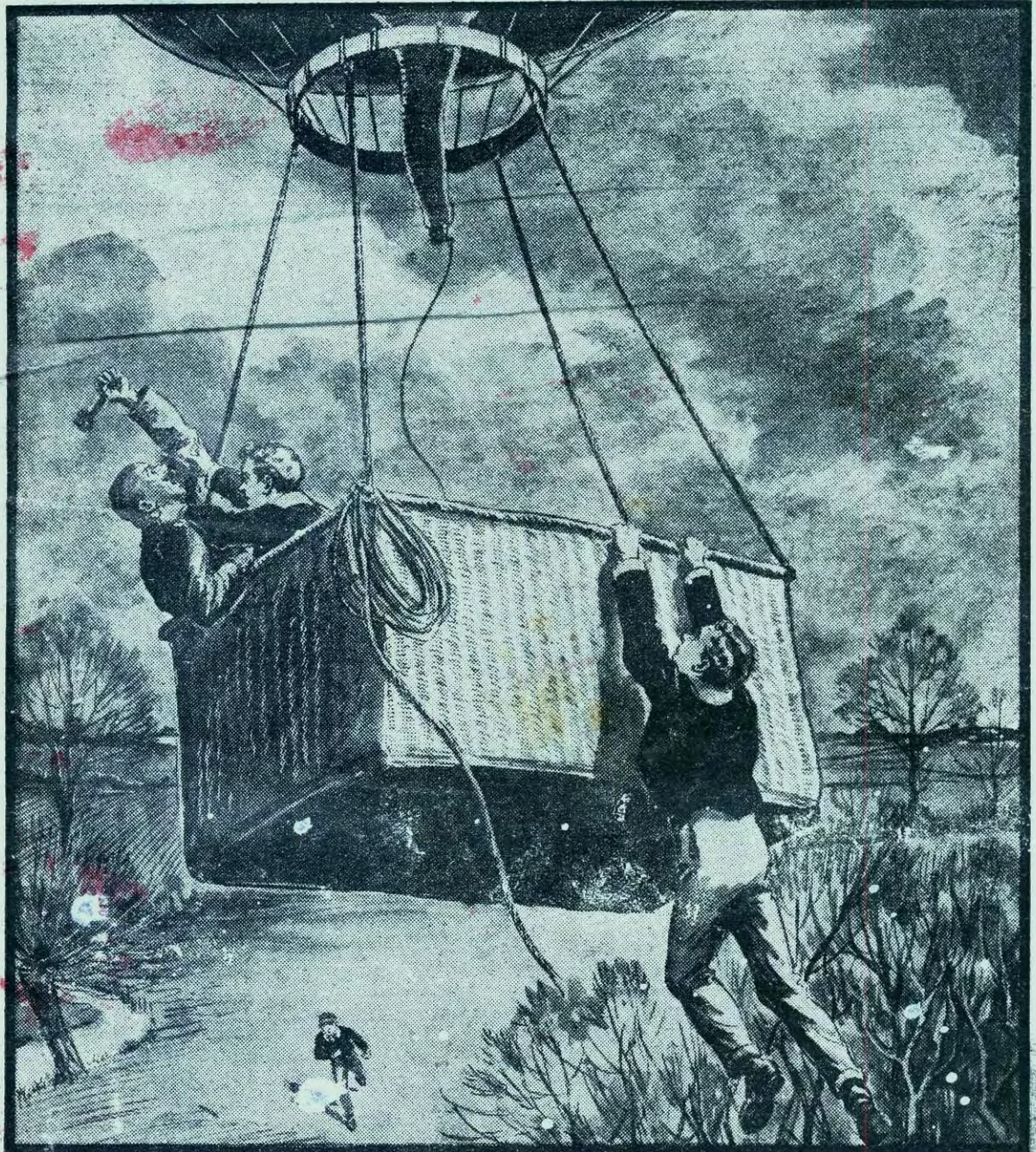



123  
"BY LUCK AND PLUCK!"

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete Tale of School Life at St. Jim's.

The **GEM** LIBRARY No. 423. Vol. 10.



**A STRUGGLE TO REACH THE HUN!**  
(A thrillingly exciting scene in the magnificent long, complete school tale in this issue.)

8/6 each



### The "LORD ROBERTS" TARGET PISTOL.

Beautifully plated and finished. May be carried in the pocket. Trains the eye and cultivates the judgment. Range 100 yards. Targets 9d. per 100. Noiseless Ball Cartridges, 1/- per 100. Shot, 1/6 per 100. Send for list. CROWN GUN WORKS, 6, Whittall Street, BIRMINGHAM.

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

## BLUSHING.

**FREE,** to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to pay postage to Mr. D. TEMPLE (Specialist), 39, Maddox Street, Hanover Square, London, W.

**100 CONJURING TRICKS.** 57 Joke Tricks, 60 Puzzles, 50 Games, 12 Love-Letters, 429 Jokes, 10 Magic Tricks, 82 Money-making Secrets (worth £20) and 1001 more stupendous Attractions. 8d. P.O. the lot.—HUGHES & Co., Station Road, Harborne, BIRMINGHAM. Sneezing Powder, 6d. Pkt.

**VENTRILQUISM.** Learn this wonderful and laughable art. Failure impossible with our new book of easy instructions and amusing dialogues. Only 7d. (P.O.). Valuable Book on Conjuring (illus.) given free with all orders, for short time.—Ideal Publishing Dept., Clevedon, Som.

**80 MAGIC TRICKS,** Illusions, etc., with Illustrations and Instructions. Also 40 Tricks with Cards. The lot post free 1/-.—T. W. HARRISON, 239, Pentonville Rd., London, N.

**RED NOSES** permanently and quickly cured. Free advice and particulars of my medically approved treatment to those enclosing stamped envelope. Many testimonials.—H. R. George (Specialist), Old Church Road, Clevedon.

## ARE YOU SHORT?

If so, let me help you to increase your height. Mr. Briggs reports an increase of 5 inches; Mr. Hay 2 1/2 inches; Miss Davie 3 1/2 inches; Mr. Lindop 3 inches; Mr. Heck 3 inches; Miss Leedell 4 inches. My system requires only ten minutes morning and evening, and greatly improves the health, physique, and carriage. No appliances or drugs. Send three penny stamps for further particulars and my £100 Guarantee.—ARTHUR BRIGGS, Specialist in the Increase of Height, Dept. A.M.P., 17, Stroud Green Rd., London, N.



Real Swiss Lever

## WATCHES FREE

Guaranteed 5 years.



A straightforward generous offer from an established firm. We are giving away Watches to thousands of people all over the world as a huge advertisement. Now is your chance to obtain one. Write now, enclosing P.O. 6d. and 4d. stamps for posting expenses, for one of our fashionable Ladies' Loug Guards, or Gents' Alberts, to wear with the Watch, which will be given Free should you take advantage of our marvellous offer. We expect you to tell your friends about us and show them the beautiful Watch. Don't think this offer too good to be true, but send 10d. to-day, fulfil simple conditions, and gain a Free Watch. You will be amazed. Colonial Orders 1s.

WILLIAMS & LLOYD, Wholesale Jewellers,  
Dept. 7, 89, Cornwallis Road, London, N. England.

## INCREASE YOUR HEIGHT 3 to 5 inches 7/6

Ross system never fails. Price 7/6 complete. Particulars 1d. stamp.  
H. H. ROSS, 73, Church Rd., HENDON, LONDON, N.W.

NEW 3d. STORY-BOOKS

NOW ON SALE

NEW ADDITIONS TO

THE "BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. LIBRARY.

No. 328.

### "RIVALS AND CHUMS!"

A Grand New School Story of Greyfriars.  
By FRANK RICHARDS.

No. 329.

### "THE FIGHTING STRAIN!"

A Great Sporting Tale.  
By T. C. WIGNALL.

No. 330.

### "KING OF THE FAGS!"

A Complete Tale of School Life.  
By GEOFFREY MURRAY.

No. 331.

### "THE SPORTING JOURNALIST!"

A Splendid Adventure Story.  
By GEOFFREY GORDON.

Insist Upon Having  
The "Boys' Friend" 3d.  
Complete Library.  
None Better!

PUBLISHED IN TOWN  
AND COUNTRY EVERY  
WEDNESDAY MORNING

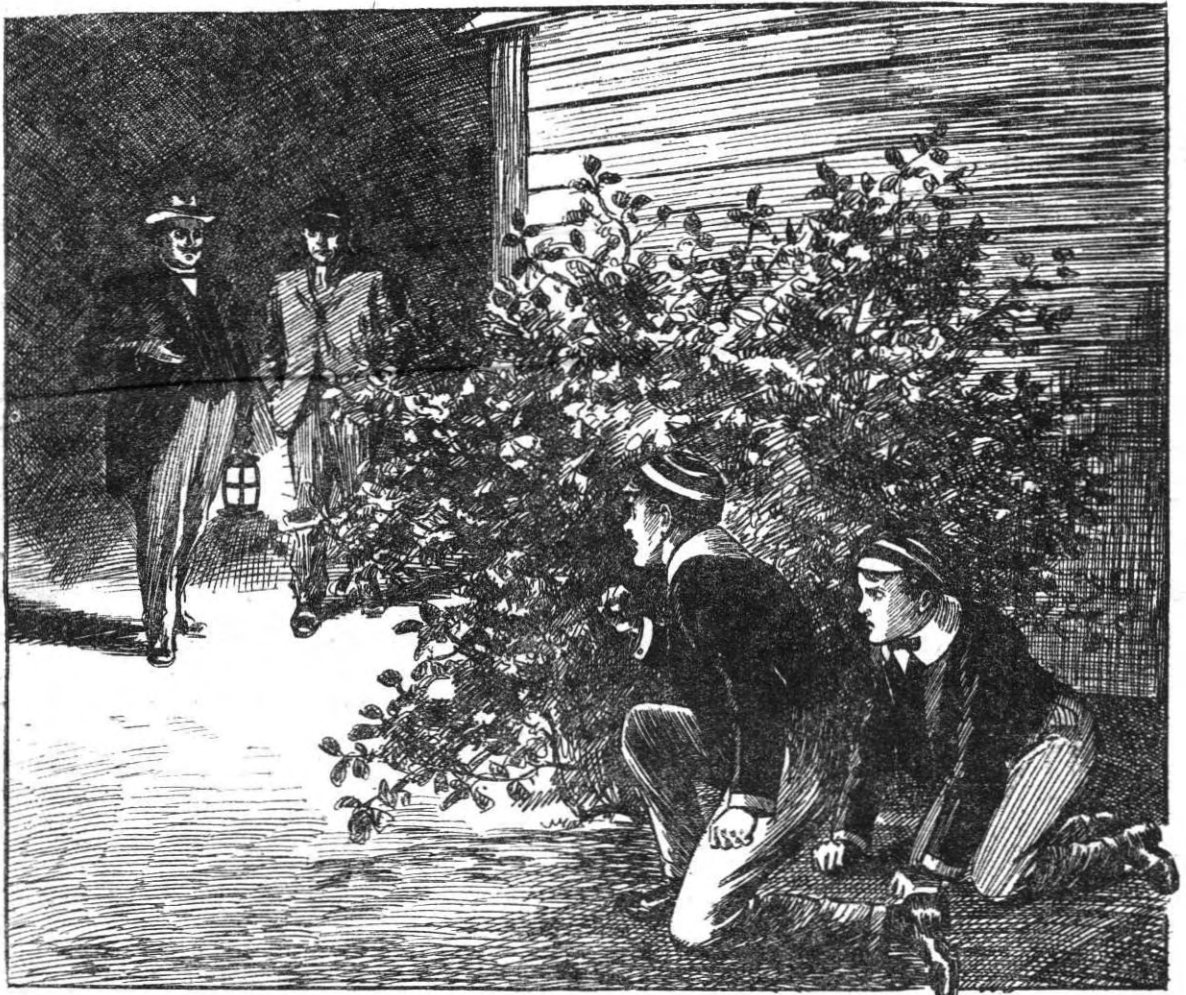


COMPLETE STORIES  
FOR ALL, AND EVERY  
STORY A GEM!

# BY LUCK AND PLUCK!

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Close to the shed a mass of scraggy bush grew, and behind the bush, in the shadow of the shed, the juniors were well concealed. They hardly breathed, as they stared with beating hearts through the interstices of the bush. What were they about to see? (See Chapter 7.)

## CHAPTER I. Very Hunnish.

**T**HIS is absolutely rotten!"  
"Rotten ain't the word!" groaned Jack Blake.  
"Buck up!"  
"We are gettin' soaked—"  
"We shall get drowned if we stay here much longer talking, Gussy!"  
"Wats! We can't get to St. Jim's in this wain. We must find some sheltah somewhah!"  
D'Arcy of the Fourth spoke with great decision.

He halted, in the beating rain, which was already reducing his once-shining silk topper to a wet rag.

Blake and Herries and Digby stopped, too.  
It was really "rotten." There was no other word for it. The chums of Study No. 6 at St. Jim's had been to Abbotsford to see the camp. In an evil hour they had decided to walk home—funds being low, and the railway fare high. It was a long walk, but the chums of Study No. 6 were good pedestrians.

But they had reckoned without the weather.  
They had taken the short cut across the moor, which saved a couple of miles, but, unfortunately, landed them, when

Next Wednesday:

"SPOOFING THE SWELL!" AND "THE PRIDE OF THE FILM!"

the rain came on, in the middle of a wide and shelterless expanse.

Weeping bushes and drenched grass surrounded them in the deepening dusk, and they were still miles from the school. They hadn't even umbrellas, and their coats were already dripping. And the rain was coming down in sheets.

It had come on suddenly, but it had come in deadly earnest. The juniors squelched on through wet and mud with ferocious feelings, till Arthur Augustus D'Arcy called a halt.

"Oh, come on!" said Herries gruffly. "There's no shelter for miles. I wish we'd gone by train now. Tom Merry offered to stand the fares."

"It's wathah late to think of that now, Hewwies."

"It's late to stand jawing in the rain!" grunted Herries. "Buck up, or we shall miss calling-over, as well as getting half-drowned!"

"I wefuse to buck up. We are going to get sheltah."

"There isn't any shelter!" howled Digby.

"Wats!" Arthur Augustus j-mmed his eyeglass into his eye, and removed it again, as it was too wet to see through. "Wats, Digby! There is a house yondah. I can see the light twinklin'."

Blake grunted. He could see the light, too—a dim twinkle from a window at a considerable distance across the rainy moor.

"That's High Moor House," he said. "We don't want to go there. It's a German lives there, and we don't want to ask favours of a Hun."

"Old Schultz is a naturalised German, Blake, and we have a wight to ask favahs of a person who has been allowed to exchange a wotten nationality for a decent one! He cannot wefuse us sheltah in this feahful weathah."

"We shall miss calling-over"

"Blow calling-over! We don't want to wain our clothes and catch cold! I'm goin' to ask for sheltah!"

Arthur Augustus turned from the miry path, and plunged away among the bracken. Blake and Herries and Digby, after a moment's hesitation, followed him. It was a case of any port in a storm.

"After all, the Hun can't refuse us shelter," said Blake. "And Railton will excuse us, when we tell him we were caught in this."

"Yaas, wathah! Follow your leadah, deah boys!"

The four juniors tramped on through the rain. High Moor House stood in a lonely position, in the midst of the wide moor, miles from any other habitation. It was surrounded by high walls, over which could be seen only the slate roof of the house and the highest windows. It was a forbidding-looking place, and the fact that it was tenanted by a naturalised Hun would have made the juniors anxious to avoid it in any other circumstances. But heavy rain was sweeping down on their unprotected heads, and they had little choice.

Tramping through dripping bracken, they reached the path that ran up to the gates, and stopped there, steaming. It was dark now on the moor, and there was no light in the old-fashioned iron lamp over the high wooden gates. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy groped for the bell, and dragged at it.

"All wight now, deah boys!" he gasped. "Even a Hun couldn't wefuse us sheltah, you know."

"Don't call him a Hun when you're asking him to let us in," grinned Herries.

"Wathah not! You can wely on my tact and judgment."

"They don't seem to be in a hurry to open the gate!" growled Blake.

Arthur Augustus dragged on the bell-pull again. The juniors could hear the clang of the bell within, but the gates did not open.

The wind was driving on the front of the house, and it brought the rain lashing upon them as they stood. The juniors began to kick savagely at the gate.

"Nobody at home, perhaps," said Digby.

"But there was a light in one window, deah boy."

"Ring that blessed bell again!"

Clang-clang-clang!

"The uttah wottahs!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"They must hear it, and they won't let us in. Bai Jove! Heah's somebody!"

There was a sound within the gate at last. The gate did not open, however, but a voice called from beyond.

"Who is it? What is wanted?"

"Open the gate, please."

"What is wanted?"

"We want shelter from the rain!" shouted Blake.

"Who are you?"

"Schoolboys from St. Jim's. We're caught in the rain!"

"And it is howwid wet wain!" added Arthur Augustus plaintively.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 423.

"You cannot come in. This is not a home for vagrants!" said the gruff voice from beyond the gate.

There was a sound of retreating footsteps.

"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "The feahful wottahs won't give us sheltah!"

Blake gritted his teeth.

"My hat! I'll make 'em open the gate, the cads!"

He dragged savagely at the bell, ringing it again and again, till the whole place echoed with the clangour. D'Arcy and Herries and Dig accompanied the ringing with a clattering tattoo from their boots on the thick wooden gate.

In a few minutes the gruff voice was heard again, raised in tones of anger.

"Go your way! Go, or I will set the bulldog on you!"

"You uttah wottah—"

"You German pig!"

"You disgusting Hun!"

"Yah!"

Blake let go the bell. It was pretty clear that there would be no shelter for the juniors at High Moor house.

"Well, of all the filthy Huns!" said Blake between his teeth. "We've wasted time coming here. Why won't they let us into the lodge, at least?"

"Inhospitale wottahs!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

The exasperated juniors bestowed a series of furious kicks on the gate, and turned away. There was no help for it. With furious feelings they resumed their tramp across the rainy moor, consoling themselves with ferocious remarks on the subject of Huns in general, and naturalised Huns in particular.

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Sufferers.

**T**OM MERRY was looking out of the doorway of the School House at St. Jim's.

Evening had fallen on the old school, and the quadrangle was weeping with rain.

"If those Fourth-Form kids have been caught in this—" said Tom.

"They'll get wet!" said Monty Lowther.

"By Jove, they will!" said Manners. "And there's not much shelter on the moor. They've missed calling-over already."

The Terrible Three looked out anxiously into the quadrangle. The weather had been fine when they left Abbotsford. The chums of the Shell had got in before the rain started. But the party walking home across the moor were evidently "in" for it.

"Hallo! Here they come!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Four dragged figures came tramping across the quad from the gates.

They looked pitiable objects as they limped muddily up the steps of the School House.

They were soaked to the skin, their boots squelched mud and water, their caps were wet rags. Arthur Augustus' topper was a fearful-looking object. They tramped wearily into the School House.

"My hat! You've been through it!" said Lowther.

"Atchoo-choo!" sneezed D'Arcy.

Mr. Railton came out of his study.

"You have returned!" he exclaimed. "Bless my soul, what a state you are in! Go to the dormitory at once, and take your things off and rub yourselves dry!"

"Yes, sir," gasped Blake.

"You should not have come through the rain," said the Housemaster. "You would have been excused for being late if you had taken shelter."

"We tried to, sir," groaned Arthur Augustus, "but they wouldn't let us in. Gwooh!"

The Housemaster frowned.

"Do you mean to say that anyone refused you shelter in this storm?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah! That howwid Hun at High-Moor House!"

"It was disgraceful!" said Mr. Railton. "However, go and change at once!"

Blake & Co. squelched away dolefully to their dormitory. The Terrible Three followed, to lend a helping hand.

The juniors lost no time. They knew the danger of wet clothes. Their dripping garments were dragged off pell-mell, and they rubbed down their wet limbs with rough towels till they glowed crimson. But all four of them were already sneezing.

"Better turn in," said Tom Merry sympathetically. "You look as if you're booked for the sanatorium!"

"Gwooh!"

"Atchooooooh!"

Blake & Co. turned in, and the Terrible Three grabbed blankets from the other beds and piled them on.

"Now tell us about it," said Tom Merry. "What's that about the Hun?"

Blake gave a growl of wrath.

"The rotten Hun!" he exclaimed furiously. "We asked for shelter at High Moor House, and they wouldn't even open the gate. I'll make the beast sit up for this somehow! Told us it wasn't a home for vagrants!"

"Yaas, wathah! Vagwants, you know!"

"That's jolly odd," said Manners. "It wouldn't have hurt them to let you stand under their roof till the rain passed."

