

"INVENTORS ALL!" This week's side-splitting school story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

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INVENTORS ALL!

An Amusing Long Complete Story of
Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By

Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Glyn's Latest!

ZURRRRRH!

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, came to a halt in the Shell passage, and turned his famous monocle upon the door of Study No. 11.

"Oh, come on, Gussy!" said Blake impatiently.

"Pway wait a moment, deah boys!" said the Swell of St. Jim's. "There appears to be somethin' wathah wemarkable goin' on in this woom!"

"Gussy's right," said Herries, coming to a halt. "Sounds like a mowing-machine, or something."

Blake turned back reluctantly. The chums of Study No. 6 were in a hurry, and Blake saw no reason why they should all halt outside a Shell study, and waste valuable time by guessing at the probable cause of the mysterious throbbing noise.

"It's Glyn's study," said Blake, frowning. "We expect funny sounds from Glyn's study, don't we? You know what an ass he is for anything mechanical. We can't waste time—"

Pop! Zurrurrh! Pop!

"What the merry dickens is that?" asked Digby, staring.

Bang!

"Sounds like the Fifth of November!" grinned Blake, becoming interested at last. "Perhaps we'd better investigate?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I twust nothin' sewious is the mattah! It would be perfectly howwid if we found Glyn in some sort of frightful dangah!"

"Rats!" said Blake. "There's nothing to be scared about."

He banged on the door, and turned the handle. But it refused to open.

"Locked!" said Herries significantly.

"Bai Jove! I wegard this as vevy suspicious," said D'Arcy. "Nobody locks his studay door unless there is dangah of bein' discovahed in compwomisin' circumstances—"

Bang! Pop! Bang!

"My giddy aunt!" exclaimed Digby. "What the thump is it?"

"Hi, Glyn!" roared Blake, banging on the door again.

"Hallo! Who's there?" came Bernard Glyn's voice.

"I twust you are quite all wight, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy.

A chuckle came through the door of Study No. 11, and a moment later the peculiar poppings and bangings ceased, and the chums of the Fourth heard Glyn's footstep as he crossed the study. The key turned in the lock, and the door opened. Bernard Glyn, of the Shell, was looking flushed and rather grimy.

"Sorry, you chaps," he said cheerfully. "Been here long?"

"We wondered what all the noise was about," said Blake.

"Noise?" repeated Glyn anxiously. "I say, I hope it wasn't very noticeable. I don't want Mr. Ralton to come nosing about. I shouldn't even like Kildare to look in just at this minute."

"Murdering somebody?" asked Blake politely.

"Pway wetwain from such widdleulous wemarks, Blake," said Arthur Augustus.

"Howevah, I wegard Glyn's appeawance with distwust. A fellow who locks his study door, and feahs the intahfewanee of mastahs an' pwefects is pwobably doin' somethin' fishay."

"It's quite likely," said Blake. "Frying kippers, perhaps."

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's nearly tea-time, Gussy."

"You uttah ass!"

"Well, you needn't argue," chuckled Glyn. "There are no secrets from friends. Come along in, and have a look at the latest marvel of the universe. The trouble is, I haven't quite perfected it yet."



He spoke dryly, and Blake & Co. entered the study, and Glyn was careful to close the door. The Fourth-Formers found themselves looking round the study in a kind of blue haze. The air was charged with evil-smelling fumes.

"Gweat Scott!" gasped D'Arcy. "Pway open the window, Dig!"

"Yes, you can open it now," said Glyn. "I closed it up because I didn't want any of the noise to escape. That's where a fellow is hampered at school. He can't make any experiments without taking all sorts of precautions."

"Well, I'm choking," said Blake, as he moved towards the window. "What the dickens have you been up to in this study, anyhow? What's the idea of discharging all this poison-gas?"

"Bai Jove! You don't weally mean to say, Glyn, that you have been manufacturin' poison-gas?" asked Arthur Augustus sternly. "I stwongly disapprove of those fwightful—"

"Keep your hair on, Gussy," said Glyn. "I've only been testing this engine."

He turned to a bench, and indicated a tiny one-horse power petrol engine which was fixed in a kind of wooden cradle at the end. It was an oily-looking affair, and the elegant D'Arcy took care to remain well away from it.

"Bai Jove, what a howwid-lookin' contwivance!" he said disgustedly. "Pway mind your arm, Hewwies!"

"Don't you worry, Gussy," said Herries. "I wouldn't touch the thing with a pointer. Rummy how some chaps get their amusement!"

"I've almost perfected my most wonderful invention," said Glyn, with enthusiasm. "If I can only get the vaporiser right, I shall have done the trick."

"Half a tick!" said Blake. "Your latest what?"

"Invention."
"I may be wrong, but I seem to have dimly heard that the petrol engine was invented a good few years ago," said Blake sarcastically. "You're not going to take the credit—"

"Rats!" said Bernard Glyn. "That little engine's nothing! It's only a power unit off a motor-cycle attachment. Quite good enough for experimental purposes, though. I've been testing my new carburettor."

"Your new whicher?"

"Carburettor."
"Bai Jove! Isn't it wathah a waste of time to expewiment on these old-fashioned gadgets, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy. "Aftah all, a carbuwettah is nothin' particularly new."

"You're quite right, Gussy. Your brain, I can see, is working as speedily as ever," agreed Glyn. "Bravo!"

"Weally, Glyn—"
"There are carburettors and carburettors," went on the inventor of the Shell. "But this one is absolutely new. That's an ordinary internal combustion engine on the bench there—a petrol-engine—"

"Better go easy, old man," said Herries bluntly. "If any of the masters catch you messing about with petrol in one of these studies you'll get a six-hander!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's fwightfully wiskay—"
"As it happens, there isn't a drop of petrol in the room," interrupted Glyn. "There isn't any paraffin, either. I'll confess to a little methylated spirit, but even that won't be necessary after I've made a few alterations to the vaporiser."

"If this is a petrol-engine, and you haven't got any petrol, what the dickens was it running on just now?" asked Blake, staring.

"Thick oil," replied Glyn triumphantly.

"Rats!" said Blake. "It couldn't be done!"

"Engineers have been trying to construct a practical crude-oil vaporiser for years," said Glyn. "I'm not sure that I have got the secret, but it looks like it. Anyhow, this engine has been running on crude-oil. I've got the flash-point explosive enough to do the trick, even with an ordinary magneto to supply the spark."

"My hat! He talks like an instruction book!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "I must confess, Glyn, that all this talk about flash-points an' cwude-oil is double Dutch to me."

"That's nothing," said Blake. "Anything is double Dutch to you, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Besides, what about oil-engines?" asked Blake. "Don't they burn crude-oil? There's nothing new in this stunt—"

"You silly ass, an oil-engine is a totally different proposition," interrupted Glyn. "They're tremendously heavy, in the first place, and they're only suitable for factories and power-plants. How do you suppose an aeroplane would rise if it had a five hundred horse-power oil-engine fixed in it? It would have to be as big as a skyscraper!"

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The chums of Study No. 6 listened as though they fully understood.

"This carburettor of mine will make all the difference—if only I can finish it successfully," went on Glyn. "It can be used on any existing petrol-engine. Think what it'll mean! Any car can run fifty miles on a gallon of crude-oil—a car that ordinarily only runs ten miles to a gallon on petrol. And with crude-oil at fourpence or fivepence a gallon—Well, just figure it out!"

"Motoring for the million!" grinned Blake.

"Exactly!"

"But the thing isn't perfect yet?" asked Herries sceptically.

"Well, not exactly—"

"I am afraid it is too good to be true," interrupted Arthur Augustus, with a dubious shake of his noble head. "Is there any objection, Glyn, to us seein' this wondah in opewation?"

"Yes, let's see it working," said Blake.

CHAPTER 2.

Not Nice for Gussy!

BERNARD GLYN agreed with alacrity. He was fairly mounted on his hobby-horse now, and would entertain Blake & Co. for as long as they wished. He hadn't noticed a wink which Blake had given to his chums.

"The apparatus isn't quite perfect yet, so I've got to heat the vaporiser with methylated spirit," said Glyn. "If my experiments are successful, I shall be able to cut the spirit out."

He busied himself at the bench, giving particular attention to a peculiar contrivance which was attached to the side of the little engine. It was nothing like an ordinary petrol carburettor. There were several chambers, all sorts of levers, and gauze-covered openings. A film of brownish oil smothered the whole contrivance.

"I think she's warm enough to start without any methylated spirit this time," said Glyn, as he seized the starting-handle. "Look out, you chaps! She may backfire!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "I twust—"

Pop! Bang! Zurrrrrh!

After a preliminary series of poppings, the engine settled down to a steady purr. Glyn watched it anxiously at first, then his expression became easy.

"How's that?" he asked calmly.

"And she's only running on crude-oil?" asked Blake.

"Crude-oil," said Glyn, nodding.

"Marvellous!"

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus, who was perfectly serious. "I wegard this as one of the most remarkable inventions of your caweer, Glyn. Congwats, deah boy!"

"Thanks, Gussy. Praise from you is praise indeed!"

"Wats!" said D'Arcy. "I am wathah sowwy for your studdy mates, though. It must be fwightful for Dane and Kangawoo!"

"Oh, they don't mind," said Bernard Glyn. "At least, if they do mind, they're decent enough to hide their feelings."

"Well, you'd better stop that giddy thing," said Blake, nodding towards the engine. "I saw Knox nosing about five minutes ago, and if he spots this contraption he'll report you to Railton."

"Yes, I'd better be careful," agreed Glyn.

Arthur Augustus was cautiously approaching the purring engine, and he was examining it through his eyeglass with respectful attention. Glyn touched a switch, and there was a sudden splutter.

Bang!

A huge cloud of black smoke and soot surged out of the engine and struck Arthur Augustus in the face.

"Yawooooop!" shrieked Gussy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus staggered back, and his chums yelled.

"Good old Gussy! Always on the spot at the right time!" grinned Blake.

"You uttah ass! I was there at the w'ong time!" yelled D'Arcy.

"It all depends upon the point of view," chuckled Blake.

"Sorry!" said Bernard Glyn. "That's one of the little faults I'm attending to now. She's liable to get sooted up, and the hot carbon deposits cause a kind of pre-ignition—"

"I wegard the whole contwivance with loathin'!" said D'Arcy frigidly.

"If you take a look in the glass, Gussy, you'll regard something else with loathing!" said Blake calmly.

Arthur Augustus spun round, and gazed at his reflection in the mirror. He beheld a startling sight. His face was



As Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was examining the engine through his eyeglass, Glyn touched a switch, and there was a sudden splutter. Bang! A huge cloud of black smoke and soot surged out of the engine and struck Arthur Augustus in the face. "Yawooooop!" roared D'Arcy. "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled his chums. (See Chapter 2.)

almost completely black, and his previously spotless collar was looking somewhat piebald.

"Gweat Scott!" he gasped faintly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all right, Gussy," said Glyn. "Here's a piece of cotton-waste."

"You uttah chump!" roared D'Arcy. "I wefuse to wipe myself with that howwid wag! I'm in a fwrightful condition alweady, without makin' myself gweasy!"

"Just as you like," said Glyn.

He seemed to take very little interest in Arthur Augustus' plight. To him this sort of thing was too trivial to be noticed. But D'Arcy held other views. He was boiling with indignation.

"I think you might have warned a fellow, Glyn!" he protested. "I wouldn't have gone near your wretched contrivance if I had known——"

Tap!

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Blake. "Knox!"

"Rats!" said Glyn, frowning. "What the dickens does he want to interfere for?"

"Interfering is one of Knox's pet hobbies," said Digby. "Well, the rotter can't drop on us. We're only visitors."

Bernard Glyn was naturally anxious. The study was filled with smoke and fumes, and if Knox reported the matter to the Housemaster, Glyn's experimental engine would be banished on the spot.

"Come in!" he growled.

The door was already opening, and a fine-looking man walked in. His face was smiling, and his eyes were twinkling.

"Why, hallo, dad!" said Glyn eagerly.

Mr. Glyn entered the study and closed the door.

"I seem to have arrived at an inopportune moment," he smiled. "Don't let me disturb you, boys," he added, as Blake & Co. made a move to go. "Another of your experiments; eh, Bernard?"

"Yes, dad," said Glyn. "My new invention."

"What is it this time—an idea for turning normal boys into niggers?" asked Mr. Glyn dryly, as his gaze rested on D'Arcy. "I don't think much of it, Bernard. I can still see some patches of pink."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Mr. Glyn——"

"Only my joke!" chuckled Mr. Glyn, patting Arthur Augustus on the back. "I can see there's been a little mishap here."

"On the contwawy, sir, it was a feahful disastah!" said the swell of St. Jim's, trying to look dignified. "I wegard your son as one of my fwriends, but there are times when fwriendship can be stwetched——"

"Come on Gussy!" interrupted Blake briskly.

"Pway wait a moment, Blake! I haven't finished——"

"That's all right! Finish outside!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Mr. Glyn doesn't want to hear it, anyhow," proceeded Blake, grasping D'Arcy's arm and pulling at it. "Grab him on the other side, Dig. Now then—both together!"

"You uttah wuffians——"

"Door, Herries!" said Blake briefly.

Herries obliged, and the chums of Study No. 6 departed. Arthur Augustus was still protesting, but his voice died away down the passage as Bernard Glyn closed the study door.

"That was too bad!" said Mr. Glyn, shaking his head. "Oh, they're obliged to do that sort of thing with Gussy."

explained Glyn, with a grin. "He'd run on for chapters and volumes if they'd let him have his own way. But I didn't expect to see you here this afternoon, dad," he went on. "You didn't say you were coming."

"As a matter of fact, I am really due to be with the Head for tea," explained his father. "But as I had a minute or two to spare, I thought I would look you up first. I hardly expected to find your study converted into an engineer's workshop."

He eyed a chair somewhat doubtfully.

"It's all right, dad—quite clean," said Glyn, with a chuckle. "I'm awfully glad you came along. If you can manage to let me have a pound or two—"

"I was expecting it!" smiled Mr. Glyn. "What are you wasting your money on this time, Bernard—or, rather, my money? Is it really necessary to give your attention to these oily contrivances?"

Bernard Glyn grinned.

"It's my new carburettor, dad," he explained.

"Ah, of course!" said Mr. Glyn. "There are so few carburettors on the market that you naturally felt the urge to produce—"

"Cheese it, dad!" said Glyn. "This isn't an ordinary carburettor. You see that little petrol-engine on the bench?"

"I can see some oily abomination—yes."

"I picked it up in Wayland for fifteen shillings," continued Glyn. "Quite good enough for experimental purposes. She's just been running on crude-oil, dad. If I can solve one or two little problems, this carburettor of mine will revolutionise the whole motor industry."

"Splendid!" said Mr. Glyn, nodding.

"You're being sarcastic, dad," protested his son.

"Well, I must confess that I hardly accept this statement of yours as a serious one," said Mr. Glyn, smiling. "If you have really solved the problem of vaporising crude-oil, Bernard, you are a genius. Go ahead with the good work! I like to see you giving full rein to these inventive ideas of yours."

"Thanks, dad!" said Glyn. "Would you like to see the engine working?"

"No that's not necessary," said Mr. Glyn hastily.

"Thinking of Gussy, eh?"

"I'll admit I had a momentary vision of that unfortunate youth," said Mr. Glyn, with a smile. "I'll take your word about the carburettor, Bernard. I only wish a few more St. Jim's boys would devote their wits to something creative like this. Boys don't develop their inventive faculties as they should. You, of course, are an exception."

Bernard Glyn chuckled.

"The fellows need a little incentive, dad," he said. "Why not offer a prize for the best invention of the term?"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Glyn, starting. "That's not a bad idea!"

CHAPTER 3.

Making It Worth While!

"GREAT Scott! I wasn't serious, dad!" ejaculated Glyn, staring.

"Yes, but I am."

"You're really going to offer a prize?"

"Why not?" said Mr. Glyn. "You appear to have this inventive faculty quite naturally, but there may be plenty of other boys in this school who are equally ingenious. The chance of obtaining a prize might conceivably awaken a

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ON SALE FRIDAY!

good deal of latent genius. We shall see—we shall see. I'll talk it over with the Head, and ask his opinion."

"He'll squash the whole idea, dad," chuckled Glyn.

His father rose to his feet.

"Possibly; but I may be able to persuade him," he smiled. "And that reminds me, Bernard. It's high time I was off. Good-bye! I'll probably see you later."

"Ahem! Yes, dad," said Glyn. "But—but—"

"Well?"

"There was that little question of cash—"

"Ah, yes, to be sure!" said Mr. Glyn, with twinkling eyes. "I thought you wouldn't let me overlook that matter, Bernard. More money for carburettor parts, eh? Oh, well, I can trust you to be careful. And mind you don't injure yourself with these fearsome contrivances," he added warningly. "I'm surprised that you're allowed to have that engine in your study."

"I'm not, dad," confessed Glyn.

"You're not!"

"No. So you'd better go easy when you're speaking to the Head," said Glyn. "He'll probably come down with the chopper if you give the game away."

"Well, it's a good thing you warned me, because I should certainly have spoken with the utmost frankness on the subject," said Mr. Glyn. "I am sure I don't know what you'll be up to next, Bernard!"

He went off, and Bernard Glyn soon forgot all about the incident. Harry Noble and Clifton Dane, his study-mates, came in, and made such pointed remarks about tea that he was compelled to clear up most of his litter and allow the problem of crude-oil vaporising to be shelved. Tea was one of those rituals which could on no account be neglected.

Later on, when it was time for calling-over, the Junior School received a surprise summons to collect in Big Hall. The Shell was included in this order. Only the Senior Forms were excused.

"Something must be up," said Jack Blake, as he drifted into Big Hall with his chums. "A flogging, or something."

"Yass, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I regard it as highly probable that Glyn has been discovered, an' that he is booked to weecive a thwashin'."

"Rats!" said Blake. "I passed Glyn two minutes ago, and he's just as puzzled as anybody else."

"Then it's vevy mysterious," said D'Arcy.

"Hallo! What's exercising the great brain?" asked a cheery voice from the rear. "If something's mysterious to Gussy, then it must be a problem of problems."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, of the Shell, came up. The Terrible Three were as puzzled as any of the others.

"It's no good asking me what it means," said Tom Merry, with a smile on his good-natured face. "The Head probably wants to make some weighty announcement about a forthcoming scholarship, perhaps. Headmasters get curious ideas on these points, you know."

"But why no seniors?" asked Blake.

"No good asking us," said Manners. "It's a case of waiting and seeing."

"Buck up there, you kids!" sang out Kildare of the Sixth.

Figgins & Co., of the New House, came bustling in.

"Who's getting it in the neck?" asked Figgins brightly. "What have you School House fatheads been up to now? It's a bit thick that we should be dragged into it."

"I hope the Head isn't going to make any announcement about food," said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "Perhaps he's going to cut down the House rations—"

"Perhaps he's going to give an order that all fellows above normal weight should go in for a rigid course of dieting," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Fatty Wynn, aghast.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence over there!" shouted Darrell of the Sixth.

At last the entire Junior School had settled in their places, and Dr Holmes appeared on the platform, accompanied by Mr. Bernard Glyn.

Noble, who was standing next to Glyn of the Shell, nudged him.

"What's your father doing here?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know!" murmured Glyn. "I thought he had gone home long ago, I hope— No, that's impossible!"

"What's impossible?" asked Kangaroo.

"For half a minute I was wondering if my dad was going to spout about that invention of mine," said Bernard Glyn. "But, of course, he wouldn't have the school called together like this—"

He broke off, as Dr. Holmes commenced speaking. The old gentleman was looking very amiable, and the Shell and the Fourth already sensed that this was a peaceful meeting.

