

A FULL-OF-LAUGHS LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN INSIDE!

CONTINUOUS
VARIETY!
YOUR FAVOURITE
STARS—
TOM MERRY & Co
INSIDE!

The GEM

2^d



SKIMPOLE *the*



Skimpole and Gussy have a shot at salvage work when Skimpole thinks his precious microscope is aboard the wrecked Condor!

CHAPTER 1.

A Matter of Great Importance.

"D'ARCY! Is D'Arcy here?" Skimpole of the Shell blinked into Study No. 6 in the School House at St. Jim's. Blake, Herries, and Digby were seated round the study table, pen in hand, with their books before them, and they seemed too busy to look up: At all events, they did not look up.

"I say, is D'Arcy here?"
Scratch, scratch! went the pens.

"Where's D'Arcy?"
Scratch, scratch!

Skimpole blinked dubiously at the chums of the Fourth Form, and came into the study. The three juniors worked away industriously, and did not seem to be aware of his entrance. Skimpole rubbed his glasses and blinked at them again.

"I say, Blake——"

Scratch, scratch!
"Digby, old man——"
Scratch, scratch!

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"Herries——"
Scratch, scratch!
"I say, I particularly want to see D'Arcy. It's an awfully important matter. Where is he?"

Scratch, scratch!
Skimpole looked amazed.

"Dear me," he remarked, "a most remarkable case of deafness—a most remarkable case indeed. I ought to make a note of this to go into my chapter on the Deterioration of the Physical Faculties Owing to the Superabundance of Athletic Exercises. A remarkable case indeed. I suppose I shall have to shout." He put his head close to Blake, and bawled in his ear. "I say, Blake!"

Jack Blake jumped up as suddenly as a jack-in-the-box. "You ass!" he roared, rubbing his ear. "What do you mean?"

Skimpole started back.
"Dear me! I thought you could not hear, as you did not reply, and——"
"You shrieking ass!"

"I regarded it as a remarkable case of sudden deafness."
"You—you dummy!" said Jack Blake, in measured tones.
"Do you see that doorway?"

AND YOU WILL ENJOY THE LAUGH OF A LIFETIME! IT'S A WOW!

DEEP SEA DIVER!

By

Martin Clifford.

"Yes. I am somewhat short-sighted, but I can see the doorway with perfect distinctness."

"Get through it!"

"Eh?"

"Get out! Travel! Bunk! Disappear!"

"But I want to speak to D'Arcy!"

"Can't you see he's not here?"

"Yes, I perceive that. But where is he?"

"Can't you see we're busy?"

"Yes. But where is D'Arcy?"

"Go and sort him out."

"It's an awfully important matter—a matter that really cannot wait."

"Yes, I know your important matters, you duffer! Have you got some new scheme of buzzing off some night to play amateur detective, and get a licking?" asked Jack Blake, in a tone of deep disgust.

"I am afraid I shall have to refuse to acquaint you with the business, Blake, as you would probably attempt to prevent D'Arcy from assisting me. Where is D'Arcy?"

"Travel!"

"Where is D'Arcy?" persisted Skimpole. "I simply must see him! I cannot go alone, and—"

"You cannot go where alone?"

"Eh? That is my secret. I cannot acquaint you with the details. Will you tell me where to look for D'Arcy?"

"Yes. Look for him under a silk hat, or inside a high collar, and you'll be certain to find him."

"Really, Blake—"

"And now travel."

"I want to know where D'Arcy is, as—"

Blake dropped into his seat again and took up his pen. Skimpole blinked at him. Digby and Herries had gone on steadily working all the time.

"I say, Blake—"

"Nonne nuntius tecum properavisset!"

"Really, Blake—"

Skimpole gave the chums of the Fourth Form a final indignant blink, and walked out of the study. It was evident that he would get no information there as to the whereabouts of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House.

Jack Blake grinned when the door had closed behind Skimpole.

"That's settled him," he remarked.

"I wonder what he wants Gussy for?" Dig remarked, looking up. "The ass seems to have some new scheme on."

"That's what I was thinking. You remember how they scuttled off one night on a silly expedition, and we had to fetch them back, and they had a licking? I suppose Skimmy has some wheeze in his head like that again, and we shall have to look after Gussy. He'll get it worse next time if there's any more breaking bounds. We shall have to make it a point to keep an eye on Gussy, and see that he doesn't get into any mischief."

"Good!" grinned Herries. "We shall be finished work by the time Gussy gets back from the village, and we can keep an eye on him."

"Yes, and keep him under our wing," agreed Digby. "It's settled that Skimpole is not to interview Gussy, except in our presence."

"That's it."

And the chums of Study No. 6 went on with their Latin. Skimpole went down the passage with a thoughtful frown upon his wide forehead. He was thinking as he went along, and did not see three cheerful-looking youths coming up the passage till he had almost run into them.

"Where are you running to, fathead?" asked Tom Merry, seizing Skimpole by the front of his collar, and bringing him to a sudden halt.

"Dear me, is that you, Merry? Have you seen D'Arcy?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"How should I know?"

"But you said you had seen him?"

"He couldn't very well be at St. Jim's the time he's

been here without my seeing him," said Tom Merry. "I haven't seen him to-day, though."

"Really, Merry—"

"I believe he's gone to the village," said Manners. "I saw him go out at the gates a little while back."

"Dear me! I wanted to see him most particularly. It's an awfully important matter. I suppose I had better go and wait for him at the gates."

And Skimpole moved on.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther grinned at one another. The Terrible Three were looking very sunburnt and very fit after their long holiday by the sea.

"Something on," drawled Lowther. "Skimmy's got some new wheeze on."

"Looks like it," said Tom Merry, laughing. "But we've got no time for Skimmy now."

The Terrible Three went on to their study.

Skimpole lost no time in getting to the gates of St. Jim's. There he took up his stand in the shadow of the ancient gateway—a time-worn relic of the ancient building—and waited.

There was no sign of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the long, white dusty road to Rylcombe, and Skimpole pulled out a pocket-book and a pencil, and started jotting down things.

He was busily engaged when three juniors came into the gateway, and took up their stand on the opposite side. They were Blake, Herries, and Digby.

Skimpole glanced across at them.

"Nice weather, don't it?" said Jack Blake affably.

"Keeps dry so long as it doesn't rain, too," remarked Digby.

"Breezy, too, when the wind's blowing," said Herries thoughtfully.

Skimpole blinked at them, and his pencil ceased to move.

"Really, Blake, I regard your remarks as extremely unintelligent," he said, "and I should take it as a favour if you would find somewhere else to lool about. Your presence somewhat distracts me. I am making notes for the two hundred and fifty-seventh chapter of my book, and—"

"Keep on, Skimmy! Don't stop for us! You're not exactly what one would call pretty to look at, but we can stand you as long as you don't talk."

"Really, Blake, I regard that as almost rude. Your presence distracts me."

"Well, you see, we're waiting here for D'Arcy."

"Oh, I'm waiting for D'Arcy."

"We'll keep you company."

"Please don't take the trouble. I want particularly to see D'Arcy alone, as I have a most important matter to speak to him about—a matter the importance of which you would probably not grasp. Please cut off!"

"Sorry; but it can't be did!"

"Very well, then, I shall have to wait somewhere else."

And Skimpole closed his notebook and strolled into the quadrangle, and took up his position on a seat under an elm, whence he could watch the gates.

Blake, Herries, and Digby strolled on, too, and sat down on the seat.

Skimpole blinked at them.

"Really, Blake, I wish you would keep away. I—"

"Have you bought up the benches in the quad?" asked Blake pleasantly.

"Certainly not, but— However, I will retire myself to avoid the trouble of argument."

And Skimpole walked away with his notebook under his arm. He leaned in a thoughtful mood against a tree at some distance, and mused over the valuable things he was putting into his wonderful book.

Skimpole was a remarkably brainy youth, as the huge bumps on his forehead and above his ears testified. He was a Determinist, and several other "ists," and his book was destined to deal in a masterly way with at least five or six "isms." He was naturally annoyed when his meditations were interrupted once more by the three juniors strolling up and leaning against the same tree with perfectly solemn and serious faces.

"Really, Blake—" he expostulated.

"What's the matter?" asked Blake.

"I really wish you fellows would find some other trees to lean against."

"Oh, don't worry; this one is all right. It has stood here for hundreds of years, and will bear our weight all right."

"I don't mean that," said Skimpole. "I was referring to the fact that your presence distracts me, and diverts my thoughts from my remarkably valuable meditations on the state of the present social system."

"Sorry! I don't see how it can be helped, though," said Blake thoughtfully.

"It can be helped by your walking away."

"Solvitur ambulandum," grinned Blake. "My dear Skimmy, I think it is selfish of you to want to make us walk about in this warm September weather."

"Very well," said the brainy man of St. Jim's, with a sigh. "I will walk away myself."

And he crossed over to the nearest wall and leaned against it, and brought out his notebook and pencil again.

Blake winked at his chums, and the three of them solemnly marched over to the wall, and took up their position in a row beside Skimpole. They stood there, with faces as serious as owls, apparently quite unconscious of the indignant glare from Skimpole's spectacles.

"Really, Blake—"

"Bless my hat!" exclaimed Blake. "If that chap isn't complaining again! What's the matter with you now, Skimmy?"

"I think it is too bad of you to come here and—"

"It seems to me that you're never satisfied," said Blake. "First you grumble at us for being in the gateway, then for sitting on the bench, then for leaning against a tree, and now you're complaining again. Where are three tired individuals to rest their weary backs, then?"

"Really, Blake—"

But before Skimpole could proceed farther an elegant figure entered the gateway. The shiny silk hat, the lavender gloves, the high white collar, the faultless jacket and beautifully creased trousers, announced that it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ah, there is D'Arcy!"

Skimpole put away his notebook once more, and started towards Arthur Augustus.

Blake, Herries, and Digby started after him.

"I say, D'Arcy, I want to speak to you upon an awfully important matter," said Skimpole.

"Pway pwoceed, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "I think it extremely prob that you are goin' to talk wot, but pway pwoceed!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby came up. With solemn and serious faces they stood round the two juniors, waiting for Skimpole to proceed.

CHAPTER 2

Skimpole's Secret!

SKIMPOLE blinked at the chums of the Fourth and hesitated. D'Arcy screwed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed Blake & Co. with surprise, but made no remark. He waited for Skimpole to proceed.

"Er—would you mind walking a short way with me, D'Arcy, before I go on?" said Skimpole. "I—er—I think I could tell you better under the trees."

"As a mattah of fact, deah boy, I have walked more than a quartah of a mile to-day, and I feel wathah exhausted; but anythin' to oblige."

"It's a matter of very great importance."

"Oh, vevy well!"

And Arthur Augustus strolled away with the Determinist of St. Jim's. After them, with solemn and serious faces, went the three juniors, keeping pace.

Skimpole stopped under one of the big elms.

"Now, D'Arcy—Dear me! Here are those fellows again!" He looked indignantly at Blake & Co. "Blake, I really wish you would not shadow me about like this."

"Have you bought up the quadrangle?" said Blake pleasantly.

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"Certainly not; but I am entitled to speak to D'Arcy in confidence."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I should be greatly obliged, Blake, if you would walk away."

Jack Blake shook his head.

"Sorry, Skimmy, but I'm afraid it can't be did."

"But I wish to speak to D'Arcy in confidence."

"That's just it," said Digby. "That's where we come in."

"Weally, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, in a stately manner. "I wegard this as far from the pwopah thing to do. If my esteemed friend Skimpole desires to speak to me in confidence, it is wathah bad form for you wottahs to be standin' about like this."

"Exactly! Under the circumstances, Blake can't do anythin' but walk away."

"Yaas, undah the cires, Blake, I weally do not see how you can do anythin' but walk away, deah boy."

"I do," said Blake cheerfully. "You see, we're your chums—"

"Yaas; but if you are guilty of bad form, deah boys, I am afraid it will be no longah poss for me to wegard you as fwiends."

"Well, we shall always regard you as a silly ass," said Blake. "That can never change. You see, this is how the case stands."

"I wufuse to be called a silly ass!"

"The case stands like this. Skimpole has some hare-brained scheme afoot, and he's going to yank you into it. As your keepers, we've got to see that you don't get into anything of the sort."

"I wufuse to wegard you in the light of keepahs!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "I shall be obliged if you will kindly take your departuah!"

"Very likely; but we're not taking any now."

"Then I shall have no alternative but to seek a more wethahed spot myself," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Come on, Skimmy!"

And the swell of St. Jim's walked off, the weedy figure of the freak of the Shell keeping pace with him. After them, keeping pace, too, went Blake, Digby, and Herries.

D'Arcy looked round several times with growing indignation, but the chums of the Fourth were not to be abashed. D'Arcy and Skimpole walked over to the gym, and then crossed to the chapel, and then strolled towards the New House. Still on their track went the indefatigable three. It was evident that there would be no confidences exchanged to which Blake, Herries, and Digby would not be equally admitted.

Arthur Augustus halted at last, and turned his eyeglass upon his chums with a withering look.

"I must wemark," he said, "that I wegard this as wotten bad form. You chaps don't seem to have mastahed the first wudiments of good mannahs."

"Can't be helped," said Blake. "Let Skimpole tell us all about it, and then we'll see. Why don't you spin it out to the lot of us, Skimmy?"

"This is impossible, and you would probably attempt to dissuade D'Arcy from coming with me," said the Determinist of St. Jim's, shaking his head.

"There, I told you so," said Blake triumphantly. "It's some fatheaded scheme like the last, and we're bound to see that Gussy doesn't get mixed up in it."

"I am quite capable of lookin' aftah myself, Blake."

"That's your mistake. As a matter of fact, you're not. I've often thought of leading you about on a little chain."

"Bai Jove, I weally—"

"Go ahead, Skimpole, and unfold the giddy secret."

"Impossible!"

"Good! Then we are bound to go on taking care of Gussy, and we'll guard him like the apple of our eye. He shan't hear a word that we don't hear."

"Not a syllable," said Digby.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"You may as well make up your minds to it," said Blake. "You can walk about all over the blessed school, and keep it up till bed-time if you like, but we mean to stick to you."

"Like glue," said Digby.

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

"I wegard this as wotten bad form, but undah the cires, Skimmy, I am afraid that we shall have to postpone our little talk," said the swell of the School House. "I had bettah meet you latah, deah boy."

"I suppose so," said Skimpole. "It is very annoying, as the matter is one of the very greatest importance, and it is absolutely necessary for it to be settled to-night."

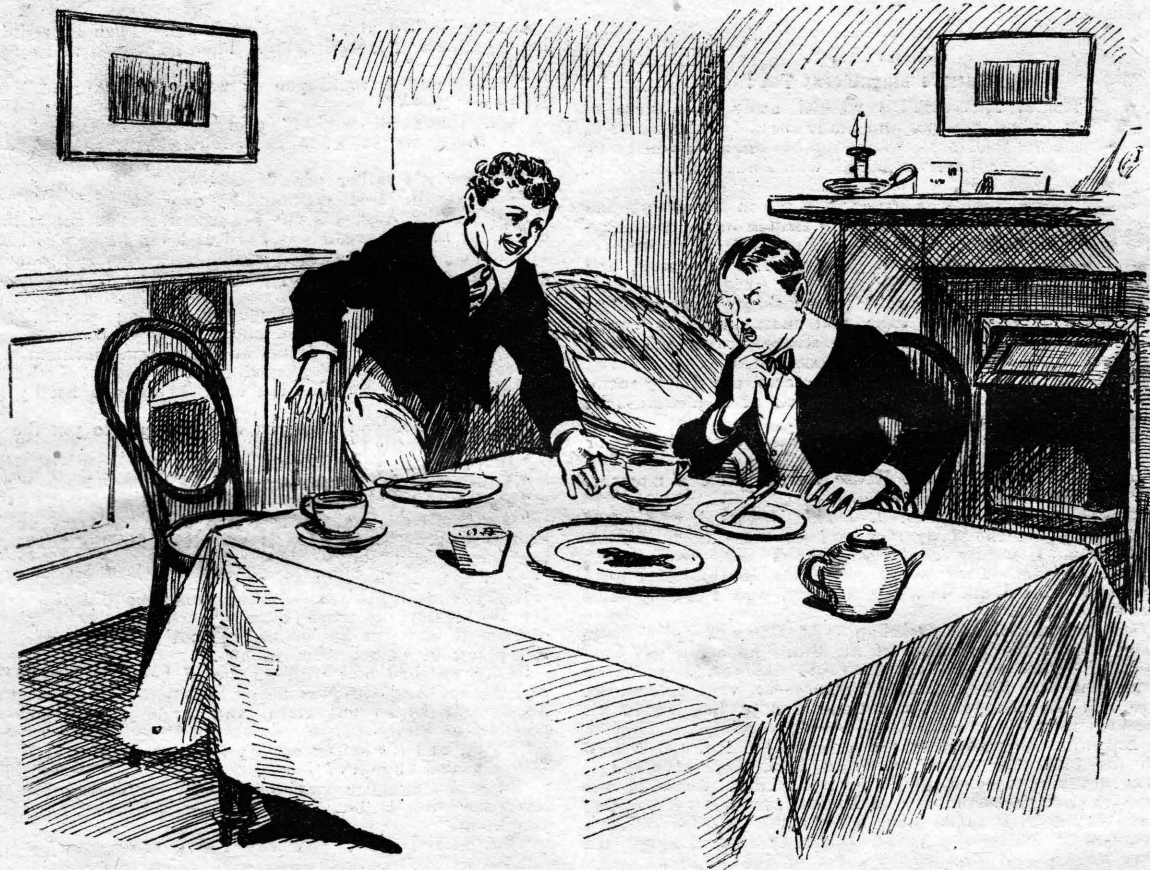
"Vevy well, I will see you latah."

And Arthur Augustus walked off to the School House with his nose very high in the air.

Blake, Herries, and Digby followed him.

