# "THE ST. JIM'S AIRMEN"

**A Complete School Tale and Grand War Serial in this issue.**


Complete Stories for ALL, and Every Story a GEM.

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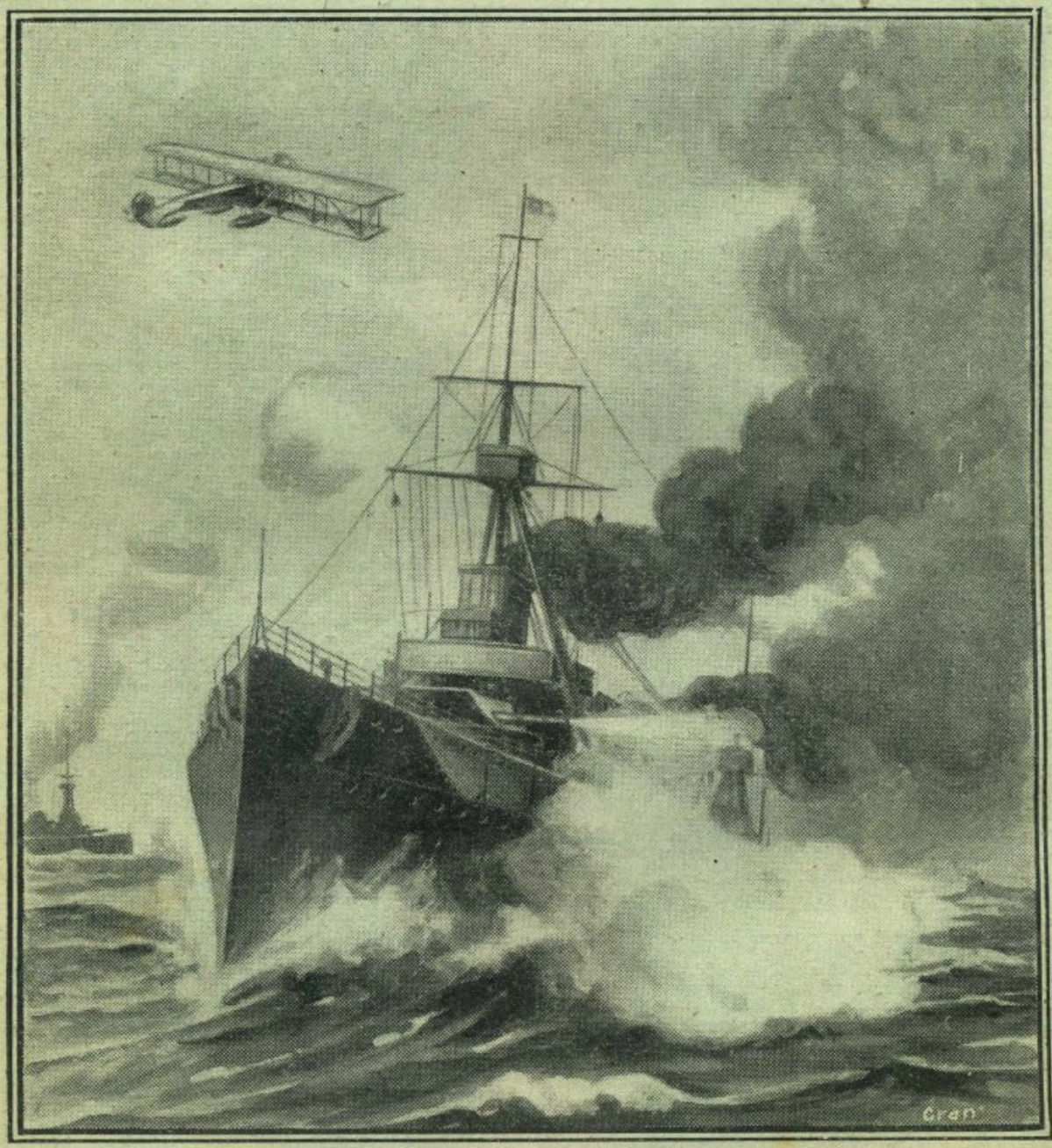

# THE WATCH-DOGS OF GREAT BRITAIN.

**A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.**

# Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE

### CONFUSED.

A number of workmen were discussing the great European War in a tramcar the other day. On the other side of the car there sat an old man, with a confused look on his face as he listened to their discussions.

"Well," remarked one of the men, "I think someone should have a smack at the Kaiser."

"And what about this general mobilisation?" interrupted the old fellow. "I think he should be shot!"—Sent in by Ed. Brewis, Northumberland.

### THE TRICK THAT FAILED.

Conjurer: "You have seen me put the marked shilling in this hat. I now ask our friend over there with the red nose to fish it out of his pocket."

Our Friend (rising), "I didn't know you wanted the whole shilling back, after giving it me this morning. I had to use sixpence; but here's the change."—Sent in by C. W. Westbury, Derbyshire.

### MISUNDERSTOOD.

Ikey: "I received an invitation for Cohen's vedding."

Jacob: "I also received one."

Ikey: "Vot does R.S.V.P. mean?"

Jacob: "Vhy, it means 'Remember to send vedding-present,' of course!"—Sent in by Ben Newman, Commercial Road, E.

### A PENNY A SHILLING.

A penny is a copper.
A copper is a policeman.
A policeman is a Robert.
A Robert is a Bob.
And a bob's a shilling.
—Sent in by W. Manser, Southwark Park, S.E.

### THE SAME OLD STORY.

The clergyman of a certain ship took a great interest in his "flock." So much so, that he worried them by giving them Bibles neatly covered in brown-paper. Brown was having a quiet smoke one day on deck, when the parson strolled up.

"Splendid weather—eh, Brown?"

"Yes, sir. If it keeps like this we'll reach Liverpool by the morning."

"Oh, by the way, Brown, how did you like the little book I gave you?"

Brown was taken aback. He remembered the parcel, but had not opened it. However, he decided to take a risk.

"Oh, the little book, sir? I enjoyed reading it——"

The parson was delighted, and wrung Brown's large hand.

"Yes, sir," continued the seaman, "I thought it great. But it finished like all the rest of 'em—got married and lived happy ever after."—Sent in by Noel Penrose, Swansea.

### COULD TRUST HIM.

Two Lancashire lads were discussing the merits of their mayors.

"We've got a real, proper mayor in our town," said one.

"So ha' we," retorted the other.

"Ay, but ours has a collar and chain. 'As yourn?"

"Nay; we can trust our chap—we can let 'un go about loose!"—Sent in by John S. Taylor, Wolverhampton.

### QUITE TRUE.

Johnnie was fishing one day, when he accidentally lost his footing, and fell into the river. A gentleman on the bank, who was helping him out, said:

"How did you come to fall in?"

"I didn't come to fall in," was the reply. "I came to fish!"—Sent in by James B. Keggen, Manchester.

### DEATH ONLY.

Two lovers were spooning one day, and the young man, in the height of passion, exclaimed:

"Darling, willingly would I give my life for you, I love you so!"

Their homeward route took them through a narrow passage, and a fierce bulldog barred their path. The girl turned to her lover, who seemed rather shaky at the sight of the dog, and said:

"George dear, you said you would face death for me, and this is not so bad as death."

"Yes," he murmured, "I said I'd give my life for you, but I did not say I'd give the seat of my trousers!"—Sent in by J. Evans, Paddington.

### "FISHY."

A lively young fisher named Fischer
Fished for fish from the edge of a fissure;
A fish, with a grin,
Pulled the fisherman in—
Now they're fishing the fissure for Fischer.
—Sent in by Charles Brotherston, Leith, N.B.

### NO TELLING.

It was visiting-day at the prison, and an old lady was being shown round by the governor. While at one cell she ventured to ask what the inmate was being punished for.

"For stealing a piano," the governor told her.

"And did you steal it?" asked the old lady, turning to the prisoner sympathetically.

"Yes, ma'am," replied the man, thinking she might be a person of note, who would interest herself on his behalf, "I'm sorry to say I did; but in a moment of weakness, lady."

"A moment of weakness!" gasped the old dame. "Goodness gracious! What could you have done in a moment of strength?"—Sent in by A. B. Swaine, Macclesfield.

### LEADING HIM A DANCE.

"Excuse me," said the girl to her dancing partner, as she stopped in the middle of the room. "Don't you think you might introduce a little variety into your style of dancing?"

"Certainly, dearest. In what way?" asked the young man.

"Well," said his partner sweetly, "would you mind dancing on my left foot for a while? The right has had about enough."—Sent in by H. Curtis, St. John's, Newfoundland.

### WHAT "PUFF"-ECT ARTFULNESS!

Youngster: "Please 'ave you got a little cigarette older you don't want?"

Old Gent: "Why, sonny?"

Youngster: "'Cos father says I must get a little older before I can smoke cigarettes."—Sent in by William Wyatt, East Ham.

## 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.**

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

PUBLISHED IN TOWN AND COUNTRY EVERY WEDNESDAY MORNING

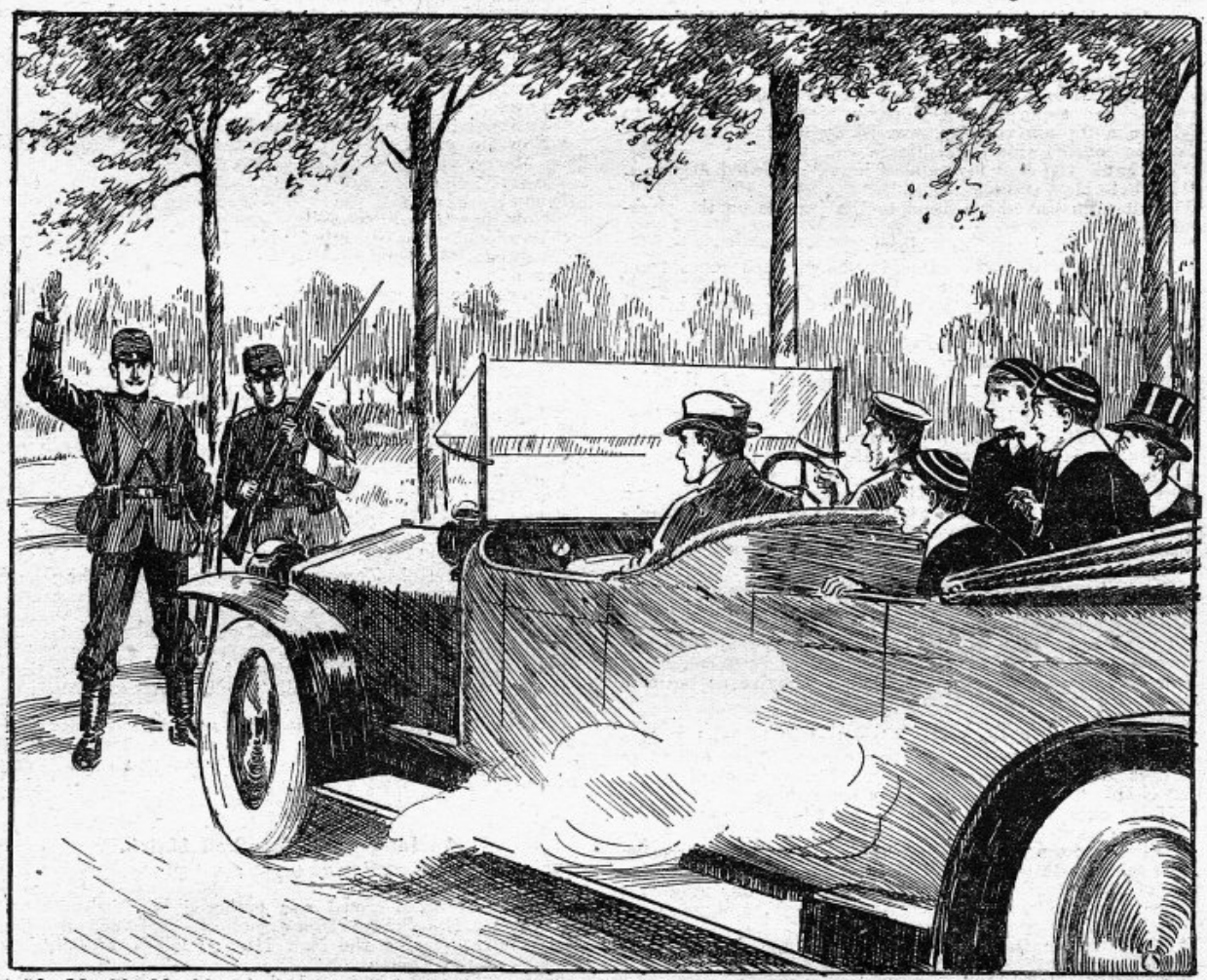
The GEM LIBRARY 1D

COMPLETE STORIES FOR ALL, AND EVERY STORY A GEM!

# THE ST. JIM'S AIRMEN!

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

## By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



A soldier ran out into the middle of the road, and held up his hand. The chauffeur brought the car to a halt. "Your papers, gentlemen," said the soldier. "What the dickens do they expect to find?" exclaimed Manners. (See Chapter 16.)

### CHAPTER 1.

#### Arthur Augustus is Convinced.

WHIRRRRR!

Tom Merry looked round him in surprise.

Whirrrr!

Buzzzzzz!

It was the sound of an engine, close at hand. The captain of the Shell Form at St. Jim's was seated in the grass, on the bank of the shining Ryll, with the latest number of "Chuckles" in his hand. He laid down the paper, and stared about him in amazement, as that strange sound, coming apparently from nowhere, smote upon his ears.

Manners and Lowther, who were lying in the grass, staring lazily at the blue sky, sat up in astonishment.

"What the dickens is that?" Monty Lowther exclaimed.

"Sounds like a motor-car; but——"

"But there can't be a giddy motor-car on the towing-path." Lowther looked along the shining river. "And there isn't a motor-boat in sight. What the deuce——"

Whirrrr!

The chums of the Shell sprang to their feet.

They were astonished, and a little alarmed. There was no motor near them, and yet the sound of the engine came clearly to their ears—close at hand. They did not think for the moment of looking upward.

Whirrrr!

A long shadow fell across the sunny river.

Then the juniors of St. Jim's turned their gaze upward.

"M-m-my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "It's an airship!"

"Phew!"

Next Wednesday:

"TOM MERRY & CO. ON GUARD!" AND "A BID FOR A THRONE!"

No. 349. (New Series). Vol. 9.

"And something gone wrong with the works!" grinned Lowther.

Whirrrr!

From over the wood behind them came the great shape—a huge gas-envelope, elliptical in form, heavily overshadowing the car attached beneath, though that was of considerable size.

Over the rail at the side of the huge oblong car a face looked down, under a peaked cap—a grim, dark face, with waxed moustaches pointed upwards. It was not a British face, as the juniors saw at once.

"A German airship!" murmured Tom Merry, catching his breath. "What the dickens are they doing here?"

"Looking for trouble," said Monty Lowther, with a grin. "There's something gone wrong with them, and they can't rise."

The face that looked down on the juniors of St. Jim's was not twenty feet above them. It was not a pleasant face to look at. The features were harsh and grim, and there was an expression upon it of suppressed rage and apprehension, which the juniors could easily understand under the circumstances. The captain of a German airship, compelled to alight in a foreign country, was likely to find himself involved in considerable difficulties.

"My hat! If I had my camera here!" growled Manners.

"Hallo! He's signing to us!"

The German waved his hand to the juniors on the river-bank.

"Hallo!" called out Tom Merry.

"What place is this?" came in sharp, hard tones from the German above in excellent English.

"The village yonder is Rylcombe—and the school behind there is St. Jim's," replied Tom Merry.

"I mean, what district—what province?"

"The county of Sussex."

"Sussex!" repeated the German captain. "Is this far from the sea?"

"A good forty miles."

"Miles! Miles!" said the German.

"Sixty or seventy kilometres," said Manners.

"Mein Gott!"

The face was withdrawn. The German airship drifted on across the river, and floated away over the trees, the whirring of the engine dying away faintly in the distance.

The Terrible Three of the Shell stared after the strange vessel until it disappeared.

"Phew!" said Tom Merry, as the airship vanished behind the tree-tops in the distance. "This takes the giddy cake! A German airship, by gum!"

"I don't know that we ought to have given that chap any information," said Manners thoughtfully. "What is he doing over here? Spying, very likely. They've no business over the English coast."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Very likely. There was a blow last night, and I dare say they've been blown out of their course. They call those monsters dirigibles, but they can't always control them. That chap will have to come down somewhere."

"If I'd only had my camera!" said Manners regretfully.

"You're wanted, deah boys!"

An elegant form came through the trees from the direction of the school. It was that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus jammed his celebrated monocle into his eye, and gazed at the chums of the Shell in surprise.

"What's the mattah, deah boys?" he demanded. "Have you seen a ghost?"

"No, ass—an airship!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"A German airship," said Tom Merry.

"Pway don't twy to pull my leg, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Fathead! We've seen it."

"Wats! There are no German airships here," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "They would not be allowed to come over here, you know."

"But we've seen it!" howled Manners. "And talked to the skipper, too."

"You've been dweamin', deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus sceptically. "I haven't seen any giddy airship. Pway don't twy to gammon me. I've come down to tell you slackahs that we're weady to play footah."

"By Jove! I'd forgotten the footer!" said Tom Merry. "One doesn't see an airship here every day."

"Not unless one falls asleep in the gwass, and dweams dweams," said Arthur Augustus, with a chuckle.

The Terrible Three glared at the swell of the School House. Certainly a German airship in that quiet corner of the country was a surprising sight; but they had seen it—there was no doubt about that.

"Look here," roared Tom Merry; "I tell you we've seen it, you ass!"

"Wats!"

"With our own eyes, fathead!" howled Manners.

"You could scarcely see it with anybody else's, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "But I wathah fancy that your eyes were closed at the time! You have been dweamin'."

"You—you ass——"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Tom Mewwy! I—— Oh, whatter you up to, you wuff beast? Hands off! Yawooh!"

The Terrible Three had rushed upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and collared him. The swell of St. Jim's wriggled in the grasp of the exasperated Shell fellows.

"We'll show him whether we've been dreaming or not!" growled Tom Merry. "Bump him!"

"Yow-ow! I wefuse to be bumped! I—— You wottahs!"

Arthur Augustus's refusal did not make any difference. In the grasp of three strong pairs of hands, he descended—not gently—upon the towing-path.

Bump!

"Yawoooh! You feahful wottahs!"

"Now do you believe we saw the airship?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Wats!"

Bump!

"Now do you believe——"

"Yawoooh! Ow crumbs! No, I don't. I believe you were dweamin' dweams——"

Bump!

"Now, then, do you believe——"

"Yawooop! Yaas!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Yaas, you wottahs; I believe anythin' you like! Yow-ow! Oh!"

"Quite sure you believe it?" demanded Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! Oh crumbs!" gurgled Arthur Augustus. "Leggo, you feahful beasts! I'll give you a feahful thwashin' all wound for this! Yow-ow! Leggo!"

"Give him another for being a doubting Thomas," said Manners.

Bump!

"Yow-ow! Help!"

"And another for being a silly ass!" grinned Lowther.

Bump!

"Gwoooooooh!"

Then the Terrible Three walked away towards the school, grinning, leaving Arthur Augustus in the grass, in a state of breathless fury. It was a full minute before the swell of St. Jim's recovered his breath and sat up, blinking dazedly, and groping for his eyeglass.

"Bai Jove! You awful wottahs! I don't believe there was any wotten airship at all!" yelled Arthur Augustus defiantly.

But the Terrible Three were gone, and Arthur Augustus's eloquence was wasted on the desert air. And the swell of St. Jim's, after dusting down his elegant "clobber" very carefully, limped after them to St. Jim's.

## CHAPTER 2.

### An Interrupted Football Match.

"WELL saved!"

"Bravo!"

Quite a crowd was gathered on Little Side at St. Jim's. The School House juniors, captained by Tom Merry, were playing the New House juniors, captained by Figgins of the Fourth.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had run the ball up to within a few feet of the New House goal, and then shot right into Fatty Wynn's hands. He tried to explain his failure to Lowther as he ran back up the ground.

"Footah is a vewy uncertain game," said Arthur Augustus. "Lots of fellahs who have got goals wouldn't have done it if the goalkeepah had not missed the ball."

"Go hon!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Did you work that out in your head, Gussy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you fellahs as asses," said Arthur Augustus. "I am sowwy, howevah, as this is pwobably my last match this season, and I weally intended to win it for the House."

"Yes, I suppose Tom Merry will have sense enough to leave you out of the next match," Digby remarked.

"I should wefuse to be left out, Dig, if I am heah. But it is quite poss that I may be away fwom St. Jim's."

"Then we may win a few matches," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, pway don't cackle!" said Arthur Augustus. "I fully expect that the House will be beaten hands down all the time I am away."

"And where are you going?" demanded Digby. "Have your people decided to send you to a private lunatic asylum at last?"

"I decline to weply to a widiculous and fwivolous question, Digby. I am pwobably goin' on a holiday in the Tywol."

"What on earth is the Tywol?" asked Kangaroo, in astonishment.

"Oh, the fathead means the Tyrol!" growled Digby. "It's only his beautiful accent. And how are you going to get a holiday in the Tyrol in the middle of the term, duffer?"

"My eldah bwothah Conway is there," explained Arthur Augustus. "As soon as I heard that old Conway was in the Tywol, I decided that I would go too. I have w'itten to him, and explained that he will weally need a chap who speaks German with him. I have w'itten to my patah, askin' him to get me permish fwom the Head. I have dwawn my money out of the bank weady to go."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for cacklin', Dig, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Digby. "I fancy you've been rather previous in drawing your money out of the bank, that's all Your pater isn't likely to ask the Head to let you off lessons for the rest of the term; and the Head wouldn't do it, anyway."

"Oh, wats! I shall put it to the Head, as an old sport. Old Conway wequiahs a fellah of tact and judgment with him, too. I weally wegard it as my dutay, as his youngah bwothah, to look aftah him a bit——"

Phe-e-ep!

The whistle went for "Time," and the juniors streamed off the field.