"It's because the man's a Hun," said Herries. "Of course, all Huns hate everybody in this country, whether they're naturalised or not. I dare say it made him feel quite chippy to leave us out in the rain!"

"Atchooh! Oh, deah! I feel that I am goin' to have a cold, and my toppah is uttably wuined, and my clothes are a weck. Oh, deah!"

"What an awful cad!" said Lowther. "It's up to us to show that Hun that he can't treat St. Jim's fellows like this!"

"Yaas, wathah! I'm goin' to look for him—atchoo!—and give him a feahful—atchoo!—thwashin'! Gwooh!"

"You won't be able to look for anything but sneezing for some time," said Tom Merry. "But I'll tell you what. If you go into sanatorium, we'll undertake to make that Hun cad sorry for himself. He ought to be punished for this!"

"Atchoo—chooh!"

Mr. Railton came into the dormitory.

"How do you feel now, my boys?"

"All right, sir—atchoo!—not at all ill, sir. Atchoo! Grooh! We—we sha'n't need to be sent into the school hospital, sir. Grooh! We shall be all right soon, sir. Atchoo—atchoo—chooh!"

The Housemaster smiled slightly.

"I am afraid you are going to have bad colds," he said. "It is very extraordinary that Mr. Schultz should have refused you shelter in such a heartless way!"

"It's because he's a—groo!—German, sir."

"I understand that Mr. Schultz is a naturalised German," said Mr. Railton, "otherwise he would be interned."

"Groo! They're worse than the other sort," mumbled Blake. "An ordinary German is a pig, but a naturalised German is a liar and traitor as well as a—groo!—pig!"

Mr. Railton smiled, and, after a keen look at the flushed faces of the four sufferers, he left the dormitory. Blake gave a groan.

"It's sanny," he said. "He's gone to tell Miss Pinch to have beds made ready for us in sanny!"

"Never mind; you'll have Miss Marie to look after you," said Tom Merry comfortingly.

"What about the footer?" grunted Herries.

"And we'll look after your Hun," said Tom. "Word of honour, we'll make Schultz sit up on his Hun hind legs and howl!"

"Thank you, deah boys! Pewwaps you had bettah leave it till I have recovahed. It wequires a fellah of tact and judgment—"

"Hanging's too good for him," mumbled Digby. "We may be laid up for a week over this. The New House will beat you at footer!"

"We'll try to keep our end up," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yes, you'll try. But what's the good of the House team without Study No. 6?" growled Blake, "Figgins & Co. will walk all over you! Grooh!"

"Bettah put off the matches till I have wecovahed, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to cackle at in that remark, Tom Mewwy!"

Arthur Augustus was interrupted by a fit of sneezing. There was no doubt that Study No. 6 were "booked."

They were! Within an hour they had been transferred to the school hospital, under the care of the elderly Miss Pinch, and ministered to by the kind and sweet Miss Marie. But even Miss Marie's smiling face could not reconcile them to the sanatorium—especially Arthur Augustus, who was considerably worried about what would happen to the footer matches during his absence. But there was no help for it, and the chums of the Fourth had to grin and bear it as best they could.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Talbot's Suspicion.

TALBOT of the Shell came into Tom Merry's study with a smile upon his face. He found the Terrible Three looking unusually serious. Prep was over, and the three were thinking out a problem—how best to make the inhospitable proprietor of High Moor House "sit up on his Hun hindlegs and howl," as Tom Merry expressed it.

In their sympathy for Study No. 6, Tom Merry & Co. were fully prepared to take measures of reprisal against the obnoxious Hun. But when they came to think it over, it did not seem quite easy. Hence their thoughtful looks.

"Hallo! Wherefore the grin?" asked Monty Lowther, as Talbot came in.

The handsome Shell fellow laughed.

"The Fourth are on the warpath," he said. "There's an indignation meeting going on in the common-room. Kerruish is in the chair—at least, he's standing on the table and presiding. Mr. Schultz is in danger of being hanged, drawn, and quartered—unless the Fourth cool down by to-morrow!"

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"Well, he was a cad to refuse Blake shelter," said Tom. "We were just thinking over it, too. The rotter ought to be scragged!"

"The trouble is, we don't exactly know how to scrag him," remarked Monty Lowther. "We could ask Kildare to drop in at High Moor House and give him a hiding, but Kildare wouldn't."

"Probably not," said Talbot, laughing.

"But we're going for him," said Manners. "We've sworn a swear to make him sit up. It's a question of ways and means."

"And you can help us, Talbot," said Tom. "You've got a good head on you. Give us your advice!"

Talbot sat on the corner of the table.

"It's a queer bizney," he said. "I've heard a good bit about this Mr. Schultz. It's extraordinary that he should have refused to shelter fellows caught in that awful rain-storm!"

"Oh, he's a Hun!" said Lowther. "You can't alter a Hun by naturalising him. Might as well naturalise a leopard; it wouldn't change his spots!"

"Quite so. Only it's queer, because naturalised Huns are generally rather cringing than rude and brutal. They want to make their peace as a rule. It's odd that this man Schultz should do such a brutal thing for no reason at all, so far as can be seen!"

"What have you got in your head, Talbot?" asked Tom curiously. "He couldn't have had any reason, except that he's an unfeeling beast!"

"I don't know. Even an unfeeling beast wouldn't go out of his way to make himself unpopular at a time like this, when naturalised Huns are in rather a critical position. It wouldn't have hurt him to let Blake and his friends in for shelter for an hour or so. He must have had some reason," said Talbot quietly. "I don't believe it was simply because he's a Prussian pig!"

"But what reason—"

"I've been thinking that over. This man Schultz has been naturalised for fifteen years, or something like that. He was Mayor of Wayland once. He had big business concerns at one time. Since the war he has lived in a rather secluded way at High Moor House. You may remember that he had some trouble in Wayland; he was in danger of being mobbed when the Lusitania was sunk. The Wayland folk don't believe in fine distinctions between naturalised Huns and the other kind."

"Quite right."

"As he is legally an Englishman, he isn't bothered in any way in his house. A naturalised Hun's house is his castle, you know. The authorities are quite satisfied with him. I've seen his name in charitable lists. He has whacked out tin for the Red Cross—five thousand pounds, I think."

"By Jove, that was rather decent!"

"Yes, unless it was a blind, as it probably was," said Talbot. "My own opinion is that not a single Hun ought to be left at liberty in the country, naturalised or not, and whether prince or pauper. Our great political panjandrums know best—perhaps. I've been thinking a good bit about this affair of Blake's, and it makes me jolly suspicious. If this particular Hun whacked out five thousand pounds for the Red Cross out of kindness, he wouldn't have left four kids out in such a storm, I think."

"That's so."

"If he did it to keep up appearances and make himself tolerated, the same reason ought to have prevented him from doing such a brutal thing as he did this evening."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

# ANSWERS

"True again!"

"So it looks to me as if he must have had some special motive for not admitting anybody within the walls of High Moor House just now."

"Oh!" said Tom.

The Terrible Three looked keenly interested now. They knew well the clear, keen insight of Talbot of the Shell. The handsome Shell fellow, whose life had been so strange and chequered in the old days when he was called "the Toff," had had many experiences which had not fallen to the lot of the St. Jim's fellows, and they had given him an old head on young shoulders, in some respects.

"But what are you driving at?" asked Manners, after a pause. "Do you think Schultz is dabbling in some spying business?"

"That is likely enough in any case, as he is a German, and we are at war with Germany. His being naturalised makes no difference."

"True, O king! But he could have let those kids in, all the same. They wouldn't have been likely to spot anything that was going on if he'd let them stand in his porter's lodge for an hour."

"That's so," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "Even if he had a wireless there they couldn't have seen anything of it."

"I don't think it's anything of that kind," said Talbot. "Ordinary spying could be carried on there in a way that couldn't be spotted, excepting by a regular search by the police. Whether it was wireless or carrier pigeons, Blake & Co. wouldn't have seen anything of it. If that was all, it would have been safer for him to be civil, as it would have caused less talk."

"Exactly. And so—"

"And so," said Talbot quietly, "it looks to me as if there's something else on. I can't even guess what, but something that the fellows would have spotted if they'd been let inside the gates. I can't think of any other reason the Hun could have had for refusing them shelter. It wasn't simply Hun piggishness—he's too cunning for that, as his contribution to Red Cross funds proves. He had a reason, and a good reason."

"Something was going on."

"I believe so."

"But what?" said Tom Merry, in perplexity. "Of course, he's likely enough to be a spy, but the kids couldn't have spotted wireless or carrier pigeons. I suppose he isn't manufacturing bombs there?"

"Not likely; but quite possible," said Talbot. "In the United States the Germans manufacture bombs for blowing up munition factories, and it's likely enough they may start the same game here. But whether it's that or something else, something was going on that he was determined no outsider should see—that's the only explanation of what he did, to my mind. I was going to ask you fellows if you'd like to look into it."

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry heartily. "We were thinking of making the brute sit up somehow. But if he's playing the traitor, it would be ripping to show him up. Patriotic, too."

"Yes, rather!" said Manners. "But—but what's the programme?"

"We shall have to think that out," said Talbot. "If the Hun is breaking the law, he's doing it carefully enough, and he will be on his guard. Germans are cunning animals, and we shall have to be wary."

There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and the study door was pitched open. Kerruish of the Fourth appeared in the doorway, with Reilly and Hammond behind him, and behind them a crowd of juniors. They were all looking excited.

"You fellows coming?" asked Kerruish.

"That depends," said Tom Merry. "Where, when, and why?"

"You know about Blake? Well, we're going to see that Hun to-morrow," said the Manx junior. "We're going to tell him what we think of him. They're laid up in the sanatorium through that beast, and we're going to give him some plain talk, and bump him if we can get hold of him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at!" said Kerruish warmly. "Rotten Huns can't treat St. Jim's chaps like that. We're going to make him sit up. You fellows can come and lend a hand if you like."

"You're looking for a leader?"

"No jolly fear!" said Kerruish promptly. "I'm leader. But you can come along."

"Better come," said Hammond. "The more the merrier, you know. Think of poor old Gussy sneezin' his head off!"

"And Blake left out of the footer!" said Reilly. "Sure, the Hun is a thafe and a spalpeen!"

"My dear chaps, the Shell can't follow the Fourth. It's putting the cart before the horse. But I'll tell you what—we'll come and show you how to do things," said Monty Lowther.

To which the crowd of Fourth-Formers replied with one voice:

"Rats!"

And they marched indignantly away, looking for more recruits. The Terrible Three grinned.

While Kerruish & Co. were beating up recruits in the Shell and the Fourth there was a council of war in Tom Merry's study, and by bedtime Talbot and the Terrible Three had decided upon their course of action—which they fervently hoped would cause the obnoxious Hun to sit up on his Hun hindlegs and howl!

## CHAPTER 4.

### Kerruish & Co. on the Warpath.

**M**R. LATHOM, the master of the Fourth, could not help observing a certain restlessness in his class the next day. Four places were vacant—those of Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy. Those four unfortunate youths were grappling with bad colds in the sanatorium. The whole Form shared the indignation on the subject of the Hun's heartless conduct towards them. Figgins & Co., of the New House, were as wrathful as the School House fellows. Indeed, Figgins had generously offered to lead the party of avengers to High Moor House—an offer which Kerruish declined without thanks. Figgins & Co. were welcome to assist if they liked, but the leadership belonged to the School House.

So George Figgins modified his offer, and stated that he would deal with the Hun after the School House party had mucked up the matter, as they were bound to do.

During lessons, Kerruish and company were thinking a good deal more of the scheme of reprisals than of Mr. Lathom's instructions, and some of them were in hot water in consequence during the day.

They were glad when lessons were over and they were free to carry out their plans.

Kerruish displayed unexpected qualities as a great general. It was quite certain that the Head and the Housemaster would not approve of reprisals on Mr. Schultz, disgusted as they might be with his boorish inhospitality. There were certain old maxims about law and order which weighed with the masters. It was extremely probable, therefore, that if Kerruish's design was suspected, the whole army would be "gated." So, with deep diplomacy, Kerruish & Co. put on their Boy Scout "clobber" as if they were simply going out for a scout run on the moor. There was nothing to excite suspicion in the fact that two score of juniors turned out in scout attire for a run after lessons, especially as the weather had cleared up and it was a fine afternoon.

The Terrible Three stood on the School House steps and watched the army march. Nearly all the School House part of the Fourth Form had turned up as well as some of the Shell, and D'Arcy minor brought along Frayne and Jameson and Manners minor and several more of that important Form, the Third. Tom Merry & Co would willingly have joined in, waiving the question of leadership, but they had their own plans to carry out.

"Follow your leader!" said Kerruish, and the junior scouts marched out of gates and took the road for the moor.

They were looking very determined. The path across the moor was still very muddy, but they did not mind mud. They reached High Moor House, standing black and grim against the westering sun. It was really a favourable spot for such a demonstration as the indignant juniors planned, for there was no other habitation within miles, and Mr. Schultz certainly could not call upon the services of the village policeman.

"Here we are intirely," said Reilly, as the army halted before the house.

"Now what's the little game?" asked D'Arcy minor. "Do we begin by digging trenches, or by executing a masterly retreat?"

Kerruish ignored this humorous question.

He took hold of the iron bell-pull beside the gate, and gave it a terrific tug. The juniors could hear the jangle of the bell within.

"That's a beginning," said Kerruish loftily.

"Got the oil?" asked Wally D'Arcy.

"The oil! What oil?"

"Aren't we going to boil him in oil?" asked Wally innocently.

There was a chuckle, and Kerruish made a plunge at the humorous fag with his staff. Wally dodged, grinning.



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy groped for the bell, and dragged at it. "All wight now, deash boys!" he gasped. "Even a Hun couldn't wefuse us sheltah, you know." "They don't seem to be in a hurry to open the gate," growled Biake. (See Chapter 1.)

"Keep your wool on!" he said. "I only want to know, you know."

"Shut up, you cheeky fag!" growled Kerruish. "Lumley-Lumley, take that bell, and keep on ringing till they come."

"Right-ho!" said Lumley-Lumley.

He obeyed orders with a will. The jangle of the bell was incessant. In a few minutes more a hoarse and angry voice yelled over the high gate:

"Who's there?"

"Us!" said Kerruish independently.

"What's wanted?"

"We've called to see Mr. Schultz."

"Mr. Schultz is engaged, and can see nobody."

"We sha'n't go till we've seen him."

There was a grunt, and no further remark.

"We're wakin' 'em up, you see," said Kerruish. "Keep on with that bell, Lumley."

"You bet!"

Jangle! Jangle! Jangle!

"I say, there'll be a row if old Schultz complains to the Head about this!" said Trimble of the Fourth, that reflection occurring to him rather late.

"Who's afraid of a row?" demanded Kerruish.

"Well, I am, for one," said Trimble.

"Then you can cut off, you funk! We've come here to talk to the Hun. Hallo! Here comes that chap with the voice again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you go away?" shouted the voice over the gate.

"I will set the dog on you!"

"Go ahead, you Hun! We'll look after the dog!"

Kerruish grinned to his comrades, who were all getting excited now.

"They'll have to open the gate to let the dog out," he whispered. "Then we'll get in. See?"

"B-b-but suppose the dog bites?" stammered Trimble.

"If you're afraid of a dog, Trimble, you can cut off! Keep your sticks handy, you fellows!"

"I—I forgot to do some lines for Lathom," said Trimble.

"I—I think that perhaps I ought to get back and do my lines."

"I—I think I'll come with you, Trimble," said Mellish. "I've got to feed my rabbits."

Trimble and Mellish started off, without waiting to interview the dog. They were followed by a howl of derision from the rest. Lumley-Lumley was still discoursing sweet music on the bell. But the gate did not open, and there was no sound or sign of a dog.

"Bet you ninepence to fourpence there isn't any dog!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I guess he was only trying to scare us!"

The besiegers found this suggestion grateful and comforting. Their legs were not well defended by their scout garb again a dog's teeth.

Jangle! Jangle! Jangle! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The scouts' staves were crashing on the gate now. The

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

NEXT  
WEDNESDAY:

"SPOOFING THE SWELL!"

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of  
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

juniors were growing more and more excited and determined. But the jangling of the bell suddenly ceased.

"Go it, Lumley!" rapped out Kerruish.  
"I guess I'm going it. The bell's been taken off the other end."

"Bang on the gate, then," said Kerruish. "Make as much row as you can. We'll worry 'em into letting us in!"

The din at the gate was terrific. For ten minutes it lasted, and the paint on the wooden gate was marked and scored by the staves. Still it did not open.

"Let's bust it in," said Wally. "We haven't come here simply to make a row. And we're booked for a wiggling at St. Jim's, anyway. The Hun is sure to complain."

"Hallo! Here's somebody."

A face was looking over the gate. A man of about forty, with a fallow countenance, a thick moustache, and shifty, greenish eyes, looked down savagely at the juniors. Some of them, who had seen him in Wayland, recognised him.

"Here's Schultz!"

"Here's the Hun!"

The German, evidently mounted upon steps within the gate, looked down, his fallow face almost convulsed with anger.

"How dare you make this disturbance at my gate!" he shouted. "I will telephone for the police if you do not go immediately!"

"Yah!"

"Rotten Prussian!"

"Hun!"

"Boche!"

"Sneaking German!"

Thus answered Kerruish & Co.—forcibly, if not elegantly.

A fat German fist was shaken at them over the gate.

"Begone!" yelled Schultz. "In vun minute more I telephone to police!"

"Rats!"

"Yah!"

"Go home to Germany!"

"We've come to talk to you, Schultz!" said Kerruish.

"Shut up, you fellows, while I jaw to the Hun-bird! Last night you wouldn't give shelter to some of our chaps, in the storm, you rotten Hun!"

"Begone!"

"They've all caught colds, and got laid up!" said Kerruish.

"We've come to tell you what we think of you!"

"Will you go?"

"No fear; we're not finished yet. You're a sneaking Prussian pig! Got that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're a crawling German worm! Got that?"

"Ach! I will—I will——"

"You're a spying, sneaking, sauer-kraut-eating, baby-killing Hun! Got that?"

The savage face disappeared from the top of the gate; but Mr. Schultz's voice was heard yelling:

"Fritz! Fritz! The hose!"

"The—the hose?" murmured Wally. "Oh, my only Aunt Jane! Looks to me as if we'd better make a magnificent retreat!"

A coarse, whiskered face appeared over the gate—evidently that of the gruff-voiced man who had first shouted to the visitors. Two large hands came over, holding the nozzle of a garden-hose.

Kerruish blinked at the hose.

He had time for only one blink. Before he could decide upon a masterly retreat, a strategic retirement, or a magnificent retrograde movement, there was a whiz of water from the hose.

Whiz—whisssh!

"Yaroooh!" roared Kerruish, as he caught the stream with his chin.

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, the Hun beast!"

"Yow-ow!"

There was no arguing with the stream of icy water as it played over them. The juniors broke into a run.

Fritz grinned as he played the hose on the departing army.

In about a minute there wasn't a single junior left within the radius of the hose. Drenched and furious, the army beat a tumultuous retreat, and Fritz guffawed and disappeared from view within the gate.

CHAPTER 5.

The Terrible Three Take a Hand,

**M**Y hat! Has it been raining?"  
"You look wet!"  
"And very wet wet!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thus did Tom Merry & Co. greet the returning army, as they met them on the moor. Talbot and the Terrible Three were sauntering out of the wood, in the falling dusk, bound for the moorland, when Kerruish & Co. came in sight on their homeward journey.

The unfortunate army looked decidedly dispirited and draggled. Nearly all of them had been drenched.

"What on earth's happened?" asked Talbot.

Kerruish groaned.

"Grooh! They turned the hose on us!"

"We jolly well slanged old Schultz first, though!" said Hammond. "We made the rotter turn quite green."

"And, faith, he's made us turn nearly blue!" said Reilly, with chattering teeth. "I feel as if I shall join Gussy in the sanatorium, bedad!"

"You've had bad luck," said Lowther consolingly. "What a pity you didn't get a Shell cap to lead you!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"So you retreated?" said Manners.

"What could we do?" growled Kerruish. "We couldn't argue with a garden-hose, could we?"

"Was it a masterly retreat or a strategic retirement?" asked Lowther. "And will the history of that retreat live for ever in the annals of the Fourth, and stand out as a glorious incident in its great history?"

Kerruish snorted, and tramped on without replying to that humorous parody of a great statesman.

The draggled army marched away, leaving the four Shell fellows grinning. As they tramped wearily along the foot-path through the wood, they met Figgins & Co., of the New House. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn paused to smile.

