

Inside the hut the Curlews made the same discovery that Figgins & Co. had made, and it excited them greatly.

The charred embers of the fire and the remains of the rabbit showed where someone had camped out the night before, and they had no doubt that it was the man they sought. But he was evidently not there now.

"Gone a dozen hours or more," grunted Tom Merry. "We've got later evidence than this. As I work it out, he chucked the bike into the pit on the moor, and took to the woods, passed the night here, and then cleared off. This afternoon he's got a chance of clothes. Goodness knows where he is now. Not much use dropping on an old sign like this."

"Might be here still," said Herries thoughtfully, as Towser began to sniff about the flat stone in the middle of the floor.

"Where, as?"

"There's a cellar under the floor."

"The stone hasn't been raised since that fire was built."

"Well, look at Towser!"

The bulldog was certainly sniffing about the stone. The juniors watched him curiously. It was not the bones of the rabbit that Towser was after. He seemed interested in the entrance to the cellar.

"You know, there's an underground passage from here to the old castle," said Herries excitedly. "It was found out a long time ago. Just the place where the rotter would hide."

"Oh, rot! How could he raise that stone without shifting the embers on it!" growled Blake.

But Herries was not to be convinced.

"Towser smells something," he said.

"Fried fish, perhaps?" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Listen!" muttered Herries, holding up his hand.

The scouts started, and listened.

From below the flat stone there came a slight sound—a sound from the cellar underneath the hut. What could cause a sound there if the cellar was unoccupied?

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another in the thickening dusk, with startled faces. It seemed impossible that the

stone could have been raised and replaced without disturbing the dry embers that lay upon it. Yet—

"Somebody's down there!" whispered Blake tensely.

"Sounds like it."

"Listen!"

"Keep that dog quiet, Herries."

Herries grinned triumphantly as he placed his hand over Towser's muzzle, and drew the bulldog away from the stone. Towser had vindicated himself at last. Certainly the bulldog had smelt out the presence of someone in the cellar below.

"What do you think now?" grinned Herries. "What about Towser as a tracker—what?"

"My hat! I can bear somebody moving down there!" breathed Digby.

"Quiet! He's coming up!"

"Stand ready!"

"You bet!"

There was no doubt about it. Under the flat stone, as the juniors knew, were several rickety old steps leading into the cellar. And they could hear the sound of boots upon those steps.

The stone itself shifted a little, as if from pressure beneath. Somebody was in the cellar, and he was coming up!

The scouts felt their hearts beating hard.

"Keep back!" whispered Tom Merry. "Keep in the shadow. Let him get fairly out before we collar him, or he may jump back and dodge us yet."

"Yes, rather."

"Don't move till I jump on him. Then all pile on him together. Remember, he's most likely armed, and we don't want to give him a chance to shoot."

"What ho!"

"Shush!"

The juniors waited, in almost an agony of expectation.

The interior of the hut was dark now—they could scarcely see one another in the thickening gloom of night. As they crouched back against the shattered old walls, it was not likely that the new-comer would see them. He would step up into the hut unconscious of his peril, and then the scouts would fall upon him, when it was too late for him to leap back into safety. And once they had their grasp upon him, he should not escape.

There was no doubt in their minds that it was their man. Who else could be hidden in the cellar beneath the ruined hut? They had proof that he had been there earlier in the day. Now he was coming back from his underground hiding-place—now that night had fallen. That was how they figured it out. They waited with thumping hearts.

In the shadows they could not see the stone, but they heard it raised from its place in the floor, and heard the dry embers slide from it as it rose upon its side.

A vague, shadowy head rose in the gloom, followed by shoulders and a body, and a figure stepped out.

Vague and shadowy, hardly visible in the gloom, but it was enough for the Curlews.

Tom Merry gave a sudden shout, and sprang.

In an instant his grasp was upon the figure, and it went heavily to the floor, with the Shell fellow on top.

The Curlews were piling on in a second.

There was a single startled gasp from the shadowy form as it bumped on the floor, and then it disappeared under the struggling, sprawling Curlews. If ever a prisoner was thoroughly secured, it was that prisoner.

"Got him!"

"Hurrah!"

"Grooooooh!" came from the prisoner beneath.

"Hold him!"

"Grip him!"

"Don't let him get away!"

"Hurrah for us!"

There was no chance whatever of the prisoner getting away. Herries and Digby were kneeling on him. Tom Merry had an arm round his neck, half throttling him; Lowther and Manners had his wrists in their grasp. The prisoner would have needed the strength of a Hercules to escape from the grasp of the Curlew patrol.

"Got the villain! Hurrah!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Grooooh!"

"Sit on him!"

"Squash him!"

"Never mind if you hurt him! He's only a spy!"

"Don't struggle, you scoundrel! We've got you!"

"Groo-booh-hoooh!"

In the midst of the excited exclamations of the captors, and the gasping and panting of the captured, there came a startled voice from the darkness below.

"What's the matter there? What's the matter, Figgy?"

It was the voice of Kerr of the Fourth!

CHAPTER 13.

Not Nice for Figgins!

KERR'S voice struck upon the ears of the Curlews with the startling force of a thunderclap.

A shadowy head came up from the opening in the floor, and Kerr's voice went on:

"What is it? Have you got him, Figgy?"

"Kerr!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Hallo! I thought I heard your voice! What are you School House bouncers doing here?" exclaimed Kerr.

"Come up, Fatty!"

"I'm coming!" came Fatty Wynn's voice from below.

"Fatty with you?" demanded Tom Merry. "Then I suppose Figgins is with you too!"

"Figgins came up first!"

"What?"

"He's here, isn't he?" exclaimed Kerr.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

Tom Merry relaxed the arm he had wound round the prisoner's neck. Then the unfortunate victim of the zealous Curlews found his voice.

"Yow! Yow-ow! You thundering asses! Lemme gerrup! Ow!"

"Figgins!"

"My only hat," yelled Kerr, "have you collared Figgins? What have you collared Figgins for, you silly asses?"

"Figgins!" stuttered Blake. "Then—then it ain't—"

"Tain't the German after all!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"It's that chump Figgins!" yelled Lowther. "What's he doing here? What are any of those New House bouncers doing here, I'd like to know?"

The Curlews released their prisoner. Manners struck a vest. Figgins rose to his feet, very much dishevelled, and very red and furious. As soon as he had recovered a little breath he proceeded to tell the dismayed and angry Curlews what he thought of them.

"You thumping asses! You thundering chumps! You silly idiots! You—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry. "What are you doing here?"

"Hunting for that German villain, of course!" snapped Figgins. "What are you doing? You silly asses, what do you mean by taking me for a German?"

"Adding insult to injury!" growled Kerr.

"Well, you are a set of precious asses," said Fatty Wynn, coming up panting out of the cellar. "I must say—"

"Of course, we thought it was the German, sneaking about in a cellar like that!" howled Blake. "What were you hiding in the cellar for, you chumps?"

"We weren't hiding in the cellar, ass. We've come here underground from the old castle!" snorted Figgins. "We're on the track of the villain."

"You've no business to be on his track. He's our spy!" said Tom Merry wrathfully.

"Yes, rather; he's ours! How did you know anything about this hunt, I'd like to know?" demanded Blake.

Figgins grinned.

"Information received!" he said airily. "Did you think you were going to keep a German spy all to yourselves, you duffers! No jolly fear! We knew it was a job above your weight, so of course we took a hand."

"You—you—you—!" Words failed Tom Merry.

"And we're on the track," said Figgins emphatically. "We found out that he'd been here in this hut—camped here last night!"

"We've found that out, too!" growled Manners.

"Too late to be of any good!" snorted Blake. "When we heard a silly idiot moving in the cellar, of course we thought it was our man."

"Just like you!" agreed Kerr sardonically.

"Look here, you ass!"

"We've got later information about him," said Figgins. "We've got positive information that he was seen going towards the old castle. We hunted for him there, but there wasn't a sign; so we thought he might have come back to his old haunt, by the underground way, to camp another night here. When you silly chumps sited on me, I thought for a second it was the German chap, till you began to jaw."

"You've got positive information!" demanded Tom Merry. "How?"

"From a man who'd seen him," said Figgins triumphantly. "We know how to get information. You can leave matters of this kind to the New House scouts. A thing of this sort is really a bit above your weight, you know."

"Fatted! Most likely it was somebody pulling your leg!" growled Tom Merry.

"It wasn't," said Figgins warmly. "It was a tramp

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fellow, who was having a feed in the wood. We came on him, and he told us he'd seen the German going towards the hill. We showed him the photograph of the beast, and he recognised it. That's pretty positive, I should say."

Tom Merry started.

"A tramp!" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"What was he like?" exclaimed Tom excitedly.

"What the dickens does it matter what he was like!" said Figgins in surprise. "A common or garden tramp, that was all."

"Oh, you ass! Did he have a bowler hat?" yelled Tom.

"Yes, I believe so. Yes, I know he did. It was an old bowler we first saw, when we came on him," said Figgins.

"And a spotted neckerchief!" howled Blake.

"Yes—have you seen him?"

"Seen him!" roared Tom Merry. "No, we haven't seen him, but we've seen the man he got his clothes from. Oh, you chumps!"

"Look here—"

"He's the man!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"What man?"

"The German!"

Figgins jumped.

"Oh, rats! What are you giving me!" growled Figgins. "He spoke English—tramp English!"

"Franz Kleinach knows the language as well as we do, fathead! It says so in the paper."

"But—but how do you know? What makes you think?"