"It is not my intention to address you, boys," said the

Head benevolently. "Mr. Glyn desires to make an interesting announcement, and I am sure he needs no introduction."

The Head smiled, and Mr. Glyn stepped forward.

"I'll go straight to the point, boys," he said genially. "I want to announce a competition, with a First Prize of fifty pounds, a second prize of twenty-five pounds, and a third prize of ten pounds. Every boy is eligible, and there is no reason why you should not all buckle to and make an attempt to get the big prize."

"Oh, good egg!"

"What's the competition, sir?"

"In the first place, it has nothing whatever to do with sport," said Mr. Glyn. "Anybody can enter, whether they are good cricketers or footballers, or whether they are duffers. I want to see more of you boys developing your inventive faculties."

"Dear men, this is gettin' interestin'!" murmured Cardew of the Fourth.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Dry up, Gussy!" frowned Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I am offering a prize of fifty pounds for the most useful article that any of you boys can invent," continued Mr. Glyn. "In the first place, it must be entirely original, and it must be mechanical, and of general utility. Furthermore, it is most essential that it should be capable of being manufactured commercially with a view to being placed on the market."

"Oh, my hat!" said Glyn, with a start.

"That's your idea!" exclaimed Dane.

"Well, yes, in a way," admitted Glyn. "But I only suggested it to my dad as a joke—"

"Fifty quid isn't a joke!" said Talbot firmly.

"By Jove! Rather not!"

"This competition is worth going in for!"

"Naturally, there will be certain restrictions," Mr. Glyn was saying. "For example, no boy must spend more than two pounds on any particular invention, and the cheaper and simpler ideas will stand the most chance of winning the first prize. Anything costly or elaborate will be useless. And, as I said before, it must be new—entirely novel and, above all, useful."

"Hurrah!"

"We'll have a shot, Mr. Glyn!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Most of you know that my son is of a creative turn of mind, and some of you will say that he should be handicapped," continued Mr. Glyn. "But I don't agree to this for a moment. There are probably plenty more among you who have just as much inventive genius—and perhaps more. Only it's lying dormant."

"A fifty-pounds' prize will give it a good stirrin' up, sir!" said Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Incentive is all you need, I am sure," agreed Mr. Glyn. "You will all stand an equal chance, and two or three, of course, may collaborate. That will be a matter for yourselves entirely. But, remember—the more practical the article, the better chance it will stand of winning the first prize. Anything freakish will be ineligible for the final entry. You must confine yourselves to inventions of common-sense utility."

"How long have we got, sir?"

"Yes, what's the time limit, Mr. Glyn?"

"One month, exactly," replied Mr. Glyn. "Your headmaster has very kindly allowed me to announce this competition, and, of course, I want to make it quite clear that you must only use your spare time. On no account must you allow the competition to encroach upon your studies or games. And any boy who deliberately uses the competition as an excuse for ill-natured practical joking will be disqualified at the discretion of his Form master or Housemaster. I may add that there will be three consolation prizes of five pounds each, making six prizes in all. Certain rules and regulations

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will be drawn up—they will be quite simple—and a type-written paper will be posted on the notice-board later on in the evening."

"Hurrah!"

And Mr. Glyn, having made his announcement, retired. The Head said a few more words, and the Junior School was dismissed. And for the rest of the evening there was only one subject for discussion.

CHAPTER 4.

Inventions Like Mushrooms!

"FIFTY pounds, by Jingo!"

"It's worth having a shot at!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

In the junior Common-room groups of Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers were animatedly discussing the possibilities.

"Yes, but what's the use?" asked Manners. "Glyn's bound to trot off with the first prize. You know what a giddy Edison he is!"

"His father seems to think that he's been over-rated," smiled Tom Merry. "He believes that we all have the inventive faculty lying latent in us. Well, if anything can wake it up, this will."

"Rather!" said Monty Lowther. "You can go ahead with that patent camera of yours now, Manners, old man."

"Which patent camera?" asked Manners.

"The one you've had in mind for months."

Manners stared.

"But I haven't had one in mind for months!" he said.

"Then you should have had," said Lowther severely. "A camera fiend like you ought to have dozens of inventive ideas. I'm disappointed. I was looking upon the fifty quid as a certainty for Study No. 10!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frabjous ass!" growled Manners, turning red.

"Well, you needn't blush!" said Monty Lowther.

"I'm not blushing!" roared Manners. "And now I come to think of it, I have had a few ideas about cameras. I thought about making a stereoscopic camera, so that a photograph would look absolutely lifelike. I shall have to think about it seriously."

"There's Herries, too," went on Lowther. "Now, Herries—"

"What about me?" asked Herries bluntly.

"Why don't you set your wits to work and make a patent cornet?" asked Lowther. "The first prize will go to something useful, though, so that rather washes out the cornet," he added regretfully. "I'd forgotten that."

"Don't you call a cornet useful?" roared Herries.

"I wouldn't like to say what I call it!" replied Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My cornet—"

"Oh, dry up!" said Blake hastily. "Don't start him on the subject of his cornet, for goodness' sake! We've had a nice little rest for a few days."

"I'll tell you what," said Lowther. "Here's a good idea for you, Herries, old man. Take your cornet all to pieces and think out some scheme for turning it into an electric hooter by merely pressing a button. It's just possible that you might forget how to put it together again. Anyhow, there's always a hope."

"You thumping dummies!" shrieked Herries. "My cornet's all right as it is, and I'm not entering for this giddy competition, anyhow. I'm not an inventor, and don't want to be!"

"Dear man, that's entirely the wrong spirit," said Ralph Reckness Cardew, shaking his head. "We must cudgel our brains an' see what a little concentration can do. I hear that Racker is already busy on his blue prints for a wonderful machine for playin' banker automatically."

"You silly fool!" snorted Aubrey Racker of the Shell.

"And Mellish, I understand, has a brainwave for removin' cigarette smoke from a study by simply utterin' a magic word," continued Cardew amiably. "I like to see these honest efforts to carry on the world's great work."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fwightful ass, you are only wottin'!" said Arthur Augustus. "Nobody can get wid of cigarette smoke by merely sayin' a magic word! I don't believe Mellish suggested anythin' of the kind!"

"Go and eat coke!" snapped Mellish.

"Weally, Mellish—"

"I say, Gussy!" exclaimed Baggy Trimble eagerly, pushing his way up. "Just a minute, Gussy—"

"Bai Jove!" interrupted D'Arcy. "Am I to undahstand, Twimble, that you are addressin' yourself to me?"

"As one of my old pals," began Trimble.

"Wats! I uttahly wefuse to wegard you as an old pal, Twimble."

"Well, the fact is—"

"Pway take yourself off, you fwightful spongah!" said Arthur Augustus, reaching for Trimble's ear, and twisting it.

"Yaroooooop!"

"Pewwaps you will now—"

"Ow! Yow!" gasped Baggy Trimble painfully. "Grooooooh! I—I'll overlook it this time, Gussy! I'll let you off!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"The fact is, I want to do you a favour—"

"I wefuse to accept any favah fwom you, Twimble."

"I'm going to let you lend me two quid," said Baggy Trimble generously. "I wouldn't let every fellow lend it to me—I'm rather particular. But you're different, Gussy. As one of my staunch pals I don't mind giving you the privilege."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You disgustin' young wottah!" said D'Arcy disdainfully. "Is that what you call doin' me a favah? Bai Jove! I should like you to know, Twimble, that the vevy sight of you fills me with loathin'. I wegard you with howwah!"

"If you're going to insult me, I'll do somebody else a good turn instead!" said the egregious Trimble with dignity.

"A wippin' ideah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"I—I mean I'll give you another chance!" said Trimble hastily. "You don't realise what an honour it'll be, Gussy. This won't be like an ordinary loan, old man."

"You are quite wight," said D'Arcy. "In fact, there won't be any loan at all, you fwightful young ass!"

"Two quid is the sum I need, Gussy," went on Trimble. "It's nothing much to you, but it'll mean fame later on."

"Bai Jove! Fame?"

"Yes, rather!" said Trimble. "You see, I've got an idea— Yow! Leggo, Blake, you rotter! Yarooooop!"

"Outside!" said Blake curtly.

"I'm speaking to my pal Gussy—"

"Your pal Gussy is a bit soft in the head, and he'll be lendin' you money unless we boot you out."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Dry up, Gussy—Trimble's going!"

"Yaas, wathah! I quite agree that Twimble should go," said Arthur Augustus. "But I stwongly pwotest against your oppwobwious wefewence to my head."

"We can't help our heads," said Blake sympathetically.

"Some of us have got soft ones, some hard. You belong to the first category, old man. Nature's a wonderful thing!"

"You uttah ass!"

"Yarooooop!"

Baggy Trimble went out of the Common-room on his neck, and Blake dusted his hands.

"You'd better go easy, Gussy!" he said sternly. "That sponging little toad will be round you again before the evening's out, and we know what you are. In next to no time you'll whack out a quid—"

"I shall wefuse to whack out anythin'!" interrupted D'Arcy frigidly. "What is more, Blake, I dislike this expwession of distwust. You evidently wegard me as incapable of lookin' aftah myself!"

"Right on the nail!" agreed Blake, nodding.

"Weally, Blake—"

"My dear fellow, just the man I wanted to see!" said the thin voice of Skimpole of the Shell. "I have been looking for you—"

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"For me?" asked Blake, starting.

"Yes, my dear Blake," said Skimpole, blinking. "With regard to this remarkable competition which Glyn's paternal parent has so magnanimously introduced. I have an astoundingly comprehensive idea for the manufacture of—"

"Oh dear!" groaned Blake.

"For the manufacture of a machine that will unfailingly record the innermost thoughts of the human mind. As we all know, we have brains within our cranium cavities. The cerebellum is sometimes associated with—"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Levison. "How do we all know that we've got brains? For example, we've never had any evidence that you've got one, Skimmy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, my dear Levison, I fail to see how the point can matter," said Skimpole impatiently. "I will freely admit that I have never seen my own brain, but there can be no question that it actually exists, since the very act of talking to you is a direct proof. No human action can be taken without the brain directing the smallest and most insignificant operation."

"There's something in that," said Blake thoughtfully. "Supposing I lift my foot and kick somebody, Skimmy? Does that mean that my brain's working?"

"Most assuredly it does."

"Then my brain's going to work now!" said Blake calmly.

"Yow! Oh dear!" gasped Skimpole. "Really, my dear Blake, I see no reason why you should demonstrate so violently upon my person. I will agree with you that the case in point was conclusive—"

"But not conclusive enough," said Blake firmly. "I believe in giving these things a good trial. Open the door, somebody! I want Skimpole to be quite satisfied that my brain's working at full pressure!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herbert Skimpole went out of the Common-room almost as speedily as Baggy Trimble had done. He couldn't understand why he was being ejected, and he wandered away in a state of mild indignation. Skimmy could never realise that the other fellows regarded him as a freak. His long words and his "isms" left them cold. And they had something better to do than to listen to his rambling scientific perorations. Besides, they had a horror that Skimpole had invented something already. He was quite ready to invent anything without any incentive from an outside source. Indeed, the mere chance of winning a fifty-pound prize did not appeal to him at all. For Skimpole regarded money as a necessary evil, which a more enlightened era of society would wipe away.

There were long discussions in junior studies that evening—discussions that were continued in the dormitories of both the School House and the New House. Dormant brains were beginning to awaken. Inventors sprang into being like mushrooms, and all sorts of wild and weird ideas were mooted, discussed, and mainly rejected.

St. Jim's had caught the invention fever badly!

CHAPTER 5.

Trimble's Patent!

"I SAY, Gussy—"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy screwed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed Baggy Trimble with stern disapproval. He was just strolling out of the School House, with the intention of sunning himself on the steps before breakfast. Two days had elapsed, and St. Jim's was a place of unusual quietness and repose.

"Just a minute, Gussy—"

"Weally, Twimble, I disappwove of you twailin' me about like a Wed Indian on the warpath!" said Arthur Augustus. "Furthermore, I stwongly object to your familiar form of address. I have wepeatedly weminded you of this, and—"

"The fact is, Gussy, I want to have a confidential chat with you," said Trimble, glancing round hastily. "If you can lend me a couple of quid—"

"Bai Jove! Have you the uttah nerve to bwing up that subject again, Twimble?" asked D'Arcy. "Blake kicked you out of the Common-woom the day before yestahday, an' last night he—"

"Never mind about that now," said Trimble nervously. "Blake isn't here, and I've got a chance of speaking to you alone. If you'll lend me two quid, you'll be famous."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed D'Arcy. "The chaps will say I've gone off my wockah. I have no desiah to attain such fame, Twimble."

"But—but you don't understand!" urged Baggy. "I've got a marvellous idea for an invention—"

"Bai Jove! I twust you are not tellin' me a whoppah?"

"No fear!" said Trimble. "It's a marvellous idea, Gussy."



Trimble's last bound sent him straight into Mr. Ratcliff's arms, and he clutched wildly and desperately at this human buffer. Crash! "Good heavens!" shrieked the master of the New House. "Ooooooh!" "Yaroooooh!" gasped Baggy Trimble. Then they subsided in a dishevelled, entangled heap. (See Chapter 9.)

But—but it needs money to test it, you know. Mr. Glyn said that anybody could go up, to two quid on exes, didn't he?"

"Yaas, that is one of the wules—" "But how can I do anything without any cash?" asked Trimble plaintively. "I've got the best idea of anybody, and yet I'm barred entering because I haven't the money to test my patent! It's a bit rough on a chap, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus regarded him with rather less suspicion.

"If this is weally twue, Twimble—" "It is true!" insisted Trimble indignantly. "You don't think I'd tell you a lie, do you?"

"Your reputation is fwightfully bad, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is one of your beastly habits to tell fwightful whoppahs. Howeveh, if you assuah me that—"

"Of course I do!" said Trimble eagerly. "I badly need this money to test my patent. It's true, Gussy—honest Injun!"

"Bai Jove! Honest Injun?"

"Yes!" gasped Baggy Trimble.

"In that case, I may be inclined to whack out!" said Arthur Augustus generously. "If you have a sewious ideah of entwain' this competition, an' you cannot do so because you are hampered for money, then the position is wotten. I will wally wound, Twimble."

"Good man!" said Baggy Trimble breathlessly.

"But you must assuah me that you will not squandah—" "Trust me, Gussy! I won't squander a penny!"

"Vewy well," said D'Arcy. "I will finance you, Twimble." He took out his pocket-book, and two crisp currency notes exchanged hands. Trimble could hardly believe his good fortune. His grubby fingers closed over the notes with feverish joy.

"Thanks, awfully, Gussy!" he panted. "You're a brick! I knew I could rely on my dear old pal!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus watched Baggy as he rolled across the

quad. Trimble had enough sense to steer clear of Mrs. Taggles' little tuckshop. It would be wiser to wait until Arthur Augustus had wandered elsewhere. And just then Blake & Co. hove in sight.

"Grab him!"

"Weally, you wottahs—" D'Arcy was seized by Blake, Herries, and Digby.

"Wefuse me!" he said indignantly. "Bai Jove, Blake, you are wumplin' my collah! You are tweadin' on my feet, Hewwies! You are wufflin' my jacket, Dig!"

"We've heard all that before!" snapped Blake. "What did you give Trimble just now? Answer, you dummy!"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a dummay!"

"What did you give to Trimble?" roared Blake.

"Pway wefwain fwom woahin', Blake!" protested D'Arcy.

"There is uttably no need for you to woah at a fellow!"

"Oh, help!" groaned Blake. "Why the merry thump can't you stick to the point, Gussy? Did you give Trimble some money just now?"

"I wefuse to answah until you have apologised for callin' me a dummay!"

"All right—I apologise!" said Blake thickly.

Arthur Augustus beamed.

"As one gentleman to anothah, I accept your apology in a gwaceful spirit," he said. "As a mattah of fact, I gave Twimble no money at all."

"You gave him nothing?" yelled Blake.

"Nothin'."

"Then I apologise for nothing?" shouted Blake.

"Weally, Blake—" "You—you footling ass!" yelled Blake. "I thought—" "I gave Twimble nothin'—but I lent him a slight twiffa to help him with his expewiments," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "Twimble has invented somethin'—"

"Yes, a new excuse to borrow money!" said Herriea bluntly.

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as an uncalled for wemark, Hewwies."

"You can regard it as you like, but it's true," put in Blake. "Of course it's true! After all our trouble to look after you and keep you out of harm's way!" he added disgustedly.

"I have wepeatedly told you that I can look aftah myself—"

"How much did you give him?" demanded Digby.

"I wefuse to discuss the mattah!"

"All right, we'll find Trimble, and turn him upside down!" said Blake grimly. "We're not going to let him make a duffer out of you, Gussy. You're one already, if it comes to that, but—"

"You uttah chump!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Twimble has given me his word of honah that he will spend the money on nothin' but his invention. I stwongly disappwove of Twimble, but when a fellow is hampahed in his expewiments for want of cash, it is watah hard lines. I felt that it was my dutay to go to the wescue, an' wally wound."

"He gave you his word of honour, did he?"

"Yaas, watahah!"

"And what's the invention?"

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I don't seem to wemembah! In fact, Twimble failed to mention the pweise natuah of his patent. Howevah, that is a small point, deah boys."

"Oh, leave him alone!" said Herries. "Let's stroll across the quad into the sunshine. I want to talk about my cornet. I've got a rather wonderful idea about the keys—"

His chums, however, displayed such a lack of interest that Herries dropped the subject in disgust.

The entire Junior section of St. Jim's was unusually sedate.

A kind of brooding calm had settled over the old school. Ideas were no longer talked openly. The various studies kept their secrets to themselves. Wonderful inventions were now in the course of being evolved, it seemed, although nothing substantial had so far developed.

But there was no doubt that mysterious things were happening. Queer sounds of hammering came from behind locked doors. Some of the fellows had fled in despair. Talbot and Gore, for example, had left Study No. 9 to the entire mercy of Skimpole.

In Study No. 3 Grundy was keeping his henchmen, Wilkins and Gunn, hard at work on something. When those unfortunate youths emerged into the public gaze they were looking worn and weary-eyed. But they had evidently been sworn to secrecy, for nobody could get any satisfaction out of them.

It was the same in the New House.

Figgins & Co. were as keenly after that prize as anybody else. Redfern was going about with a dreamy, absent expression. Pratt had been seen to wander beneath the elms, and several witnesses were willing to swear that he had positively torn his hair. Even Clampe, the black sheep of the New House Fourth, claimed to have an invention; but he was hardly pleased when somebody asked if it was a patent cigarette case, or an ingenious device to make cards disappear into a table at a second's notice.

Masters were going about with worried expressions.

Mr. Ratcliff was positively alarmed, and he warned one or two of the other masters that this sort of thing was merely the calm before the storm. As soon as the schoolboy inventors produced some of their contrivances St. Jim's would become a place of peril! But this, after all, was only Mr. Ratcliff's view.

But who shall say that he was not gifted with the mind of a seer?

CHAPTER 6.

A Shock for Gussy!

TOM MERRY frowned.

"Something ought to be done about this," he said thoughtfully.

The Terrible Three were just passing the tuckshop. Breakfast was over, and it was nearly time for morning lessons. The tuckshop at such an hour was usually empty. But it wasn't empty this morning.

Baggy Trimble was in possession, and Baggy Trimble was making hay while the sun shone. Or, in a word, he was converting D'Arcy's two pounds into solid property before any of it could be reclaimed. Baggy's idea of property was fixed.