"Been swimming?" asked Figgins.

"With your clothes on?" chuckled Kerr.

"No, you silly asses!" growled Kerruish. "We've been swamped over by those beastly Huns at High Moor House, and there's nothing to cackle at, and if you cackle at me I'll dot you on the nose! Br-r-r-r!"

"Going to try your hand, Figgins?" asked Hammond.

"Well, we thought we'd come along," said Figgins. "We knew you'd make a muck of it, you see——"

"Oh, dry up!"

"That's what you'd better do—dry up!" grinned Kerr.

"You look wet!"

"Rats!"

Figgins & Co. walked on smiling, leaving the draggled procession to drizzle on to St. Jim's. Kerruish had carried out his intention of telling Mr. Schultz what he thought of him, but he was not feeling satisfied. A wet jacket did not conduce to satisfaction. Still, as Hammond remarked, it was lucky they were in scout clobber; so matters might have been worse.

Matters, certainly, might have been worse; but the army reached St. Jim's in anything but high spirits, and a good many of the members found solace in emphatic slanging of their unfortunate leader.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. were walking across the moor at a leisurely pace. The chums of the Shell did not wish to arrive at High Moor House before the early evening had fallen. The shadows were already thickening over the lonely moor.

The more the chums thought over the matter, and over Talbot's suspicion, the more they were convinced that Mr. Schultz's action had been dictated by something more than mere German boorishness.

There was something to be concealed at High Moor House—something that would have been seen if the juniors had been admitted within the gates the previous night!

What it was they could not guess, but its nature they could guess easily enough, knowing that Schultz was a German. It was some kind of German treachery. And they felt more than justified in looking into it.

But it was evidently necessary to be cautious.

The misty evening had fallen before they came in sight of High Moor House. Dim and forbidding, the high walls rose against the darkening sky, and not a light gleamed from any of the windows that showed over the walls.

The juniors paused in a clump of bracken by the path, a hundred yards from the house, and Talbot swept the darkening moor with his eyes. Then he started a little.

"We're not alone here," he said.

"Hallo! What have you seen?"

"Look!"

Tom Merry blinked in the gloom.

**CHUCKLES.** 1D. THE CHAMPION COLOURED PAPER. EVERY SATURDAY  
2

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

ARE YOU READING PROSPER HOWARD'S SCHOOL STORIES IN "CHUCKLES," 1D.?



"Is that somebody on the path, or a blessed shadow?" he murmured.

"It's somebody."

"St. Jim's chap, most likely."

"I saw him against the sky for a moment," said Talbot. "It was a man. I don't know what he's hanging about here for, but— The house may be watched. The police may not be fast asleep, after all, you know. Sometimes a watch is kept even on naturalised Huns."

"Then he's seen us," said Lowther.

"Yes, very likely. It makes no difference, though. Come on! It's quite dark enough now."

The juniors moved on through the gloom towards the house. They approached it from the back, where the high brick walls rose without an opening of any kind.

"Pretty safe place, this," murmured Manners. "Those walls are twelve feet high."

"They've been repaired and been made higher since Mr. Schultz took the house," said Talbot quietly; "and those spikes along the top are a new thing. The Hun does not leave anything to chance."

"May be afraid of being mobbed some day, as he was before in Wayland," suggested Manners.

"Perhaps. Ah, there's a light!"

From a high window of the house, which could be seen over the top of the garden wall, a light glimmered. A thick curtain was drawn across the window, and after that only a faint glimmer was to be seen.

Talbot took a deep breath.

"Did you see that?" he whispered.

"Ye-e-es," said Tom Merry, puzzled. "Nothing queer in a light in a room in the evening, is there?"

"No; only that it was gas."

"Yes; I noticed that. What about it?"

Talbot smiled.

"How do they get gas here?" he said.

Tom Merry rubbed his nose.

"I don't know. Pipes, I suppose."

"Pipes—laid across miles of moor? Gas isn't laid on here," said Talbot. "There must be a plant there for manufacturing gas."

"Oh!"

"This man Schultz is known to have been a chemist. He may have amused himself in his spare time, since he's retired, in making gas to light his house. An electric plant would have been much simpler. I should imagine that he wanted the plant for some other purpose."

"But—but what? Not gas bombs?" murmured Tom.

Talbot shook his head.

"It's possible, but not likely. But—it's queer."

"I've heard that he's a scientific Johnny, and makes experiments," said Tom. "He may want the gas for that."

"Perhaps. I wonder—" Talbot paused. "Look here, the more I think about this matter, the more fishy it looks to me. It's agreed that we're going to see into it?"

"Yes, rather! But—but how? We can't get over that wall."

"I—I say, it's rather serious getting into a man's place!" said Manners. "All very well if he turned out to be a spy or anything, but otherwise—"

"We're risking that."

"Oh, all right!"

"I don't know that we need enter, either. We're going to look over the wall, and see whatever it was he was hiding from Blake last night."

"It's out of doors, you think?"

"Yes. Or why shouldn't he have let Blake into the lodge for shelter?"

"Well, yes."

"But this giddy wall?" said Lowther. "Blessed if I can walk up a wall like a fly!"

Talbot smiled, and unfastened his coat. He drew out a coil of thin but very strong rope. He unrolled it, and made a slip-noose at the end. The Terrible Three watched him silently, but with great keenness.

The Toff stepped towards the high, looming wall, and the rope whizzed up from his hand. The first cast was successful—the Toff had practised lassoing. The loop settled over a thick spike on the top of the wall, and the rope hung fixed.

"Blessed if I thought of that!" said Tom Merry.

"I thought of it," said Talbot simply.

He grasped the rope with both hands, and with scarcely an effort, as it seemed, drew himself up hand-over-hand, his feet against the wall. The Terrible Three watched him breathlessly, till the darkness swallowed him.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Figgys' Little Joke.

"I SAY, Figgys—"

Fatty Wynn's voice was plaintive.

"Well?" grunted Figgins.

"I'm hungry."

"Shurrup!"

"That's all very well!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "But we shall be late for locking-up, as it is. And tea—"

"Never mind tea!" said Kerr. "What's the little game, Figgys?"

Figgins & Co. had halted in the deep gloom on the footpath that led to the gate of High Moor House.

"We're going to see the Hun," said Figgins. "I've got a ripping idea."

"Dry up! My idea is to give the Hun beast a jump," said Figgins, grinning. "What price ringing him up, and telling him to open in the name of the law?"

"My hat!"

"You see, he's a German, so it's pretty certain he's a spy, or would be a spy if he could. So if he is one, it would give him blue horrors, and even if he isn't, it would give him the jumps."

"Good egg!" said Kerr heartily.

"After dark, you see, they can't see us, and if I put on a deep bass voice, he'll take it for a bobby as sure as a gun," said Figgins confidently. "He'll have to open the gate, and then we'll collar him and bump him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And buzz off! He won't be able to report us to Ratcliff—he won't know us, or whether we come from St. Jim's, even."

"It's a jolly good idea," said Fatty Wynn. "But—"

"But what?"

"We're late for tea already, and—"

"If you say tea again, I'll scrag you!" said Figgins ferociously. "Come on! I believe those Shell bounders are hanging about here. I saw them leave the school, and they were ahead of us. They might think of the same wheeze. Hallo! Who the merry thunder's that?"

A dark figure loomed up before Figgins' startled eyes as he moved on. It vanished into the bracken immediately.

"Who the dickens—"

"My hat!"

"That wasn't one of the Shell kids," said Figgins, in a low voice. "It—it was a man. What the dickens was he hanging about here for?"

Much puzzled, the three juniors went on, and advanced to the gate of High Moor House. Save for a dim glimmer from one or two thickly-curtained windows, the building within the high walls was in darkness.

Figgins grasped the bell, and rang it loudly.

He rang incessantly for several minutes, till a gruff voice was heard from within.

"Who is there?"

A softer voice added:

"It is those boys again, Fritz. Get the hose ready."

Figgins grinned.

"Open, in the name of the law!" he said, in his deepest bass.

There was a startled ejaculation within.

"Mein Gott! Who is it?"

"You know who it is, Mr. Schultz!" went on Figgins' deep bass. "I have received information which makes it necessary for me to visit your premises. If you do not admit me at once, you will take the consequences."

"Mein Gott!"

"Open this gate!"

The gate did not open, but a pale face looked down from over it. The darkness was so deep, however, that Schultz could not make out the figures of the juniors, beyond seeing that they were there.

"Will you admit me?" boomed Figgins. "You know the penalty of opposing officers in the execution of their duty, Mr. Schultz."

"Bring a light here, Fritz."

Figgins snorted.

It would have been much simpler for Mr. Schultz to open the gate, and see his visitor face to face, and it was really remarkable that he did not do so. It was pretty clear, even

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



NEXT  
WEDNESDAY:

"SPOOFING THE SWELL!"

to the unsuspecting juniors, that the German had some powerful reason for keeping the gate bolted. There was a glimmer of light over the gate as Fritz handed up a lighted lantern to the German.

The lantern gleamed over the gate, and Schultz peered down, and stared at three grinning faces upturned to him.

"Ach! You are not—not the police!" he panted.

"Go hon!" said Figgins.

"Young rascals! Scoundrels—"

"Oh, draw it mild, you Prussian pig!" said Figgins.

"We've called to tell you that the fellows you shut out last night have caught bad colds, and that you're a disgusting Hun!"

"A sneaking, crawling Prussian!" said Kerr.

"A rotten Boche!" said Fatty Wynn cheerfully.

"Quick, Fritz—the hose!" yelled Schultz.

But Figgins & Co. did not wait for the hose. Having enlightened Mr. Schultz as to their candid opinion of him, they scuttled away, laughing loudly. The light disappeared.

"Well, we've slanged him, that's something," said Figgins.

"If the beast had opened the gate we could have bumped him. Jolly queer he didn't open the gate."

"There's something dashed fishy about this!" said Kerr, wrinkling his brows. "It can't be Schultz' habit to talk to visitors over the top of a high garden gate. Blessed if I can make it out. Looks to me as if there's something fishy going on."

"Shouldn't wonder, as he's a German. What do you think, Fatty?"

"Sausages, I think."

"Eh?"

"And chips," said Fatty Wynn.

"What are you burbling about, ass?"

"What we're going to have for tea," said Fatty Wynn.

"Didn't you ask me what I thought?"

"Oh, come on!" said Figgins. "Fatty will start on one of us if he doesn't have his tea soon."

"Well, I'm hungry," said Fatty Wynn plaintively. "I've had nothing since dinner, except a pork-pie, and a saveloy, and some jam-tarts, and a cake, and—"

"Don't give us the list, for goodness' sake, or we sha'n't be home to-night!" said Figgins. "Let's sprint home."

"Good!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'll race you. I've got the sosses in the study ready, you know, and—"

"Buck up, then!"

The three juniors started at a run along the footpath. There was a sudden collision in the gloom, and Figgins & Co. staggered back, gasping. Before they could understand what was happening, they were pinioned on all sides by powerful hands, and a deep voice muttered:

"Secure them! The handcuffs—quick!"

## CHAPTER 7. A Desperate Venture.

TALBOT slid down the rope that hung against the wall, and rejoined the Terrible Three, who were waiting with beating hearts in the darkness. They peered anxiously at the face of the Toff.

"Have you seen anything?" muttered Tom

Merry.

Talbot nodded.

"Yes."

"What—what, then?"

"There's a big space inside—between this high wall and the house. And—and there's something there."

"Something! What?"

"I couldn't make out, in the dark. But it's something—something big and dark—goodness knows what! If I made a guess, I should think it was—"

Talbot paused.

"Well?"

"A balloon!" said Talbot quietly.

The Terrible Three gasped.

"A balloon?"

"That's the only thing I could think of that it could be. But the moon will be out later, and then we shall see."

"But a balloon would show over the wall," muttered Manners. "It would be too big to be hidden."

"If it's a balloon, it's only partly inflated," said Talbot.

"If it's that, that would account for Schultz refusing to let anybody step inside his gate. I believe it's necessary to have a licence now for experiments in that kind of thing, and the authorities would have too much sense to allow a German anything of the sort—even a naturalised German."

"But—but what could he want with a balloon?" said Tom Merry, mystified.

"It might be simply experimenting, or—"

"Or what?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

"Or a dodge to escape, if the police get down on him," said Talbot. "If Schultz is a spy—as very likely he is, being a German—he must expect to be bowled out sooner or later. He wouldn't want to be shot in the Tower, if he could help it. He couldn't get out of the country, now the authorities are careful with the passports. He might keep that as a last resource. Anyway, I believe that's what it is, and we can't quite suppose he's got it there for a good object."

"The police ought to be told," said Lowther.

"They must be told; but we must be sure first. We shall see when the moon rises."

"But they'll see us, too," said Manners. "When it's moonlight, our chivvies would show up over the wall—"

"That's what I came down for. I'm going down inside."

"Not alone!" said Tom Merry quickly.

"One would be enough to see what's to be seen," said Talbot. "And it's risky."

"Exactly; so we're all coming."

"We are—we is!" murmured Lowther.

Talbot paused.

"Look here," he said, "it's pretty clear Schultz is doing something against the law and his neck may be at stake. There will be danger if that's the case—perhaps a bullet each for us—"

"All or none!" said Tom

"Right! But, in case anything happens, one of us had better stop outside, to give information afterwards."

"Oh!" said Lowther.

"Well, I'm not stopping out," grinned Tom Merry.

"What about you, Monty?"

"Rats!" said Lowther promptly.

"What about you, Manners?"

"More rats!" said Manners.

"What about you, Talbot?"

"Still more rats!" said Talbot, smiling. "But I'll tell you what. Toss up for it, and take even chances all round."

"Well, that's a good idea."

"Agreed," said Manners. "But how are we going to toss up in the dark?"

"It won't do to strike a match here," said Lowther.

"No fear! Think of a number, and we'll guess odd or even," said Talbot.

"Ripping! Go ahead," said Lowther.

"Even."

Lowther grunted.

"Right! I thought of ten—the number of our study."

"Go it, Tom," said Manners.

"Even!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Right!" growled Manners. "I thought of Study No. 6."

"Two right," said Talbot—"Tom and I. Now you have got to settle it between you."

"All serene," said Lowther. "Will you ask me, Manners, or shall I ask you?"

"Just as you like," said Manners. "Well, I'll think of a number. If you guess wrong, you stay out."

"That's it. Got your number?"

"Yes. Guess."

"Odd!" said Lowther.

Manners snorted.

"How the thunder did you guess I'd thought of an odd number?" he demanded.

"Well, you're rather an odd fish, you know—"

"Br-r-r-r-r! Well, you've got it. I stay out!" growled Manners. "I was thinking of three—us three."

"And with my powerful brain I guessed you were!" chuckled Lowther.

"If you'd like to do it all over again on another system—" began Manners.

"Thanks, we wouldn't!" chuckled Tom Merry. "You're the odd man out, Manners. Perhaps it's all the better for you, as we may meet a ferocious Hun on the warpath!"

"I could handle him better than you could, you know."

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, all serene!" said Manners. "But how long am I to wait?"

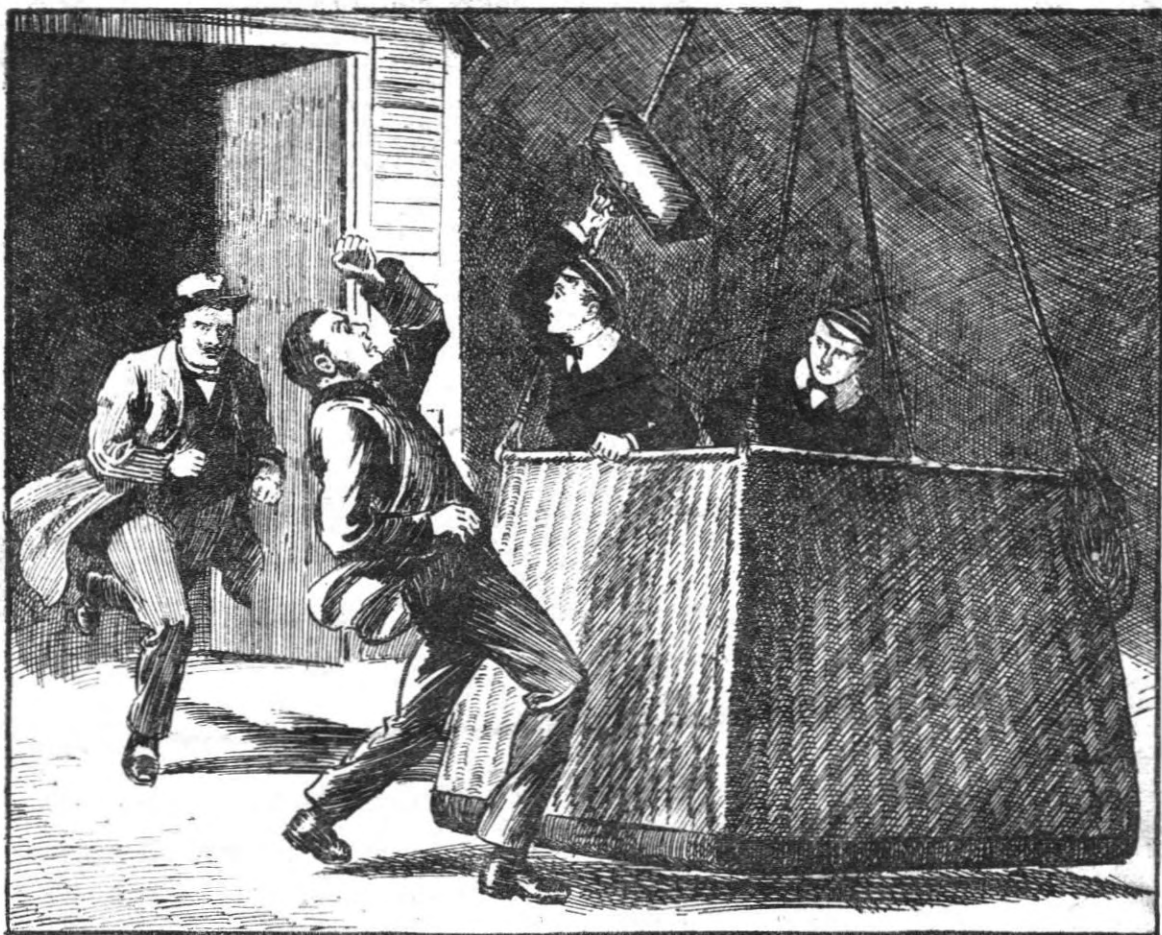
"Until your patience gives out!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Well, if we don't come back, you'll know something's happened," said Talbot. "You must use your own judgment. I'll go up first, you chaps, and spread my coat over the spikes."

"Right you are!"

Talbot whipped off his coat, and, with it hanging over his shoulder, swarmed up the rope again. He vanished into the darkness. But in a few minutes there was a shake of the rope, as a signal that he was on the wall.

Tom Merry climbed up next. It was not an easy climb, but the captain of the Shell was active and muscular, and he made good progress; but he was breathing very hard



The Swiss made a spring at the car. The leather bag in Tom Merry's hand smote him full in the face, and he reeled back with a yell. "Ach! Mein Gott!" (See Chapter 10.)

as he reached the top of the wall. He did not venture to speak, lest anyone lurking in the wide garden within should hear. He peered about him in the gloom, holding on to the huge spikes that lined the wall.

Talbot's coat was jammed on the spikes, and the Toff had already clambered over them, and was holding on by his hands inside. Tom Merry slowly and cautiously followed him.

The high spikes were set close together, and it was not easy to pass over them; but it could be done, and Tom did it. In a few minutes more he was on the inner side of the wall, holding on. Meanwhile, Monty Lowther was climbing the rope from outside.

Lowther paused at the top of the wall, and made his way cautiously over the spikes. He hung on the inside, and Talbot, freeing one hand, drew up the rope, and slid it down on the inner side of the wall. He touched Tom's arm, and the captain of the Shell obeyed the signal. He could have dropped the distance, but not without noise. He seized the rope, and lowered himself down. Monty Lowther followed.

Talbot removed his coat from the spikes. Invisible as it now was, it would have shown up conspicuously in the moonlight, and there was already a glimmer in the sky that hinted of the coming moon.

Holding the coat over his arm, Talbot slid down into the dark garden, and joined Tom and Lowther.

Around them was dense darkness.

The chums of the Shell peered about them. A sound reached them from the opposite end of the great garden—the sound of an angry voice. Though they did not know it, Figgins & Co. of the New House were at the gate. Monty Lowther chuckled softly.

"Sounds as if Schultz is interviewing some more of our

chaps," he murmured. "But where's the giddy article, you saw, Talbot?"