Figgins & Co. listened with dumb dismay as Tom Merry hastily told the story of Mr. Bill Higgins and his unfortunate meeting with the German fugitive. The New House Co. were stricken with dismay. Redfern and Owen and Lawrence, who had been a little behind the Co., came up one by one out of the cellar in time to hear Tom Merry's words. The Wolves of the New House gazed at one another in the gloom, but it was too dark for their blushes to be seen. There was no doubt about it. The man they had spoken to—the man they had taken for a common tramp—the man who had sent them on that fool's errand to the old castle—that man was the man of whom they had been in search, clad in Bill Higgins's ragged clothes, and with his face purposely soiled to disguise it, and his tell-tale blonde moustache cut off. There was no doubt upon the point. The last doubt vanished as Tom Merry described in detail the clothes that had been worn by Bill Higgins at their first meeting with that gentleman, and Figgins recognised every detail.

"Well," said Figgins at last—"well, the spoofer—the villain!"

"How were we to know that a German beast could speak English like that?" growled Redfern. "We've been done."

"Done brown!" said Fatty Wynn.

"And you had the man fairly in your hands, if you'd had brains enough to know him," said Blake. "Oh crumbs!"

"How were we to know him?" said Figgins.

"Yes, how—considering that you are a champion ass!" said Blake witheringly. "I'll bet you we'd have known him."

"Yes, rather!"

"Rot!" said Kerr. "All you fellows can do is to collar a chap in mistake for a blessed German. That's your limit!"

"You thumping ass!"

"Well, it's no good ragging," said Tom Merry. "Time we got back to St. Jim's, or we shall get lines for missing call-over. We can't look for the slippery beast in the dark."

That was true enough; ragging one another by the rival scouts would not improve matters in any way. The rascal had escaped, for the present; and if the juniors did not like it, they could only lump it. But it was in a very disappointed and depressed frame of mind that they took their way back to St. Jim's.

The afternoon had not been wholly a failure. They had found proof, at least, that the rascal was still in the vicinity, and they had accured the victim of the violence of the desperate fugitive. But they had not succeeded, as they had hoped, in laying the rascal by the heels.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy met them at the gates of St. Jim's. He turned his eyeglass inquiringly upon Figgins & Co. as he perceived them with the Curlews.

"What luck, dear boys?" he asked.

"Rotten!" growled Tom Merry.

"The Kangawoos and the jackals are all in," said Arthur Augustus. "They haven't had any luck. I was afraid you wouldn't get the man, you know. If I had been with you—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"More rats!"

And the disappointed scouts went to their respective Houses, to grin and bear their disappointment—or, at all events, to bear it, even if they could not grin.

CHAPTER 14.

Missing.

"ANY news?"

A dozen eager voices asked the question, as Tom Merry hastily unfolded the "Daily Mail" on the following morning.

All the scouts of St. Jim's were keen to know whether the German spy was still at large. After the information they had been able to furnish to the police, it seemed extremely unlikely that Franz Kleinach had been able to avoid capture.

And although they were disappointed at their own want of success, it would have been a great satisfaction to know that the rascal was safe under lock and key.

But Tom Merry shook his head.

"Here's a quarter of a column about it," he said. "But he's not caught. The police are here in force now, and the wood is surrounded on all sides, and the keepers of all the district are lending a hand in searching it. He can't possibly get away."

"Not if he's still in the wood," Blake remarked.

"Where else can he be?"

"May have sloped under cover of the dark last night."

"Well, the whole neighbourhood is being watched and searched, and any man dressed as a tramp is pretty certain to be stopped and questioned."

"Yaas, I weally think he can't get away," said Arthur Augustus. "But he is an awfully deep wotah, and I should feel bettah if we had caught him yestaday. It was vewy unforch that I was not on the spot when Figgins met him—"

"What would you have done, as?" demanded Figgins.

"I should have recognised him, dear boy, and seized him at once."

"How-wow!"

"The extremely unforch part is, that he was gettin' away all the time Tom Mewry was capturin' Figgins," said D'Arcy, with a solemn shake of the head. "That was weally a waste of time and energy. Pevsaps, after this, Tom Mewry, you will be weady to defer to a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Rats!"

"Well, he ain't captured, anyway," said Kangaroo. "Not much chance for us after this, as he's certain oibler to be caught or to clear out of the neighbourhood. The scouts of St. Jim's won't distinguish themselves, after all."

"More likely extinguish themselves," sneered Levison of the Fourth. "Like your cheek to think that you could catch a fellow like that, when the police haven't been able to do it. I think you're a set of cheeky asses."

"Weally, Levison—"

Levison walked away before the scouts could make a forcible reply to his disparaging remarks. Levison was the only fellow who was pleased by the failure of the expedition. The disappointment was great for the scouts. Their only consolation was, that they had been able to give information which made it pretty certain that the police would run the rascal down.

But, certain as these seemed, it did not happen.

The Terrible Three cycled over to Wayland that evening for the "Evening News," and there was no mention in it of the capture of Franz Kleinach. There was great and thrilling news from the front, but there was no mention of the matter that more immediately concerned the scouts of St. Jim's.

"Looks as if the beggar is getting away, after all," Monty Lowther remarked, as they pedalled back to the school.

"He can't be still in the wood, anyway," said Tom Merry glumly. "With the police and the keepers, and half the countryside searching for him, he would have been found before this, if he had been still there."

"Must have cleared off!" said Manners.

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"Yet I don't see how," he exclaimed. "Every road, every path is watched, and the description of the beast is posted up everywhere. Blessed if I know how he can have got away, unless he has flown into the air."

"Well, he hasn't done that. There may be some nook or cranny in the neighbourhood where he is in hiding, after all."

"I wish I could guess where."

"He must be famished by this time, too," said Lowther. "He had a sandwich from Fatty Wynn yesterday, and a crust or two from Bill Higgins, but that won't last him long."

I suppose he can't live without food. When he gets starving, he's pretty certain to give himself up, I should think."

But that day, at all events, the German spy did not give himself up. Rascal as he was, he evidently had an iron determination of character.

Possibly he still hoped to get clear of the toils, and to escape with the information he had gained of the defences at Southampton, or to hand it over to some accomplice in the country.

Levison of the Fourth met the Terrible Three as they wheeled their bikes in, with his usual sneering smile upon his thin face.

"Man caught yet?" he asked.

"No," said Tom shortly.

"Going after him again?" grinned Levison.

"Oh, go and eat cake!"

Levison laughed and turned away. The disappointment of the scouts was amusing to the cad of the Fourth. Feelings of patriotism did not trouble Levison very much. The scouts of the School House held another meeting in the common-room to discuss the matter. As Kleinach had not yet been captured, they felt that there was still a chance for them. With the hue-and-cry up all over the countryside, it seemed impossible that the fugitive could have got away, and Tom Merry inclined to the opinion that he had found some nook wheren to hide himself.

"If he's still loose on Saturday, we'll have another hunt," said Tom Merry's decision. "We ought to get some news of him. He can't live without food, and to get food he will have to show himself somewhere. Then we shall know."

"Yaas, wotah!"

That was all the scouts could decide.

The meeting broke up as time came round for calling-over. The juniors crowded into Big Hall to answer to their names.

Mr. Railton was taking call-over, and as he called out the name of Levison there did not come the usual "Adsum!"

Mr. Railton raised his head.

"Levison?" he repeated.

There was no reply.

"Levison?"

"He's not here, sir," said Blake, glancing over the ranks of the Fourth.

"Very well."

Mr. Railton marked down Levison as absent from call-over, and went on with the names.

Levison was not seen in the common-room that evening. Mellish, his chum and study-mate, came down after doing his preparation, and looked round for him.

"Anybody seen Levison?" he asked.

"Nobody had, apparently."

"He wasn't at calling-over," said Lunley-Lumley. "I haven't seen him in the study, either. I suppose he's gone out."

Mellish looked perplexed.

"He didn't say anything to me about going out," he remarked. "It's jolly queer where he's got to. It's close on bedtime now."

"Well, he's going to get a licking," said Blake. "It won't do him any harm."

Nobody concerned himself much about Levison. At bedtime Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looked into the common-room, to shepherd the Fourth-Formers off to their dormitory.

"Is Levison here?" asked Kildare.

"Not here," said Mellish.

Kildare frowned.

"He hasn't reported himself since calling-over," he said. "Does anybody know where he is now?"

"Seems to have disappeared," said Tom Merry. "Nobody has seen him this evening. I saw him near the gates just before locking-up."

"Well, get off to your dormitory," said Kildare. "I suppose he will turn up there, and I'll talk to him."

But Levison did not turn up in the Fourth Form dormitory. The juniors turned in, and Kildare went down to report Levison's absence to the Housemaster.

The cad of the Fourth was looked for immediately, but he was not to be found.

It was soon evident that he was not in the School House, and in the New House nothing had been heard of him.

By half-past ten he had not appeared, and Mr. Railton began to feel anxious. The absence of the Fourth-Former was extraordinary. He could hardly be supposed to be absenting himself intentionally, and the Housemaster surmised that an accident of some sort had occurred.

The School House master, anxious and annoyed, walked down to Rylocombe to make inquiries, but at the police-station there no one had heard anything of an accident.

Mr. Railton returned to St. Jim's very much disturbed, and discussed the matter with the Head.

Levison was missing!

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"He must have gone out," said Dr. Holmes, wrinkling his brows. "It is extraordinary that he has not returned. If there had been an accident, it should surely have been heard of at the police-station. It is amazing. Nothing can be done till the morning, however."

When morning dawned, and the rising-bell clanged out over St. Jim's, the Fourth-Formers woke up, to find that Levison's bed in the dormitory was still empty.

"Blake was the first to make the discovery."

"Levison's not here!" he exclaimed.

"Bui Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sitting up in bed. "The boundah has had a night out! He'll get the sack for this!"

