

TOM AT THE FRANCO-BRITISH.

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GRAND SCHOOL TALE.

DOUBLE-
LENGTH
TALE OF
TOM MERRY.

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.

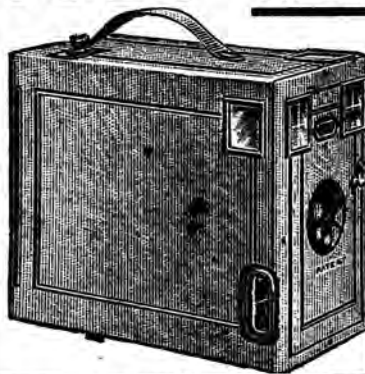


NO. 22.

VOL. 1.

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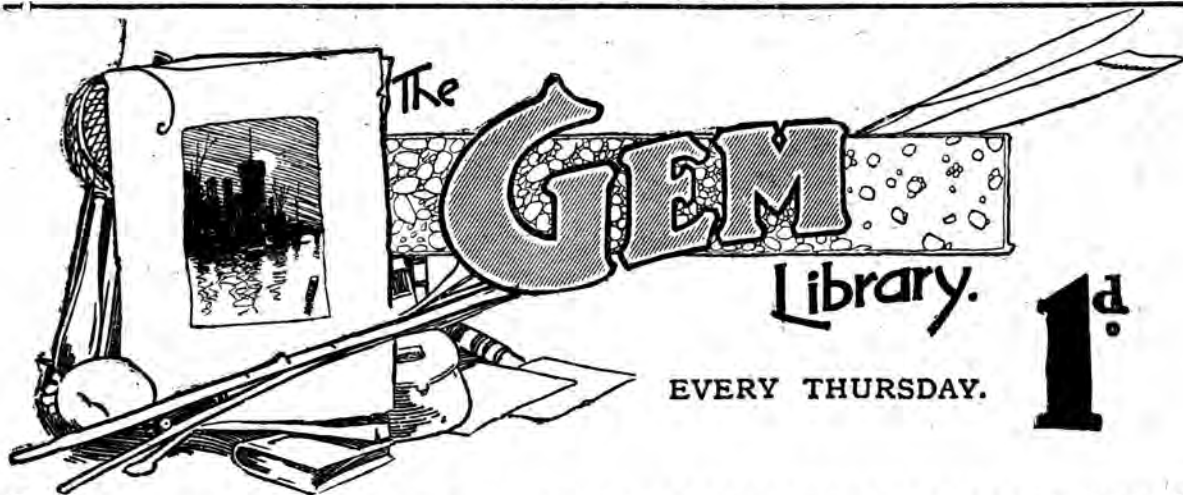
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THURSDAY:

"TOM'S TERRIBLE TIME."

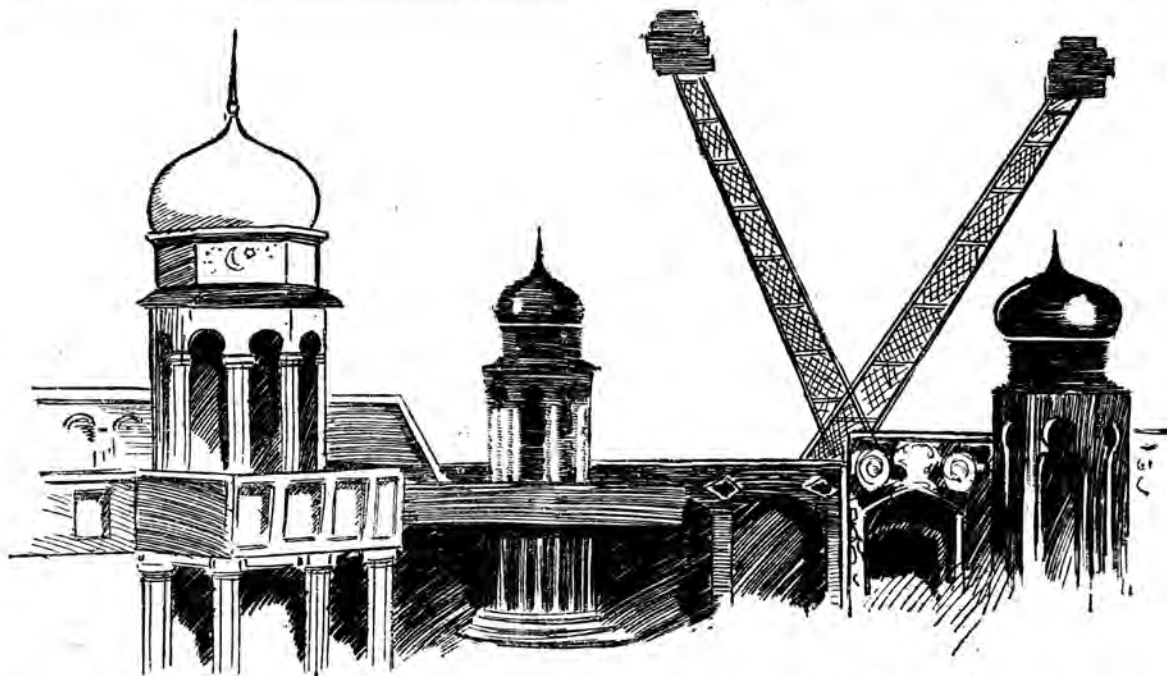
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CHAPTER 1. Great News!