"Ready for tea, Gussy?" asked Blake affably.
 "Yaas, wathah, Blake! But undah the circs, deah boy, I shall wefuse to speak to you for the pwesent. I am not suah whethah I can wetaim you in my list of fwriends, aftah the extwemely bad form you have been guilty of. I shall turn it ovah in my mind, and for the pwesent I shall cut you."
 "With what?"
 "Eh?"
 "What are you going to cut me with? A carving-knife?"
 "Pway don't be absurd, Blake. Of course I wifer to cuttin' your acquaintance."
 "Which acquaintance?" asked Blake seriously. "I've got a lot of acquaintances at St. Jim's, you know. There's Tom Merry, and Lowther, and Manners."
 "Oh, pway don't wot. I shall wefuse to speak to you for

"I am afwaid that is impos, Blake. If Skimpole desired to make a confidential communication to me, I am bound to tweat it as stwictly confidential."
 "Is that what you call being a chum?" demanded Blake severely. "Are you going to start having secrets from the rest of the study?"
 "I weally do not see any alternative, undah the circs."
 "Then I am afraid we can no longer regard you as a friend," said Blake, shaking his head solemnly.
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "I am driven to this, D'Arcy. It is very unpleasant to me to break off old ties in this manner, but under the circs I can no longer regard you as a friend. What do you say, Dig?"
 "I was just thinking the same," said Digby seriously. "I



Reilly brought out the third part of a herring on a plate. It looked like a fragment saved for a dog, but he put it on the table with quite a flourish. "There you are!" he exclaimed. "I want you to have all the fish, Gussy darling!" D'Arcy could not conceal his horror for a moment!

the pwesent, that is what I mean. I wegard you as a set of wottahs."
 "Then you won't come up and have tea in the study?"
 "Yaas, wathah, but undah the circs, I think you fellows ought to keep out, as I do not for the pwesent wecognise you as fwriends."
 Blake chuckled.
 "Yes, I can see us keeping out of the study," he remarked. "Especially when we've got such a ripping tea!"
 D'Arcy looked interested.
 "Have you got a wippin' tea, deah boys?"
 "Yes, rather! Sausages and ham, and cake and marmalade, and some of those nobby little wafer biscuits you are so fond of—"
 "Undah the circs, Blake, I think I shall not allow this little affair to make any diffewence to our fwriendship."
 "Good!" said Blake, with a grin. "And, of course, as your special chums, whom you love very much at tea-time—"
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "You will promise us not to listen to that ass Skimpole without telling us all about it."
 Arthur Augustus shook his head.

don't see how it is possible for me to regard D'Arcy as a friend any longer."
 "What do you think, Herries?"
 "My sentiments exactly. I cannot regard D'Arcy even as an acquaintance."
 "Weally, deah boys—"
 "Of course, we shall always remember our late friendship with him," said Blake sadly. "We shall always remember that he was a silly ass—"
 "I wefuse to be wemembahed as a silly ass."
 "We shall often think of him. Whenever we see a donkey or a monkey, we shall always think of Gussy—"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "How long will it be before you can remove your things out of Study No. 6, Mr. D'Arcy?" asked Blake politely.
 "I wefuse to wemove my beastlay things out of Study Numbah Six!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I am weally surpriswed at you, Blake!"
 "Mister Blake, please!"
 "Oh, don't be an ass! On second thoughts, I shall dwop your acquaintance. I shall go and have tea in the Hall unless you apologise."

"No fear!"

"Then I am goin'!"

"I say, Gussy—"

"You have said quite enough, deah boy. Undah the circs I have nothin' more to say to you. I wefuse to join you at tea in the study."

And Arthur Augustus marched off.

Blake chuckled.

"There's one circumstance that the one and only Gus has forgotten," he remarked. "Tea is over in the Hall, and there won't be any left for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on up to the study. Gussy must be hungry after walking to the village, and he'll be there soon after we are, I expect."

And the chums went up to Study No. 6, and were soon busy with their preparations for a tea that would have proved irresistibly tempting to any hungry junior who could have seen it.

CHAPTER 3.

Gussy's Magnificent Tea!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS walked away in a state of great indignation, and made for the dining-room in the School House, where the boys had tea when they took their meal "in Hall," which was not more often than they could help.

Every fellow, junior or senior, had tea in his study when the funds ran to it, and it was very seldom indeed that anyone belonging to Study No. 6 turned up in Hall for tea.

But it was a question of dignity with D'Arcy now, and that settled it.

Perhaps a regretful thought passed through his mind of the sausages and ham, cake and marmalade, in Study No. 6. All this contrasted very strongly with the weak tea and bread-and-butter of the school table.

But he kept on heroically, and entered the dining-room. The last table was just being cleared of a mountain of crockery, and D'Arcy halted in dismay.

Tea was over in Hall, and there wasn't a crumb left for so late a comer.

The swell of the School House stared in for a moment, and then turned away.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "This is wathah wotten! I can't go up to the study now and let those wottahs cwow ovah me. I weally doubt whether I shall evah speak to them again. They would ewoh like anythin' if I gave in now. But I am beastlay hungwy, and I weally must have some tea."

He thought of the tuckshop. At Dame Taggles' little shop within the precincts of St. Jim's he could get anything he liked to eat that he could pay for, and Arthur Augustus was never short of money—or very seldom so. He had the change of a five-pound note jingling in his pockets now.

But what he wanted was a comfortable tea, not a feed in the tuckshop. And tea when Mrs. Taggles made it was not like they made it in the study. Some of the juniors strongly suspected that Dame Taggles never emptied her teapot, but made new tea on the old leaves from economical motives. At all events, Dame Taggles' tea was known and avoided by most of the juniors.

Reilly of the Fourth, the boy from Belfast, was going along the Fourth Form passage with a kettle in his hand, which he had evidently just filled at the tap. It was a sign that there was to be some tea in Reilly's study.

"Goin' to have tea now, Weilly?" asked Arthur Augustus affably.

"Faith, and I am!" said Reilly.

"Got anybody comin'?"

"No."

"I should have gweat pleasah in havin' tea with you, Weilly," said D'Arcy. "I have drowped the acquaintance of Blake and Hewries and Digbay, which makes it wathah awkward for me to feed there. Under the circs—"

"Faith, and ye're an ass!" said Reilly cheerfully. "But ye're welcome, Gussy, though sure it's a poor spread I have entoirely."

"Bai Jove, that is all wight!"

"Faith, and it's a mighty poor spread, but I'll be pleased to have ye, and I'll take it as a great compliment, Gussy darlint," said Reilly, with that perfect gravity which an Irishman always knows how to assume when he is "pulling the leg" of a friend. "Sure the honour av ye presence will turn me poor study into a palace."

"Bai Jove, Weilly, I take that as wathah decent of you. I shall be vevy pleased indeed to have tea with you."

They entered Reilly's study. The fire was out, and the table was not spread. There had always been a sort of

antagonism between Reilly and D'Arcy, but there was no sign of it now. Reilly was effusively friendly, and Arthur Augustus was too hungry to think of anything but gratitude for his hospitality.

"Sure, and I'll have the fire alight in a minute," said Reilly. "Will you lay the cloth, Gussy darlint?"

Arthur Augustus laid the cloth. Reilly soon had the kettle boiling over a fire of sticks, and made the tea.

He had his back turned to D'Arcy as he put the tea in the pot. Then he fetched the spread out of the cupboard.

He had said that it would be a poor spread, and Arthur Augustus had been prepared for bread-and-butter and sardines, or perhaps bread and jam without the butter, or anything in that line.

Reilly, with a perfectly grave face, brought out a crust of dry, hard bread and placed it on a plate.

"Help yourself," he said hospitably. "I'll pour out the tay."

D'Arcy looked at the crust of bread. Then he adjusted his eyeglass and looked again. Then he looked at Reilly.

"Weilly—"

"Faith, and I tould you it was a poor spread," said Reilly. "If—"

"Oh, that's all wight!" said D'Arcy hastily. "Pway don't think me so wude as to cwitcise a spwead, deah boy."

"I know it's rather poor."

"Not at all. I—I wathah like dwy bwead."

And Arthur Augustus cut a slice of bread, not without difficulty, for the bread was hard and the knife was blunt. He managed it, however, while Reilly poured out the tea. He passed a full cup over to D'Arcy, who looked at it earnestly.

"Faith, and ye'll excuse me not having any milk or sugar," said Reilly. "Sure, and I tould ye it was a poor feed, me being low in funds at the present moment."

"It's—it's all right!" gasped D'Arcy.

He looked very hard at the tea. There was hardly any colour to it.

"But—but are you sure you didn't forget to put the tea in the pot, Weilly?"

"Don't you like it weak, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Faith, and I tould ye—"

"Oh, that's all wight! I—I like weak tea vevy much," said D'Arcy. "Stwong tea is vevy bad for the nerves, so the doctors say."

"Faith, and it's right ye are!"

Reilly sipped his tea. Arthur Augustus did the same. He could not do more than sip it, for, as a matter of fact, it was just hot water, without milk or sugar, and the palest of pale browns in hue.

Reilly watched him with an air of beaming hospitality, and Arthur Augustus was never known to fail in courtesy. To appear as an ungrateful and carping guest was impossible to him.

"Faith, and it's eating mighty little ye are!" said Reilly. "Aren't you hungry?"

"My—my appetite has gone off," murmured the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's. "It's—it's wathah uncertain, you know."

"Faith, and it's a poor tay I'm offering you."

"Not at all."

"Help yourself, you know."

There was nothing for D'Arcy to help himself to with the exception of dry bread, but with the host's hospitable eye upon him he could not refuse to eat. The crust was not only dry, but it had the indefinable smell of a crust that had lain about for a considerable time.

"Faith, and there's more to come, you know!" said Reilly.

D'Arcy felt rather relieved.

"I—I think I'll wait for the next course, then, deah boy," he remarked.

"Sure—and here it is!"

Reilly opened the cupboard again and brought out the third part of a herring on a plate. It looked like a fragment that might have been saved for a dog. But Reilly put it on the table with quite a flourish.

"There you are!" he exclaimed. "Sure, it's satisfied with the good bread I am, and I want you to have all the fish, Gussy darlint!"

D'Arcy could not conceal his horror for a moment. The herring was almost talking, and it was an unappetising-looking thing, anyway. But it was impossible to wound his kind host. He made only a feeble resistance.

"Weally, Weilly, I could not think of wobbin' you like that!"

"Not at all, Gussy darlint! Sure, and ye're my guest!"

"I would gweatly pwefer to divide it—"

"Not at all!"

"I—I am not at all hungwy 'now—"

"Faith, and I warn'd ye it was a poor feed, and I suppose you—"

"Oh, no, p'vay don't put it like that!" said D'Arcy instantly. "I shall gweatly enjoy eatin' that excellent hewwin'!"

"Go ahead, then! Don't spare the bread."

"Certainly not, deah boy!" gasped D'Arcy.

He tackled the herring. He ate some of it, and separated the rest to make it look smaller on the plate. He munched a little dry bread and gulped down some of the cup of warm water. He would have given a week's pocket-money to be outside the study. But Reilly's kind and hospitable eye was upon him all the time.

"Faith, and ye're not finished yet, are ye?" exclaimed Reilly, as D'Arcy rose at last. "Sure, and I wish ye'd finish the bread, Gussy darling!"

"I—I—I have had quite enough, deah boy, thank you!"

"Will you have a little more tay?"

"No, thanks!" said Arthur Augustus, repressing a shudder. "I—I weally am quite satisfied. It is vewy kind of you to entahtain me in this way."

"Faith, and it's proud of ye company I am!" said Reilly.

"I hope you will come to tay with me often, Gussy darlint!"

"Bai Jove, you are, vewy kind!" gasped D'Arcy.

And he made his escape from the study. As he closed the door, he thought he heard the sound of a chuckle. He dismissed the idea, however. There was no reason that he could see why Reilly should chuckle. He caught sight of Skimpole as he went downstairs, and called to him as he hastened after the Determiniaist of St. Jim's into the Close.

It was an opportunity of hearing the secret at last, uninterrupted by the over-obliging chums of Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 4.

Reilly Tells the Tale!

"ANOTHER sausage, Dig?" said Jack Blake, with great politeness.

There was one sausage left on the dish in Study No. 6. Blake had said that there were sausages and ham for tea, and, as a matter of fact, there were four sausages. But the absence of Arthur Augustus left one cold on the dish.

"Er—no, thanks!" said Digby.

"Another sausage, Herries?"

"Well, no. Pass the marmalade."

"Another sausage, Jack?" asked Blake, addressing himself.

"Yes, please. Thank you!"

And Jack Blake helped himself to the last sausage. Herries attacked the marmalade, while Dig travelled into the cake. Blake took the last fragment of ham to keep his sausage company. It had been left till the last minute in case D'Arcy should turn up, but the swell of the School House had failed to put in an appearance.

"I wonder where Gussy is?" Digby remarked. "I wonder at his sticking it out like this. He must have gone to the tuckshop."

Blake nodded.

"I suppose so. After we've finished tea we'd better go and look for him. Obstinate young bounder! We've got to keep a brotherly eye on him, and see that that ass Skimpole doesn't lead him into a new scrape."

"Although we've dropped his acquaintance?" grinned Herries.

"Yes," said Blake, laughing, "for the sake of old times."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Seriously, though, it's some hare-brained scheme Skimpole has got on, and we must keep Gussy from getting into a scrape. Hallo! Here he is at last!"

The door of the study was ajar. It was pushed open as Blake spoke, and the chums of the Fourth turned round to see D'Arcy; but it was not D'Arcy. A large head, with a bumpy forehead, and a huge pair of spectacles, was projected into the study.

"It's that ass Skimpole!"

"Sorry!" blinked Skimpole. "I thought D'Arcy might be here."

He dodged back into the passage, just in time to escape the last remnants of Blake's sausage, which missed him by a fraction of an inch.

"Get out!" roared Blake.

But Skimpole was already departing.

Blake glowered wrathfully.

"Cheek of that ass coming here, after what we've told him!" he exclaimed. "He thought Gussy might be alone in the study, of course. If he puts his head in here again, I'll let him have this pat of butter."

"I can hear him coming back," muttered Digby.

Blake grinned gleefully.

"Watch me, then! I'll bowl him out first time!"

"Mind it isn't a wide. We don't want that stuff plastered over the wall."

"Trust me."

Blake took up the pat of butter. It might be a sinful waste, but the temptation to catch the bore of the School House in the eye with it was too great. The door was pushed open from outside, and the pat of butter flew with deadly aim.

The next moment Jack Blake gave a gasp.

It was not Skimpole who was entering, but he did not see that till the missile had left his hand, and was whizzing with unerring aim to its destination.

"Oh!" roared Tom Merry, as the butter squelched on his nose. "Oh!"

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "I'm sorry! Ha, ha, ha! I'm awfully sorry! I thought—"

"You—you—you—"

Tom Merry wiped the butter off his face with his handkerchief. The handkerchief was immediately soaked with grease. The weather was warm, and the butter inclined to run to oil.

The leader of the Shell gasped.

"I'm sorry," gurgled Blake. "Oh, you do look a picture!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Digby. "We're all sorry!"

"Ho, ho, ho!" gasped Herries. "It was a—ha, ha, ha!—mistake!"

"I thought it was Skimpole," said Blake. "Honour bright!"

Tom Merry mopped his face. He threw down the handkerchief, wreaking with grease, with a shudder.

"You unspeakable ass!" he growled. "You've greased my chivvy all over, and I can't get half of it off. You shrieking dummy! Lend me your handkerchief, Lowther."

"No fear!" said Lowther. "I'm not wanting my handkerchief buttered, thank you! Go and wipe it off on Blake!"

"Well, that's a good idea."

"Here, keep off!" exclaimed Blake, jumping up as Tom Merry advanced towards him. "Keep off, you ass, or you'll get damaged!"

Tom Merry did not keep off. He chased Blake round the table, with the intention of wiping off the clinging butter upon his person, and Blake, in a state of considerable alarm, dodged him.

"Keep off!" he howled. "You can wipe it off on Dig, if you like. I tell you it was an accident. Keep off! I'll punch your beastly head if you come near me!"

He was cornered, and he squared up desperately.

Tom Merry ran straight at him and knocked his guard up, and closed with him.

"Your butter, my pippin!" he said blandly. "I'm not greedy, I don't want it all. Have some on your chivvy. This is what you might call getting your own back."

"Ow! Gerroff! Groogh!"

"Have some more?"

"Ow! You greasy beast! Ow!"

Blake struggled desperately, but it was of no avail. Tom Merry's face was rubbed against his till he had more of the butter than the hero of the Shell. Then Tom released him and retreated, gasping, to the door.

"You—you greasy rotter!" gasped Blake. "I'll—I'll—"

"You'd better go and get a wash," grinned Tom Merry breathlessly. "Let that be a lesson to you not to sling butter about in the future. We came here to consult you about the football, but that will have to be put off till I get cleaned. An revoir!"

And the Terrible Three, laughing heartily, quitted Study No. 6.

Blake sank into his chair, breathing hard. Digby and Herries were roaring. Blake looked at them.

"Blessed if I can see what you want to be hee-hawing about!" he exclaimed. "There's nothing funny in a chap getting his chivvy smeared all over with butter."

"You seemed to think it funny when it was Merry's chivvy," grinned Dig.

"That was different, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop that fearful row!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

(Continued on next page.)

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"Well, if you two imbeciles are going to make a row like an old rooster with the croup, I may as well clear out!" grunted Blake.

And he cleared out, followed by the laughter of his two chums.

He made for the nearest bath-room, and when he came out, with a clean face and a clean collar, he was looking more like his usual good-tempered self.

Digby and Herries were waiting for him in the passage. "Better have a look for Gussy," suggested Digby. "We don't want to have him chow-chowing with Skimpole without our being on the spot."

"Certainly not! It was impossible to miss our tea, but now we ought to be on the watch again."

The chums of Study No. 6 went downstairs. They passed Mellish of the Fourth, and Blake stopped to ask him if he had seen D'Arcy lately.

Mellish grinned.

"He's been having tea with Reilly," he replied. "Reilly's in the Hall, telling the chaps about it. You'd better go and hear him."

"What's the joke?" asked Blake suspiciously.

"Better go and ask Reilly," said Mellish, grinning.

"Come on, kids!" said Blake shortly.

The chums of the Fourth hurried downstairs, and found Reilly standing in the Hall, the centre of a crowd of grinning and chuckling Fourth-Formers. Reilly was relating the story for the tenth time, and it seemed to tickle his audience immensely.

"Faith, and there wasn't more than a smell of tay in the taypot!" said Reilly, with a huge grin. "Not more than a smell of ut, me darlins! But did D'Arcy complain? Not a worrud—not a blessed worrud!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There was only a dry crust on the table—but did he complain? Wasn't he entirely polite? He was."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And for the second course, faith, I brought out a bit of a herring that I had put by a couple of days before to give to Herries' bulldog, and forgotten; but, faith, D'Arcy never turned a hair! Sure, and it's a broth av a boy he is for politeness entirely!"

"Did he eat it?" yelled a dozen voices.

"Faith, and he did that, or a good bit of it, and he thanked me for the tay entirely, and sure he—"

A yell of laughter interrupted the speaker. D'Arcy's unflinching politeness was proverbial in the School House, and the idea of him under such a test, remaining still the pink of politeness, and never suspecting that he was being "rotted" made the juniors shriek with merriment.

Jack Blake could not help grinning, but his face soon became severe again. Arthur Augustus belonged to Study No. 6, in spite of a temporary estrangement. The honour of Study No. 6 had to be vindicated. Blake exchanged a glance with Herries and Digby, and they pushed their way through the crowd of juniors.