"You mean Trimble?" asked Manners, glancing into the tuckshop.

"Yes. Look at the disgusting bounder!" said Tom Merry. "He's fatter and greasier than ever, and he must have been gorging for an hour, at least! He only paused when the breakfast-bell rang."

"Great Scott! Was he here before breakfast?" asked Lowther.

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"Of course he was," said Tom. "Let's put a stop to it!" They entered the tuckshop, and Trimble glanced round apprehensively. An expression of relief came into his eyes as he recognised the newcomers. An array of indigestible pastries was displayed in front of him. There were several well-filled bags, too.

"Is all this stuff paid for, Mrs. Taggles?" asked Tom.

"You can be sure it is, Master Merry," replied Dame Taggles, with conviction. "There are some young gentlemen as I can trust, an' some as I can't trust!"

"I say, look here—" gabbled Trimble, with his mouth full.

"How much has he paid you altogether?" put in Lowther.

"Why, two pounds, Master Lowther!"

"Pheh!"

"I—I say, don't go talking all over the place!" said Trimble anxiously. "I can do what I like with my own money, I suppose?"

"Are you sure it was your own?" said Tom Merry.

"I don't like your tone!" said Trimble indignantly. "You're almost accusing me of stealing, Merry, and you'd better be careful what you say!"

"You fat glutton, I'll pitch—"

"Oh, so there he is!" interrupted a voice from the doorway. "Come on, Gussy! Come and have a look at your pet inventor! The poor chap was so stumped for a new patent that he's been compelled to have a good feed, so that he can get some new ideas."

Blake & Co. entered, and Blake had spoken sarcastically, sarcastically.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, gazing at Trimble through his eyeglass. "What is the meanin' of this, Twimble?"

"Just—just having a bite!" said Trimble feebly.

"I am compelled to wemark, Twimble, that I am vewy suspicious," went on D'Arcy. "I wegard this disgustin' exhibition of gweed as a highly significant mattah!"

"Gussy's improving," said Blake. "He's suspicious!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I don't see why you fellows should interfere," said Trimble fearfully. "I—I'm only having a little snack—"

"That's not the point," interrupted Blake. "Gussy tells us that he lent you two pounds—"

"Alas, poor Gussy!" interrupted Lowther. "The two quids are now in Dame Taggles' till."

"They're not!" roared Trimble, in alarm. "I—I mean—"

"Gweat Scott!" said Arthur Augustus. "Mrs. Taggles, has this uttah wottah spent two pounds on tuck this mornin'?"

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus turned on Trimble, quivering with righteous indignation.

"Then you told me a whoppah, Twimble!" he said wrathfully.

"I didn't!"

"What!"

"I didn't!" roared Trimble. "I told you the truth!"

"You fwabjous lunatic!" said D'Arcy. "How you can have the uttah nerve to deny the thing is beyond my compwehension."

"Leave this to me, Gussy," said Blake grimly. "Your comprehension doesn't matter—it's only a negligible quantity, anyhow."

"Weally, you wottah—"

"Brrrrrr!"

"I do not wegard that as an intelligible wemark, Blake," said Arthur Augustus sternly. "This is my affair, an' I twust you will leave it in my hands. Twimble, you despicable boundah, you told me you wanted that money for your invention!"

"So I did!" said Trimble desperately.

"An' now I find you squandewin' the money on tuck—" "Nun-nothing of the sort!" panted Trimble. "I told you the truth, Gussy! I said I wanted the money to conduct my experiments with. And that's what I'm doing now—conducting experiments."

"What!"

"Naturally, I'm not going to let you into the secret," continued Trimble, regaining a little confidence. "It isn't fair that you should ask me. Most of the fellows are keeping their inventions to themselves—"

"Bai Jove! Are you twyin' to tell me, you uttah wuffian, that you have spent the money on conductin' expewiments?"

"Yes, rather!"

"But, you dummy, Mrs. Taggles has just told me that you spent two pounds on tuck!"

"That's right," said Trimble. "I—I wanted the tuck to use for my experiments."

"What!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did!" roared Trimble. "In fact, I couldn't conduct my experiments at all without a lot of tuck. I gave you my

word, D'Arcy, that I shouldn't spend the money on anything else but my invention—and I meant it."

"Ye gods! What a nerve!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Look here—" began Blake.

"Pway let me continue, Blake, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus grimly. "Twimble, you swindlin wogue, you are makin' mattahs worse by these dweadful untwaths. You gave me your word—honest injun—that every penny of that money would go on your invention—"

"That's right," agreed Trimble. "I've kept my word, too!"

"But, you fwightful fibbah, you spent it on tuck!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Yes, I know—to make experiments with."

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grab him!" said Blake. "Gussy's lost his money, but we can get some satisfaction by bumping this swindling rotter—"

"Keep your hands off!" hooted Trimble.

He backed away in alarm, and the chums of Study No. 6 fell upon him.

"Bai Jove! You fwightful—"

"I—I can explain!" gasped Trimble. "I didn't want to give away the secret of my invention, but you're forcing me to!"

"Your invention?" repeated Blake. "Do you think you can spoof us with another lie, you greasy toad? You haven't got any invention, and you never had one—except the invention of a whopper to get two quids out of our pet lunatic!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"My—my invention is, a patent belt," shouted Trimble desperately.

"A what?"

"A belt!" roared Trimble. "I'm going to call it my Marvellous Hunger Belt, and the construction of it is a secret. I know what your game is—you want to pinch my idea, so that you can claim it as your own!" he added accusingly. "You're just doing this as an excuse to—"

"You—you howling ass!" gasped Blake. "By Jove, if you weren't such a fool I'd slaughter you for an accusation like that! What the merry dickens do you mean, anyhow? What's all this rot about a hunger belt?"

"Give him time—give him time," said Monty Lowther gently. "You mustn't expect too much of a brain like Trimble's. He's inventing this as he goes along!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not!" yelled Trimble. "Oh, dear! I suppose I'd better tell you everything now! It's a beastly shame, because I wanted to keep it a secret until the last minute, and then grab the first prize."

"Grab it right!" nodded Lowther. "That's about the only way you'll get it, Trimble! I shall advise Mr. Glyn to put a padlock on it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Twimble, I wegard all this chattah as uttah nonsense," said Arthur Augustus sternly. "You are merely playin' for time. I lent you that money because I felt that my tact an' judgment were called upon to make an exception—"

"Why waste all this time?" interrupted Blake. "Let's bump the swindling rotter and finish with him. We might as well collar these bags and things, too. We'll save what we can out of the wreckage."

"You leave me alone!" howled Trimble. "I'm wearing my patent hunger belt now, and I told Gussy the truth! I wanted that money to conduct experiments with. As a matter of fact, I—I've just been trying to find out how the belt works."

"And what is the idea of this twentieth century marvel?" asked Lowther.

"Well, it's a kind of special belt for starving people."

"Bai Jove! Then why are you weavin' one, Twimble?"

"I—I've been experimenting," said Trimble feebly. "You—you see, this belt is worn next to the skin, and you set it at a certain place in the morning. Then—then—then—"

"Well?" asked Blake ominously.

"Give him time," murmured Lowther, with a grin.

"Then you go through the day without any food," said Trimble feebly.

"Oh, I see!" said Blake. "That's what you've been doing?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Two quids' worth is too trivial to be counted, eh?"

"Eh? Oh, crumbs!" gasped Trimble. "I mean—I mean, I've just been testing my belt. It's not quite perfect yet, and I bought all this tuck so that I could give the thing a good trial! I've been trying to find how much I can eat before my hunger's satisfied. You—you see, there's something wrong with the belt, and I shall have to make some adjustments to it."

"Well, my only hat!" said Blake, fanning himself.

"I'm going to make some alterations," went on Baggy

Trimble. "I've only got to change the thing here and there, and it'll probably work perfectly. I may want to borrow some more money, Gussy—"

"You uttah wascal!" said Arthur Augustus helplessly.

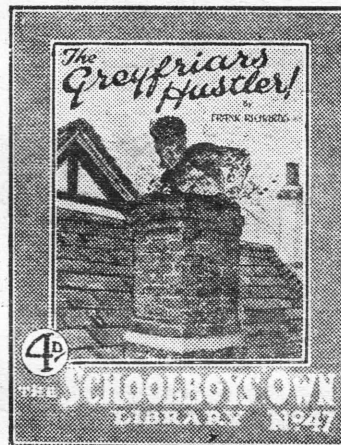
"Oh, let him go! He's earned his freedom!" grinned Monty Lowther. "My only sainted aunt! I've heard a few impromptu yarns, but this one beats the lot! It's the richest thing I've ever struck!"

"I'm going to strike something, too," said Blake grimly. "It isn't rich, and it isn't pleasant, but I'm going to strike it, all the same!"

"Yow! Yooooop!" hooted Trimble wildly. "Leggo, Blake! Oh, crumbs! It's not fair to pile on a chap—Yaroooop! Oh, dear! I—I think I'll be going—"

He thought correctly. He left the tuckshop with far more speed than dignity. With several boots to assist him,

OUT ON FRIDAY!



"Hustle" and "Pep" are the two watchwords of Fisher T. Fish, the amazing junior from New York, but by the time the Greystriars boys have pulled his American leg a little, Fisher T. Fish is forced to the conclusion that England is not such a "sleepy il' ole island" as he has been led to believe! If you're in the humour for a good laugh read—

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Any Newsagent will supply you with a copy.

he sailed out through the doorway, and hit the gravel with a terrible thump.

The first patent of the St. Jim's inventors had not been much of a success!

CHAPTER 7.

Levison's Mechanical Early Riser!

CLANG, clang!

It was Monday morning, and the rising-bell sounded its unwelcome note throughout the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House.

Blake sat up in bed, and glanced out of the nearest window. The sun was shining cheerily, and the morning was bright. Up and down the dormitory juniors were awakening.

For several days St. Jim's had been labouring under the stress of mental concentration. This morning, according to many whisperings that had gone round the previous night, the first fruits of the St. Jim's geniuses would reveal themselves. Two or three inventions had been ready yesterday, but, the day being Sunday, nothing could be done with them.

"Ho-hum!" yawned Blake, as he threw the bedclothes back. "Another giddy week in front of us! Lessons this morning!"

"Rats!" said Dick Julian. "Don't talk about lessons now, Blake, you ass!"

"Let's be happy for an hour or so at least," said Lumley-Lumley. "What about the inventions? Who's going to be the first to stagger the school? I hear that lots of chaps are out for the honour!"

"What about yours?" asked Kerruish, from the Isle of Man. "Aren't you making a special easy-chair?"

"S'sh!" said Lumley-Lumley. "Something's gone wrong with the works, and I can't get hold of the right idea. I don't mean the works of the chair, but the works of my massive brain. I believe the grey matter has turned mottled owing to the strain."

"Who's got a jug of water?" asked Blake briskly. "Gussy's in such a sound sleep that he hasn't even heard the rising-bell. I'll empty a quart of water down the back of his neck, and it might—"

"You uttah ass, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking up from his pillow. "I wefuse to have a jug of watah poured down my neck! There is uttahly no need to make these widiculous suggestions!"

"All right; as long as you get up within ten seconds," said Blake. "One—two—three—four—"

"Here, cheese it!" interrupted Ernest Levison anxiously. "Leave Gussy alone, Blake! No need to spoof him like that!"

Blake stared.

"What's it got to do with you?" he asked in astonishment.

"Oh, let Gussy lay in," said Levison carelessly.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Blake.

"As a mattah of fact, I am on the point of wisin'," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I am gwateful to you, Levison, deah boy, for intervenin'—"

"That's all right!" said Levison hurriedly. "Don't thank me!"

"Yaas; but—"

"Take your time, Gussy," said Levison genially. "There's no need for you to rush things. You look so picturesque, lying there in bed."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy frigidly. "I believe you are wottin', Levison! I intend to get up at once. I shall wise— Whooooo!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy not only got up, he not only rose, but he went hurtling into the air in the most startling fashion.

The dormitory was suddenly aroused by a loud click, and Gussy gave a wild, anguished howl, and shot ceilingwards. "Yawooooooh!"

Crash!

Arthur Augustus came down again, and hit the floor with a dull, sickening thud. He sprawled on his back, uttering groans. The centre of his bed was hunched up in the most intriguing fashion.

"Great Scott!" gasped Blake. "What's happened, Gussy?"

"Gwoooooh!" mumbled D'Arcy incoherently.

"Lend a hand, you fellows! He's hurt!" said Herries. "My only aunt! Did you see him sail upwards? What the thump happened to him?"

"Are you hurt, Gussy?" asked Blake, as the swell of St. Jim's was hoisted to his feet.

"Gwooooh! Oh deah!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "Oh ewikey! I am sewiously injuahed, deah boys! Oh deah! I am afwaid my back is bwoken!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But what made you jump out like that?" asked Digby.

Gussy was so indignant that he recovered rapidly.

"You footlin' ass, Dig!" he shouted. "Do you think I did that myself? Some fwithful wuffian got undah my bed an' heaved me into the air. Bai Jove! I thought I was goin' through the ceilin'! I am suah I have bwoken my back!"

"You needn't be afraid of that, Gussy," said Blake. "You'll be all right in a few minutes. But I can't understand about your gymnastics. I've never seen anybody get out of bed so wonderfully in all my life."

"Good man!" said Levison heartily. "You think it's a success, then?"

"Eh? Think what's a success?"

"My Patent Early Rising Apparatus."

"Your what?"

"I didn't say anything about it," continued Levison calmly. "I thought I'd give you a surprise. You see, I set the mechanism to go off three minutes after rising-bell, so that I should be awake when the apparatus worked. Personally, I think it's a big success."

Arthur Augustus, who had been listening with growing wrath, now broke in.

"Good gwacious!" he gasped. "Am I to undahstand, Levison, that you delibewately fixed some wotten contwivance undah my bed?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that's a good one!" grinned Blake.

"Bravo, Levison!"

"You ass! Why didn't you warn us?" asked Reilly, grinning. "Then we could have enjoyed the whole show. I missed Gussy altogether!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Try it again, Gussy—some of the chaps didn't see you!" said Blake.

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"I uttahly wefuse to twy it again," said Arthur Augustus, as the juniors yelled with amusement. "Furthahmore, I wegahd Levison as a beastly twickstah. Levison, you wottah, I have a good mind to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

Ernest Levison chuckled.

"Sorry, Gussy," he said contritely.

"That is all vevy well—"

"I apologise humbly," went on Levison. "It's really Cardew's fault, though. I wanted to set the spring at only half pressure—I've been a bit doubtful about that spring all the time—but Cardew urged me to go the whole hog. He said there was nothing like giving the apparatus a thoroughly good try-out."

"Dear man, I plead guilty to the impeachment," drawled Cardew.

"In that case, Cardew, I wegahd you as an unfeelin' wottah!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Levison has apologised, so I will excuse him. But I shall uttahly wefuse to address you—"

"Dry up, Gussy!" interrupted Blake. "Don't make a fuss over nothing. It was only a little miscalculation. Anybody's liable to set a spring wrong."

"Nothing easier," said Herries.

"Being done every day," declared Digby.

"It is all vevy well for you fellows to make light of it, but you weren't thwown into the air," said Arthur Augustus. "Oh deah! There are feahful pains wunnin' down my wight side. I am sewiously afwaid that my injuwies will pwove gwave."

Rather callously, the rest of the juniors made nothing of D'Arcy's hurts, but concentrated their attention upon his bed.

"How does the giddy thing work, anyhow?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"It's quite simple, really," said Levison, as he hauled back D'Arcy's mattress. "I fitted this up last night—with Cardew and Clive to help me. We had to be pretty careful, too, in case we were spotted."

"It is a great pity you were allowed to finish your fwithful work!" said Arthur Augustus coldly. "And, if it comes to that, Levison, why didn't you wig up the death-twap undah your own bed?"

"Naturally, he had more sense than that!" said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"The fact is, I wanted to see how the thing worked," said Levison. "I couldn't very well do that since I've been to sleep, could I? Besides, I couldn't have seen anything even if I'd been awake."

"But what about Cardew's and Clive's beds?" demanded Gussy.

"Rummily enough, they didn't seem to like the idea," replied Levison gravely.

"You fwabjous idiot! Do you think I liked the ideah?"

"Levison was quite right, Gussy," said Blake. "What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve about. How do you suppose you could have slept if you had known that that thing was under your bed, liable to go off at the wrong moment? You wouldn't have had a wink all night. But in your gentle innocence you slept as soundly as a cooing baby."

"I wefuse to be likened to a cooin' baby," said D'Arcy coldly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The unfortunate victim of the experiment was forgotten while the juniors gathered round the bed, greatly interested in the mechanism. Ernest Levison was highly pleased with himself. As far as he could see, his apparatus was a great success.

But what Arthur Augustus thought of it would fill reams.

CHAPTER 8.

George Figgins' Strange Behaviour!

LEVISON pointed. "See that bar?" he said, with the enthusiasm of the creator. "The whole thing rests on that, you understand. You just jam that iron rod against the sides of the spring mattress, and the whole apparatus hangs there, fixed. There's a clock attached to it, and you can set the alarm for any hour you like."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I wondahed where the tickin' came fwom!"

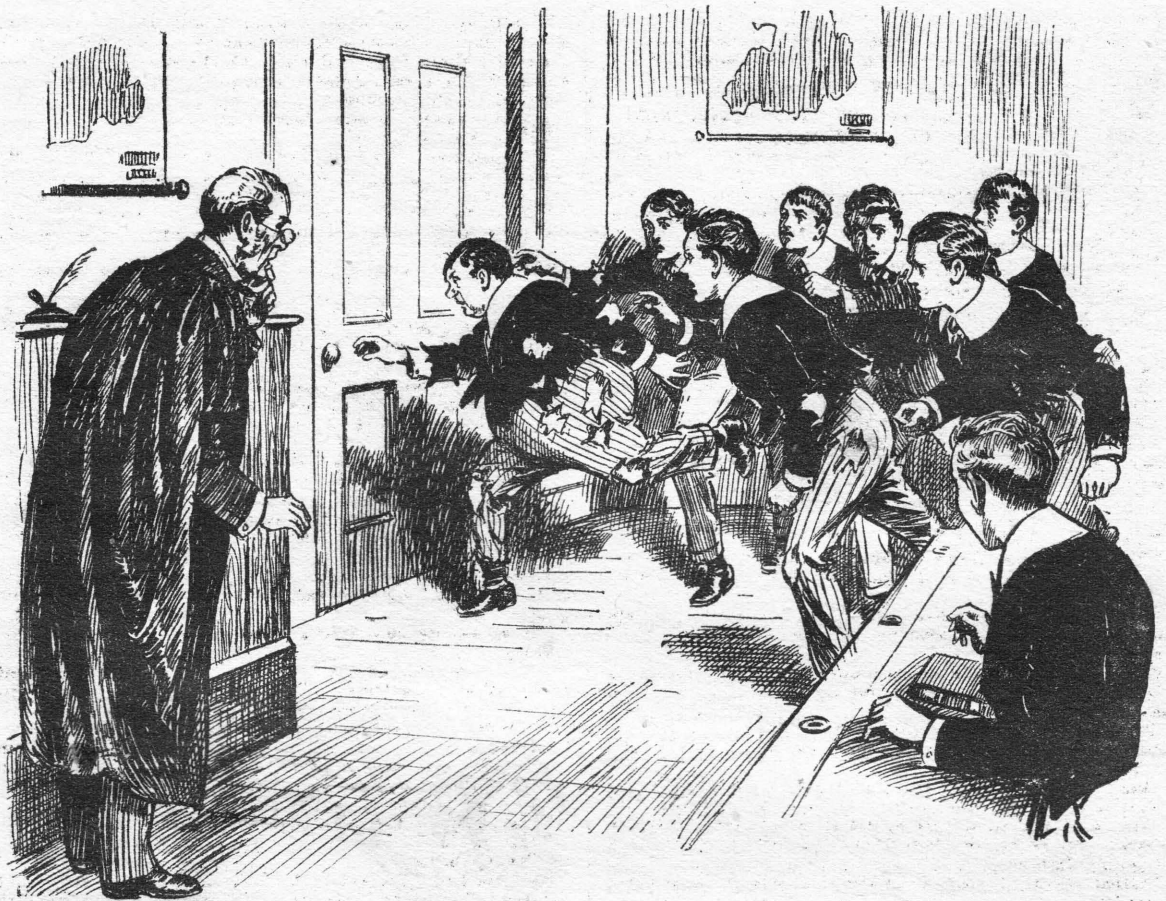
"Well, now you know," said Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass, Levison—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You set the alarm, and at the given hour this mechanical hand comes into operation," said Levison, indicating a bar with a boxing-glove fixed to the top. "As soon as the spring is released, up comes this hand, and gives the sleeper a gentle jab from underneath—"



"Every boy who has developed this—er—unhappy complaint had better go straight upstairs and change his clothing," said Mr. Lathom. There was an immediate rush for the door on the part of the ragged brigade, with Trimble well in the lead. "Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Lathom. (See Chapter 12.)