"I don't suppose he's had a night out on purpose, as!" said Blake. "Something's happened to the fellow."

It was pretty evident by this time that something had happened to Levison, and the School House was in a buzz of excitement over the matter as the fellows came down from the dormitories.

CHAPTER 15. A Night of Horror.

LEVISON of the Fourth was not far away. But the St. Jim's fellows would have been amazed if they had known where he was and what had happened to him.

After speaking to the Terrible Three near the school gates that evening Levison had sauntered away towards the old tower of St. Jim's in the dusk.

The old tower, which was half in ruins, was out of bounds for the juniors. The ancient stone stairs, broken in many places and yawning with dangerous gaps, were not safe, and the Head did not approve of the juniors risking their limbs in exploring the old place. But that did not make any difference to Levison. It was a little habit of his to adjourn to the old tower when he wanted what he called a quiet smoke—that being one of the pleasant manners and customs of the cad of the Fourth. Levison had a new packet of cigarettes in his pocket, and he had gone to his usual haunt to smoke. In the old tower there was no danger of being discovered by a master or a prefect.

As for any other danger, Levison never thought of it. But it was the unexpected that happened.

Levison slipped quietly into the old building and ascended the stairs to the room above, almost the only room in the tower that was still intact. He pushed open the heavy oak door and walked in carelessly.

It was dusk in the quadrangle, and still duskier in the room in the tower, which was only lighted by a couple of narrow windows—mere slits in the thick stone walls, used in times long past for arrows.

Levison swung the heavy door shut behind him, without the slightest suspicion that there was anyone else in the room.

He made that discovery when it was too late to retreat.

A dark figure detached itself from the shadows of the wall and crossed quickly between Levison and the door.

The junior gave a startled gasp.

In the dim light he made out a man of powerful frame, dressed in tattered clothes, with a battered bowler hat on his head, and a face that showed white and haggard through mud and dirt.

Two gleaming eyes were fixed upon Levison as he stood rooted to the floor with surprise and terror, and a hand was raised threateningly.

"Not a sound!" muttered a thick, harsh voice.

Levison's heart thumped.

"Who—who are you?" he panted.

Although he asked the question, he knew well enough who it was. He had read the description of the man who had despoiled Bill Higgins in his tattered attire.

He knew that it was Franz Kleinach, the German spy.

Levison's brain swam as he realised it. The scouts of St. Jim's had suspected that the hunted man had found some hidden nook to conceal himself in. But it had never occurred to them that that hidden nook was within the walls of St. Jim's. And yet a safer place, less likely to be suspected, could hardly have been thought of. That old ruin within sight of the windows of the School House was not likely to be searched for a hidden fugitive. With the hunters close on his track, the German spy had probably climbed over the school wall merely to obtain a temporary refuge—to gain time—under cover of the darkness of the previous night, his hiding-place in the wood being no longer of use. And he had found this hiding-place and remained there.

Levison realised it, and realised that he was in the presence of a desperate man, who would stop at nothing to secure his own safety. Bitterly enough at that moment Levison

repented him of the bad habits that had led him to that secluded spot for a quiet smoke.

He gazed at the tattered, haggard figure with dilated eyes. "You know who I am!" The German's voice was hoarse and savage. "If you utter a cry your life will pay for it! Understand that!"

Levison almost fainted with terror as he caught the gleam of a weapon in the dim light. The sight of the revolver was enough for him. He had little doubt that the desperate man would use it if needed.

"Don't—don't!" stammered Levison. "I—I—I didn't know you were here! I—I wouldn't have come here if I'd known!"

The German laughed harshly and grimly.

"I can quite believe that! Now you are here, you must remain. If you betray me—"

He did not finish, but the look in his haggard eyes made Levison shrink.

"I—I won't give you away!" panted the wretched junior.

"I—I won't say a word! Let me go, and—and—"

"Stay where you are!"

Levison stayed.

"Is anyone coming here after you?"

"N—no!"

"Does anyone know you are here?"

"N—no!"

"Why did you come?"

"I—I came here to smoke," faltered Levison.

"Ach! Have you any food about you?"

"No!"

The German muttered a curse. It was easy to see that he was famished with hunger.

"You have something to smoke! Give me that!"

Levison, without a word, handed over his packet of cigarettes. The German struck a match, shading it with his battered hat to keep the light from the narrow windows, and lighted a cigarette. He blew out the match at once.

"That is better than nothing!" he snarled. "It is well for you that no one knows you are here. If others come I shall fight. Do you understand? It will cost six lives at least to capture me! And yours will be the first!"

Levison shuddered.

"I—I haven't done you any harm!" he muttered miserably. "Let me get out! I won't say a word about you! I—I promise!"

"Hold your tongue! You will remain here! You must remain for my safety. If you utter a cry I will stun you with the butt of my revolver! Your life is nothing to me! Mein Gott! I have a mind to dispose of you at once, and make you pay for what I have suffered!"

Levison staggered back against the wall, almost overcome with terror. His face was as white as chalk.

"D-d-don't touch me!" he panted. "I—I won't make a sound! I—I'll stay here if you like. I—I'll try to get you something to eat if—if you'll let me out!"

"Don't lie to me!" said the spy harshly. "Now, tell me—they are searching for me. I suppose—the police, I mean?"

"Yes!" muttered Levison.

"Have they come in this direction?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then they do not suspect that I am near here!"

"I—I suppose not."

"Good! Here I may lie in safety for a few days, then, till it is safe to go—if I can obtain food. Does anyone ever come into this place? It does not look like it."

"No; it's out of bounds," said Levison. "Some of my friends come here sometimes to smoke, that's all."

"If they come here now it will be the worse for them," said the spy grimly. "and for you! If I am discovered you will get the first bullet from my revolver! Keep that in your mind. I am a desperate man! Now, silence!"

He had thrust the revolver away into a pocket of his ragged clothes. He threw himself upon the floor to rest close against the door. There was no other means of quitting the room, and even if the man slept Levison's escape was cut off.

Levison leaned against the wall, a prey to terror and dismay. He would be missed at calling-over, missed again at bed-time. Search would be made for him, but no one would think of searching the ruined tower of St. Jim's; no one could possibly suspect that he was there, held a prisoner by the desperate man for whom the whole countryside was hunting now.

What was to be the end of it?

The minutes dragged by on leaden wings for the wretched junior. He wondered what Tom Merry or Blake or Higgins would have done in his place? They would not have allowed themselves to be held tamely like this. But Levison was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. His danger weighed upon his mind, and he was as quiet as a scared rabbit.

Minutes—hours passed. It was long past bedtime now; he heard the hours strike from the clock-tower.

He sank down to a sitting posture against the wall. How was this to end? He heard the deep breathing of the German. The rasal, exhausted by his efforts of the day, was sleeping heavily, in spite of his hunger. But he lay close to the inside of the door, and Levison could not have touched the door without awakening him. And that he did not dare to attempt.

The long hours of the night passed wretchedly enough for Levison. He could not sleep, as the German spy did. He heard midnight strike, then one, then two. The long, long night was like a nightmare to him.

And what was to happen on the morrow? It was not likely that the presence of the German spy would be discovered there. No one was in the least likely to suspect that Levison was in the old tower. He had to remain there, a prisoner, while he was being searched for far and wide outside the walls of St. Jim's.

A prisoner, at the mercy of a desperate scoundrel, without food. For how long? Until the spy became desperate with hunger, or until he thought it safe to flee. For days, perhaps—several days!

Levison shuddered at the prospect.

His life was in danger at any moment. For though no one was likely to search the old tower for him, or to suspect the presence of the German spy there, still, there might be a chance visit to the place. Mellish or Crooke might come there for a smoke, as Levison had done, and the alarm would be given. Levison trembled as he thought of it.

Whether the discovery was made or not, matters seemed equally black for the unfortunate end of the Fourth.

There was only one chance—that the German might be discovered, and that the visit might be made by a strong force of police, who could seize him before he had time to keep his promise of bestowing on Levison the first bullet from his revolver. Indeed, if he found himself attacked in earnest, the rasal was not likely to trouble his head about a shrinking, trembling junior schoolboy.

If only the police could come!

Levison, as he sat shivering and thinking, realised that that was his only hope.

And Levison, though he certainly was not brave, was no fool. His brain was very active, and his faculties were sharpened by danger.

He thought it out very carefully, as he listened to the deep breathing of the German, who was sleeping the sleep of exhaustion.

He made up his mind at last.

Silently he drew out a pencil and his pocket-book. It was very dark in the room in the old tower, but Levison could write in the dark. And upon an open page in the pocket-book he wrote:

"German spy hiding here, keeping me prisoner. He is armed. Send for the police.—LEVISON."

By means of the elastic band on the pocket-book he fastened it open, so that the written page would be exposed to view. Then he rose silently to his feet.

His movements were very cautious as he crept towards the nearest of the narrow slits of windows.

He paused every moment to listen to the deep breathing of the German, and assure himself that the man was still asleep.

But Franz Kleinach did not wake. He was exhausted, and he was sleeping like a log.

He stretched his arm through the narrow aperture, but the wall was so thick that his hand did not reach the open air.

A dim bar of starlight marked the slit of the window, where it narrowed to a width of six inches on the outside.

Levison, with beating heart, thrust the pocket-book forward with his outstretched fingers, and it fell outside. He listened almost in agony to hear it drop on the ground below.

A faint thud came from beneath.

Slight as the sound was, scarcely audible, it seemed almost like a thunderclap to Levison's bursting ears, and he crouched low in the darkness lest the German should hear it and wake. But the German did not wake.

Levison crept back to his place, and sat down, and rested his burning, throbbing head against the cold stone of the wall.