Arthur Augustus spotted Blagg, the postman, at last, crossing the quad, and he dashed off to intercept him. His chums looked after him with grinning faces. Arthur Augustus had about as much chance of a holiday in the Tyrol as of a vacation in the moon, as a matter of fact, and they were interested to know what was in that letter from his pater.

Arthur Augustus came triumphantly back with a letter in his hand, which he had not yet opened. He waved it gleefully to the juniors.

"There you are, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "Now, what do you say?"

"Is that from your pater?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And what does he say?"

"I haven't wead it yet, deah boy. But it will be all sewene. You see, I explained to the patah that I weally must go, and I am sure that he will see the mattah in a sensible light."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus slit the envelope with his silver-handled penknife, and took out the letter. He unfolded it, and began to peruse it, the juniors watching him with interested faces.

Arthur Augustus's countenance fell as he read.

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors chuckled. Evidently the letter from Lord Eastwood was not to the liking of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Oh, wotten!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does he say?" yelled Digby.

"Bai Jove! You can wead it if you like," said Arthur Augustus despondently. "I weally nevah suspected the patah of anythin' like this. I weally wegard him as havin' failed to play the game, and I shall certainly w'ite and tell him so."

The juniors gathered round to read the letter. It was short, but not sweet.

"Dear Arthur,—I have received your letter, with your astounding request to be allowed to leave school for the rest of the term to go upon a holiday. Of course nothing of the sort is possible. I certainly refuse to make any such request to the Head. I advise you to work hard at your lessons, and then you will enjoy your next vacation when it comes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus gazed round through his eyeglass at the grinning juniors.

"I uttahly fail to see any cause for laughtah!" he exclaimed. "I shall tweat the patah with dignity, I twust, and shall wefuse to ask him again. I shall go diwectly to the Head with my wequest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I twust he will act like an old sport. I assuah you that I have made up my mind to go to the Austwian Tywol. Now that Austwia is goin' to war, it will be an extwemely intewestin' countwy to twavel in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is wathah a disappointment. Howevah, I am goin' all the same."

"Two to one in quids that you don't!" grinned Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth.

"If I were a bettin' chap, Lumlay, I should say done. As it is," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity, "I can only say wats!"

"Hallo!" roared Kangaroo suddenly. "What the dickens——"

"Great Scott!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

"It's an airship!"

"The German airship!" gasped Manners. "Now's my chance, by gum!"

And Manners tore away towards the School House for his camera. Manners, the keen amateur photographer, was always looking for something new in his special line, and the chance of photographing a German airship was not to be lost. And Manners knew, too, that photographs of the dirigible, well taken, might be very valuable.

Secrets of construction, hitherto carefully guarded in Germany, might come to light in the photographs. That this huge airship was different in structure from the pictures he had seen of the Zeppelins, Manners knew. It was probably the latest thing in aircraft designed by the German builders, and accurate photographs of it might be valuable to the War Office.

Manners tore away breathlessly, forgetting footer and everything else in his eagerness to take a series of pictures of the German dirigible.

But there was plenty of time, as it happened, for the airship was descending.

That there was something wrong with the craft the Terrible Three had guessed before, when they had seen it floating low down on the banks of the Ryll.

The German captain was evidently looking for a place to land.

The great airship came swinging down like a wounded bird, and it landed fairly across the footer-ground on Little Side.

## CHAPTER 3.
### The German Airship.

BUMP!

The German airship landed on the football-field, and in a moment it was surrounded by an excited crowd.

Fellows came running from near and far at the extraordinary sight.

Seniors and juniors crowded round the stranded airship.

Five faces could be seen looking over the rails, one of them the hard face with the peaked cap over it which the Terrible Three already knew.

Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, came striding up through the buzzing crowd. He raised his cap to the German captain, who saluted stiffly in return.

"This place—this is a school?" the German asked.

"Yes," said Kildare; "St. Jim's School. Have you had an accident?"

The German twisted his moustache.

"Ja, ja; a slight accident—very slight—to my engine. But it is necessary that I shall have that repaired before I can go. It is by accident I come here; the storm last night blew me inland. In a few hours I can go!"

Kildare whistled softly.

The German captain stated that the storm had blown his airship inland, and that was doubtless true; but he must have been hovering over the English coast, if not actually inland, when it happened.

What had he been doing there?

It was more than possible that the crew of the foreign airship were spies, and in that case the vessel certainly could not be allowed to depart in a few hours. In any case, the authorities would have to be informed of the matter, and would have to inspect the stranded vessel, and give permission for its departure.

"I am sorry that I descend here, and disturb you," said the German captain, speaking very civilly, though Kildare could see that he was inwardly consumed with rage and chagrin. "But in some hours I am gone, and I am willing to pay for any damage that is done!"

"It isn't a question of that, sir," said Kildare. "I'm afraid, though, that you will not be able to go until the authorities have been here. But I will call my headmaster; he will speak to you!"

"Thank you!"

Kildare strode away to the School House. Manners passed him as he came out, with the camera in his hand. The Shell fellow hurried down to the footer-ground. The footballers and a crowd of other fellows surrounded the airship, examining it curiously. All thought of football was gone now.

The scrutiny of the St. Jim's fellows was evidenty displeasing to the German captain. But it could not be stopped, and he bit his lips with anger, and kept silent. But when Levison of the Fourth ventured to put his hand on the rail, as if to climb aboard, one of the German airmen shoved him roughly back. Evidently the Germans did not intend to let the schoolboys get aboard the craft

Manners was getting to work now. The German captain was talking in quick, guttural German to another of the airmen, and he did not observe the photographer. Manners sighted his camera carefully. The light was perfect, and he was assured in advance of a splendid set of pictures. He had a roll of a dozen films in his camera, ample to take the airship under every possible aspect.

Click—click—click!

"Go it, Manners!" grinned Blake. "My hat! It will be a sell for the bounders if their giddy secrets come out in the photographs!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's the chance of a lifetime!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "As they have the awful cheek to bwing their beastly airship into this countwy, we certainly have a wight to collah its secwets, if it has any!"

"What-ho!"

Click—click! went the camera.

Manners was getting on famously.

The amateur photographer of the Shell little dreamed at that moment of the consequences that were to follow his action.

He was only thinking just then of getting a good set of pictures, and certainly he was getting them.

Film after film was filled, till Manners had only one left. Eleven had been taken, and all of them he was certain would be successful. If there were any secrets of construction in the airship open to the camera, they would not remain secrets after Manners's negatives had been developed.

Manners was sighting his camera for the last film, when the German captain happened to catch sight of him.

The German gave a violent start, and sprang from the car to the ground, and rushed towards the amateur photographer.

"What is that you do?" he shouted.

Manners stared at him.

"I'm taking photographs," he answered.

"Das ist verboten——"

"Eh?"

"It is forbidden!" shouted the German, his pale blue eyes blazing with rage. "You must not! You hear me—you must not!"

"And why not?" demanded Manners coolly.

"It is forbidden!"

"It may be forbidden in Germany, but it jolly well isn't forbidden here!" said Manners. "You should keep out of this country if you don't want your airship photographed! What were you doing on our coast at all?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The big German ground his teeth. His hand went to the sword at his side, for he was armed; but he probably realised that it would be worse than useless to draw it. He relinquished it again at once.

But the threatening gesture had "got the backs up" of the juniors at once. They had heard and read enough about the swagger of military men in Germany, and they did not mean to allow the airship captain to reproduce any of it on English soil.

"You can keep that sticker where it is!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Don't be an ass, sir! We have a right to photograph the ship if we choose!"

"And we're jolly well going to do it!" said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The German made a great effort to control his rage.

"Listen to me!" he said, as calmly as he could. "You have taken photographs—is it not so?—how many already?"

"Eleven films so far," said Manners. "I'm just taking the twelfth, if you'll kindly get out of the way!"

"But I tell you——"

Click!

"That's the twelfth," said Manners cheerfully. "It was a snap, but I think it will be a good one. Much obliged, sir. First chance I've ever had of photographing a German dirigible!"

"My boy, I will give you a hundred marks for those films!"

Manners's eyes glistened. The offer of a hundred marks—five pounds—for the set of films showed him that they were valuable. Evidently the photographs depicted some secret of construction that the German wished to keep very dark. Not that Manners had the slightest intention of accepting the hundred marks, or parting with the films under any circumstances whatever.

"You will give them to me?"



"No fear!"

"I will give you two hundred marks!"

"You can make it two hundred quid if you like," said Manners, with a grin, "but I'm not parting with these films!"

"Ach! I will give you five hundred marks, that you give me the films, and that you shall take no more!"

"Great Scott! That's twenty-five quid!" said Tom Merry, his eyes opening wide. "Manners, old man, you've spotted some giddy secret!"

"Yaas, wathah! Stick to it, deah boy! Don't part with the films undah any circs!" said Arthur Augustus impressively. "It is our dutay to inform the War Office of this, deah boys, and those photogwaphs will be vewy valuable!"

"What-ho!"

"But—but I will have the films!" the German captain exclaimed; and he stretched out his hand towards the camera.

Manners promptly backed away, and the juniors closed round him.

"Hands off!" said Tom Merry sharply.

"Back up, you fellows!"

"Keep your paws off; you're not touching those films!"

"No feah, deah boy!"

"I tell you that I must have those films—that you shall not keep them!" the German captain exclaimed furiously.

"Rats to you!" said Manners independently. "I'm going to develop them now, as a matter of fact. You should have kept your giddy dirigible out of this country, my friend."

And Manners started off towards the School House.

The German captain made a movement to follow him, but Tom Merry & Co. closed up in the way, looking very grim.

The captain twisted his moustache furiously, and strode back to the dirigible. Manners disappeared into the School House, and made a bee-line at once for the dark-room. He intended to develop his treasures at the earliest possible moment.

"Here comes the Head!" murmured Kangaroo of the Shell. "The Herr Kaptain can explain to him; but he won't get those giddy photographs. Why, as soon as it's known that a German airship has landed here, there will be police and photographers here by the dozen to take care of it."

The juniors fell back respectfully as the Head of St. Jim's came up. Dr. Holmes entered into conversation with the German captain, speaking in German. The big Teuton spoke with great earnestness and excitement, waving his hands to impress upon the Head the importance of what he was saying. Dr. Holmes looked very grave and thoughtful. The juniors looked on curiously, guessing that the German captain was demanding the photographs from the headmaster.

Dr. Holmes made a sign to Tom Merry to approach.

"It seems that one of the boys has been taking photographs of this dirigible, Merry?" he said. "Manners, I presume?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Captain Guggenheim objects to his airship being photographed. Let it be understood that no further photographs are to be taken until the authorities have been here. Meanwhile, tell Manners that he is not to part with the photographs he has taken. They must be handed to the authorities, who will judge whether they are to be returned to Captain Guggenheim. Tell Manners to take care of them."

"Yes, sir."

The captain made a passionate gesture.

"You will not, then, return those photographs to me?" he exclaimed.

Dr. Holmes looked at him steadily.

"I cannot do that," he said. "If you succeed in explaining satisfactorily to the authorities why your airship is here, they will order the photographs to be handed to you. There will be no harm done in that case. If you cannot explain satisfactorily, your vessel will certainly be detained."

Captain Guggenheim twisted his waxed moustache.

"In six hours I shall be ready to start," he said.

"Before six hours, then, competent persons will be on the spot, to say whether you can be allowed to start," said the Head.

Captain Guggenheim shrugged his shoulders.

"I am in your hands, as my engine has broken down," he said. "The repair will take six hours, and then——" He paused. "Excuse me, mein Herr, for having invaded your private grounds in this manner. It was not my fault."

"Quite so, sir, and you are very welcome," said the Head. "I must do my duty, however, in informing the proper authorities of your arrival here. I have no doubt that everything will be satisfactorily arranged. If you and your men are in need of refreshment——"

"Thank you, mein Herr, but we are very busy with our machinery."

"Very good."

And the Head retired. The German airmen seemed to be

very busy on board the dirigible, and the St. Jim's fellows watched them from a distance with great interest. It was the most exciting half-holiday that had ever happened at the old school.

## CHAPTER 4.
### A Sudden Attack.

MANNERS came out of the dark-room with a satisfied smile upon his face. He found a crowd of fellows waiting for him outside.

"How are the negatives?" asked Tom Merry.

"Ripping!" said Manners enthusiastically. "Never had a better set of pictures in my life. Developed beautifully. When the films are dry I'm going to print them. I must take some more——"

"Verboten!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Oh, that Dutch chap won't stop me!"

"Head's orders," said Tom. "No more photographs to be taken till the authorities arrive on the scene."

Manners grunted.

"How rotten! Never mind, I've got a jolly good set, anyway."

"And you're to keep them to yourself till the authorities come," said Tom Merry. "The Head's been telephoning. They'll send somebody over here from Aldershot, I expect. And the bobbies will come too. The airship won't be allowed to leave till Captain Guggenheim has explained his business here. I remember it was the same when a German dirigible came down in France—I read of it in the newspapers."

"Yaas, wathah! The Fwench chaps wouldn't let it go till they were satisfied," said Arthur Augustus, with a nod. "Quite wight, too."

"No more footer this afternoon, I suppose," remarked Blake.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not with that blessed airship lying across the ground. It will be there a good time. Captain Guggenheim told the Head the repairs would take six hours."

"Must be something jolly wrong with the works, then," said Manners. "We can go and look at the dashed thing, I suppose, even if we can't take snapshots of it."

There was still a crowd round the stranded airship. The chums of the School House joined them. Captain Guggenheim was standing by the car, conversing in low tones with his second in command, whom he addressed by the name of Kranz. There was a harassed look upon the captain's face. Evidently the photographing of the airship caused him considerable worry. He caught sight of Manners among the juniors, and came towards him. Manners eyed him warily.

But Captain Guggenheim seemed to have got completely over his bad temper. He gave the junior an agreeable smile.

"So you are an amateur photographer, hein?" he remarked.

"Something in that line," assented Manners.

"You take good photographs, is it not?"

"Very good sometimes."

"Those that you have taken of my ship—are they good?"

"Best I've had for a long time," said Manners cheerfully. "Every blessed line comes out first class."

A shade crossed the captain's brow. Evidently that piece of information afforded him no pleasure.

"You will excuse me that I was annoyed," he said civilly. "I am a servant of the Kaiser, and it is my business not to fall down in a foreign country, and there is much trouble for me if my ship is photographed."

"Don't mench," said Manners agreeably. "I'm sorry if you get into trouble over it, but, you see, there are two sides of the question. If your airship comes into this country, naturally we want to know what the little game is. If the authorities are satisfied with you, I dare say they'll ask me to hand those photographs over to you, and I shall have to do it."

The German captain nodded.

"I should like to see them," he remarked.

"Not dry yet," said Manners.

"You have not printed them yet, hein?"

"Oh, no!"

"But the negatives—they are good?"

"Topping!"

"Will you let me see them?"

Manners hesitated.

"In return I will let you see over my ship," said the German captain, with a smile. "You will be interested to see over a German airship. I will take you on board."

Manners face lighted up.

"Well, that's very kind of you, sir," he said. "May the other chaps come too?"

"Your friends?" said Captain Guggenheim, as Manners indicated Tom Merry and Monty Lowther. "Ja wohl—certainly, if you wish."

"Then I'll get the films, if they're dry," said Manners.

"Thank you, my boy."

Captain Guggenheim turned back to his airship. The engine, which had been silent for the last hour, was throbbing again. Apparently the airmen were testing it.

"Not getting ready to start, I suppose," remarked Blake, as the throbbing of the engine smote upon his ears.

"They can't," said Tom Merry. "I don't know how they work these things, but I think they'll have to get a new supply of gas before they can clear off."

"May be a new kind of thing," said Blake, looking curiously at the great vessel. "This isn't quite like the pictures I've seen of the Zeppelins. Still, the six hours isn't half up yet—they can't be going."

The juniors waited for the return of Manners with the films. Captain Guggenheim and Kranz had gone back on the airship. The engine was throbbing and buzzing, reminding the juniors of some powerful animal striving to burst its tether.

Manners came back from the School House, and joined the juniors.

"Not dry yet," he remarked. "Our friend will have to wait a bit."

"Better tell him so."

The Terrible Three approached the airship. Captain Guggenheim looked over the side with a smile of welcome.

"Please come on board," he exclaimed. "Give me your hand. I will help you."

"Thanks."

Manners jumped on board the airship. Tom Merry and Lowther followed him at once. What happened next followed like a flash.

One of the German airmen seized Manners, and bore him down into the bottom of the car. The propellers revolved the same instant, and the airship moved.

For an instant Tom Merry and Lowther stood transfixed. Then they leaped upon the man who had seized Manners, and strove to tear him away from their chum.

There was a yell from the juniors crowded round the dirigible.

"She's off!"

"They're going!"

The airship was rising.

In the car the Terrible Three were struggling desperately with the big, burly fellow who was gripping Manners, but the man did not let go.

There was a rush of the juniors towards the dirigible.

Whether it was starting by accident or design it was carrying off three St. Jim's fellows, and there was a rush to the rescue.

Blake and D'Arcy and Kangaroo and Digby reached it as it rose, and leaped at it, and caught the side-rail with their hands.

A fierce blow sent Digby rolling back on the ground, and the next moment Kangaroo was hurled off, dropping a distance of six or seven feet, and giving a loud yell as he bumped on the cricket-pitch.

Blake avoided a blow aimed at his head, twisted himself over the rail, and pitched headlong into the car. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scrambled in and rolled over. The airship was rising fast now.

Below a huge crowd of St. Jim's fellows stood gazing upwards.

Digby and Kangaroo had picked themselves up, but they could not make another attempt; the airship was twenty feet above their heads now, and rising fast.

The Head of St. Jim's gazed from his study window. Mr. Railton had come out of the School House, and was looking up. On the steps of the New House appeared Mr. Radcliff, with startled gaze turned on the rising airship.

The football ground and the quadrangle swarmed with fellows, seniors and juniors.

All eyes were turned upon the rising airship.

Higher and higher it rose.

"Great Scott!" gasped Figgins. "They're gone, and they've taken our chaps with them! My only hat!"

"They must be stopped somehow!" gasped Herries. "Oh, the rascals!"

"They can't be stopped."

"They're gone!"

Higher and higher the airship rose, till it was a mere speck to the straining eyes of the St. Jim's fellows, whizzing away to the north-east.

Tom Merry & Co. were gone, carried away into the clouds by the German airship, and the St. Jim's fellows stood rooted to the ground in astonishment and dismay.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Carried Off Through the Clouds.

TOM MERRY and his comrades stood panting in the car.

Manners had been released by now, and he rose to his feet, looking very much crumpled and dishevelled.

Tom glanced over the side. It was death to jump out. St. Jim's was vanishing earthwards. Higher and higher the airship rose.

Captain Guggenheim turned a grim look upon the boys.

Tom Merry met his glance with a blaze in his blue eyes.

"What does this mean?" he shouted. "You did not start by accident!"

The German captain laughed.

"Scarcely," he assented.

"You have carried us off, then! Why?"

Captain Guggenheim laughed again. He was evidently well-pleased with the success of his trick. The story of six hours being required for the repair to the machinery had a fabrication to deceive the Head and the St. Jim's fellows. When he had made that statement the German captain had evidently planned this coup.

"I did not wish to carry you off, my young friends," he said. "It was this enterprising young gentleman whom I asked to come on my ship."

"And what did you want me for?" demanded Manners.

"The films."

Manners grinned.

"The films! Oh, my hat!"

The German captain held out his hand.

"You will give them to me, my young friend," he remarked. "I have taken this serious step to obtain the photographs. You will hand them to me at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is no laughing matter, I warn you!" exclaimed the captain, his face growing hard and grim and savage. "You are in my hands now. I shall have the photographs, and then I will set you down when it is possible—in Germany."

"In Germany!" exclaimed the juniors together.

"Bai Jove, you're jollay well not goin' to take us to Germany!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"There is no help for it," said Captain Guggenheim grimly. "You have only yourselves to thank. If you had handed me the photographs when I demanded them I should not have taken you away from your school. It is not for pleasure that I have loaded my airship with a parcel of schoolboys. Now I cannot descend until I am on the other side of the North Sea. But you need not be afraid. You will be sent home safely from Deutschland."

"We are not afraid," said Tom Merry coolly. "If you take us to Germany I suppose we cannot help ourselves, as we cannot compel you to descend. I don't know that I object to having a run in an airship. I've been up in a balloon, and I think this beats a balloon hollow."

"Yaas, wathah! It will be a giddy vacation in the middle of the term, aftah all," grinned Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, my patah will be surpwised when he discovahs that I am off without his permish!"

"Now hand me the films," said Captain Guggenheim.

Manners shook his head.

"Can't be done!" he replied.

The captain's jaw set grimly.

"Mein Gott! Hand them over, or I will order my men to take them from you by force!" he exclaimed.

"They can't do it!"

"What! Kranz—Klein—Ludwig——"

"Hold on!" said Manners, as the airmen advanced to seize him. "I'm not thinking of putting up a fight, and you can keep your paws off. I can't hand you the films, for the simple reason that I haven't them about me."

"What!"

"They're not here," explained Manners.

"It is false!" the captain exclaimed harshly. "You went into your house to fetch them to show them to me!"

"If they were dry," said Manners calmly. "They weren't dry. I came back to tell you so, and if you hadn't been in such a dashed hurry I should have told you so. The films are still in the School House at St. Jim's."

"It is false!"

The German captain's face was transfigured with rage and disappointment. Though he shouted out that it was false the junior's tone carried conviction. Captain Guggenheim realised, too late, that he had been a little too clever. He had planned this coup to obtain possession of the photographs very cleverly, and he had succeeded, only to discover that he had over-reached himself.

He had captured the photographer, but not the photographs.

He rapped out an angry order in German to his men, and Manners was promptly seized and searched.



The search was thorough enough—every pocket being turned out—but no films came to light.

Captain Guggenheim had to be satisfied that they were not there.