"**H**URRAH!" The shout burst from Tom Merry with startling suddenness, and Manners and Lowther gave a simultaneous jump.

The Terrible Three were in their study in the School House at St. Jim's. Tom Merry had just opened a letter, addressed in the well-known hand of his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. Manners and Lowther were working away busily at their preparation, while Tom Merry read his letter.

Then the silence of the study was broken by Tom Merry's sudden shout.

"Hurrah!"

Manners jumped, and scattered a shower of blots over his paper. Lowther jumped, and barked his shin against a leg of the table. Both glared at Tom Merry.

"You utter ass!" roared Manners.

"You shrieking duffer!" shouted Lowther.

But Tom Merry did not seem to mind the epithets that were applied to him. His sunny face was beaming with satisfaction and glee. He jumped up, and caught Lowther round the neck

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 22 (New Series).

with one arm and Manners with the other. Then he waltzed the amazed juniors round the study.

"Leggo!" roared Manners, "You shrieking ass, leggo!"
"He's off his rocker," gasped Monty Lowther, "right off his silly rocker! Hold him before he gets dangerous."

"Hurrah!" shouted Tom Merry.
"You ass——"
"You lunatic——"
"Hurrah!"

Lowther and Manners wrenched themselves from the embrace of their chum, and turned upon Tom Merry. They seized him by the shoulders and jammed him against the wall of the study.

"Now, then," said Lowther, "Just explain yourself, ass, before we empty the inkpot over your silly head."

"What are you making this row about?" demanded Manners.
"Explain, quick, or——"
"Hurrah!"

"Hold him while I get the inkpot——"
"Chuck it," gasped Tom Merry, "hold on! I'll explain!"
"Buck up, then," grunted Monty Lowther.
"That letter was from Miss Priscilla——"
"What about it?"

"Oh, she's sent him a new recipe," grinned Manners, "something new in the way of cough lozenges, I suppose. Take three parts of cod liver oil and one part of camphorated chalk, one part of carbide of calcium and two parts of tincture of quinine, mix and——"

"Cheese it," said Tom Merry, "It's not a recipe——"
"What is it, then? An order on the druggist for a dozen bottles of Dr. Bones's Mysterious Medicine for Peaky Patients?"

"Ha, ha, no. It's——"
"A new box of the Purple Pills for Silly Softies——"
"No. It's a holiday!"

"What!"
"A holiday! Hurrah! A whole holiday, and——"
Manners and Lowther released their exuberant chum at once. They understood the reason now of his exuberance.

"Now you're talking!" exclaimed Lowther, "but what do you mean by a whole holiday? It's a half-holiday to-morrow, Wednesday——"

"We're going to have a whole one—and a visit to the new exhibition——"

"The what?"
"The Franco-British Exhibition at Shepherd's Bush."

"My only hat!" gasped Lowther, "why, that's where I want to go more than anywhere else on earth! Do you mean to say that your tame governess can manage it for us?"

"Yes, rather."
"But how!" demanded Manners, "How can Miss Priscilla Fawcett of Huckleberry Heath get a holiday for three juniors of St. Jim's?"

Tom Merry chuckled.
"She's asking it as a special favour of the Head. She's coming down here to-morrow morning to take us up to town. If the Head refused, she would stay here till she persuaded him that a holiday would do me good."

"Ha, ha, ha."
"He's bound to let her have her way. Besides, as it is a half-holiday to-morrow, it's only letting us off morning lessons. And the Head is an old sport, and he's bound to encourage fellows like us, who bring credit on the old school——"

"Of course. I only hope Miss Fawcett will be able to make him see things in the proper light," said Manners, fervently.
"Oh, it will be ripping to have a whole day off, and get to town and see the exhibition. I hear they've got a flip-flap there."