"You dummay! I nearly bwoke my back!"

"A gentle jab from underneath," continued Levison. "With all the thickness of the mattress to act as a buffer—in addition to the boxing-glove—the thing is naturally harmless."

"Yes," said Blake. "So I noticed."

"Weally, Levison, I must point out—"

"Of course, Gussy, the spring's a bit too strong," admitted Levison. "I shall have to make a few adjustments. Thanks awfully for providing me with such a good demonstration."

Arthur Augustus turned away. He could not trust himself to discuss the subject at any greater length. Moreover, he was feeling strained and twisted, and he was suffering from several bruises.

"It acts all right, but I don't think much of it for the prize," remarked Clive. "It won't stand an earthly, Levison. Mr. Glyn wants practical inventions—"

"Well, don't you call this practical?" asked Levison. "What could be more useful than an apparatus that will pitch you out of bed at a fixed hour every morning with clockwork-like regularity? Why, thousands of City clerks would buy one the instant it got on the market!"

"Rats!" said Blake. "It's too painful."

"Bai Jove! I'm glad you wealise it, Blake," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "If you want my opinion, the thing is murderous in the extreme! It is a lucky thing I have not boken my neck!"

"I say!" sang out Trimble, from one of the windows. "Quick, you fellows! Oh, my hat! Look at Figgins!"

"What's the matter with Baggy?" growled Mellish.

"Oh, he's always roaring about something!" said Wildrake.

"Quick!" gasped Baggy. "There's something the matter with Figgins! Oh, goodness! I'm dreaming, or something! He's jumping about in the quad like a jack-in-the-box!"

"Rats!"

"We can't bother—"

"Bai Jove!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "That fat wascal is wight, though. Somethin' is certainly the mattah with old Figgay. He is weally performin' the most extra-ordinary gymnastics in the quad!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"What the thump's the matter with him?"

The Fourth-Formers crowded to the dormitory windows and watched Figgins, the long, cheery leader of the New House juniors. And Figgins was undoubtedly acting in a very peculiar way.

He had the quadrangle entirely to himself, having evidently arisen well before rising-bell, and he was running about rather erratically. But this wasn't the feature of his activities which made his School House rivals stare so hard.

Figgins was apparently endowed with magical powers. He was taking enormous strides, eight or nine feet at a time, and rising into the air as though his shoes were provided with tremendous springs. And when he took a clear course across the quad, he progressed in a series of great bounds which took him along as fast as a cyclist. It was an extraordinary spectacle indeed.

"My only sainted aunt!"

"What the merry dickens does it mean?" gasped Blake. "The thing's impossible! How can he leap about like this? He's got long legs, I know, but—"

"Bai Jove! Anothah invention, deah boys."

"Gussy's right!" said Blake, staring. "I don't know how he did it, but he's hit the nail on the head! Who's got a piece of chalk? Somebody had better mark up that Gussy has had a glimpse of intelligence!"

"Weally, Blake, I fail to see the need to insult—"

"Let's get down as quickly as we can!" interrupted Levison. "I want to have a look at Figgins at close quarters. And if we don't buck up, he'll dodge in, and then we shall lose him."

"By Jove, yes!"

Nobody wasted much time in further talk. It was quite on the cards that Figgins would retire into the New House after giving his invention a trial. So Blake & Co., and many of the others, rather skimped their ablutions and concluded their toilet with far more haste than thoroughness. They streamed downstairs, and poured out into the quad before Figgins could make his escape. They rushed upon him in an excited crowd.

"You rotters!" shouted Figgins. "You're not due down for another ten minutes. I didn't mean you to see me."

"What the dickens are you wearing?" demanded Blake, staring at Figgins' feet. "My only hat! Look at his feet, you chaps! They're almost as big as Herries' now."

Herries turned red.

"If I had feet as big as that, I'd hide myself away and never appear in public again!" he said indignantly. "It's like your nerve to talk about my feet—"

"Oh, well, I suppose you've got to know now!" said Figgins, with a grin. "I was just giving my invention a trial. These are my Seven League Boots."

"Your what?"

"Your which?"

"My Seven League Boots!"

"Bai Jove! Figgay imagines that we are still livin' in the days of Gwimm's Fairy Tales," said D'Arcy. "Weally, Figgay—"

"Dry up, Gussy!" said Blake gruffly. "Now, then, Figgins, what's all this rot about Seven League Boots? What the dickens are you wearing, really?"

The School House juniors pressed round.

"Chuck it!" said Figgins hastily. "Pax, you know! If our chaps spot you, they'll swarm out, and wipe you up!"

"Better let 'em try!" said Blake aggressively.

"You silly School House fathead—"

"You long-legged New House burlber—"

"Chuck it!" said Levison. "We don't want to make a House row out of this bizney, do we? We came out to inspect Figgay's invention. Let's have a demonstration, Figgay, old man!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I must say I am fwightfully interwested, deah boys. Figgay appeahs to be weawin' somethin' special in the way of boots."

"My hat!" said Blake. "We hadn't noticed that before."

"Gussy sees everything!" said Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"These boots are my patent," said Figgins. "I've spent a lot of time on them, and if there's any justice in this world, I shall get the first prize for the most original invention. It's a device that will appeal to everybody. Cheap to produce, universal in appeal, and far better than any bicycle."

"Specially suitable for the crippled and the aged," said Blake.

"Oh, well, they're naturally designed for active people," said Figgins. "Just the same as bikes. Crippled people don't ride bikes, you funny ass! A pair of these boots can be made for a quid, and any ordinary chap can travel along at twelve miles an hour with ease. I've tested them, and I know."

"Let's see you have another shot," said Levison.

"These boots of mine have other advantages, too," went on Figgins enthusiastically. "In fact, the bicycle will soon be obsolete. No bike can go across a ploughed field, can it?"

"Well, hardly!" said Blake. "But—"

"No bike can take banks and hedges in its stride," continued Figgins. "And no bike can cross ditches as though they didn't exist. Quite apart from all that, tell me of a jigger that can be taken indoors under your arm, and stowed away in a coal-locker," he added triumphantly.

"Bai Jove! There appeahs to be somethin' in what Figgay says," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Not that I should care to twy the woihten things myself. It would be howwid for your clothin', Figgay, if you wicked your ankle, an' fell ovah."

Figgins waved a long arm.

"All that applies to a bike just as much," he added. "People are always skidding over on bikes, and getting themselves muddy. But with my Seven League Boots there's no danger of a skid at all. Once you've learned the trick of keeping your balance, it's easier than roller-skating!"

"I thought there was a catch in it somewhere," said Herries.

"You ass!" roared Figgins. "It's no harder to learn how to ride on my boots than it is to learn to ride a bike. As for roller-skates, they don't come into the argument at all. I can jump stiles, ditches, and cross ploughed fields as much as I like—and keep up an average of twelve miles an hour all the time."

The School House juniors were impressed.

Figgins' claims were big ones, and it certainly seemed that he had produced a novel invention which would stand a good chance of winning one of the coveted prizes.

CHAPTER 9.

Trimble Has a Try!

JACK BLAKE gazed at Figgins' feet with interest. To all intents and purposes, the New House junior's boots were an ordinary pair of footgear, but Figgins had obviously been making some drastic alterations to the soles. These were about six inches deep, and they bulged out beyond the welts like miniature balloons. AN THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 994.

ordinary bicycle valve projected from the heel of each like spurs.

Indeed, those soles had obviously been constructed from sections of a large motor-car size inner tube. They had been neatly designed and joined up, and as Figgins stood there, he swayed slightly, although he would not admit that he found some little difficulty in maintaining his balance.

"I didn't mean anybody to see!" he said gruffly. "It's quite likely that some rotter will pinch my patent—"



CAMEOS

RUGGER

Oh, Rugger is a glorious game
Of thrills and spills and bruises!
The quickest way of getting lame
That ever schoolboy chooses hard.
Boldly you dash into the fray,
Though prudence warns you not to;
"He's disappeared!" the fellows say,
"Where has the beggar got to?"

A whirling mass of legs and arms
The human serum discloses;
There's shouting, strife and wild alarms,
Sore limbs and damaged noses!
Westminster School on Pancake Day
Is like a placid ocean,
Compared with Little Side's fierce fray
Of tumult and commotion!

Merry and Blake are there, of course,
Imbued with dash and devilry;
And Grundy's snorting like a horse
To join the dreadful revelry.
His arms go round like windmill sails
Making wild revolutions;
And like a giant he prevails
Among the Lilliputians!

"You needn't worry," said Blake. "There are plenty of witnesses here to prove that you were the first inventor. We sha'n't try to rob you of your chances, old man. Let's see you give another demonstration."

"Oh, all right!" said Figgins good-naturedly.

He was rather flattered by the intense interest which the School House juniors were displaying. Fatty Wynn and Kerr had just come out, too, and Figgins was keen upon showing his rivals what Study No. 4 of the New House could do.

Not that George Figgins was a fellow who had a habit of "showing off." His nature was quite the opposite. He

had a horror of doing anything which savoured of "swank." But this matter was different. He had been asked to demonstrate his invention, and he was quite willing to oblige.

"Of course, this is only an experimental pair," he said. "The whole secret is contained in the pneumatic sole. I believe I've got them pumped up a trifle too soft, but that can easily be remedied. The harder they're pumped, the more efficiency, you know."

"Good!" said Blake. "Go ahead!"
Figgins went ahead.

in the patent that I can see. A chap needs to be an acrobat

"Not likely!" interrupted Baggy Trimble. "An active chap could wear those boots, and do just the same as Figgins is doing."

"Oh, could you do it, then?" demanded Blake.

"Don't be personal, Blake," said Trimble, with a sniff. "You're imputing that I'm not agile. Of course I could wear those boots!"

"Just a minute, Figgy!" sang out Blake. "We're tremendously impressed, but we think that another demonstration is necessary."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We suggest that Trimble should repeat your manoeuvres," said Blake.

Figgins shook his head.

"Not likely!" he retorted. "I don't want my boots punctured!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't mind any ordinary chap having a shot, but I bar Trimble!" said Figgins firmly.

"Oh, look here, Figgins—" began Trimble indignantly. "Half a tick!" interrupted Blake. "I thought you said your boots were of universal appeal, old scout?"

"So they are," replied Figgins defensively.

"Then why bar Trimble?" asked Blake. "What's the good of those Spring-heeled Jack affairs unless anybody and everybody can wear 'em? My dear chap, you're admitting that they're just a special—"

"Rats!" broke in Figgins. "Trimble can have a shot, if he likes."

"Good man!"

"Go it, Trimble—let's see your paces."

Baggy Trimble was full of importance.

"Rather!" he said. "I'll show you how those boots ought to be really worn. Figgy is pretty smart on them, but it needs a School House fellow to do them justice!"

"Brrrrrh!" growled Figgins.

He unlaced his boots, and within two minutes Trimble had donned them. Then Baggy was placed on his feet, and held in position by several grinning helpers.

"Bai Jove! I'm afraid the soles will burst," said Arthur Augustus. "They are bulgin' in the most alarmin' fashion, deah boys!"

"They ought to be pumped a bit harder for Trimble," said Figgins anxiously. "That's the whole idea of the patent. The greater the weight, the greater the pressure. Still, I expect they'll do for now."

"Go it, Baggy!"

"Let's see you jump over the gym, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble looked round and blinked.

"You needn't all crowd round!" he protested. "Leggo my arm, Gussy!"

"Weally, Twimble, I am waitin' to give you a send-off—"

"I don't want one!" interrupted Trimble. "Do you think I can't walk on these silly boots?"

"What silly boots?" asked Figgins aggressively.

"I—I mean these wonderful boots!" said Baggy, with a gasp.

He took a bold stride forward, and the expression on his face was, as Blake put it, worth a guinea a box. It was Trimble's first experience of this new sensation, and it seemed to him that his foot had turned to jelly. He could hardly tell whether he was touching the ground or not.

"Wow!" he gasped. "Hi! I can't— Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble's balance deserted him, and he sat down with a hard thud. But in a moment he was scrambling up again, only to discover that his grip on the ground was so unstable that he pitched on to his face.

"Fine!"

"Go it, Trimble, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you fatheads!" hooted Trimble, sitting up. "I—I believe Figgins has let some of the air out, or something! He kept his feet all right, didn't he? So why can't I?"

"It's one of those mysteries which time alone will solve," replied Blake. "But come along, Trimble. You haven't given us our money's worth! You said you could beat Figgy at his own game, and we want to see you do it."

"Give me time!" gasped Trimble.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Figgins. "He'll only spoil—"

"You dry up, my son," said Blake. "You claimed that these boots of yours could be worn by anybody, and it seems to me that you're getting the wind up. We want proof!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins grunted. He was beginning to feel that his first triumph was being somewhat marred by this development. He was so serious about his patent that he did not quite realise that the School House juniors were merely out to get some fun.

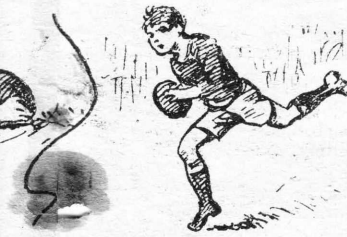
OF SCHOOL LIFE!

AT ST. JIM'S!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's there,
He's buried in the scrimmage;
He's not content to stand and stare
Just like a graven image!
He's caked with mud from top to toe,
And black as any nigger;
Soon to the bathroom he will go,
And scrub himself with vigour!

The serum breaks up; and like a flash
Tom Merry races furiously;
Hard at his heels opponents dash,
Chanting their war-cry curiously!
But though in hot pursuit they fly
To check his mad careering,
Tom dashes through to score a "try,"
Amid terrific cheering!

Yes! Rigger is a glorious sport;
For active boys and agile;
But certainly it's not the sort
Of pastime for the fragile!
Let weaklings all keep off the grass,
It's "Safety First" for dummies!
Not theirs to tackle, charge and pass,
Or venture where the scrum is!



He took two or three cautious steps at first, jumping into the air slightly, in order to give himself momentum. And in a moment he was careering across the quad in full flight. His strides were enormous, and he covered the ground at a remarkable speed.

Round he came, banking over like an aeroplane in flight, and the juniors grinned with appreciation.

"Bai Jove! This is wathah good, you know," said D'Arcy mildly.

"Jolly brainy, if you ask me," said Levison. "I didn't know old Figgins had it in him! There's only one flaw

Several of them grasped Trimble, and held him upright. "Now then—all together!" said Blake briskly. "We'll give him a good heave, so he can't say that he hasn't had a good start."

"Hi! Look out!" bellowed Trimble. "I— Oh crumbs!"

He was sent hurtling forward with tremendous force. He took two or three long strides, and went bouncing off across the quad, roaring. The spectacle was excruciatingly funny.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Twimble is doin' it, deah boys!"

By some miracle Trimble was managing to keep his balance. It was probably the instinct of self-preservation which came to his aid. But he found it impossible to stop!

As long as he kept going he was fairly safe, it seemed. His fat, podgy figure looked something like a balloon bouncing up and down. As soon as one foot touched the ground he bounded forward on a fresh impetus, and he swayed from side to side in the most perilous manner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" grinned Blake. "This is worth seeing!"

"I must remark, Figgay, that your boots are a wippin' success," beamed Arthur Augustus. "I have a good mind to try them myself!"

"Oh, my goodness!" said Figgins suddenly. "Old Ratty!"

"What!"

"Cave, you fellows!"

"Gweat Scott! Wattay!"

Mr. Ratcliff, the ill-tempered Housemaster of the New House, had suddenly appeared on the steps of his domain. He was frowning. This, of course, was nothing unusual in Mr. Ratcliff. It was some moons since he had been observed to smile.

"What is all this noise?" he asked testily.

"Hi! Out of the way!" hooted a frantic voice.

"Good gracious!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff, turning. "Who—who dares to— What! Upon my soul!"

He beheld Baggy Trimble bounding toward him like a human football. The unhappy Baggy was on the point of losing his balance, and it seemed to him that Mr. Ratcliff had been sent by Providence.

His last bound sent him straight into Mr. Ratcliff's arms, and he clutched wildly and desperately at this human buffer. Mr. Ratcliff had been referred to as a buffer many times, but never before had he so literally acted the part.

Crash!

"Good heavens!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "Crash!"

"Yaroooooh!" gasped Baggy Trimble.

They subsided in a dishevelled, entangled heap.

CHAPTER 10.

More Inventions!

MR. HORACE RATCLIFF sat up, sizzling like a bomb.

"Good heavens!" he repeated wildly. "I am injured! Boy, how dare you deliberately collide with me!"

"Groooooh!" groaned Baggy Trimble, sitting up dazedly.

"I shall report this matter to Mr. Railton!" barked the New House master viciously. "You—you wretched boy! You outrageous young rascal! You might have seriously injured me!"

"It wasn't my fault!" hooted Baggy indignantly.

"Don't dare to argue!" stormed Mr. Ratcliff. "What are these ridiculous abominations you are wearing on your feet, Trimble?"

"They're not ridiculous abominations, sir!" panted Figgy, running up.

"Be silent!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "I was not addressing you, Figgins! I was not— Thank you—thank you!" he added grudgingly, as Figgins helped him to his feet. "Good gracious! I am hurt!"

"It's not my fault, sir!" said Trimble, with a gasp. "These—these rotten boots belong to Figgins, and the chaps made me put them on, although I protested! I'm awfully sorry, sir—"

"Oh, so these wretched contrivances belong to you, Figgins?" snapped Mr. Ratcliff, his eyes gleaming with ill-natured satisfaction. "I shall confiscate them at once—"

"You can't do that, sir!" said Figgins desperately.

"Oh, indeed!"

"They're my—my patent, sir!"

"Nonsense! I refuse to allow—"

"We're all permitted to go in for this Inventions' Competition, sir!" said Figgins indignantly. "I haven't broken any rules, or done anything wrong. And I want to make some more experiments on those boots, too. If you confiscate them, I shall be robbed of my chance to get a prize."

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Mr. Ratcliff smiled unpleasantly.

"This is of no interest to me, Figgins!" he retorted curtly. "I disapprove of the competition, in any case. It is a foolish, preposterous scheme, at the best!"