Manners submitted to the ordeal with a smiling face. He was extremely pleased that chance had baffled the designs of the German captain in this way. If he had had the films upon him, Captain Guggenheim would have succeeded in his object. As it was, they were far out of the German's reach. After his action in carrying off the juniors by force, he could not descend at St. Jim's again. The school was already long out of sight, and it was impossible for the airship to return there; still more impossible to obtain the photographs, even if it returned.

The captain gritted his teeth and twisted his moustache savagely.

Evidently he was nonplussed at this unexpected turn of events. Manners calmly smoothed out his clothes, ruffled by the rough search of the German airmen.

The airship was speeding on, with a ceaseless throb and buzz. The propellers whizzed and whistled incessantly. The speed of the dirigible proved plainly enough to the juniors that it was indeed an aircraft on new lines, and the secret of its construction was doubtless dear to its constructors. And that secret was revealed in the photographs; they could be certain of that from the German's anxiety to obtain possession of them.

The captain consulted in a low tone with Kranz as the airship rushed on.

The juniors "took" German at St. Jim's, but the German of the Lower Fourth and the Shell was hardly sufficient to enable them to understand what the German officers were muttering. They caught a few words here and there, that was all.

Captain Guggenheim turned to Manners again at last. The amateur photographer of the Shell, whose hobby had landed him at last into so strange a predicament, met his gaze coolly. Manners was rather enjoying the situation. It was very probable that he had done his country a service by obtaining those photographs, and he rejoiced that they were beyond the reach of the airship captain.

"Listen to me, boy," said Captain Guggenheim. "I must have those photographs! You understand—I must!"

"I don't quite see how you'll manage it," said Manners. "But you're welcome to try."

"Go back to St. Jim's," said Jack Blake, with a grin. "The films are there, you know. You may bring it off next time—perhaps."

"Silence! Listen, boy. It was my intention to land you as soon as possible, if only to rid my ship of you."

"Thanks!"

"But I must have those films. You must think of some means of giving them to me, or you and your friends will never see England again!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"I don't quite see what you'll do with us, if you don't set us free," said Tom Merry. "We can't stay in this airship for good, you know."

"We shall soon be crossing the sea," said the captain, with a dark frown. "What if I should drop you into the North Sea from my ship!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"You won't do that," said Tom Merry quietly. "In the first place, you wouldn't get the photographs. In the second place, you are a German officer and a soldier; and you wouldn't do a rotten, cowardly thing like that."

"I should uttahly wefuse to be dwopped into the sea!"

"Shut up, Gussy!" murmured Blake.

"I wefuse to shut up, Blake. I should certainly put up a feahful fight, if anyone twied to dwop me into the sea," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "But I decline to believe that an officah of the Kaisah would do anythin' of the sort. It would be a most ungentlemanly proceeding."

"At all events, you will never see England again until the films are in my hands," said the captain.

"Then what will you do with us?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"There are ways and means," said Captain Guggenheim. "Listen to me. I will set you free, and hand you five hundred marks, if you will give me the films."

"No fear!"

"But we can't, anyway," said Monty Lowther. "The films are at the school, and we are here."

The captain scanned Manners' face keenly.

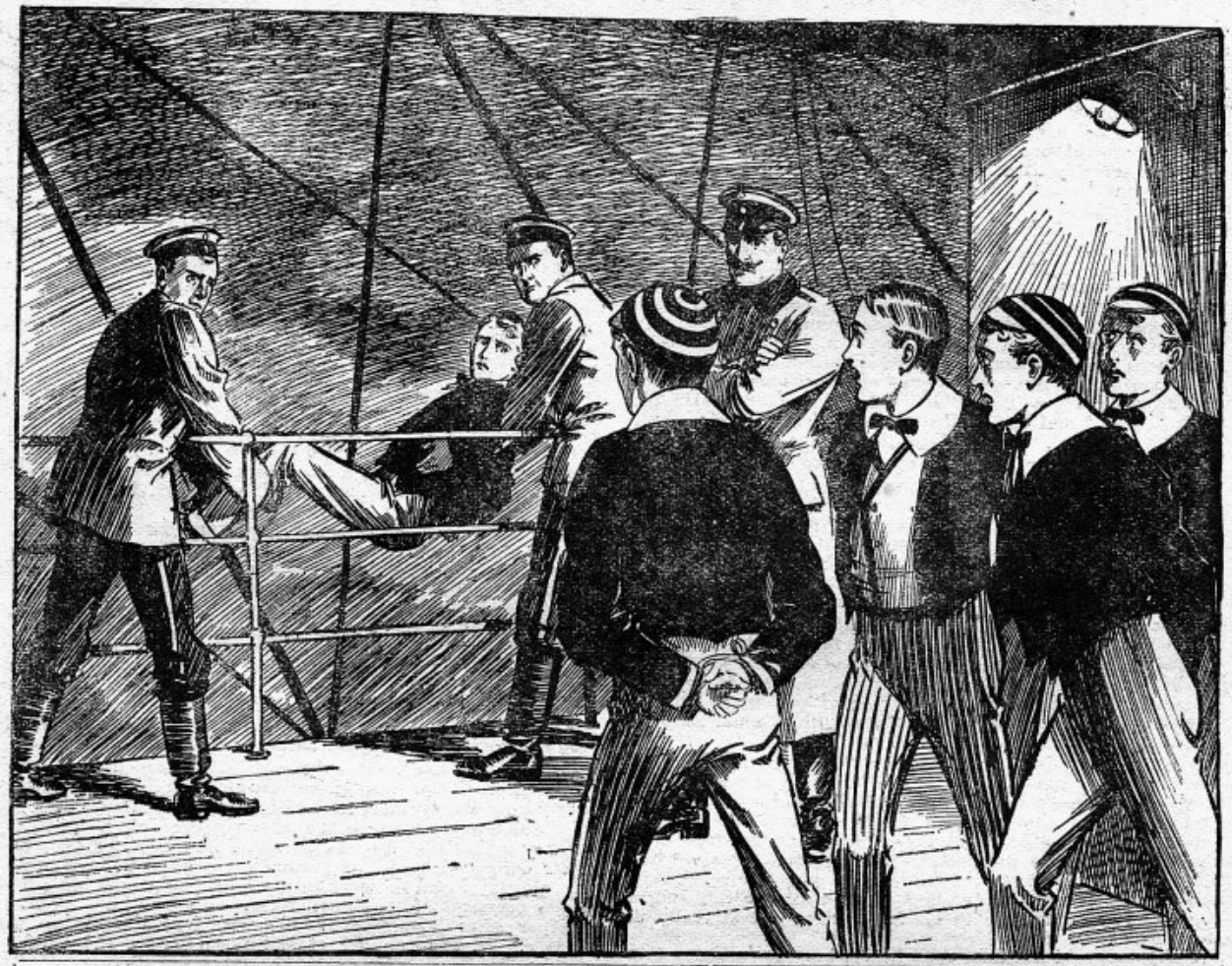
"You look an honest lad," he said.

"I hope so," said Manners cheerfully.

"If you gave me your word, you would keep it."

"Certainly."

"Give me your word, then, to fetch the films, without showing them to a soul, and I will descend and let you go. When you return with the films, I will set your friends free."



**Two of the airmen seized Tom Merry, and the junior, with his hands bound, could make no resistance. His heart thumped as he was swung upon the side-rail of the airship. "Bai Jove! Stop, you wottahs!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.** (*See Chapter 6.*)

"No!"

"And you shall name your own price."

"Oh, leave that out!" said Manners. "Can't you understand that we don't want your money?"

The captain nodded.

"I understand," he said. "I will not, then, offer you money. I will trust to your word if you promise to fetch me the films."

"I cannot!"

"And why not?"

"Because those films are going to be handed over to the authorities to make what use they think fit of them," said Manners steadily. "You are thinking of serving your country. I'm thinking of serving mine."

"I must have them!"

"You won't get them!" said Manners.

The captain clenched his hand.

"I shall find means of overcoming your obstinacy," he said. "You are dealing with a man who does not stop at trifles. I am not to be braved by a schoolboy. Listen. Before nightfall we shall be over the sea. If you do not then give me the promise I have asked of you, your friends shall be dropped overboard one by one before your eyes."

"Gammon!"

"What! What do you mean by that?" exclaimed Captain Guggenheim. Excellent as was his knowledge of English, the old and familiar word "gammon" was evidently absent from his vocabulary.

"I mean I don't believe it," said Manners.

"You will see," said the captain darkly. He gave an order in German, and the airmen advanced upon the juniors again. Tom Merry & Co. put up their fists. Captain Guggenheim rapped out another order, and the airmen drew the short swords they wore at their sides.

"If you resist," said the captain, in a grinding voice, "you will be cut down. Take your choice."

"Bai Jove!"

There was no resisting cold steel. The juniors gave in with the best grace they could, and allowed the airmen to bind their hands behind their backs. Then, with bound hands and gloomy faces, the five juniors of St. Jim's sat down, while the great airship winged its passage through the clouds towards the North Sea.

## CHAPTER 6.
### Facing Death!

DARKNESS fell.

The German airship fled steadily onward through the gathering gloom.

Troubled as they were in their minds, the juniors felt a peculiar sense of exhilaration in that rapid flight through the air. They felt no fear. They had been up in a balloon, and the airship was incomparably steadier and safer. There was no risk, and they soon became accustomed to the motions of the vessel. A slight tendency to sea-sickness passed off, and but for the trouble on their minds, the uncertainty of their fate, Tom Merry & Co. would have enjoyed that strange trip through the clouds.

The German airmen went about their business without taking notice of the juniors. Mile after mile of green country, villages and towns and cities, passed under the flying ship, too far away to be clearly distinguished. The airship was too elevated and too rapid for more than a passing glimpse of it to be obtained by people on the earth so far below.

"My hat," remarked Blake presently, "I'm not surprised that they want to keep the secret of this giddy small-box! It's a wonderful thing. The Germans have been pegging away at airships for a long time, and they've done the trick at last."

"Yaas, wathah! But when those photographs are in the War Office, deah boy, we shall be able to make similah airships if we want to."

"Unless they pigeon-hole the photographs in the War Office, and forget all about 'em," grinned Tom Merry. "They're not quite so wideawake as the German War Office. But this craft is a corker, and no mistake. She's simply buzzing along."

"And so we're going to Germany," said Monty Lowther. "I hope they'll put us down somewhere near the Rhine. There's somebody lives in the Rhineland whom I should like to see again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Herr Schneider's niece," chuckled Manners, "Fraulein Marichen! Give her address to the captain, and ask him to stop there."

And the juniors chuckled. Monty Lowther's devotion to the niece of Herr Schneider, the German master of St. Jim's, had caused many smiles among his chums. Lowther, who had never before been keen on German, had lately devoted himself to that language, with the intention of spending his next vacation on the sunny banks of the Rhine. His chums had heard him practising "Ich liebe Dich" and "Du bist mein Schatz," and had smiled exceedingly.

"They seem to have forgotten all about us," said Tom Merry, after a pause. "We're over the sea now, you chaps."

In the growing darkness the juniors, looking over the rail, could not see the ocean, save every now and then a white gleam; but they heard the sound of the water far below. It gave them a curious feeling to know that the wide waters of the German Ocean rolled far beneath them in the gloom of gathering night.

What were they thinking at St. Jim's?

Already the alarm must have been given, and the airship would be looked for on all sides; but the vessel could never be tracked and taken. Now that it was over the sea, it was far beyond the reach of pursuit. Below them the mighty Dreadnoughts might glide, monarchs of the sea; but the German captain, in the car of the dirigible, could snap his fingers at the whole British Fleet.

There was no help or rescue for the juniors. Their fate depended upon the will of the man in whose power they had fallen—a man exasperated by the failure to obtain the photographs of his ship—perhaps expecting trouble with his superiors when he returned home and made his report. It was not a pleasant prospect. Yet that the captain would proceed to extremities, the juniors did not believe. Hard and harsh he might be, but he was a German officer, and no ruffian. It was difficult to believe that he would really do them harm.

But they could not help their hearts beating faster as Captain Guggenheim came towards them in the light of the electric lanterns.

"The time is come!" said the captain abruptly.

"Well?"

"Will you give me the promise I have asked of you?"

Manners shook his head.

"Listen! I have my duty to do," said the captain harshly. "I have already warned you that I shall not stop at trifles."

"I have mine to do too," said Manners quietly, "and my duty is to see that those photographs go to the British War Office."

"Enough words! You refuse?"

"Yes."

The captain spoke sharply in German. Two of the airmen seized Tom Merry. The junior, with his hands bound, could make no resistance. His heart thumped as he was swung upon the side-rail of the airship.

"Bai Jove, stop, you wottahs!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"When I give the word, your friend falls into the sea," said Captain Guggenheim grimly. "Now will you give me your promise?"

Manners scanned the German captain's face. It was hard as iron. His heart failed him.

"Tom," he muttered, "I—I must——"

Tom Merry's voice rang out clearly. His eyes were flashing.

"Hold your tongue, Manners! Let them do as they like!"

"But, Tom—Tom——"

"Don't say a word. Let them do as they like. They sha'n't see us show the white feather."

Tom Merry's voice rang out clearly.

"For the last time!" shouted the captain fiercely.

Manners set his teeth.

"I won't promise," he said.

There was a pause—a pause of intense anguish to the juniors. Would the German captain carry out his fearful threat? Their hearts throbbed when he made his men a sign to lower Tom Merry into the car again.

The captain twisted his moustache savagely.

"I cannot do it," he said. "You know that I cannot do it. But I shall find some other means—some other means."

He swung angrily away.

Tom Merry sat down panting, his heart going in great throbs.

"I—I knew it was only gammon!" he muttered. "Of course, they wouldn't do it! It was only bluff! But—but I felt pretty queer, all the same."

"I wegard you as a hewo, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus softly.

The airship rushed on through the night. The motion was not so steady now. The wind was rising. Below the airship there came a dull roar of waters. A storm was rising on the North Sea, and the dirigible, as it rushed on, strained and groaned under the buffeting of the wind.

## CHAPTER 7.
### Hard Driven!

"Bai Jove!"

It was a wild night. Tom Merry & Co. found what shelter they could from the tearing wind. It was blowing great guns from the north, and they knew that the course of the airship had been changed. The great vessel, dirigible in fine weather, was helpless when the storm was raging. More than once the juniors had feared that the huge gas-envelope would be blown to pieces by the fierce wind. And certainly that would have been its fate had it faced the wind.

But the airship now was fleeing from the storm; it was speeding along at a terrific rate, with the wind behind it. Where they were going the juniors could not guess, and they doubted whether Captain Guggenheim and his men knew. One thing was certain—they were not making for the German coast now. The great vessel was being hurled along southwards at a rate like that of an express train. The cessation of the dull roar of waters warned them that they were no longer over the sea. Below them lay land, but they knew it must be a foreign land; and, so far as they could guess, it was France that lay beneath the rushing airship. But in the blackness of the night nothing could be seen.

The juniors had been unbound. They needed their hands to cling on to the rocking, oscillating car. The airmen were not taking the slightest notice of them now. When they saw Captain Guggenheim in the gleam of the electric lanterns they saw that his face was grim and hard-set, and they read their danger there. The great airship was at the mercy of the storm. From moment to moment grim death hung over every occupant of the swaying car.

Hour after hour passed. The speed of the airship was terrific. It was running at full speed before the wind to escape its fury. How fast it was going they could not calculate, and it was difficult to guess what distance was covered, but they were certain that hundreds of miles flashed by beneath them in the long, dark hours of the night.

Midnight had passed, and the storm was increasing in fury.

Once or twice the juniors peered over the rail downwards, but they could see nothing—nothing but blackness.

Once Tom Merry thought he caught a glare of light far downward, far away, like the lights of a great city. If so, it was a foreign city—Paris, perhaps. But it vanished in the darkness behind.

The juniors did not think of sleep.

Fatigued as they were, the sense of ever-present danger was sufficient to keep them awake, their senses continually on the alert.

They knew that the German airmen had abandoned long ago the attempt to control the airship; they had resigned themselves to their fate with the calm and steady courage of their race. If the airship went to its destruction in the storm, the five juniors of St. Jim's would share the fate of Captain Guggenheim and his men; there was no help and no rescue. They could only wait and watch with throbbing hearts.

A dim, grey gleam in the darkness hinted of coming dawn. Tom Merry became aware that the airship was rising.

The cold was growing keener, and the juniors' Etons were little protection against the intense cold of the upper air.

Tom Merry scrambled to his feet, holding on to the rail.

Higher and higher rose the airship.

Tom Merry quickly saw the reason. Ahead of the fleeing vessel appeared a white glimmer that was not the gleam of dawn. He knew that it was the glimmer of snow on the summits of high mountains.

The airship could not stop, and it could not turn. It kept straight on, rushing like an arrow through the air. And unless it rose high enough to escape, it would rush upon those snowy summits, and crash there into a thousand fragments.

"Bai Jove!" muttered Arthur Augustus through his chattering teeth. "We're in for it now, deah boys! This looks like the finish!"

"We're rising!" muttered Blake.

Higher and higher, shooting up in a slanting line, went the great airship. But the snowy ridge was terribly close now.

The wind cut through their clothes like a knife. Their hands were blue, their teeth chattering, their feet numbed.

Kranz, the handsome, fair-haired German lieutenant, came staggering across the slanting car, with a pile of heavy coats on his arm, and threw them to the juniors. It was a kindly act. Gladly enough the juniors wrapped themselves in the heavy coats. They tried to thank the German, but the rushing wind drowned their voices, and Kranz turned away immediately, his eyes fixed upon the snowy ridge upon which the airship was rushing.

Where were they? Tom Merry wondered. What mountains were they, lifting snowy summits in the path of the airship? Thick with snow, even in the summer weather. Tom knew that they must be some branch of the Alps, but whether French or Swiss, Italian or Austrian, he had no means of guessing.

How many miles had the whizzing airship covered in the long, long hours of the night? Hundreds of miles at least, he knew that. Only the previous afternoon the juniors had been playing football on Little Side at St. Jim's, and now they were confronting grim death amid the high mountains of Central Europe. Manners was paying dear for his enterprise in photographing the German airship—and his comrades also.

Higher and higher!

The wind that whistled through the car was laden now with snow, and the thin flakes settled white on the occupants of the car.

Higher and higher!

The snowy ridges were below them now; the fatal collision had been avoided. The juniors breathed deeply with relief as the vast white expanse sank beneath the car. In the eastern sky the dawn was strengthening.

But the storm showed no sign of slackening.

It was not a mere tempest; it was evidently a tremendous atmospheric disturbance extending over the whole Continent, into the grip of which the luckless airship had fallen.

Half frozen by the cold, weary and faint with want of food and sleep, the juniors clung on to the rail, and looked below as the light strengthened and objects became visible to their eyes.

Mountains, huge cliffs piled on cliffs, rushing streams and cascades, seemed spread to an interminable extent below the airship.

They saw Captain Guggenheim in anxious whispered consultation with Kranz. The German captain evidently did not know whither his ship had been driven. But he knew that he was not speeding above German soil, and even if it had been possible to descend, he would not have chosen to do so. The juniors caught the words "Welt-Kreig" several times as the two Germans muttered together. They knew that that meant "world-war." That there was war on the Danube, where Austrian and Servian were meeting in deadly strife, they knew. They could understand that in this time of war the German captain would probably have preferred destruction in the snowy Alps to descending upon French soil, where his vessel would have fallen into hostile hands.

The airship had descended some distance now, and the cold was less intense. But the land below was still far away—too far for objects to be made out with certainty. More than once the juniors caught sight of towns and villages. Once they saw a train crawling like a black snake across the green face of the country. The train was speeding southward, and it was going fast, but the rushing airship soon left it far behind.

Tom Merry had noticed some time before that the engine was no longer throbbing. He had seen the airmen busy and anxious, and he wondered if the engine had broken down again. In that case, the airship was utterly helpless. Even with the return of fair weather, return would be impossible. Captain Guggenheim would be compelled to descend sooner or later, and he could not make his way to the borders of the Fatherland.

"They're sayin' somethin' about Italy," said Arthur Augustus, as the word "Italien" came several times to the ears of the juniors.

Tom Merry whistled.

"Italy! That must be a good distance, surely?"

"I don't know," remarked Blake. "We must have covered a tremendous distance in the night. If they have to come down, they'd rather come down in Italy than in France, I expect. Italy is an ally of Germany, and they wouldn't get into trouble there. If this contraption came down on French soil, the Froggies would be on it like a bird."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Italy!" repeated Tom Merry. "My only hat! If we come down in Italy, how the dickens are we going to get back to St. Jim's?"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "I shall get that holiday aftah all, deah boys!"

"Eh—what?"

"You wemembah my bwothah, old Conway, is in the Tywol—the Austwian Tywol. It's a wippin' countwy, you know—first-class scenewy. If we dwop down in Italy, we'll go ovah to the Tywol and see old Conway, and get him to send us back to England—see? We can't be expected to twavel alone, you know. Bai Jove! Didn't I tell you fellows that I was goin' to the Tywol by hook or by cwook?" concluded Arthur Augustus triumphantly.

"Blow the Tyrol!" growled Manners. "I jolly well wish I was safe back at St. Jim's! I suppose the rising-bell is going now."

"And the fellows turning out of the dormitories," said Tom Merry, with a sigh. "Well, it's a ripping experience to have a run in an airship, but I'd give it all twice over to be safe back in school. Grinding Latin in the Form-room is a bit better than this!"

"Oh, wats!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "It seems to me that the dangah is past; and this German captain seems to be a decent sort of chap, aftah all. He was natuwally exaspewated about those photogwaphs, you know; you couldn't expect him to like it. Now he knows he can't have them, most likely he will set us down somewhah, safe and sound, and say 'Alf Peterson,' and cleah off!"

"What on earth should he say 'Alf Peterson' for?" demanded Tom Merry, in amazement.

"That's German for 'Au wevoir,' deah boys. Germans say 'Alf Peterson' when they leave one anothah," explained Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Ha, ha, ha! I presume you mean 'Auf wiederschen'!" roared Tom Merry.