"Faith, and he says, says he, haven't you forgotten to put in the tay, says he."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But he drunk the warm water, too, loike— Hallo! Oh, tare and hounds, and phwat are you doing entirely?" roared Reilly, as the chums of Study No. 6 grasped him.

They did not reply. They collared the cheerful youth from Belfast and bumped him over. And they bumped him along, and Reilly struggled in vain in their grasp. And the juniors laughed as heartily at his vain struggles as they had before laughed at his narrative.

"Faith, if he—ow—ow—ow!"

A final bumping along the floor, and Reilly was deposited on the mat, dazed and bewildered, with his collar hanging by one end, his necktie across his knees, his waistcoat stripped of half its buttons, and his jacket split up the back. And Blake, Herries, and Digby walked on into the quadrangle with the proud satisfaction of a good deed well done.

CHAPTER 5.

Towser, the Bloodhound!

"HAVE you seen our Gus?"

Jack Blake asked the question of everyone he met in the quadrangle, where the September dusk was gathering. No one seemed to have seen Arthur Augustus since he had had tea with Reilly.

Figgins of the New House was crossing the quad from the direction of the tuckshop with a bundle under his arm, and the chums of the School House bore down upon him. Figgins caught sight of them, and expecting a House row, put his parcel on the ground under a tree, and put his back against the trunk.

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Blake burst into a laugh.

"It's all right, Figgy—honest Injun!"

"Oh, all right," said Figgins, picking up the parcel. "I've got a feed here, and Fatty Wynn would scalp someone if anything went wrong with it. He's come back from the voyage on the Condor with a worse appetite than ever—I mean a more fearful one. He has tea in Hall now as well as in the study, and he has proposed that we start the custom of having two teas—one at half-past six and one at half-past seven."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good old Fatty!"

"I'm going about getting fellows to ask him out to tea," said Figgins ruefully. "It's the only thing I can think of to stop a famine in the study."

"Send him over to us," said Blake, with a twinkle in his eyes. "Give him my love, and tell him I want him to come to tea to-morrow evening, and he's to be sure not to have tea first, or he'll spoil it."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins. "Good!"

"By the way, have you seen Gussy? We're looking for him."

"Gussy? Yes. He went round towards the menagerie with Skimpole just before I went into the tuckshop."

Blake gave a jump.

"With Skimpole—sure?"

"Yes, of course. What the—"

But the chums of Study No. 6 did not wait for Figgins to finish. They bolted off in the direction of the menagerie.

Figgins stared after them for a moment, and then walked on and entered the New House.

Blake, Herries, and Digby did not lose a moment. Every moment now the secret might be told, and D'Arcy might be drawn into the scheme from which they had resolved to save him, whether he liked it or not.

The "menagerie," as the boys of St. Jim's called it, was the building where the fellows kept their pets, pet-keeping in the House being strictly tabooed. The building was at the back of the New House, and the chums lost no time in getting there. It was growing very dark, and it was difficult to see in the shadows of the great buildings.

They arrived at the pets' quarters without seeing anything of D'Arcy or Skimpole.

Jack Blake gave a growl of exasperation.

"They're chow-wowing in some corner," he exclaimed. "They know we may be looking for them. They're keeping out of sight on purpose."

"That's it," said Digby, fully sharing his chum's indignation. "They're keeping out of sight with malice aforethought. The worry is, how are we to spot them in the dark?"

"I've got an idea," said Herries.

"Have you?" said Blake, who did not think much of Herries' ideas as a rule. "I suppose we shall have to look round for them—"

"But I've got an idea."

"What is it, then—buck up?"

"I've read that the Spaniards used to hunt runaway niggers with bloodhounds, in the West Indies, and—"

"Off your rocker?"

"No," said Herries indignantly. "I'm not off my rocker. The Spaniards—"

"Blow the Spaniards! What on earth have the Spaniards got to do with this matter?"

"I tell you that they used to hunt runaway niggers with bloodhounds—"

"Well, suppose they did. What on earth—"

"I mean that we could find Gussy and Skimpole the same way."

"Well, of all the chumps! Where are we to get any giddy bloodhounds?"

"I was thinking of my dog Towser."

"Oh, I see! Why couldn't you say so before?"

"You didn't give me a chance. You never will let anybody speak but yourself. I never saw such a fellow for jaw. Why—"

"Oh, ring off. I don't suppose Towser could find D'Arcy, but we may as well try."

"I'll have him out in a jiffy."

Herries disappeared into the little building, and quickly reappeared, leading a savage-looking bulldog by a chain. Towser was the pride of his owner's heart, but he was not very popular among the St. Jim's boys. He had a weakness for seats of trousers and calves of legs when he was off the chain, which happened not infrequently. He had had the one free bite to which he was entitled by the law of the land long, long ago, but, like *Oliver Twist*, he wanted more.

Blake and Digby looked rather suspiciously at the bulldog, who was tugging at his chain.

"Is that rotten brute safe, Herries?"

"He's not a rotten brute!"

"Well, is he safe?"
 "Of course he is. He'll find D'Arcy in a jiffy. Find him, boy! Smell him out! Go for him! Fetch him!"
 Whether Towser believed that he was being encouraged to run for a rat or a rabbit, or whether he had some ability in finding things out, we cannot say, but certainly he started off at a run, and tugged at his chain so hard that Herries had some difficulty in holding him in.
 "Come on!" exclaimed Herries. "He's on the scent."
 "Rats!" said Blake. "I don't believe—"
 "Oh, don't jaw; come on!"
 And Herries disappeared in the gloom with the tugging bulldog. Blake and Digby followed.
 Herries' voice could be heard in the darkness.
 "Fetch 'em! Good dog! Fetch 'em!"
 Round the menagerie they went, and along the wall of

Digby came dashing on and ran into Herries in the dark and fairly bowled him over. Herries bumped on the chapel rails and slid to the ground, and a savage jerk by Towser dragged the chain from his hand.
 It whisked away like a snake, and the bulldog was free.
 "My—my hat!" gasped Herries. "He's gone!"
 "What's gone?" cried Jack Blake.
 "Towser!"
 "My only aunt!"
 They dashed in pursuit. There was no telling what Towser might do now that he was free. He was no respecter of persons, and even a Housemaster's calves might not be safe. But Towser was gone, with the loose chain clinking behind him.
 Arthur Augustus ran on desperately, holding his silk hat with one hand. He paused at last near the School House, panting for breath.



"Ow! You greasy beast! Ow!" Blake struggled desperately, but it was of no avail. Tom Merry rubbed his buttery face against Blake's until the latter had more of the butter than the hero of the Shell. "Your butter, my pippin!" said Tom Merry blandly. "And you're welcome to it!"

the New House, and then back into the railed ground behind the chapel, and then there was a sudden yell.
 "Keep him off!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "That's Gussy!"
 The chums dashed on. In the shadow of the chapel two juniors had been standing, and Skimpole, who had just started to explain to D'Arcy, had been interrupted by the sudden appearance of Towser, tugging at the hard-held chain.
 At the sight of the two juniors Towser plainly made up his mind that they were the quarry his master intended him to fetch, and he leaped at D'Arcy with open jaws.
 "Keep him off!" yelled the swell of the School House, pressing back against the chapel rails. "You uttah wottah, keep that feahful beast off!"
 Herries dragged desperately on the chain.
 "I—I can't!" he gasped. "You—you'd better run!"
 "Bow-wow-wow! Gr-r-r-r-r!"
 "Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "Skimmay, deah boy, wun like anythin'!"
 And he set the example. The Determinist of St. Jim's was not long in following suit. The two juniors dashed away at top speed, and Towser barked furiously and dragged at his chain in his eagerness to pursue. Blake and

"It's all wight, Skimmay!" he gasped. "We're far enough away now, deah boy!"
 "Bow-wow-wow! Gr-r-r-r-r!"
 That remark was made by Towser. The clink of the loose chain came to the ears of the juniors at the same moment.
 Skimpole gave a jump.
 "He's loose!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Here he comes!" yelled Skimpole. "Run for your life!"
 "Bow-wow-wow! Gr-r-r-r-r!"
 And they ran. Towser ran, too, and it was a very close thing. D'Arcy and Skimpole dashed into the School House at top speed, and Towser chased up the steps and stopped as the heavy door was crashed in his face.
 Disappointed of his prey, he set up a terrific barking on the School House steps.
 "What on earth is that fearful row?" exclaimed Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, rushing out of his study. "Where is that dog?"
 "He's outside, Kildare," gasped D'Arcy. "We have had a feahfully nawwow escape. He's a fewocious beast! Pway don't open the door!"

"Is that Herries' beast again? I'll have the brute drowned if he gets loose any more!" exclaimed Kildare. "I'm getting fed-up with Herries' bulldog!"

"He'll get fed-up with you, dear boy, if you open that door," said D'Arcy. "Pway be careful, Kildare."

"Oh, bosh!"

Kildare swung open the door, and Towser ceased his solo on the step. He looked at Kildare with a growl, but as the captain of St. Jim's did not show any sign of fear Towser did not attack him. Kildare picked up the loose chain.

Blake, Herries, and Digby came tearing up.

"Here he is!" shouted Blake. "Er—hallo—Kildare!"

"Hallo!" said the Sixth-Former grimly. "Which of you young rascals let the brute loose?"

"He got away by accident," said Herries. "I was holding him—"

"You shouldn't have brought him out if you couldn't keep him safe."

"It was all D'Arcy's fault. We were hunting him down with Towser for a bloodhound, and if he hadn't cut and run—"

"Bai Jove! If I hadn't won that fewocious beast would have wined my twousahs—"

"Well, take him away!" said Kildare. "And take twenty lines as well! Get off!"

Not sorry to escape so cheaply, Herries dragged his bulldog away. Towser went very unwillingly, jerking at the chain and showing a strong inclination to snap at the legs of Blake and Digby. He evidently considered that he had been defrauded of the bite he was entitled to after his run.

"Get the beast in," said Blake, prudently giving Towser's jaws a wide berth. "I wish you'd sell that beast, Herries!"

"Well, Reilly wanted to buy him—"

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"Rats! Sell him outside the school, I mean."

"Rats to you!" retorted Herries. "He's a jolly good dog! I wish I could have had him on board the Condor during the vac. I'm not going to part with him. Better keep out of his reach or he may bite."

"Yes, the beast looks like it. If he bites me there will be a dead bulldog picked up one of these times, so I warn you!"

"Well, keep out of his reach, then. Hallo! Who's that?"

"Hold on—it's Ratty!"

The juniors halted. They were passing the angle of the New House when the thin, meagre figure in cap and gown came along. It was Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House at St. Jim's. There was no more unpopular master in the old school.

During the vacation spent by the boys of St. Jim's on board the steamer Condor, Mr. Ratcliff had been senior master on board, and he had shown his power by making things uncomfortable for everybody. There was a long, long grudge between the New House master and the chums of Study No. 6 in the School House.

The juniors drew back into the darker shadow of the building, and waited for the Housemaster to pass. But Mr. Ratcliff had apparently heard the snapping of Towser, for he stopped and turned his head to look in their direction.

"Who is that?" he exclaimed. "Who is there? Come and show yourself."

Perhaps something about the New House master irritated Towser; perhaps he only wanted the bite he had been basely deprived of. At all events he made a sudden leap forward, and the jerk dragged the chain from Herries' hand.

"My—my hat!" panted Herries. "He's—he's gone again!"

Blake chuckled.

"I don't care! It will give Ratty some exercise! Hark!"

A wild and horrified yell broke from the New House master as the flaming eyes and red jaws came leaping up from the dusk.

Mr. Ratcliff stared at the dog for a second, petrified, and then he turned and bolted, his cap on the ground, his gown flying in the wind.

And Towser, encouraged by his flight, darted after him with a growl that made the Housemaster's blood run cold as he heard it.

"My word!" muttered Digby. "There will be a row over this!"

"We must stop him!"

Blake darted after the bulldog. The chain was trailing and clinking along the ground. Blake threw himself forward, and his hands clumped on it, and he grasped it. The tug on it the next moment almost dragged him along the ground, but he held it fast. The dog barked savagely and swung round on the chain.

"Come on, Herries!" gasped Blake.

"Bow-wow-wow! Gr-r-r-r!"

"Good dog!" said Herries. "Quiet! Good dog!"

"I've got the chain!"

"Good! Hand it over! What on earth's the matter?"

"Ow! He's got my trousers!"

"Good dog! Good dog! Come off! Good old doggie!"

Blake tugged at the chain and Towser let go, and Herries dragged him away. Blake breathed hard for a minute.

"That bulldog will be found drowned one of these days!" he panted. "Come on—let's get in, for goodness' sake, before Ratty starts inquiring after us!"

But Mr. Ratcliff was not feeling like inquiring after anybody just then. He had run his hardest to the New House and bolted in, and made a dive into his study. The barking of the bulldog was still ringing from the quadrangle, and to the horrified New House master it seemed close at hand.

He slammed the door and locked it, and pushed the table against it, and then sank breathlessly into a chair. And it was not till a good five minutes after Towser's last bark had died away in the distance that Mr. Ratcliff ventured to open his door

CHAPTER 6.

For Auld Lang Syne!

"BAI JOVE, what a feahfully nawwow escape!"

"Yes, rather! I was just saying to you when the bulldog interrupted us—"

"I feel in an awful fluttah still."

"Yes, so do I. As I was saying—"

"The howwid bwute would have wined my twousahs if he had caught up with us. I had a pair of twousahs wined while we were on board the Condor."

"It's about the Condor that I was going to speak to you."

"That was due to a silly ass openin' a porthole and soakin' them with salt watah! Bai Jove, I feel absolutely exhausted with that wunnin'!"

"It is very fatiguing. I was saying——"

"Weally, Skimpole, give us a west for a few minutes, old chap. I am feelin' uttably exhausted, you know."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat down on the stairs and panted. Skimpole was panting, too, for the hard run home had taken most of the wind out of the weedy junior. But he had not forgotten the important matter on hand, and he was anxious to come to the point before there were interruptions.

"Yes; but you see, D'Arcy, these fellows may be in in a moment."

"Yaas, watah; I nevah thought of that!"

"Oh dear me, here they come!"

Blake, Digby, and Herries came in. They were looking round for something, and that something was undoubtedly the swell of the School House.

Skimpole blinked in an annoyed way at the chums of the Fourth.

"It is too late now, D'Arcy."

"Yaas; it looks like it, doesn't it," said Arthur Augustus. "I tell you what, deah boy. I'll meet you in the passage aftah lights out to-night. You can come out of the Shell dormitoway, and I out of the Fourth Form dormitoway, and we can meet in the beastlay passage and have a jaw." Skimpole brightened up.

"All right; but come fully dressed, and ready to go out."

D'Arcy fixed his monople upon Skimpole in amazement.

"Ready to go out, Skimmy?"

"Certainly, because——"

"But——"

"You see——"

"Hold on, those wottahs will hear you. I'll do as you say, deah boy."

"Oh, you'll do as he says, will you?" said Blake, coming up in time to hear the last sentence. "And what does he say?"

"I wefuse to inform you, Blake."

"Have you learned the giddy secret, after all?"

"No; I have not learned the secwet."

"Good! Then we are in time," said Blake, with much satisfaction. "It's like your cheek, D'Arcy, to give us all the trouble of hunting you down with a blughound——"

"I should weally be considewably obliged if you would cease to take any twouble on my behalf," said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "I have been thwown into a fluttah, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah. I have been thwown into a fluttah, and compelled to wun like anything. I wegard it as a feahful piece of impertinence on your part—especially as I no longah wecognise you as acquaintances."

"Yes, I forgot. We don't know you, you know, Mr. D'Arcy. But, you see, we're doing this for old acquaintance' sake," explained Blake. "It's for the sake of auld lang syne, my dear. Because we used to know you."

"Oh, pway, don't be an ass!"

"I refuse to be called an ass!" said Blake. "I regard the expression as opprobrious."

Arthur Augustus turned pink. He was frequently making that remark himself, and, in spite of Blake's curious face, he knew that the chief of Study No. 6 was "funning."

"I wegard you as a wottah, Blake. I wegard Digby as a wottah. I wegard Hewwies as anothah wottah. I have always endeavoured to keep my circ of fwriends select, not to say swaggah. I have dwopped you thwee wottahs out of it. Pway, do not address me when we meet in futuah!"

Blake fell into Digby's arms and wept. Herries leaned on Blake's shoulders and wept, too.

Arthur Augustus looked at them in amazement for a moment, and then, with an extremely indignant expression, strode away.

Blake and Digby left off weeping, and burst into a roar of laughter.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came downstairs, and they stopped to inquire what was the joke.

"Gussy has dropped our acquaintance again," explained Blake. "We were weeping over the pieces. We are not to address him when we meet him in the future—all through this ass Skimpole. Lend us a hand, and we'll roll him down the steps into the quad, and jam his head on the—— Hallo! He's gone!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"What's all this rot about D'Arcy and Skimpole?"

"Good! You can lend us a hand there," said Blake. "Skimpole has been hatching a scheme for another expedition, and he's trying to inveigle D'Arcy into it. We have passed a law that Skimmy doesn't tell Gussy the secret

without telling us also, and we have taken a fearful lot of trouble in shadowing them about. We were even reduced to the necessity of hunting down Gussy with a blughound."

"With a what?"

"With Herries' bulldog. And as he took a fancy to Ratty's calves as we took him home, I expect there will be a row about it. Gussy has dropped our acquaintance, and we've dropped his. But we're going to look after him, all the same. The Head was very good last time he made a break, and he was let off with a caning. This time the matter would be more serious, and we don't want our one and only Gus flogged. It's no good arguing with him; but we're going to keep him within bounds if we have to bind him hand and foot and sit on his chest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can lend a hand if you like, by keeping an eye on Skimpole. If you watch your duffer, and we watch ours, they can't very well escape."

"Good idea! We'll do it!"

And they did it. For the rest of the evening the Terrible Three haunted Skimpole. Wherever the freak of the Shell went, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther went, also. They entered into the fun of the thing, and the indignation of the victim prevented it from getting monotonous. Arthur Augustus, at the same time, was the recipient of similar kind attentions from Blake & Co.

Skimpole took refuge at last in a corner of the Common-room behind a ponderous volume on the entrancing subject of Determinism, and the Terrible Three sat in a row watching him and reading somewhat lighter literature. Skimpole blinked at them through his spectacles, over the top of his volume at intervals, with smouldering indignation; but every indignant blink was answered by the blindest of smiles.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered into a game of chess with Walsh of the Fourth, and Blake, Herries, and Digby sat in a row watching the game. The swell of St. Jim's endured it patiently for some minutes, and then turned his monople upon them.