"The Head doesn't think so, sir," said Figgins boldly.

"Boy, are you being deliberately impudent?"

"Nun-no, sir! But—but this competition was instituted with the Head's sanction, and it's a bit thick if we're not allowed to carry out our experiments," said Figgins.

"Trimble, you rotter, take those boots off at once!"

"I don't want the beastly things!" said Trimble.

He discarded them, and ran off in search of his own shoes before Mr. Ratcliff could detain him. Ratty, to tell the truth, was in a bit of a quandary. Figgins had committed no breach, and to punish him was unjust. And Mr. Ratcliff had an idea that if he really confiscated those boots, Figgins would complain to the Head. George Figgins was just the kind of boy to take a bold step of that sort.

"Ahem! I am very annoyed, Figgins," said Mr. Ratcliff tartly. "In the circumstances, I will allow you to take these boots away. But if I have occasion to warn you again, I shall confiscate the ridiculous things without compunction. Let this be a lesson to you!"

He strode off, inwardly boiling at his own helplessness. He was totally opposed to the competition. But, unfortunately, Dr. Holmes wasn't.

"Interfering old jesser!" said Kerr, as he and Fatty Wynn joined their leader. "He wanted to pinch your patent, didn't he?"

"He knew better!" said Figgins grimly. "I let him know pretty plainly that I should go straight to the Head if he started any of his monkey tricks. This is what comes of allowing those fatheaded School House chaps to interfere!"

"Oh, well, there's no harm done!" said Fatty Wynn. "And you've demonstrated that we're top-House! We've brought out the first sensible invention. We'll bring out the second, too," added Fatty. "I shall have my patent Frying Pan ready by this evening!"

"And my Fire Extinguisher is coming along nicely, too," said Kerr, with satisfaction. "I can't quite get the nozzle right, though—"

They went into the New House discussing nozzles, frying-pans, valves, and all manner of things connected with mechanical patents.

It was just the same in the School House.

This was the first day of the week, and the results of the previous week's concentration were becoming manifest. Blake & Co. ran into the Terrible Three in the School House doorway, and were stopped.

"What's all this about Figgins?" asked Tom Merry.

"If you Shell fellows want to see everything that's going on, you ought to get down at the right time!" said Blake severely. "You can't expect us to go over old history just because you've been slacking in bed—"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry, grinning. "We've been in the study, and didn't know there was anything doing until three minutes ago."

"Any invention ready for the public yet?" asked Blake.

"Well, Manners is getting out a patent camera—"

"Rats!" said Manners. "It'll take days yet."

"Bai Jove! You Shell fellows are fidgetfully slow!"

"Slow but sure, Gussy," said Monty Lowther. "By the time Manners' camera is finished, it'll knock spots off every other invention that was ever invented. It'll wipe out every patent that was ever patented. I don't exactly know what the camera will actually do, but you can bet it'll be something startling."

"Chuck it!" said Manners, who was sensitive about his camera. "I don't think much of your silly Fountain Pen, anyhow, Monty!"

"Now, there's a genuine invention!" said Lowther enthusiastically. "My Fountain Pen will revolutionise the entire art of writing. You just press a knob, and—"

"And get smothered?" asked Blake politely.

"You just press a knob, and—"

"Ah, my dear fellows, I am delighted to meet you so opportunely," said Skimpole, joining the group in the doorway. "I am slightly disturbed by a trifling question of cash. I find that I need a small sum to continue my experiments. And, ridiculously enough, the shopkeepers fail to appreciate the scientific possibilities of my investigations, and obstinately refuse to supply me on credit."

"Very shortsighted of them, Skimmy," said Lowther, shaking his head. "Why don't you go to Blankley's Stores, and suggest a system of instalments?"

Skimpole blinked dubiously.

"I have already had experience of Blankley's, my dear Lowther," he replied. "Unhappily enough, they appear to be brutally mundane in their methods, and I hesitate to suffer any further indignities at their grasping hands. I am in a quandary as to my latest invention—"

"Give it a rest, Skimmy!" said Blake hastily. "Yaas, wathah!" added D'Arcy. "Pway take your wovvies elsewhere, Skimmy. I have no doubt watevah that your latest invention is as uttably impwacticable as any of your othah contwaptions."

"My dear fellow, let me disillusion you," said Skimpole earnestly. "If you would care to come to my study, I will go into a full description of my remarkable—"

"Good gwacious!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "I uttably wefuse, Skimmy!"

"Don't be impolite, Gussy," said Blake, with a frown.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I agree with Blake," said Lowther, with a nod. "Skimmy has asked you to his study, Gussy, and you can't get out of it. As one gentleman to another—"

"I wogard you as a twightful chump, Lowthah!" interrupted Arthur Augustus coldly. "While I sympathise with Skimmy, I have uttably no intention of encouwagin' him in his widiculous wesearches by displayin' an intewest in them."

Skimpole blinked round in astonishment.

"But you are surely labouring under a misapprehension, my dear fellows?" he asked. "My reseaches are in no way ridiculous. On the contrary, I am on the point of making the greatest discovery of the twentieth century. I have already conquered the initial difficulties, and a few minor reseaches will undoubtedly culminate in an unqualified triumph. When my experiments have been finally concluded—Dear me! Blake! Lowther! Really, my dear fellows, I was speaking to you!"

Skimpole gazed down the passage in astonishment as his audience walked hurriedly away. He could only conclude that some unaccountable summons had reached them without his knowledge. It certainly never occurred to the

CHAPTER 11.

Well up to the Scratch!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW was rather amused when a number of other Fourth-Formers collected round him and asked for full particulars.

"You can't enter that invention for the competition," said Lumley-Lumley. "Mr. Glyn made it quite plain that only mechanical contrivances are eligible. A liquid stain remover isn't a mechanical contrivance."

"Bai Jove! Lumlay-Lumlay is quite wight!" said Arthur Augustus, gazing at Cardew through his monocle. "I am afwaid you have had your twouble for nothin', Cardew. You should have wemembahed—"

"Every rule has an exception," interrupted Cardew airily. "When the merits of my extraordinary patent get known, I shall not only be allowed to enter the stuff, but I shall undoubtedly pour the first prize into my pocket. I hate to dishearten you all—"

"Wats!" said D'Arcy. "I believe that bottle contains nothin' but watah!"

"Yes, you're trying to spoof us, you ass!" said Blake.

"Perish the thought!" said Cardew. "Let me give you a little exhibition. Here we have a common or garden duster—an' here a quite ordinary bottle of ink."

He produced the articles with a flourish from his pocket.

"You will kindly observe that I have nothin' up my sleeves," he went on calmly. "My assistant will now hand the bottle of ink among the audience, an' I offer a prize of one thousand pounds to any sleuth who can prove that it is faked. This ink, gentlemen, is guaranteed fifty per cent. blue and fifty per cent. black. Kindly examine it!"

"Ass!" grinned Blake.

"Get on with the demonstration, Cardew!"

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genius of the Shell that the fellows were escaping from him. Once Skimmy got fairly started, nothing short of T.N.T. would stop him.

After breakfast, Ralph Reckness Cardew, of the Fourth, was observed near the School House steps, idly handling a large blue bottle with a glass stopper. He occasionally took a sniff at it, and was apparently pleased with the result.

"What's the idea, Cardew?" asked Blake as he came out.

"My new invention," said Cardew carelessly.

"My hat! Have you been stung, too?"

"Dear man, we are all liable to be bitten at any moment," drawled Cardew. "At first I thought about producing a patent cigarette-holder which not only consumes its own smoke, but also resembles a stick of sugar-candy. An excellent idea in every way. Smoking quite safe—even under the eyes of a master."

"You funny ass!"

"I abandoned the scheme, however, as I felt that it would meet with your stern disapproval," went on Cardew flippantly. "Besides, why go to all that trouble, when I can enjoy a cigarette in perfect safety behind a convenient tree?"

Arthur Augustus came out, and eyed Cardew severely.

"I twust that you are not continuin' your smokay habits, Cardew, you boundah?" he asked.

"Don't chide me, Gussy—my conscience is too black," said Cardew, with a sad shake of his head. "Every time I try to reform I find myself slipping back into the murky depths of naughtiness. However, you expressed a certain curiosity regarding this fluid, Blake."

"What is it?" said Blake. "A substitute for champagne?"

"Nothing so wicked as that," replied Cardew, with a smile. "Let me give you a demonstration. I call it my Instantaneous Stain Remover. One drop, an' all stains are magically effaced. It is even guaranteed to wipe stains off a fellow's character! Marvellous stuff, I assure you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Everybody was quite satisfied that the ink was genuine. Cardew, still whimsically facetious, proceeded to splash a liberal dose of the ink on to the duster. There was a big black stain there.

"Now," said Cardew, "watch! Take particular note of the fact that I do not change the duster. There is no deception, gentlemen—there is no illusion. I will now wipe this stain off as though it never existed."

"Cut the cackle!" said Blake gruffly. "I've seen these tricks before! After we've watched, somebody will be asked to hold the duster, or something, and Cardew will get the laugh—"

"Dear man, I assure you!" protested Cardew. "Good gad! You surely don't imagine that I would descend to such trickery?"

"You ass, you can't remove that ink stain while it's still wet!" said Levison. "You'll have to wait until it's dry, anyhow. Where did you get the stuff? We've heard nothing about it in the study."

"Not a sound," said Clive.

"You may be my study-mates, old fellows, but there are some secrets which we keep locked away from our nearest and dearest," replied Cardew urbanely. "Now, observe. Watch very closely!"

Cardew tipped some colourless liquid on to a clean piece of linen, and the juniors grinned. They were certain that that liquid was merely water. Cardew gave one wip across the big ink stain, and it vanished.

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Quite simple, you see," said Cardew smoothly.

He held the duster out to Blake.

"Examine it closely," he smiled.

Blake turned the duster over, and he was looking startled.

"Well, I'm jiggled!" he ejaculated. "There's not a trace of it left!" He sniffed closely. "There's a rummy niff, but it's not unpleasant. I've never seen anything so quick in all my giddy life!"

"How the thump did you do it, Cardew?"

"I'll bet it's a trick!" said Herries sceptically.

"Yaas, wathah! A conjuring twick—"

"It saddens me to see this scepticism," interrupted Cardew sadly. "Blake, old scout, I observe a somewhat murky stain on your left knee."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy promptly. "I am fwightfully glad that you have pointed it out, Cardew. I have repeatedly pwotested with Blake in wference to that stain. It wains his whole appeawance—"

"Blow my appeawance!" growled Blake. "I'm not such a tailor's dummy as you are, Gussy—"

"Weally, Blake, I pwotest—"

"While Gussy is pwotesting, I will operate," said Cardew smoothly.

"Weally, Cardew—"

Ralph Reckness Cardew leaned forward, and drew his soaked rag across Blake's knee. Only twice did he rub, and the stain had vanished. The juniors blinked in wonder.

"Great Scott!" gasped Blake. "It's gone!"

"A most wemarkable occuwence, deah boys!"

"I can't believe it," said Herries bluntly.

"Rats! You've got to believe it," said Blake, looking down at his knee. "There was no trickery about that, you ass! I've had that stain for two days, and—"

"My magical fluid is guaranteed to remove the pattern from a Scotch plaid," said Cardew. "If anybody is still sceptical, let them stand forward. For to-day only, and purely as an advertisement, every customer will receive treatment free of charge. But henceforward the price will be one shilling per stain—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say!" gasped Baggy Trimble, pushing forward.

"How do you make that stuff, Cardew?"

Cardew looked at him, and shook his head.

"If I thought about broadcasting my secret, I would whisper the formula into your-shell-like ear, Trimble," he replied. "I would impress upon you the fact that it is a close secret, and I should consequently know that the world would soon be told."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I won't breathe a word!" roared Trimble. "But—but if we can make a good supply of that stuff, we can charge the chaps a shilling a time—"

"Will somebody remove this porpoise?" asked Cardew, pained. "I have already said that the treatment is to be perfectly free for to-day only. I will be generous, and start on Trimble himself. Trimble, forward! If you will kindly tell me which are the few unstained spots on your clothing, I will operate upon the rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're not going to charge me?" asked Trimble suspiciously.

"Rats!" said Blake. "Hold still, you fat ass! I want to see if this stuff takes your stains away, too. I can't quite believe it yet."

But he believed it soon afterwards; for after Cardew had rubbed fairly lightly on Trimble's elbows, knees, and other prominent spots, the result was startling. All those stains had gone.

"Bai Jove! I have nevah seen Twimble lookin' so spotless," said D'Arcy, with approval. "I weally think that Cardew will wun off with the first pwize. The invention may not be mechanical, but it is a wonderful patent for keepin' a fellow's clobbah in ordah!"

Cardew was kept busy for the next ten minutes. Over a dozen fellows found that they were marred by one or more ink-stains. Until now they had hardly noticed that their bags were thus decorated, although Gussy, of course, had always regarded these stains as an eyesore. The swell of St. Jim's was feeling very elated when the Fourth went into its Form-room for morning lessons.

"For once, deah boys, I feel that I am in wrespectable company," beamed Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! I wondah if Mr. Lathom will notice any difference!"

"He'll be blind if he doesn't!" said Blake.

A moment later Mr. Lathom came busting in. In his mild, inoffensive way the master of the Fourth was not a man to be feared. For a moment he looked at his class over the tops of his glasses. Then he coughed, took another look, and adjusted the focus.

"Dear me!" he said. "You are looking very neat this morning, boys!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "Cardew has—"

"Pray take no notice, sir," said Cardew languidly.

"Weally, Cardew—"

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But it was quite clear that Cardew was not anxious for Mr. Lathom to hear any details. He was modest, and required no credit.

"Don't say a word!" he whispered. "I don't want the whole school gassing about my Stain Remover."

"I am glad to see this general improvement," continued Mr. Lathom mildly. "I trust that it is no mere flash in the pan, boys. And now let us get on with our work."

For perhaps half an hour there was peace in the Fourth Form room. After this period, however, Mr. Lathom had occasion to remonstrate with Baggy Trimble.

"Really, Trimble, I cannot allow this restlessness," said the Form master. "For over five minutes you have been shifting about in the most extraordinary fashion."

"I—I—"

"Are you ill, Trimble?"

"Nun-no, sir!" gasped Trimble.

"Then compose yourself, young man, and get on with your work," said Mr. Lathom. "Leave your knee alone. There is no need to scratch— Take your hand away from your shoulder, Trimble! Why do you keep scratching yourself in this irritating manner?"

"Because I itch, sir!" said Trimble desperately.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "I cannot understand— Blake!"

"Sir!" said Blake, jumping up.

"You were scratching your knee just now, Blake!"

"Was I, sir?"

"Yes, you were!" retorted Mr. Lathom. "I cannot understand what on earth— Mellish, how dare you!"

"Please, sir, I—I'm all irritable, sir!" gasped Mellish.

"My elbow is itchy, and my left knee, and—"

"Yow!" panted Trimble. "Oh crumbs! I—I can't sit still, sir!"

He tried to scratch himself in about eight places at once, and his squirmings were painful to witness. Mr. Lathom regarded his Form in amazement. In every part of the room the juniors were busily scratching knees, elbows, and various other portions of their anatomy.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Lathom blankly.

CHAPTER 12.

The Ragged Brigade!

"YOW! Oooh!"
"Oh, my hat!"
"Help!"

Undoubtedly the Fourth Form was acting in a most remarkable fashion. Quite twenty per cent of the juniors were contorting themselves and fidgeting continuously.

"Bai Jove! Whatevah is the mattah?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, screwing his eyeglass into his eye, and surveying his immediate neighbours in amazement. "Blake, what are you doin'?"

"Scratching my knee!" replied Blake thickly.

"Then I wegard such an action as wepwehensible in the extreme," said D'Arcy, with stern disapproval. "Gweat Scott! It is fwightfully bad form to scratch yourself!"

"I can't bother about form!" gasped Blake. "Oh crumbs! My knee's itching like the merry dickens!"

"I am disgusted!" said D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, this is the kind of behaviouah one expects fwom a twamp! I twust you will wealise where you are, Blake!"

"Boys, boys!" shouted Mr. Lathom desperately.

"Ow—yow!" roared Trimble. "I'm in pain, sir! It's—it's so awful that I can't keep still! There's lots of places I can't reach!"

"Trimble, I am amazed!" shouted Mr. Lathom. "Blake! Mellish! Julian! Wyatt! Order—order! How dare you continue this disgraceful scene? I am convinced that it is merely an attempt to play a practical joke upon me!"

"It is not, sir!" gasped Blake. "Oh, goodness! My knee's a bit easier now."

"What does it mean?" asked Herries in surprise.

"Yaas, wathah! Whatevah is the mattah?"

"Silence!"

Mr. Lathom, now fairly aroused, seized a pointer, and walked up and down the Form-room. Most of the juniors controlled themselves. Even Baggy Trimble managed to sit still when he found that pointer within reach of him.

"Now," said Mr. Lathom grimly, "we will continue our work!"

The Fourth continued.

"It beats me!" murmured Figgins. "It's only these School House chaps who are affected, by the look of it. It can't be a jape, either. There's no sense in—"

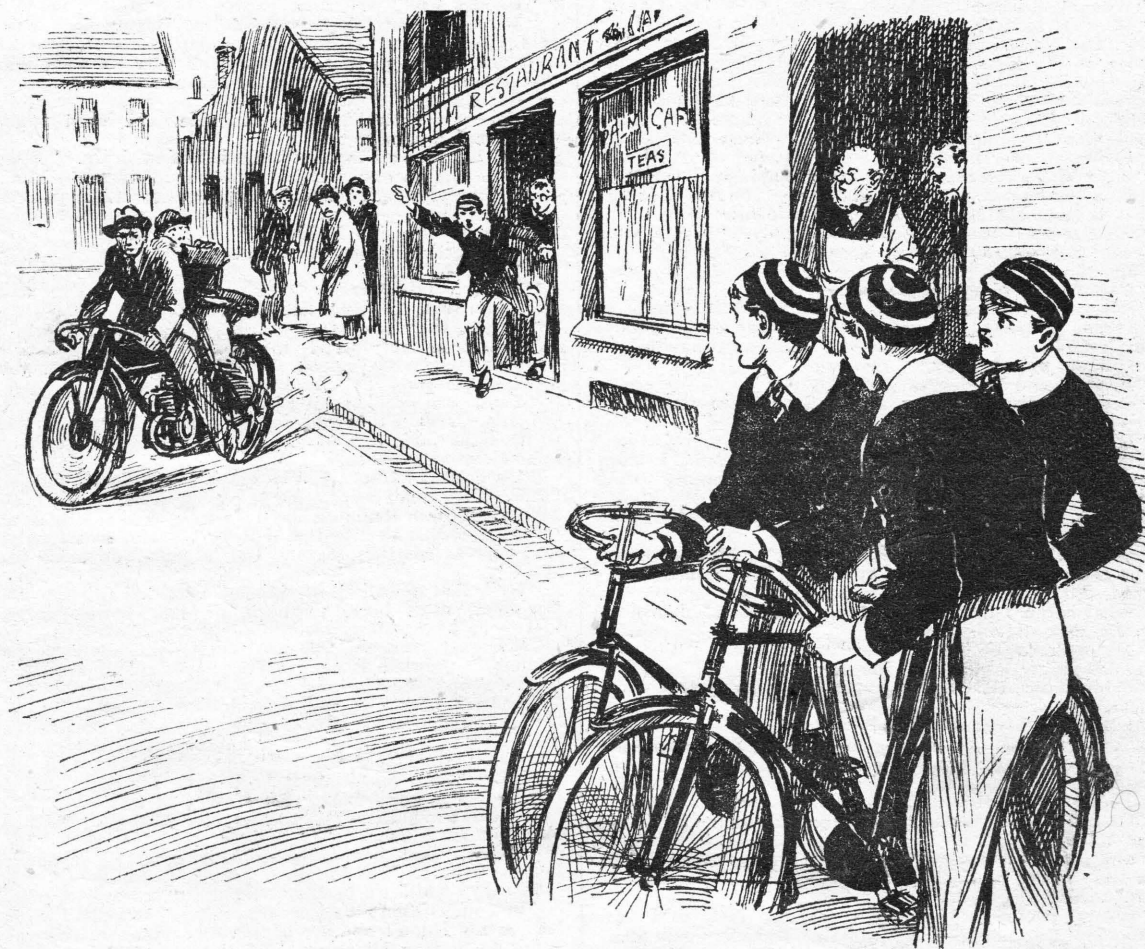
"Cardew!" murmured Kerr shrewdly. "I wonder—"

"Eh?" said Figgins. "You wonder what?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Kerr. "I just wonder!"