"Look!" whispered Talbot.

Between the dim house and the wall a strange shape was seen, at some distance from the juniors. There was evidently no one in that part of the garden, and the juniors with cautious steps moved along the wall. The garden was totally uncultivated and unkept, only a few straggling bushes growing within the walls.

But a good deal of space at the back was occupied by sheds.

Talbot suddenly drew his companions to a halt.

"Cover!" he breathed.

A light danced in the gloom.

From the direction of the front of the house footsteps came, and a low, growling voice. A man carrying a lantern was approaching, and the three juniors drew quickly back behind the corner of a shed.

Their hearts were beating fast.

They felt an inward certainty that "something" was going on behind the high walls of High Moor House that would not bear the light. But if their belief was a mistaken one, it would be no light matter to be caught trespassing in private grounds. A report to the Head of St. Jim's would surely follow, and dire punishment. On the other hand, if their suspicion was well founded, the danger was probably still more serious. They had ample reason for taking careful cover.

Close to the shed a mass of scraggy bush grew, and behind the bush, in the shadow of the shed, they were well concealed. They hardly breathed as they stared with beating hearts through the interstices of the bush. What were they about to see?

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"SPOOFING THE SWELL!"

## CHAPTER 8.

## To Fly or Not to Fly!

IT was Heinrich Schultz who held the lantern. The burly Fritz was following him, Figgins & Co. having been disposed of. Schultz's face, as the hidden juniors saw it, was pale with rage and, as they guessed, with apprehension. If ever fear and apprehension lurked in a human face, they could be read now in the fat features and shifty eyes of Heinrich Schultz.

His companion looked no less apprehensive. He was muttering something which came to the juniors' ears in a language which sounded like German, but which was not the German they knew. It was easy to guess that he was a German-Swiss, and it was his own dialect he was speaking.

"What are you saying, Fritz?" growled Schultz, speaking in English from long habit.

Probably, too, the odd dialect of the German-Swiss was incomprehensible to him.

"It is danger, Herr Schultz," said the man. "That was not the police; it was a boy that played a trick—a school-boy. But why should he say—how should he think of that trick? It is tat he know something!"

Schultz clenched a fat hand savagely. "It may be—it may be!" he muttered. "I have had warnings from Elbertz, in London, and another warning from Goerz. The police are awakening at last, and at least it will mean a search of the house!"

Fritz shrugged his broad shoulders. "A search, mein Herr! But that will be the finish. When they searched before there was nothing; but now—"

"Now there is the wireless," said Schultz grimly. "But it can be hidden in time if they come. Only if they are very suspicious will they search deep enough to find it; but then—"

"Puff—bang! Then we are dead men," said Fritz. Schultz shuddered.

"That is our risk," he said. "Himmel! We are paid for it; but—"

"But if we are sure that the game is up, mein Herr, it is petter tat we go," said Fritz. "After all, for a year and more we have done our work well."

"If I knew—if I were sure!" muttered Schultz restlessly. "But I cannot be sure. That was a schoolboy trick at the gate."

"But the boy must have known something."

"How could he? It was but a trick."

"And den the warnings tat you have."

Schultz nodded gloomily.

"It's true, Fritz. It would be madness to linger. But they do not suspect that a way of escape is prepared. The balloon will be a surprise to them. It is easy to pull the wool over the eyes of the police in this country. The walls and the gate will keep them out long enough for our escape—when they come."

"Let us go," urged Fritz. "The balloon is ready."

"You have placed the food in the lockers?"

"Ja wohl."

"And the water-bottles?"

"Ja, ja!"

The German set down the lantern.

"It would be madness to linger," he muttered. "But—perhaps safer than trusting our lives to the balloon. A favourable wind would drift us across the Channel; but—"

"The risk is not so great as to stay, and it is the only way of escape from this accursed country," growled Fritz. "That is what we have always known—that escape was impossible, if we are found out. There is only the balloon."

Schultz still hesitated.

Every word that was muttered by the two apprehensive rascals came audibly to the ears of the three juniors behind the ragged bush.

They remembered the shadowy figure they had seen in the darkness on the moor, and they understood that the German's apprehension was probably well founded. Other spies had warned him that the police were on his track, and the juniors had little doubt that the shadowy figure they had seen was that of a detective watching the building. As the German evidently feared, that very night the swoop of the police might come.

Escape from the country, once he was suspected, was impossible by any of the ordinary channels—hence the balloon that was prepared for the last desperate flight when the police were at the gates. Certainly, that was a resource that the officers of the law were not likely to foresee.

By the time the bolted gate was battered in, the balloon would be rising, and the two spies would be beyond their clutches, taking their chances of getting out of the country in the balloon. Well provisioned for a voyage, there was no

reason why the balloon should not carry them to safety. The distance was short to the Channel, and beyond the Channel was France—an enemy country to the spies; but an easterly wind would waft them to Belgium, where their rascally countrymen were entrenched. The flight would be a desperate one, but the alternative was a shooting-squad, once their treachery was discovered.

Schultz had put down the lantern, and was pacing to and fro, evidently in a state of mental agitation. Fritz watched him anxiously.

"Is it tat I inflate the balloon?" he asked at last.

Schultz stopped.

"When the balloon is inflated we must go," he said.

"Inflated, it will show over the walls when daylight comes."

"It is to-night that we should go!" growled the Swiss.

"I am assured tat te house is watched."

"I am not sure."

"Te game is up, Herr Schultz. If it is left, it may be too late."

Schultz made a gesture of decision.

"Let the balloon be inflated," he said. "We will keep it in readiness, and if there is no alarm, it can be deflated in the morning."

"And if te police come in te morning—"

"We can keep them out long enough to inflate the balloon."

If needed—Schultz's eyes gleamed savagely—"a Browning pistol will keep them out! There will not be many of them, and I am a dead-shot. If we are discovered, it is death for us; bloodshed will make it no worse."

"Tat is true, Herr Schultz."

"Inflate the balloon!" said Schultz, and he strode away towards the house, and disappeared.

Fritz followed him slowly.

The three juniors looked at one another breathlessly. Fritz had taken the lantern with him. But the moon was rising on the moor now, and a faint, silvery light glimmered into the garden.

"Well!" said Tom Merry, with a deep breath.

"We don't need much more proof," said Talbot.

"Hardly! But what's the game now?"

Talbot knitted his brows.

"We know what to tell the police," he said, in a low voice.

"But at the first sign of the police at the gates, the rascals will be off. And—and if the police are coming to-night, as that fat rascal seems to think— My hat!"

"What?"

"Look at the balloon!"

"It's filling!"

The great gas-envelope was supported on trestles. It was changing its shape now, belling out roundly. Evidently the envelope was connected by a pipe with the supply of hydrogen in the house. Fritz was inflating the balloon.

Slowly the great envelope bellied out, larger and rounder, rising higher every minute before the eyes of the juniors. Strange and ghostly it looked in the dim moonlight that fell into the garden.

They could see the car now under the gas-envelope—a large, round car, evidently very roomy within.

Lowther burst into a sudden soft chuckle.

"What price cutting the car loose?" he muttered. "We could get into it, and saw through the ropes, and the giddy balloon would sail off on its own."

Talbot and Tom Merry chuckled at the thought.

"If they came back and caught us, though?"

"Risk it!"

"You heard what that fat beast said about a Browning pistol. His neck's fairly in a noose, and he wouldn't stop at much!"

"But they don't seem to be coming out. One of us can keep watch while the others cut the ropes. You've got your pocket-knives?"

"What do you say, Talbot?"

"Good egg!" said Talbot. "It's a big risk, but it means catching those scoundrels instead of letting them get away. If we cut the balloon loose, they're done; and then we could bolt, and make for the police-station—"

"Then we'll chance it!"

But it was with wildly-beating hearts that the three juniors crept out of cover. Whether the German fully meant his desperate words they could not tell, but the danger was evidently real enough. Against a murderous weapon in a desperate hand they had little chance.

But, though their hearts thumped, they did not hesitate. Tom Merry and Talbot climbed nimbly into the great car, the sides of which almost overtopped them as they stood in it. Monty Lowther remained without, watching, ready to give the signal for flight if the Germans appeared.

The balloon was filling rapidly. It was quite off the trestles

now, and bellying out above the heads of the juniors. The gas was flowing fast into the great circular envelope.

Tom Merry and Talbot opened their pocket-knives. They were about to begin their work, when a sudden din came echoing through the silence—so sudden and startling that they jumped.

Bang! Bang! Bang! It was the sound of heavy blows upon the gate of High Moor House!

## CHAPTER 9.

### In the Name of the Law!

**F**IGGINS & Co. stood panting, amazed, as the hands that had grasped them in the darkness held them fast. There were five or six dark figures round them in the gloom, dimly seen.

"The handcuffs—quick!"

The wrists of the juniors were seized and dragged together. Then the astonished Figgins found his voice.

"What the thunder—"

"Chuck it!" growled Kerr. "What's the name of this game?"

"My aunt!" mumbled Fatty Wynn. "Gerroff my feet! Leggo!"

The startled voices of the schoolboys had a startling effect upon their captors. A face peered close to their faces searchingly.

"Never mind the handcuffs; but hold them. These are boys—schoolboys!"

"What the dickens did you think we were," demanded Figgins—"Turks or Prussians, or wild men from Borneo?"

"Who are you?"

"I'm Figgins of the Fourth."

"You are—what?"

"George Figgins, of that ilk!" said Figgins coolly. "I suppose you fellows are bobbies. Well, you've woke up the wrong passengers!"

"I wish you'd leggo!" said Fatty Wynn plaintively. "I'm fearfully hungry, and it's past tea-time!"

There was a faint chuckle among the captors.

"What are you doing here?" went on the deep voice.

"You have just come away from High Moor House. What business had you there?"

"Suppose you tell us what right you have to ask questions?" said Kerr coolly.

"I am Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard."

"Blessed if I didn't think I knew your voice!" said Figgins. "I've seen you before. You ought to know St. Jim's chaps when you see them. You've been to the school."

"I think I remember you," said the inspector grimly. "Now, tell me what you were doing at High Moor House!"

"Visiting the Hun," said Figgins. "We haven't been inside; he wouldn't let us in. Very cautious Hun, old Schultz!"

"But what was your object?"

"We wanted to bump the cad!"

"To—to what?"

"Bump him! Some of our chaps were caught in the storm last night on the moor, and the Hun beast refused them shelter," explained Figgins. "They're laid up with colds, in the sanatorium, all through him. So we came along to rag him a bit. But he wouldn't let us in—too fly!"

"Oh!" said the inspector.

"We japed him, pretending we were the bobbies come for him!" chuckled Figgins. "But the cunning brute spotted us over the gate, you see. Still, I think we gave him a turn."

"You young donkey!"

"Thanks! Same to you, and many of them!" said Figgins imperturbably.

"They may have given the alarm, Mr. Fix," said a voice which the juniors recognised as that of Inspector Skeat of Rylcombe.

"Not if the rascal saw that they were schoolboys," said Mr. Fix. "What put such an idea into your head, my boy?"

"Well, we knew he must have a bad conscience, being a Hun," said Figgins. "Shouldn't wonder if he's a spy, you know."

"You are a very sharp youth," said Mr. Fix.

"Generally considered so," admitted Figgins.

"I suppose you are after them?" said Kerr. "You didn't come out specially to capture Fourth-Formers of St. Jim's, did you, Mr. Fix?"

"No, I didn't," said Mr. Fix gruffly. "You young asses had better get back to your school."

"Jolly glad to," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm famished. If

I'd known that ass Figgins would stay so long, I'd have brought some sandwiches. As it is—"

"So the gate was fastened, was it?" asked Mr. Fix.

"Yes, rather."

"And they refused to open?"

"Yes."

"How many persons have you seen there?"

"Two—old Schultz and a man he called Fritz."

"You haven't seen any others?"

"No," said Figgins.

"Good. You may go. Clear right off at once," said the inspector, and he signed to his men to release the juniors.

"Thanks," said Figgins. "Good-night, Mr. Fix! You wouldn't like us to help you?"

"No!"—grunted Mr. Fix.

"We're considered rather hefty in a scrap—"

"Cut off at once!"

"Oh, all right!"

Figgins & Co. cut off and quickly disappeared into the darkness of the moor. But as soon as they were well out of sight of the police, Figgins called a halt.

"Oh, come on!" urged Fatty Wynn. "I've been thinking that young Pratt knew about those sosses in the study. Suppose he borrowed them—"

"We're not going home yet," said Figgins.

"But tea—"

"Shut up, you porpoise! Blow tea!"

"We've missed call-over already," said Kerr.

"Blow calling-over, too! We're on in this scene. Don't you see?" Figgins whispered excitedly. "Old Fix and his gang are after the Huns. Schultz must be a spy or something. The way they collared us shows that they're going to bag the Huns in High Moor House."

"That's plain enough," said Kerr, with a grin. "But the inspector declined our assistance, Figgy."

Figgins snorted.

"That's because he's an ass. Suppose the Huns get away from them—"

"Not likely."

"But they might, and that's where we come in. Anyway, we're going to see the fun. We're late already, and we may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb."

"But I'm hungry!"

"If you say you're hungry again, Fatty," said Figgins, in a tone of concentrated ferocity, "I'll sling you into the deepest hole on the moor, and leave you there!"

"But look here, Figgins—"

"You can cut off, you fat duffer, if you'd rather gorge than have a hand in collaring Huns!" growled Figgins.

"Well, you ought to have given a chap a warning. I could have brought some sandwiches if I'd known—"

"Br-r-r! Come on!"

Fatty Wynn suppressed a dismal groan, and Kerr grinned, and the loyal Co. followed the great Figgins, creeping back cautiously towards the lonely house. If the Huns were to be seized by the police, Figgins was fully determined to see the fun. Besides, he felt that very probably his help might be wanted. Mr. Fix didn't seem to think so, but that might be only a proof of a lack of intelligence on Mr. Fix's part.

Bang, bang, bang!

Figgins jumped.

"Hallo! They're knocking at the gate!"

"Looks like business!" grinned Kerr. "I suppose old Fix has got the house surrounded."

"The Huns might break through, and that's where we come in," said Figgins sagely. "What are you mumbbling, Fatty?"

"Have you got any chocolate or toffee about you, Figgy?"

"Dry up!" hissed Figgins.

"Well, any aniseed balls, then? Yow-ow-ow! Keep your fatheaded elbow out of my ribs, you silly idiot!"

"Keep your fat head shut, then!"

Keeping in the cover of a straggling bush by the path, Figgins & Co. peered towards the house. Outside the gate dim forms were gathered. The sound of the loud knocking rang through the night.

A head rose over the gate.

"Who is there?"

"Police!" said Inspector Fix grimly. "Open at once, in the name of the law! I have a warrant to search this building!"

It was Fritz. He blinked down over the gate at the inspector. The rising moon gave light enough now for the Swiss to recognise that the visitors, this time, were indeed the police. His face was pale as death.

"You hear me?" said the inspector. "Open the gate instantly, or it will be forced!"

"My master has the key!" faltered the Swiss. "I will call him. In two minutes, sir, the gate will be opened."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

"Hurry up, then, and mention to your master at the same time that the house is surrounded on all sides," said the inspector.

Fritz disappeared.  
Mr. Fix waited for the opening of the gate. Mr. Fix was in a completely satisfied mood. Unless the Huns had wings, there was no escape for them—so far as Mr. Fix knew. He could afford to wait a few minutes for the opening of the gate.

## CHAPTER 10. In the Balloon.

"WHAT the dickens—" ejaculated Tom Merry.  
Talbot compressed his lips.  
"Some of the fellows at the gate again, perhaps, or—"  
"Or what?"

"The police."  
"More likely some of the fellows," said Tom Merry.  
"Lots of them are on the warpath, you know."  
The din at the gate died away, and it was followed by deep silence. There was a sound of hurried footsteps in the garden.

"They're coming!" panted Lowther, outside the big car.  
"My hat! Cover!"  
Lowther scudded back into the cover of the bush.  
Tom Merry and Talbot put their hands on the rim of the car to jump out. But Talbot dragged his chum back in time.

"Too late! They'll spot us!" he breathed.  
The Swiss was dashing towards the balloon, his face white in the moonlight, his eyes gleaming like a wild animal's. Monty Lowther, behind the bush, clenched his hands in an agony of anxiety. His comrades were still in the car, and if they were seen, Lowther stood ready to rush to their aid.

But the two juniors in the car had grasped the situation. They sank down out of sight in the roomy depths of the car as the white-faced Swiss ran up.

"Quiet!" breathed Talbot. "He mayn't see us. If he does, then it's time to show up! Quiet!"  
Tom Merry pressed his arm to show that he agreed.  
The balloon car was deep and spacious, and surrounded by lockers. There were a number of coats and rugs piled on the lockers, evidently for protection against cold when the voyagers rose into the clouds. All was prepared for the flight, save the inflation of the gas-envelope.

Talbot pulled a large woollen rug over him and his comrade in the depths of the car, leaving only their faces exposed. If it came to a struggle, the juniors were ready; but not so long as they could help it did they wish to try conclusions with the two ruffians, who were armed and desperate.

The Swiss did not enter the car.  
He paused outside, and the juniors heard his hurried breathing. He was examining the thick rope that held the car moored to the ground, and the pipe by which gas was pouring into the envelope.

Hurried footsteps sounded again, and the juniors knew that Schultz had joined the Swiss. His agitated voice was heard.

"Fritz! Fritz! Is it ready?"  
"Five minutes yet, mein herr!"  
"Mein Gott!"  
"But the police will wait five minutes before they break in the gate, mein herr. They know nothing of the balloon."  
"True. They are too close to the walls to see it rising now; but they have others further out—they will see it—"  
"Not in this light."  
"The moon is clearing—"  
"Only a few minutes now."

Schultz panted like a hunted animal. The fat rascal was evidently in a state of mingled fear and fury and desperation. For a year or more he had carried on his nefarious work under the noses of the police, in incessant peril of discovery and death, tempted by the high pay of the Berlin spy bureau. But now that the climax had come, the crisis that he had foreseen and guarded against to the utmost in his power, he was quivering with dire apprehension.

Crash, crash!  
Schultz started violently.  
"They are beating in the gate, Fritz!"  
"It will keep them some minutes, mein Herr. You have the papers?"  
"All—all safe!"  
"They will find the wireless—they will not find us! And the pigeons—"  
"I have released the last of them."  
"Sehr gut!"  
Crash, crash, crash!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

Inspector Fix had evidently lost patience. The police had come provided with implements for forcing an entrance, and they were using them. The crashing of the woodwork rang through the night, as the gate yielded under the heavy blows of axes wielded by muscular arms.

Crash! Creak! Crash!  
The gate was falling.  
"Fritz! Schnell! Schnell!" panted the German.  
"Fertig!" said the Swiss.  
In the darkness, within the deep car, Tom Merry and Talbot crouched—silent, dismayed, nonplussed.

They understood the muttered words in German—they knew that "Fertig" meant that it was ready.

The two villains were about to ascend. And the two juniors were in the car. What was to be done?

Tom Merry gripped Talbot's arm. It was impossible to speak without betraying their presence.  
The gate still held, though it was yielding; the police could give no aid. To enter into a struggle with the two desperate spies was a fearful alternative, but the only other alternative was to remain in the car and ascend with them, and then the struggle must come.

The Swiss' hands were moving quickly in the gloom; he was casting off the pipe by which the gas-envelope had been inflated.

Crash!  
It was the last crash of the falling gate. Loud footsteps, the flashing of lanterns in the gloom—shouting voices! The police were within the walls of High Moor House at last.

"Keep them out of the car!" muttered Talbot.  
"It's the last chance, Talbot!"

The juniors threw aside the rug, and leaped up. They groped about the car for something that could serve as a weapon. Talbot grasped a grappling-hook and Tom a leathern bag that lay on a locker. But their muttering voices had been heard, and there was a shriek from the German.

"Ach, ach! Mein Gott! Fritz, who is in the car?"  
The Swiss stood rooted to the ground.  
"There is someone in the car, Fritz!"  
"Himmel!"

The Swiss made a spring at the car, and glared in. The leather bag in Tom Merry's hand smote him full in the face, and he reeled back with a yell. The juniors were desperate now.

"Fritz, what was it? Ach!"  
"There are two boys in the car!"  
"Boys! Ach!" The German's voice rose to a shriek.  
"The police! They are here!"  
The Swiss ground his teeth.

"We must go or all is lost! Leap into the car!"  
The burly Swiss led the way. He came crashing into the car, and both the juniors struck fiercely. The bag and the grappling-hook crashed upon the Swiss, but he rolled into the car, and his powerful arms grasped both the juniors. The three of them rolled into the bottom of the car, struggling.