"I should be gweatly obliged if you would wetiah," he said.

"Have you bought up the Common-room, Mr. D'Arcy?" asked Blake.

"I wegard that question as widiculous! Your pwesence wowwies me!"

"Well, your face worries me."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Check!" said Walsh.

Arthur Augustus moved, and the game continued; but the watchfulness of the three juniors distracted D'Arcy's attention, and he lost.

He rose with an air of considerable indignation and walked away. Three solemn juniors walked after him.

He started a game of draughts with Mellish, and lost that, too, and then he settled down with the latest number of the "Magnet." Three solemn faces within a couple of yards of him prevented him from really enjoying even that.

It is possible that all the juniors concerned were relieved when bedtime came.

The Fourth Form and the Shell separated to go to their respective dormitories, and Blake slapped Tom Merry on the shoulder as he said "Good-night!"

"It's all right," he remarked. "They're safe now till morning."

And Tom Merry laughed assent.

But were they?

CHAPTER 7.

Skimpole Explains!

"GOOD-NIGHT, boys!"

"Good-night, Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's left the dormitory, and the buzz of voices in the darkness gradually died away, and slumber settled upon the Fourth-Formers.

Half-past nine was the bed-time of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. Ten o'clock striking from the clock tower was heard by few, and the quarter after the hour chimed out to only a single pair of ears.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up in bed.

"I say, Blake!" he whispered cautiously.

There was only a sound of deep breathing from Blake's bed. Arthur Augustus grinned in the darkness, and slipped out of the sheets. It did not take him long to dress himself for once, and he quietly left the Fourth Form dormitory.

The passage without was very dark. The light was out in the hall below, and there was only a glimmer on the staircase. Arthur Augustus turned in the direction of the

Shell dormitory, and went slowly up the gloomy corridor. The sound of an opening door made him start.

"Bai Jove! That must be Skimmay!"

A figure loomed up in the gloom of the passage.

"Is that you, Skimmay, deah boy?"

"Is that D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! I'm here!"

"Vewy good! I was determined to keep this beastlay appointment if only to put those wottahs in their place; but I was feahfully sleepy. I am awfully sleepy now. How long will it take you to tell me the beastlay secwet?"

"Only a few minutes, but——"

"Then go ahead, deah boy."

"But I want you to come with me."

"Where?"

"To Norfolk."

"To—to—to Norfolk?" murmured Arthur Augustus, as amazed as if Skimpole had said the North Pole, or the centre of the earth. "To—to Norfolk?"

"Yes, certainly! But I will explain. I hope you have not had to wait for me."

"Not more than a beastlay minute or two."

"Very good. I could not get out sooner, as I was afraid that Tom Merry was awake. Those three fellows have been watching me all the evening."

"There have also been thwée wottahs watchin' me, but I have eluded them," said D'Arcy. "I hope you have not allowed Tom Mewwy to get on the twack."

"Oh, no; I waited till I was sure they were all asleep, and——"

"Hist! What was that?"

"I heard nothing."

"It sounded like a door opening."

"Oh, no, nothing of the sort. I should have heard it. As I was saying, this is a most important matter, and I want someone to assist me. Do you remember when we were on board the steamer for the August holiday, I had a microscope which I had taken with me to use for some experiments?"

"No, I can't say I wemembah."

"Well, I had it, anyway. I wasn't able to make the experiments, as no opportunity occurred, but——"

"I wemembah one expewiment you made," said D'Arcy, "the expewiment with the beastlay gunpowder in the hold, which blew a hole in the steamah and wecked it."

"Oh, no! That was quite a mistake. That keg did not contain gunpowder."

"What did it contain, then?"

"I really do not know. I was going to analyse it, and I left it there in the hold while I went to fetch a lamp."

"And left a candle burnin' near it, you ass!"

"How could that possibly matter, as it was not gunpowder?"

"But it was gunpowdah!"

"Not at all. I am sorry I was not able to analyse it, for I should have been able to convince you that it was not gunpowder. Unfortunately that inexplicable explosion followed, and the ship was wrecked, and it was then impossible. But as I was saying, when the Condor was beached on the coast of Norfolk——"

"I am suah I heard somethin' then."

"Oh, no! I am certain that Tom Merry is fast asleep in

bed. Still, we may as well get into the alcove down the passage there, and speak in whispers, in case of accidents. Herr Schneider would pass us here if he came up to bed."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The two juniors went quietly down the passage and entered the alcove. A minute later a cautious footfall passed the alcove, and was lost in the distance.

"You heard that?" whispered D'Arcy.

"Yes; but it could not have been Tom Merry, as I left him fast asleep in the dormitory. I even pinched him a little to make sure he was asleep. As I was saying, when the steamer was beached we were in such a hurry getting the things out of her, that we most of us overlooked a great deal of our private belongings, and——"

"Yaas, wathah! I left my spotted necktie on board, afah all!"

"And I left my microscope. At least, I think I must have done so, or rather, I know I must have done so, as I have not got it with me here. It was a rather valuable microscope, but I am not anxious about the value of it really, as it is bound to be salved along with the other things by the men who are at work on the wreck."

"Then what are you wowwyin' about, deah boy?"

"I need the microscope for an experiment—a most important experiment. A case has lately come to my notice which makes me feel that it is my duty to take up the role of amateur detective once more for a time, and so far the present I am giving up my Deterministic propoganda. I have discovered bloodstains——"

"Bai Jove!"

"I have discovered bloodstains upon a letter which point to a fearful murder having been committed, but it is barely possible that the stains are not of blood but of red ink or currant-juice, and in that case, of course, I do not wish to waste my time hunting down the criminal. It is absolutely necessary for me to have my microscope to examine the stains."

"But, if the men are sure to salve it up——"

"Yes, in the course of time. I have learned that the tide has shifted the wrecked steamer farther off the shore, and that she has settled under water off the edge of the beach, where there is a sharp drop. Divers have been called in. The men are doing the diving work in the diving-suits, you know, with air pumped to them through a rubber pipe from above. They are salving the steamer, but there is no telling how long they may be in finding my microscope, or even whether they may find it after all. Besides, I must have it at once, in order to discover whether the individual I suspect has committed a terrible crime, or simply spilt some red ink. It is most important."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My idea is to pay a visit to the wreck and obtain possession of one of the diving-suits, and go down into the water and salve the microscope."

"But they won't let you, deah boy!"

"As a Determinist, D'Arcy——"

"But I mean they would kick you out, you know."

"Not at all, as I should choose the right moment with my usual perspicacity. I have trained my intellect by assuming the role of an amateur detective, and have made many observations that are of great use to me. I have observed that people who work always leave off in the middle of the day for an hour, while they partake of refreshments. That

Potts, the Office Boy!



is known as the dinner-hour. My idea is to go down to the wreck during the dinner-hour of the persons engaged in the salving, and thus escape any impertinent interference."

"Yaas, that's a wathah good wheeze!"
 "But I need a companion, and, of course, I thought of you at once."

"That is wathah flattewin', deah boy."
 "I felt sure that you would understand the importance of the matter, where others would only have scoffed," explained Skimpole. "When I go down in the diving-dress I shall need someone to work the air-pump, or I should be in danger of suffocation."

"But I don't know how to work a beastlay air-pump."
 "That is of no consequence—you will learn as soon as you see it. I rely upon you in this, D'Arcy; but if you are afraid—"

"Afraid!"
 "Yes, if you are afraid—"
 "If you came out of the Shell dormitowy at this time of the night to look for a thick eah, deah boy, you are goin' the wight way to work!"

"Then you will come?"
 D'Arcy hesitated. He was not afraid—the swell of St. Jim's, in spite of his elegant and dudish manners, had rather too much than too little pluck. But Skimpole's idea was so harebrained that even D'Arcy hesitated.

"Of course, if you don't want to go against Blake and the others—"

"I pwesume that I am my own mastah, Skimpole."
 "Blake seems to have made up his mind—"
 "Perwaps I had bettah come in ordah to show these wottahs that I am fwice to do as I like without their feahfully impertinent intahfewence."

"Yes, that's a good idea. You will come?"
 "Well, you see—"
 "Good! I am fully dressed, and I suppose you are ready?"

"I am quite weady; but—"
 "Then let us go. We shall never have a better opportunity. To-morrow those fellows will start watching us again."

"Yaas, but—"
 "We can get out of the little window in the passage below stairs. It will be easy to reach it, and we need make no noise."

"But the Head will be feahfully angwy."
 "Ah, yes, I had forgotten the Head! Still, he won't be angry till we come back, you know, and so that need not bother us now."

"Yaas, but—"
 "H'm! Perhaps I made a mistake in selecting you as my companion. As a bloated aristocrat you naturally would shrink from what appears a very trivial matter to a Determinist like myself."

"Oh, wing off!" said D'Arcy. "I am comin' with you."
 "You've made up your mind?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"

D'Arcy had made up his mind. Where Skimpole ventured to lead it was up to a D'Arcy to dare to follow, and all hesitation was gone now.

"Good! Come on. Oh, there is one other matter. I suppose you have some money. We shall have to get to Wayland and catch the express to London, and then go to Liverpool Street or—King's Cross—I forget which—and get a train for—somewhere in Norfolk. We can

ascertain at Wayland. It will cost money, and, unfortunately, I haven't any. I lent my last shilling to young Curly of the Third. Have you plenty of tin?"

"I have about thwee-pound-ten left out of my fivah."
 "That will be amply sufficient. Let us go!"
 "Very well, then. But, bai Jove—"

"What's the matter?"
 "I've forgotten my hat."
 "You can take a cap from the rack."
 "My cap is not there."
 "There are plenty of caps there, and you can borrow one."

"I am afraid that I could not take a cap that might not fit me, Skimpole. Besides, I do not care about goin' a long journey in a cap. I shall have to go to Study No. 6 for my toppah!"

"You don't want a topper now."
 "I should certainly wufese to go out on this expedish without a silk hat, deah boy."
 "Oh, very well. I consider you a fool, but—"

"Eh?"
 "I consider you a fool, but I suppose I must humour you—Ow, ow! What are you doing?"

"I am pullin' your nose, deah boy, and I am afraid that I have no alternative but to continue to pull it unless you apologise for that most oppwobvious expression."
 "Really, D'Arcy—"

"I am waitin' for my apology!"
 "Ow! I withdraw the expression, and will not utter my thoughts aloud again."
 "Vewy well, I am satisfied. I will go to the study for my toppah, and meet you on the kitchen stairs."

"Very good!"
 They parted. D'Arcy groped his way to Study No. 6, where he kept his hatbox, and Skimpole went downstairs, and on the first landing three pairs of hands groped out of the gloom and seized him and held him fast.

CHAPTER 8.

Caught!

"GOT him, Tom Merry?"
 "Yes. And you?"
 "I've got him, too!"
 "So have I," said Manners. "It's Skimmy—"

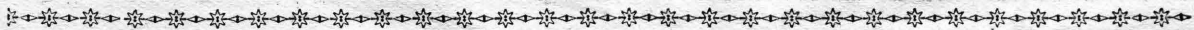
I can see the glimmer of his specs! Skimmy, you ass, we've got you!"
 "Dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "I suppose you have. I thought you were all asleep in the dormitory. I pinched Tom Merry to make sure that he was asleep."

"Yes; and woke me, ass!"
 "Please release me! I am going out—"
 "You are whatting?"

"I am going out, and I have no time to waste as I have to catch a train at Wayland Junction. Please—"
 Tom Merry chuckled.

"You won't catch any train to-night, Skimmy. You are coming back to the dormitory now."
 "I am not—I am going out. As a Determinist I claim the right to do as I please. I am going out. It is most important."

"Where is Gussy?"
 "He has gone to his study for his hat. Where are you going? What are you doing?"



IT DID HAPPEN!



"We are yanking you upstairs."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I won't—oh—ow—don't be rough! I wish you wouldn't jerk me like that! As you insist I will certainly return to the dormitory with you, and—"
 "Bring him along!"
 Skimpole was marched back to the Shell dormitory in the grasp of the Terrible Three. There was no help for it, and Skimpole went quietly. They entered the dormitory, and Tom Merry closed the door.
 "Now then, we've no time to waste," he said. "There's the other dummy to deal with yet. Skimmy, you've got to give your word not to leave this dormitory again to-night."

"I shall do nothing of the sort."
 "Either that, or we'll tie you to your bed with a cord—you can take your choice."
 "You have no right to interfere with me—"
 "Everybody has a right to interfere with a lunatic," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "We're saving you from a flogging."

"I am willing to risk the flogging."
 "'Nuff said! Are you going to promise?"
 "Certainly not. I am going to leave the dormitory, but as a sincere Determinist it would be impossible for me to break a promise. Therefore I shall not promise."
 "Very well! Get out the rope, Lowther!"
 "Here you are!"
 "Bump him on his bed!"
 "I protest! Ow!"

Skimpole gasped as he was bumped on his bed. With a few turns of the rope Tom Merry secured his ankles to one end and his wrists to the other. Skimpole resisted in vain.

"There," said Tom Merry, "that's a workmanlike job, kids. He won't get away from that in a hurry."

"I insist upon being set free immediately."
 "No objection to that," said Tom Merry considerably. "You can insist as long as you like. We are going to look after the other ass!"

"Tom Merry! Manners! Lowther! Beasts!"
 The Terrible Three were gone, and the closing door cut off the rest of Skimpole's remark.

Tom Merry chuckled.
 "One duffer disposed of," he remarked. "They ought to be awfully grateful to us for the trouble we're taking, but it's a thankless world."

"Well, Skimmy didn't seem grateful, but D'Arcy may pan out better," remarked Lowther.

"I'm afraid it's more likely to lead to his dropping our acquaintance. Still, we must do our duty like Britons, whatever the consequences," said Tom Merry heroically.

The Terrible Three made their way cautiously towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's study.

"S-sh!" said Tom Merry, as they approached it. "I can see a light."

There was a glimmering light under the door of Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus had gone there to fetch a hat, and he had been time enough about it. No doubt he was giving it a good brush, and making some other preparations for the journey.

Tom Merry opened the study door without ceremony. He turned the handle quietly, and D'Arcy, who had his back to the door, heard nothing, and did not turn his head.

The Terrible Three looked in, and grinned.
 Arthur Augustus was putting on a silk hat before the glass, and on the floor lay a bag crammed with articles of attire—shirts and collars and neckties being visible through the opening. The bag was not yet fastened.

"I suppose I can't cawwy an extwa hat," murmured D'Arcy. "I weally ought to have one in case of accidents, but I suppose it is imposs. It is wathah wotten. I—Bai Jove!"

He caught sight of the grinning juniors in the glass, and turned round with a start to stare at the Terrible Three.

"Bai Jove! You—you wottahs!"
 "Good-evening!" said Tom Merry blandly.
 "Good-evenin', deah boy!" said D'Arcy suspiciously. "I am surprised to see you! What are you doin' out of bed at this time of the beastly night?"

"We have come to see you home," said Monty Lowther.

"Eh?"
 "We have come to see you home," said Manners.
 "I pwesume you are jokin'! What have you come here for, Tom Mewwy?"

"We have come to see you home," said Tom Merry.
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Are you ready?"
 "Weady for what?"

"To be seen home. We're going to walk with you back to the Fourth Form dormitory."

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"I shall uttably wefuse to walk with you back to the Fourth Form dormitowwy!"

"Now, Gussy, don't put us to the trouble of carrying you."

"I should absolutely wefuse to be cawwied!"
 "Don't be unreasonable. If you won't walk and won't be carried, how are you to get back to the dormitory?"

"I am not goin' back to the dormitowwy at all."
 "Your mistake; you are!"

"I uttably wefuse!"
 "We've got to get back to bed ourselves, Gussy. Are you coming?"

"No, I am not!"
 "Collar him, then!"



While Thompson collared Skimpole, Mr. Fish took hold of Arthur's huge knee, and a huge hand rose and fell. "Ow! You beastly werry & Co. came up!"

D'Arcy retreated as the Terrible Three advanced.
 "Tom Mewwy, Mannahs, Lowthah, I wefuse to return to the dormitowwy! I wefuse to be intahfeahd with! As a mattah of fact, I have an appointment to keep."
 "Oh, that's all right! Skimmy's gone to bed!"

"Wats!"
 "Fact! We've taken him there, and tied him down with a cord," said Tom Merry, laughing. "He won't be out again to-night. Come along!"

"I wefuse to come along! It is a question of dig with me now, and I wegard you as intahfeahwin' beasts! Pway wetah fwom my quartahs!"

"Collar him!"

Arthur Augustus was promptly collared. He resisted gamely, but his resistance did not count for much against the Terrible Three. He was pinioned and marched, protesting, out of the study.

"You uttah wottahs!" he gasped. "I will give each of you a feahful thwashin' to-mowwow! I wegard you as uttah beasts!"

"Yank him along!"

"I wefuse to be huwwied!"

"Tread on his toes, Lowther!"

"Certainly!"

"If you twead on my beastlay toes, Lowthah, I shall—
Ow-owo-w!"



Augustus. The unfortunate swell of St. Jim's was twisted across a
ah! Help! Wescue! There was a trampling of feet and Tom
unning hard.

"Ha, ha, ha! Move along, then!"

The swell of St. Jim's moved along. There was no help for it, and he was marched back to the Fourth Form dormitory, and marched in. Silence and slumber reigned in the long, lofty room. Tom Merry knew his way to Blake's bed, and to that bed Arthur Augustus was marched.

"Now then, all togethher!"

"Stop, you wottahs! Ow! Gewwooh! Oh!"

"Go!"

And D'Arcy went with a swing from three pairs of powerful arms which landed him plump upon Blake's legs,

sprawling across the bed on his back in a fashion extremely undignified for the elegant swell of the School House.

There was a gasp from D'Arcy, and a startled yell from Jack Blake.

"Yarwooch!"

"Oh! Wh-wh-what's that?"

CHAPTER 9.

Gussy Gets a Letter.

JACK BLAKE jumped, as well he might. He started up in bed, and clawed wildly at the heavy object sprawling across his feet. There was a wail from Arthur Augustus as a hand gripped his hair, and another dug in his ribs.

"Ow! Leggo! You uttah ass, it's I!"

"Why—what—Gussy!"

"Pway welease my hair! You are hurtin' me, as well as disawwvangin' it!"

"You shrieking ass! What on earth do you mean by sprawling across my bed in the middle of the night?" demanded Blake. "Have you been walking in your sleep?"

"Certainly not! I—"

"Then you are off your rocker, I suppose!"

"I am not off my wockah!"

"Then what do you mean by it?" exclaimed Blake, jerking D'Arcy by the hair to help him to a quick answer.

"What the dickens do you mean by it—eh?"