He glanced round at Ralph Reckness Cardew.

Cardew was lounging at his desk, calm and nonchalant.



Just as the motor-bike, with its passengers, was making off, Bernard Glyn and Skimpole came tearing out of the cafe. "Hi!" roared Glyn excitedly. "Stop! Stop, thief!" "Great Scott!" shouted Tom Merry. "That must be Glyn's bike—and it's being pinched! After 'em, chaps!" (See Chapter 15.)

But as he always adopted this pose, there was nothing particular to be got out of an examination of him. But Kerr was not the only fellow who was giving Cardew a very straight glance.

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "It's fishy!"

"How do you mean?" whispered Digby.

"Well, that marvellous stain remover!" growled Blake.

"I'm not saying anything, mind you, but it's a bit rummy that my left knee should itch. That's the one that Cardew rubbed!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "This is vewy interwestin', Blake. An' did this stain wemovah go through to your skin?"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Fathead!"

"I do not regard those expressions as an intelligible weply, Blake."

"Silence!" said Mr. Lathom, frowning. "D'Arcy, you were speaking!"

"Yaas, sir. I am puzzled ovah the epidemic——"

"I am obliged to you, D'Arcy, for being so concerned, but you will kindly get on with your work!" said Mr. Lathom tartly. "And let there be no further talk in this room. We have had quite sufficient disturbance for one morning."

And so peace reigned in the Fourth once more.

But not for long. The itching, it seemed, had died down, the malady being very swift and short-lived. Even Baggy Trimble was now quite comfortable again, and he was going ahead with his work with all his usual reluctance.

Blake was the first to start the next sensation.

Quite unconsciously he rubbed his knee as he worked. There was no discomfort there now, but Blake performed the action quite mechanically. And once, when he brought his hand up, and reached over for a pencil, he suddenly stared.

"What the merry dickens——" he began.

He stared at his hand. There were some shreds of

material adhering to his finger-nails—dark material, like bits of woollen stuff.

"Rummy!" murmured Blake, as he glanced down at his knee. "I don't remember— Eh? Why, what the— Great Scott!" he yelled.

Mr. Lathom jumped.

"Blake!" he rapped out.

"Sir?" gasped Blake. "I—I——"

"How dare you make those abrupt noises in the classroom?" demanded Mr. Lathom. "You will write me fifty lines——"

"Just a minute, sir!" interrupted Blake. "Something's happened to my knee, sir. My bags are torn!"

"Your knee?" repeated Mr. Lathom mildly. "I am concerned to hear that your bags—ahem!—that your trousers are torn, Blake. You must report to the matron after lessons. In the meantime——"

"Bai Jove!" interrupted D'Arcy. "What a fwightful catastwophe, deah boy! Pway have a look at Blake's knee, sir! It is uttably impossible for him to pwoceed——"

"Stand up, Blake," said Mr. Lathom impatiently.

Blake stood up, and all eyes were fixed upon his nether garments. One knee was literally in rags. A jagged hole was showing, as though half a dozen rats had been having a meal off that particular piece of cloth.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "How did you do that, Blake?"

"I didn't do it, sir," said Blake, startled.

"You didn't do it!"

"No, sir!"

"Really, Blake, I find it difficult to——"

"I suddenly noticed it, sir," broke in Blake. "I looked down, and saw that my bags were like this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

"Oh, I say," came a yell from Mellish. "There's a whacking great hole in my coatsleeve! And look at Trimble! He's falling to pieces!"

"What!" shrieked Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lathom scarcely knew what to do. In almost every corner of the room certain juniors were discovering that their clothing had suddenly become ragged. Baggy Trimble was undoubtedly in the worst plight. Both his knees were completely bare, he was out at elbow, one of his jacket lapels was crumbling away, and there were other holes appearing all over him.

"Something's radically wrong here!" said Mr. Lathom, in blank astonishment. "Boys, what have you been doing? What is the meaning of this strange epidemic?"

"It's Cardew!" shouted Trimble suddenly. "Oh, my hat! Cardew and his rotten Stain Remover!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Cardew, you dangerous rotter—"

"Silence!" stormed Mr. Lathom. "Am I in control of this room, or am I not? If any boy speaks again without being addressed, I will detain him! Cardew, what do you know about this remarkable matter?"

"I, sir?" said Cardew mildly.

"Several boys have suggested that you are responsible for—"

"Oh, but you know what they are, sir!" said Cardew, shrugging his shoulders. "How on earth could I know anything about their clothing, sir? There's nothing wrong with my own appearance, that I know of."

"It was that beastly chemical stuff of yours!" yelled Mellish.

"Of course it was!" shouted Trimble. "Cardew ought to be made to give us new clothes, sir. He's ruined everything! All our bags are falling to pieces!"

"What is this I hear about a Stain Remover?" demanded Mr. Lathom.

"My patent, sir," said Cardew calmly. "A secret formula of my own. It's the most wonderful stuff for removing stains, sir. If you've got any clothing that needs renovating, sir—"

"I thank you, Cardew, but I have not!" interrupted Mr. Lathom. "I shall say nothing further at the moment, but if you have been dabbling in dangerous chemicals, with the result that much clothing has been ruined, I am afraid I shall have to report you to the Housemaster."

"Isn't that a bit steep, sir?" asked Cardew. "I didn't press the fellows to try my patent. I certainly offered to remove all stains free of charge, but they needn't have taken advantage of the suggestion. They've only got themselves to thank!"

"H'm! Perhaps so, Cardew—perhaps so!" said Mr. Lathom. "I do not wish to be unfair. Did you freely allow Cardew to rub this preparation on your knee, Blake?"

"Well, yes, sir—"

"And you, Mellish?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"If you all allowed Cardew to operate upon your clothing of your own free wills, there is little further to be said," continued Mr. Lathom. "Every boy who has developed this—this—er—unhappy complaint had better go straight upstairs and change."

There was an immediate rush for the door. Baggy Trimble was among the first, and he was a strange sight. Holes had developed over every part of his person, and it seemed rather doubtful if he would succeed in getting upstairs in a truly respectable condition. His clothing was literally falling off him, and he was more holes than otherwise.

CHAPTER 13. Glyn's Trial Run!

"GRAB him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew found himself surrounded by an excited mob as he came out of the School House after morning lessons.

"Dear men, there is no need to spill my blood—"

"You rotter!" snorted Blake. "What about my bags?"

"I fail to see how I am responsible—"

"They're ruined!" shouted Blake.

"My whole suit's ruined!" yelled Baggy Trimble. "My pater will send in a bill for damages, Cardew! You needn't think you can escape the consequences!"

"If you insist upon compensation, Trimble, dear heart, allow me to gracefully settle the matter," said Cardew smoothly. "One suit ruined—eh? Well, I think fifteen shillings will meet—"

"Fifteen shillings!" hooted Trimble. "You mean fifteen pounds!"

"No, I mean fifteen shillings."

"Why, you ass, my suits always cost twenty quid!" shouted Trimble. "My pater has a tailor from Savile Row for me! He always comes down to Trimble Hall especially!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your pater must have spoofed you, Baggy, dear man," said Cardew. "That man isn't from Savile Row at all. Just one of your little mistakes. He's only the tally man, and he probably calls monthly for his instalments."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you rotter!" roared Trimble. "I want twenty quid compensation!"

"Any advance on twenty?" asked Cardew dryly. "It was fifteen a minute ago, but it makes no difference. You're just as likely to get twenty as fifteen, old scout. If you care to take shillings—"

"I don't!" shouted Trimble.

"You decline fifteen bob with scorn?"

"Yes, I do!"

"Funny!" said Cardew, shaking his head. "I've never known Trimble to refuse money before!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is all very well," said Blake, glaring. "I don't want any compensation off you, Cardew, but I've a good mind to biff you!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy hotly. "Allow me to remark, Cardew, that you deserve a feahful thwashin'. It is no light mattah when a fellow delibewately wuins a numbah of suits—"

"My dear old Gussy, you've got it wrong," said Cardew. "You surely don't suspect me of playing a deliberate trick? My patent Stain Remover may be responsible, or it may not—it's impossible to say—but if it is, I apologise all round, and express heartfelt regret. Can a fellow do more than that?"

"Well, that is wathah handsome," admitted D'Arcy. "In the cires, deah boys, pewwaps we had bettah forgive him—"

"It's easy enough for you to forgive anybody, you dummy!" growled Blake. "You haven't had a pair of bags ruined!"

"I see no weason to call me a dummy, Blake—"

"Oh, what's the use?" said Blake. "Cardew's apologised, and it's no good trying to get anything out of him. We know him of old!"

"Ah, what a sad thing it is to have a record!" sighed Cardew. "A black, shady past! We try to live it down, and it lurks round the first corner, with a sandbag poised in readiness for a knock-out!"

"Where's that beastly chemical of yours?" demanded Levison grimly. "You're in my study, Cardew—"

"Really?" said Cardew. "I thought you were in mine."

"You funny ass! It's the same thing!" snapped Levison. "Clive and I don't approve of this silly nonsense, and we're going to destroy all the rest of this chemical before you can do any further damage."

"A laudable intention, but quite unnecessary," said Cardew. "It so happens that the precious fluid is entirely expended. I seriously doubt if I can recall the formula. I will try, of course—"

"You thumping idiot, you'd better forget it!" growled Blake. "Come on, you chaps! These inventions are getting a bit too warm."

Baggy Trimble sidled up to Cardew.

"I—I'll make it ten quid, Cardew, old man!" he said.

"I am frightfully sorry—"

"Well, eight, then!"

"I'm still frightfully sorry—"

"Look here!" roared Trimble. "Give me a fiver, and I'll call it square."

"You can call it square, if you like, but to the best of my recollection, a fiver is slightly oblong," said Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you destructive rotter!" shouted Baggy desperately. "Unless you give me a fiver compensation, Cardew, I'll never speak to you again!"

"That settles it!" said Cardew promptly. "You don't get a cent!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean I'm willing to take three quid!" gasped Trimble.

"I am more frightfully sorry than ever—"

"Well, two quid, then!"

"This is gettin' monotonous," complained Cardew. "I offered you fifteen bob, Trimble, an' you refused it."

"All right, you swindling rotter, I'll take fifteen bob!" said Trimble.

"No, you won't," replied Cardew. "You refused it once, and it's not my habit to offer a thing twice."

"You can't back out of it!"

"I wouldn't dream of persuadin' you to go back on your own word, Trimble," interrupted Cardew. "An' I quite appreciate that fifteen bob to you is such a mere trifle that it's tantamount to an insult. And who am I to insult a man who pays twenty quid for his suits?"

Cardew walked off with Levison and Clive, leaving Trimble flat.

"You silly idiot!" snapped Mellish viciously. "Why the

"Dickens didn't you take that fifteen bob in the first place? Cardew might have given me fifteen, too."

"The rotter!" gasped Baggy. "I—I thought I should get a fiver, at least!"

"Well, it serves you right for being so jolly greedy," said Mellish sourly. "We can't prove anything against Cardew, anyhow, and it's no good complaining to old Railton. It's quite possible that Cardew thought his chemical was perfectly safe."

And so the affair was forgotten, and Baggy Trimble spent a disconsolate afternoon worrying over the fifteen shillings that he might have jingled in his pocket but for his greediness.

As soon as afternoon lessons were over Bernard Glyn got his bicycle out and hurried off to Glyn House. He said nothing to his chums, but he was intent upon giving his invention a trial on the road. He had a small motor-bicycle at home, and he was carrying his precious carburettor in a parcel.

It was only the work of half an hour for a mechanic like Bernard Glyn to remove the existing carburettor and to fix up his own patent in its place. Then he filled the tank with crude-oil, and took the motor-bike out on the road.

This was to be the big test.

Until now he had only tried his carburettor on the bench. The results might be very different on the road under load. This latter was the point which was concerning Glyn most of all. How much power would he be able to get on crude-oil, even supposing the engine fired properly?

It was still necessary for him to heat his vaporiser by means of methylated spirit. When it was thoroughly hot the mechanism would, according to his calculations, function correctly without any aid. There was no danger of an explosion, since the thick oil was perfectly safe.

"Now!" murmured Glyn anxiously.

He operated the kick-starter, and there was no result. Again and again he tried to start, but it was useless. He made some fresh adjustments and tried some more methylated spirit. He operated the kick-starter.

No result.

Glyn scratched his head and began to get despondent. He gave another kick, and this time his heart jumped. There was a spluttering explosion, followed by a number of others. The engine was running!

"My hat!" breathed Glyn. "She's going!"

He leapt into the saddle and opened the throttle. To his joy, the engine roared in answer, leaving a cloud of thick, murky smoke in the rear. But Glyn didn't worry himself about smoke.

He slipped in the clutch and the motor-bike moved off. And Glyn discovered, to his great joy, that the engine seemed to be developing more power on this crude oil than she had ever developed on petrol. True, the explosions were inclined to be rather erratic, but that was all a matter of adjustment. The one glorious feature was that his carburettor was functioning on the road.

Bernard Glyn rode on absentmindedly, his whole attention centred upon the engine. He found himself on the Wayland Road, and he was only dimly aware that a somewhat skinny figure was waving to him ahead, and signalling for him to stop. Glyn closed the throttle and applied his brakes.

"Skimmy!" he said with a glare.

"My dear Glyn, I am delighted to see you," said Skimpole of the Shell. "I was walking into Wayland, and when I saw you coming I thought, perhaps, that you would be travelling in that direction, too."

Glyn nodded.

"Well, I am going to Wayland, as a matter of fact," he admitted. "I need some sparking plugs from the garage. I want to make different tests under varying conditions."

"Quite so, quite so!" agreed Skimpole. "I, too, am in the midst of my scientific researches. Much as I distrust these noisy motor-cycles, I am willing to overlook my aversion in the interests of haste. I desire to get back to my study in the shortest possible space of time. So I will accept your invitation of a lift with the greatest pleasure."

"Did I invite you?" asked Bernard Glyn.

"Really, my dear fellow, I cannot remember," said Skimpole, blinking. "But as you would undoubtedly have invited me in any case, what difference does it make? Thank you, Glyn, thank you!"

He sat himself astride the carrier, and Bernard Glyn chuckled and moved off.

CHAPTER 14. Unexpected!

SKIMPOLE was in a dreamy mood.

He was evidently intent upon some great invention of his own, and he had no time to attend to Bernard Glyn's enthusiastic discourses on the merits of his wonderful carburettor.

Glyn kept up a continuous flow of talk over his shoulder as the pair motor-cycled into Wayland. It was a fine, sunny afternoon, and Glyn's success had put him into an excessively good humour.

As a rule he was not overjoyed with Herbert Skimpole's company. For Skimmy was rather apt to monopolise the entire conversation, and to talk the hind leg off a donkey. But for once Skimpole had met his match.

Indeed, by the time Wayland was reached, and Glyn had stopped outside the garage, Skimpole was beginning to get quite interested.

"And so, my dear fellow, you have obtained this great success after months of research?" he asked mildly. "Splendid! Let me be the first to congratulate you. You have produced something which will revolutionise the industry of motoring."

Glyn looked at him in surprise.

"If you know all about it, tell me the principle!" he said.

"With pleasure!" replied Skimpole readily.

They were just outside the garage now, and the machine was on its stand. Skimpole bent down, and pointed to the strange-looking carburettor which jutted out from near the cylinder head.

"Here, my dear Glyn, we have the secret of the whole revolutionary design," he said. "With this carburettor we discard petrol once and for all. We use crude-oil in its place."

"Wonderful!" said Glyn, nodding.

"It is only necessary to think for one moment, to realise the stupendous and far-reaching possibilities," continued Skimpole, his thin voice rising with enthusiasm. "In this—this chamber we no longer mix petrol and air in order to produce the necessary explosive gas, but we vaporise crude-oil, converting it swiftly into a highly efficient form of gasoline which not only takes the place of the former petrol mixture, but which has a higher combustible tendency."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Glyn.

He did not observe that two men were listening rather intently. They were standing near their car a few yards away, and they had probably been attracted by Skimpole's professor-like manner. It was highly probable, too, that they were under the impression that Skimpole was the owner, and Glyn a mere novice.

"A carburettor of this description has, I realise, the most far-reaching possibilities," continued Skimmy. "When it is absolutely perfected, and placed on the market at a reasonable figure, it will make a fortune for any firm which handles it. That, of course, is an unqualified conclusion. Crude-oil is Nature's own fuel. I have never approved of the present orgy of refining. Imagine the great advance in the whole motoring industry when crude-oil can be used as a universal method of locomotion. And this carburettor, my dear Glyn, has solved that great problem at last."

"By Jove, it has!" said Glyn enthusiastically.

He went off into the garage, and Skimpole continued to examine the carburettor as though he had never heard of it before. But it was clear that he had soaked the principle of it. And those two men were clearly convinced that he, Skimpole, was not only the owner, but the inventor. A small error, but one liable to lead to astonishing developments.

Bernard Glyn came out with his sparking-plugs, and found Skimmy in the saddle, dreamily testing the controls.

"Are you going to drive?" he asked, grinning.

"Eh? No, my dear fellow—no!" said Skimpole, hastily getting off. "I would much prefer you to drive, if you have no objection. From the rear position I can observe the functioning of the mechanism much more satisfactorily."

Bernard Glyn operated the kick-starter, and he was delighted when the hot engine instantly fired. A moment later the two Shell fellows went off down the street. But they didn't go far. They came to a halt outside another shop, where Skimpole desired to make certain purchases. Apparently he had raked up some money from somewhere.

"What do you make of that?" asked one of the men, as he looked down the street at the now deserted motor-cycle.

"All rubbish, of course!" said the other.

"I don't know so much about that," said the first man, in a low voice. "I'd like to have a close look at that jigger, Martin. She wasn't running on ordinary petrol, I'll swear! Didn't you notice the black smoke?"

"Yes; but you're not going to tell me that a mere school-boy could invent a carburettor to use just thick oil!" said Martin, a thick-set individual, with a clean-shaven, ruddy face, and small, closely-set eyes. "Why, there'd be a fortune in it if it was true!"

"That's just what I was thinking," muttered the other. "As far as I can see, the carb was a home-made, tinny-looking contrivance, and the engine was certainly running good enough."

"She was, Twist—she was!" admitted Mr. Martin, scratching his chin. "By gosh! If I thought there was anything in it—"

"Why not stroll along and see if we can get a close look?" suggested Mr. Twist. "If so, we might be able to do a deal with the kid. A fiver to square him, and we'd get the plans, at least."

"It's no good!" growled the other. "They're out again now."