"Cast off the rope, mein Herr!" panted the Swiss. "I hold them—I hold them! Cut the rope, in the name of Satan!"

Schultz, panting, rolled into the car. A knife gleamed in his hand, and sawed across the rope.  
There was a shout from the constables, who were swarming in through the shattered gateway.  
"A balloon!"  
"Stop them!"  
"Quick!" yelled Mr. Fix. "A balloon, by thunder! Seize the rope!"

The German's knife sawed frantically. In the bottom of the car Tom Merry and Talbot were struggling furiously with the Swiss. But the burly ruffian held them, heedless of blows rained upon him. He held them fast, and they could not get at the German—and the knife sawed rapidly through the rope.

From the bush by the shed Monty Lowther dashed desperately, grasping the car. What would happen he did not know; but he knew his chums were fighting for their lives, and that was enough. He clambered fiercely over the rim of the car—the German, sawing madly at the rope, did not even look at him.

Lowther tumbled headlong into the car, falling heavily upon the Swiss and the two juniors struggling on the floor. In the darkness there it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe.

The footsteps of the police were close at hand; they were racing frantically to seize the car before it could rise. But the keen knife was sawing through the last strand of the rope.

Just as the rope parted the foremost constable reached the car. The balloon was moving, as he caught the rim with both hands and dragged on it.



Fritz grinned as he played the hose on the departing army. In about a minute there wasn't a single junior left within radius of the hose. Drenched and furious, the army beat a tumultuous retreat, and Fritz guffawed, and disappeared from view within the gate. (See Chapter 4.)

With a snarl like a wild beast, the German hacked at his hands with the knife, and the man let go with a yell of pain. The car sprang up as his weight was gone, and the German was flung backwards, and the knife flew from his hand.

The balloon was rising, and below, just out of reach of the bottom of the car, Inspector Fix of Scotland Yard stood gesticulating and raging.

## CHAPTER 11. The Flight.

**B**UMP!

There were five in the car, struggling helplessly in a heap. They were dragging themselves apart when the sudden bump came, and they were hurled down again.

The car, floating away as the balloon rose, had struck against the high wall at the back of the garden, and it rocked

like a boat in a storm. But for the fact that the occupants were clinging to one another, some must have been hurled out. They rolled confusedly, dazed and bewildered, as the great car rocked and swung.

Bump!

The wind had caught the great gas-envelope, and was bearing it on. But the balloon had not risen high enough to clear the wall.

The reason was simple. The German had planned for the balloon to shoot up immediately the rope was cast off. But there were three more occupants in the car than the spy had allowed for.

The weight of the three juniors made all the difference.

The balloon was rising, but slowly and lethargically—the addition of a few more pounds of weight would have been sufficient to bring it bumping on the earth again.

Bump!

At the third bump the balloon cleared the wall, oscillating

violently, and floated away over the moor, barely a dozen feet from the ground.

Manners of the Shell stared up at it.

He had heard the suffling and the panting, helplessly—the rope was on the inner side of the wall, and he could not go to the help of his chums. What had happened? He did not know that the juniors were in the car. All he could see in the moonlight was the bottom of the car and the great gas-envelope bellying over it. The car swung from side to side as if it would overturn. Then Manners jumped as a loud voice came to his ears from the balloon:

"Buck up!"

It was Tom Merry's voice.

"Tom!" shrieked Manners.

The balloon drifted away over the moor, and Manners started running in pursuit. It was moving slowly—the wind was not powerful. Higher up there were stronger currents, but the balloon, overweighted, could not rise.

Manners, panting, ran along under the car, his eyes fixed on it, stumbling, falling, picking himself up again, and running on desperately.

In the moonlight, the great balloon showed up clearly on the moor. There was a yell from somewhere, and Manners knew Figgins' voice.

Footsteps beat behind him—the long-legged Figgins overtook him. Kerr was close behind, and Fatty Wynn—all forgetful of his tea now—was panting in the rear.

"Manners!" panted Figgins, as he drew level with the Shell fellows. "Manners, are they getting away in that?"

"Yes; and Tom's in it!" groaned Manners.

"Tom Merry?"

"Yes. Run!" panted Manners. "It's not rising! It may catch in the trees when it passes over the wood!"

"Good egg!" breathed Figgins. "Run, you beggars!"

"I'm here!" panted Kerr. "Buck up, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn did not reply; he needed all his breath for running. He was putting on steam at a record rate.

The four juniors pounded on over the rough moor. What had happened within the high walls of High Moor House they could not know; but they knew that the German spies were escaping in the balloon—that Tom Merry was there—and the wild oscillations of the car showed that a struggle was going on, so it was unlikely that Tom was alone with the Germans. Ahead of them lay the wood, and the balloon was drifting directly towards it. Unless it rose higher, it could not clear the trees. It seemed to be rising yet, but only by inches. And it moved so slowly along that the juniors below could easily have out-raced it. If it caught in the trees— Behind the running juniors, several of the constables were in hot pursuit. They had seen that there was a chance yet of capturing the balloon, though they could not guess why it did not rise.

The car swung wildly as the struggle went on. Tom Merry and Talbot had pinned the Swiss down in the bottom of the car. They were sprawling on him and holding him down, in spite of his savage efforts. Monty Lowther was struggling with the German. It was a man against a boy; but the man was fat and clumsy and unfit, and the boy was active and strong. Schultz had been pitched over by the rolling of the car, with Lowther clinging to him, and the junior was uppermost. His knee was on the German's stomach, and Schultz was gasping spasmodically. He made frantic efforts to get his hand into his pistol pocket, but Monty Lowther had his wrist in a fierce grip, and held on to it.

The forces seemed about equally matched, unless one of the rascals should get a chance to use a deadly weapon. The Swiss had succeeded in getting his hand behind him, to the hip-pocket where his revolver was, but he was pinned down on his back, his arm under him, and he could not draw the weapon.

Crash!

The balloon had reached the trees. The car crashed into the high branches, and rocked and swung through them. It dragged onwards, smashing through the boughs. But it was slow and heavy now, and it dragged along almost on its side.

"Now's our chance," breathed Figgins.

Manners was leaping forward. He was ahead of the balloon now, and he clambered hurriedly into the tree in its path. He did not think for the moment of his own danger of being hurled to the earth by the impact of the car.

The balloon swept on, crashing into the tree, and Manners' desperate clutch fastened on the wicker rim. He was swept onward with the balloon dragged away from the tree he had climbed, but he had hold of the car, and he held on grimly. And his weight told at once. The boughs and branches lashed and stung him as he was dragged on; but his elbows were over the edge of the car now, and he rolled

THE GEM LIBRARY, No. 423

in. The balloon sank lower, settling down in a wide green glade.

Bump!

The car crashed against the grassy earth.

"Got it!" shrieked Figgins.

The three New House juniors came bursting through the bushes to the spot as the balloon struck the earth.

But the sudden impact curled it up again, and it rose eight or nine feet, the car swinging like a pendulum, Figgins & Co. were left below, panting.

The shock tore the combataats in the car from one another's grip, as they rolled over dazed and dumbfounded. The Swiss tore himself loose, almost exhausted by the struggle. He did not turn upon the juniors, however. He grasped a heavy portmanteau that lay in the car, and hurled it over the side. He followed it with a sandbag, and then another and another, till Tom Merry and Talbot fastened on him and dragged him down again.

But the Swiss had succeeded

The balloon, relieved of a great weight, shot up at almost dizzy speed, and vanished like a rocket from the eyes of Figgins & Co.

At a height of three hundred feet it found its level, and a strong current of wind caught it and whirled it onwards.

"Done!" panted Figgins. "Where's Manners?"

"In the car," said Fatty Wynn. "I saw him hanging on— He got in—"

"My hat!"

Figgins gazed after the balloon. It was a spot in the moonlight, and disappeared quickly, borne southward on the high wind. Further pursuit was evidently hopeless.

Inspector Fix came panting up

"It's gone, sir," said Figgins.

The inspector gritted his teeth.

"What a trick!" he muttered. "Who'd have thought it? But it'll be brought down. They'll never get out of England."

"All the rotters got away in it, sir!"

"There were only two, and they're both in it!" growled Mr. Fix savagely.

"And some of our chaps with them!" said Kerr grimly.

"What?"

"Tom Merry and Manners are in the car with them. I don't know about the others. I know Talbot and Lowther were with them. Did you see them at the house?"

"There is nobody at the house but the police."

Figgins whistled.

"Then they must be in the car along with Tom Merry."

Figgins stared up into the moonlight. The flush of exertion had died out of his face, and it showed pale and set in the glimmer of the moon. Higher and higher the moon sailed over the moorland lighting up the wide, heathy expanse and the glimmering trees. But the balloon had vanished, and with it had vanished the chums of the Shell. Would St. Jim's ever look again upon the faces of Tom Merry and his comrades?

## CHAPTER 12.

### The Last Fight.

"HOLD them!" panted Tom Merry

The struggle was over in the gliding car.

High above the earth, glimmering in the moonlight, the balloon swept on to the southward. The grim struggle in the car had ended for the moment; Manners had made all the difference. The German and the Swiss, each in the grasp of two sturdy juniors, lay in the bottom of the car, held down by main force. The fierce struggle had exhausted both parties, but the St. Jim's juniors held the upper hand.

Schultz was breathing stertorously, completely winded. He gave the juniors little trouble now. The burly Swiss had also ceased to resist, but his eyes were gleaming like a wild cat's. The juniors had given him no chance to draw a weapon; but had his revolver seen the light, grim murder would have been done in the drifting car.

"Our win!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Manners, old man, where the merry thunder did you spring from?"

Manners panted.

"I got in a tree—it was touch and go—"

"Lucky it was touch, and not go," chuckled Lowther.

"Keep still, you Swiss scoundrel, or you'll get my elbow in your bread-basket—like that."

"Groooh!"

Monty Lowther was evidently recovering his spirits.

"We've got them," said Talbot quietly. He released one hand, and reached out for the grappling-hook, which had fallen near him. "Mind, you rascal! Make a movement, and I'll brain you as I would a mad dog!"



The eyes of the Swiss glittered at him, but he did not speak.

"Anybody hurt?" asked Lowther.

"I've got about two hundred and fifty bumps, more or less," said Tom Merry. "Not what you'd call hurt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've got the balloon," said Manners.

"You mean the balloon's got us," said Monty Lowther.

"Anybody know where we are, or where we're going?"

"Haven't the faintest idea."

"It's a south wind," said Talbot. "It won't take us long to reach the sea at this rate. We've got to get down somehow."

"How, dear boy?"

"There must be a valve-cord to the balloon. We shall have to let out the gas to descend."

"And let go these cut-throats to do it?"

"No. Hold on to the rotters!"

Schultz was panting in great spasms, but he found his voice at last. His eyes were burning with rage and hatred, but he strove to speak calmly.

"Let me up!"

Tom Merry laughed breathlessly

"Yes; that's likely," he said.

"What right have you to enter my balloon?"

"More right than you have, I think, you Prussian soundrel!"

"I am British," said Schultz. "I am well known in Wayland."

"Better known now than you were, as the bobbies are after you," grinned Monty Lowther. "Is the cheeky reptile trying to bluff us? My dear Hun, we know you are a spy. We heard you burbling in the garden. We know you are going to be shot if you are caught and we're going to do our level best not to disappoint the firing-party. Savvy?"

Schultz ground his teeth. If he had hoped to fool the schoolboys, that faint hope was gone now.

"Listen!" he said, after a pause. "As you say, my life is at stake. My freedom means my life. Do you—schoolboys as you are—wish to have my life on your hands?"

"Certainly," said Lowther. "Pleased, in fact."

"That's not our business," said Tom Merry, more soberly. "It's for the authorities to deal with you, Mr. Schultz. when you are handed over to them. You are a spy and a traitor, and your pal is worse, as he belongs to a neutral country. You knew what you were risking."

"I will give you a thousand pounds—"

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther. "Will you have it in gold or notes, Tommy?"

"A thousand pounds to release us," said Schultz. "You are schoolboys—it will make you rich. Lower the balloon, and step out. You shall take the money with you. I have it in my pocket-book."

"It can stay there till the police take it," said Tom Merry contemptuously.

"Ach! You must be mad! Listen! I will give you all that I have! I have banknotes for thousands—all shall be yours—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Schultz relapsed into savage silence. The Swiss had not spoken a word, but his look showed that he was only waiting to recover his exhausted strength to make another struggle.

"We shall have to tie them up," said Talbot. "There's plenty of rope in the car. When they're safe we can descend."

"Good egg! Keep that hook handy, and if the villain moves, smash him," said Lowther. "We'll fasten him up first, as he's most dangerous."

The Swiss set his teeth hard.

Monty Lowther blinked round the car in search of a rope. There were several coils hanging inside the car, but they were out of reach. It was evident that one of the juniors would have to release the Swiss, and that at that moment the ruffian would renew the struggle.

Talbot set his strong knee on Fritz's broad chest, and with his right hand raised the heavy grappling-iron.

"Move, and this comes down as hard as I can hit," he said quietly. "I give you warning."

"Ready?" said Lowther.

"Yes; get the rope."

Lowther released the Swiss and reached for the nearest rope. The iron hook was over the upturned face of the ruffian, and Talbot's hand was firm, his determination fixed. But the Swiss did not hesitate—it was his last chance. Once bound, he would be helpless, and he knew what to expect when he was handed over to the military authorities. His doom would then be short and sharp.

The moment Lowther's grasp was off him he made a fierce effort, and Talbot was almost hurled off. True to his word,

Talbot brought down his weapon with a crash. The Swiss's head jerked aside, but he could not wholly escape the blow—instead of striking him fair and square, the iron hook crashed on the side of his head. He uttered a yell of agony. But Talbot had no time to repeat the blow. Dazed as he was, the ruffian grasped the junior in both arms and rolled over with him.

"Help, Lowther!" panted Talbot.

Lowther whirled round on the Swiss again and grasped him.

The car rocked violently as they rolled over struggling in a heap.

Tom Merry was flung sideways from Schultz, and the German made a savage effort, and flung off Manners, and rose to one knee.

The two juniors were on him again like cats, but not before the Browning pistol had been dragged out.

Before the German could use the weapon, however, he crashed down in the car under Tom and Manners.

Crack!

The sudden explosion seemed like thunder in the car as the German pulled the trigger. He was sprawling in the bottom of the car, and the shot flew at random; but a loud, terrible scream showed that it had found its billet.

That fearful cry rang in Tom Merry's ears. His fists beat furiously at the German's fat face. Schultz panted and struggled, but his arm was twisted under him, and he could not pull the trigger again. An iron hook swept through the air and crashed on his head, and Schultz groaned and lay still.

Tom Merry staggered blindly up.

"Who's hurt?" he panted. "Monty—"

"I'm not hurt, old chap. It's the Swiss!"

"The Swiss!"

Tom Merry almost sobbed with relief.

That terrible cry was still ringing in his ears, and before his eyes had danced a horrible vision of his chum stretched in his blood in the bottom of the car.

But the random bullet had found another billet.

The muzzle of the pistol had been almost touching the burly Swiss when the German blindly pulled the trigger. He had shot his companion through the body.

The Swiss lay huddled in the bottom of the car, his face white as wax, his limbs nerveless, groaning deeply.

Manners wrenched the pistol from the hand of the half-stunned German.

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Tom Merry. "I—I thought—I thought—"

"The brute didn't know where he was shooting," said Lowther, in a low voice. "We've been lucky."

Schultz sat up blindly. His fat hand rubbed at his head, where he had been struck, and he blinked dazedly at the juniors. They grasped him at once.

"The rope!" said Talbot.

Monty Lowther uncoiled the cord. The German resisted feebly, but he was held fast while Lowther knotted the cord about his wrists and ankles.

Then he lay a helpless prisoner.

Tom Merry looked at the Swiss. His eyes had closed, and he was insensible. The floor of the car was stained crimson where he lay.

"We—we must do what we can for him," muttered Tom.

There was little they could do for the Swiss. They uncovered the wound, and bound it up with their handkerchiefs to stop the flow of blood. It was all they could do. The man lay insensible under their hands.

"Now to descend!" said Talbot.

## CHAPTER 13.

### Landed at Last.

**T**OM MERRY looked over the rim of the car. The wind was bearing the balloon along in a south-easterly direction, but what distance it had covered Tom could not even guess.

Three hundred feet or more below the countryside glimmered in the moonlight—farmhouses and trees glimmered by, and a shining river.

Twinkling lights ahead showed that a town lay in the path of the balloon.

Tom uttered a sudden exclamation as he caught sight of long lines of huts on the heath beyond the town.

"Abbotsford!" he exclaimed.

"It's a camp, anyway," said Talbot. "Yes, it's Abbotsford. We shall pass over the camp."

"And descend there," said Tom.

Talbot smiled faintly.

"A surprise for my uncle," he said.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Tom Merry smiled, too. The previous day the chums of the Shell had visited Colonel Lyndon in his quarters at Abbotsford Camp. They had little dreamed under what circumstances they would pay another visit.

Had the balloon been still in the hands of the Germans, it would have risen into the clouds to escape the sight of the men in khaki. But the juniors were masters of the situation now, and they were looking for a place to descend.

The balloon drifted on over the town, and there was a sound of shouting in the streets below.

They had been sighted!

In the moonlight, streets and buildings were clear to their eyes as they looked down; they sighted Abbotsford School, where they had played many a game of football and cricket, and then the town was passed, and they were floating over the wide heath, covered with hats and tents.

Among the huts men in khaki were swarming, looking upward, watching the progress of the balloon. A shot rang out from below, whizzing away past the balloon.

"That's a signal to come down and give an account of ourselves," said Talbot. "Look, there's an officer watching up through his glasses! By Jove, it's my uncle!"

Talbot leaned over the car and waved his hand to Colonel Lyndon, but the distance was too great.

"Where's that blessed valve?" said Monty Lowther. "I don't understand these things. We've got to get down, or they'll take us for an enemy balloon, and open fire, very likely."

"The sooner the quicker," said Manners.

"I've found the cord," said Talbot quietly.

He pulled the valve-cord.

The balloon floated on, indistinguishable shouts reaching the ears of the juniors from below.

Another shot rang out—evidently a warning to descend. There was a ripping sound as the bullet tore its way through the great gas-envelope.

"That's to help us down," grinned Monty Lowther.

The balloon was descending now. The gas was escaping both from the valve and from the double bullet-hole where the rifle-shot had passed clean through from side to side.

The huts, the tents, the khaki-clad figures came clearer and clearer into view from the car.

"Better show a white flag," said Monty Lowther. "I've got a handkerchief—"

Lowther waved his handkerchief to the men below. The balloon was drifting slowly now, and settling down.

There was a hoarse cry from Schultz, as he lay huddled in his bonds on the floor of the car.

"Ach! We are going down, then?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Mercy! It is death for me!"

"Would you like us to take you to Germany?" asked Monty Lowther politely.

"I will give you all that you can ask—"

"You may as well shut up, Mr. Schultz," said Tom Merry quietly. "You'll have a fair trial, and that's more than you deserve."

A stream of curses in savage German broke from the spy. His fate was sealed now, and he knew it.

But for the intervention of the St. Jim's juniors, the balloon would have been sailing high in the clouds, for Belgium and safety. But the last desperate resource of the spy had failed him. Fate had been against him, and he was not to escape his deserts. His voice died away at last in savage mutterings.

Lower and lower sank the balloon.

There was a crash as it struck a tree and branches were dragged away. The juniors held on to the car. Talbot threw out a rope, and it was caught by a man in khaki. The rope was made fast to the car.

"All serene now!" said Talbot.

A dozen men had hold of the rope below, and the balloon was dragged to earth.

Talbot closed the valve. The huge gas-envelope, half deflated, floated down, and the car bumped gently on the sward.

It was instantly surrounded by soldiers. Monty Lowther raised his cap to the amazed men in khaki with a graceful bow.

"Good-evening, dear boys!" he remarked.

"What the thunder—"

"Call Colonel Lyndon," said Talbot. "He is my uncle. I will explain to him."

"The colonel's here, sir."

The tall figure of the colonel was striding to the spot. He looked to the car.

"Who are you? What— Talbot, by gad!"

Talbot smiled.

"Yes, uncle."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

"Talbot," gasped the colonel, in utter amazement, "what the dickens— What are you doing here? What is all this?"

Talbot explained quietly.

"By Jove!" said Colonel Lyndon, tugging at his grey moustache. "You young rascals! What would your headmaster say to this—what?"

"That's what we're going to find out, sir," said Monty Lowther. "We've missed calling-over catching these spies for you!"

Colonel Lyndon laughed.