"I wefuse—"

"Explain yourself, ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three, unable to contain themselves any longer.

Jack Blake gave another jump, and peered round in the gloom.

"Oh, so you're there!" he exclaimed. "I'd know Lowther's hee-haw anywhere. And that is Manners' cackle, too, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What little game are you playing, asses? If you don't get off my bed, D'Arcy, I shall kick out—I warn you!"

"How can I get off your beastlay bed when you've got hold of my beastlay hair?" exclaimed the exasperated swell of the School House.

"By Jove, I never thought of that, you know," said Blake, in imitation of one of D'Arcy's frequent remarks; and he let go.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Mr. Blake, please."

"You uttah ass!"

"Look here, Tom Merry, what's the little game? What are you Shell-fish doing in a respectable dormitory, anyway?"

"We came to bring Gussy home."

"Eh? Has Gussy been out?" exclaimed Blake, in amazement.

"We were on the watch, you see, while somebody else was snoring," explained Lowther.

"Well, of course, I never suspected the young ass would get out in the middle of the confounded night!"

"I wefuse to be alluded to as a young ass! I—"

"Well, we thought differently," chuckled Tom Merry. "We've taken Skimpole into our dorm, and tied him up like a turkey, and you'd better do the same with this lunatic."

"I wefuse to be called a lunatic, and I uttably and absolutely decline to be tied up like a beastlay turkey!"

"We ran him down in Study No. 6," said Tom Merry. "He was making a collection of white shirts and silk hats all ready for an expedition—"

"I was bwushin' my toppah—"

"And we brought him back—"

"I shall give you a feahful thwashin' to-mowwow for your feahful cheek."

"Well, you needn't have bumped him on my feet," grumbled Blake. "Still, under the circumstances, I'm glad you brought him back. We'll fasten him to the bedpost for the rest of the night."

"Weally, Blake—"

"We will, you young ass, unless you give your word of honour not to leave the dorm again till rising-bell."

"Undah the circs, as my fwiend Skimpole cannot come out, I have no weal objection to givin' my word," said D'Arcy.

"Honest Injun, mind."

"Weally, Blake, I don't think you have ever known me to depart frowm my word," said D'Arcy, with great dignity.

"Get into bed, ass!"

"I wefuse—"

"Then you stay out of it. Good-night, you Shell-fish!"

"Night-bye, little boys!"

"Who are you calling little boys, you—"

But the dormitory door closed.

The Terrible Three returned to the Shell dormitory in high good humour with themselves. The voice of Skimpole was heard as they entered.

"Tom Merry! Is that you?"

"I believe so," said Tom Merry cheerfully, as he threw off his clothes.

"Please loosen these cords. I am willing to give my word as a sincere Determinist not to leave the dorm again to-night."

"Oh, very well. He gives his word as a sincere dummy, chaps, so I suppose we can set him loose."

"I suppose so," yawned Manners.

So Skimpole was released, and he returned to bed, in a state of suppressed indignation at having his personal liberty interfered with by the tyrannical chums of the Shell.

But he was sleepy, and he was soon in the arms of Morpheus, and dreaming that he was plunging into unknown depths in a diving-dress in the work of salving his microscope.

The Terrible Three slept soundly till rising-bell, and would willingly have slept longer.

There were five juniors who looked somewhat "blinky" about the eyes at breakfast in the School House. Needless to say, they were the two would-be breakers of bounds, and the chums of the Shell. But the latter had lost their sleep in a good cause, and they were satisfied. And in the morning began again the arduous task of watching Skimpole and D'Arcy.

The Terrible Three undertook to watch Skimpole, while Arthur Augustus was under the fatherly eye of the chums of Study No. 6.

It happened to be a Wednesday, and a half-holiday. D'Arcy was wanted in the afternoon for the first football practice of the season, in which, of course, Tom Merry & Co. were to figure.

"Blessed if I know how we're going to keep an eye on them this afternoon, Merry," Blake remarked. "We shall all be too busy!"

"Well, Gussy will be playing!"

Blake looked a little dubious.

"Well, it's just like him to cut the practice, for the sake of buzzing off on this idiotic expedition, whatever it is."

"If he cuts the footer, the footer will jolly well cut him. I can tell you," said Tom Merry, with all the warmth of a junior football captain.

"Yes; but even if we keep hold of Gussy, there's Skimmy. But I suppose it's no good watching him. It doesn't matter so much if he makes a break."

"Well, we ought to keep him within bounds."

"I don't see how we're to do it unless we shut both of them in the wood-shed or the old tower, and lock them in."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, we'll see. It's rather a bore, I know, but we can't let them go after all the trouble we've taken."

"Hallo, Blake," said Fatty Wynn of the New House, strolling up in the quadrangle. "I've had your message from Figgins."

"My message from Figgins?" said Blake.

"Yes. He says you've asked me to tea this afternoon."

"Oh, yes, of course," said Blake, grinning. "I hope you will be able to come, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn smiled expansively.

"Certainly, Blake. I shall be very pleased. Do you know, I have come home from the voyage on the Condor feeling fearfully hungry. My appetite has improved."

"It didn't need it," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, I don't know. You fellows always make jokes on that subject, but I never did really eat much," said Fatty Wynn. "I get so jolly hungry in this September weather, though, and that voyage has given a sort of edge to my appetite. What time shall I come to tea, Blake?"

"Oh, half-past six!"

"Good! Then I'll have tea in Hall before I come, and I'll ask Figgy to leave our study tea till half-past seven. I can manage the three."

"Hadh't you better have a feed at the school shop on your way over?" asked Tom Merry sarcastically. "You may feel faint, you know."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Some sandwiches in your pocket, though, would sustain you—"

"Wish I had some now," said Fatty Wynn. "I've had hardly any breakfast, the usual House grub, you know, and a few little things I took in myself—some sausages and ham and tongue, and half a cold chicken, and some cakes and pastries and half a jam roll, and one or two trifles."

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Have you any toffee about you? It's time for chapel, and I could eat a little toffee in chapel."

"I don't hold with eating toffee in chapel," said Tom Merry solemnly. "Besides, I haven't any toffee!"

"Well, you can expect me at half-past six, Blake," said Fatty Wynn, and he strolled away.

Tom Merry looked at Blake inquiringly.

"I say, you've taken a job on," he remarked. "You'd better get the grub in by the hundredweight before tea-time."

Blake chuckled.

"It's a little joke," he exclaimed. "I've got a ripping feed in the study cupboard, as far as that goes; but the idea is to rot Fatty. You heard how Reilly served Gussy. Made him feed on a dry crust and warm water."

"Yes," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Of course, it was like his cheek to jape a member of our study, and we jolly well bumped him for it," said Blake.

"Still, it was a good wheeze. That's what we're going to work off on Fatty Wynn. We're going to have him in to tea, and shove some stale rolls on the table and a jug of cold water. It will be the shriekingest joke of the season to see Fatty's face."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"I think it will be funny," grinned Blake. "We shall all have tea before he arrives, so the rolls and water will do for us. We'll tell him we're short of grub—so we shall be after tea. See? Hallo, there's chapel bell."

The juniors were hurrying in for morning prayers.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went in with the Fourth Form, and as he was going in, Skimpole brushed against him, and slipped a paper into his hand.

Arthur Augustus understood, and he nodded with a smile. It was a secret communication which had escaped the keen eyes of the shadowers.

D'Arcy felt that the eyes of Study No. 6 wandered towards him every now and then, and he did not venture to open Skimpole's note till he was in the class-room, when he did so under cover of his Latin Grammar.

"Dear D'Arcy," he read—"It is exceedingly difficult to elude the impertinent vigilance of the fellows who have imposed upon themselves the task of preventing us from effecting our purpose. I think, however, that it may be managed in this way. When you leave the class-room for the morning recess, go straight to the bike-shed and take out your machine. I will do the same with Tom Merry's machine, which just suits me. Then we can make a dash for it. We shall very probably escape unnoticed, but, in any case, we can baffle pursuit. We can leave the machines at the station, and catch the 11.50 express for Victoria, then go to Liverpool Street to catch the train for Yarmouth. "H. S."

Whenever Skimpole wrote a letter it read half like a lecture and half like a detective story. But the meaning was quite clear in this case. The plan seemed a good one; and Arthur Augustus smiled at the thought of Blake's look when he read that the birds had flown.

Jack Blake happened to look up and he caught that smile on D'Arcy's face and saw him thrust the paper into the back of his Latin Grammar and put the latter away in his desk. He did not attach much importance to it at the time, the thought crossing his mind that D'Arcy was sketching out some comic contribution for the next number of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

When the boys left the class-rooms for the recess at eleven o'clock, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy strode away with a careless air towards the gymnasium. Blake saw him go, and concluded that he was safe there. But the astute swell of the School House entered the gym by one door only to leave it by another, and then walked quickly to the bicycle-shed. Skimpole was already there.

CHAPTER 10.

Off at Last!

SKIMPOLE had taken Tom Merry's bicycle off the stand, and was unfastening the head-lock when D'Arcy entered.

The School House swell looked at him curiously.

"Bai Jove, Skimpole, that's wathah a liberty to take with a fellow's bike," he remarked.

"Not at all," said Skimpole airily. "I was prevented from leaving the school by Tom Merry, and he must naturally expect to take the consequences. I can't use my own bicycle, as it is punctured in both tyres; but Tom Merry is welcome to use it if he mend's the punctures. Are you ready?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Where's your cap?"

"My cap? Hangin' on the peg on the wack, I believe."

"You don't mean to say that you're coming out on a bicycle in a silk hat?"

"I am afraid that I have no alternative in the mattah. You see, we have a long twain journey before us, and I must have a toppah. We might meet somebody we know, you know. I couldn't wide in a cap and cawvy a toppah in my hand, that would look wathah widiculous; and, besides, it would waise suspish that we were goin' to bolt."

"But—"

"It's all wight, don't waste time. My machine is quite weady."

"We'll go separately," said Skimpole. "We'll pretend to be riding round the quad, and all of a sudden when I am near the gates I'll scorch off. You follow."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Skimpole wheeled Tom Merry's bicycle out of the building and mounted it. He was not a good rider, but he could manage a machine; and the bicycle was a very fine one, a present from Tom Merry's loving governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. Skimpole rode boldly down the path. It happened that the chums of the Shell were taking their sprint exercise just then, and they had momentarily lost sight of Skimpole.

The Determinist of St. Jim's was unwatched, and he did not neglect the opportunity. A minute more and he was on the road to Rylcombe. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed him, Blake still under the happy impression that the swell of the School House was still in the gymnasium.

Figgins & Co. were lounging near the gates and they looked at D'Arcy as he passed them, with three huge grins.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "I say, Gussy—"

"Sowwy, I haven't time to stop, deah boys."

"Do you usually take your spins in a silk hat?"

But Arthur Augustus did not reply. He pedalled on and overtook Skimpole, and then they both put on speed and vanished in a cloud of dust from the astonished gaze of the New House chums.

"What on earth's up?" exclaimed Figgins. "They're not allowed outside gates now."

"Some new wheeze," said Fatty Wynn.

"They may have a pass to go down to the village," Kerr remarked.

Figgins shook his head.

"There's something on, I imagine."

Little caring what comments were passed upon his hurried departure, Arthur Augustus scorched on, fagging the weedy Skimpole to keep up with him.

"Bai Jove, we won't go to Wylcombe at all!" said D'Arcy. "We may as well wide stwaight to Wayland Junction, deah boy, and catch the twain there. That will put them off the twack if they follow us."

"Certainly, D'Arcy. But—but please don't ride quite so fast!" gasped Skimpole. "I—I am not a very rapid cyclist."

"There's no time to lose, deah boy."

"No; but please don't ride quite so fast. I—I am not an athlete. I have developed my vast brain at the expense of my body to some extent."

"Yaas, you're wight there, Skimmay." And the swell of St. Jim's slowed down. "Turn to the wight for Wayland, deah boy."

The adventurers took the turning for the market town where the London expresses stopped, and reached it in half an hour. Arthur Augustus took the tickets for London, and they had to wait ten minutes for the train. They waited on tenterhooks, fearing the appearance of their over-obliging friends every moment; but neither Tom Merry nor Blake appeared.

D'Arcy put the machines up at the station, and the train came roaring in at last.

"Here it is!" exclaimed Skimpole, with a gasp of relief. "Safe now!"

"Yaas, wathah! They will nevah guess where we are gone."

"Oh, no! I suppose you destroyed that note I sent you," said Skimpole, as he entered a third-class carriage.

D'Arcy had taken third tickets, the difference on the fare being considerable, and many expenses lying ahead of them.

"Bai Jove! No, I didn't, deah boy."

Skimpole looked annoyed.

"Really, D'Arcy, suppose it were found—"

"That's all wight. I left it inside my Latin Grammah in my desk in the class-woom. It's imposs for anybody to find it there."

"Good! Nobody is likely to look into your Latin Grammah. Still, it would have been safer to destroy it. However, that cannot be helped now. Ah, we are starting!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The train jerked and puffed, and steamed out of the station. D'Arcy looked out of the window, but there was no sign of pursuers in the station. The express swept on, and D'Arcy settled back in his seat.

"These are wotten uncomfy seats," he remarked. "Nevah mind; I suppose a fellow ought to be always weady to wuff it. We shall be at Victoria in fifty minutes, deah boy, according to the time-table."

"And it will take over two hours to get to Yarmouth," said Skimpole. "It's a long journey, but it is worth it."

"Weally, upon wefflection, it hardly seems worth while for the sake of a wotten microscope."

"That microscope will enable me to decide whether a terrible crime has been committed, and whether a fearful criminal is to be brought to justice, D'Arcy."

"Vewy good!"

"We shall arrive at the scene of the wreck too late to take advantage of the dinner-hour," Skimpole remarked. "But there is a recess for tea, I believe, among the people who work, and so we shall find an opportunity."

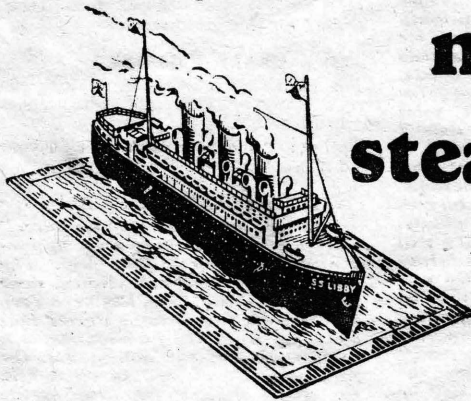
"Bai Jove! I'd forgotten to bwing a book with me, and I have nothin' to wead in the twain," said Arthur Augustus.

"That does not matter. I have with me my notes for my great book on Determinism, and I shall be very pleased to read you a few extracts."

"Oh, pway don't twouble."

(Continued on page 19.)

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HALLO, chums! I've got another great story of Tom Merry & Co. in store for you next week, so make sure of your copy, by ordering it early. If you miss

"DETECTIVES OF ST. JIM'S"

you will be missing one of Martin Clifford's best stories. Who the detectives are, and what they are "detecting," I'm leaving you to discover for yourselves next Wednesday. You'll enjoy this yarn all the more, then. Watch out for further thrilling chapters of

"THE WORLD WRECKERS!"

and another tonic laugh, for which Potts the Office Boy is responsible. Now for some news pars.

"HOME-MADE" ISLANDS!

Great minds have been giving a deal of thought to the problem of refuelling planes engaged on trans-ocean work, and out of it all emerges the possibility of dotting the mighty oceans with islands made of ice in the near future. These islands will "carry" hangars, repair sheds, living quarters—everything the ocean-flying passenger and pilot requires. How is it to be done? This way: A German scientist, a Dr. Gerke, proposes to lay a network of horizontal pipes to the sea bottom. Two or three ships standing by will be fitted with refrigerating plants. Through the network of pipes will be pumped a freezing mixture and gradually an island of ice will take form. On the island will be installed a permanent refrigerator plant so that in the most temperate atmosphere the "home-made" island will not melt. Once the "island" had been made it will be towed to deep water and anchored, and Dr. Gerke declares that it will be as safe as any natural island of rock. It's a great idea, and if it is adopted flying the Atlantic, for instance, will soon lose all its fears.

THE DIVING-BELL!

Californian sightseers are making the most of a "stunt" which has just come into being. It consists of a three-ton steel cage with room for four passengers inside it which is lowered into the depths of the ocean. Through special portholes the passengers can get a first-hand view of life on the ocean bed, without risk. The operator, who makes the journey with them, can unload the 1,500 pound of steel ballast at any moment of emergency, and the bell will immediately shoot to the surface. In any case sufficient oxygen is

stored in this airtight compartment to keep the four passengers alive for three days. Sturdy steel legs stand out in triangular pattern from the bottom of this diving-bell, thus enabling it to remain steady when it touches the ocean bed. How long does it take the bell to reach a depth of one hundred feet?—just about a minute. What if the glass portholes somehow got smashed? Don't worry. Each porthole is fitted with a special watertight "flap." If the glass should break the "flap" automatically jams into place and stops a big leak. Great stunt, isn't it!

OUR COMPANION PAPERS!

I refer to "Modern Boy," "Magnet," and "Ranger." These three famous boys' books are shortly starting a mammoth Free Gift Scheme. Every reader of the GEM is recommended to get a copy of one or the other of these fine papers and learn for himself the full details of the Record-breaking Free Scheme they are planning. Nothing like it has ever been offered to boys before, and it would be a rare pity for Gemites to miss their "share" in this great scheme.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Son to father, who is fed up with the term's report): "This embrocation makes my hands smart."

Father: "Well, try some of it on your head!"

FIFTY POUNDS REWARD!

Are you any good at "divining" ghosts? If so, there's an opportunity of picking up fifty quid. The caretaker of Lilleshall Abbey, near Newport, Shropshire, has been very troubled by the strange noises that come up from the foundations of a certain part of the abbey, and the fifty pounds reward is offered to the ghost diviner who can locate this supernatural visitor and drive it away. Some time ago a secret passage underneath the abbey was found, and some people seem to think that the weird, ghostly noises, ranging from groans to reports like thunder, are due to the existence of another secret passage and currents of air playing along it. Who knows?

DOGS IN ARMOUR!

The shepherds of Tibet have got so fed up with the stealthy raids of the local leopards on the handsome mastiffs that act as sheep dogs that they have hit on the idea of arming the dogs with a special collar of stout leather studded with long steel spikes. In fair fight the shepherds would back their mastiffs against the leopards every time, but your wily leopard has a nasty habit of attacking from behind.

Once its teeth find a hold in the loose flesh at the back of the dog's neck it is all UP with the dog. But the leopard has got a heap to think about now that the special "armoured collar" has come into being. Instead of a mouthful of flesh all he will get now is a mouthful of sharpened spikes should he be tempted to spring on his quarry from behind. And while he is lying low and turning over this new problem the sheep are safe—which, with the safety of the valuable sheep dog, is the main thing.