"I mean 'Alf Peterson,'" said Arthur Augustus obstinately. "I've heard German chaps say it lots of times. I'm wathah good at German!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!"

The juniors' spirits were returning. The long, dark night was over, and the light of day was about them once more. The wind was still tearing, but they realised that its violence was abating. The worst of that terrific storm was over. Through fleeting white clouds the sun was shining, and the sunshine seemed to bring new life to them.

## CHAPTER 8.

### In Italy!

BUT the German airship still rushed onward.

The engine was throbbing again with a curious, uneasy throb, spasmodic and irregular, which showed plainly enough that all was not in order. The propellers were revolving once more, but Captain Guggenheim had made no attempt to turn his vessel to the north. The wind was still too violent for that. The dirigible was keeping southward—ever southward.

Tom Merry noticed that the captain's face was less anxious now. The stress of the danger was past. And the airship was sinking ever lower as the snowy mountains were left behind.

There were mountains still beneath the airship—peaks that rose into the snow-line—great cliffs bare of herbage, and lower hills that were green to the summit. More than one great river had vanished beneath the dirigible as it sped onward. What was beneath them now? The French Alps—or Switzerland—or the Italian Alps? The juniors could not guess. They only knew that they were many a long hundred miles from home.

"We're not going due south, either," Blake remarked, after some time. "South-east, as I make it out. Where the deuce is the man making for?"

"Italy, I suppose," said Tom. "They were saying something about 'Italien,' and that's the German name for Italy."

"But this must be Italy already."

"Goodness knows!"

"They've just been talking about Osterreich," said Monty Lowther. "Anybody know what that may happen to be?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Ass! That's the native name for Austria!"

"My only hat! They can't be making for Austria!" exclaimed Lowther.

"I shouldn't wonder. They'd want to keep out of France at any price. Italy would be safer for them, and Austria safer still. If this is the north of Italy, they can't be far from the Austrian frontier!"

"Bai Jove! If they stwand us in Austwia, we shall be quite done in," remarked Arthur Augustus. "I can't speak a word of Austwian!"

"Fathead! The Austrians speak German!"

"Oh, that's all wight, then! I'm wathah a dab at German. I say 'Alf Peterson' exactly like a German chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish we could get something to eat," said Manners, with a sigh. "I'd almost give the captain those films in return for a good feed. What price one of Mrs Taggles' rabbit-pies now—what?"

"Oh, don't!" groaned Tom Merry. "I could nearly eat a pie-dish, let alone a pie!"

"Dash it all, the chap can't want to starve us!" said Blake. "Let's ask for something to eat. After all, we're guests here, in a way, and it's up to them to feed their giddy guests!"

And Blake approached Captain Guggenheim, who stared at him as if just remembering his existence. Blake's German was good enough for the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, though Herr Schneider had never expressed himself as quite satisfied with it. But, like most school German, it was hardly equal to the strain of talking to a German. However, not many words were required for asking for something to eat.

"Ich bin hungrig," said Blake politely.

"Hein!"

"Essen," said Blake, remembering that that was the German verb for "to eat."

"The captain speaks English, you ass!" said Tom Merry.

"By Jove, so he does!" agreed Blake. "I say, can we have something to eat? We're famished!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The captain muttered an impatient exclamation, and spoke in German to one of his men.

The man, with a good-humoured grin, brought the juniors a loaf and a large piece of German sausage, which they devoured with great gusto.

"Bai Jove! I feel bettah now," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I nevah knew that German sausage was so weally nice!"

"Topping!" said Blake.

"First rate!"

"Hallo! We seem to be going down, after all," said Tom Merry, starting up. "The engine has stopped!"

"Wun out of petwol, pewwaps!"

The grim, anxious look had returned to Captain Guggenheim's face. He spoke rapidly in German to Kranz. The juniors distinguished the words "Stilfserjoch," "Bormio," "Trafoi," "Spondinig"—evidently the names of places; but what they might mean the schoolboys had no idea. The airship was descending, and evidently against the will of its captain. The huge gas envelope had suffered from the stress of the storm, and the gas was doubtless escaping.

The descent was not rapid, but it was sure.

It could not be arrested. Willy-nilly, Captain Guggenheim had to make up his mind to a descent.

The sun had passed the meridian now, and as the airship sank lower and lower the juniors felt with each passing minute a perceptible increase of warmth.

The wind was dying down.

The storm, which had upset the plans of the German skipper so thoroughly, had spent its force; and, had the airship still been navigable, Captain Guggenheim could have steered it back to the distant north—to the Fatherland.

But the dirigible was "done."

The escape of gas had probably been going on for some time, but now it was going on with increased speed, and the great gas envelope was sagging and swaying, and losing its shape.

Lower and lower it sank.

"Bai Jove! It's gettin' warm!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, throwing off the greatcoat. "Wathah a sudden change from wintah to summah!"

The other fellows followed his example. They did not need their greatcoats now. As the airship sank lower, they were exposed to the heat of the blazing Italian sun. They peered eagerly over the rail. Below them were still mountains, hills and valleys and ravines in all directions. Eastward rose a huge wall of mountains, with gaps between the peaks, one gap larger than the rest, that was probably a pass.

As a matter of fact, it was the celebrated Stilfserjoch—or, as the Italians call it, the Stelvio Pass—from Italy into Austria. But the juniors knew nothing of it, and they did not know how nearly Captain Guggenheim had succeeded in taking his airship into a German-speaking country for the inevitable descent.

Nearly, but not quite! Thirty miles or so lay between the struggling dirigible and the Austrian frontier, and a descent upon Italian soil could not be avoided.



The juniors watched the earth, as it seemed to rush up to meet the sinking airship.

In a deep valley they could see green fields, winding white roads, and a little town of grey buildings nestling among the rocks.

A crowd of swarthy men and women and children had gathered in the narrow, shady streets to stare up at the huge, unmanageable airship.

It was easy to recognise them as Italians.

In the extreme north of Italy, where that sunny land borders upon Austria and Switzerland, the airship was sinking at last to its rest.

The German airmen were silent and grim. As for the juniors, Captain Guggenheim seemed to have forgotten them. They were out of his power now. In Italian territory, they were free from him. As soon as they set foot upon the earth, his power over them was gone.

In that grey, picturesque town snuggling among the hills they would find protection, if they needed it. The iron grasp of the German would be unloosed at last.

But Captain Guggenheim had no time to waste upon his prisoners now. All his attention was directed towards landing his airship safely.

But that the dirigible would be a wreck when it landed was certain. The gas envelope was crumpling up already.

Still the descent was at a moderate speed.

"Get ready to jump!" murmured Tom Merry. "As soon as the car touches the ground, out we go. It may rise again, or that gas-bag may crumple up over it and suffocate us!"

"Wight-ho!"

Lower and lower now!

The airship drifted over a level green field—level as a billiard-table, though close by the cliffs rose like a wall.

Thirty feet—twenty feet—ten feet now!

The juniors' hearts were thumping. They saw that the German airmen were preparing to jump, and they were ready.

The car touched the ground at last, and as it bumped lightly upon the green grass the five juniors leaped over the rail.

They landed in the grass and rolled over, the German airmen rolling round them, having jumped at the same time.

The contact with the earth sent the car spinning up again, and it rose a good fifty feet, drifting on towards the hills.

Then the gas-envelope suddenly collapsed, and the airship came down like a stone and crashed on the earth.

The car, broken, wrecked, lay hidden and enveloped in the swathing masses of the burst and deflated gas-envelope.

Tom Merry sprang to his feet.

Captain Guggenheim and his men were dashing across the field towards the wrecked airship, which had fallen a hundred yards away.

The juniors were left alone.

"Free!" said Tom Merry. "And jolly good luck to get out of that without broken necks!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he dusted down his elegant "clobber." "I have been thwown into quite a fluttah."

"All serene!" panted Blake. "I feel rather sorry for that German chap. His giddy airship seems to be the apple of his eye. But we're all right now—free as air, and we've only got to walk away. We're in Italy, that's a cert, and the German chaps can't touch us here. Let's get into the town and get a feed."

"Good egg!"

And Tom Merry & Co., as soon as they had recovered their breath, walked into the little town that snuggled under the hills and made for the nearest hotel.

## CHAPTER 9.

### On Their Own.

A DUSKY, smiling waiter greeted the juniors on the steps of the hotel.

He ushered them in, and the juniors were glad to get out of the blinding sunshine into the shady vestibule.

"You speak English?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," said the Italian, with a sweet smile. "Speak him very good."

"Good luck! What town is this?"

"Eh?"

"What's the name of this town?"

The waiter, with all his urbane politeness, could not help looking astonished. It was the first time guests had arrived at that hotel without knowing the name of the town they had arrived in.

"Bormio!" he gasped.

"Bai Jove, we can't be in Borneo!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, imperfectly catching the name. "That's where the Wild Man comes fwom, isn't it?"

"Bormio, you ass! Not Borneo," said Blake.

"I weally don't see much diffewence."

"And we're in Italy?" asked Manners.

"Si, signor!" gasped the astonished waiter.

"We'd better take up our quarters here for the present," said Tom. "I don't know how you fellows are fixed for money. I've got some."

"That's all wight, deah boy. I've got lots of oof!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Didn't I tell you I had dwawn my money out of the bank weady to go on a holiday in the Tywol?"

"Yes, you champion ass!" said Blake.

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Gussy's asinine manners and customs come in useful now," grinned Monty Lowther. "He's not going to have a holiday in the Tyrol, but his cash will come in useful to pay our hotel exes here."

"Yes, rather!"

"I've got six fivahs," said Arthur Augustus. "I cawwy it awound with me for safety."

"Bravo!"

"We want five beds," said Tom to the waiter.

"Please to come, signori."

The waiter led the way up the carpeted stairs. There was apparently no lift, lifts being very nearly unknown in the mountain towns on the frontier. The smiling, dusky waiter ushered the juniors into a palatial apartment.

"Better ask the giddy price," murmured Blake. "We don't want to blue all Gussy's fivers in one afternoon."

"How much is this room?" asked Tom.

"You take pensione?"

"Bai Jove! What the dickens is pensionay?"

"Pension," said the waiter in French.

"Pongshong!" said Arthur Augustus. "Anothah mystewy."

"Ass!" said Tom. "Pension means paying a fixed sum for room and grub. No, we don't want pension. How much is the room?"

"Ten lire."

"That's ten francs, about seven-and-six," said Tom Merry. "We'll have something a little less gorgeous. We want something cheap."

"We have also sheep," said the waiter gracefully.

"But we don't want any sheep," said the mystified Arthur Augustus.

"Ass! He means cheap."

"Does he, bai Jove!"

Up further stairs, which seemed endless, the juniors went, and discovered rooms barely furnished, with paved floors, rickety doors and windows, which the waiter announced could be had for three lire a night. Tom Merry concluded the bargain, ordered a dinner, and the waiter bowed gracefully.

"I tell the porter to bring up ze baggage?" he asked.

"No baggage."

"You come wizout baggage?"

"Yes."

"Zen ze signori pay for ze rooms first."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry paid for the rooms. The waiter, whose dusky face had clouded a little when he learned that there was no baggage, was all smiles again as he pocketed fifteen lire.

"Aqua calda?" he asked.

"What's that, Gussy? You know Italian."

Arthur Augustus looked thoughtful. Arthur Augustus prided himself upon his knowledge of Italian, but his knowledge was chiefly confined to such expressions as "presto," "prestissimo," "adagio," "andante," and other musical expressions. Aqua calda was beyond his powers.

"Aqua must be water," said Lowther. "This language comes from the Latin, therefore aqua must be water."

"'Ot wotter?" said the waiter.

"Pway don't speak German," said Arthur Augustus. "Tell us in English."

"I speak English. 'Ot wotter?"

"My hat! He's speaking English!" murmured Blake. "Not the kind we speak in England."

"'Ot wotter?" said the water.

"Oh, hot water!" exclaimed Tom Merry, guessing at last. "Yes, rather! Hot water, and plenty of it; and soap!"

"Always ze English signori zat arrive shall ask for 'ot wotter," smiled the waiter, as he bowed himself out.

The English custom of washing after a journey had evidently impressed itself upon the good man's mind, and afforded him considerable amusement.

Hot water was brought up by a smiling, dusky chambermaid, and cakes of soap that smelled strongly of a powerful scent. But the juniors were glad to get any sort of soap, and after the camariera had gone they revelled in soap and hot water.

After they had finished their ablutions they came downstairs, and the smiling waiter met them on the landing.

"Il pranzo e pronto!" he told them.

"Now, Gussy——"

"I think he's sayin' it's a fine day," said Arthur Augustus. "Yaas, deah boy, it's a very fine day, much warmah than in England."

The waiter grinned.

"Ze dinner, he is retty!" he explained.

Arthur Augustus blushed. His knowledge of Italian had failed him again. Pranzo was evidently dinner, and pronto meant ready.

The juniors were taken into the dining-room—sala di pranzo, as they learned from the name painted over the door. There were two other diners in the room, and they started as they recognised Captain Guggenheim and Lieutenant Kranz. The two Germans looked towards them, and then went on with their dinner and their conversation, taking no further notice of the English boys. Evidently Captain Guggenheim realised quite clearly that they were out of his power now. The other German airmen were not to be seen.

The juniors sat down to a tremendous "pranzo," which began with macaroni, and continued with fish, flesh, and fowl, and, hungry as they were, they were quite satisfied when they had finished.

"Time for bed, I think," said Blake, yawning. "I feel as if I could sleep for a week!"

"Must send a telegram first," said Tom Merry. "If we wire to St. Jim's, the Head will let our people know that we are safe. Fork out a fiver, Gussy. The waiter will change it."

Tom Merry wrote out a telegram, while the waiter fetched Italian change for a five-pound note. It was a long telegram, explaining to the Head what had happened to the juniors, and that they were safe in the town of Bormio, in Italy. The telegram despatched, the juniors sought their rooms. They were tired out and very sleepy.

"Better lock the doors," Blake remarked. "I've an idea that we haven't quite done with our friend Guggenheim yet."

"I don't see what he could do here," said Manners.

"You never know. Can't be too careful."

The rooms communicated with one another, and when the juniors turned in they left the communicating doors open and locked the outer doors.

Then they turned in, and slept the sleep of the just.

Whether Captain Guggenheim gave them any attention during the hours of slumber they did not know, for they did not awaken till late the next morning.

They came down at eleven o'clock to breakfast, much refreshed by their long slumber, and hungry enough for another "pranzo." There was no sign of Captain Guggenheim or Lieutenant Kranz about the place now. The rolls and coffee, which constitute an Italian breakfast, did not suit the ideas of the juniors. Bacon was not to be had, but they ordered eggs galore, and cold chicken, and made a meal which evidently astonished their smiling waiter.

"And now," said Tom Merry, when breakfast was finished—"now, what's going to be done?"

## CHAPTER 10.
### Over the Stelvio.

THAT was the question.

Tom Merry & Co. had escaped from the hands of the German airmen, and they were free as air, but they were stranded in a little Italian town in the Alpine mountains, many miles from a railway-station.

What was to be done was an interesting question.

Not that the juniors were particularly anxious to get back to St. Jim's. A little holiday in the Italian Alps was much more to their taste than grinding Latin in the Form-room at St. Jim's.

But they would have to return sooner or later, and the Head would expect them to do so as quickly as possible. The question was—how?

"We'll ask the waiter," said Tom Merry. And the waiter, whose name they had learned was Giacomo, came smiling in when he was called.

"How do we get back to England from here?" asked Tom Merry.

"The signori depart?"

"Yes; we've got to get home."

"Is there a railway-station near here?" asked Blake.

Giacomo smiled and shook his head.

"No railway," he said. "The signori may take the diligence to Tirano, and then there is a railway."

"Good! Then we can get a train home, say, to Paris?"

Giacomo grinned.

"From Tirano you may take a train to Sondrio," he said, "and from Sondrio to Cilico you take anozzer train. From Cilico you may get to Milano."

"Milan!" gasped the juniors.

"Si, signori! Zen you make take the express for Paris."

"But—but Milan's a frightful distance from here," ejaculated Tom Merry, in dismay. "Isn't there a nearer way? Over these blessed mountains, for instance."

"There is anozzer way."

"Oh, good! Let's hear it."

"You may go over the Stelvio Pass into Austria, and get the train from Meran by Innsbruck."

"Innsbruck—Meran!" said Arthur Augustus. "I know those names. They're in the Tywol, where my bwothah Conway is."

"In the Tyrol!" assented Giacomo.

"Seems to me that's the nearest way then," said Tom Merry. "Are we far from the Tyrol here, Giacomo?"

"Quaranta chilometri."

"Forty kilometres," said Tom Merry. "My hat, I didn't know we were so near as that! Then the best thing we can do is to get into the Tyrol, and plant ourselves on your major, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus chuckled. "Won't old Conway be surpwised when we dwop down on him—what?"

"I hope it'll be a pleasant surprise for him," said Blake, with a chuckle. "Anyway, that's the programme. We'll hop along into the Tyrol, and plant ourselves on Gussy's brother. He can find our railway fares home. We haven't got enough money to get back to England, anyway."

The idea appealed very much to the juniors. To go down to Milan in the hot summer weather was not a pleasant prospect, but a trip over the mountain passes into Austria was a very desirable thing. And the fact that Austria was at war lent an agreeable excitement to the idea.

"Ma, la guerra!" said Giacomo.

"The what?"

"The war," said Giacomo. "Is a war, signori—v'e guerra?"

"Well, the war won't hurt us," yawned Blake. "They're not at war in the Tyrol, and they don't make war on tourists, I suppose. I'm for going over the pass."

"Yaas, wathah! We'll dwop down on old Conway in the Tywol and surpwise him!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "He'll think we've dwopped fwom the clouds; and, bai Jove, so we have, you know! Besides, I want to see Austwia vewy much; the Austwians are famous for their politeness, you know, and good cookin'. You can't do better than visit a countwy where they have beautiful mannahs and beautiful cooks."

"It's settled," said Tom Merry. "We'll go over the pass into the Austrian Tyrol, and get a train from Innsbruck as soon as we can. Now about getting over the giddy pass. It looks a pretty steep proposition from here." The hotel windows gave a view of the great pass, high up among the snow-clad summits of the Austrian Alps. "We can't walk it, and there's no railway. How do you get over the pass, Giacomo?"

"There is a diligence, signori."

"That's a sort of mail-coach," said Tom. "How long does it take?"

"Dodici ore."

"Dodici—that's twelve," said Arthur Augustus. "Ore—that's hours. It takes twelve hours over the pass in the diligence. Bai Jove, that wathah takes the cweam off it!"

The juniors' faces lengthened. To spend twelve hours crammed in a mountain diligence was a far from attractive prospect.

"Isn't there any other way?" asked Tom.

"Automobile," suggested Giacomo.

"Bai Jove, that would be wippin' doin' it in a motah-car!" said D'Arcy. "Can you get an automobile here, deah boy?"

"We have very good car," said Giacomo.

"Wippin'!"

"Hold on!" said Tom. "The car will cost something, and I don't know if the tin will run to it. We can depend on Conway after we join him, but we've got to live till then, and we can't live on air. How much for the car, Giacomo?"

"Tre cento cinquanta."

"Three hundred and fifty lire!" gasped Tom Merry. "That's fourteen quid! That settles it. We can't have the car."

"For the Inglesi signori, "the price would be only tre cento."

"Three hundred! Twelve quid!" said Blake. "We're jolly well not going to pay anything of the kind for a run of about thirty miles."

"Possibly the padrone might find a car that would make ze joureny for two hundred lire," purred Giacomo cheerfully. "But that is the small price."

"That's eight quid," said Tom Merry. "Tell the padrone we'll pay six."

Giacomo shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

But he sought the padrone, or landlord, and came back again.

"Two hundred lire is ze small price," he said.

"Rock bottom—eh?" said Blake. "Well, if that's the smallest price we shall have to blue eight of Gussy's quids on the car."

"All wight, deah boy."

"Car ready to-day?" asked Tom Merry.

"Si, signori."

"Then we'll buzz along this afternoon. Bring us the bill after lunch, and have the car ready for two o'clock."

"Certo, signori."

"Then we'll buzz along this afternoon. Bring us the bill after lunch, and have the car ready for two o'clock."

"Certo, signori."

Giacomo retired with a smiling and contented face. It was easy for the juniors to guess that they were paying about thirty per cent. too much for the automobile, but it was not so easy to see how it could be helped. And, after all, as Tom Merry remarked, they were out for a holiday before they had to go back to St. Jim's. Money always goes on a holiday, and in Italy it naturally went a little faster than at home.

The juniors lunched, and by the time lunch was finished Giacomo announced that the automobile was "pronton."

The juniors walked out to see the car. It was a fine large car, with a dusky Italian chauffeur in attendance. Giacomo brought the bill, the extent of which made the juniors open their eyes. But Giacomo's knowledge of English suddenly failed him when Tom Merry drew his attention to the fact that the bill was twice as large as it should have been. He smiled excessively and shrugged his shoulders, and bowed and bowed and bowed till the juniors wondered that he did not suffer from a severe pain in the inside. Finally Tom settled the bill, adding a five-lire piece for Giacomo, and the juniors mounted into the car.

The motor-horn hooted, and the big automobile moved out of the narrow, shady street into the glare of the sun on the open hillside.

The heat was oppressive, the sun blazing down on the car as it whizzed along the dusty high-road. They passed a huge building on the hill, which the chauffeur informed them was the "Bagni di Bormio," and then all buildings were left behind. The car, at a rate of speed which seemed reckless to the juniors, whizzed on up a winding, steep road.

But reckless as the chauffeur was, he soon had to slacken speed.

For the Stelvio Pass over the Alps is one of the highest and steepest in Europe, and the only possible method of making a road there was by following a spiral form, winding up the steep mountains.

The turns in the road almost took the juniors' breath away.

As they proceeded higher and higher the road grew steeper, the turns more sudden. Sometimes the car would not turn at a corner, and it would come to a stop with the front wheels fairly on the edge of an almost bottomless abyss, and back slowly away till room was gained to complete the turn.