"I will take care of them," he said, "and you can leave the balloon in my hands. I'll let Inspector Fix know that his prisoners are safe. Jump out!"

Tom Merry & Co. clambered out of the car.

Schultz and the wounded Swiss were lifted out by the soldiers. The juniors followed the colonel to his quarters. There, while they discussed a substantial supper—having realised, now that the excitement was over, that they were very hungry—the colonel went to the telephone, and after supper the colonel's car carried them homeward in great spirits.

## CHAPTER 14.

### Anxious for News!

**F**IGGINS & CO. had arrived at St. Jim's with glum faces.

What would happen to their chums in the car they could not tell, but their hearts were heavy.

The gates were locked, and Taggles came grumbling out of his lodge as Figgins rang a peal at the bell.

"Nice goings hon!" said Taggles severely. "Where are the other young rips? Which you're to report yourselves to the 'Ead!'"

Figgins & Co. made their way to the Head's house. They were not very uneasy as to the result of the interview, considering the news they were bringing. Kangaroo of the Shell bore down on them in the dusky quad.

"Oh, so you've got back, you bounders?" he said.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" grunted Figgins morosely.

"And we're frightfully hungry," said Fatty Wynn.

"Your Housemaster's been to the Head about you," said Kangaroo. "Ratty was in a wax. Have you seen anything of Tom Merry? He hasn't come in yet."

"I don't think he's likely to," groaned Figgins. "He's gone off in a balloon."

"Wha-a-at!"

"And Manners and Lowther and Talbot with him—and two German spies," said Figgins. "I only hope we shall see him alive again. Poor old Tommy!"

"What's happened?" exclaimed Kangaroo breathlessly.

Figgins explained, and the Co. went on dispiritedly to the Head's house, while the Constalk rushed into the School House with the news.

Dr. Holmes was looking very stern when the three delinquents were shown into his presence.

"So you have returned?" he said. "Your Housemaster has reported your absence to me. You have stayed out almost till bedtime, Figgins!"

"I've got bad news, sir," faltered Figgins.

"Has anything happened to Merry and the others?"

"Yes, sir."

"You may tell me, Figgins," said the Head quietly.

Figgins told the story again in a faltering voice. The doctor's kind old face grew paler as he listened.

"Good heavens!" he said at last. "The reckless lads—the foolish lads!"

**FREE FOR SELLING OR USING  
12 BEAUTIFUL POST-  
CARDS AT 1d. EACH.**

As an advertisement we give every reader of this paper a splendid present **FREE**, simply for selling or using 12 Beautiful Postcards at 1d. each, Gold Mounted, Embossed, Patriotic, Real Photos, Glossy, etc. Our new Prize List contains hundreds of different kinds of free gifts, including Ladies' & Gents' Cycles, Gold & Silver Watches, Periscopes, Feathers, Chains, Rings, Fur Sets, Cinemas, Gramophones, Air Guns, Tea Sets, Toys, etc., etc. *All you need do is to send us your Name and Address (a postcard will do), and we will send you a selection of lovely cards to sell or use at 1d. each.* When sold send the money obtained and we immediately forward gift chosen according to the Grand Illustrated List we send you. (Colonial Applications invited.) Send a postcard now to—**THE ROYAL CARD CO., Dept. 3, KEW, LONDON.**





The thorough rout of the Turkish Army in Armenia was due to the rapid movements of Russia's Siberian troops. Our Special Artist here depicts a regiment of these wonderful fighters charging across the moonlit and frozen ground, and patting the fleeing Turks to the sword!

"They were trying to stop the spies getting away, I suppose, sir," said Figgins. "But they got away, and took the chaps with them. I—I don't know what'll happen to them—" Figgins broke off miserably.

"We must hope for the best, Figgins," said the Head. "There is a chance that they may be safe. You may go to your House. In the circumstances, I shall not punish you for being late."

"Thank you, sir!"

And Figgins & Co. returned to the New House.

They were surrounded at once by a crowd of fellows, anxious to know what had kept them out, and in a few minutes the New House was buzzing with the news.

In Figgins' study, Fatty Wynn eyed the sausages dubiously. In the circumstances, he felt that he couldn't indulge in the tremendous feed he had been anticipating. He looked uncertainly at Kerr and Figgins.

"You fellows feel hungry?" he ventured.

"I am," said Figgins. "I don't feel as if I could eat anything, though."

"Better have a snack," said Fatty. "I—I feel awfully out up about those chaps, too; but it's no good getting run down. You can bear these things ever so much better if you lay a solid foundation!"

Figgins grunted, and Kerr did not answer. Fatty Wynn eyed the sausages regretfully, but he felt that a smell of cooking in the study would seem heartless. Yet to go to bed unfed was impossible to Fatty. He decided on a middle course, and replaced the sausages in the cupboard, and started on the cake.

All St. Jim's was buzzing with the story of the disappearance of Tom Merry & Co. in the German spy's balloon. Their friends—and their name was legion—were in a state of consternation, but the rest of the School House were in a state of the keenest anxiety. Only Crooke of the Shell looked as if he could bear the loss of the four chums with complete fortitude.

Even Levison and Mellish were looking concerned, and Skimpole blinked over his glasses with a woebegone expression.

"We can't go to bed till we know what's happened," said Kerruish decidedly, when Kildare came into the common-room, where the School House fellows were crowded, eagerly discussing the fate of Tom Merry & Co. "I say, Kildare, give us a chance. We can't go to bed, you know!"

Kildare, who was looking concerned himself, nodded.

"Mr. Railton says you may stay up till ten if you like," he said. "But at ten you've got to buzz off, whether there's news or not."

And with that the anxious juniors had to be content.

Mr. Railton had gone to the Head's study. Both the masters were looking very grave.

The Head had just laid down the receiver of the telephone, and he gave the Housemaster a sombre look.

"I have been inquiring," he said. "So far, nothing is known of the balloon in any direction. Heaven grant that those reckless lads are safe!"

Buzzzzzz!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT  
WEDNESDAY:

"SPOOFING THE SWELL!"

The telephone-bell rang loudly as the Head sat down. Dr. Holmes made almost a jump to the instrument. "It may be news!" he exclaimed. He took up the receiver. "Hallo!" "Is that St. Jim's?" "Yes." "Hold on! It's a call from Abbotsford Camp!" came the voice from the exchange. "Probably Colonel Lyndon," said the Head, glancing at Mr. Raitlon. "It cannot be in connection with— Yes! Hallo!" "Dr. Holmes?" "Yes, yes! Is that Colonel Lyndon?" "Yes. I have news for you, sir. You are aware that my nephew, with Merry, Lowther, and Manners—" "Yes, yes! Has anything been seen of them?" "They are here, and safe." "Thank Heaven!" "They have been the means of capturing two German spies, who had escaped the police in a balloon. The balloon descended in the camp here, and the spies are in our hands." "Bless my soul!" "I am sending the boys home in a car. They will reach St. Jim's in an hour." "Thank you, Colonel Lyndon! And—and they are quite safe?" "Quite safe, sir." "Thank Heaven!"

## CHAPTER 15.

## All's Well that Ends Well!

**K**ERRUISH of the Fourth came into the New House with a rush. His face was beaming.

"News!" he chortled. There was a rush of the New House fellows to hear the news. The New House were just going to bed when the Manx junior rushed across the quadrangle with the great news. "News of Tom Merry?" shouted Figgins. "Yes, rather!" "What's the news?" "Buck up! Is he safe?" "Safe as houses!" grinned Kerruish. "Landed in Abbotsford Camp—Mr. Raitlon's just told the School House—Colonel Lyndon 'phoned it to the Head." "Hurrah!" "All of them safe?" asked Kerr. "You bet! And they've captured the balloon—" "Good!" "And captured the spies—two rotten German spies—" "Bravo!" "I—I say, Figgins, we might have had those sosses, after all—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I—I wonder whether Mr. Ratcliff would let us stay down and have a bit extra supper on the strength of this?" said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "I've had nothing since I came in except a cake and some sandwiches and ham patties, and a few biscuits and a pineapple and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I was too jolly anxious to eat," said Fatty Wynn. "But now it's all right—" "My hat! If you hadn't been too jolly anxious to eat, how much would you have scoffed?" yelled Pratt. "Oh, you go and eat coke! Now it's all right we ought to have some supper," said Fatty Wynn.

Mr. Ratcliff came along the passage, frowning. "Why are you juniors not in your dormitories?" "Just got news, sir," said Figgins. "Tom Merry is quite safe—"

"Indeed! I am glad Merry is safe, but that is no reason for breaking House rules. Go to your dormitory at once!" "If you please, sir," said Fatty Wynn, "now I'm not anxious any longer I'm hungry. May I—"

"You may take fifty luns, Wynn! Now go to bed!" "Oh!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Good-night!" chortled Kerruish. "But, I say, they've captured the balloon and the German spies. Who's cock-house of St. Jim's now—eh?"

And Kerruish scuttled off in great delight. Figgins & Co. went to bed much relieved in their minds. But it was a long time before Fatty Wynn slept. His anxiety was over, but he suffered from an unending regret that he had not cooked the sausages, after all.

In the School House there was no thought of bed. The relieved Housemaster gave the juniors leave to wait up till the four Shell fellows arrived, so that they could see with their own eyes that Tom Merry & Co. were safe. They did

not have long to wait. There came the hoot of a motor from the quadrangle, and a whole army rushed to the door to greet the returning heroes.

"Here they are!" yelled Kerruish. "Hurrah!"

Gore of the Shell struck up "See, the Conquering Hero Comes!" on his mouth-organ. The car stopped at the steps of the School House, the door was flung open, and Tom Merry & Co. descended, looking a little sleepy, but in great spirits.

Mr. Raitlon met them in the doorway. "I am glad you have returned safely, my boys," said he. "I hope you'll excuse our being late, sir," said Tom Merry.

"We—we really hadn't much choice about it, sir."

Mr. Raitlon smiled. "You are fully excused, Merry. In the morning you shall give me an account of what has happened. I understand that you have been instrumental in securing the arrest of two spies?"

"Yes, sir. That naturalised villain at High Moor House and a Swiss beast—I—I mean, chap!" said Tom Merry. "They had the balloon all ready for bolting, and that's why they wouldn't give Blake shelter last night. They're both prisoners at Abbotsford Camp now, sir."

"You seem to have done very well," said Mr. Raitlon, with a smile. "Now you may go to bed."

"Thank you, sir!" The juniors crowded round Tom Merry & Co. as they made their way to the Shell dormitory.

"Tell us about it!" howled Kerruish. "It's all right, Kildare; we're going to bed in two ticks."

"Faith, and we want to know about it intirely!" exclaimed Reilly. "How did ye catch the thafe of the worruld?"

"Spin the yarn, Tommy," said Kangaroo.

"To-morrow, old scout. Bed now."

"There isn't much to tell," said Monty Lowther blandly.

"Having decided to look into the matter we—ahem!—looked into it. Feeling that Mr. Raitlon would excuse us for missing call-over, under the circumstances, we decided to—ahem!—capture some spies—"

"Oh, come off!"

"So we captured them," said Monty Lowther calmly.

"Blessed if I see what you kids are excited about. This isn't anything great—for our study."

"Not so much of your Shell swank!" growled Hammond.

"Let's ave the story! Now then, who—"

"Bed!" said Kildare.

And the Fourth Form were shepherded off to their dormitory. But in the Shell dormitory the Terrible Three and Talbot faced a rain of questions. And long after lights out there was a buzz of voices in the dormitory till slumber descended at last.

"Wotten!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when the Terrible Three visited the patients in the sanatorium the next day.

Arthur Augustus groped under his pillow, and produced the famous monocle, and jammed it into a watery eye.

"Wotten!" he repeated. "Weally, Tom Mewwy, you fellahs might have left this till I was out of the sanatovium. I weally wegard you as havin' been wathah hasty."

Tom Merry chuckled. "But the spies wouldn't have waited, Gussy," he said.

"Otherwise, of course, we—ahem!—shouldn't have thought of acting without your expert advice."

"I have a feelin' that mattahs would have gone bettah if I had been pwesent. I dare say there were weally several othahs, who got away."

"Mr. Fix thinks he's got the lot," grinned Tom.

"Yaas; but I haven't vewy much faith in these bobbies, you know. If you fellahs had left it till I could have come, we should probably have bagged the whole lot of them."

"Come to think of it, it was rather a pity Gussy wasn't there," Monty Lowther remarked musingly.

"I am glad you realise that, Lowthah."

"You see, it was rather a tussle, but if you had been there, your face—"

"Mum-mum-my face?"

"Yes; it would have paralysed them—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

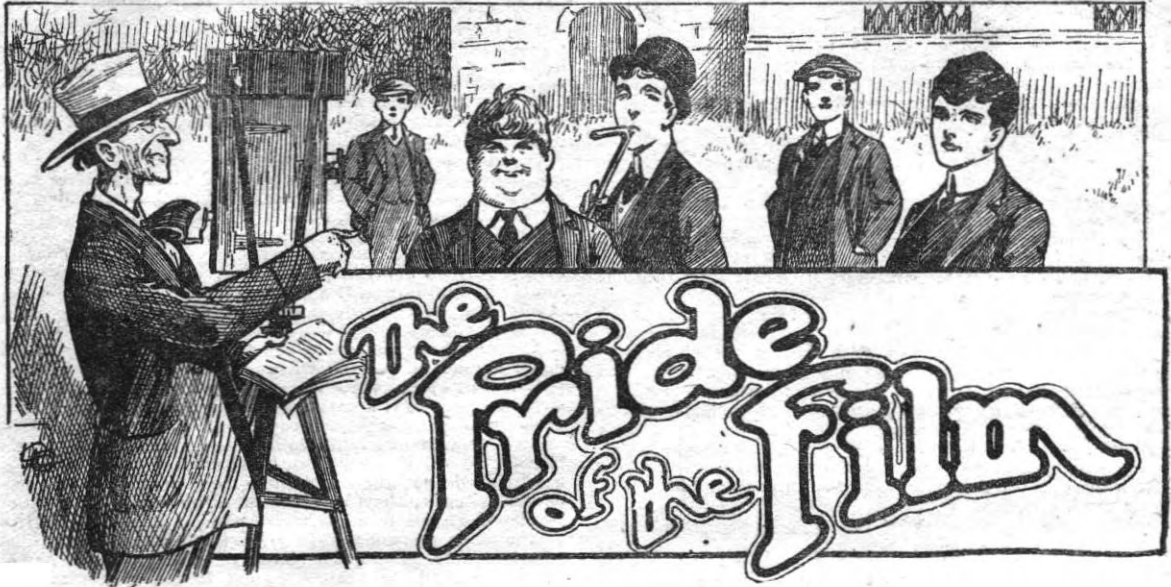
"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Lowthah. If such circumstances should arise again, I twust you fellahs will call me in, and we will bag the whole cwoad!"

And the Terrible Three grinned, and promised to call Arthur Augustus in without fail—if such circumstance should arise again.

THE END

(Another grand story of Tom Merry & Co. next w dnesday. Order early. It is the only way to make certain of your copy.)

## START OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY TO-DAY!



## The Opening Chapters of a Magnificent New Adventure Story. By VICTOR CROMWELL.

### The First Instalments.

REGGIE WHITE, an orphan, is befriended by MR. ANTHONY DELL, a millionaire film-producer, and given a position as actor in his company.

Among others in the company, Reggie makes the acquaintance of RICHARD TURNEY, a boy whom he likes; HUBERT NIXON, a snobbish youth, whom he dislikes; and WILLIE BURR, a jovial fat boy.

SAMSON SKEWES sells Mr. Dell a picture plot, which shows how a man was wronged by a certain MR. RANKIN, and afterwards admits that it is true, and he is the wronged person.

MR. STARTLEFIELD, a neighbour of Mr. Dell's, calls to see him, and Skewes, being present at the interview, asserts that Startlefield is Mr. Rankin.

Mr. Startlefield denies the accusation, and bounces out of the room

(Now read on.)

### The Flash.

After Startlefield had gone, Mr. Dell had a long chat with Samson Skewes, the net result of which was summed up in Mr. Dell's final words.

"Now, look here, I want that orchard out of Mr. Startlefield's lot to add to my factory, as this place isn't big enough for our business. So I must cry small and eat humble-pie to the man. Whether he is called Startlefield or Rankin doesn't alter the fact that I want his orchard. We've had some rows over this deal and over my buying the property, but he has now come to a state of mind in which he will treat.

"I've known him ten or twelve years, and had many deals with him, and though we have quarrelled, I'm not the sort to believe a man I have known so long is an out-and-out rogue, simply because a tame poet says he is. Understand, Mr. Skewes?"

"Quite proper, Mr. Dell," replied Skewes.

"But I'll tell you what I'll do," went on Dell. "I believe your story about you being robbed by that guardian chap who was called Rankin. I'll put a good detective on the case, and find out where Rankin is. If we trace him to a workhouse—well, we'll deal gently with him. But if we trace him to the house next door, I know a way of getting some of your money back, my boy."

"You are indeed kind," said Skewes. "How can I repay you?"

"Get to work on the altered plot," said Dell. "I want to start that picture to-morrow. And, by the way, let me have any papers or clues you may think useful about Rankin."

The next day picture-making began in earnest. The film took several days to complete, and before it was finally finished Skewes had outlined a new plot that pleased Dell even more. In both of these pictures Reggie took a leading part.

Then came a third and a fourth.

And, meanwhile, Mr. Dell's detective had been at work. At last he came to report.

"I've been into the whole subject," he said to Mr. Dell. "Mr. Skewes' father was in partnership in Newcastle with a man called Rankin. He left a large fortune to his son, entirely in the control of his partner. Mr. Rankin sold the business, and moved to Birmingham, taking the boy with him. At Birmingham I traced him up to six years ago, when everyone thinks he died."

"That is too thin," said Dell. "These letters of his Samson Skewes gave us are dated since."

"True. They give an address in Newcastle. The address is a tobacconist's shop."

"Looks fishy."

"Very," assented the detective.

"Can you trace him to London?"

"No. I am pretty certain, too, that he only visited Birmingham occasionally—specially to see his ward."

"And the money?"

"I've traced that through three banks. It was mostly used in buying 'bearer' bonds."

"Which could be sold anywhere without leaving a trace?"

"Yes."

"What do you think of it?"

"I think a fool and his money are soon parted," said the detective. "And I think your young friend was lucky if he was left with a pair of boots."

The conversation was taking place in Mr. Dell's sanctum at the top of the house. It had a good view of the London Road, and the two men were at the window.

"What sort of chap is this young Skewes?" asked the detective. "I'd like to see him."

"Why, there he is, coming down the road," said Dell—"that young fellow in grey, near the carriage-drive of Mr. Startlefield's house."

"Is he coming here?"

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 423.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT  
WEDNESDAY:

"SPOOFING THE SWELL!"

"Yes. He'll be—"

There was a blinding flash, then "Bang!"

The two men heard the explosion nearly a second after they saw a blinding flash of light. The wall of Startlefield's house rocked and fell, bricks flew everywhere, and Samson Skewes was flung into the road.

### The Mystery of the Bomb.

It did not take Tony Dell and the detective very long to get out into the road to the scene of the explosion, though a good many others, mostly employees of Mr. Dell, were on the scene almost as soon as they.

They found that Samson Skewes had already managed to pick himself up. His coat-sleeve was cut to ribbons, and his arm was bleeding. In addition, he had a long thin cut just over the right eye.

"Nothing much," he said, a little faintly. "I'm more confused than hurt."

Harvey Weir, the detective, with the instinct of his profession, had left the care of the wounded to other hands, and was delving round for causes. He knew the souvenir-hunting passion of the ordinary crowd, and in consequence he got to work at once. In a few minutes he had an interesting pocketful of various trifles.

The subject of Skewes' wounds was no problem after about half a minute, for the motor-car of a local doctor happened to be passing.

"A bad cut and a scratch," was the medical man's verdict. "No bones touched. I'll take him home and bind him up."

"What is all this, Tony?" asked a voice.

It was Mr. Startlefield, who had come along the road from Mitcham.

Then, before anyone could answer:

"By Jove, that's part of my wall gone! Hallo! Is that man badly hurt? Take him into my house."

For once Tony Dell betrayed the suspicion he felt.

"Where have you come from?" he asked.

Startlefield pointed down the road, beyond the entrance to Dell's house.

"That way!" he said off-handedly. "But how did it happen?"

Mr. Dell was suddenly busying himself in assisting Skewes into the doctor's motor-car, and did not answer, and Startlefield made no attempt to repeat the question.

But half an hour later the subject was resumed in Mr. Dell's sanctum.