THE HUMAN BOMB!

The aeroplane is travelling four miles above the earth. Suddenly from out of a trap in the fuselage emerges a giant projectile shaped like a torpedo bomb. And inside that metal casing is a man, diving head-first to terra firma! Is he mad, you ask? No, he's quite sane—merely testing a theory in practical fashion. Watch him as he hurtles earthwards. At five thousand feet above the ground you will see something happen to that giant "bomb." The nose-cap will break loose, and you will hold your breath in horror as you see a man shoot out into space. But wait a moment longer and you will observe a parachute flutter out bravely above the falling human, check his downward rush to destruction and eventually land him safely. This is only the first step towards building a device to land passengers from high travelling aeroplanes without the plane having to waste time in landing. We wonder how the passengers will take to it? And supposing, for instance, the chap inside the projectile forgot his instruction to pull a certain lever which releases the nose-cap and brings the parachute into operation?

ANNUALS FOR ALL!

This is a month to which most of you look forward eagerly, for it sees a new crop of fascinating annuals appearing on all the bookstalls. This year's Annuals are better than ever. Gemites are recommended to the following list, which covers a wide range of taste. The "Holiday Annual," price 6s.; "Modern Boy Annual," price 6s.; "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories," price 2s. 6d.; "The New Zoo Annual," price 6s.; and "The Modern Boy's Book of Motors, Ships, and Engines," price 7s. 6d. Each of the above books offers really good value for money. If you would care to purchase any of them through a Christmas club ask your newsagent about it. He'll be pleased to give you full particulars.

THE TURTLES ARE RACING!

There's been an invasion of turtles in Hollywood recently—15,000 of these sea reptiles, in fact, have taken up quarters there. They had no choice in the matter, however, for as they basked in their own climes they certainly had no thoughts of capture or of entering for the Hollywood Turtle Stakes. Yet out of that 15,000, special teams will be selected, and on a certain date they will race round a set course cheered on by thousands of spectators who have "backed their fancy." To identify the turtles their shell backs will be coated with white enamel in the centre of which will stand out clearly their identification number painted in black. Well!

YOUR EDITOR.

SKIMPOLE, THE DEEP SEA DIVER!

(Continued from page 17.)

"No trouble at all," said the obliging Skimpole; "in fact, I shall be only too pleased."

"Oh, wing off, Skimmay."

"You see, Determinism is—"

"Bai Jove! If you don't wing off I'll get out at the first stoppin'-place and return to St. Jim's," said D'Arcy. "I don't mind bweakin' the wules of the coll to oblige a fellow, but when he wants to boah me all the way to Victowia, the posish becomes intolewable."

"Oh, very well," said Skimpole, with the patience of the true propagandist who knew how to bide his time.

"Very well; I only meant to explain that I—"

"Oh, wing off, deah boy—pway wing off!"

"Very good. But to pass the time I shall be very pleased to read you some extracts from the hundred and seventy-fourth chapter of my book."

"Don't bothah!"

"It will be a real pleasure to me. I should like to have your opinion upon that chapter, too. It deals with—"

Skimpole broke off suddenly. "What are you getting up for, D'Arcy?"

"Only just to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Really, D'Arcy—keep off, please! I—I will not read you any of the extracts if you do not wish— Really, D'Arcy!"

"Then shut up!" said the swell of the School House. "Mind, anothat word and I shall punch your silly head and change cawwiages at the next stop!"

"Oh, very well. If you prefer to remain in the dark depths of dense ignorance."

"Wing off!"

And Skimpole rang off at last, and the journey was pursued in silence till the train dashed into the great station at Victoria and the juniors took a taxi to Liverpool Street to catch the Yarmouth express.

CHAPTER 11.

Tom Merry and Co. on the Trail!

"**W**HERE'S Gussy?"

"Haven't seen him."

"He went into the gym," said Blake, looking worried. "He's not there now. He can't have bolted, surely? I say, Tom Merry, have you seen Gussy?"

"No. Have you seen Skimpole?"

"No. You don't mean to say he's missing, too?"

"Well, we can't see him anywhere."

"My only hat! Then they've done it!"

The chums looked at one another in dismay. After all their care, a few minutes of negligence had undone everything. The birds were flown!

"Well," said Blake, "I feel like kicking somebody. I suppose I had better kick Tom Merry."

"I suppose you'd better not," said Tom Merry. "Why couldn't you keep your eyes open?"

"Why couldn't you keep yours open?"

"Well, we only let the silly ass out of our sight for a minute."

"I thought Gussy was in the gym. He went in there."

"Well, they've bolted," said Digby, "and there isn't much chance of finding out where they've gone. There's the ball!"

"Hallo, Figgins!" exclaimed Blake, as the Fourth crowded towards their class-room for the resumption of morning lessons. "I suppose you haven't seen Gussy?"

Figgins chuckled.

"Yes, I have, rather," he replied. "Hasn't he come in?"

"No. Did you see him go out?"

"Yes; he was on his jigger, and he had a silk hat on. Skimpole was with him."

"And he was on a bike?"

"Yes."

"They're gone," said Herries, "There will be a row, I expect."

Herries' expectation was fulfilled.

When Mr. Lathom glanced over the Fourth Form he noted the absence of Arthur Augustus and inquired after him. No one volunteered any information, and D'Arcy was marked down as absent, and Mr. Lathom's expression showed that things would be warm for the swell of the School House when he appeared again.

In the Shell Mr. Linton was equally solicitous about Skimpole.

"Does anyone know where Skimpole is?" he asked.

No one knew.

"Very well. I shall have to impress upon Skimpole that he cannot miss lessons with impunity," said Mr. Linton, with a close tightening of the lips.

"Something warm for Skimmay when he comes back, Tom," Monty Lowther whispered.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Well, I must say it serves him right. We did our best to save the silly ass, but he gave us the slip."

When morning lessons were over the Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 met to discuss the matter. Skimpole and D'Arcy were still missing, and the two Form masters were looking very angry about it.

It was plain, of course, that the two juniors had gone off on some excursion without asking permission.

"It's a half-holiday to-day," Tom Merry remarked. "It wouldn't have been so serious if the bounders had broken bounds this afternoon. But to cut morning lessons—"

"It will mean a row, of course."

"The worst of it is that they must be gone a long way, because they intended, as we know, to catch a train at Wayland last night. They may stay away two or three days, perhaps."

Blake looked worried.

"It would be just like them. That would mean a flogging, if not worse. Fellows have been expelled for as much as that."

"If we only knew where the rotters were gone," growled

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See Our Companion Papers:—

The "RANGER" The "MAGNET" and "MODERN BOY."

Digby, "we might cut the footer practice this afternoon and follow on. But—"

"But we don't!"

Jack Blake gave a sudden start.

"My hat!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"Why, it's just struck me—how did they arrange to slip off together to-day when we've been watching them so closely? I've hit it!"

"Hit what?"

"Gussy was reading a paper and grinning over it in the class-room this morning. I thought at the time it was some piffle he was concocting for the 'Weekly,' but now it looks to me as if it were—"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tom Merry, catching Blake's meaning at once. "It's very likely. Skimpole may have sent him a note!"

"It would be easy to slip it to him without our noticing, and then—"

"Well, it's too late now," said Monty Lowther. "It doesn't matter much how they arranged it—they've done it, and gone!"

"Wait a bit! I saw Gussy shove that paper into his Latin Grammar, and he put that in his desk. Now I come to think of it, he was grinning a great deal over it, and, of course, it was something up against us. We might have guessed it if—"

"If you had had the sense," suggested Lowther.

"Oh, rats! If the paper's still there we may learn something from it, anyway. I'll cut off and see."

Blake hurried into the empty class-room. It did not take him long to bang the Latin Grammar on the desk so that any paper inside could not fail to fall out. The note from Skimpole fluttered to the floor.

Blake picked it up with a crow of triumph. He rejoined the group of juniors with the note in his hand.

"Got it?" asked Digby.

"Here it is."

"What does it say?"

"I—I suppose we're justified in reading it under the circumstances," said Blake. "It's for Gussy's own sake, you know."

"Of course we are! Read it out!"

"Very well."

Blake read the note aloud.

Tom Merry gave a whoop.

"The young villain! My bicycle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My jigger! The young brigand!"

"Listen to the finish," said Blake. "He says: 'Catch the train for Yarmouth!'"

"My hat! What in the name of wonder does he want to go to Yarmouth for?"

"I think that's pretty clear," said Lowther, after a moment's thought.

All eyes were turned upon him at once.

"Well, if it's pretty clear, you'd better explain!" said Blake. "Blessed if I can see what they should want to bolt off to Yarmouth for."

"It's in Norfolk—"

"I don't want you to teach me geography, Monty Lowther. What I want to know is—"

"Dry up a minute. Yarmouth is in Norfolk, and not far from the spot where the Condor was wrecked."

"My hat!"

"I'll wager that's it," said Monty Lowther confidently. "They've gone to the wreck."

The juniors looked at one another. Now that Lowther pointed it out, it seemed pretty certain. The fugitives could have no other conceivable motive for making this sudden break into a distant county. Where the steamer had been run aground she still lay, and the divers were at work upon her. For some reason Skimpole had wanted to revisit the wreck, and had taken D'Arcy with him upon this hare-brained expedition.

"I suppose that's it," said Tom Merry. "Why, it will take them a fearful long time to get there, and if they're looking for anything—"

"Now I remember," said Manners. "Skimpole was saying something yesterday about having lost a microscope."

"He lent me a microscope a few days ago," said Lowther. "I forgot to return it to him, and it's in the study now."

"It would be just like Skimmy to forget that, and to think it was on the wreck, and go there to look for it," grinned Blake.

"I say, we ought to tell Mr. Railton, I think," said Tom Merry. "The young asses may be away for days. Either that, or we must go and fetch them back."

"We'll fetch them back," said Dig.

"What about the fare? I don't know how much it is, but it must be pretty heavy."

Blake whistled.

"It won't be possible for us all to go, that's certain."

he remarked. "I shall have to go, and you'd better come, Merry."

"Two will be enough," said Tom Merry. "If we have a whip round, we shan't raise more than enough cash to pay our expenses."

"That's very likely."

"Oh, rats!" said Digby warmly. "I must come, of course!" "Right-ho!" said Herries. "And I don't see how I can stay behind. Suppose you get into mischief?"

"What about the cash?"

"We can borrow it. We'll make Gussy pay it all back," said Digby, struck by a brilliant idea. "We'll make out a bill for him to pay, see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a ripping idea," said Tom Merry, laughing. "He shall pay out-of-pocket expenses, and we'll put in the time for nothing. We should be quite within our rights to charge for our time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, then!" said Blake briskly. "Our credit is good enough, and we can borrow the tin. It will be a lesson for Gussy. The footer will have to go for this afternoon, and we can catch the next train from Wayland."

And they did.

CHAPTER 12.

Skimpole the Diver!

"BAI JOVE, there's the Condor!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who uttered the exclamation.

The two explorers from St. Jim's had arrived. They had left the train at Yarmouth, and taken a local for the village by the headland where the wreck of the steamer lay.

From the village was a walk of a quarter of a mile to the shore, and, coming round the path by the headland, the sea had suddenly burst upon the view of the juniors from St. Jim's.

When the billows of the North Sea broke upon the long stretch of sand, the funnel of the steamer could be seen above the creaming water.

The steamer, when disabled by the explosion in the lower hold, had been run ashore by the captain, and all her passengers and most of their personal effects had been saved. But the tide had shifted the hull into deeper water, and now only her funnel was showing at low water. The great mass of the steamer was hidden below the blue waves.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "It makes you feel wathah wotten, you know, to see her undah the watah like that. We had some mewwy times on board, Skimmy!"

"Yes, you're right," said Skimpole, "though things might have been better. If you fellows had backed me up we could have set aside the officers, and run the ship ourselves."

"Oh, wats! Don't begin that again. The ship might be sailin' now, if you hadn't blown a hole in her timbaws with your wotten expewiments."

"That is quite a mistake. The explosion was not due to my experiment in the lower hold. Besides, the ship could not be sailing now, as she is a steamer, and is propelled by—"

"Let's get down to the weck," suggested Arthur Augustus. "There seems to be no one about, and now's the opportunity, deah boy!"

"Come along, then. The place certainly has an aspect of being deserted. You can see that they have been at work recently. It is in a case like this that you find my observations of manners and customs most useful. It is undoubtedly the time now when the divers have retired for rest and refreshment, which they call 'knocking-off for tea.'"

"Then we have awwived just at the wight time."

"Apparently, yes."

The two juniors made their way down to the beach.

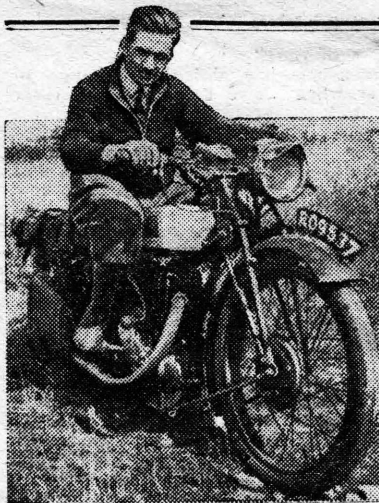
The men engaged in the salvage work were doubtless having their tea in the shelter of some big rock near at hand, out of the blaze of the sun.

That the work had been proceeding actively was shown by the piles of various kinds of property on the beach, above the reach of high water.

The work of clearing out the steamer was first being effected, and that, to judge by the piles on the shore, was almost completed. There was a sort of staging rigged up, which projected out in deep water, right up to where the ship was lying. This was evidently used for diving, but was now deserted.

The divers had left their apparatus just where they had used it last, never dreaming that there was any chance of its being interfered with.

Skimpole looked cautiously up and down the shore. On the headland could be seen part of the walls of Headland School, where the boys of St. Jim's had spent the night after the wreck the previous week. But there was no one in



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"Yarooop!" A wild and terrified yell broke from Mr. Ratcliff as the dog came leaping out of the dusk. The New House master turned and bolted, his gown flying in the wind. Towser, encouraged by his flight, darted after him. "My word!" muttered Digby.

sight. The two boys climbed on to the staging, and walked along to the end, where the diving apparatus was lying.

"This is excellent!" exclaimed Skimpole. "Don't make a row, D'Arcy!"

"I'm not makin' a wov!"

"I mean, we must be cautious, as the salvage men are undoubtedly near at hand, behind some of those rocks, and they would probably interfere with us if they saw us taking a diving-dress. You see, Determinism has not permeated their stupid heads, and—"

"Are you goin' to get into a divin'-dweess?"

"Certainly! Let us get to work, and not waste time in talk. It is a great mistake to stand talking when there is something to be done. In the hundred and eighty-fourth chapter of my book I point out the mischief that accrues from such thoughtlessness. Want of punctuality and promptness, and—"

"Are you evah goin' to leave off talkin', Skimpole?"

"I was pointing out that it is very foolish to waste time in talk—"

"What are you doin' at the pwesent moment, ass?"

"Pointing out to you that it is foolish to—"

"Oh, pway let's get to work!"

"Certainly! I am waiting for you. Lend a hand. You see, these boots are weighted with lead to make the diver sink to the bottom, to overcome the resistance of the water. This helmet is weighted, too, and would be jolly heavy to walk in, but under the water—"

"Undah the watah it's all wight. I know as much about it as you, Skimmy, so pway get to business."

"You observe this tube attached to the helmet," said Skimpole, unheeding. "Through this air is pumped to the diver by means of this hand-pump. If the supply of air should fail, the diver would undoubtedly be asphyxiated."

"He would be whatiated?"

"Asphyxiated! Die of suffocation, you know."

"Then why can't you say so? Or, watah, why do you keep on talking at all? Are you goin' to get into that divin'-dweess before we are collared, or are you not?"

"Certainly!" said Skimpole. "Pray assist me! These boots are very heavy. Mind you pay out the rope and the tube carefully, as if they become entangled I should undoubtedly be asphyxiated."

"Oh, wats! Pway get on!"

"I suppose you don't want me to be asphyxiated?"

"I weally don't think it would mattah vevy much. It would pwobably stop your jawin'. If you don't buck up I shall wetah."

"Oh, very well!"

Skimpole got into a diving-suit easily enough. It was large enough for a full-grown man, and Skimpole was only a boy, and a rather weedy one. His feet did not go down as far as the boots, and his chin continually threatened to slip down through the neckband to which the helmet was fastened.

"One last word before you fasten the helmet, D'Arcy."

"Pway huwvy up, then!"

"You will be careful not to get the tube entangled."

"Yaas, watah!"

"Or I should undoubtedly be asphyxiated!"

"Oh, keep your head in!"

"Yes; but one more moment—just a word!"

"What is it?"

"Be very careful indeed with the pump, as if the supply of air should fail I should undoubtedly be asphyxiated."

Arthur Augustus sniffed impatiently and closed the helmet. He fastened it up, and gave Skimpole a push to signify that all was ready. Through the glass in the helmet

he could see only the tufty hair on the top of Skimpole's head.

Skimpole, shut up inside the diving-dress, felt a momentary regret that he had left St. Jim's in search of the missing microscope.

Diving for salvage seemed a much easier and pleasanter thing at St. Jim's than it did in a diving-dress on the spot. But it was too late to retreat now.

Besides, he remembered the great importance of recovering the microscope, and the sensational detective case which would probably follow his investigations with its aid of the mysterious stains.

And, screwing up his courage to the sticking point, he plunged in.

He went under the water feet first, the heavily weighted boots taking him down, and D'Arcy paid out the rope from above.

Skimpole had judged by the position of the funnel the way into the ship, but under the water he found it was not so easy to tell his direction.

In the first place, his head was too low down in the helmet for him to see through the glass, and so he was, as a matter of fact, completely without sight to aid him.

He blundered on, and suddenly felt himself going. There was a gasp inside the hollow helmet.

Down he went, and he knew that he had passed over the side of the wreck, and was sinking into the deeper water on the seaward side.

"Dear me," murmured Skimpole, "this is most—most—Oh!"

His feet jammed in thick, soft sand. At the same moment there was a jerking on the air tube, and Skimpole shuddered.

The tube was caught on something, undoubtedly pressing against the side of the sunken steamer.

"Dear me!" gasped the amateur diver. "I—I shall undoubtedly be asphyxiated!"

There was a sharp jerking on the rope. Skimpole felt it, but he could not rise.

His leaden-weighted boots were jammed in the soft sand, and he could not pull them out.

He succeeded in extricating one, but in the effort he drove the other farther in, and when he started to drag out the other, the first one had sunk again.

Meanwhile, the rope was jerking and jerking.