"On the morrow that pocket-book would be found, lying outside the old tower; sooner or later it must be found, and then the police would come! And Franz Kleinach would have his hands too full to think of the wretched junior cowering by the wall. He would not suspect what the junior had done. But Levison felt that it would be better for him to affect slumber, and he stretched himself upon the cold stone floor. Cold as it was, exhaustion overcame him, and he was soon asleep in earnest. And when the rising sun shone on the old tower, Levison was still plunged in slumber, as well as the German spy, stretched close to the door.

CHAPTER 16.

Tower's Triumph.

"**B**AI Jove, it's remarkable, you know!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The juniors had come out of the School House, most of them down very early that morning. The mystery of what had happened to Levison of the Fourth puzzled them all.

"Quite remarkable!" went on Arthur Augustus. "I wearily cannot understand what has become of Levison—unless he has run away to become a pirate!"

"Another chance for the giddy scouts," remarked Monty Lowther. "We shall have to find Levison instead of the German."

"Easy enough," said Herries.

"Easy! Is it?" said Tom Merry. "I don't quite see it. But if it's easy, you'd better go and tell the Housemaster how it's to be done. He looks rather worried, and doesn't seem to think that it's easy."

"Yaas, weally, Hewwies—"

"I'm thinking of Tower!" explained Herries.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"You see, it was a bit difficult for Tower yesterday, as I couldn't give him anything to smell, to start with," said Herries. "But in Levison's case it's as easy as winking. I can show Tower something of Levison's, and then he'll track him down—see!"

"No, I don't quite see!" grinned Tom Merry. "You can try if you like!"

"He, ha, ha!"

Herries grunted, and strode away to fetch Tower. Herries regarded this as a really special and excellent opportunity for showing what Tower could do. Ten minutes later the School House juniors had the entertainment of seeing Herries displaying an old cap that belonged to Levison to Tower, and urging him to take up the trail.

Tower did not seem to see it. He lay down to go to sleep, and looked cross when Herries dragged him up again.

Finally he lost his temper completely, jerked the chain loose from Herries' hand, and bolted across the quad.

"Come back, you rotten beast!" roared Herries, starting in pursuit.

"Chase me!" chuckled Blake. "Tower's on the track. Let's go on Tower's track. I want a run before brekker!"

"Yaas, watah!"

And the juniors ran after Herries, who was running after Tower. Tower had evidently had enough of his master for the present. He declined to listen to the voice of the charmer, so to speak, and Herries' shouts and entreaties fell on deaf ears. Tower dodged him round the quadrangle, and then round the chapel, and then round the old tower. There, however, Tower paused.

Herries came panting up, to find the bulldog sniffing at an object that lay on the ground at the foot of the tower.

Tower left it, and started off again at once, as the juniors came up, and Herries rushed on after him, but the other fellows stopped as they saw the object at which Tower had been sniffing.

Tom Merry picked it up.

"Somebody's pocket-book," he remarked. "And turned inside out!"

Then he gave a jump. His eyes almost started from his head as he read the scrawled, blurred lines written upon the open page, straggling wildly where Levison had scrawled them in the dark.

Tom's grip closed on the pocket-book, and he looked up at the old tower. Above him was the slit of the narrow window, twenty feet over his head. From that window the book had been dropped.

"What is it?" asked Blake, in surprise.

"Yaas, deah boy; what the dooce—"

"Come on!" said Tom quietly.

Without another word he led the way towards the School House. The juniors followed him in blank astonishment.

"What in thunder—" began Kangaroo.

"Look at that!" said Tom, as he stopped on the steps of the School House.

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"It's one of Levison's rotten jokes, I suppose!" said Blake incredulously.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Levison wouldn't stay out all night for a joke, you differ. It would mean the sack for him if he did."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Bai Jove! But is it possible that German wotnah has had the astounding cheek to come into these precincts to hide his wotten self?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I regard that as a fearful nerve."

"We guessed that he was hiding in some corner some-

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NEXT WEDNESDAY—**"THE ST. JIM'S AIRMEN!"** A magnificent New Long Complete School Text of Tom Merry & Co. by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

where," said Tom quietly. "We never guessed that it was so near, that's all. Levison goes into that place to smoke, I know; I suppose he went there last evening, and tumbled on the German. He must have dropped this out of the window in the night. The spy is keeping him there, of course, so that Levison can't give him away. And this—"

"Let's go and wout the wutah out!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with a warlike look.

"Better take that to Mr. Railton," said Blake.

"That's what I'm going to do. Keep away from the tower, all of you; there's no telling what the brute may do to Levison if he finds out that he's been given away."

"Yaa, wutah! I nevah thought of that!"

Tom Merry hurried to the Housemaster's study. Mr. Railton was there; and never had the Housemaster been more nettled than he was when Tom presented Levison's pocket-book for his inspection.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "That is Levison's hand, certainly! Where was this found?"

Tom Merry explained.

Mr. Railton's eyes gleamed as he listened. He crossed to the telephone.

"Not a word about this, Merry, and keep away from the tower," he said. "In half an hour the police will be here, and that scoundrel will be secured. Meantime, he must not be alarmed, or harm may come to Levison."

"I understand, sir."

Mr. Railton rang up the police-station at once.

Then he hurriedly communicated with the House prefects, to give them orders to keep all the boys away from the vicinity of the old tower.

There was a buzz of excitement among the School House fellows, and among the New House fellows, too, when they heard the news.

"Right here under our blessed noses!" gasped Figgins.

"Who'd have thought it!"

"Beats the giddy band, and no mistake!" agreed Tom Merry. "Nobody would have thought it! But we've got him now!"

There was a snort from Herries.

"Towser found him out," he said.

"Towser!"

"Certainly! I showed him an old cap of Levison's, and he tumbled to the spot, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where does the cackle come in?" demanded Herries wrathfully. "Do you mean to say that Towser didn't find out where Levison was immediately? Why, he rushed straight to the spot after—after going round a bit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silly asses!" snorted Herries. "They say that seeing is believing; but you fellows see and you don't believe! Soat!"

"Hallo!" murmured Lowther. "Here come the peelers!"

"Now look out for squalls," said Tom Merry, as Inspector Skeat and four stalwart constables entered the quadrangle.

The crisis was at hand.

In the room in the old tower both Levison and the German spy still lay in sleep.

Levison had not slept till nearly four in the morning, and it was natural that he should not wake. And the spy was exhausted by fatigue and hunger. Buried in slumber, the German spy did not hear the sound of cautious feet approaching the old tower. He did not hear the slight, almost inaudible sounds on the old stone steps.

He did not know that on the old stone landing outside the door were gathered an inspector and four sturdy men in blue, and behind them Mr. Railton—a force quite ample to deal with any character, however desperate.

Inspector Skeat listened cautiously at the door.

From within he could hear the deep, stertorous breathing of the German close to the door, divided only, in fact, by the thickness of the wood from the men who sought him.

"Get him!" murmured the inspector. "Truncheon ready! Don't give him a chance to use a weapon if you can help it! Stick close to me!"

It required some nerve to shove open the door, considering that an armed and desperate man was lying close against it, and must awaken with the push. But the inspector did not hesitate. He had his duty to do.

He gave the door a sudden powerful shove, and drove it open, and there was a guttural exclamation within.

The German bounded to his feet.

The door, flying further open, knocked against him as he jumped up, and he staggered for a moment. But he recovered himself instantly, and his hand flew to his pocket.

At the same instant the police rushed upon him.

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The spy's hand flew out, with the revolver in it, and a heavy truncheon crashed upon his arm at the same moment, knocking it limp and aching to his side, and sending the weapon spinning through the air.

The revolver clanged down on the stone floor, and the next moment the spy was in the grasp of the police, and struggling furiously.

Levison sprang up, effectually awakened by the uproar. He crouched back out of the way of the combatants.

But the struggle did not last long.

Weight of numbers hurled the German to the floor, and he was promptly handcuffed and secured.

He lay panting, with his triumphant captors round him.

"Run down at last!" said Inspector Skeat, scanning him. "That's the man, without a doubt! You are arrested, Franz Kleinach, on a charge of spying and treachery!"

"Ach!" The German burst into a better, panting laugh.

"Ach! I am in your hands now! I have done my best! Bah!"

All St. Jim's gathered round to see the German taken away by the police, after he had been, humanely, given some breakfast, which he devoured with a wolfish appetite.

He was led away—to justice.

And the scouts of St. Jim's felt that, after all, they had cause to congratulate themselves. They had not actually captured the spy, certainly; but they had had a good deal to do with the events that had led up to his capture, and they felt that they had reason to be satisfied.

But Herries of the Fourth remained firmly convinced that the credit of the capture was due to one individual, and one individual alone; and that individual was not a scout—School House or New House. It was Towser. Herries regarded the whole biznez as Towser's triumph.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. next Wednesday, entitled "The St. Jim's Airman!" by Martin Clifford. Don't forget to tell your friends of the Series of a Soldier-chum's Letters, starting on Cover III of this number.)



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READ THIS FIRST.