"Bai Jove," remarked Arthur Augustus, "this is wathah excitin', deah boys!"

"A little too exciting for me," grunted Blake. "But I suppose it's all right, as the diligence comes this way every day."

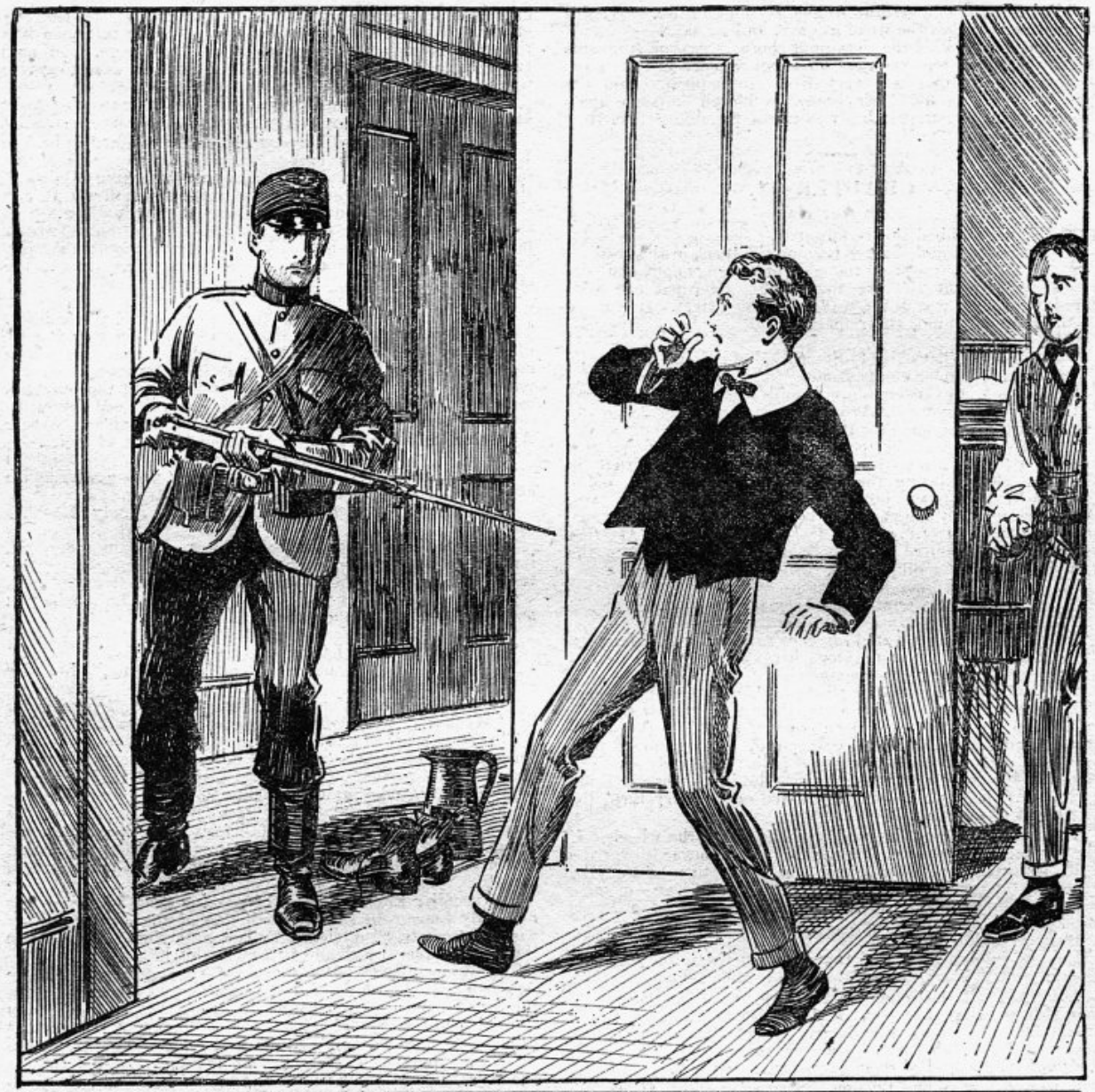
"Wight as wain so fah, deah boy; but I can't help thinking what would happen if a tyre were to burst."

"Ow! Shut up!"

"Or if it wained, and the woad became skidday——"

"Shurrup, ass!"

Arthur Augustus watched the turns in the road with great interest through his eyeglass. If the road had been greasy, certainly the car would have been in fearful danger, for a skid of a couple of feet



"Halt!" Tom Merry jumped back as a bayonet gleamed before his eyes. In the corridor outside the room a Tyrolese conscript was on guard. "Am I a prisoner?" demanded the junior. (See Chapter 7.)

would have hurled it and its occupants to instant death on the rocks at the bottom of the chasm.

But the juniors comforted themselves with the knowledge that a horse-diligence, and a good many motor-cars, crossed the pass every day in the summer. As a matter of fact, motor-cars were not so common on the pass as Giacomo had led them to believe. They did not sight another on the road all the way up the pass.

A coach with three horses came into view ahead.

"There's the diligence," said Tom Merry. "We're beating it hollow."

The car soon overtook the diligence.

The latter was proceeding at a walking pace. It was full of passengers. It drew to the side of the road, and the car passed it with about six inches to spare between the car and the edge of the precipice. The passengers in the diligence stared at the car, and the juniors looked back at them, and Tom Merry gave a sudden start as he recognised a face in the coach.

"Guggenheim!" he muttered.

It was the German captain.

Evidently he had left the wrecked airship in charge of Kranz and his men, and was on his way into Austria. His glance met those of the juniors, and he smiled—a strange smile that haunted Tom Merry.

The car glided on, leaving the diligence far behind. There was a cloud of thought on Tom Merry's brow.

"So that chap's crossing the pass too," he said slowly.

"Can't be after us," said Blake. "The diligence started first."

"He may know where we are going. Half the blessed town probably knew that English tourists had hired a car to cross the pass into Austria."

"Bai Jove, yaas, and he started first in the diligence," said Arthur Augustus excitedly. "He is on our twack. Still aftah you and those gidday photogwaphs, Mannahs, deah boy."

Manners whistled.

"Blessed if I think we've done a sensible thing in crossing into Austria, after all," he remarked. "It's a German-speaking country, and Guggenheim probably has friends there. He may cause trouble for us."

"Too late to think of that now," said Monty Lowther. "We've booked for the Tyrol."

"Bai Jove! It's snowin'!"

The change in the weather was startling. Miles below, where the car had started on its journey, there was blazing sunshine, and the juniors had felt inclined to take their jackets off. Here, high up on the pass, the snow was falling. Looking down as the car wound among the cliffs, they could see, in the distance, the lower hills bathed in floods of sunshine, but at this height, the snow was falling, and great ridges of snow were banked up beside the road.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "If this blessed snow makes the woad gweasy, and we skid——"

"Shut up!" yelled the juniors in chorus. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's sapient remarks were quite out of place just then, for it was a thing that was very likely to happen. And the possibility of leaving their bones to bleach in some deep ravine in the Austrian Alps was not a possibility that they cared to dwell upon.

## CHAPTER 11.

### In Austria.

THE car climbed slowly upwards.

Sharper and sharper became the turns in the road.

At last, almost on the edge of a tremendous cliff, the chauffeur brought the car to a halt. The padrone who hired out the car was in the seat beside the driver. He turned to the juniors behind, and remarked:

"La dogana!"

"Bai Jove! What's that? Some kind of a dog, I suppose?"

"Customs!" added the padrone.

"The Austrian Custom-house," said Tom Merry. "Dogana is the Italian name for it. We have to get down here. Luckily we haven't any baggage for them to bother about."

An officer and a soldier came out of the building that was banked round with snow. They spoke to the padrone in German, after saluting the passengers in the car—a polite attention to which the juniors replied by raising their caps. As there was no baggage to be examined, the Customs' examination occupied only a few minutes. The Austrian officer politely saluted once more, and made a sign to the chauffeur that he could proceed.

The car glided on.

"We're in Austria now," Blake remarked.

"Looks much the same," said Tom Merry.

"By Jove! I wish I had my camera here," said Manners. "I could take some ripping views here, and have 'em framed afterwards, to hang up in the study at St. Jim's."

"I don't think it would be allowed," Tom Merry remarked. "They're awfully particular about their giddy frontiers."

The top of the pass had been covered now, and the downward journey into the Tyrol commenced. If the upward path had been dangerous, the downward path was doubly so. The slopes of the road was really terrific—the turns were at acute angles. With powerful brakes jammed on at every turn, the car swept downwards.

The snow powdered the road, and slid under the wheels. If the car had skidded once, it would have shot onwards over the cliff, instead of winding round the sharp turns. For the road and the turnings were bordered by deep chasms—in some places dropping about as straight as the wall of a house for hundreds of feet.

But the brakes held.

But the juniors were glad enough when the spiral road was passed, and the car glided down into a safer region.

They had left the snow behind them now. On the pass it was still snowing, but here, half-way down to the Tyrol, it was warm and sunny and dusty. Easier turns, and longer reaches of straight road, showed them that they were approaching the end of their adventurous journey.

Scattered houses and villages appeared in sight, as the car ran on at gathered speed down the long, dusty road.

As they looked back the mountains, with snow-clad summits, rose like a massive wall behind them.

On the mountain road, they had passed places with names difficult to pronounce—Gomagoi, Trafoi, and others. The car was to stop at Goggig, close by the railway that led to Meran.

The padrone looked back into the car.

"Now we come," he said, in English.

"Is this Goggig?"

"Si, signor."

The car stopped outside a large hotel. The juniors looked round them. There was the hotel, a tremendous building, and opposite it a post-office, and there were no other buildings to be seen, save a farmhouse or two in the distance.

"Not much of a town," remarked Blake; "but we're at the end of our journey—we only bargained for getting over the pass."

"Yaas, wathah! May as well have a look at the place before we go to Meran."

"We can telegraph to Conway from here too," said Tom Merry. "It would only be civil to let Lord Conway know that we're going to drop on him."

The juniors alighted. A big, fat man in evening clothes came out to meet them; evidently the head-waiter with his best smile on to greet new arrivals. He had what Jack Blake described as a "will-you-walk-into-my-parlour-said-the-spider-to-the-fly" manner.

The discovery that the juniors had no baggage brought a supercilious expression to the plump face of the great man; but some whispered remarks from the automobile padrone changed it at once. The Italian had evidently informed him that the schoolboys, baggageless, as they were, had paid two hundred francs for the hire of the car, and were therefore pigeons worth plucking.

Dusk was falling upon Goggig. The juniors were glad to be at their journey's end, with a prospect of dinner and rest.

The padrone received his payment, and explained in broken English that it was a custom to give ten per cent of the fare as a tip to the driver, the head-waiter backing him up in that statement. As the supply of money was likely to run short, Tom Merry did not quite see parting with a tip to the extent of nearly a pound; but the earnest, almost tragic face of the padrone as he insisted that it was the man's right, caused him to yield, and he handed over twenty lire to the chauffeur, receiving a "grazie" in return.

Then the juniors entered the hotel.

Prices ruled higher than on the Italian side of the frontier. The head-waiter, preceding them with a stately step worthy of a general on parade at least, displayed apartments that could be had for the moderate sum of ten francs a day each, without food. He was induced to go higher in the building, each floor growing cheaper as the juniors advanced skyward.

"Bai Jove! Where is the lift?" demanded Arthur Augustus, as he panted over the fourth flight of stairs.

The head-waiter had a pained look.

"There's no lift, sir," he said, speaking very good English after the manner of head-waiters in all countries.

"Can we have some oysters?" asked Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Oysters!" repeated the head-waiter. "I am sorry, sir, but we have no oysters in the hotel now. Yesterday—yes—to-morrow, perhaps—but to-day, there are no oysters."

"What on earth do you want oystahs for, Lowthah, you ass?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Because there isn't a lift."

"Weally, Lowthah, I fail to see the connection."

"Oysters ought to be useful to 'oist us up," Lowther explained laboriously.

"You uttah ass! You should keep those wotten puns for the 'Weekly,'" said Arthur Augustus, with a sniff.

The party reached a four-franc floor at last. One room with three beds, and a room with two beds, could be had for four kroners each person. The juniors discovered that a kroner was very nearly the same as a franc or a lire—worth about a farthing more, as a matter of fact. They settled on the rooms at four kroners, having fallen as many degrees in the estimation of the head-waiter as they had risen in stairs. However, the opinion of the head-waiter did not trouble them greatly.

The peculiar English custom of washing after a journey was evidently known on the Austrian side of the Alps, for they were immediately supplied with hot water, only here it was "heisses Wasser" instead of "aqua calda."

The juniors removed the dust of the journey. Arthur Augustus gazed with an almost tragic face at his reflection in the glass. His collar was decidedly soiled, and his cuffs showed plain traces of what they had been through; but collars and cuffs were not to be had for love or money in the village of Goggig. Certainly, such articles were not sold at the hotel, nor at the post-office, and the hotel and the post-office comprised the whole place.

"Bai Jove, this is simply awful, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus pathetically. "We sha'n't be able to change our linen till we get to a town."

"Awful!" said Blake. "Whatever will the head-waiter think, Gussy, if he sees that spot on your collar?"

"I twust you do not suppose me capable of cawin' twopence what a head-waiter thinks?" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I am considewin' what I think myself. Imagine goin' down to dinnah with a soiled collah!"

"Horrible!" said Monty Lowther. "It makes my heart bleed to think of it."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Awful!" said Tom Merry. "We've been through some things since Captain Guggenheim yanked us off the cricket-pitch at St. Jim's, but this fairly puts the lid on!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Don't think about it," implored Blake. "Don't let your mind dwell upon such dreadful things, Gussy. Close your eyes when you look in the glass."

"Weally, Blake——"

"And now for dinner," said Tom Merry.

"How can I possibly go down to dinnah in a soiled collah, deah boy?" said the swell of St. Jim's distressfully.

"Go down to dinner in a dining-room, then," said Monty Lowther.

"This is no time for wotten puns, Lowthah. I weally do not know what is to be done."

"Oh, that's all right," said Blake cheerfully. "We'll go

down to dinner, and you can stay up here and mourn over your soiled collar—see? Come on!"

And the juniors chuckled and marched out. And Arthur Augustus decided to follow them, soiled collar and all.

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## CHAPTER 12.

### Startling News.

"YOU have heard der news?"

Thus asked the head-waiter of the Post-Bahn Hotel, Goggig, as Tom Merry & Co. sat round a table in a corner of the long dining-room close by a window that looked out upon the beautiful mountains of the Tyrol.

The big fat man in evening-dress "swam" up to the juniors' table, evidently pleased to have foreigners, ignorant of late events, to whom to impart the news.

"No," said Tom Merry. "We haven't seen an English paper for dogs' ages. Any news of the war?"

The war on the Danube did not concern Tom Merry & Co. in the least, but he considered it only civil to take some interest in it.

"The war!" repeated the head-waiter, rolling his eyes impressively. "Ach! It is terrible! Now that Germany is at war——"

"But——"

"And France is at war——"

"Yes; but——"

"And Turkey has declared war——"

"Turkey!"

"And Greece——"

"Greece!" gasped the juniors.

"And also Spain has declared war!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "We seem to be in the thick of it. Whom has Spain declared war upon?"

"Spain has declared war," repeated the head-waiter impressively, apparently not quite knowing upon whom. "It is the Welt-Krieg at last."

"Bai Jove! Wathah wotten for us to be stuck heah, deah boys, in that case. We may find it wathah difficult to get a twain home."

"Are the tourists leaving the country?" asked Lowther.

The head-waiter, or Ober-Kellner, as he was called in his own language, waved his hands dramatically.

"All—all gone!" he said.

"Bai Jove, then, old Conway will be gone too!" said Arthur Augustus, in dismay. "Weally, this is wathah thick."

"Altogether too thick," said Manners, with a grunt. "Better telegraph to Conway at once and tell him we are here."

"Yaas; but I don't know where to telegraph to, deah boy."

"You know where he is, I suppose?" exclaimed Blake.

"How should I know, Blake?"

"You ass!" ejaculated Blake. "You came here and dragged us along to join Conway, and now you tell us you don't know where he is."

"He is in the Tywol."

"But the Tyrol's a thumping big country. I suppose you're not thinking of walking up and down the Tyrol till you meet Conway? I thought you knew his address."

"You see, he is twavellin' wound," exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Natuwally, he did not send all his new addwesses to me at the school. He hadn't the least ideah that I was comin' out heah to see him. I had made up my mind about it, but old Conway didn't know."

The juniors glared at Arthur Augustus. They had crossed the mountain pass from Italy on purpose to meet Lord Conway in the Tyrol, to be sent home. It had never even occurred to them that the cheerful Arthur Augustus did not know his brother's address. Lord Conway was somewhere in the Austrian Tyrol, that was all D'Arcy knew.

"Well, of all the asses!" said Lowther.

"Of all the chumps!" said Tom Merry.

"Of all the thumping idiots!" growled Blake.

"We shall have to stay here till we can find out where Lord Conway is," said Tom Merry. "After all, it's a lovely place, and there's lots to be seen. I dare say we shall see something of the war, too—conscripts marching, and so on."

"I wish I had my camera!" sighed Manners.

"Ass! You're better without it in war-time. It would only get you into trouble."

"Camera!" said the Ober-Kellner, with a shocked look. "You must not use a camera on the frontier. It would be very dangerous. They would take you for spies."

"My hat! There can't be any spies in the Tyrol, surely?"

"Many—many!"

"But what are they doing here?" said Tom Merry, beginning to suspect that the Ober-Kellner was drawing on his imagination a little. "There's nothing to spy on here. This place is hundreds of miles from Servia."

"A spy was caught yesterday," said the Ober-Kellner solemnly. "He was disguised as a hospital nurse."

"Great Scott!"

"Looks as if we've dropped into a pleasant state of affairs," growled Monty Lowther, as the Ober-Kellner swam away, taking his interesting news to other tables. "However, they can't suspect us. I suppose we look harmless enough?"

"We haven't any passports," said Tom.

"But nobody carries a passport in these days. It ain't necessary."

"Might be necessary in war-time, though. Well, we can't help it. Peg into dinner, anyway."

The startling news worried the juniors a little. They had fully expected that the pleasant Tyrol, removed by so great a distance from the seat of war, would be perfectly peaceful; but, according to the head waiter, that was far from being the case. But they took the startling news with a grain of salt. The Ober-Kellner was evidently a gentleman of somewhat melodramatic tastes, and liked to make impressive announcements.

They finished their dinner, and strolled out of the hotel in the evening dusk. There was a rosy glow on the mountains, and the wide meadows, the green, sloping hillsides, and the giant peaks in the distance made a scene of surpassing liveliness.

"Bai Jove, this is a beautiful place!" said Arthur Augustus. "Old Conway knew what he was about when he came into the Tyrol. We shall have a lot of things to tell the chaps when we get home."

"Hallo! Here are some soldiers, at all events!"

Down the road came swinging a column of marching men. Some were in uniform, and some in ordinary clothes. Calm and steady-looking men they were—peasants called from their fields by the conscription, and marching away cheerfully to join in the great mobilisation that was proceeding over the whole country.

The juniors looked at them with keen interest.

It was their first sight of anything like war at close quarters. The Ober-Kellner swam out of the hotel to gaze at the marching conscripts, and waved a plump hand to them as they swung by.

The conscripts marched to the railway-station close at hand, where a train was waiting. The juniors sauntered down to the station, and saw them packed into the train to start for Meran. Crowds gathered to see them, cheering and waving handkerchiefs with great enthusiasm. Women were crying in the crowd, but the faces of the men wore grim expressions of determination, or were flushed with enthusiasm. The juniors caught the excitement around them, and found themselves waving their caps to the packed train as it glided out, and cheering with the rest.

"Bai Jove! It makes a chap want to be a soldiah, doesn't it?" remarked Arthur Augustus, as they walked back to the hotel.

People they passed looked at them curiously, recognising them at once as English. The presence of English travellers seemed to cause surprise, and yet only a short time before the country had swarmed with tourists. But though the juniors did not know it, the outbreak of hostilities had sent the tourists swarming off like flocks of scared geese, and foreigners who remained were objects of surprise or suspicion. Not that there was the slightest hostility shown towards the little party. Strangers who passed them said "Guten Abend!" politely and cheerfully. As Arthur Augustus had already remarked, it was a land of beautiful manners.

In the hotel lounge, where the juniors took their coffee, there were several Austrian officers, apparently quartered in the hotel. They were speaking to one another in German, and they saluted the English boys politely. But the Ober-Kellner, when he brought the coffee, looked portentiously grave.

"You have heard der news?" he asked.

"More news?" said Tom Merry.

"Ja, ja, ja!"

"Anybody else declared war?"

"Ja! Switzerland has now declared war upon Spain," said the head-waiter

"Switzerland!"

"Spain!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Ach! But it is terrible!" said the Ober-Kellner solemnly. "It is the World-War at last—the Welt-Krieg."

"It must be, if Switzerland has declared war on Spain!" grinned Monty Lowther. "I suppose they'll be sending the Swiss Fleet to the Mediterranean?"

"Ja, ja!"

"Well, when the Swiss Fleet gets to the Mediterranean

we shall see things happen," said Lowther humorously. "Has the Isle of Man declared war yet?"

"Gestern Abend—yesterday evening," said the Ober-Kellnerr.

And he sailed away, leaving the juniors almost in hysterics.

## CHAPTER 13.
### Danger Ahead!

"My hat! Here's our old friend Guggenheim!"

The diligence had come in as the juniors were about to go up to their rooms to bed. Captain Guggenheim stepped from it, and strode into the hotel.

He glanced at the juniors as he passed.

As the Post-Bahn Hotel was the only hotel in Goggig, the captain had to put up there, and it was possible that his visit had nothing to do with the juniors. But Tom Merry & Co., remembering those unlucky photographs, thought otherwise. The roll of films was safe in the dark-room of the School House at St. Jim's in far-off England. But they had a strong impression that Captain Guggenheim had not given up hope of obtaining possession of them.