Arthur Augustus was getting anxious. He could see dimly the diver's form as Skimpole groped over the sloping deck of the sunken vessel, and he had seen the diver slide over into the water beyond.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "I wondah what Skimmy has gone there for? I weally undahstood that he was goin' inside the ship."

And he jerked on the rope as a signal to the junior to come up.

Skimpole would willingly enough have done so, but it was impossible, and as the moments passed, and he did not reappear, D'Arcy's anxiety changed to alarm.

"Bai Jove, there's somethin' wong!" he muttered. Skimpole remained invisible on the other side of the wreck.

Arthur Augustus cast a wild glance round. It fell upon the air-pump.

"Bai Jove, I'd forgotten that!"

In a moment he was working away frantically at the pump, but the tautness of the tube where it disappeared under water warned D'Arcy that it was caught somewhere, and his hair stood on end. It might be caught against the timber without being blocked, but D'Arcy did not think of that at the moment. He pictured the hapless diver gasping in vain for air in the heavy helmet, slowly yielding to the horrors of asphyxiation.

"It's—it's howwid!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's. The perspiration was pouring down his face as he worked at the pump. His hat fell aslant, and his collar burst its stud.

"Help! Help!"

Arthur Augustus shouted as he worked. The salvage men must be near at hand, he knew, and he would have given anything to see them on the spot at that moment.

"Help! Help!"

A face rose into view behind a rock, then another, and another. A gruff voice bawled across the beach to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Leave that alone, you young rascal!"

"Help! Help!"

Arthur Augustus worked away with one hand, and waved the other frantically.

The men on the beach stared at him.

He was indeed a curious sight, with his burst collar, his flying necktie, his hat on one side, one hand at the pump, and the other wildly waving.

"Help! Help! Help!"

"Let that pump alone!"

"Help! Help! Help!"

"You hear me?"

"Help! Help! Help!"

"Cut off, I tell yer!"

"Help! Help! Help!"

They seemed to realise at last that something was wrong. Three or four men came up at a run, some of them still eating their tea.

"Now, what's the matter, you cheeky young rascal?" demanded the gruff-voiced man.

"My fwriend—he is dyin'—"

"Hey?"

"He is in the divin'-dwess on the othah side of the w'eck, and the tube is blocked, and—"

"You mean to say you've had the blooming check—"

"Save him!"

"You've had the check to—"

"Save him before he is suffocated, you wottahs!"

"You young idiot! He's all right even if he's down there! The pipe is clear, and he won't 'urt!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Get into your things, Thompson, and go down and fetch him up!" said the gruff-voiced man. "This 'ere is a matter for the police. My word, an attempt to rob the salvage in broad daylight!"

Arthur Augustus was too agitated to explain. He sat down on the staging, and pushed his silk hat on the back of his head, and fanned himself with his pocket handkerchief. He was gasping for breath, and he continued to gasp while Thompson descended into the water and dragged Skimpole out of the sea.

The unfortunate amateur diver came into view, and was bumped unceremoniously on the landing-stage. His borrowed plumes were ruthlessly stripped off him, and Skimpole was revealed. He adjusted his spectacles, and blinked at the angry divers.

"Dear me, there seems to be quite a crowd here!" he remarked. "I am afraid that you have not been so quiet as I warned you to be, D'Arcy."

"And now," said the gruff-voiced gentleman, who was in charge of the salvage operations, grimly—"now, have you young rips got anything to say for yourselves afore we march you off to the lock-up?"



"Detectives of St. Jim's!"



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"Now then, all together!" "Stop, you wottahs! Ow—gewwooh—oh!" D'Arcy went with a swing from three pairs of powerful arms which landed him plump upon Blake's legs, sprawling across the bed. There was a startled yell from Blake. "Oh! Wh-wh-what's that?!"

CHAPTER 13.

Rescued!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY groped for his eye-glass, rubbed it on his handkerchief, and screwed it into his right eye, and then proceeded to favour the gruff gentleman with a long and cool stare.

"Weally, my deah sir, I fail to undahstand you," he remarked. "We came here with stwictly honouvable intentions to wescue a micwoscope belongin' to my fwient Skimpole."

"You see——" began Skimpole. "A likely yarn! What do you think of that yarn, Thompson?"

"Gammon, Mr. Fish!" said Thompson promptly. "I wefuse to have my remarks chawactewised as gammon!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "We belong to the school that had a holiday on that steamah, and when it was wecked my fwient Skimpole left his micwoscope on board."

"Exactly!" said Skimpole. "We came here to recover it. It is very unfortunate that you have interrupted us; but really I owe you my thanks, as I was stuck in the mud and could not move. If I had any money I should present you with a gratuity, but as it is I can give you nothing but my thanks. And now, will you kindly lend me a diving dress?"

"Eh?" "Will you kindly lend me a diving-dress, as I wish to go down in search of my microscope? It is very important for me to have it at once."

Mr. Fish chuckled. "Off his onion," he said. "Off his onion, or else a very clever thief."

"I am not off my onion, as you vulgarly express it. I unfortunately left my microscope aboard the steamer, and it is absolutely necessary for me to recover it at once. If, therefore, you will lend me a diving-dress——"

"Haw, haw!" "There is nothing to laugh at in my exceedingly reasonable request. Still, if you would prefer to go in search of the microscope yourself, I should like that just as well, and if I had any money I would present you with a gratuity."

"Weally, Skimpole——" "Now I come to think of it, my friend D'Arcy has plenty of money, and he——"

"Weally, deah boy——" "Take 'em to the police station, sir," said Thompson. "This 'ere is all gammon!"

"Weally, my good fellow——" "Perhaps it would be better to give them a good licking," said Mr. Fish; "that would save trouble."

"I should uttahly wefuse to be licked." "I object very strongly to anything of the sort," said Skimpole.

Mr. Fish grinned. "Your objections won't count very much, you young rascals," he said. "You've got to learn not to meddle with other folk's property. You take the skinny one, Thompson, and I'll take the other—and spank 'em!"

"Ay, ay!" said Thompson. And he promptly collared Skimpole, whom Mr. Fish had irreverently alluded to as the skinny one, while Mr. Fish himself took hold of Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove——" "Now then, better take it quietly." "I uttahly wefuse to take it quietly. I wefuse to be wuffly handled by you, you feahful wottah! Wefuse me at once——"

"Haw, haw, haw!" "Wefuse me at once, or I shall lose my tempah and stwike you!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" The unfortunate swell of St. Jim's was an infant in the powerful grasp of Mr. Fish. He was twisted across a huge knee, and a huge hand rose in the air and fell. "Ow! You beastlay wottah! Help! Wescue!"

There was a shout from the path over the headland. It came as music to the ears of the swell of St. Jim's, for he knew the voices of his chums.

"Wescue!" he shouted. "Wescue, St. Jim's!" There was a trampling of feet on the beach. The pursuers had arrived; and Tom Merry and Blake, running hard, were the first to reach the diving-stage. Lowther and Manners, Digby and Herries came panting on behind.

"Wescue! Blake! Dig! Wescue! Howwies, wescue!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

And the six juniors from St. Jim's sat down and laughed themselves breathless.

Smack, smack, smack!
 "Wescue!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Here, hold on!" gasped Blake. "That will do! I dare say Gussy deserves it—in fact, I know he does—but hold on!"
 "Mind your own business!" said Mr. Fish gruffly.
 "Rats! This is my business!"
 "Wescue!" wailed D'Arcy.
 "Line up, St. Jim's!" shouted Tom Merry. "Charge!"
 The juniors rushed to the rescue. But Mr. Fish did not want trouble. He released Arthur Augustus, with a broad grin, and the swell of St. Jim's squirmed away. Skimpole was released, too, and he stood gasping, pressing his hands to the place where he had received the punishment.
 "Take 'em away," said Mr. Fish, grinning. "They came here meddling with our apparatus, and we've spanked them. If they belong to you, take them away and chain them up."
 "Come on, Gussy."
 "I cannot wetchiah fwom this spot yet, Blake."
 "Haven't you had enough?"

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 of packets of stamps, have also been awarded and sent off, too.

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The 1,000 prizes for parents—200 special parcels of Cadbury products, and 800 consolation prizes—have also been awarded for the best answers to "Why I like my child to eat Cadbury's chocolates." These also have been despatched to winners.

"I have been gwoosly insulted. I cannot leave this spot until I have given this wuffian a feahful thwashin'."

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Mr. Fish.

"Oh, come on, Gussy!"

"I uttahly wescue. Undah the circs, as you have so bwavely come to my wescue, I wescue you to my fwiendship, and shall atah my mind about dwoppin' your acquaintance. But I cannot wetchiah fwom this spot without thwashin' that wottah!"

"Oh, come on! Take the other ass, Tom Merry!"

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "Are you coming, Skimmy? Or shall we carry you?"

"I cannot come, after taking all this trouble, without recovering my microscope from the wreck. It is of the first importance."

"You ass!" said Lowther. "Your microscope is safe at St. Jim's. You lent it to me the other day, and it's still in my study."

Skimpole rubbed his bumpy forehead.

"Dear me! Now you mention it, I recall that I did!" he exclaimed. "It was a lapse of memory, such as frequently occurs in the brain of a great genius."

"Ha, ha, ha! A great idiot, you mean!"

"Not at all! I will explain."

"No, you won't! Come on!"

And Tom Merry and Lowther took Skimpole by the arms and marched him off.

Blake and Digby did the same for D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's struggled.

"I insist upon bein' wescued, Blake! Let me go, Dig! I insist upon thwashin' that wottah before I wetchiah fwom this spot."

"You young ass!" said Blake severely. "As a matter of fact, you owe him an apology. What do you mean by meddling with his property without permission?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, you know," said Arthur Augustus, turning towards the grinning Mr. Fish.

"My deah sir, undah the circs, I apologise for havin' used your pwoerty without permish."

"Haw, haw, haw!"

And Arthur Augustus suffered himself to be led away.

CHAPTER 14.

Fatty Wynn Takes the Cake!

TOM MERRY & CO. marched the recaptured adventurers to the railway station, and did not take their eyes off them till they were safely in the train. When they changed at Yarmouth, Blake linked his arm in D'Arcy's, and Tom Merry his in Skimpole's, and the same again when, later on, they got to London. They did not mean to run any more risks of losing their quarry.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy remarked, as the Wayland express tore along southward, "this must have wun you into a feahful expense, deah boys."

"Not at all," said Jack Blake. "We don't mind the expense in the least."

"But there are six of you, and the wayland fares are vewy high," said Arthur Augustus. "I was vewy glad to be wescued fwom that wuff bwute, but it was like your feahful cheek to follow me, you know. Undah the circumstances it serves you wight to be stuck for a large amount of money."

"But we're not."

"I suppose you're not twavellin' without tickets, deah boys?"

"Not at all."

"Then it will cost you—"

"Nothing," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I weally fail to see how that can be, Tom Mewwy."

"Easy enough. We borrowed the tin and we are going to send the bill into you."

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"To me?"

"Certainly!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You see, as this journey was undertaken on your behalf you naturally have to allow expenses. We charge nothing for our time."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Tom Merry with a withering look.

"You—you charge nothin' for your time?"

"Nothing at all," said Tom Merry generously. "Blake will make out the bill for the fares and you can settle up when you get another remittance from your governor."

"I should uttahly wescue to do anythin' of the sort."

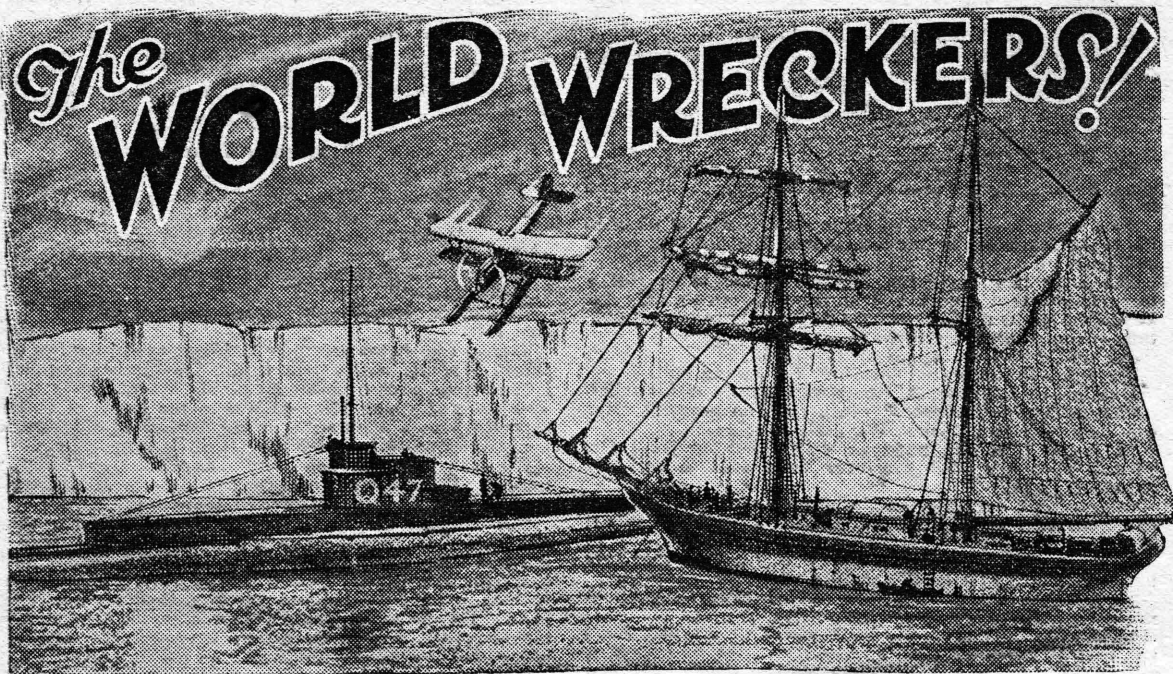
"Very well, if you insist on evading your liabilities we shall post you up as a defaulter," said Blake.

"Me—as a defaultah!"

"Certainly. We shall shove your name up in the Hall

(Continued on page 28.)

OUR GRIPPING YARN OF ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE.



By J. E. GURDON.

The World Wreckers are a band of criminals who have devised a means of controlling the earth's weather. From their headquarters, "somewhere in the Antarctic," they have threatened to destroy the entire British Empire by floods and droughts. The British Government has sent out an expedition consisting of a submarine, an aeroplane, and a base ship. Jim and Rex Tempest, the two airmen of the expedition, reach the Wreckers' headquarters, but are captured. They make a break to escape in an enormous tank, taking with them as a prisoner one of the Wrecker chiefs, Krughanger, but the enemy are hot on their heels!

Escape!

TOO thankful to wonder by what miracle his brother had got there first, Rex did as he was told, and a moment later was helping Jim to lower his captive through the manhole of the tank.

Inside the monster the lights were already full on, revealing two titanic engines, one on either side of the centre line, a bewildering tangle of machinery plastering walls and roof, and the disconsolate figure of Wilmot S. Krughanger slumped in a corner and blinking dazedly around.

"Full up inside! Outside only!" roared Jim, clamping down the cover of the manhole. "Wind up the works, Alphonse, and don't forget you've got to be a good boy!"

"Alphonse," the prisoner, was a spiky bearded manikin, who looked like a comic Frenchman come to life from a humorous cartoon. The efficient way in which he got busy with the engines, however, proved both that he knew his job and also that he was anxious to please his new masters.

Jim eyed him shrewdly for a moment, then turned to look his brother up and down.

"O.K., young fella?" he asked, with a touch of anxiety. "You seemed to be having a pretty busy time back yonder, but I couldn't stop to lend you a hand."

"How did you get here?" countered Rex.

Jim laughed and nodded towards Krughanger.

"Thanks to our host over there it was 'quite easy,'" he replied. "I just grabbed hold of the first fellow I met and bellowed: 'Lend a hand. The chief's hurt!' The chap took one look at Uncle K. and rallied round like a sportsman. Carrying him between us we marched down the line of tanks, yelling, 'Way for the chief!' until we reached this one, when I was reluctantly compelled to hand my mate the k.o., and then set about persuading Alphonse that it was time he changed sides."

Further talk was stopped by a sudden ear-splitting bellow. Alphonse had started the two fifteen hundred horse-power engines.

As the first deafening clamour sank to a thundering growl Jim jumped to the controls in the bows of the tank.

There was a dual set of these, placed side by side in a three-walled cabin. Although Rex would dearly have liked to take the seat beside Jim, he knew that his job was to keep an eye on Krughanger and Alphonse.

He edged up close behind Jim, however, and was able to see out through the narrow slits which pierced the front and side walls of the driving cabin.

Sizzling and spluttering, a dazzling fan of light shot ahead as Jim switched on the single arc lamp searchlight which was mounted on the roof.

In its glare the opposing row of tanks stood out like a rank of frozen mammoths surrounded by pygmies, who scattered wildly in all directions.

With a chuckle Jim let in the clutch to the starboard caterpillar track, while keeping the port engine still disconnected.

Amazingly swiftly the ponderous mass wheeled left towards the metal sheet that sealed the cavern's mouth. Then, both tracks grinding and clattering, and both engines racing on full throttle, charged down on the barrier.

So great was the acceleration that they hit the sheet at a speed of more than thirty miles an hour.

Instinctively Rex blinked and ducked at the moment of impact.

There was no need.

Barely faltering, the colossus ripped its way through as easily as a poodle jumping through a paper-covered hoop at a circus.

Out from the mountain's side the tank thundered into a blaze of Antarctic snow and sun.

Dazzled, Jim flashed a glance around and gasped at what he saw.

It was no level plain into which they had burst, but a slope that steepened so rapidly as to become almost vertical within eight hundred yards.

Straight ahead, across the gulf so formed, a spidery suspension bridge spanned the quarter mile to an opposing range of cliffs.

Eyes narrowed, teeth set, he strove to coax another ounce of power from his engines and raced for the bridge.

Above the racket and clanging of mechanism there rose a shriek.

It was Alphonse, and his cheeks were ashen.

"Stop!" he screamed. "Stop! It is mined! They blow it up!"

"Of course they blow it up, you ass!" gritted Jim. "All the more reason why we should be on the other side when they do!"

The ribbon-like bridge unwound and sprang to meet them. The guard towers at its entrance leapt apart and fled behind. The narrow roadway boomed and trembled as it took the shock of their onslaught.

Looking down, Rex saw, far below, a shroud of clouds.

On they stormed, rocking and lurching, yet for all their speed the opposing towers seemed to crawl.

The awaited explosion drowned their cheers at the moment when the clawing tracks gripped the far ridge of snow and safety.

As a spider's web vanishes when slashed with a stick, so the flimsy fabric of the bridge dissolved in a flurry of smoke and dust.