Paul Satorys, the rightful heir to the throne of Istan, lives quietly in England as a private gentleman until he hears that his place in Istan has been usurped by an adventurer named Jim Stanton, who is the exact double of Satorys. Worse than this, Stanton has deceived Grace Lang, Satorys' fiancée, out to Istan with him. Grace, however, discovers the deception and escapes from the usurper. She falls into the hands of a tribe of natives, who make her their queen, and call her Nada. Satorys himself is subsequently captured by the natives and brought before the queen, who, however, he does not recognize owing to her veil. Nada offers to help him, and Paul leads her native troops against Istan. He is defeated, however, but saves himself by donning the uniform of an Istan officer, and mixing with the Istan Army. With his faithful followers, Peter Mardyke and Anton, he enters the city, and gets into conversation with an Istan officer. He learns that Germany has declared war on England, and that the troops of Istan are going to England to help the German invading forces. Paul Satorys, with Peter Mardyke and Anton, succeed in reaching England with the Istan troops undetected. Staking all on a bold coup, Satorys then declares himself to the army as the rightful king, and calls upon his troops to follow him over to the side of the British in a body. The men of Istan are won over, Stanton, the impostor, flees, and Satorys comes to his own again. At the head of his army, Satorys attacks the German position. The British troops co-operate with the German position. The German divisions are annihilated. The Allica depart for France, and a fierce war rages in Europe. Satorys receives a severe wound in an engagement, and he and Peter Mardyke are harboured by a French dame. German officers enter the house, and their position is rendered desperate, when a troop of light French cavalry comes to the rescue, and the Germans are cut down. The officer in charge of the French cavalry—Captain Durand—ascertains that Satorys is capable of riding a horse, and states his intention of returning to his headquarters. Satorys learns that Durand is none other than Grace Lang, whom he believed to have been dead. He moves off with Peter Mardyke at the head of his troops. A rush is made by the Germans, and Satorys sees Durand fall wounded. Having dismounted to render aid, they are captured, and imprisoned in a fortress. It is here that Paul once more meets Stanton, who endeavours to secure Satorys' aid to turn the troops of Istan against England again. "You will benefit by turning round," he says. "The long-talked-of Channel tunnel has been built by Germany!" (Now go on with the story.)

Tricked!

Satorys gave a start. He was about to spring to his feet, but he managed to control himself. "Ah, I see that surprises you." "I confess it does." "But that is nothing to what the world will feel. I have been admitted to the knowledge, and I tell my friends. You

A Bid for a Throne.

A Thrilling War Story.

By CLIVE R. FENN.

are one of my friends now. They talk in London so confidently of the impossibility of invasion—of the command of the sea by the British Fleets. Pah! It is nothing. They have known at Kiel for many a year. The tunnel has been in the making. Now it is made, and England is denuded of troops. At a signal from the Emperor the country which has called itself the ruler of the seas will be invaded, and it will be unable to repel the invader, unable to do anything but cry for peace, and that peace will be on the Emperor's terms."

Satorys could not but believe. This, then, was one of the secrets which Germany had guarded so jealously from prying eyes. He was to learn more ere at last the time came for the interview to end. Stanton did not seem to repent having told the other. He was a vain man, and a shallow one, and it pleased him to know that Satorys was now heart and soul with him—as he opined.

Satorys returned to his friends. He told them what he had heard.

"See here," he said, as Peter and Durand listened in horror to the report. "There is no time to lose. Stanton was half fuddled, or he would never have put me in possession of a fact which may mean the ruin of the country we love." He brought down his list on the table with a crash. "But it is not going to mean that, for we are here, and it was a lucky moment for me when I determined to placate this scoundrel. He is ready to believe me now through thick and thin, and in this fight to a finish this knowledge must be rushed to London while yet there is time."

"How can we get it there?" asked Peter. "There is a way," said Satorys. "Stanton comes and goes as he likes, and it will be my affair to convince him that in everything concerning all this I am at his disposition—as I am in a sense. He knows very well that at a word from him I might be sent the same as the rest of us, but for some reason he imagines that after the war I shall be prepared to use my influence to establish him in Istan. Without my aid he realises that the thing is impossible. Now, there are aeroplanes in this fortification, and Stanton is going to show me where they are!"

All knew it was a fight with time. It might be too late; but although Satorys was permitted plenty of freedom, and his two companions were shown much courtesy, as people whom Stanton chose to honour, they saw that their only chance was to act with the utmost circumspection, if the warning was to reach the authorities in England in time.

Days followed—days of agony for all three—but they were usefully spent by Satorys, who, with consummate adroitness, contrived to add to his knowledge of the tunnel which would mean the undoing of England, leaving it open to the Kaiser's hordes.

He discovered that the German entrance to the tunnel was at a place called Delgen, and that it came out on a lonely part of the East Anglian coast. It was not ready at the opening of hostilities. There had been those in Berlin who had discredited the fact that it ever would be ready, but they were proved wrong.

Stanton showed himself more and more delighted with the companionship of Satorys.

"We are firm friends at last," he said one day, as he strolled with the other along the shelling road which led

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under the glacis of the forts. "It is fortunate. You will be helping me back to Istan one day, and your place here shall be equally great."

He turned to Durand and Peter, who were just behind, and addressed a laughing remark to all three, while Satoryz was inwardly wondering, while he fingered the revolver he had managed to secure, whether his plot would succeed.

"This is one of the famous Zeppelins, surely!" he said, as he pointed to a dark object a quarter of a mile away—a huge airship which lay close to a long, low shed.

"Yes, you must see it! It is wonderful—wonderful!" They went slowly forward. It might even now be too late, but Satoryz had directed their steps towards the big machine in the hope that in it lay the chance long sought of carrying the news to England that her gates were open to the invader, and that her destiny depended on instant action.

Stanton went forward, pleased to be able to explain the points of the machine, and he was so deep in what he was saying to Satoryz that he did not observe Peter, who had gone forward, and was busy with a rope.

Satoryz gave Durand a sign. A sailor a few paces distant had taken particular notice of the group, but, after gazing at Stanton, the soldier was quite assured as to everything being all right.

The message to England was to be delivered, cost what it might.

Satoryz had gone over all the possibilities with his friends. If one went down, the others would carry on the work. At least one of them would succeed in getting away to the safety of the skies.

It seemed a mockery. The scene, despite the fortress walls and the mechanisms of the big guns, had something which was peaceful about it. Away on the other side lay the little town—just such a picturesque little German town of the northern provinces such as there are many, with trim, white, bungalow-like houses, and gardens brilliant with the blooms of late summer. Overhead, the sky was of the deepest blue; and yet not so many miles distant war was in progress, hundreds of thousands of men engaged in a conflict which meant the existence of nations.

Stanton was bending over the car. To leave him behind was unthinkable now.

Satoryz had determined to take the arch-traitor with them, and, with a sudden movement, he sprang at his old enemy, driving him forward over the side of the roomy car, and then leaping after him at the same instant as Durand nimbly jumped into the machine.

"Peter!"
It was Satoryz who shouted to the sailor.
"Ay, ay, sir!" responded the man.

In the bottom of the car Satoryz was engaged in a fierce struggle with Stanton, who shrieked for help. The soldier on guard fired his rifle, and came tearing up, yelling out a threat, while from the grim fortress more soldiers came pouring out, firing as they raced towards the spot.

Peter had clambered into the car, and Satoryz, leaving Stanton to the sailor, plunged through the ropes to the engine.

Shot after shot was fired; but the big ship, after wallowing in the dense atmosphere, threatening to careen over, suddenly shot upwards towards the filmy clouds, and as he steered Satoryz saw below him the world resolving itself into a quaint panorama, straddling buildings, a vivid gleam of water, a vast expanse of green marshland, obscured for a moment by a soft, yellow cloud; for the Zeppelin was tearing up the airways to freedom, its mission not to attack England, but to save her from her deadly foe.

The Battle in the Clouds.

Stanton gave a howl of rage, and then all his courage evaporated as he saw that escape was impossible, and realised that all his notions of getting back the power he had lost were dissipated.

The big airship rocked, quivered, wallowed suddenly in a cross-current, rose above it, and raced into a filmy veil of vapour which was dense enough to shut out for the moment the things which were happening down under, where enemies were running hither and thither, intent on capturing the fugitives.

The air was crisp, fresh, a light wind blowing, salt impregnated from the northern marshes, and Satoryz turned away from Stanton to try and make out what was actually passing below.

There was no more fear from the prisoner. Stanton's courage had ceased away. He was nothing more than a whimpering craven, begging for his life. Satoryz saw just beneath them what looked like an island of gold, a cloud lit up by the sun, and as the Zeppelin, under the skilful direction of Peter, passed serenely above the cloud shape

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there was visible once more the quaint, dumpy-looking fortress, as well as the stretch of green country like a carpet curiously patterned with white edgings, the walls of fields, walls of stone.

Then a puff of smoke showed plainly.
The sailor started a look and gave a grunt.
"They won't hit us, sir. Always heard them Germans were rotten marksmen, and now I know it. Where do we go now? Straight away for England, I suppose. There's nothing like it. Only wish Mr. Anton were here. Sort of miss him."

Crack came again, and Satoryz heard a low, whistling sound quite close to where he stood.

"Not such bad shots after all—eh, Peter!"
Durand came over to where Satoryz stood.
"There is no more to be feared from him," said the young officer. "If he offers any resistance I will shoot him. We have to think about this message. It is the peril for England, maybe the end of her greatness, unless we are in time."

Satoryz gave a nod.
"Let him be," he said. "Look what they are doing!"
He was straining to see. As the Zeppelin raced onwards he saw another airship rise from the earth, another of the big craft which had struck such terror into the hearts of the peaceful inhabitants of towns which had been placed in terror by the work of these engines of war.

The second ship rose almost vertically, and the sun flashed on its tapering spars, turning them to orange colour.

"There's a rifle down there, sir; in fact, two," said the sailor.

He need not have spoken. Satoryz had already seized the weapon, tried it, and now he was taking careful aim at the helmsman in the pursuing craft.

Peter bent to his work. They were so high up that around them was the silence of the higher airways, merely a singing of the wind.

There was no doubt but that the pursuing airship, steered with more skill, was gaining on the fugitives, and ever and again a bullet pinged close to Satoryz, who fired in reply.

Peter took a peep at often as his duties permitted him.
"That chap there won't have any more headaches," he said gruffly.