"It was a bomb," said Detective Weir; "but how on earth it got there beats me. To wreck a wall like that, and hurl our friend into the road, it could only be thrown from certain places."

"From across the road, striking against the wall?" suggested Dell.

"Precisely. That is the most obvious. Now come to the window. We get a fairly good view here. You and I were looking out of the window at the time. If anyone had hurled it from such a position, wouldn't we have seen him do it?"

"Yes; certainly!" said Dell.

"But," put in Reggie, who was also in the room, "if anyone had been on the garden side of the wall, and just thrown it over, you wouldn't have seen him. We can see the garden now as well as the road, because the wall is down, but the wall would have prevented that when you were looking out."

Dell and Weir looked at each other, and then at Reggie.

"Young man," said Dell quietly, "you are only saying the obvious thing. When you are as old and experienced as I am, you will begin to discover that there are a great many things that people can think, but that it isn't always wise to say."

"Why not?" asked Reggie.

"I fancy I can answer that," put in Harvey Weir. "Shall I do so, Mr. Dell?"

"Mr. Dell raised no objection.

"Well, the fact is, I am just at present representing Mr. Dell in a case about which he tells me you have already certain information. The basis of that case is a charge which young Skewes brought against Mr. Startlefield, the owner of that house over there. I have investigated the charge, and I can find nothing to implicate Mr. Startlefield so far."

"Go on," said Dell. "You are putting the case very fairly."

"Mr. Dell and I," went on the detective, "were witnesses of an explosion in which young Skewes was nearly killed. Now you want us to be discoverers of the fact that that bomb must have been thrown from Mr. Startlefield's garden."

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 423.

"But it must have been," said Reggie.

"Very well," said the detective. "Then let the police find out as much. Don't you see? Mr. Dell and I are already working on one case of Skewes v. Startlefield, so we can scarcely dare to be chief witnesses in a second and much more serious case of Skewes v. Startlefield. It would look as if Mr. Dell had his knife into someone."

Reggie had a boy's enthusiasm, and did not understand nice distinctions in a case of this nature, and he held to his point with some warmth.

"In plain English, Reggie," said Tony Dell, when the boy had had his say, the nett effect of what you are getting at amounts to this—that Startlefield flung that bomb."

"I didn't say so," said the boy.

Tony Dell was a just man before anything else. Old friends and acquaintances, whether good or bad, could always rely on one thing from him; and that was that, no matter how things went against them, nothing but the most absolute proof of wrongdoing would rob them of Tony's loyalty.

At the present moment he saw two lines converging to condemn a man he had known and even quarrelled with for years. But one of these lines sprang from the statement of a "tame poet" (as he always termed story-writers), and the other from an unexplained accident.

Not only would he refuse to believe either inference against Startlefield till there was some substantial proof behind it, but he would not allow himself to dwell upon one small part of the evidence, though it was so obvious a nature that all the whole world would be accepting it in an hour or two.

It must be remembered that Tony Dell was the same man who had held on to John Nixon when Nixon's actions had actually roused his anger. Tony Dell had also retained young Nixon in his company after his father's misdoings had become patent. This was his nature. He never had believed evil of any man till it was proved.

And now he was firmly determined not to believe evil of his old acquaintance, James Startlefield, till he was sure he had grounds for so doing.

He had put a detective on the case, for the benefit of Samson Skewes, to trace a fraudulent trustee called Rankin, but not for a moment had he allowed himself to regard this action as directed against his neighbour. In doing this deed, he was quite aware that the action might work out badly for Startlefield, and in consequence he was all the more anxious to avoid finding or stating other causes of suspicion against him.

Hence his words to Reggie.

But Reggie White was not in the mood to be suppressed with a cautionary hint. He had another fact to report.

"I think I ought to mention something very important," he said.

"Just one moment before you do," put in the detective. "I want to make one fact quite clear. And that is this: The explosion was the result of a bomb. I discovered that much by collecting some of the pieces. But I was careful to hand them over to a policeman, and also to get him to search around and find the other pieces of the bomb."

"What sort of bomb was it?" asked Dell. "One of the regulation Army kind?"

"Oh, dear, no! A home-made affair, shaped out of an old meat-tin, and filled with unpleasant little bits of iron. It was just the sort of thing that Anarchists used in the early days of bombs."

Then he turned to Reggie.

"Now, young man, what is this important bit of news you have for us?"

This was said with an emphasis on the word "important," which clearly meant, "You know, what you would call 'important,' I would probably call 'trivial.'"

But when Reggie had given him the information, the detective spirit in the man emerged, and no longer, by word or look, did he suggest that he held the news as trifling.

"Mr. Dell," said Reggie, "I heard you ask Mr. Startlefield where he had come from."

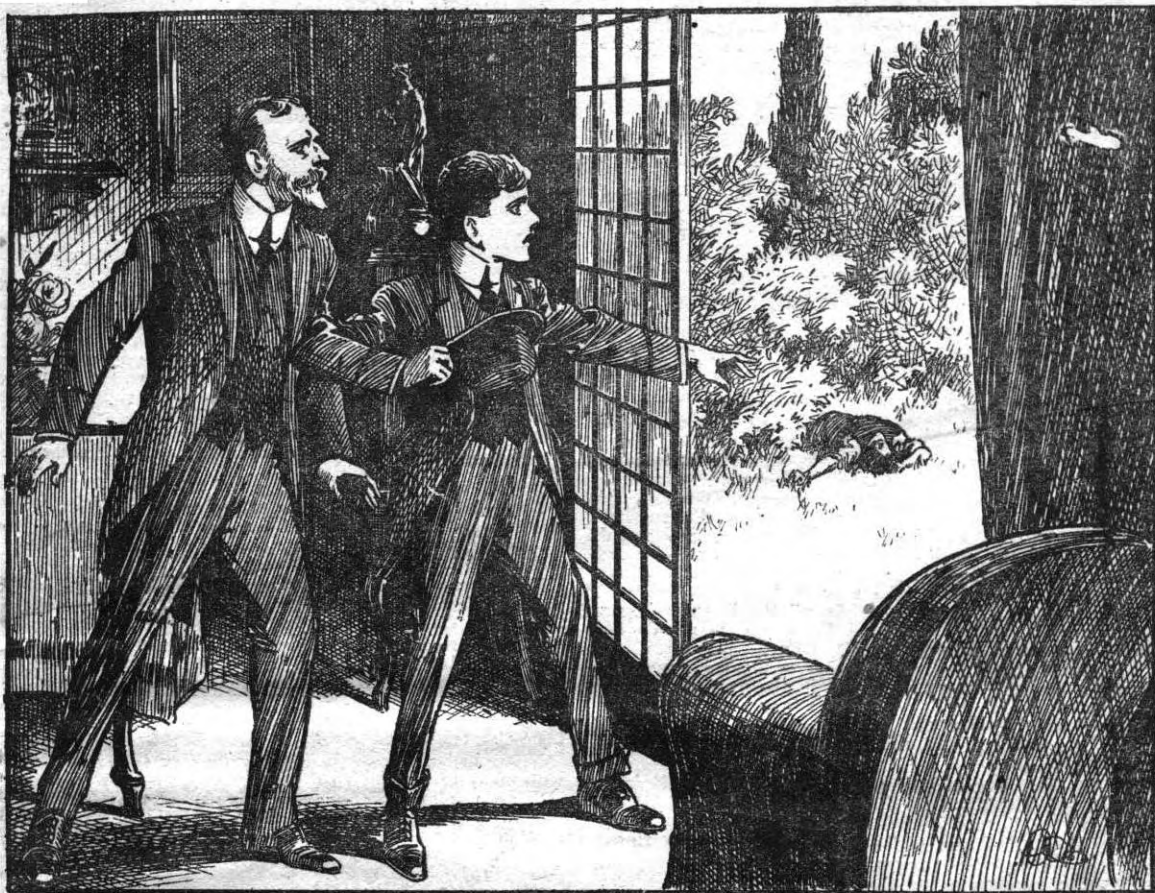
"That's true," said Dell; "and a right silly question it was to ask, too. I had no business to be judge and jury of my neighbour's movements. We all do silly things when we are a bit excited, and that was my break out."

"It was not silly," said Reggie; "and I am only sorry you didn't press him further. When you asked him, he pointed back the road as if he had been in Mitcham, didn't he?"

"Yes; I understood so."

"Well, he hadn't come from Mitcham at all. He came running out of that little lane by the side of the factory, and when he got to the main road he changed his pace into a walk."

"How do you know?"



"Look!" cried Reggie. "What's that under that bush? There's a man lying there!" "Eh? What?" snapped Startlefield. He looked to where Reggie pointed. "It is Sprace, my head-gardener!" he cried.

(see page 24.)

"I was in the waggon-yard that opens on to the lane, and saw him run past. I had heard the explosion, and I came out on the main road the other way, and there he was walking towards the crowd. I followed him, and heard your question."

"Where does that side lane lead?" asked the detective sharply.

"That is the very point I am coming to," said Reggie. "It leads to the waggon-yard, and skirts all round the picture factory, and along the back of Mr. Startlefield's garden."

"And you mean, Reggie," cried Dell, "that he could have flung that bomb over the wall, crossed his garden, dodge round the lane, and then come along the main road as if he were just coming from the other direction? Please be very careful. Either you mean this, or you don't. Now, which is it?"

The detective took a hand.

"No. Stop, Mr. Dell!" he said. "It is you who are running ahead now. The boy needn't mean anything of the sort. He is only stating what he saw. Whether he really saw it or only imagined it, or is telling a first-class lie, is the point we may have to settle. It is time enough when the fact is established, to deal with inferences and morals. Now, youngster, tell us again!"

Reggie repeated his story. The detective listened and put a question or two; then he turned to Mr. Dell.

"Is this a reliable witness?" he asked.

"What do you mean? Reliable in what he says—whether he tells the truth?"

"Yes."

Dell answered bluntly.

"I'd take his word against yours, Mr. Weir, and a dozen of you, with a bank manager thrown in!"

And then he went on hastily:

"But, mind, that doesn't mean I believe Jim Startlefield would fling a bomb to hurt even a rabbit."

"Of course it doesn't," assented Harvey Weir. "And,

more than that, any man is entitled to walk out of the back entrance to his house, and wander round to his front."

"But running!" said Reggie.

"He may have a liver that needs stirring. Good gracious, my boy, it may be his usual custom after meals!"

Harvey Weir said this jocularly, though Reggie's story had impressed him. He showed plainly from his manner that he regarded Mr. Startlefield's action as, at least, strange.

Just then there was a knock at the door.

"There's a young man downstairs," said the messenger, when he came in, "who has been waiting to see the gentleman who is with Mr. Dell, and he is a little afraid that he may miss him. He says that it is rather important."

"What sort is he?" asked Dell. "Did he give any name?"

"He says that he is under-gardener next door, and—"

"Show him up," said Dell.

### The Under-Gardener.

A most awkward youth, whose appearance was startlingly emphasised by a frantic squint, was shown in. His unparalleled lines of vision led him into complications at his first sentence.

"I thought I could see you alone, sir," he said, addressing Weir, but plainly looking at Mr. Dell.

"Oh, it is me you want to see?" said Dell.

The new-comer addressed Dell, and the emphatic eye switched round to Reggie.

"No, not you; the other gentleman."

"I didn't speak," said Reggie.

The young man became confused and a little irritated. Then he pointed at Weir, while his game eye surveyed Tooting Junction through the window.

"I want the gentleman who was nosing round for pieces of the bomb," he said.

Manifestly he was referring to the detective.

"Though it don't really matter," he went on. "The others can stop and listen, because if I don't tell you I shall tell the

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

NEXT  
WEDNESDAY:

"SPOOFING THE SWELL!"

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of  
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

police here. I didn't think as how I would at first, but I decided to while I was sitting downstairs waiting."

He waited for this statement to sink in. Then he got to his theme with real abruptness.

"I made that bomb."

"You!" cried the detective. "Who told you to do so—Mr. Startlefield?"

"Bless you, no, sir! What makes you think of him? I don't suppose he ever heard tell that I knew how to make a bomb. The fact is I am a bit of a misfit."

He made the statement oracularly; but the remark was puzzling, in that it seemed to have no bearing on the case. Then he still further mystified them by a peculiar action.

He put his hand up to his forehead and tapped it.

"People don't know what a headpiece I've got on me," he said. "There's two things that ain't common, and I've got both. Those two are brain and brain-power. Lots of people have brain what haven't got brain-power, and some 'ave brain-power what haven't got brain. But I've got both."

No one asked the meaning of this dark and paradoxical saying, so the young man groped his way on.

"People don't come forward and believe me," he went on. "Part of it's my looks, part of it is jealousy, and part of it again is luck. Now, I've got an idea of a new kind of bomb: so I took my notion up to the War Office, and nearly lost my job by the hours I waited in that there waiting-room of theirs, and not even a thank you at the end. Once I said I'd make one of the bombs and bring it up, and then they told the police, and said I'd been threatening 'em, and I nearly got had up for it. That's what makes me feel so awkward about things now. You see, the police still thinks I threatened the War Office with a bomb."

At the mention of the word "bomb," the listeners began to understand. Harvey Weir led the young man on with some non-committal abuse of the War Office.

"I'll tell you how I come to think of bombs," resumed the young man. "My first job was in the firework factory here, and I losted that through making a new kind of catharine-wheel of my own."

"That's how I lost that little finger," he added, holding up a damaged hand.

Even the detective had to struggle to keep himself from smiling at the blunt way he showed the result of his experiment.

"They don't give you a chance at the firework factory. They said I'd no right to touch the explosives at all, and just boosted me out. And it's been like that ever since, till at last I feel that I'm a misfit."

"I can guess it is an uncomfortable feeling," said Tony Dell. "One would think you ought to be ammunition-making."

"I did try," said the young man complainingly; "but they told me as how I'd be more use to my King and Country if I offered for the regulars. That is what they said to me—me, who'd got an idea of a bomb that would blow the German Empire to smash."

"I presume that it was the one that blew Mr. Startlefield's wall down—eh?" asked Dell, with a twinkling eye, who, in the humorous aspect of the young man's recital, was losing sight of the main point.

Harvey Weir drew him back to the subject.

"Yes, that's it. We want to hear all about this bomb, and how it got exploded. Perhaps you will tell us a little more, Mister—Mister—"

"Nivon is my name," said the man with the squint—"Augustus Nivon."

"Well, Mr. Nivon," went on Weir, "what made you pitch this bomb over the wall and into the road?"

The young man looked positively horrified.

"People won't think I did it, will they?" he gasped. "I'm as innocent of doing such a thing as a child unborn!"

Then he suddenly spoke with real violence, not untouched with hysterical emotion.

"Why, you must be a born fool to think of such an idea! I know how the bomb was made—in fact, I made it myself, with ten brass-headed nails sticking out all round it, so's it couldn't fall anywhere without going off with a bang. What? Me—me fire it over the wall—me who made it? You must think I'm an electro-plated idjit!"

"I was only asking," said Weir drily. "As perhaps you have some ideas on the subject yourself. How do you think that the bomb was thrown over the wall?"

"It wasn't thrown over the wall at all," said Augustus Nivon. "It exploded inside the garden."

"Why do you say so?" asked the detective.

"Because it was just inside the wall that has fallen. I left it there on the grass."

"Good glorious sunshine!" shouted Tony Dell, suddenly merry. "Oh, my exacting onion!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

He made no attempt to explain what these cryptic words meant as he literally shrieked with laughter. Even Weir was too staggered by the outburst to reprove him, and as for Augustus Nivon, he switched one eye on to the millionaire's left eyebrow and the other on to the eight-day clock, and commenced biting his nails in sullen disgust.

"I don't see there's any call for to laugh at a chap," he said bitterly. "I'm the loser by it. Them brass-headed nails and the explosives cost a tidy bit, after all's said and done, and now the blessed bomb is all blown to smash afore I can show it to anyone!"

"Likewise, Mr. Startlefield's wall is blown to smash," added Dell, "and, nearly likewise, a promising author's interior organs of digestion, to say nothing of his limbs and diaphragm. You're a queer reasoner, young man."

"Let him tell his story," interrupted Weir, determined to get to the bottom of the mystery. "Come, Mr. Nivon, how did you manage to leave a bomb like that lying about on the grass?"

The young man looked as if he had some explanation, and so, it turned out, he had. He took time to give it, having a varying method of speech that was occasionally direct and abrupt, but that more generally wore a sinuous way through tiresome epitomes of his own misfortunes and extraneous declarations on the advantages of having both brain and brain-power.

Boiled down, his story was this.

Augustus had a little corner of the garden to himself. It was a sort of tool-cupboard in the corner near the road and the picture-gallery. Here the ingenious inventor made his bomb and stored it.

But the garden had a tyrant, more brutal—judging from the account given—that the Emperor Nero, and more inquisitive than Eve. This was Sprace, the head-gardener.

"He must come muddling round this morning a-grumbling that the tool-cupboard looked messy, and promising to give it a clear up with his own hands! That's why I moved the bomb."

Hence the idiot had moved his treasure out in the garden beneath a convenient bush.

Nivon had a theory about the explosion, that he unfolded with many accompanying references to his brain-power.

"The wind must of blown a branch down, that pushed against a brass-headed nail, and busted the thing off," he said, in final elucidation of his opinion.

Mr. Dell was rather impressed with this idea. But the detective shook his head.

"It won't do," he said. "The young man is entirely wrong. That wall was blown in on the garden, not out on the road. The bomb would have to be a vacuum bomb, with unusual suction powers to perform such a miracle."

The two unparallel eyes of the under-gardening possessor of brain-power oscillated violently at Weir's statement. It was so unanswerable that his lips parted many times, and he struggled for a suitable comment.

At last he made one:

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

The young man of unequal vision had come for advice, because, having seen Harvey Weir collecting fragments of the bomb, and engaged in conversation with the policeman, he had come to the conclusion that he was a detective. He explained these objects of his call.

"You had better tell the police," said Weir, seeing that his advice was being invited.

"That's what I was afraid," said Nivon, a little hesitatingly. "You understand I haven't got anything to hide, but, besides that little fuss about the War Office, I wants to be sure I'm quite safe."

Here Tony Dell reassured him.

"If you tell them the story as you told it to us," he said, "I feel sure they will believe you."

"I don't believe that," said Nivon, while his agitation made his eyes gyrate most vigorously. "What I mean is, if I go to give my evidence, are you sure they won't think I've come to enlist?"

"Eh?" gasped Dell.

"One can't be too careful these times," went on the under-gardener. "A friend of mine got had that way. He went to pay his father's taxes at Wandsworth Town Hall, and he must have took the wrong turning inside and signed the wrong paper. Anyway, he's at Aldershot at the present moment."

"You don't seem very eager to serve your King and country," said Dell, a little sternly.

"I was turned down by the doctor," said Nivon dejectedly. As he was shuffling out Dell stopped him.

"Come on my staff," he said. "I'll give you a man's wages. We want a face like yours in the pictures. The public is getting fed up with Charlie Chaplin."

"Do you mean it, governor?"



"I do," said Dell. "Report in here to-morrow morning at ten, and if there's any fuss with Mr. Startlefield I'll pay the bill."

"Thank 'ee, gov'nor!"

"Only," said Dell, "no bombs, please!"

Then when he was gone:

"What absurd ideas some people get. They wouldn't take a wreck like that in the Army. Brain-power! It's too funny for words!"

After Augustus Nivon had left, the detective suddenly lapsed into that lofty silence which is a kind of unconscious pose of all men with a special profession, whether they are doctors or detectives, editors or architects.

The man who has been specially trained in his subject will frequently discuss it with a layman, but there is bound to come the time when he waks to himself, and gently, but firmly, puts the layman in his place.

"We shall do no good to discuss this further evidence now," said Weir sedately. "I see where it leads, but I shall need to confirm two or three points."

As a matter of fact, he didn't see anything of the sort, and was quite puzzled, and wanted to gain time. But he was a detective—and a jolly good detective, too—and he wasn't going to give himself away till he could see a little farther.

"What I want to know from you, Mr. Dell," he went on, "is whether I am to include the mystery of the bomb in my investigations? It seems to me to bear on the case."

"If you think so, well and good," said Dell. "But please remember you are working to find out where Samson Skewes' executor is hiding himself, not to try to prove that my neighbour is a rogue."

"I appreciate the point," said the detective, as he gathered up his hat and stick.

Reggie remained to discuss the subject further with Mr. Dell. They did so near the window which commanded a view of the road and the ruined wall.

"Look!" said Dell suddenly.

Reggie's glance followed his pointing finger. He saw that Harvey Weir had turned into the carriage-drive of Mr. Startlefield's house.