No doubt it was the captain's duty to obtain the photographs of the airship if he could. And he was evidently a very determined character. The juniors discussed the matter when they were in their rooms.

"I don't see what he can do, anyway," Tom Merry remarked. "We're in Austria, not Germany, though they speak German. I can't see anything at all that he can do. Yet I can't help having an idea that he is after us."

Tap!

It was a knock at the door of the bed-room.

"Herein!" called out Tom Merry, remembering that that was German for "Come in."

The door opened, and the big German strode into the room. The juniors stared at him in surprise. They had not expected a visit from the German captain.

Captain Guggenheim saluted them gravely.

"You are surprised to see me?" he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"A little," said Tom Merry. "What do you want?"

The German captain smiled grimly.

"You are aware of what I want, my young friend. I want the films that were taken of my airship in England."

"They are in England."

"Ja wohl. But you can obtain them."

"I suppose we could, if we wanted to," agreed Tom Merry. "But we don't want to, and that's an end of it. We don't bear you any malice for taking us away from our school—I suppose you thought you were doing what you considered your duty. But it's useless to ask for the films. You can't have them."

"No fear!" said Manners emphatically.

"You will send for them, and they will be given to me," said Captain Guggenheim, "otherwise you will be in serious trouble."

"Nonsense! We're not in Germany here."

"You are in Austria, which is an ally of Germany. I have friends here, and if you do not send for those films and hand them to me, I shall use my influence."

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"You can't frighten us with words," he said. "There is law and order in this country, and you cannot hurt us!"

"Have you passports?" asked the captain grimly.

"Passports? No! You didn't give us much time to get passports when you yanked us off the football-field at our school."

"Exactly! But you must have passports in war-time."

"Well, we haven't any."

"Then I shall inform the authorities that suspicious characters are here, and you will be detained."

"Detained?"

"Yes—as spies."

"Oh, rubbish!"

"You will see."

"Bai Jove, it begins to look to me as if we'd bettah get back into Italy!" said Arthur Augustus. "It appeahs to me things will be more comfy there."

"You cannot get into Italy," said Captain Guggenheim.

"Cannot!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "And why not?"

"The pass is closed."

"Closed!"

"Yes. The diligence I came here in was the last allowed to pass."

"My hat!"

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You shall see!"

Captain Guggenheim touched the bell, and spoke in German to the maid who answered it. She departed, and a minute later the Ober-Kellner came into the room, portentously grave as usual.

Captain Guggenheim spoke to him in English, as if to prove to the juniors that he was speaking the truth.

"Is the Stelvio Pass closed, Friedrich?" he asked.

"Ja, ja, mein herr."

"You are sure?" asked Tom Merry.

"Quite sure."

"Then we could not return into Italy if we wanted to?"

"Impossible!"

And the Ober-Kellner retired without declaring war upon a fresh country, as Monty Lowther remarked in an undertone. The juniors had already dropped into the habit of expecting a fresh declaration of war whenever they saw the Ober-Kellner.

"You see now," said Captain Guggenheim. "Listen! I speak to you as a friend. I do not feel unkindly towards you. You think to serve your country by keeping those films; but I have my Fatherland to serve, and a German will stop short at nothing for the sake of his Fatherland. Here I am among friends—Germany and Austria are brothers now. Give me what I ask, and you shall go in peace."

"Can't be done!"

"You refuse—finally?"

"Yes."

"Then the consequences will be upon your own head."

And the German captain quitted the room.

The juniors looked at one another gravely. The melodramatic announcements of the Ober-Kellner they had already learned to discount. But the German captain was a man of very different character. He was as hard as iron; his look and tone told of grim determination. He had no personal dislike for the juniors, but he would stop at nothing for the service of the Fatherland. They knew that he meant every word he said, and they knew that that meant trouble.

"Well, we're landed in Queer Street, and no mistake!" said Tom Merry, after a long pause.

"Yaas, wathah! But it's wathah excitin', all the same," said Arthur Augustus. "We shall have a lot of things to tell the fellows when we get back to St. Jim's."

"We haven't got back there yet," growled Blake, "and I jolly well wish we were! It would be no joke to be arrested on suspicion, and carted off somewhere by the gendarmes."

There was a tap at the door, and the Ober-Kellner looked in, his face simply awful in its seriousness.

"You have not heard der news?" he murmured.

"My hat! More news? What is it now?"

"America has declared war upon Ireland——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a matter to laugh," said the Ober-Kellner. "The British Fleet has met the Irish Fleet, and there has been a great battle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Ober-Kellner retired with a very huffed expression. He had deemed his news of sufficient gravity to keep the juniors awake all night, and he did not like to have it received with roars of laughter.

"I wonder what it will be in the morning?" chuckled Blake. "We shall hear next that the Isle of Wight has declared war on Blackpool!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors went to bed pretty thoroughly tired out, and dismissing further consideration of Captain Guggenheim till the morning.

## CHAPTER 14.
### Danger.

"HALT!"

Tom Merry jumped.

It was morning, and he had opened his bed-room door for the purpose of taking in his boots. He jumped back as a bayonet gleamed before his eyes.

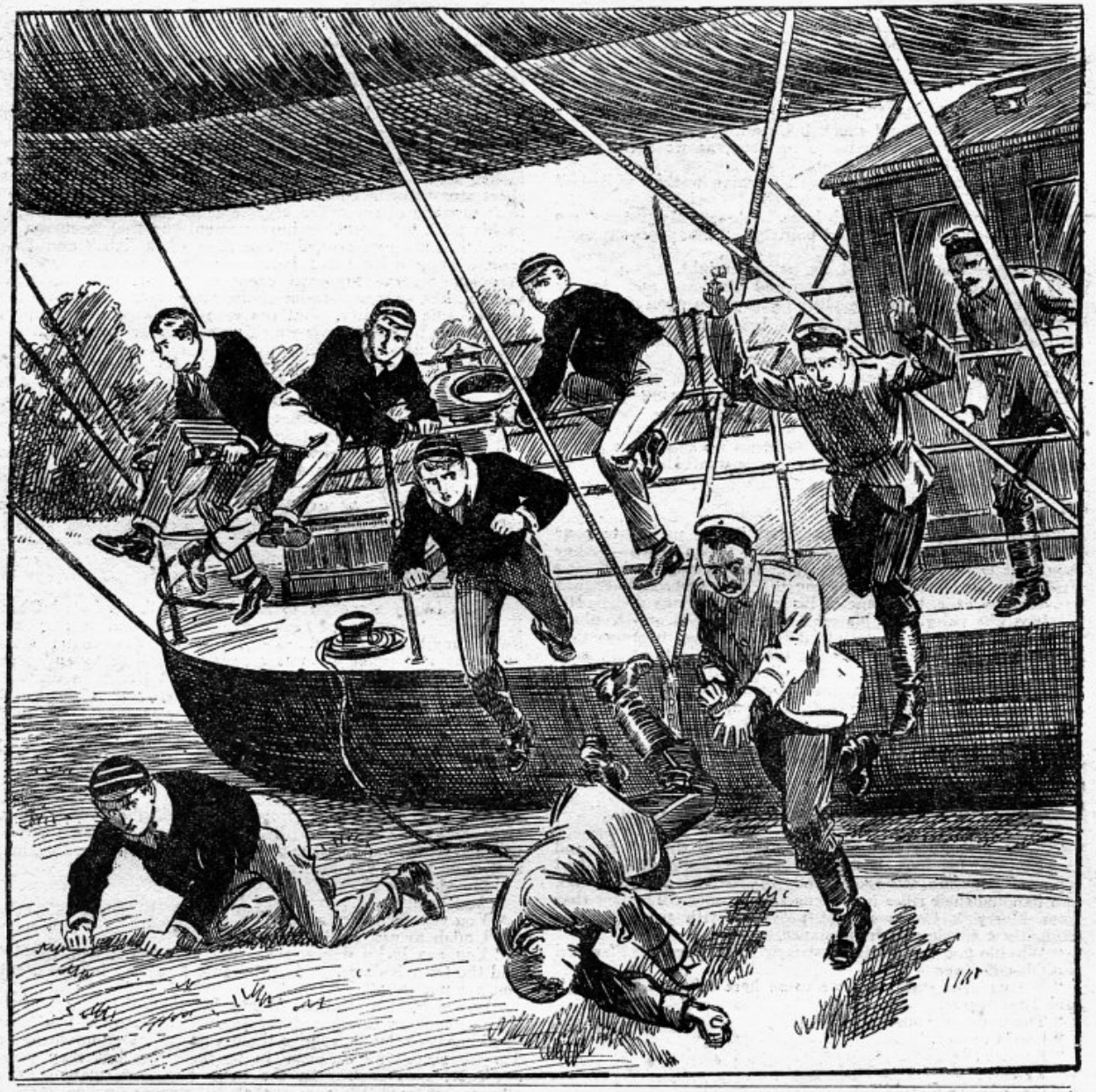
In the corridor outside the room a Tyrolese conscript was on guard.

Tom Merry opened the door wide and looked at him.

Evidently he was a new conscript. His soldier clothes sat uneasily upon him. He had a stubby, good-humoured face, which Tom Merry recognised at the second glance. The man had helped to take the horses from the diligence the previous evening. Since then he had evidently been called to his duties as a conscript soldier—like all the men of that smiling and sunny countryside. But a mere change of clothes was hardly sufficient to turn a stableman into a soldier, and he still looked more like a "hand" than a trooper.

But his rifle was real, his bayonet was real, and his determination to use them in case of necessity was very real indeed.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.



**The car touched the ground at last, and as it bumped lightly upon the green grass the five juniors leaped over the rail. They landed on the grass and rolled over.** (*See Chapter* 8.)

The man muttered something quite civilly, in the odd-sounding German of the Tyrol, which was quite beyond Tom Merry's powers of comprehension. But his meaning could be understood if his words could not. The English boy was not to quit his bed-room.

"Am I a prisoner, then?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Ich weiss nicht."

"Where is your officer?"

"Ich weiss nicht."

"How long is this going to last?"

"Ich weiss nicht."

"But I say, I want to go down to brekker."

The conscript made no reply. Tom Merry made a motion as if to come through the doorway, in order to see what the Austrian would do. In an instant the bayonet came up to the charge, and almost touched the schoolboy's chest, and the eyes of the conscript gleamed behind it.

It seemed almost comically real, yet it was tragically real. If Tom Merry had made a step in advance, a thrust of the bayonet would have stretched him dead on the floor of the passage.

He stepped back into his room and closed the door. The other fellows had gathered round to witness the scene. They were all looking very grave now.

"This looks wathah sewious," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

"Asses to come into the country in war-time!" growled Blake. "Of course, we owe this kind attention to Captain Guggenheim."

"But what can he have told the authorities about us?" said Tom Merry, puzzled. "We are travelling schoolboys, and doing no harm here."

"Might think we're spies if Guggy piles it on."

"Spies! My word!"

"Well, you know Germany is always spy mad, and I dare say they're the same in Austria, as they're Germans, too. And Guggy will make it as bad for us as he can."

"I want my brekker," said Manners plaintively.

"Looks as if we sha'n't get any bwekkah, bai Jove!"

"We'll ring, anyway. The Ober-Kellner may be able to persuade this chap to let us pass."

Tom Merry rang and rang again, but nobody came. The hotel staff evidently had instructions not to go near the quarters of the suspected English.

But half an hour or so later the door was flung open, and an officer of the Austrian gendarme strode in. He was a tall, well-built and handsome man, with a good-humoured face and very sharp eyes. He saluted the schoolboys politely. He

was quite prepared to have them dragged away in irons if they should prove to be spies, but all the same he would have done it quite politely; and if he had ordered them to be shot on the spot, he would have bowed gracefully at the same time.

"You speak English?" asked Tom Merry.

The officer smiled and shook his head.

"Then I don't see what's to be done, as we don't speak German."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I speak German wathah well——"

"Oh, rats!"

"Pway leave it to me, deah boys." Arthur Augustus came towards the officer and bowed politely. "Pway go on, deah boy—I mean, gehen-Sie ahead."

The officer looked puzzled, as well he might.

Then he began to speak in rapid German, and Arthur Augustus listened with a perplexed expression upon his face.

Finally, the swell of St. Jim's brightened up, and exclaimed:

"Ja, ja, mein herr! Sehr gut wetter hier."

The gendarme jumped.

"You ass!" roared Blake. "He's not saying anything about the weather!"

"Weally, Blake, you may as well leave it to me. I feel convinced that he is sayin' that he hopes we shall have a nice holiday in the Tywol, because of the nice weathah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

The officer apparently realised that it was useless to pour forth German upon the schoolboys, even with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as an interpreter. He pressed the bell, and Friedrich the Ober-Kellner came in. The Ober-Kellner was graver than ever, but some of his importance was gone. His fat face was paler, and his eyes had a worried and troubled look, and his fat hands trembled. It was easy to guess that the bare possibility of spies being discovered in the hotel sent a chill to the very heart of the Ober-Kellner. He was far more alarmed than the juniors; perhaps because he had a closer acquaintance with German methods of government.

The gendarme-officer spoke to him in German, and the Ober-Kellner translated.

"You must tell me who you are," he said.

"We have written our names in the hotel register," said Tom Merry.

"But that is not enough. Where are your passports?"

"We have none."

The Ober-Kellner translated this reply to the officer, and immediately his look became grimmer. Four soldiers had followed him into the room, and they looked grimmer, too, and handled their rifles in a menacing manner. The fact that Tom Merry & Co. were not provided with passports was evidently a suspicious circumstance.

"Why do you come into Austria without passports?" asked the Ober-Kellner.

"We were in Italy, and we came here to meet a friend," said Tom Merry.

"The name of your friend?"

"Lord Conway."

"English?"

"Yes."

"He is in the Tyrol?"

"Yes."

"His address?"

"We do not know exactly."

"And you came to Italy without passports?"

"Yes."

Tom Merry did not mention the fact that they had come against their will in a German airship. It would have sounded too extraordinary to the Austrian officer. Unless Captain Guggenheim had told him, there was no need to pile on suspicious circumstances. The Austrian gendarme was only concerned with what the juniors had done since they had crossed the Austrian frontier.

"Most English travellers come to Italy without passports," Tom Merry went on. "They are not needed there. They are not needed in Austria in peace-time, so the guide-books say."

"But it is war-time now. The officer asks how long you intend to stay in Goggig?"

"A few days, till we find out the address of our friend."

"And then?"

"Then we are going back to England."

"Show what papers you have."

"Certainly!"

The juniors had no passports, of course. But they had some papers about them—letters of which the addresses showed what their names were. Arthur Augustus had a couple of tailor's bills. Tom Merry had a sheet of impot paper, upon which was written an intended contribution for Tom Merry's "Weekly," that enterprising journal which recorded the doings, the little jokes, and the literary efforts of the juniors of St. Jim's. The Ober-Kellner took that paper and gazed over it fearfully, as if in dread of discovering some spy report which would necessitate the immediate shooting of his guests, which would have been exceedingly painful to the kindly feelings of the Ober-Kellner.

The gendarme looked at the paper quickly. It was covered with writing, crossed out and corrected here and there, and looked extremely suspicious. As a matter of fact, it was a short story which Tom Merry had intended to put into the next number of the "Weekly," and he had carried it about in his pocket for further improvements as they occurred to him. The story was called "The King of the Air," and dealt with a supposed combat between a British and a German aeroplane in the supposed event of a war, but had been written, like so many stories of the same sort, long before the war became a reality. But the eyes of the gendarme-officer gleamed as he read words which were familiar to him, though he did not understand English.

"German—aeroplane—dirigible——" he repeated several times, and the juniors knew that he regarded that document as a report drawn up concerning Germany's war plans, to be transmitted to the War Office in London.

The Ober-Kellner was trembling now.

"Was is dis?" he asked, his English growing more broken in his agitation. "Was denn?"

Tom Merry laughed; he could not help it.

"It's a story," he explained. "It was to be put in a journal—a schoolboy paper."

"It is not true?"

"Of course not."

"It is not a report for your War Office?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"This is not a matter to laugh," said the agitated Ober-Kellner. "There are spies everywhere, and if they are found they are shot—puff!—bang!—you are dead man! Only yesterday a Servian spy was arrested, disguised as an apple-woman, and a Russian spy was found in Berlin in disguise as—as a coal-merchant. If you are a spy, it is death for you."

Tom Merry flushed angrily.

"I am not a spy. We don't employ dirty spies in England as you do in this country!" he exclaimed indignantly.

"But dis paper——"

"I tell you it is a story—a fable."

"Dat is what you must prove, den," said the Ober-Kellner, after another colloquy with the gendarme. "This paper will be taken away, and sent to Vienna and examined. Then if it is all right, you are free."

"My only hat!"

"And until then?" exclaimed Blake.

"You remain under arrest."

"Undah awwest! Bai Jove!"

"You are lucky dat you are not shot outside de hotel," said the Ober-Kellner. "It is because I use my influence dat you are not shot."

"Bow-wow!" murmured Monty Lowther.

The gendarme addressed the juniors in German, this time speaking very slowly, to give them a chance of comprehending They expected his remarks to be ferocious, but they were agreeably surprised. In the most courteous manner, the officer expressed his regret that he was compelled by his duty to interfere with the travellers, and explained that it was "Der Krieg" that was the cause. He added that undoubtedly German-speaking travellers in England would be examined in the same manner, and perhaps more rigorously. The juniors understood most of his speech, and they replied in their best German, thanking the officer for his civility.

The Austrian saluted again and departed, with Tom Merry's valuable contribution for the St. Jim's "Weekly" in his hand.

The soldiers remained.

"Can we go down to breakfast now, Friedrich?" asked Tom Merry

"Ja, ja! But the soldiers must watch."

"Oh, let 'em watch!"

The juniors descended the stairs. Four soldiers, with bayonets fixed, followed them downstairs, and into the dining-room. And while Tom Merry & Co. breakfasted, the four soldiers remained within six paces of them, watching.

## CHAPTER 15.

### Under Arrest!

THE situation was curious, and it excited the juniors strangely.

Captain Guggenheim's hand, of course, could be seen in what had befallen them.

The German captain's course had been plain. He knew, of course, that the juniors could have no passports with them.

He had simply sent information to the gendarmerie that travellers without passports were staying at the Goggig Hotel. The visit of the gendarme officer and the soldiers had immediately followed.

Now the juniors were under arrest, to the extent that they were confined to the hotel, and could not leave the building. Within the hotel they were free, but under the incessant observation of the soldiers.

Remembering what they had read of the spy-fever in German countries, the juniors had grounds for uneasiness.

The popular imagination was fevered on the subject of spies. If the people there believed that Servian spies had come to a holiday resort like Merna disguised as hospital nurses, they would believe anything. According to their ideas, it was far from impossible that spies might come in the guise of travelling schoolboys. Though what on earth there was to spy upon in Goggig was a mystery—only the hotel, the post-office, and the cows in the meadows.

But it was said by the great William "that the thief doth fear each bush an officer." In war-time the Germans see a spy in every shadow. Their own tremendous system of espionage causes them to believe that the English Government follows similar tactics, and it is impossible for the average German to believe that the Continent does not swarm with English spies.

But though they had ground for alarm, Tom Merry & Co. made an excellent breakfast. The excitement of the situation was rather agreeable to them. It was better than lessons in the Form-room at school.

At breakfast they sauntered into the garden, with the soldiers on their track. The Ober-Kellner joined them there, and told them news. Norway and Sweden had declared war on Brazil, according to the latest information received by the Ober-Kellner.

"What about Yorkshire?" asked Blake.

"Yorkshire!" repeated the Ober-Kellner, who had apparently never heard of that great county.

"Yes, I come from Yorkshire, you know. I want to know whether Yorkshire has declared war on County Cork?" said Blake, with perfect seriousness of countenance.

"Ja, ja!" said the Ober-Kellner at once. "There has been a great battle already. The Yorkshire fleet has met the Cork Dreadnoughts off the coast of Warwickshire, and there are four thousand killed and wounded."

"Good egg!" said Blake heartily. "I'm glad old Yorkshire is getting its whack in. Let us know when the Isle of Wight declares war on the Eskimos, won't you?"

"Ja wohl! But there is more news. The French have sent a consignment of gold to Russia in a motor-car that crossed Germany. You know that Frankreich and Russia are allied. The motor-car has escaped into Austria, and has been searched for everywhere."

"Not yet found?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Noch nicht," agreed the Ober-Kellner. "But they will find it. Two millions in gold will be captured, hein?"

"Perhaps."

Friedrich swam away.

"I can see the French sending a car-load of gold through Germany now—I don't think!" grinned Lowther. "If these people will believe that, they will believe anything."

The juniors walked down to the station to buy papers. Four soldiers walked after them. Only German papers were to be had—no English, French, or Italian papers were allowed to enter Austria now. And the German papers, bristling with words of five and six syllables, were almost incomprehensible to Tom Merry & Co. Sincerely enough they wished that they had worked a little harder with Herr Schneider at St. Jim's. But they made out enough of the news from Berlin to understand that Germany was victorious in all directions; but though the news came directly from the German War Office, they took the liberty of doubting its accuracy.

"Let's have a stwoll thwough the countwy, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I wathah like to see these poor chaps of conscwipts marchin' off. It's an expewience, you know."

"Halt!"

The soldiers closed in on the juniors. They were not allowed to take that little stroll in the country. They walked back to the hotel with the soldiers behind them. At lunch, the soldiers waited in the dining-room to watch them. All the staff of the hotel looked at Tom Merry & Co. with suspicious eyes. The Ober-Kellner was the only man there who understood English, so they could speak to no one else. Yet, though the whole hotel was evidently impressed with the suspicion that the boys were English or Servian spies, their courtesy was never failing. The "beautiful manners" of the Austrian people had never been so well exemplified.

The day passed, and the next day, and another, in the same aimless waiting. Tom Merry's contribution to the "Weekly" was evidently being examined by the powers at Vienna, and they were taking their time about it. The hotel was very comfortable, and the scenery around it was splendid. But the juniors grew very tired of their inactivity, and they could get no news.