Satoryz was aiming again. The airship which was chasing them through the clouds had given a sudden lurch, as if all control had been lost, and from the car a small, dark object dropped stone-like, to pitch into a woolly mass of cloud, and vanish in space.

Satoryz drew in his breath. Peter was straining at his work, Durand was keeping watch over the prisoner. The Zeppelin raced on, rising in her course, and the dark hull of the other ship seemed smaller. There was no question, however, of its being given the slip. Suddenly it glided upwards, and despite his peril Satoryz could not refrain from admiration of the wonderful manoeuvre. The pursuing craft was higher now, soaring at an altitude which must have been far greater than the one attained by the fugitives, while from it a bomb was hurled.

Peter saw the attempt, and swung the craft about, the bomb missing by a dozen feet. The enemy dropped to a level with its intended prey, and skimmed on ever faster in a desperate race, puff after puff of smoke coming from its car as the soldiers on board strove to bring down the man at the wheel.

"They won't hit us," said Peter.
"Our friend and ally is the night," said Satoryz, as he aimed again.

"The sooner it comes the better," said Peter. "I used to work with a lunatic who made these things down Woolwich way. Comes in handy now."

Satoryz's rifle cracked again, and this last shot had evidently caused confusion on board the other craft, for the latter swung back, and for an appreciable time hung poised between earth and heaven, while Peter rammed on speed and outdistanced it by a mile or more.

Stanton, who had been lying in a state of pitiable fear, now made a move towards one of the rifles near to him. There was a sharp warning from Durand, and the scoundrel drew back, murmuring something to the effect that he meant nothing.

And now the enveloping curtains of the night began to close them in. It was too soon yet to think they were safe—safe, that was, to continue the business of taking the fateful message to London; to any point, in fact, where measures could be rushed for the frustration of the German plot. But Satoryz breathed a sigh of relief as he reloaded and looked round. All soft and grey, behind heavy clouds drifting up, obscuring the light pathway of the moon, but he knew well that the foe in the rear would leave nothing undone to bring them down, for they were carrying away knowledge in which

was bound up the mystery of the future; whether the world should be ruled by the brutal, tyrannous, jack-booted camarilla of Potsdam, and thrown back in its progress for centuries, or whether the power of Great Britain should prevail.

Stanton cowered in the bottom of the car. He was crushed, but he hoped still that the unforeseen would occur and deliver him from those who appraised him at his correct value—men of spirit, a renegade, one who had worked for the downfall of Britain.

Satorsy glanced now and again at his fallen enemy, and felt there was nothing to fear from him. And, besides, there was something else to be considered. He was the owner of one of the secrets which Germany, working insidiously through many a year of so-called peace, years when its traitorous Emperor had played the hypocrite's part, coming over to England with words of peace and amity, had up her sleeve for the undoing of the land which treated its power with scorn.

From high over their heads came a vivid light, and Satorsy, standing in the car, took aim and fired at a looming mass which hung far over them, and from which a ball of flame was descending, describing in its descent a whirl of lurid shapes. Peter did not need the shout from his leader. The sailor had crammed on all the pressure possible, and the Zeppelin quivered like a thing of life, every part of her vibrating as she shot forward, passing right beneath the dropping explosive, and missing it by the narrowest shave.

A cloud of sparks swept across her bows, and then the bomb was seen bursting far below, the air rocking with the intensity of the explosion, causing the Zeppelin to lurch, threaten to capsize, swing off its momentum, and then lie suspended for a second, oscillating badly despite Peter's frantic endeavours to get her back into her track.

Satorsy was flung down, but he was up in a flash, and firing at the enemy in the darkness of the clouds, aiming by the guidance of the fading trail of light.

His shot was not wasted. From the gloom which was intense now, for the fireball had been lost in the profoundness below, there was a shriek of human agony, a whirling, rushing sound, something ripping, tearing, and then the noise of the rending of wood, and those on board the Zeppelin saw their adversary drop plumb, passing them a mass of dark, indistinguishable wreckage, seen now dimly, for the moon had sailed from out of the veils of the clouds.

Peter said nothing, neither did his two friends, but there was a cry of fear from Stanton, which went unheeded, and now the airship, recovered from the shock, raced onwards through the unretrodden pathways of the air. But the foe was not beaten yet. Satorsy, like his companions, thought of nothing but getting free to bear the tidings of the new peril to England, and he crouched with his rifle ready to defend the ship to the last. Now and then he heard a curious rushing sound, as of unseen foes trying to locate them in the darkness, but the Zeppelin, under the brilliant direction of its pilot, careered on, ever on, the wind purring softly against its side, the grizzled head of the sailor seen now and again as they emerged from a dark tract and glided through a soft, silky lake of moonlight, to vanish once more in the clouds.

There was something to be seen at last besides the tender grey of the night. Vivid lights shot up to them, and, gazing down, Satorsy made out that they were right over the track of desolation where the Germans had been laying waste peaceful countryside, burning villages, destroying everything like a scourge.

The watchers in the heavens did not know exactly over which portion of the deadly field of war they were riding, but they saw far below sudden, angry burst of flames, the tapering towers of buildings, churches evidently, which had carried from out of the romance of a grand old past the tale of the centuries and of what men may do; and then, as an air-current seized the airship, carrying it to a lower plane, the frightful scene became clearer—a scene of burning towns, of tiny figures fleeing for their lives from the savage fury of the demon hordes of the bloodthirsty, sanctimonious tyrant of Berlin.

"My word! But all this will have to be paid for in blood!" muttered Peter, as he toiled at his task, the beads of perspiration on his forehead.

"Shall I take the wheel, Peter?" asked Satorsy, as he kept up his watch for the foe.

"No, sir. You are doing better work where you are."

They were rising again from the scene of carnage and horror, and as morning came they found themselves hovering over a stretch of country which seemed to be free from the grim terror of the war, but as the light lit up the airship the sailor gave a grunt of dissatisfaction.

"I knew there was something wrong, sir," he said. "So there is. We didn't come out of it untouched."

He jerked his head in the direction of the helm of the craft which had been partly torn away.

"She has been worrying over something for hours past, but I wasn't going to say anything until I was sure."

A Race with Death.

The injury to the Zeppelin was bad, but she still hung to her course, and there seemed a chance for her yet. The air was fresh and scented with the sea, and Peter was sticking to his work with all the endurance and tenacity of a sailor, whose life is his ship, whether it is of the air or the deep.

Satorsy took in the sensations of the moment—the scene in the car with Durand ever watchful, Stanton lying back as though asleep, and around them the country, fresh and beautiful, a windmill, the red roof of a farm, and a squat church, a belt of trees, something strangely, and after what they had been through, unaturally peaceful.

The notion was not destined to endure for long. From the wood away on the right there came a gleam, and Satorsy made out the silver helmets of a party of German cavalry. The Zeppelin had lost her buoyancy, and was sinking very slowly, but surely sinking. There was a shout from the horse-men below, a shot, another and another, and Satorsy, leaning over the car, returned the fire, emptying two of the saddles, just as the wind, rising, carried the airship higher, and left the danger behind.

Peter turned his head.

"I think we can do it, sir, and I'm game, and I know you are, for we must get this message through. There's the sea, and that's the way to England, and these wretches would do anything to prevent us reaching the Old Country with what we know; but what about—?" He made a gesture towards Durand.

"Go on," said the latter.

Peter did not say any more. The Zeppelin seemed as though it were really something which lived, was inspired by the enthusiasm of its new owners, and it shot forward, rising supremely to its work.

Satorsy moved and went towards the sailor.

"I will take the wheel," he said.

Peter gave way without a word, and allowed his chief to steer, picking up the rifle which Satorsy had leaned against the side of the platform.

It was not a disagreeable sensation now, the land shifting away from under them, and the sea taking its place, first a deserted sandy strip of shore, and then nothing but the shaggy, moire-like expanse, lit up by the sun which rose glancingly from the cloud-mountains behind.

"There was a heavy sail, a fishing-boat here and there, a black mass, the hull of a cruiser dotted oddly on the horizon-line, and then nothing but the sparkling waves."

The glow of the sun flashed up to them from the waves. The Zeppelin plugged on, responding to her helm better, but as he steered Satorsy realised bitterly she was done. Durand brought food from in the locker. Satorsy ate as he worked, and made a gesture towards Stanton. Enemies, however disposable, had to be fed.

The airship rode on hour after hour, Satorsy was thinking hard, and seemed to understand how near a thing it was. Yet one day, whatever happened, it would be the turn of Berlin, with the miserable Hohenzollern Empire crumpling up like a house of cards, and Liberty restored to the world.

"England!" said Peter suddenly. "Does one good to see it?"

There was a long, low, misty line, and Satorsy forced the pace. It was none too soon. The Zeppelin sagged, faltered, threatened to drop, and now, like a wounded bird, it was dropping, falling fast—its last hour come—and the coast was still a full mile distant across the deep.

Satorsy gripped the levers. There was scarcely an ounce more buoyancy in the craft, its floatability gone with the rent in the torpedo-shaped bag, and the steering-gear ripped as well, but after crossing the waves, the ship staggered, rose once more, and glided forward, to flop again, to rise, and yet the victory was to be won.

Satorsy glanced over his shoulder. Peter and the others were staring at him, white fear written in the face of Stanton, but he did not speak.

The Zeppelin rode on, and then, as though indeed it knew it had served its turn, it fell, plunging into the shallow waters, a shapeless wreck, while those it had borne so bravely, struggled out and gained dry land.

Satorsy would have assisted Durand, but there was a shake of the head, and the leader turned his attention to Stanton, who had straightened himself and had started to run.

"Stop, or you are a dead man!" cried Satorsy. Stanton swung back, and stood.