The huge tank staggered, balked on the brink like a terrified elephant before a fire, see-sawed sickeningly for an endless moment, then, carried on by its gigantic momentum, plunged massively forward.

Jim pulled up and mopped his forehead.

White-faced, Rex stared back over the gaping gulf.

Huddled on the floor, Alphonse wept noisily in his relief.

"Many thanks, professor," whispered Jim hoarsely, "for queering your own pitch! We shall meet again!"

"I should jolly well think we shall!" put in Rex hotly.

"I ask you, Jim, did you ever meet such a perfectly poisonous pest?"

"Can't say I ever did, and, what's more, the further we are from that same pest, the happier I shall be at the moment."

As he spoke, Jim let in the clutches, and the tank lumbered ahead with much grunting and crunching of snow.

"Where are we making for?" asked Rex, shouting to make his voice heard above the uproar.

"The coast. I don't quite know where we are and that's the nearest place to pick up bearings. Go and have a talk to Krughanger and make him tell you what's happened to Osborne and the others."

Ten minutes later, Rex was back in the driving-cabin.

"There's such a fearful din back there," he reported, "that one can only hear about one word in every five. I did, however, gather that all three are quite fit and not in any immediate danger."

"Good enough. We'll get particulars later on and work out a wheeze for collecting the lads. Hallo! Unless I'm very much mistaken, that was a bit of perfectly good sea that I glimpsed between those two ridges."

On the top of the next rise, Jim halted while they searched up and down the coastline for signs of human activity.

Bright sunshine glittered on the snow dunes and lit up the creamy foam of distant breakers. Out to sea, an iron-grey haze hid the horizon.

"Gee!" ejaculated Rex. "Isn't it just fine to see all this after that ghastly cave affair? Now what on earth—"

Wheeeeeee-oomPH!

A shrill whistling ended in a coughing roar. The tank shuddered as something struck its steel hull with a jarring crash.

"Golly!" whispered the boy. "What was that?"

"Shell!" retorted Jim briefly, racing his engines and throwing in the clutches.

Shrieking like a tortured animal, the tank whirled dizzily round in a narrow circle and came to rest.

"Starboard track broken!" grunted Jim. "We're flummoxed, young fella! If we don't bolt, the professor's got us beat!"

Again came the screeching of a shell and a deafening clang.

"Good shooting!" Jim nodded. "Another direct hit! Help with the manhole cover, everybody. It seems uncommonly heavy. Come on. Shove! Shove! SHOVE!"

Panting, they strained at the metal plate, but not an inch would it budge.

Jim ceased his futile efforts and smiled wryly.

"Nothing doing!" he murmured. "That second shell's jammed it. We shall have to wait till the professor comes to let us out!"

In gloomy, helpless silence they sat, until, two hours later, they heard the sound of feet tramping on the snow outside, followed by the grinding of tools that wrenched at the damaged plate.

Twenty minutes work sufficed. Sunlight streamed through as it clattered aside. In the opening appeared a fist gripping an automatic.

"Come out one by one and look lively," ordered a crisp and familiar voice.

Jim and Rex started as though stung, then with one accord let out a mighty yell:

"Commander Sherwell!"

Midnight found them still yarning in the ward-room of Q 47, which was lying snugly on the bottom, a mile from shore.

"Your blowing the main fuse cut the current and washed

out the magnetic force that was holding us," concluded the commander, after listening to Jim's account of their adventures. "We came to the surface, saw your tin-can scouting about on the skyline, and proceeded to shell it by way of getting a bit of our own back. That's all."

Jim rose and stretched.

"And quite enough, too!" he grumbled. "Hey, Rex. What about bed?"

Krughanger Talks!

"NOW then, Mr. Krughanger," began Commander Sherwell, fixing the prisoner with keen, grey eyes. "let us understand one another. You informed Captain Tempest this morning that you heartily wished you had never started this World Wrecker business, and that you will do everything in your power to assist us. Is that sincere?"

Willmot S. Krughanger leaned forward eagerly in his chair.

Twenty-four hours before he had been one of the two great World Wrecker chiefs, and within measurable distance of becoming dictator over all mankind. Now, thanks to Jim Tempest and young Rex, he was in the hands of enemies, cooped up in a submarine at the bottom of the sea, and many miles away from the nearest of his supporters.

His lean face was pale and haggard, his white hair tousled. But there was courage and dignity in his manner, and his voice as he spoke carried conviction.

"Commander Sherwell," he said earnestly, "I give you my word that by falling into your hands I feel like one released from a nightmare. Had I remotely suspected the character of Professor Ockley Toreor when I first met him, nothing would have induced me even to shake him by the hand. But he is, as you know, a scientific genius of the highest order, and I am myself a scientist by nature, as well as being a millionaire by sheer good fortune.

"We, therefore, began with an interest in common, and when I discovered that he had in very truth devised a method of controlling the earth's weather I became blinded with enthusiasm. I saw in that achievement the means of making wars impossible, and of imposing law and order upon the whole world.

"With my money and his brains, therefore, we created this base in the heart of the Antarctic continent, erected our gigantic power plants, provided ourselves with men, aeroplanes, tanks, munitions of every description, and proceeded to issue our orders to civilisation.

"Not until too late did I realise that Ockley Toreor scorned my ideals; that, in fact, he was—and is—a fiend in human shape, who intends to bring every living man, woman, and child under slavery to himself. I could do nothing, since all the power was in his hands. But now that you have freed me I am only too anxious to undo the evil that I began."

After this outburst silence reigned for a while in the ward-room of Q 47, while Commander Sherwell, Jim, and Rex exchanged understanding glances.

Each had already made up his mind that this white-haired idealist was telling the truth.

Jim was the first to speak.

"Thanks!" he said quietly. "That pretty well clears the ground, and now we can go ahead with plans. First of all we need some information. As you know, my brother and I, after crashing our planes in the sea near the coast, were dragged by the current through an underwater tunnel, and emerged into that tremendous system of caverns where you have built your power plant. Later on we escaped, with you, by bagging a tank and charging through the metal doors that sealed an opening in the side of a mountain. So what I want to find out is this—how many other ways are there of getting in and out of your rabbit warren?"

"None!" returned Krughanger emphatically.

Jim drew a deep breath and turned to the commander.

"Then we've got 'em!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "All we have to do is to block up their main entrance in the mountainside, and they'll have to use the water tunnel as a bolt hole. Well, if the rats come down that hole, old Q 47 will be waiting at the exit to act as terrier!"

"Sound scheme," nodded the commander. "Only I don't see how you propose to do the preliminary blocking."

"Rex and I have already worked out a wheeze for that," returned Jim confidently. "We went ashore this morning to do a bit of scouting, and we spotted a certain something about that mountain that is going to give Professor Ockley Toreor the surprise of his life. But to work our little stunt we've got to have aeroplanes—plenty of 'em—which means that our first move is to collect Osborne, Musson, and Stewart."

He paused, then addressed himself again to Krughanger. "Those three young flyers of ours, whom you captured some time ago—where are they imprisoned? And what is the best method of getting them out?"

The erstwhile World Wrecker frowned, drew a sheet of paper across the table towards him, and began rapidly drawing a rough map.

"They are not imprisoned," was his surprising reply, "and yet they are more inaccessible than if they were confined in the deepest of dungeons. Look at this map. Here is the mountain of the power plant. From the foot of the mountain a cape juts out into the sea. We ourselves, I imagine, are lying at about this point, to the east of the cape. Along the coast on its western side, forming one boundary of the Wreckers' aerodrome, is another mountain—a very peculiar one. Your three young friends are marooned on its summit."

"Then we'll climb up and fetch 'em down," put in Rex.

Krughanger smiled grimly.

"The problem is not quite so simple," he murmured. "I said that the mountain is peculiar. It is, in fact, an extinct volcano, and its summit consists of a deep, conical crater. The sides of the crater are thickly coated with soft sulphur, so loose that as fast as a man climbs up it the sliding stuff carries him back to the bottom again. In fact, I do not see how it is ever possible to get out of that crater."

"What a rotten sort of trap!" exclaimed Rex hotly. "How did you get 'em up there? And why did you do it?"

"They were dropped from one of our machines by parachute. A tent, fuel, and food were thrown after them. As to why we did it—well, those three young men caused so much trouble, and knocked so many of their guards about, that Ockley Toreor wanted to shoot them out of hand. In order to save their lives I persuaded him to adopt this other plan."

Jim was grinning thoughtfully as he studied the map.

"I can quite believe that Osborne and his pals would make very prickly prisoners," he observed; "but I don't share your pessimism about getting them out of that crater. Is our tank in going order, commander?"

"Should be by now. The engineer took a party ashore at dawn. There wasn't much wrong with it."

"Then," said Jim slowly, "this is what we'll do."

For the next half-hour four heads were bent close together over the ward-room table.

As a result of that conference, at two o'clock in the afternoon a reverberating explosion shattered the Antarctic silence, and a huge, flat fragment of ice was torn from the glacier that fringed the coast.

In his observation post on shore, a mile away from the site of the explosion, one of the World Wrecker scouts watched the newly formed iceberg ponderously drifting out to sea.

Through his telescope he could see a large hummock of snow on one angle of the ice, but, since the closest scrutiny failed to show any human figures or signs of life, he concluded that the berg must be merely an accidental result of the explosion.

Concerning this itself he puzzled for some time, then suddenly and brilliantly decided that the enemy must have been blowing up the tank that they had captured, in order to prevent its being recovered by the professor.

Satisfied on this point, he left the iceberg to pursue its own wandering fate, and resumed his methodical watch on the coastline.

It was a bad mistake that he made.

Slowly the iceberg rounded the cape which Krughanger had shown upon his map, sailed portentously westward up the coast, edged gradually shoreward, and grounded itself at a point just behind the hangars of the World Wreckers' aerodrome.

Five hundred yards out to sea Commander Sherwell peered into the bowl of his periscope and chuckled contentedly as he watched the huge mass come to rest.

Having safely towed it to its destination, Q 47 had played her part for the moment.

A sentry, leaning on his rifle outside the hangar nearest the sea, eyed the newly arrived iceberg with bored indifference. He had been in the Antarctic too long to find any interest in a flat slab of ice with a chunk of snow perched on one end of it.

Two penguins, squabbling noisily, distracted his attention for a moment. He stooped, kneaded a compact snowball, and heaved it at the clamorous fowls.

Peace and order being thus restored, he again glanced casually at the iceberg, and this time his gaze did not wander away.

Instead, he stood rooted to the spot, alternately blinking and staring at the hummock of snow with eyes fixed and bulging.

The hummock was moving!

Aghast, he watched while the huge white mass advanced majestically across the berg, picked up a remarkable turn of speed as it reached the shore, and bore down upon him at a brisk twenty-miles an hour.

One piercing yell only did he utter before hurling aside his rifle and setting off at a tangent across the aerodrome.

"Your scheme seems to make us unpopular, Rex," remarked Jim from the centre of the galloping hummock.

It had been Rex's idea to camouflage the tank with canvas screens plastered with snow, in order that they might get within striking distance of the enemy without arousing suspicion.

Jim was now driving the steel mammoth, while Rex sat beside him, keeping a sharp look-out in all directions through the slits in the three walls of the driving cabin.

Behind them, in the body of the tank, were two skilled engineers to look after the machinery, and a crew of twenty picked from the best of Q 47's marksmen.

"Make for Number Five Hangar," said the boy, peering intently ahead. "Its doors are already open."

"Right! See that the manhole cover is unclamped, and that the landing-party are all ready to cut loose in double-quick time."

With a screeching and clattering of caterpillar tracks, the steel monster pulled up outside the fifth hangar. The manhole in its roof sprang open, two sliding doors in its flanks clanged apart, and from every opening there erupted armed men.

Not a shot, not a sound greeted them. Except for three two-seater biplanes, the big hangar was completely empty.

"Run!" muttered Jim, gazing around.

"What is?" demanded Rex, who was busy giving one of the two-seaters a swift but expert examination.

Jim made an expressive gesture.

"All this," he replied. "Aerodrome unguarded, except for one poor scared boob of a sentry; hangar left conveniently open; machines lying about waiting for anyone to stroll in and help himself—everything!"

"Well, there's nothing wrong with this bus, anyway!" declared Rex, twanging a flying wire. "She's sound in wind and limb, full up with juice, and ready to buzz off at a moment's notice. Shall I get our gear on board?"

"Yes. And start her up; I'll be along in a second."

He sought out the petty officer in charge of the landing party.

"Found anybody?" he asked.

"No, sir, not a trace of anyone—either inside or out."

"H'm! I don't like it! Leave a guard of five men in the tank, and while we're aloft look out for squalls. I've a notion this is the calm before a particularly nasty storm of some sort, and—"

A coughing and a crackle interrupted him. Rex had started the two-seater's engine.

Abruptly Jim turned, strode to the biplane, climbed into the cockpit, and ten minutes later was looking down at the aerodrome from a height of 500 feet.

Horror-stricken, Jim gazed, automatically holding the machine in a tight circle on vertical wing-tip.

Its shadow thrown far by the low southern sun, the tank showed up conspicuously before the row of hangars.

On the ground round about it lay the crew—scattered, sprawling, and motionless.

Through to the earphones in Jim's helmet Rex's voice filtered faintly.

"What—what has happened to them?"

"Gas!"

"We must go down!"

"Not on your life! We can't help those chaps by getting gassed ourselves. Our job is to carry on. Have you got the gear in order?"

"Yes."

With a grunt, Jim pulled the machine level and climbed her towards the mountain prison of Osborne and his fellows.

"Of course," he mused, "that fat brute Toreor would guess that we should have a stab at collaring some machines, and he knew that our attack must come from the sea. All he had to do, therefore, was to set the trap and choose some nervous cove to put on sentry duty, knowing that the lad would bolt as soon as we arrived, and so give him the signal."

"Jim!" Rex's voice was quivering with excitement. "The tank's moving, and the fellows inside it are using their rifles! The gas can't have got at them!"

Looking back, Jim saw the huge mass of machinery, now free from its camouflage, lumbering rapidly across the aerodrome, while tiny spears and bayonets of red fire sparkled from its sides.

"Stout chaps!" roared Jim, banging the rim of the cockpit with his gauntleted fist. "We'll beat 'em yet, Rex—What's the matter now?"

Rex was shouting at the top of his voice.

"Our undercarriage," he bellowed—"it's got no wheels!"

(Jim and Rex are bound to crash when they land! Can Jim succeed in saving their lives? Look out for thrills in next week's great instalment!)

SKIMPOLE, THE DEEP-SEA DIVER!

(Continued from page 24.)

and the Common-room as a defaulter, a fellow who's not to be trusted again by anybody."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And then, of course, you'll have the grace to change out of our study, as it will be impossible for us to continue the acquaintance of a defaulter."

"You—you uttah wottah!"

"Think it over," said Blake, with a wave of the hand.

"It's a bad system to start evading your just debts at so early an age."

"I—I—"

Words failed Arthur Augustus, as the express tore on through the dusky September evening.

"Bai Jove, I shall be glad to get in and get some supper!" said Blake, as the train drew near to Wayland Junction.

"We shall be late for supper, I'm afraid—even if we're allowed any after missing afternoon and evening roll-call like this."

"Oh, when we explain—"

"Gussy and Skimmy will get a licking. We shall get lines as thick as the leaves in Vallombrosa."

"Gussy and Skimpole will write out our lines, of course."

"Bai Jove—"

"That's only fair," assented Tom Merry. "Hallo, here's Wayland!"

It was the last change. The local train bore them to Rylcombe, and they walked to the school. Taggles grinned in anticipation as he let them in. Mr. Raiton was waiting for them in the School House. They explained, but their explanation did not seem to wholly satisfy that House-master that their conduct had been highly judicious and exemplary. At all events, he took down his cane.

"I am afraid that an infraction of the college rules like this must be severely dealt with," he said. "I shall give each of you four strokes and D'Arcy and Skimpole twelve. Bend over, Merry."

"Weally, Mr. Wailton—"

"Silence!"

Tom Merry & Co. went through the punishment with fortitude. They had risked it, and when it came they were not the fellows to complain. Skimpole was the only one to do that, but it made no difference. He had his twelve cuts all the same, and he was wriggling as he left the study.

"And now you will go to bed," said Mr. Raiton. "Good-night."

"Good-night, sir," said the juniors, as cheerfully as they could. And they went upstairs.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "He laid it on that time."

Never mind! I wouldn't care if only we weren't late for supper. I'm famished."

"So am I," said Blake. "Got anything in your study?"

"Not a thing!"

"Then it's lucky we have in ours. We had a jolly spread in the cupboard, and as we weren't in to tea, it hasn't been touched. By Jove, that reminds me; we've missed that little joke on Fatty Wynn. He was coming over to tea to-day, you know, and we were going to work off on him the same wheeze that Reilly played on Gussy. Never mind, it will keep till to-morrow. Come on!"

The juniors quietly entered Study No. 6 and Blake lighted the gas. They had had nothing to eat since leaving Yarmouth, and they were feeling hungry.

Blake looked surprised as he glanced at the table. The cloth was spread, and the crockery was there, and there were plain signs that someone had been feeding.

"Why, what the—who the—"

"Somebody's been having tea here!" exclaimed Digby.

"My hat!" said Herries. "Where's our grub?"

Blake tore open the door of the cupboard. It was empty, every single article of diet had been transferred to the table and consumed—with the exception of a portion of a loaf and butter and jam. Pies and sausages and ham, eggs and bacon, marmalade tarts and cream puffs, and the big currant cake which was to have lasted Study No. 6 a week or more—all, all were gone!

"My—my hat!"

"Here's a note for you on the table," exclaimed Tom Merry.

"A—a note!"

"Yes, and it's in Fatty Wynn's writing."

Blake mechanically took the note and read it. Then he gave a whoop. Fatty Wynn's note was brief, but to the point.

"Dear Blake,—I came over to tea, as you asked me, and found that you were gone out with Herries and Dig. I didn't want to disappoint you, so I had my tea all the same. Don't think I feel neglected at all. I suppose you had important business on hand and hadn't time to leave a note for me. I have had a ripping tea, and thank you very much. I have enjoyed myself thoroughly."

"Yours very sincerely,

"Wynn of the New House."

The juniors looked at one another as Blake re-read that note aloud. Tom Merry broke into a chuckle.

"The joke seems to have worked out the wrong way, doesn't it?" he remarked. "I say, Blake, old chap, you're playing with edged tools when you invite Fatty Wynn to tea. Good-night."

And the Terrible Three, hungry as they were, chucked as they went off to their dormitory.

THE END.

(Next week's ripping yarn, "DETECTIVES OF ST. JIM'S!" is packed with thrills! Order your copy now and make sure of getting it!)

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