The Ober-Kellner, indeed, was full of news; but they knew how much that was worth. The German papers gave them news, which they spelt out in their long leisure hours; but the news was astounding. That it was believed even by the Germans themselves was astonishing. One interesting item of news was that Sir Edward Carson had proclaimed the independence of Ulster, and had taken the government of that province into his hands as an independent sovereign. This news was solemnly printed for the German readers, and it was discussed by the hotel people with perfect seriousness—the wild impossibility of it never occurring to them.

Of real news there was none. French and Germans were fighting in Alsace, that seemed to be all, but with what success on either side could not be guessed. The hours were very long to the juniors. All they could do was to hope that Lord Conway would find them and help them out of their fix. At the post-office they had sent off half a dozen telegrams to various places where he might possibly be, but whether the telegrams were really despatched was a question. The polite and urbane postmaster took them in; but the juniors had a strong suspicion that some of them, at least, were still reposing in the pigeon-holes in the post-office.

On the fourth day Captain Guggenheim put in an appearance. He met the juniors in the hotel garden. They gave him grim looks. But for the intervention of the German captain they might have been safe in Switzerland by this time.

"Are you tired of this?" Captain Guggenheim asked politely.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You have only to give me an engagement to hand over those films, and I will use my influence for you."

"Wats!"

"This is your last chance," said the captain moodily. "To-day I must leave to join my regiment marching on Paris."

"Retreating on Berlin, more likely!" growled Blake.

The captain's eyes gleamed.

"We are victorious everywhere," he said. "In a week more we shall be stabling our horses in Paris—the Uhlans will be camped in the Place de la Concorde. A fortnight more, and our troops will have crossed the Channel and landed in Kent."

"Bosh!"

"Enough! If I leave you here, you remain till the end of the war. They are too busy in Vienna to trouble about examining your papers. Only I can obtain your release by explaining how you came here. You would not be believed yourselves. If I leave you, you are prisoners for a year at least. Take your choice!"

"We have taken it."

"You refuse—finally?"

"Yes."

Captain Guggenheim ground his teeth.

"If we were in Deutschland," he said savagely, "I would have you taken out and shot! In Austria I cannot do so. But I leave you prisoners till the end of the war!"

And he strode away, and the juniors saw no more of him.

Another long and weary day passed.

Then, on a fresh and sunny morning, there was the hoot of a motor-car outside the hotel, and the juniors, looking from the window, recognised a familiar face.

"Old Conway!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Hooray!"

And the juniors rushed out of the Goggig Hotel to greet Lord Conway.

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## CHAPTER 16.

### Homeward Bound.

LORD CONWAY jumped out of the car.

"You young duffers!" he exclaimed, as he shook hands with the juniors. "I'm jolly glad I've found you!"

"You got our wires?" asked Tom Merry.

"I received one of them last night," said Lord Conway. "It had been delayed four or five days. I came at once!"

"Good old Conway!" said Arthur Augustus. "Where were you?"

"In Vienna. I could not have come before, even if I had heard from you, because the railway is not working, and my car had been taken by the authorities. They required it for the mobilisation. They handed it back to me last night. Things are in a frightful state in Vienna. There is a run on the banks; paper money is worth exactly the paper it is printed on, and nothing more. Luckily"—Lord

Conway smiled—"I saw what was coming, and accumulated some gold, and it is not exhausted yet. I was only waiting to get my car back to get out of Austria, and fortunately I shall be able to take you young rascals with me!"

"Good egg!"

"Have you any baggage?"

"None at all. We are gettin' fwightfully soiled all ovah!" said Arthur Augustus plaintively. "Look at my collah! Isn't it fwightful?"

"Awful!" agreed Lord Conway. "I hardly think I can take such a ragamuffin in my car with me!"

"Weally, Conway——"

"However, I'll try. Get ready!"

"We're not allowed to go," explained Tom Merry. "We're being watched all the time by four blessed soldiers!"

Lord Conway laughed.

"That is all right. I've seen the authorities in Vienna about you, and they showed me that precious manuscript. You had better keep your literary efforts within the walls of St. Jim's for the future, Tom!"

"I jolly well wish I were within the walls of St. Jim's myself!" said Tom Merry ruefully. "I'm fed up with this!"

"Yaas, wathah! Undah the circs, I shall welinquish my ideah of a holiday in the Tywol!" said Arthur Augustus. "I decline to patwonise a countwy where I am wegarded as a spy!"

"And we're free to go?" asked Lowther

"Yes. The gendarme officer in this place will give you a written permit. I have seen him already."

"Hooray!"

"And where are we going?" asked Lowther.

"Switzerland. We could hardly go through Germany," said Lord Conway, smiling, "and the pass into Italy is closed. Italy is remaining neutral in the war so far, but there may be an outbreak there at any time. The Swiss are neutral, and English and American tourists are travelling there. Unluckily, the railway service through France is stopped, but we shall get home somehow. The first thing is to get out of Austria!"

The polite gendarme officer appeared, and saluted with a smile. He gave Tom Merry a written pass to the frontier—which he could not read, but which Lord Conway pronounced satisfactory.

Then the juniors tumbled into the car, provided with packets of sandwiches for the journey. Lord Conway paid their bill in Austrian gold and silver, paper money having lost all its value, even English banknotes being refused in the panic-stricken state of the country.

The car buzzed off.

The whole hotel staff turned out to wave their hands in farewell, and express—in German—their hope that the travellers would succeed in reaching their own country in safety.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "These Austwians are ducks. I twust that Austwians in England will be tweated with equal politeness, but weally I cannot help having my doubts!"

The car buzzed along at a good speed.

But a quarter of a mile from Goggig a soldier in the road held up his hand. The chauffeur came to a halt. Papers were required—Lord Conway's passport and the juniors' written permit. In spite of their satisfactory papers, however, the car was searched.

"What the dickens did they expect to find?" asked Manners, as the car buzzed on again.

Lord Conway smiled.

"Two millions in gold," he replied.

"My hat!"

"There is a fixed belief in this country that somewhere in Austria there is a French car carrying two millions in gold to Russia. I was stopped and searched fifteen times on my way here from Vienna, especially as I was driving in the night. We shall have this a dozen times over before we reach the Swiss frontier."

"Halt! Here they are again!"

Soldiers surrounded the car once more. Again the search was gone through, even the cushions of the seats being prodded with bayonets to make sure that nothing was concealed in them.

Then the refugees were allowed to proceed.

Again and again, as the automobile proceeded on its way, the cry of "Halt!" was heard, and the papers were examined,

and the search gone through. Every soldier on the road—and they seemed numberless—was apparently convinced that the French had despatched a car laden with gold for Russia by way of the Tyrol—a belief which showed the amazing state of suspicion and credulity reigning in the country.

Short as the journey was to the Swiss frontier, the incessant delays caused the hours to lengthen out, and the travellers were glad enough of their sandwiches, as the afternoon wore on.

At the bridge over the Inn, which marked the boundary between Austria and Switzerland, there was a very long delay.

The Austrian officers, with perfect politeness, but inflexible determination, examined the passengers in the car and their papers, and bestowed a final search upon the car for the imaginary French gold.

Then the automobile was allowed to proceed over the Inn river.

Glad enough were the juniors to find themselves upon the soil of Switzerland.

The incessant suspicions and searches of the Austrians were beginning to get on their nerves, and even the "beautiful manners" of the Austrian officers did not quite compensate them for the delay and worry.

At the Swiss Customs-house there was another delay; but the car was at last allowed to proceed, and the chauffeur drove on into Switzerland—at this time a general refuge for tourists from all parts of Europe.

They stopped for the night in the little town of Bevers, in the Grisons. Petrol had run out, and a further supply was not to be obtained for love or money. Lord Conway had no choice but to leave his car in an hotel garage, to be reclaimed when better days arrived.

Fortunately, he was provided with coin, for paper money in Switzerland, as in Austria, had lost all value. At the principal hotel in the little town, where the travellers applied for rooms, they found the whole building swarming with soldiers—Swiss this time.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "Is this little countwy goin' to war too? Seems to be a wegular bust-up, deah boys. I am sewiously thinkin' of enlistin' as a soldiah myself. Wathah wotten to be left out, when evewybody is goin' to war!"

"Switzerland is calling out all her forces to defend her frontiers," Lord Conway explained. "They will not fight unless they are attacked. The Germans have broken the neutrality of Luxemburg and Belgium, and, if it suits their purposes, they will undoubtedly attack Switzerland next—though, as a matter of fact, I fancy they have their hands full already!"

"Looks as if we can't get rooms here," said Monty Lowther. "Nowhere to lay our giddy, weary heads, unless we sleep in the car!"

"Whenevah shall I get a change of clothes?" said Arthur Augustus plaintively.

There were no rooms to be had at the hotel; but the proprietor asserted that he had a "beautiful house" in the vicinity, which would exactly suit the travellers; and they were conducted to a wretched building at some distance, and shown into dismal rooms by candlelight.

It was useless to grumble—besides, there was nothing better to be had. And the proprietor, who was probably losing money hand over fist by having military quartered in his house, indemnified himself by charging handsome prices for the miserable rooms he placed at the disposal of the travellers. Lord Conway agreed without demur, and the tired voyagers went to bed—not very comfortably, but glad that they had reached at last a peaceful spot where they could sleep in quiet.

The next day it was necessary to depart by railway.

Lord Conway considered the question very carefully. Routes through France were closed till further notice, and an advance of the German Army would, of course, close them for good. One way was still open—southward through Italy, and then by ship.

Tom Merry & Co. had no objection to make. They were not at all disinclined to have their holiday prolonged in this way.

Accordingly, they boarded the train for Italy, and arrived in Tirano—only a short distance from Bormio, the place whence they had so unluckily crossed the frontier into Austria by the Stelvio Pass.

In Tirano the heat and the flies made them keen to proceed, And accordingly they proceeded the next morning. Day after day of travel followed, through which we need not follow the youthful adventurers. They were homeward bound, and in spite of their adventurous tastes, they were glad enough when the shores of Old England appeared in sight once more.

## CHAPTER 17.

### Back at St. Jim's.

THE old gateway of St. Jim's was crowded.

That morning a telegram had arrived.

Tom Merry & Co. were returning.

All the news that had been received of them hitherto was that they had arrived in Italy, and it was known that they had not perished—that they had found themselves on firm soil, in a friendly country, after their capture and flight in the German airship.

But nothing since had been heard.

Not till that morning, when a telegram from Southampton announced that the party had arrived safely in England.

Then St. Jim's went quite wild with excitement and joy.

As the hour drew near for their arrival at the old school, the St. Jim's fellows, juniors and seniors, crowded round the school gates to give them a welcome.

There was a roar as Lord Eastwood's motor-car was sighted on the road.

"Here they come!"

"Bravo!"

Figgins of the Fourth was the first to greet the returned juniors as they alighted. He shook Tom Merry's hands, and thumped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the back, till he—and they—were breathless.

"Home again!" grinned Herries. "We've got a spread ready in Study No. 6. Hungry—what?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I've done the cooking," said Fatty Wynn. "I say, what sort of grub did you fellows find in Austria?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've heard that the Austrians are good cooks," said Fatty Wynn, apparently surprised by the laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What sort of grub are we going to find here; that's more to the point," grinned Blake.

An army of fellows escorted the juniors to the School House, where the Head and Mr. Railton met them, and shook hands with them. But while Tom Merry and Lowther and Blake and D'Arcy proceeded to Study No. 6, Manners rushed away to the dark-room to secure his photographs. They were still where he had left them—quite safe. And before he joined the convivial party in Study No. 6 Manners had placed the films in the hands of Dr. Holmes, to be sent to the proper quarter.

Then he walked into Study No. 6 with a satisfied smile upon his face.

That famous apartment in the School House was crammed. Tom Merry's telegram in the morning had announced that the party had been in Austria, but that was all, and the fellows were keen to hear the story of their adventures. They swarmed in Study No. 6 and in the Fourth-Form passage.

A dozen times at least Tom Merry & Co. had to retail their stirring adventures aboard the German airship, and in the hostile land from which they had luckily escaped, Arthur Augustus making it a point to insist emphatically upon the marvellous politeness of the Austrians, which he contrasted very favourably with the manners of the Germans.

Tom Merry & Co. were the heroes of the hour. They had been in an enemy's country. They had been under arrest, and their adventures were really breathless to recite.

They had only one loss to mention—that of Tom Merry's intended contribution to the school "Weekly." That had not been restored to its author. Somewhere in the archives of the Secret Police at Vienna reposed that valuable manuscript, and Tom Merry's "Weekly" had lost a valuable contribution.

But Tom did not mind. The next number of the "Weekly," when it came out, was filled almost from cover to cover with accounts of "Travels in the Tyrol," "Adventures in Austria," "Chats About Italy," "Up Among the Alps," and so forth, and it was really a quite unique number.

Having come out of their scrape, the heroes of the School House were by no means sorry that it had occurred; and, as Blake remarked, things at St. Jim's seemed pretty quiet after what they had been through. But further news from the Continent, that came through the papers, quite reconciled the young adventurers to the normal life of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, when he had finished reading an account of the operations in Alsace. "Bai Jove! I wathah think that we are well out of that scwape. Takin' it all in all, I weally considah, deah boys, that St. Jim's is about the best place for us!"

And the dear boys quite agreed with him.

THE END.

***(Another splendid, long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. next Wednesday, entitled "Tom Merry & Co. On Guard!" by Martin Clifford. Don't forget to tell your friends of the Series of a Soldier-chum's Letters on Cover iii of this number.)***

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## By CLIVE R. FENN.

READ THIS FIRST.

"Of course, you would! And you have got Germans on quietly in England as a private gentleman until he hears that his place in Istan has been usurped by an adventurer named Jem Stanton, who is the exact double of Satorys. Worse than this, Stanton has decoyed Grace Lang, Satorys' fiancee, 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 recognise 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 men of Istan, and the German divisions are annihilated. The Allies depart for France, and a fierce war rages in Europe. Satorys receives a sabre 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. Stanton, having now taken Satorys into his confidence, tells him that the long-talked-of Channel tunnel has been built by the Germans. Paul is taken to view the Zeppelins, and by means of a clever trick boards one of the machines, with Stanton a prisoner, and makes for England. Satorys sees another airship rise to give chase. A fight takes place in the air, and Satorys' machine, although damaged, reaches the English coast, where he finds German guards installed. Yet another chase results, then suddenly Satorys and his companion come across a motor-cyclist corps, and to them Paul tells his story.

"The Germans are at the gates!" he says. "I have come from Germany—so I know!"

(Now go on with the story.)

### Suspense.

"O fcourse you would! And you have got Germans on the brain! Been out all night, from the look of you, and——"

Satorys stamped his foot on the rough ground.

"It's right, sir," put in Peter.

Satorys waved the sailor aside.

"You are an officer of his Majesty the King of England, sir," he said sternly as he recovered his breath and looked at the young lieutenant. "I have brought news from the other side which means the life and death of England. At your peril, doubt me! The airship on which we escaped from Germany was wrecked, or we should have made for London. The foe has made a tunnel, and the mouth is there." He jerked his hand backwards. "You will ride and give warning of the danger to the nearest military station, and tell the commandant that there is not a single moment to be lost. Do you understand?"

The words told, and yet the young officer regarded Satorys and his friends with a lingering doubt.

"A tunnel," he said—"a tunnel to England! Man, it is a dream!"

"It is the truth," said Satorys. "You will obey my orders, sir. I am Paul Satorys, of Istan, taken prisoner by the Germans, and now anxious to get to London before rejoining my army at the front. Do you understand me, sir?"

The officer brought his hand to the salute. It was unbelievable, unthinkable, absurd, but yet he did believe. All notion that Satorys was some madman was gone.

"You say this tunnel comes out near here, down at Lowsands?"

He was mounting his machine.

"Yes. The enemy has a guard close to the mouth, and we, my friends and I, were nearly caught."

"I will dash for Carchester—ten miles."

The officer was speaking to himself.

"You, Edwards and the others, stand by this gentleman. If it is as he says, there isn't, indeed, a second to be lost."

He was mounted now. The Germans had vanished, the officer's comrades were taking their orders, and the next second their leader was racing down the road, to be lost to view, while Satorys moved to the edge of the track where a finger-post stood up whitely, its lettering almost bleached out by the winds.

He wanted to think. But nothing was clear—something more like a dream, some magic, wild vision of a night rather than sober fact—and when Peter and Durand spoke to him he did not seem to hear.

"They will get a force down, sir, in no time," said one of the patrol, "and if there's anything in it we'll be able to give the devils a taste of something they hadn't bargained for."

"Yes—yes, of course!" said Satorys, as he made a supreme effort to overcome his fatigue, which was now mastering him, along with an intense desire to drop down and go to sleep.

The other pulled out his cigarette-case and proffered it with a certain show of deference to Satorys, who took a cigarette absently, let the young fellow hold a match and help him to light it; and the action served to nerve Satorys once more.

"Of course, your comrade thought me mad?" he said.

There was a slight shrug of the shoulders from the officer.

"I don't know, sir, about that. In these times pretty well everything does seem mad; but if it is as you say—well, we shall have to look slippy. I'm going down to the shore to have a look. No, it's this way. My aunt, but there isn't any doubt now! Look there!"

All present turned and gazed in the direction the young fellow pointed, to see a group of men standing about a quarter of a mile away on a stretch of high ground. They had not seen the party below, it was evident, and the young officer signed to his companions to draw back. He dropped down himself, and as he did so he unhitched his rifle and examined the breech.

"They are Germans, right enough, and if they haven't come from out of the earth, well, I should like to know how they did get here, that's all."

He edged himself a little nearer, and then darted a look over his shoulder, to see that Satorys and the others had followed his example.

"What's to be done, sir?" he said respectfully to Satorys. "You were right enough. This tunnel comes out there in the side of that hill. Why, they must have been making it for years and years—miles of it—and now, if it doesn't mean plenty of trouble for somebody, I'm a Dutchman!"

The party at the mouth of the tunnel increased; but to Satorys it was evident that they were only an advance guard, and the news could not have reached the German headquarters that the fugitives who were carrying the intelligence to London had escaped.

Through the fresh early morning air came the sound of talking—guttural German—then a laugh.

Satorys understood. It was something about the surprise, about the time of attack, and the preparations which had been made to overrun the land. There was to be a large force through in the course of the next twenty-four hours, that was evident, and what of the invulnerability of England then?

"We must wait," said Satorys.

There was nothing else for it. All crouched low in the grass. They were talking now by the hillside of the danger of an alarm. The idea seemed to be scouted.

"Too late!" said one of the Germans.

The young officer raised his rifle, sighting the man nearest to him, but at a sign from Satorys he lowered his piece.

"Perhaps you are right. It wouldn't be any use," said the officer. "But I hope old Hanson won't be long."

Hanson was not long. He had ridden harder than ever before. It was no easy thing for him to shake himself out of his normal equanimity. War had not done it, though since the outbreak of hostilities he, like thousands of his comrades, had been up against the marvellous and the strange side of the world. He scorched through the peaceful, sleeping countrysides, through that quaint dream-world of the dawn, and a smile was on his face as he bent over his saddle.

"The King of Istan!" he muttered. "That same chap there was all that bother about a long time ago. A fine sport, from all accounts, I should say. And he did good work for this country, anyhow, but it was a tough lot to swallow, all the same. A tunnel, and the Germans pouring into England from down under, and nobody with an inkling! My aunt, but it's weird!"

The sun blinked at the rider from over the ridge of the hills on the other side of which the garrison town lay, a place where there was not much sleep in those times for anybody. A man who had charge of a couple of somnolent-looking cows gazed stupidly at the young man as Hanson flashed through a tiny village. From a farmyard came the lusty crowing of a cock. The sun glared now, and the dew by the wayside was flashing like diamonds in the brilliant rays.

Hanson took a stiff corner at breakneck pace, and, once more on the straight—it was one of those roads which link up coast to coast without reference to London—he let his machine rip for all it was worth, now sitting bolt upright in his saddle, now bending over the bars, an easy forty miles an hour through the empty countrysides.

Hanson was just one of those frank young Britons of whom there are, luckily, thousands—a man who took things lightly, even duty, though he did his duty, and always at express speed. But the idea of the German bogey, as the peril appeared to some, never struck him. England would worry through all right, and later on, of course, there would be a lot of pleasant souvenir collecting in Berlin, with orders to march out, most probably, for the Emperor, who had bitten off a sight too much for a little chap like him to manage. That was Hanson's cheery view as he raced up to the gates of the barracks, where already the day's work was well on the way, and leaped to the ground. The sentry saluted.

Hanson dashed into the quadrangle, tore to the headquarters of the officer commanding, was up the stairs like a flash of lightning, and a soldier servant who hurried up was hustled out of the way.

Colonel Vyse was up and at work as his subordinate flung himself into the room.

"Not a moment to be lost, sir!" shouted the young officer. "It's it this time, sir! I have come from Lowsands. We were patrolling there early, and the Germans are here, coming by way of a tunnel which is ready! You take me, sir? It's all true, sir! Satorys of Istan brought the news!"

Vyse jumped up from his chair. He, like many another, was accustomed to surprises by that time, but the intelligence brought by the young lieutenant took him unawares, and he was ready to call the messenger mad, just as Hanson had considered Satorys an hour before.

"A tunnel! The entrance at Lowsands! You are sure?"

"I will take any oath, sir, that Satorys—you know him? He is King of Istan; has been through it; was a prisoner in Germany; and all the rest of it—is right! Not one to raise a scare!"

The colonel swung to the door.

"I don't discredit it," he said. "This news is vital. As you say, there is not a moment to be lost."

### The Explosion.

It was twenty minutes later. A detachment of a hundred and fifty strong filed out of the little town to reach the place where Satorys and the others were waiting. There were more signs of activity now at the spot where the tunnel emerged, and the colonel advanced with caution, intending to take the party of Germans on the flank, issuing orders as he went forward with the main body that the light motor which accompanied the column should swing into the shelter of a clump of trees.