He knew that there was still time to thwart his enemies, and

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assist his new friends the Germans, and he meant to do his best, although now he was once more back in the land he hated, amongst those who would bring him down, and humiliate him to the dust.

Satorsy gripped his arm, and thus they walked up the sloping shore to gain a tiny fishing-village, where the inhabitants were still, for the most part, asleep; and it struck an odd note, that—the thought that anybody in England could sleep with the danger at the gate.

Satorsy was about done, but he mastered his fatigue, and hurried forward to an inn, the door of which was just open, while a man in his shirt-sleeves was talking to someone inside.

Satorsy heard the words—German words—and he seized their meaning. The English coast had its guards, German guards, men ever on the watch, and as he drew back, he knew instinctively that the intelligence of his flight, and the certainty of his possessing the secret of the tunnel which would bring invading hosts into Britain, had been flashed along the coast.

Peter had drawn out his revolver, and Satorsy and Durand did the same. There was a hoarse cry from the inn, and a dozen men dashed forward.

"Gif in!" cried the leader. "You had better. I haf orders, and they must be obeyed!"

The Great News.

It was a critical moment, and Satorsy knew it better than anybody, knew it as he dashed aside the hand of one of the men who tried to stay him. The thing was clear enough. Germany had still got her filthy paws on the country, although her armies had been driven out.

"You cannot pass!" shouted the man who had spoken before. "Give in, do as we tell you, and your lives shall be spared."

Peter was close to Satorsy, also Durand. Stanton was once more among his friends, and the uneasy outnumbered the little party, which was bearing the fateful message to London by four to one.

"There was but one thing to do.

"Run for it!"

Satorsy had sprung round on Durand, thinking, even at that supreme moment of the peril of the devoted friend who should never have been there.

"I can look after myself!" cried Durand.

A revolver-shot rang out, but the big, purdy German was no marksman, and as Satorsy, Peter, and Durand raced past the inn, and another and another shot went wide.

It was all very well, but all three knew that they could not hope, worn out as they were, to escape the men who were pumping hard in their wake.

It would go hard if they were captured now, with England, ay, the whole Empire in jeopardy once again. Satorsy shot a glance over his shoulder. He and his companions were racing for the shelter of the cluster of fishermen's cottages, poor little hutments, whose inhabitants seemed to be asleep.

It was a fresh, crisp morning, the rough grass shining with dew, and ahead of the fugitives nothing but a vista of hummocky downs.

"Stop, or you die!"

"There's a lot of stopping about me!" muttered Satorsy. If he had ever doubted the sinister importance of the secret which Stanton had explained to him, he realised now its full significance.

The Germans would spare nothing, stop at nothing, to prevent the intelligence of their new plan to submerge, overrun England, enslave her, treat the country just as unfortunate Belgium and a goodly portion of Franco had been treated by the savage and relentless Hun.

And yet it seemed to him as he raced on, narrowly missing a fall as his foot caught in a rabbit-hole, that the chances of

getting off and communicating the news were scant, for the enemy was coming steadily on, and the clean morning air was cut again with shots from revolvers as the Germans tried to bring down Satorsy and his companions.

"Stop, or you die!" came bellowed to the fugitives on the light morning air.

Satorsy swung round, took aim, saw the foremost German swerve, stagger, recover himself swiftly, and then continue the race.

And England was asleep!

The idea maddened Satorsy. There was nobody to be seen abroad in that little corner of south-eastern Britain, a strip of coast which had not seemingly been considered worthy of any special guard—except by the powers who directed proceedings at Berlin. They had their patrols located at this vulnerable point, and as he sported on, looking for a sign of a house or of anybody who could take his message, he gave a hoarse ejaculation.

He knew it now. Stanton had given him full particulars of the tunnel which was a finished thing, a means all prepared for a sudden devastating rush into England of the German hordes, a submarine passage which would act at naught the power of the sea, and the Boets riding the fairways. But he saw it now. The mouth of the tunnel was close. That village, such as it was, facing the spot where the Zeppelin had dropped into the deep, like a wounded bird, was the very spot where the tunnel emerged.

He glanced ahead. Durand was running pretty freshly yet, and Peter was apparently only anxious as to the condition of his friends, for the sailor kept on jerking out words—strange, wild words—which had a peculiar bearing on the ultimate fate of the German Emperor, who was putting people to so much unnecessary trouble, and the thought was odd at the moment, and had an unexpected and angry effect on Satorsy.

One of the pursuers was alongside him.

"Peter gif in!" he shrieked out.

The notion of giving up struck Satorsy as comic. He turned and saw the red face of his enemy in the mist, and his right arm shot out just as the German attempted to seize him. The man gave a cry of rage, his foot slipped on the wet, wiry grass, and he collapsed, rolling down the slope; but he was up again, swearing volubly in his own tongue, and racing forward once more.

Pat, pat, pat! The sound of the footsteps of the men in hot pursuit was continuous, and Satorsy emitted a grunt as he thought of the position—the news which he and his two companions were bringing, its fell import—a sudden onslaught on the country, which stood for the peace and security of the world, and the whole place swept by the legions of the man who knew only the cause of might, who would stop at nothing to effect his purpose and bring the whole of Europe under the sway of the German Eagles. Ahead of him, a couple of paces, Durand and Peter were pressing on; behind, the Germans panted heavily, dropping shots every now and again, but without result; and nothing to be seen but the vista of gently undulating downs wreathed in the sunlit mist.

But behind that mist was the thought of England—its big cities, the armies fighting in France, the slow march onward to Brestia of the Russian host. And yet all that had been done would be rendered useless if this last scheme of the enemy was allowed to be carried out.

Then he gave a shout—a half frenzied shout—for suddenly, out of the mist, he saw a number of dark figures. Peter saw them, too. Not many—three—no, four, patrol riders on motor-bicycles, who were slowing down on a road which ran parallel with the shore.

"Hallo! What's up?"

"The group of riders saw Satorsy dash up from out of the dense mist. He was a wild enough figure, and it was evident that the man—a smart-looking fellow in uniform—why had shouted on the question thought the stranger who had raced up to him and was now gripping his arm was mad.

"The Germans are here!" gasped out Satorsy. The young officer, for the leader of the scouting party of motor-cyclists was that, gave a laugh.

"Here, Andrews," he cried, "this chap says the Germans are here! Would you believe it? I dare say they are, old sport; walked across the silver streak in water boots, of course, or swam it. It would be a bit of a change for a German, that."

The pursuers had halted, and were seen now indistinctly, a matter of fifty paces away.

"It's true!" said Satorsy. "The Germans are at the gates! Don't believe me, call me mad—anything you like; but it is a fact."

"Where are you from?"

"From Germany."

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FROM THE FIRING-LINE!

A Series of Letters of Enthralling Interest received direct from Corporal Charles, of his Majesty's —th Dragoons, who is an old reader of "The Gem" Library, and is now on active service on the Continent with the British Expeditionary Force.

(Exclusive to "The Gem" Library.)

No. 1.—THE SIEGE OF LIEGE.

HOW it came about that I happened to be in Antwerp on a sunny morning towards the end of July I am not at liberty to tell.

Suffice it to say that when I entered Belgium I never dreamed that the terrible clouds of war were already hanging over Europe, or that Fate would fling me into the very first engagement with the German Army. Had I known, I should have been only the more keen to take up arms against the enemy.

First of all, let me introduce myself. Well, then, Corporal Charles, of No. 1 Troop, "A" Squadron, of the King's Dragoons, stands before you. An inch short of six feet in my socks, weight twelve stone, age twenty; sound as a bell, and greedy for adventure.

For several days I kicked my heels in Antwerp, roaming the city and examining the fortifications. My instructions were few. I was to call each morning at the British Consulate to receive orders from London.

One evening as I reached the cafe where I was staying a man stopped from one of the marble-topped tables after me.

"Ho, my friend, I want a word with you!" he exclaimed in French.

Turning about, I saw before me a man staying at the restaurant, who had seemed to eye me with suspicion. He was far from a nice-looking man. Despite his mufli, there was the soldier in every movement of his well-set-up figure and imperative flash of his small, close-set eyes.

"I'm an officer in the Belgian Army," he went on. "It is easy to see that you, too, are a soldier. Where are your military papers?"

I shrugged my shoulders and smiled. It was my last thought to tell him that I was a corporal of horse, awaiting instructions from London.

"If you have not reported yourself, there can be only one explanation," he continued, with a savage frown. "You have not been wandering about the Antwerp forts for mere amusement. You must be a—spy!"

He hissed the words into my face. For a second I thought of knocking him down. My shoulders stiffened, but I let my fist fall to my side.

"Very good, sir," I answered politely. "Give notice to the authorities, if you like. Still," I added meaningly, "if you utter those words again, it won't be my fault if you're not spinning in the gutter?"

With that I swung round on my heels and left him. The following day the message arrived. It was a bulky packet, with my name upon it. I tore it open.

Inside was a sealed letter bearing the official stamp, O.H.M.S. It was addressed to the General Commandant, Liege. Accompanying it were brief instructions. I was to get into my kit and ride to Liege; to take particular notice of the country through which I passed; to keep a sharp lookout, and to guard the packet with my life.

The simple words set my pulses leaping. Rumours of war had been in the air for days. War between Germany and France and Russia had already been declared. What would Great Britain do was the question on every lip. For all I knew, the fate of Europe lay concealed in the sealed packet handed to me.

At once I set about making preparations for my journey. Though at the top of the building, my room faced the fine thoroughfare of the Rue de l'Opera, with its lines of broad elms.