"Well," said Mr. Dell, "we'll let him go ahead with his investigations. He seems an energetic sort. We've got our work to do, and there's that new film plot of Skewes' to get ready. I'm putting Ben Wheeler on it as the eccentric uncle, as Ben is shaping wonderfully well. You take the young inventor's part."

And he left to discussing the practical business of film production.

### An Offer.

As Reggie left Mr. Dell's sanctum, a young clerk approached him somewhat mysteriously.

"A gentleman told me to give you this," he said as he slipped a note into Reggie's hand.

The note was mysterious.

"Dear Sir," it ran, "I want a few minutes with you about something very important. Can you walk up to the clock-tower at the corner of the green? You will see me waiting there. I sha'n't keep you many minutes. I shall be wearing a white flower. You'll know me by that, as I am a stranger to you. Please don't leave this letter about."

"What's in the wind?" wondered Reggie.

But he went off all the same to meet the mysterious stranger.

He found a remarkably well-dressed man, whose frock-coat and glossy hat suggested Bond Street before the war broke out. He was wearing a white flower, and slapping his leg with a swagger-stick in an almost military manner.

"Mr. Reginald White?" he said as Reggie approached. "I am delighted to meet you! I dare say you were puzzled by my letter. I wanted to see you about business. I belong to the Pearl Light Company, the great film makers."

"I have heard of them," said Reggie.

"Heard of them!" said the stranger. "I should hope you had heard of them! Why, millions of people see our films every night! Ours is a real picture-making company. We don't play about at the thing as Mr. Dell is doing!"

"Not?"

"Of course not. Dell's pictures are a byword in the trade. Badly acted, badly staged, and badly produced, it is a wonder he sells them at all. It is lucky that he has a good long purse."

Of course Reggie knew that the stranger's statement was far from the truth. Mr. Dell had scored a tremendous success, and had not put a single failure on the market. His only limits were the size of his studios, which he was now increasing, and the fact that he liked to superintend everything himself. This insured a good output, but a small one.

"It's this way," went on the stranger. "We in the trade

see all the pictures before the public gets the chance, and I have seen a good many in which you figure. Now, it seems to me a most regrettable thing that anyone who can act like you should have to work for such a miserable show as Dell's. If it doesn't take the heart out of you, it will soon spoil your acting."

"Oh, that's nonsense! You have no right to say such things of Mr. Dell's company."

"Ah, my boy, you're not in the trade! You don't know what the trade thinks about Dell's pictures! Why, they laugh till they're hoarse at the rubbish that man tries to palm off as films!"

Reggie nearly replied angrily, and with a scornful reference to the Pearl Light Picture Company. But he was determined to find out what the stranger wanted to say to him.

"I want you to come with us," went on the man. "We'll give you a three or five years' agreement at a thumping big salary. You'll find we will treat you fairly. We aren't tricky people, like Mr. Dell."

This was too much for Reggie.

"How dare you say such a thing?" he demanded. "Mr. Dell is not tricky!"

"Excuse me," said the stranger, "but he is, and you'll jolly soon find it out, too! Why, look at those last pictures of his! Who made up the stories?"

"I know," said Reggie.

"I know, too!" said the stranger. "It was a young man, called Skewes—Samson Skewes—whom we were educating for our own purposes. The manuscripts of those plots you have been working on lately have been in my own desk for weeks. I turned them down because I was educating that young man to do something better. Well, what does Dell do? He steals this promising young author away from me, and uses the very plots that I could have had!"

"How much a year did you pay him?" asked Reggie, who knew that Skewes had never had a penny from the Pearl Light Picture Company.

"Oh, never mind about that!" said the man. "It's stealing! The man who would do that isn't to be trusted!"

"And you want me to come with you?"

"Certainly I do! We'll give you—"

"Isn't that stealing, also?"

"Every man is entitled to get the best price he can for his work."

"That is what Skewes thought," said Reggie. "And now I'll give my answer. I'm with Mr. Dell, and I'm proud to be with him. He has always treated me well, and he does the same to everyone else. I'm going to stay with Mr. Dell, and now you can run away and play!"

And Reggie turned on his heel and left him.

### A Discovery.

On the way back Reggie suddenly ran against Mr. Startlefield. To his surprise that worthy stopped him.

"I want a word with you, young man!" he said. "Will you come into my house?"

They walked past Mr. Dell's buildings, and on to Startlefield's house. This was an amazingly gorgeous mansion, the style and luxury of the furnishing and ornamentation proving the owner's love of splendour.

In a dainty little apartment, that was clearly a smoking-room, though it might easily have served as a fashionable lady's boudoir, Mr. Startlefield bade him be seated.

"It's about that bomb explosion," he began abruptly. "The whole affair's likely to be an awkward thing for me, for, although, I've just been over to the doctor, and have learned that the young man isn't much hurt, the fact remains that he might easily have been killed."

"Yes," admitted Reggie. "It was a near shave for him."

Startlefield wouldn't sit down; he was pacing about in the narrow, confined little room like a timid creature in a cage. Plainly, he was in a state of terrible anxiety.

"You see," he went on, "I've acted foolishly. There is no use saying I haven't. I saw you standing in the yard, through the gateway, when I was running along the lane, and I saw you again when I was walking in the road. Perhaps you wonder why I tell you this, or, perhaps, you can guess why? The reason is, I've had that man here."

"Who?" asked Reggie.

"A man called Harvey Weir," replied Startlefield. "I am pretty sure he is a detective, for he knew a good deal about the case. You told him that you saw me running."

"Was there any harm in it?" asked Reggie.

"Harm?"

Startlefield repeated the word with tremendous emphasis, that showed sheer blank amazement.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 423.

A Magnificent New Long, Complete Set of 100 of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Harm?" he repeated. "Why, if that young man had been killed, instead of slightly wounded, it was the kind of harm that might have put a rope round my neck!"

"Why?"  
"Because I was in my garden at the time of the explosion, and all the household knows it."

Reggie saw that the man was trembling with fear. "Listen to me!" went on Startlefield. "I'll tell you what happened. I was in the garden, not very near the wall that fell, but not very far from it. I heard that there was an explosion outside, and I nearly saw the wall tumble in. At all events, I saw the cloud of dust. In a moment I decided to see what was the matter. The way out through the front gate was the nearest, but somehow I feared a second explosion, so I went out at the back entrance. Not wishing to be late, I ran the length of the lane; but as soon as I saw the crowd of people, which was when I turned into the main road, I walked.

"As soon as I got near the crowd I recognised the young man who was wounded, and immediately I remembered that I had had a quarrel with him. Almost at the same moment Mr. Dell turned quite fiercely on me, and asked where I had come from. Like a fool, I pointed back to the road. There's the whole story."

Reggie had listened attentively. "Well, what about it?" he asked.

Mr. Startlefield stared at him a little blankly. "Don't you see—" he began.

He stopped abruptly, and commenced again. "I forgot! You don't know all that the detective said and inferred and hinted and nodded about! Mr. Weir took hold of all these little facts, and twisted them and turned them, and made me out to have flung this bomb on purpose, and really it is a wonderful case he has built up out of what Mr. Dell and you told him. You saw me running. Is there any harm in running?"

"No," said Reggie. "Certainly not!"

"And would you think I had flung a bomb over a wall simply because I was running?"

"No," said Reggie. "I should want more proof than that!"

"And that man will make more proof out of it!" cried Startlefield bitterly. "He'll make a hangman's rope out of it, if I don't take care!"

"Perhaps," said Reggie, "you wouldn't feel so nervous if anyone but Mr. Skewes had been hit."

"What do you mean by that?" Startlefield asked.

"Perhaps there is some special reason why you should wish Mr. Skewes out of the way," said Reggie, more plainly.

Mr. Startlefield nearly flew at him.

"Oh, you've got hold of that lie, too, have you?" he demanded. "It is just what the detective was hinting! I see! You are working some little plot between you!"

Here he spoke with a new eagerness.

"But you have overreached yourself, young man!" he said. "Now I can guess who threw the bomb. It was Skewes himself! He took the risk so as to try to fasten the blame on me!"

"Nonsense!" said Reggie. "What about the gardener's story?"

"Gardener?" repeated Startlefield, bewildered. "What gardener? Mine? I haven't seen Sprace since the accident happened!"

"I don't mean Sprace," said Reggie. "I mean the undergardener—his name is Nivon. Mr. Weir must have told you—"

"He never even mentioned him!" said Startlefield. "What about Nivon?"

Then Reggie saw that he had made a mistake. Of course, if the detective had kept back the undergardener's story, he had done it for some purpose that might easily be lunged.

Reggie was so upset at the error he had made that he turned to the window, trying hard to think of some way of slurring over his careless remark. As he did so he saw something that startled him.

"Look!" he cried. "What's that under that bush? There's a man lying there, and he's got a wound in his head!"

"Eh? What?" snapped Startlefield.

He looked.

"It is Sprace, my head-gardener!" he cried. "And I believe he is dead!"

The next moment they were both through the window. Startlefield examined the man hastily.

"He's not dead!" he said. "But it is touch and go! Fly for a doctor!"

(Another long instalment of this splendid new serial story next Wednesday. Order your copy early.)

# HELP TO SMASH GERMANY

## AN IMPORTANT APPEAL NOTICE TO READERS OF THE "GEM."

We want more and more ships to carry troops and munitions. Hence the Government has cut down the imports of pulp for paper. This means we must reduce the waste in unsold periodicals to the lowest possible amount. Now, your newsagent has to order next week's issue of the "Gem" Library this week, but he can only guess at the number of copies he will require unless you help him by definitely ordering your copy in advance. Will you please do so? This assists the nation to meet the difficulty of paper shortage by limiting the number of copies of periodicals printed to the number actually sold over the retailer's counter. All economy of this kind helps to give Germany a heavier blow. Please lend your weight to that blow by giving your newsagent a **STANDING ORDER FOR THE "GEM" LIBRARY.**

ORDER FORM.  
Date.....1916.  
To Mr. ....  
Please order for me one copy of the "Gem" Library each week until further notice.  
Name .....  
Address.....



# THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to — — — — —  
**EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.**  
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON. E.C.  
**OUR · · THREE · · COMPANION · · PAPERS!**  
**"THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY" CHUCKLES.**  
 — LIBRARY — ; — POPULAR — ; — 1/2 —  
**EVERY MONDAY | EVERY FRIDAY | EVERY SATURDAY.**

For Next Wednesday:

## "SPOOFING THE SWELL!"

By **Martia Clifford.**

In the splendid, humorous yarn which appears next Wednesday the schoolboy inventor, Bernard Glyn, plays a very prominent part. This news will, I know, delight thousands of readers, for there have been incessant demands lately for another story dealing with the activities of this very popular character. Do you remember Skimpole the Second? Do you remember the mechanical dog? A great many of you will, no doubt, recall how you roared over those yarns. The story due next week is funnier than either. The one and only Arthur Augustus is Glyn's victim this time, but not the only victim. Knox, the bullying prefect, gets a lesson, and all D'Arcy's chums are completely mystified by

## "SPOOFING THE SWELL!"

## HAVE YOU GOT IT YET?

Got what? That is the question some will ask, of course. I am not going to leave you guessing, however. Have you got

## "RIVALS AND CHUMS!"

the great new number of the "Boys' Friend" Threepenny Library, which puts in the shade even the best of its predecessors? If you have not, get it at once, or you may find that there is not a single copy left on sale anywhere!

## THE THIRD TIME OF ASKING!

For the past two weeks I have been pegging away at you on the subject of ordering your copies of the Companion Papers in advance. I am not going to explain all over again the reason why you should do this; but I do urge upon those of you who have not yet done as I asked you that you should do it at once, and so render your Editor, in a time of real crisis, help that you cannot give in any other way.

## READERS' LETTERS.

If the number of letters an Editor receives is any true criterion of the popularity of his papers—and I doubt whether a better one could be found—then I think I ought to be satisfied, though I am not going to admit that I am, for however great the number of my readers might be, I should still want to see the figures mounting up. We always have had heavy post-bags, but of late they have been getting heavier than ever, with the result that we have all we know how to do, in the depleted state of my staff, owing to the war, to answer them all. I do my level best to insure that this shall be done, but I must really ask my correspondents to exercise a little more patience than some of them are disposed to show! It is never possible to reply to any letter in "the next number," simply because the next number and the next after that are already printed before the letter is received. Among the few unwelcome letters I get are impatient ones of this sort, which would never be written if my correspondents would only remember what I have told them time after time.

It would help me a good deal if all who want replies in a hurry gave their names and addresses, as an answer through the post can always be given sooner than one in the columns of the paper.

Among the many welcome letters that I receive are those from the trenches, telling me how much my papers are appreciated there. One of another sort, yet somewhat similar in a way, came a few days ago from a boy of fifteen,

whose life for the last eight years has been spent either in bed or in a bath-chair. Through his sister—for he is not even able to write—he tells me that the "Gem" and "Magnet" have done more than anything else to make life endurable to him through all that weary time. I think you will grasp my meaning when I say that I rank this letter with those received from my chums in the trenches; for this reader of mine has also had a very hard fight of it—a long battle against the weariness and despondency induced by illness, and I am more than glad to know that I have been able to help him in it.

## NOTICES.

Charles J. Welling, Chief Yeoman of Signals, No. 1, C Mess, R.N. Barracks, Chatham, one of our oldest readers in more senses than one, would be very glad to hear from anyone who has for disposal the numbers or volumes of the "Gem," containing the serials, "Britain Invaded," "Britain at Bay," and "Britain's Revenge."

J. H. Nixon, Ship Hotel, Maryport, wants both boys and girls who are readers of the Companion Papers in that neighbourhood to take notice that he has formed a club for all readers, and will be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to join.

John Ritchie, 77, North Wallace Street, Glasgow, and Robert McIntosh, 180, Henderson Street, N.C. Road, Glasgow, are forming a football club, and either of them would be glad to hear from good boy players in the Town-head district who would care to join.

Private E. Harding, 10711, 2nd Battalion Buffs, B.E.F., France, would be glad to have letters from either boy or girl readers of the "Gem."

Private F. Atherton, 2737, 5 Ward, Heald Place, Military Hospital, Rusholme, Manchester, would be obliged if readers would send him back numbers of the "Gem" and "Magnet."

Seaman G. Snowdon, 30721, H.M.S. Orontava, care of G.P.O., London, asks for back numbers of any of the Companion Papers.

Private R. Harrison, 8220, A Co., Y Battalion, Royal West Kents, B.E.F., France, would like to correspond with one or two girl readers, age seventeen or eighteen, of the "Gem."

Driver N. Brown, 34120, No. 1 Co., A.S.C., Base Horse Transport Depot, Le Havre, France, asks for back numbers of the Companion Papers.

Private W. Wood, 3314, 5 Platoon, B Co., 5th Durham Light Infantry, B.E.F., France, is in urgent need of a melodeon. Will some reader oblige?

G. W. Saram, 5124, 24 Ward, 4 Block, R.N. Hospital, Stonehouse, Plymouth, wants back numbers of the "Gem" and "Magnet."

Lance-Corporal T. W. Green, D.M.-2, 097390, No. 2 Section, 565 Co., M.T., A.S.C., Attached 46th Siege Battery, R.G.A., B.E.F., France, asks for back numbers of the "Gem."

Rifleman J. Banks, 12324, D Co., 4th Battalion, King's Royal Rifles, B.E.F., France, would like to correspond with a few readers of the "Gem," preferably Irish readers.

The Office Boy F.C. (Southport), average age fifteen, are open for home or away matches in their district any Saturday afternoon. The hon. sec. is R. Anderson, 1, Windsor Road, Southport.

Private T. Sanderson, 4399, Hut 15, C Company, 3/5 East Lancashire Regiment, No. 3 Camp, Codford, Wilts, would welcome letters from "Gem" or "Magnet" readers.

Your Editor

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



# Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

## "WHAT WOULD TOM MERRY DO?"

When at school you're faced with a problem hard,  
And it seems that it won't come right,  
But you know if you cheat in the slightest way  
That the answer will come to light,  
You just pause, and the voice of Conscience says:  
"Is that the thing to do?"  
Then your thoughts revert to the good old "Gem"—  
"What would Tom Merry do?"

Then later, again, in business life,  
The chance may come for you  
To make a "pile," but, doing this,  
Thousands the day may rue,  
You will not say: "I have lived for this;  
I shall gain, and I can't help you!"  
But your thoughts will fly to the good old "Gem"—  
"What would Tom Merry do?"

Friends, it's up to you in the game of life  
To stick to the right all through.  
Temptations will come with their seeming power.  
But don't let them beat you.  
You have read many tales of old St. Jim's,  
And the chums are dear to you,  
So ask yourself when the tempter comes:  
"What would Tom Merry do?"  
—Sent in by W. G. Wright, Chiswick, W.

## A GENTLE HINT.

Charlie: "I say, Dick, old chap, what are you going to do when you leave school?"  
"Dick: "Oh, I don't know."  
Charlie: "Well, I think you would make a splendid book-keeper."  
Dick: "What makes you think that?"  
Charlie: "Oh, you haven't given me back yet that copy of the GEM I lent you!"—Sent in by A. Young, Bournemouth.

## NASTY!

She was a sweet young thing, and having come down to see her soldier brother, who happened to be on duty when she arrived, she was taken round the camp by his chum. She was, of course, full of questions.  
"Who is that person?" she asked, pointing to a colour-sergeant.  
"Oh, he shook hands with the King; that is why he is wearing a crown on his arm, you see!" replied the "truthful" man.

"And who is that?" she asked, seeing a gymnastic instructor with crossed Indian clubs on his uniform.

"That is the barber. Do you see the scissors on his arm?"

Seeing yet another man with cuffs decorated with stars, she asked:

"And that one?"

"Oh, he is the battalion astronomer; he guides us on night manoeuvres!"

"How interesting!" exclaimed the maiden.

Then, seeing her companion's badge, which represented an ancient stringed instrument, she asked:

"And does that thing mean you are the regimental liar?"—Sent in by Henry Wigley, Sheffield.

## A BAD EXAMPLE.

Mother: "Johnnie, you should never speak roughly to your aunt."  
Johnnie: "Why not? Father does."  
Mother: "I'm sure he doesn't!"  
Johnnie: "Why, yesterday I heard him say to her, 'Speak-ing roughly, it's about a mile.'"—Sent in by J. W. Wilson, Glasgow.

## EXCEEDINGLY SO!

It was a truly rural district, and the visitor was surprised to see a football match in full swing.  
Making his way to the scene of operations, he found a battle royal in progress, and soon a couple of players had to be assisted from the field in a battered condition.  
Ten minutes later another followed, and shortly afterwards a fourth was rendered "hors de combat."  
The visitor was shocked, and asked a rustic who was standing near:  
"Whatever makes them contest the match so fiercely? Is it a cup-tie?"  
"Coop-tie!" exclaimed the rustic. "Noaw, sir; this be the 'Estates' friendly."—Sent in by H. Dickie, Glasgow.

## ONE OF THE VETERANS.

Customer: "I say, this chicken is a bit tough. Where did you get it?"  
Manager: "They come up in fresh lots from the country, three times a week, sir."  
Customer: "Well, this must belong to 'Group Forty-five.'"—Sent in by B. Freedman, Manchester.

## TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

First Tramp: "If it wasn't such a long way off, Mike, we might go to the South Sea Islands, where there are coconuts and bananas all over the place which can be had for nothing."  
Second ditto: "Well, I suppose you have to pick 'em?"  
First ditto: "Yes, of course!"  
Second ditto (disgusted): "Ugh! I knew there'd be some drawback!"—Sent in by Miss B. Soar, Llandyssul.

## A MINOR CONSIDERATION.

"Drive like the deuce!" shouted Smith, springing into a taxi.  
With a lurch, the car started forward, and away they went like lightning.  
Crash!  
They took off the wheel of a passing waggon.

"Hi, hi!"

They missed flattening a small child by a hair's breadth.  
Clang!

They upset a milk-cart.

People shouted, bobbies held up their hands, as the taxi dashed up one street and down another, taking corners on two wheels, and threatening every lamp-post with destruction.

At last, after half an hour's furious racing, they slowed up in a narrow thoroughfare, and Smith poked his head timidly out of the window.

"Are you nearby there?" he asked, trembling.

The chauffeur turned in his seat.

"Where did you want to go, sir?" he inquired calmly.—Sent in by Miss E. Oliver, Blyth, Northumberland.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

## THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.,

Published every Monday,

in order to give more of our readers a chance of winning one of our useful Money Prizes.

If you know a really funny joke, or a short, interesting paragraph, send it along (on a post-card) before you forget it, and address it to: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, E.C.

Look out for YOUR Prize Storyette in next week's GEM or BOYS' FRIEND.