But Bernard Glyn and Skimpole did not return to the motor-cycle. They crossed the road and entered the cafe on the other side. Glyn was feeling so elated that he had invited Skimmy to a light feed. And Skimpole, although he was impatient to be back, was too polite to refuse. Moreover, he wanted to return on the pillion of Glyn's machine.

"That's good!" said Mr. Twist, with a keen light in his eyes. "The kids have gone into that restaurant. There's hardly anybody about, and we can easily have a look at that machine closely."

"Can't examine it, though."

"We'll try."

The men left their car where it was, and strolled casually down the street. Mr. Twist stood looking at the motor-cycle.

"Well?" said Mr. Martin, joining his companion.

"It's queer!" muttered Mr. Twist, staring. "Look at that thick oil! See it oozing out of the pipes and joints? There's not much we don't know about carburettors, Martin."

"Fifteen years in the trade," said Mr. Martin, nodding.

"And this carburettor is different to any other I ever set eyes on!" continued Mr. Twist. "Gosh! An invention to vaporise crude-oil! There's a fortune in it, man! That boy doesn't realise it!"

"Doesn't he?" said Mr. Martin. "He said the same words!"

"Bah! Only schoolboy talk!" muttered the other. "The chances are he'll take the thing off and be using petrol again inside a week, and forget all about this device of his. Our best policy is to grab it now, while the grabbing's good!"

Mr. Twist took a bold move.

With a quick movement he unscrewed the large filler-cap of the petrol-tank, and looked in. The tank was nearly full, and it contained thick oil. The thing was staggering.

"Come on!" he muttered tensely.

"What are you going to do?" gasped Mr. Martin.

"There's hardly a soul about!" breathed Mr. Twist.

"Give me a shove off, and don't argue! Jump on the back as soon as we start moving!"

"You're going to pinch it?" breathed the other.

"We're going to pinch it!" said Mr. Twist.

CHAPTER 15. Not So Easy!

TOM MERRY jumped off his bicycle, with a laugh. "Beat you by a short head, Monty!" he chuckled breathlessly.

"Rats!"

"I call upon Manners to pass judgment," said Tom.

"Tom's right, Monty," said Manners, nodding. "You were fairly whacked, old man."

The Terrible Three had just arrived in Wayland to make a few purchases, the fine evening having drawn them out. Manners wanted to buy one or two gadgets for his patent camera, and Tom Merry and Lowther were taking a fatherly interest in his experiments.

Tom Merry himself was not entering for the Inventions

Competition. For one thing, the genial Tom had quite enough to do as Junior sports captain, and he knew his own limitations. He had never professed to be an inventor, and he wasn't starting in that line now.

"Well, you'd better go along and get your plates, old man," said Monty.

"Plates?" repeated Manners, with scorn.

"We need a few cups and saucers, too," added Monty thoughtfully.

"You—you silly dummy!" roared Manners. "I don't use plates in my camera! I use films!"

"Really?" asked Lowther in astonishment.

"I've used films for years!" howled Manners.

"Why take any notice of him?" asked Tom Merry, laughing. "You know he's only kidding you. It's one of his fatal—Hallo! What the thump— Look at those men!"

The Terrible Three stared down the High Street, attracted by the efforts of two strangers to get a motor-cycle started. The man in the saddle was tall and thin, and his companion, who was pushing laboriously in the rear, was heavy and stoutish.

There seemed to be something desperate in their efforts.

Under ordinary circumstances, one felt that they would have laughed over this task. For the motor-cycle was only a lightweight, and quite unsuited to the carrying of such a heavy burden.

Pop, pop, pop!

The engine started to splutter.

Bang!

There was a loud, noisy back-fire, and a cloud of smoke enveloped the stout man in the rear.

Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop!

This time the engine was running evenly, and Mr. Martin managed, by some sort of miraculous gymnastic effort, to perch himself on the pillion. The motor-bike swerved giddily, but Mr. Twist managed to keep her upright.

"Jolly rummy!" said Manners, frowning.

At that moment Bernard Glyn and Skimpole came tearing out of the cafe.

"Hi!" roared Glyn excitedly. "Stop! Stop!"

"Great Scott!" shouted Tom Merry. "That must be Glyn's jigger!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Monty Lowther.

"You—you funny ass!"

"Stop thief!" bellowed Glyn in wild alarm.

The old Wayland High Street gave a sort of start and woke up. Shopkeepers appeared at their doors, and they gazed in astonishment at Bernard Glyn and Skimpole as they raced along at top speed.

"Come on, you chaps!" said Tom Merry briskly. "That's Glyn's bike—and it's been pinched! After 'em, chaps!"

"But we can never hope—" began Manners.

"We can't do anything unless we try!" snapped Tom.

They grabbed their machines, dashed into the saddles, and tore down the High Street in chase of the motor-cycle thieves.

They were just in time to see the machine swerve giddily into a side-turning and vanish. Bernard Glyn was giving up the chase. Then he saw the Terrible Three riding up at top speed.

"Leave it to us!" shouted Tom Merry.

"My new carburettor!" gasped Glyn. "They've pinched that bike because my new—"

"All right!" yelled Tom, over his shoulder.

"We'll never do it!" panted Manners.

"We might!" said Tom Merry. "Put your backs into it, my sons! It's only a small motor-bike, and—"

"There it is!" shouted Lowther.

There was a little dip in front of them, and they could catch a glimpse of the corresponding hill. The motor-cycle was crawling up it, slowed down to a mere crawl by the weight of its load.

The Terrible Three pedalled with all their strength, and from their rear came further shouts. Blake & Co., of Study No. 6, had arrived on the scene a minute afterwards, and Bernard Glyn had borrowed Digby's machine and was in full chase.

"We'll do it—we'll do it!" said Tom Merry breathlessly.

They gained such momentum by pedalling down the hill that they fairly roared up the opposite rise. The quarry had just reached the top, and Glyn's motor-cycle was purring along the level.

Another dip lay just ahead.

And then something happened which came as an unexpected surprise for all. The back wheel of the motor-bike dropped into a heavy rut and wobbled badly. It seemed to the Terrible Three that the wheel was coming off.

"The machine's collapsing!" yelled Manners excitedly.

He was right.

That back wheel, groaning and protesting under the weight of Mr. Martin, converted itself into a kind of

ALL THE INNER SECRETS OF FOOTBALL

and all about the

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ALL SPORTS

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"Come on—the thin one first!" sang out Blake. "Good! All together!" The thin man was raised on high, and then—Splash! He disappeared into the slimy ditch. "Yarooooh!" gasped Mr. Twist, as his head and shoulders appeared above the ooze. "You—you young demons—Grrrrh!" Next moment, his companion had joined him.

figure 8 and sagged down. The next moment Mr. Twist was flung over the handle-bars, and his companion went sprawling into the ditch.

"Hurrah!" shouted Tom Merry. "We've got them!"

It was idle for the two rascals to attempt to escape.

Before they could even get up, Tom Merry & Co. were upon them. Mr. Twist staggered back and began to bluster.

"We thought it was our machine!" he shouted. "If we've made a mistake—"

Crash!

Tom Merry's fist thudded into Mr. Twist's face, and at the same moment Manners and Lowther rushed upon Martin.

"Bai Jove! Just in time, deah boys!"

With a terrific clatter, Study No. 6 arrived. They flung themselves from their machines, and Glyn rushed to his motor-cycle, and saw, with relief, that the precious carburettor was unharmed.

"On 'em!" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Twist and Mr. Martin were heartily sorry that they had ever commenced this enterprise. There was no fighting against such a determined horde. The St. Jim's fellows simply piled on the two men, bowled them over, and sat on them.

"What shall we do?" panted Tom. "Hand 'em over to the police?"

"Too much trouble," replied Blake. "Why not chuck them into the ditch?"

"Heah, heah!"

"Much more spectacular, and we'll get a lot more satisfaction," said Lowther. "There's that back wheel, of course—"

"Oh, that doesn't matter!" said Glyn. "Let's pitch them into the ditch. I'll bet they won't try any more dodges!"

"Come on—the thin one first!" sang out Blake.

"Good! All together!"

Splash!

"Yarooooh!" howled Mr. Twist wildly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you young demons— Grrrrh! Glub-grrrrh!"

The mud oozed round Mr. Twist's face, and he vanished for a moment. And as he dragged himself out, the other rascal went hurtling into the mud.

Howling wildly, Mr. Martin made a grab at Mr. Twist just as the latter was climbing out. Both men rolled back into the mire and became mixed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. picked up their machines and walked off. Bernard Glyn was assisted by two of the others to half carry the smashed motor-cycle back to Wayland. The buckled wheel was the only damage, and the cost for repairs would not amount to many shillings.

"Well, it's taught those rotters a lesson, anyhow," said Glyn indignantly. "The nerve! Trying to pinch my bike!"

"Bai Jove! It is quite pwobable the wuffians will come pwowlin' wound St. Jim's," said Arthur Augustus.

"If they do, we'll give them a hot reception," said Blake grimly.

"But pewwaps we shall fail to recognise them, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "It is vevy dusky now, an' I don't wemembah much about the wotters! In fact, I didn't see their faces—"

"I don't suppose they'll come within ten miles of St. Jim's," interrupted Blake. "They'll think the atmosphere is too unhealthy for them."

And Tom Merry & Co. continued on their way, fairly satisfied that the incident was over and done with.

But Bernard Glyn was not quite so sure.

Being the inventor of that carburettor, he naturally set more store on it than any of the other fellows. And he had a vague, uneasy feeling that Messrs. Twist & Martin might "pwowl wound," as Gussy had expressedly put it.

THE END.

(Now look out for the next yarn in this splendid series, entitled: "Skimpole's Thought-Reading Machine!" Martin Clifford hits the bulls-eye without a doubt in this rollicking fine story. Don't miss it, chums, whatever you do.)

THE CONCLUDING CHAPTERS OF THIS GRAND ADVENTURE STORY.



Bulldog Blood!

HUNKS was alive. Long-Leg's eyes had not deceived him, and the calculations of White Cat were correct. A considerable change had taken place in the character of the pup lately. His love for Tom was as great as ever, and he obeyed him in everything, without any of the rebellious impulses which had so often entered his obstinate head in his puppy days, and caused tribulation to both master and dog.

But Hunks' life was not confined to running at Tom's heels. Since his long illness in hunting camp, particularly, he had felt a personal responsibility for all members of Black Hawk's party, which had presently extended to the household at Calumet; and during the winter at Trantville, he had increased his family of friendships by hundreds, including numbers of small Indian children, whom he befriended in various ways, and their grateful mothers.

This multiplication of responsibilities widened, as time went on, the outlook of the pup; and, although he could take no ease when away from Tom, and was always within call, he went abroad on his own business a great part of the time. He could understand what people talked about—at least, if he cared for them; and when the names of Badger Head, whom he hated, and of Sadie, whom he loved, were mentioned by Black Hawk to his son, the dog's attention was arrested at once.

Indians always accompany what they say with eloquent and expressive gesture, and Black Hawk and White Cat had not failed to mention what Tom's anxiety would be about Sadie's safety. This touched Hunks most. He knew Sadie was dearest of all to his master. She was in danger, and the enemy to be feared was the man he had himself distrusted on her account when they first met. He perceived, too, from the gesticulations of Black Hawk, that Badger Head had a long start, and if he were to be hunted down he must be followed without delay.

That was enough for Hunks. The finding of the trail of the band was bagatelle to him who knew the smell now of nearly every Indian in the Reservation and their ponies. Before Tom knew anything, and before White Cat had picked his men, Hunks was on their tracks. A hundred miles. It was a long way, and Hunks of course had no accurate knowledge of distance. But he had footed it in the fall, and a dog on the frontier never forgets where he has once been. Therefore, though Hunks had no power or inclination to measure out the miles, he prepared himself for a journey which would need all the power of endurance he might possess.

At first all went well. His limbs were of steel, his broad chest had immense breathing capacity, and the meal he had devoured in the cowboys' camp gave him a good reserve of staying power, and then suddenly a cactus-thorn bit into his fore-paw. Not in the pad, these were too hard, but above, between the toes.

He limped to water, and plunged his paw into soft mud. That gave relief for the moment. He licked the place well, and, inspired to unusual cunning in his desperate need, got the thorn in his teeth and pulled it out.

This probably saved Hunks from blood-poisoning, but when he rose and put his foot to the ground again, the pain of it made him yelp, and for a little while he limped on three

WHITE EAGLE!

WHAT HAS HAPPENED!

TOM HOLT, a young Britisher who has lived amongst the Indians in New Mexico, is promoted to the rank of chief, and is known thereafter as White Eagle. His best Indian friends are Black Hawk, also a chief, and White Cat, his son. Amongst the white men Colonel Chapin, a wealthy rancher, is perhaps Tom's greatest friend. Sadie the colonel's daughter, whose life Tom once saved, bears more than a friendly regard for the stalwart young Britisher, a feeling Tom reciprocates.

Badger Head, the supreme chief of the Indians, hates Tom like poison and while the colonel and his ranch hands are away at the Indian Reservations, Badger Head swoops down on Calumet Ranch, intent on pillage and murder. Tom hastily collects a band of men to go in chase of Badger Head's party, but he realises that if he is to reach Sadie in time he must forge ahead alone. One thought comforts him, however, and that is the fact that Hunks, his faithful dog, is somewhere ahead of him on the trail.

(Now read on.)

feet. But there is no progress to be made that way. A very lightly made creature can, with practice, go in this manner fast enough, but not a big dog like Hunks. Now, quite plainly, there came to his nostrils the smell of the Indians.

Then Hunks' great jaw set, his lower teeth gleamed in the afternoon sunlight, his heavy brow drew down until his eyes were but slits, and he started away at the old trot; and a family of skunks out for an evening stroll, found blood-marks left by a foot in the grass, and licked their furry lips and sighed.

On—on without pause now, faster than before. The pain, which drove like a sword-thrust to the shoulder, became a goad. The dog knew he could not bear it for long, and that the race now was not between his own strength and the Indians, but between this hurt to his foot, with the loss of blood, and his endurance and vitality. He gained fast upon the Indians now. They were going cautiously, lest their presence might become known to settlers round Calumet, and draw men to the ranch from Servita.

Hunks was now well to the west of Calumet, before which the Indians would now be cautiously assembling for their attack. He turned and made straight for the ranch. But the end of his strength was very near. His head was reeling with weakness, for he had lost a large amount of blood. The pain in his leg seemed to have spread to the whole of his body. He ached all over, and his limbs were as stiff as dry wood. Nothing but that obstinacy, that curious, innate incapacity in his bulldog blood to give in when his mind was once set irrevocably upon fulfilment of a purpose kept him going. But this, the strangest part of his nature, did not fail Hunks now, and as he came upon landmark after landmark of the ranch, he knew his journey was nearly over; but for all that, the last five hundred yards he had to crawl upon his belly, or make short runs from bush to bush. He got through, however, reached the corrals, limped to the house, and threw himself, with a long-drawn whine of relief and warning, at Sadie's feet, as she was coming out upon the veranda.

Badger Head Arrives!

SADIE was bored. She was depressed and out of sorts. The time at college had been intensely trying. It was an old-fashioned place, and for the first time in her life Mistress Sadie learnt what discipline was, and suffered accordingly, though it has to be confessed she made her preceptors suffer quite as much.

All that afternoon she had been taking herself to task over her deep regard for Tom Holt. She began by reading his letters, with the intention of burning them. But she did not burn them. Nevertheless, they did not please her.

"He treats me as a child," she said, frowning. "I am just a child—a sisterly kind of child—to him! How hateful! I shall go away east as soon as ever I hear he is coming back. Say! How will you like that, Brother Tom?"

And she kicked a stool to the other end of the room, and sat down and had a quiet cry all to herself. And then she stamped her foot three times because she knew perfectly well she couldn't go east, or anywhere else when Tom was coming home.

The moon was riding high when Sadie thought she would like some tea. She told Uncle Eph to bring it into the library; then countermanded the order, and said she would have it outside; then thought she wouldn't; and finally had taken it out herself, and met Hunks.

At sight of the dog all Sadie's humours fled. She sprang towards him with a delight which was almost delirious.

"How lovely, Hunky—Hunks, my darling! Where have you come from? Where's your master? Oh, what is the matter?"

The dog had stiffened under the caress and drawn back with a growl.

"My dear," Sadie cried in distress, "what has happened? Your poor foot! Did I hurt you?"

He was a mass of mud and dust. His white ruff was deeply stained with blood; the right fore-paw was a dreadful sight. But he was not growling at her. His head was turned away as if he were listening. Then suddenly he stood erect, and from his throat came the long, savage, rolling bark of a bulldog at bay. The challenge was taken up by the deerhounds in the yard at the back, and the fat spaniel in an upper room joined in with shrill clamour.

Sadie was a person of quick understanding, and she knew Hunks well. Without having a suspicion of the full cause of his excitement, she divined that an enemy must be about—a host of them. Calling the dog in, she closed the great front doors, and rung the bell for Uncle Eph. The negro came into the hall with a stare of bewildered excitement, which, at another time, would have made Sadie shriek to herself with laughter. But now she had difficulty in keeping her temper.

"Something serious has happened!" she said sharply. "The dogs would not bark in this way for nothing. Have you seen anyone?"

"Not me, missy—not me, indeed! But cook has, and she played kind of rough game on him."

"What game? Upon whom?"

"Why, dis way. Jus' now come a knock at kitchen door, and when young Topsy open it, dere was a low red feller, missy. One of those Indians we had a-foolderin' aroun' in the fall. Soon as de door open, he come in smiling like a dozen pussy-cats. He say nothin', walk right past Topsy, and, pickin' up a doughnut off de table, starts chewin' it, lookin' round all de time as if de house 'long to him.

"Topsy, she squeal and run; but cook, she was stirrin' soup on the stove, and she scallops Master Apache on the head with her ladle, which was full—an' plosh!—it all goes

over his bare shoulders. Gemini, how he howled, missy! Ah' den, seein' that cook had 'nother ladle, 'way he runs, leaps the wall, and off. I guess that starts the dogs. Dere dey go again! 'Lordy, I wish de kunnel was at home, I do!"

Uncle Eph was no coward, but a life of obedience to the will of others is bad training for an emergency, and Sadie saw it was impossible for him to be of any use. She must take control at once.

"Cook did very wrong!" she said severely, though the face the negro made when he described the "scallop" nearly sent her into a peal of laughter. "I shall tell her so. Now go to the stable and fetch the boys. Then shut the windows and bolt every door fast. If that Apache has friends here the house will be attacked. Quick, I say! Why on earth are you staring at me like that?"