I had almost finished dressing, and was taking stock of the weather, when down below in the boulevard I saw my officer friend of the previous day. In his hand was a packed leather bag. He stopped suddenly as a grey motor-car pulled up. It was a fast, rakish-looking vehicle. Seated in it was a

stoutly-built, bullet-headed man, with German written in every feature.

For a minute my Belgian friend and the motorist stood in conversation, then he flung in his bag, stepped in after it, and the motor-car disappeared through the avenue of elms.

Ten minutes later, having saddled Bess, my chestnut mare, who had chafed as much as I at the enforced idleness, I set out on my mission.

Naturally, the good Antwerp folk stared at the sight of a British corporal of horse in khaki riding through their peaceful city.

Putting Bess to the trot, however, I soon left the last ring of forts behind me, and set my course through the long-lying land that led to Malines. My road then lay along the Deener, which I crossed at Aerschott, and an hour after sunset, without a single incident worth recording, reached Louvain.

Louvain was strangely excited. The townfolk had been thrilled all day by the sight of aeroplanes and dirigibles which had sailed across from the German frontier.

From the villages, news had come of German cavalry, the dreaded Uhlans, who had destroyed property, and had driven the simple folk from their homes wherever resisted.

"It's war—war!" they cried. "Germany is not observing Belgian neutrality. They mean to trample down our towns and villages! Surely Britain will not allow us to be slaughtered!"

They knew me for a Britisher, and clustered round me. But what could I do save shrug my shoulders?

Despite her long journey, Bess was in excellent condition. After I had brushed her down, watered and fed her, and had had a meal myself, we started on the last stage of our mission.

All night long I rode through the silent countryside, where the light of the silver moon shone down on the fields in process of harvesting.

Not until Tirlemont was left behind did I see any signs of German cavalry. In turning a lane that led past a wood I almost ran into a belated patrol of Uhlans, who gave chase, and fired shots after me. But Bess, tired as she was, was too good for any of them.

More than once I espied smoke rising from bivouac fires. Whether they were Belgians or Germans camped there, I was not near enough to discover.

The pink and grey of dawn was lighting up the massive steel-capped forts when I entered Liege. Already the town was quiet. Activity was to be seen in every one of its great girdle of forts.

When challenged by the sentry, and having explained my business, I was conducted through a yard alive with infantrymen, and taken to General Lemau's room. I was admitted at once, the general, a gallant, keen-faced soldier, himself coming to take the despatch from me.

Eagerly he tore it open, examined its contents, and laughed breezily. Two of his secretaries in military uniform were seated by the window.

"It's all right!" he cried, in the French tongue. "Britain's behind us!" Then the light faded from his kindly eyes, and his jaw became grim and set. "It's war—war to the last franc, to the last man!" he added gravely.

I caught a glimpse of field-officer's uniform as he stepped briskly into the adjoining room. There was a consultation for some minutes, and then the general returned to me.

"You have done well, corporal!" he exclaimed. "My instructions are to keep you here until I have vital information for you to convey back to Antwerp. Until that time you are at liberty to remain here at your ease, or to help us in the work of defending Liege."

"You can easily guess what answer I gave him. I

(Continued on next page.)

FROM THE FIRING-LINE!

(Continued from page iii. of cover.)

hastened out, stabled Boes, and passed out into the square, to see a party of engineers moving towards the grand old stone bridge across the Meuse, which I had noticed on my way into the town.

On the other side of the river the Germans were streaming towards us. There was an incessant exchange of rifle fire. Whilst the engineers dashed on the bridge and laid the charges, the Belgian infantry drove the Uhlans back.

Presently the engineers, together with the Belgian infantry, drew back to a position of defence.

All eyes were fixed on the bridge. When that was shattered, the Germans would only be able to cross by means of pontoons, and that would delay them for hours.

The first charge went off with a tremendous explosion, sending up a vast cloud of smoke. There was a great shout from the German ranks as they discovered that it was a blank. The bridge still stood as intact as ever.

At once the Uhlans galloped across, followed by a solid mass of infantry. On they came, rushing the bridge in a compact body, the sun shining on their accoutrements, the dreaded cavalry making a brave show.

It was an anxious moment, I can tell you, for us on the other side. I saw the Belgian officers look anxiously at each other. Had someone been tampering with the explosives?

The first section of Uhlans were almost across, when the second charge exploded. The sight that followed was awful, and baffles description. The bridge had its middle flung violently into the air. Horses, guns, and men were tossed up into the thick smoke like so many shuttlecocks.

And then, when the smoke had cleared away, all that was left of the mighty stone bridge were the supports on each side. Lying down below in the swift-flowing river were hundreds of the enemy struggling for their lives.

Boom! Above the terrified cries the great guns began to belch out death and destruction. They swept through the ranks of Germans on the farther side like a hailstorm into a barley-field.

I was swept back by the crowd of triumphant engineers. At the Merxem Fore I almost collided with a pallid-faced man in a major's uniform, who darted out of a doorway, was the officer who had questioned me in Antwerp. He stood motionless, staring at me as if I were a ghost.

"You will realise now, monsieur, that I am no spy," I ventured to remark, with a smile.

I expected him to make some pleasant reply, but he only winced and gritted his teeth together. Instead of answering, he raised his hand to the salute. Turning, I saw General Leman behind me. The General-Commandant's face was stern, and hard as a flint.

The two stepped aside. I saw the officer—Major Boslay was his name—stagger and turn a puffy colour. A sharp, short altercation followed.

The general turned away, and I was about to do the same, when I saw the officer whip out his revolver. Even as he levelled it, my sword was out in a flash, and as the weapon exploded harmlessly, I sent it spinning into the air.

In another moment I leapt at the scoundrel, and had my point at his heart. He stood there shivering and cowed until the guard came up, and, at a word from the general, marched him off to the coils.

"Thank you, corporal!" said General Leman, extending his hand, as I turned to depart. "You saved me from the weapon of a traitor. Britain can well be proud of her soldiers if she has many like you!"

Later that day I heard that Major Boslay was the worst of all traitors—a spy. He had been sending information to Germany, interfering with the explosives, and misplacing ammunition. Following upon a court-martial, he met with a traitor's fate.

How I escaped from Liège, and the adventures that befel me, until I joined the British Expeditionary Force, will have to remain untold till my next writing.

(Another letter from our comrade at the front will be published in this paper next Wednesday. We can boast that we are the only weekly periodical for boys and girls who has a soldier-reader sending us a weekly letter for the benefit of his fellow-readers. Kindly tell all your chums of this, and be sure to order your copy in advance.)

THIS WEEK'S CHAT.

The Editor's Personal Column.

For Next Wednesday—

"THE ST. JIM'S AIRMEN."

By Martia Clifford.

Our splendid issue for next week contains the story of the most amazing adventure that has ever befallen Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's. An extraordinary combination of circumstances puts them in a position such as has surely never been occupied by schoolboys before. Unwilling passengers on board a great German airship, they are borne far from St. Jim's to meet many strange adventures and perils on the war-ridden Continent. Before they reach home again they have put behind them sufficient thrilling experiences to make

"THE ST. JIM'S AIRMEN."

the heroes of the hour at the old school.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Charles Allen (Mile End).—To decrease your weight take plenty of exercise. Take care to eat no fattening foods, such as suet, pastry, or starchy commodities.

"George."—Apply to the recruiting-sergeant of the regiment, either by letter or personally, for advice.

"X Y Z."—It depends on how far back you wish to purchase our companion papers.

J. B. (Horsforth).—I will most certainly consider your suggestion.

An Australian Reader.—Thank you very much for your suggestion. Messrs. A. W. Gamage, of High Holborn, London, W.C., should be able to supply you with a make-up box.

"Mag." (Belfast).—Send your sketches in according to the size of the paper you submit them. Higgin's ink is mostly used by artists.

Cyril A. Gibbs (Hornsey).—Thanks very much for your letter. Talbot will in all probability be allowed to return to St. Jim's.

Tom Evans.—Very many thanks for your letter. Of course, the exact meaning of the word is obvious, and, just as it was, I do not think it objectionable.

W. A. Spanswick (Bermundsey).—See reply to Cyril A. Gibbs.

"Girl Reader" (Glasgowshire).—Between four and five in the afternoon.

H. H. Crook and W. P. Mair.—Many thanks for your letters. What you suggest may possibly come to pass shortly.

Vera Redgate and Dorothy Pemberton (Nottingham).—The Terrible Three are each fifteen years of age, and Kildare is seventeen. Talbot has left St. Jim's.

"A Sincere Blackpool Chum."—Many thanks for your letter. I am afraid the back numbers you mention are out of print, and therefore unobtainable. Redfern will probably be in the limelight again shortly. You have my sincere sympathy in your present trouble.

W. D. and H. R. (Ilford).—You will hear more of Kippis anon. Best wishes.

OUR EXCLUSIVE NEW FEATURE.

I must this week draw the particular attention of my readers to the fine series of exclusive War Letters, the first of which appears in this number. These graphic letters, written from the field of operations, should especially appeal to all my patriotic readers, since they are the actual experiences of an old "Gemite" who is now serving with the Colonies.

The newspapers, of course, set forth day by day the striking scenes of warfare—acclaiming British victories, and lauding those fine acts of heroism inseparable from the men of our nation; but how much better it is to be able to obtain detailed information from the pen of one of our own comrades, who, even at this moment, is undergoing the severe hardships and trials of warfare!

The first of these grand, descriptive accounts deals with the storming of Liège, and the gallant defence made by the plucky little Belgian Army, whose unexpected resistance came as a severe blow to the German tyrant. The narrative is replete with thrilling incidents, and will kindle the patriotism and enthusiasm of all who read it.

It behooves you, therefore, to make a special point of following up this fine series each week, and to acquaint your friends with this good news. DO IT NOW!

THE EDITOR.