It was evident enough that the German force, a small one, had scouted the possibility of any surprise; but a swift change came over everything as a sharp order was heard. The Germans at the exit of the tunnel were breakfasting—an advance guard, as Satorys had seen, when from the rising land behind they saw the British infantry charging down on them, their bayonets flashing in the sun.

The enemy had barely time to form up and fire as the British soldiers dashed up. There was a volley, a savage roar, and the new-comers were through, rounding up the Germans, driving them back from the tunnel mouth which loomed dark in the hillside.

The affair was over in five minutes, and the British soldiers were disarming their foe; while the colonel, accompanied by Satorys, who had made himself known to the commander, approached the entrance of the mysterious route to Germany which was to have been the undoing of England, as it would have been but for the action of Satorys and his friends.

There was no sign at all of the men who had tried to seize Satorys on the coast. It seemed as though they had felt the message could not ruin the enterprise, believing as they did that the story would not be believed.

The colonel paused just inside the tunnel, and an orderly struck a match.

Vyse nodded his head.

"You see, sir," he said to Satorys. "All just as you told Hanson, and I don't know what they will say in London."

He turned and gave an order, and then went a few steps further into the subterranean way to gaze at the line of metals at his feet, which glistened a little, and then faded off into the darkness where a locomotive was standing with a few trucks.

"What are you going to do?" asked Satorys.

The motor which had accompanied the detachment was being run up, and several of the soldiers were lifting from it a package which, at a sign from their chief, they placed in one of the trucks.

"Do?" said Vyse. "We are going to prevent this place being any more use. That's what is wanted, isn't it? At first, I could not believe, but it is wise to credit anything in these days. Here, Hanson, can you see to that engine? Her steam is up, I see."

"Yes, sir."

The officer was busy with the levers of the locomotive standing there in the deep gloom. A puff of smoke came from the low, squat funnel. The package was shifted, and the colonel himself leaned over the side and began to busy himself with something the big package contained.

He turned with a grim look to Satorys.

"Not a time for half-measures, this," he said quietly, as he went on with the work. "No, stand aside, you," he said to one of the infantrymen, who had come forward with a desire to assist. "I can manage."

"You are going to blow it up?"

The colonel paused and examined what he had done.

"Yes," he said. "It will be rather a nasty ride for this little lot of rolling-stock; but we have to destroy a few things. All ready, Hanson?"

"Yes, sir."

Vyse took a box of matches from his pocket, paused again,

changed the course of the little powder trail which was now running in a zigzag down the rough flooring of the truck, bent over it, thickening it here and there, and then, drawing back, made a sign to Hanson to set the engine going.

"The draught will do it," he said to himself.

He struck a match, and held it to the train of powder. There was a faint sizzling, the engine gave a jolt, bumped at a point, and then glided off slowly into the darkness, the loosely-coupled trucks crashing into one another as they rolled on.

And all the time there was a glow of light from the foremost truck, a curious light, which assumed proportions altogether out of keeping with what was to those who watched.

"Our little present to Germany," said Vyse. "A nice journey to her, that's all."

He drew back. According to his calculations, the explosion which would wreck the tunnel, this secret entrance into England which would have caused the disaster long spoken of, would take place soon after the engine had reached the sea, and the effect would be something awful in the extreme.

Vyse walked out into the sunshine, and without so much as glancing at the prisoners, he gave orders for the return to the town of half the detachment with their convoy of captives.

"We will now look after this so-called inn," he said to Satorys.

The half of the column told off to accompany their leader swung away towards the shore, and as Satorys, who was walking by the side of Vyse and Hanson, caught sight of the low shelving ground up which he had raced, he saw, too, signs of panic in front of the building out of which his pursuers had come.

"They will escape!" he cried excitedly, forgetting all else.

Stanton was among them, and Paul was eager to have the arch-scoundrel placed in the security of an English prison.

The soldiers broke into a run at a word from the lieutenant who was marching with them, and Stanton and his confederates, who had abandoned all hope of entrapping Satorys and his friends, made a frantic dash for the shore.

There was a yell from the soldiers, who charged down on them, capturing the big man who had led the pursuit of Satorys, and half a dozen of his companions, though others darted right and left, and for the moment got away; but Stanton, white with fear, forgot all else but his peril, and he it was who saw salvation in something which stirred a quarter of a mile out amidst the waves.

He plunged into the water, and a soldier who was after him fell sprawling in the foam.

Satorys stumbled, recovered himself, ran forward again; but as a shot rang out from one of the soldiers' rifles, Stanton was seen making for a dark object, and the latter had sighted him—a German submarine, which rose suddenly and took the fugitive on board before diving once more.

"Well, he's only one," said Vyse, "and——" He got no further.

Suddenly from out of the sea came a long, low, rumbling sound, and Satorys touched the colonel's arm.

"It's coming," he said. "Your gunpowder!"

"Gunpowder!" cried Vyse. "Dynamite!"

A report like thunder in the tropics deafened those who looked on. A mile out the sea was in a ferment, and a huge waterspout was seen; then a crash, and another and another, while the waves came with a rush up the sands.

"It's their tunnel," said the colonel drily. "Not much use to them after all, I fancy."

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**The Surprise Packet for German y.**

"So much for their tunnel," said the colonel.

Something about Satorys struck him. The commander seized the other by the arm.

"You are about done, sir," he said, with sympathy.

"Not so bad as that," was the reply; "but, as a matter of fact, we have been through a good bit, my friends and I. If you could look after them, I should be obliged."

All three were glad to avail themselves of the motor-car on the journey back to the local headquarters, the colonel talking jubilantly of the coup.

It was one of the important events of the war, but Satorys was almost past taking in its full significance now that the tremendous strain of the many hours during which he had been on the alert was lifted. On reaching the barracks, he accepted breakfast, and then fell asleep. He was awakened by Vyse.

"Thought I had better inform you, sir," he said. "I have been in communication with London, and the highest quarters ask whether you will go to the capital to receive the thanks of those who can give them, for it is not for me, sir, to do so. I am starting in an hour, and I thought if you decided to accompany me that you would like to prepare."

There was a smile on the speaker's face as Satorys clapped a hand to his chin.

"Yes," he said, "I must look a fair sight; but, somehow, nothing seems to matter now the job's done."

On the journey to London, as he sat in the train, Satorys was thinking more of the deadly peril which had been driven back. But there were other things to dwell upon as well, and it was with a sense of profound relief that he was able to place Durand—no longer Captain Durand, but once more the brave and dauntless girl—in the care of friends, for it was his lot to return to the front.

At the house of loyal friends where he left her, the girl faced him with a brave smile.

"I believe we shall meet again, Paul," she said, "on the other side of all this frightful trouble. It is your duty to go back, of course, as I suppose it is mine to wait here. We have been through a good deal, you and I, and while that man lives there is, I know, danger for you, apart from the war!"

Satorys brushed the notion aside. Once more back amidst his friends, in telegraphic touch with the Istan Army as he already was, it seemed idle to trouble about the scoundrel who had escaped in the German submarine.

He hurried back to his hotel, to find Peter waiting for him in a ferment.

"They have been asking for you ever since you went, sir," said the sailor, "and the papers! Well, it is enough to make anybody feel uncomfortable!"

Peter handed one of the news sheets to Satorys. It was just one of many, with the doings of the past twenty-four hours narrated in big type.

Satorys skimmed the paragraphs:

"ENGLAND SAVED FROM INVASION.

THE SECOND COUP FRUSTRATED.

THE KING OF ISTAN BRINGS THE NEWS."

There followed a concise and particular account of the manner in which the news was brought to the country which was threatened with the same fate as Belgium and France; not a detail was omitted, though the secret of the identity of Durand was not the writer's to divulge.

Satorys would, if he had consulted his own wishes, have left London quietly, and returned to duty with his own men; but this was not to be, and an hour later he drove to the Palace, to be received as friend and ally by his Majesty the King, whom Satorys had had the honour of meeting in earlier days, long ere the claim to his old rights in Istan took concrete form.

"You say that it is your intention to go back to the seat of war, sir," said the King, "and I envy you this; but my duty is here."

"And nobly are you doing that duty, sir," said Satorys, as he took the King's hand.

Satorys left the Palace, and walked across the Horse Guards Parade, for he had been requested to receive Lord Kitchener ere he left London; and the world-renowned soldier was, as ever, at his post, accomplishing a work which would have baffled any ordinary man.

London was brilliant that autumn day; the people, rather different, rather sterner, but with the old confidence of the race; and as the ruler of Istan paused in the wide, tree-dotted expanse, the lilt of martial music reached his ear—music which contained a note of proud assurance as to the result of the war.

At the War Office the famous commander came hurriedly forward to shake hands with Satorys.

"I would have waited on you, sir," he said.

Satorys waved the idea aside.

"I am for the present, my lord," he said, "just a soldier going back to the army, and I do not wish for ceremony!"

The two men chatted for twenty minutes.

"There had been rumours of this tunnel," said Lord Kitchener, "but they have always been scouted, and yet it existed. But we would have been ready for them, sir, although your splendid action has saved the country from many a bad day!"

Satorys thought over the situation as he went back to his temporary quarters. London had been his home, and he knew the mighty city well, or imagined that he knew it; but to know London is perhaps beyond the power of the human brain.

The capital was calm—calm with that restraint of conscious strength. The world was ringing with the news from Europe. Armies were crossing the seas to assist in the work of crushing out a vile tyranny; there was tremendous enthusiasm, and London was calm.

***(Another splendid long instalment of this grand serial next Wednesday.)***

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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. 2.—THE MYSTERY OF NAMUR.

BEFORE I describe the fall of Namur, which caused the highly perilous retreat of the British and French forces to the very gates of Paris, which thrilling episode, from all I hear, is still a mystery to you in Britain, it is necessary to explain my adventures at Liege.

I can assure you that from the moment I was fortunately able to render General Leman a service until I joined the Expeditionary Force at Mons, a fortnight later, every hour was packed with exciting incidents. In that time I faced enough perilous adventures to last the average Tommy a lifetime. I could write books about them.

If you've ever seen a big firework display at the Crystal Palace, and can imagine a dozen of such displays taking place at once, you'll have some idea what it was like when at night-time the Germans hurled shells by the thousand at the steel-capped forts at Liege. You can take my word for it that the Liege gunners weren't idle. Even though I was stripped to the waist whilst helping them, the perspiration fell like rain from me. Poor beggars! Every one of them was a hero, and didn't give in till the guns were silenced and his fort was a heap of battered steel and shattered bricks.

There are no words to describe the pandemonium. It was deafening, terrifying! There's nothing like it on earth. Giant steam-hammers pounding as hard as they can go on the earth, shaking it, breaking it into masses, hurling it with terrific force, whilst overhead from the flying shells, there is a continual screeching and howling like the wail of lost spirits! That's as near as I can get to describing a modern siege bombardment.

It got too hot at last for even that brave soldier General Leman. For three days the Belgians held up the mighty German armies, which we could see from the forts stretching for miles at the other side of the Meuse in great black masses. It caused us no surprise when we learned that General von Emmich had pressed the trigger of his revolver against his temple, in despair at his failure to capture the town and enter Belgium.

"We cannot hold out much longer, corporal," the gallant General Leman told me one morning. "The Germans are numberless. Their guns are never silent. Our brave Allies, the French and the British, must know the extent of the mighty forces the Kaiser is pitting against them. Dare you undertake to deliver a despatch to the officer in charge of the forts at Namur, and go thence to the general-commander of the French forces making for Dinant?"

As you know, I had carried the historic despatch which had informed General Leman that Great Britain was determined to stand by Belgium, and to punish Germany for her treacherous violation of the treaty of neutrality. My instructions were to place myself at the general's disposal as a despatch-bearer.

"Your commands, sir, are my duty," I answered. "Can nothing be done to stop the German advance?"

"Nothing but the walls of the Liege forts," was the heroic little general's reply; "and they are doomed! To-day the Kaiser's barbarians will be scurrying over our peaceful, fertile soil like a pack of hungry wolves. My only hope is to warn the British and French in time."

He gave me the despatches, shook hands with me, and wished me a safe journey. I felt like parting from a friend when I saddled my horse and turned its head from the inferno of flame and noise.

I had scarcely left the town when the fort wherein I had spent so many perilous days crumbled up into a heap of ruins before the big siege-guns. I have learned since that Belgium's bravest general was found unconscious beneath the ruins of his own fort. May the Germans, who took him prisoner, treat this great soldier mercifully!

Except that the road to Huy was crowded with flying refugees—mostly terror-stricken women with babies in their arms and children clinging to their skirts, and who, often as not, carried a bundle over their shoulders—that bundle containing food and the few valuables collected from the village homes they had deserted—there was nothing to delay me.

The dreaded Uhlans were ravaging and terrifying the districts before Brussels and Antwerp. All the same, there were many German spies upon the road. Once, as I left a cafe, where I had paused for a much-needed rest for my horse and a bite for myself, I was fired upon from a wood. But he was a poor shot, whoever he was—as poor as a German infantryman. Not a single bullet came within yards of me.

I returned the compliment by emptying my revolver into the shadows. That silenced him, but I had no time to make a search for the brute.

The lovely cathedral and the old-world town of Huy was reached just before nightfall. Crossing the bridge—so soon to be the scene of terrible carnage, I made my way up the steep incline towards the ring of forts proudly defending Namur. Several hundred feet above sea-level, with their guns dominating the valleys and villages below, and fortified with even greater strength than Liege, Namur seemed unconquerable.

Alas! The mighty power of the German siege-guns, aided by the thrilling happening which I am about to relate, muffled its resistance as a snuffer does a candle-wick.

"One of the gallant British!" cried the general-commandant, when his secretary took me to him. "Welcome, friend! You have heard the good news? Your brave fellows, the Expeditionary Force, have landed at Boulogne. We shall soon have them here, driving back the enemy like rats from a wheat-field!"

It was news to me. I could have jumped for joy. How I longed to be back with the boys of the squadron, to fight in real earnest the action we'd only played at in manœuvres!

But there was no elation in the general's face. I knew why before long. Liege had fallen. News had come through by telephone. The Germans were streaming through Belgium in two vast columns. One was heading for Brussels, the other was already on the road to Huy.

By midnight, as I left the town for Dinant, the first German battery opened fire. Besides my despatch, I carried another, hastily scribbled by the Namur general, to the commander of the French forces in Dinant.

Dawn was breaking, and the thunder of the guns was ringing in my ears, when I faced the French commandant.

"Mercy!" he ejaculated excitedly, when he read the despatch I gave him. "Liege has fallen! The Germans are already before Namur—three whole days before they were expected! And they have scarcely more than a day's ammunition for the forts!"

My acquaintance with the French tongue—which, indeed, I had to thank for being entrusted with my important mission—enabled me to realise Namur's terrible position.

Without sufficient of the terrible steel food for the great guns of the forts it was impossible for Namur to hold the Germans back for long. Neither the French nor the British main armies were as yet in a position to meet the enemy. They were outnumbered from the start. The fall of Namur would open the gates to the flood of German invaders.

Not till afterwards did I learn the terrible truth. The German firm to whom Belgium had given a huge order for shells and ammunition for the Namur forts had failed to deliver them. Why, it is obvious now. It was further evidence of German trickery.

"We are going to help Namur keep back the enemy,"

**(Continued on next page.)**

# FROM THE FIRING-LINE!

*(Continued from page iii. of cover.)*

explained the French commander next day. "A convoy of ammunition-waggons will soon be on the way. Will you convey a despatch to Namur?"

I was all impatience to return to my chums in the King's Dragoons. But, needless to say, if I had been told to gallop to the North Pole I should have obeyed orders.

"Brave lad!" smiled the general, patting my shoulder. "You British say 'No' to nothing. Ah, yours is a wonderful race, corporal! But take care! You may meet a few unfriendly spirits on the way."

A few unfriendly spirits! That's what he thought of German Uhlans! My word, hardly had I crossed the bridge from Dinant when I espied at least a hundred of them grouped outside a cafe! They blocked the road. The river was on my left; steep, rugged unclimbable passes to the forts on my right. Before I could wheel round a hail of bullets descended on me.

My horse, squealing in the death agony, collapsed beneath me. With difficulty I withdrew from her flying hoofs. By a miracle I escaped the bullets of the Germans. They hastily mounted, determined on riding me down.

There was only one way of escape. I took a header into the river, and beat all records at the trudgeon stroke as I made for the wide stone buttresses that supported the bridge. They peppered the water, but I dodged them right enough, and clambered safely out at the further side, the water dripping from me, yet having the despatch safe and sound.

I set out on foot for Namur. It was impossible to get another horse. The peasants had fled from their homes before the bands of Uhlan scouts. The farmhouses were tenantless. I have no space to describe my many escapes from cavalry patrols. The Germans were everywhere.

In the late afternoon I fell in with the ammunition convoy, a dozen waggons drawn by motor-lorries, which the French had sent from Dinant, under escort of a troop of chasseurs.

The cavalry had been fighting almost all the way. I scrambled to a seat on one of the lorries. All went well till we were within sight of the forts. We were on the road by the river—as pretty a spot as one of the Thames upper reaches—when, without a word of warning, the Germans opened fire with machine-guns upon us from a wood.

The driver of the leading lorry was killed instantly. With no hand on the steering-wheel, the great vehicle slewed round in the narrow road, blocking the path as it jammed between the walls of two opposite buildings. The murderous hail became a hurricane. Saddles were emptied. The chasseurs were in a panic. There was no road forward. A company of German infantry rushed to our rear from the wood.

There was only the river on our left. The French colonel—as big a dandy, and as cool a hero as ever faced bullets—called his men together. They drove the infantry back like sheep. But the Fates were against us.

One of the ammunition-waggons exploded and caught fire. The enemy rushed us again. The colonel of the chasseurs realised the hopelessness of his task.

"They sha'n't have the waggons, anyway!" he roared. "Into the river with them!"

And so the ammunition that would have enabled Namur to hold the German main armies back till the British and French were in sound defensive positions never reached the forts.

I shall never forget that sight, as waggon after waggon plunged over the steep bank into the swirling waters, whilst the bullets hummed about our ears like bees. All we left the Germans was a fiery furnace and a score of dead horses. For the second time that day, I owed my life to a plunge in the river and the bad marksmanship of the Kaiser's men.

When I reached Namur some of the forts, ammunitionless, were already silent. Five also had been put out of action. That night the Germans, coming through in tens of thousands, captured the passages of the Sambre to Charleroi, and so compelled the British retreat from Mons after over thirty hours of stubborn fighting.

How different would have been the tale had Namur not fallen!

In my next letter I will have something to say about the historic retreat from Paris, and tell how we got the Germans on the run.

***(Another letter from our chum at the front will be published in this paper next Wednesday. Will you all tell your friends of this, and order your copy in advance, so as not to miss seeing how the Allies succeeded in turning the Germans when almost at Paris.)***

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# THIS WEEK'S CHAT.

## The Editor's Personal Column.

**For Next Wednesday—**

**"TOM MERRY & Co. ON GUARD!"**

**By Martin Clifford.**

In next week's grand long, complete tale of the chums of St. Jim's, the scouts of the Fourth and Shell once more take an active part in their country's service. The Territorials who had been guarding the railway-line and other important places are called away, and the St. Jim's juniors, under the leadership of Kildare, take upon themselves this duty.

Levison, more for the holiday than for any patriotic reasons, participates in this work, and he finds himself placed in a position which he thinks is going to prove of great monetary value to him. But he is mistaken, and the arrival of an old acquaintance of Tom Merry & Co.'s makes things distinctly uncomfortable for the cad of the Fourth. Ultimately, however, matters are righted, and although the scouts are considerably surprised by an action of their old acquaintance, St. Jim's, as a whole, is very proud of the result of having placed

**"TOM MERRY & Co. ON GUARD!"**

## REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"A Scotch Patriot."—Mr. Martin Clifford obviously meant British. England does, and always will, have good cause to be proud of the Scotch and Irish.

"Tomboy Gemites" (Whalley).—More will be heard of Mulvaney in the near future.

"Billy" Raymond (Islington).—A splendid idea, but there are various reasons why I am afraid I cannot carry it out now.

"X Y Z" (Essex).—The age of Tom Merry and Figgins is fifteen.

A. P. G. (Earlsfield).—Sorry, but the issue you require is out of print.

T. E. Fazakerley (Liverpool) and Others.—It is quite possible that Talbot will return to the school at some future date.

"A Loyal Welsh Reader."—No storyette will be taken into consideration other than those written on postcards, as set down in the rules.

Albert B. Norman (Brighton).—Very many thanks for your verses.

"Interested" (Glasgow).—Most certainly you may win more than one prize in our Storyette Competition.

G. F. Anderson.—I am sorry the photo you require is not available. The Christian names of Redfern, Kerr, and Levison are Harry, George, and Ernest respectively.

"A Gemite" (Brockley).—Tom Merry is about fifteen years of age. The character you mention will doubtless reappear in due course.

## A SPECIAL NOTICE.

I should like to draw my chums' attention to the splendid budget of reading matter contained in the issue of our companion paper, "The Penny Popular," now on sale. In the first place, the adventures of Sexton Blake, the world-famous detective, are set down in a really thrilling manner, and this story alone is worth the small charge made for the paper. But, in addition, there is a grand complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., the famous schoolboys of St. Jim's, and a thrilling tale of the three comrades, Jack, Sam, and Pete.

There is no other book on the market which gives such good reading as "The Penny Popular," embracing as it does the adventures of the most well-known characters in fiction.

Ever since the first number of this splendid paper of ours was placed side by side with its companion papers, "The Gem" and "The Magnet" Libraries on the market it has enjoyed immense popularity, and thousands of boys and girls have bought it regularly every week.

But I want more readers. I want you to introduce "The Penny Popular" to all your friends, and get them to place an order with a newsagent for "The Penny Popular" to be delivered to them every week. My readers have always helped me, and I know they will help me now.

Finally, get a copy of the issue of "The Penny Popular," now on sale at all newsagents, and see for yourself the excellent reading matter it contains. You will not be disappointed.

YOUR EDITOR.

17-10-14