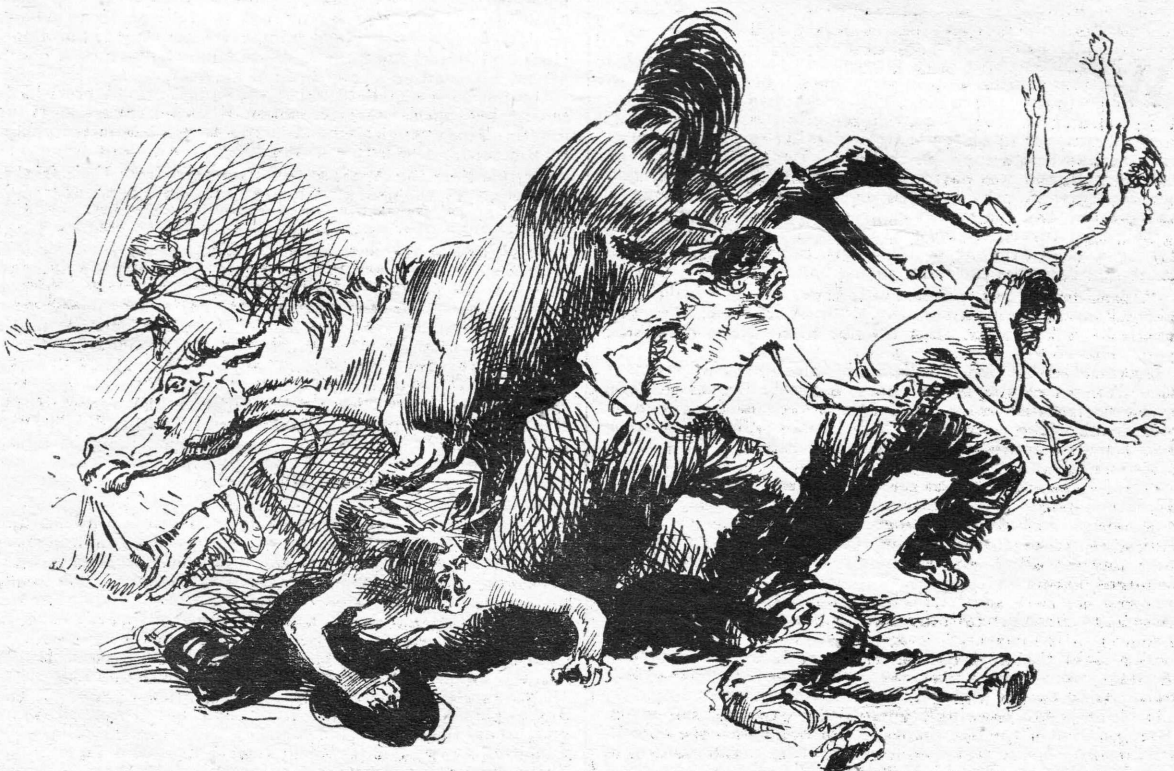
But even as the girl spoke she knew that it was something else which caused the negro's black face to turn grey with horror and twitch as if he had palsy. Hunks was growling as she had never heard him do before, and a door had opened behind her.

She swept round to encounter that tall Indian she had met—how long ago it seemed—the morning after the prairie fire. Where he had come from she could not tell. He had slipped into the hall through one of the side doors—Uncle Eph's pantry, it turned out—and now stood quiet and still as a ghost, smiling at her. In one hand he carried a revolver, in the other a tomahawk, but both weapons were held lightly and without menace, as if they were playthings. The menace was in his eyes.

"Huh! Good-afternoon!" he said in his carefully-articulated English. "Tell old man go away, please. Dog, too."

Nothing could be quieter than the tone in which Badger Head spoke. He was in full dress, as if for a council meeting. There was not a sign that he had just ridden, without resting, more than a hundred miles. But Sadie, as she met the look in his yellow, wide-open, motionless eyes, felt a sudden faintness and feeling of sickening fear which she could not understand, and was never able to describe. These eyes seemed to mesmerise her. Almost unconsciously she did his bidding—told Eph to retire, and ordered Hunks to go with him.

The negro obeyed quickly enough. It was the chief he had seen at his master's table, and though he did not like the stealth with which he had approached, or the weapons he held in his hands, there seemed nothing threatening about the man; and it was Uncle Eph's private conviction,



Malinka struck into the room and was upon the Apaches like a living avalanche, snapping and lashing out with her heels like a fiend possessed. (See page 27.)

founded upon experience, that Miss Sadie was equal to dealing with any male creature that lived.

With a significant growl, meant as a warning to Badger Head, Hunks retired with Uncle Eph as he was bid.

When the door closed behind the pair Badger Head went to it, deliberately drew out the key which was at the other side, and locked it. Then he approached Sadie very slowly.

"Yellow Flower grown," he said. "Tall as a young willow tree. She look well in Badger Head's tepee as his squaw!"

With the swift apprehension which comes to a brave woman in a desperate crisis, Sadie felt that the man was carrying out a deliberate plan, connected in some way with the absence of her father and Tom and the boys. But she saw at the same time that he wished to act quietly. It might be merely cunning, but she thought not. In any case, she would be cunning as he.

The first thing to teach herself was not to shrink, but to appear absolutely cool. So, stiffening every muscle against the desire to spring out of his reach, she kept still.

"You not Yellow Flower," muttered Badger Head, at length, passing his tongue over his lips slowly. "No! White and Pink Flower—the blossom of the wild cherry!"

He stepped away as an Indian does when about to make a speech, and Sadie drew a quick breath of relief. She had only one thought at the moment—to make time. If Hunks had not come she would have been in a state of dull despair, but the presence of Hunks meant, she was sure, that Tom was on the way. Time! Oh, if she could only gain time!

"I will listen, Badger Head," she replied, her voice as calm as his own. "But are you not weary? Let my servants bring food and drink. My father has good wine here. Do you not remember?"

The Indian inclined his head.

"I will drink with my flower," he answered with a grin.

He gave a low whistle, and from the door through which he had appeared himself an Apache entered with swift, silent tread.

Badger Head now said something to the Apache in his own language, and following Sadie's example, seated himself on the opposite side of the hall. Again the girl breathed freely. She did not know that Badger Head was extremely thirsty, and that strong drink has a most disastrous effect upon Indian mentality. But the minutes were passing. The ranch was still safe. The first rescue-party was not more than an hour's journey away, and Tom was nearer still.

The Last Fight!

WHEN the Apache re-appeared in the hall he carried two bottles, one in each hand; but they were of whisky, not wine. The corks had been drawn, and Sadie saw by a difference in the man's manner, and a slight swagger in his gait, and a leering smile on his face, that he had tasted some on the way. Badger Head noticed this as well, and was obviously displeased. They exchanged words together, which ended by Badger Head giving a sharp order and the speedy retirement of the Apache.

The chief turned to Sadie as the man vanished, and after taking a deep draught of the spirit, put one bottle on the table and balanced the other in his hands.

"Warriors of my nation just hogs when whisky run about," he said contemptuously. "In short time, now, this ranch be full of hogs. But do not fear. None dare hurt you. Huh!"

He smacked his lips, drank again, and then choking over the strength of the liquor, gave a queer, hoarse chuckle, and rose from his chair. Sadie went very cold. The man was drunk. The restraint he had exercised, from which she had hoped so much, was disappearing rapidly. In another minute anything might happen.

"Huh! Flower shall be my wife. Yes!" grunted Badger Head suddenly. "We get medicine man now!"

He laughed at the end in a way that sent a shiver through Sadie. But she forced herself to smile. He approached and took her hand, and though he lurched in his gait, she felt that he was endeavouring to be dignified, and meant to treat her with respect. They crossed the hall and went down the passage to the drawing-room beyond hand-in-hand.

The sight that met Sadie's eyes was beyond description. Apaches were everywhere; squatting on the floor of the hall, sitting on the table in the dining-room, sprawling over the piano in the drawing-room, or stretched on the carpet. Every one of them was drinking hard. Some were speechless, others fierce and quarrelsome. The sight seemed to infuriate Badger Head. He shouted loudly, and ordered them to do something. Sadie could not make out what.

But they were all too drunk to obey, and now several came towards her with horrible, ape-like gestures. In terror she shrank against Badger Head for protection. But something seemed to have happened to the chief. He did strike one Indian down with a blow from his tomahawk, and this kept the others at a distance for a moment. When another, however, handed him a bottle he drank deeply from it, and seemed to lose all control of himself and his men. He caught Sadie by the arm and began to make a speech to the crowd in Indian. What he said Sadie, happily, had no idea, but the effect of it was to bring the men round her closer than before.

At this she screamed with all her might, and her cry was answered by a howl from the drunken crowd. Badger Head's hold tightened upon her, and he laughed horribly.

But now came another sound which drowned all the rest—a furious yelling bark, and Badger Head's laugh ended in a ghastly choke, as Hunks, leaping from the door, fastened his teeth upon the Indian's throat.

The pup had bided his time with great circumspection. Just outside the hall was an empty space under a flight of stairs. He had crept into this, and paid no attention to the howls and rampage in the ranch. It was his business to protect Sadie; nothing else concerned him.

When Sadie screamed the pup knew his time had come. His bad foot was like a fiery furnace for pain, and the rest which he had taken was only enough to stiffen his joints; but nothing remained in his consciousness when he heard that cry but thirst for the blood of his enemy. He had yelled as he attacked, though it was against his usual practice, because, while Badger Head must be disposed of, there were at least twenty more Indians left. It was a challenge to them all.

The sound had a most weird effect upon the warriors. Every Indian there had witnessed the pup's defence of Tom on the steps of the storehouse in Trantville; and two of them had suffered severely from it. They had imbibed the notion that he was more devil than dog, and his miraculous appearance now, a hundred miles away, settled the question. Though too tipsy to run, the Apaches shrank back terrified, and Badger Head had to meet his fate alone.

But if Hunks had lost all sense of pain in his anxiety for Sadie, Badger Head was mad with drink. He had ceased to be human. His crooked fingers buried themselves in the dog's shoulders, like claws. He rolled over and over, kicking and screaming horribly. Hunks, heavy as he was, was thrown on his back, then tossed to right and to left, and dragged underneath the Indian's body and pounded with his heels. But those jaws, fixed squarely in the windpipe, were immovable. At every jar or jerk of Badger Head's body they tightened; the blood might stream down the dog's chest and limbs, the flesh of his shoulder be torn in a dozen places, his head and body bruised all over.

No power on earth could save Badger Head now. His scream became a hoarse croaking, then a frenzied gasp for breath. His struggles were reduced to spasmodic twitching, then ceased. The man was dead.

By this time the Apaches had recovered from their fright. The effect of the drink, which at first had deadened their powers of resistance, changed them into maniacs. Hunks had scarcely time to drop the limp body of Badger Head as it sagged to the floor when he found himself surrounded on all sides, and, worse still, heard Sadie cry again, and saw that an Indian had gripped her by the arm. With a ferocious howl, bursting through the ring of menacing forms closing about him, the dog fixed his teeth in this Apache's ankle, and brought him shrieking to the ground.

It was Hunks' last effort. Though he saw above him the raised tomahawks and the glint of knives, he could do no more. Then his ears were deafened by a loud report; there was a smell of burning flesh, the man he had caught by the foot fell over him stone dead, and he saw a beloved figure spring into the midst of the swaying, howling mob, grasp Sadie with one hand, and with the other fire to right and left, scattering the Apaches in all directions.

It was Tom at last. He had ridden to within a mile of the ranch, left Malinka loose to wander as she pleased, crept forward under such cover as he could find, and after several very narrow escapes from Badger Head's scouts, got to the stables, then to the back of the house, and, thanks to the intoxication of the Apaches, through to the drawing-room in the nick of time.

But though Tom was able to save Sadie and rescue Hunks for the moment, there was no chance for him to do more than fight to the last against the men who remained. The Indians had no firearms; these had been dropped when they found the store of the colonel's whisky in the cellar, and forgotten since; but they had their knives and tomahawks. They were sobered now, and in their fury nothing would stop them. It was one against sixteen.

Tom's pistol was empty. He had no time to reload, and, shifting his hand to the end of the ten-inch-long muzzle, he swung it like a hatchet, cracking the skull of an Indian with the dog-head.

Sadie he had dropped gently behind him, and over her Hunks mounted guard, with bared teeth and bloody jaws. This left Tom free to draw his knife and use it with the other hand; and the Indians, fearing Hunks still, gave way a moment in their onset. But it was only for a moment. They had spread themselves in a half-circle, and, bending double like creeping cats, tiptoed closer inch by inch. The end was very near.

Though White Cat and his men were approaching fast they were still a mile away. But a shadow moved on the lawn outside, a face looked in, a powerful body, huge and black in the moonlight, reared against one of the french windows, and, with a spring which smashed window-frames like matchwood, and sent splintered glass in every direction, Malinka broke through into the room.

The mare, weary and forlorn, had followed Tom. By the light of the moon, almost on the horizon, she saw what was happening inside, and with a force which nothing could stay, she now charged to the rescue.

It was a horrible task. Her shoulders were cut, her head bruised, her nerves shaken. But such was the mare's temper that these things only roused her to more fury, and her strength did the rest.

As she struck into the room she was upon the Apaches like a living avalanche. One man was caught between her teeth and dashed against a chair; two others were struck senseless under her forefeet. Then like lightning she pivoted round, and, lashing out, her heels crushed the spine of another and the legs of two more. In their blind panic the Indians ran into danger, and every time the mare bit with her teeth and struck with her forefeet and heels alternately, the terrible blows drove home into human flesh. Only half a dozen Apaches got out of the room unhurt, and these in mad flight carried stark terror far and wide.

Half an hour later, as White Cat and his men swept in to the attack, they were met by Indians who cried for mercy and surrendered without a blow. Before the main body had arrived all was over. Only one outhouse had been fired, and this was extinguished easily. Calumet was safe!

Good-Will!

THERE was no sleep for anyone that night, and many of the cowboys were riding hard for a week. While the majority of Badger Head's party were taken on the spot, several had escaped, and these had to be hunted down. All were captured in the end, taken to Servita, tried, and sentenced by a mixed tribunal of white men and red.

During this time Apaches from the Reservation arrived in large numbers, until the greater part of all the tribe were camped there, including hundreds of squaws and children. It was an entirely peaceful gathering. Everyone was welcome, and when a council was held and Black Hawk was acclaimed head of the nation, and White Cat was made a chief with full ceremonial, loud cheers came from the white men present, led by the stentorian lungs of Kit Grent and Old Billie.

The night after these elections a great dinner was held at Calumet Ranch. It was in honour of Tom. He had protested against it, but the colonel would not be denied. Black Hawk was there in his full chief's dress, untroubled on this occasion by any obligation to examine the fastenings of doors and windows, or to count the rooms of Calumet.

White Cat is there, too, almost smothered in his new robes of state, with a collarette of white lynx fur, clasped with gold, a present from Sadie. Tom, also,

sitting next to the colonel, with Black Hawk on his left, is dressed in Indian robes in compliment to the Apache nation, which has now taken him entirely to its heart.

But it is to the bottom of the table that all eyes turn most often. Sadie is here, the hostess of the evening, all in white. She looks a little pale and thin, and many think that she has not yet quite recovered from that terrible evening of four weeks ago;

The toast of the President of the United States has been duly given, followed by that of "King George of England" in honour of Tom, and proposed in a very neat speech, at his own special request, by Lieutenant Groot. Then the colonel slowly rises. Uncle Eph, more dignified than ever, and untroubled now by any qualms of fancies about "dem fooling Indians," has seen that every man's glass is full to the brim. A hush falls upon the company. The room is very still.

"I give, friends all, the health of a man you know. So well is he known that no words of mine are needed to commend this toast to you. But I cannot let the occasion pass without saying something; and you would not wish that I should. Like Abraham Lincoln, I will tell you a little story: Seven months ago there came into this house a tired boy, dressed in clothes not one of my cow-punchers would have been found dead in the road in. His errand was to beg me to see justice done to an Apache warrior who had nearly killed a white man. Friends, I refused to help him. I turned a deaf ear to all he had to say. I did that to see what he would do. What did he do? Give up? He never gives up. You know that. But he took me at my word, and sat right down to make out a cheque for all the money he had in the world to save that warrior's life. Why?"

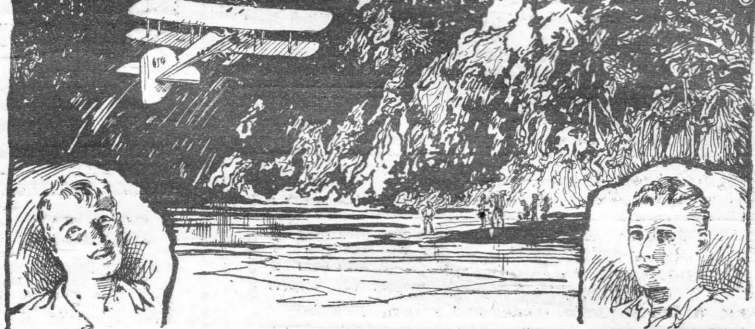
"Because that warrior was his friend. That is Tom Holt—just that!"

He raised his glass.

"Now, everyone upstanding—"

THRILLS, THRILLS, THRILLS!

BEYOND the SILVER GLACIER!



ADAM.

By **ARTHUR S. HARDY.**

HARRY.

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The company rose to its feet as one man. "To Tom, Holt—to White Eagle, chief in the Apache nation—for the love you bear him, and the love he has shown for you, drink to his good health, long life, and happiness. Give it with three times three!" They gave it with might and main; gave it till the room rang and echoed with the shouts of the white men. While White Cat leaped to his feet, and every Indian present joined in the full Apache yell.

Was Tom happy? All the weeks since the rescue at Calumet he had tried to see Sadie alone to tell her something which lay like a ton weight upon his soul—something he did not know how he could express when he got the chance—something he longed yet feared to say. But Sadie would not give him any opportunity. They met often, enough, but only when others were there. She seemed to shrink from seeing him alone.

Perhaps he ought to go away. To speak, when she did not want him, seemed like an insult; yet he could not go like this. Once he thought of saying something to the colonel; but that seemed to him like sneaking in at a back door.

At last, after tossing sleeplessly the whole of the night of the dinner, he got up very early, intending to go a long ride before breakfast. His mind was made up now. He would not speak at all. He would go away again to the Reservation; go into partnership with Miah at his hotel, live among the Indians he loved, and never come back to Calumet again.

He went to the stable and saddled Malinka. Then he called Hunks. But Hunks did not appear. Tom felt a sudden chill. That terrible day, when they got the news of Badger Head's raid, came back. The fear passed—Hunks, the beggar, was hunting rabbits. So, swinging himself on to the horse's back, Tom loped off alone.

He had no particular intention of going anywhere, but something he did not analyse took him in one particular direction—or was it Malinka herself who did that? She was

a very wilful mare. He did not know, or care. On they went, that sweet spring morning, away across the river; over the rolling prairie, on—on to the very place where, all those months ago, he had ridden at a lathering gallop to stop Sadie's runaway. And there; behold, on the very spot where he had found her, was that horse again, her bridle fastened to a tree—the identical tree—and sitting against it was Sadie herself, with her face hidden in Hunks' neck!

They were sitting very still, both of them. Hunks, who was licking her face at the moment, did not even turn towards his master, though he must have heard him plainly. Only his tail wagged and wagged and pounded the grass where he sat, held in Sadie's arms. Malinka stopped of her own accord and stood quite still. Tom dropped off, he knew not how. Slowly he went towards the tree. Then, with a sigh that was almost a sob, he stopped in front of Sadie.

"Sadie—oh, Sadie darling! Sadie, I love you so! Can you care a little—just a little?"

Her head moved now. Her face was buried deeper and deeper in the pup's broad neck. Then suddenly she rose with a spring like a young deer and looked at him.

"Tom! Say, Tom, do you mean it—really? Or is it that I'm just a kind of sister—"

"Sister!" he almost roared. "Good heavens, no!"

It was all over; and for many, many minutes everything was very still as they clung and clung to one another and whispered things that were for their ears alone. But Malinka heard them; so did Hunks, and these two waited patiently. Then they got tired, and over Tom's shoulder the mare pushed her soft nose and nibbled his ear, while Hunks rose on his hind legs and, being the boldest, licked Sadie on the cheek.

The girl freed herself and caught him in one arm, while Tom's hand found its way under Malinka's chin.

"The dears!" Sadie cried. "The lovely dears! Tom, they just know! I'm going to hug them both—for you!"

THE END.

(Now look out for the opening chapters of Arthur S. Hardy's grand serial next week.)

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