"What on earth's a flip-flap?"
"Well, I don't quite know," confessed Manners, "but it sounds as if it were worth seeing. Your governess ought to have a putty medal, Tom. I wish I had a few like her. A whole holiday! Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" roared Lowther.
And the chums of the Shell joined hands, and danced round the table in exuberant glee. There was a knock at the door, but it passed unheeded in the joyous excitement of the moment. Then the door opened, and Jack Blake of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's looked in.

"My——my hat! Mad, I suppose."
The Terrible Three ceased their impromptu war-dance. Blake stared at them, and they stared at Blake.

"Well, what's the row?" asked Blake, "I came along to tell you the news, and I find you behaving like a parcel of lunatics from Colney Hatch. Anything the matter?"

"Nothing," said Tom Merry, "only we're joyful. But what are your news?"

"Jolly good news," said Blake, with a grin of satisfaction.
"I'm only sorry we can't take you fellows along."
"Eh?"

"You're rather cheeky kids, and you don't pay a proper respect to the junior captain of your house—that's me——"
"Rats!"

"But I'm rather sorry all the same that you can't come."

"Can't come where?" demanded Tom Merry. "What are you talking about?"

"We're going up to town to-morrow."
"Great Scott!"

"Yes, and where do you think we are going?"
"Couldn't say."

"Well, I can guess," said Monty Lowther. "I suppose you're going to consult a brain specialist."
"Oh, don't be funny," said Blake, "we're going to the Franco-British Exhibition at Shepherd's Bush."

The Terrible Three stared at him blankly.
"You're going to the——"
"Franco-British Exhibition——"
"At Shepherd's Bush!"

"Yes," said Blake, "and I'm sorry you chaps can't come. You see, this is the how of it. Lathom, our respected Form-master, had the idea of going. It was a good idea, but not so good as what he thought of next. It occurred to him that he might take some of the fellows of the Fourth Form along with him, to give them a treat—and he naturally picked out the best of the bunch——"

"I thought you said he was going to take you——"
"So he is," said Blake, "Study No. 6 is the pick of the House, bar none. But as a matter of fact he decided to take the two head boys in the Fourth, and they happened to be Digby and myself at the present moment. So you see something comes of swotting over Latin at times."

"My hat! If you're top of the class in Latin, what must the rest be like?" said Lowther, with an expression of innocent wonder.

"Aren't Gussy and Herries going, then?" asked Tom Merry.
Jack Blake nodded.

"Oh, yes. When little Lathom told us, we could have hugged him—but we didn't. We asked him if he would let the other two come as well, as a special favour, and as we shouldn't enjoy the holiday without them. Lathom hadn't bargained for that, but he is a good little chap. He consented, and there you are! I'm only sorry you chaps can't come. We had a ripping time the last time we were in London together."

"But we are coming!" shouted Tom Merry, hugging Blake round the neck, and waltzing the astounded Fourth-Former round the study. "We are coming, my son."

"Here, leggo——"
Blake jerked himself away, and set his tie straight.

"What do you mean by saying that you are coming," he exclaimed. "Lathom won't take more than four——"

"Miss Fawcett is coming down to-morrow morning, and she's going to take us——"
"My hat! Is that so?"

"Honour bright."
Blake's face glowed with satisfaction. In spite of the continual warfare between Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three in the School House at St. Jim's, the rival juniors had a real regard for one another.

"Well, I'm jolly glad," exclaimed Blake. "We had better all go together, then—what do you say——"
"Of course——"

"Good! And if we can induce Mr. Lathom to go away with Miss Fawcett and lose himself, why, we shall have a ripping time on our own."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"By jove," said Tom Merry, "to-morrow will be a red-letter day for us. Luckily we're in funds at the present time——"

"Yaas, wathah," said the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the swell of the School House looked in at the door. "I have had a fivah from my governah, and I shall blue it all to-morrow, deah boys. It will be wippin'."

"What-ho! I only wish old Figgins were coming."
"Yaas, wathah."

"I wish he were," said Blake seriously. "But I'm afraid it can't be fixed. Can't ask Lathom, in conscience, to take more than four."

"And Miss Fawcett couldn't very well request a holiday for fellows in the New House," Tom Merry remarked. "If the Head lets us three go, it's as much as we can expect. Last time we went to town Figgins & Co. sloped off without permission."

"Yaas, but that can't be done again, deah boys," remarked D'Arcy. "You wemembah that the doctor pardoned them because they gave their word of honah that it should not occur again."

"Yes, I remember."
"It is very unfortunate, but anythin' of the sort is barred now," D'Arcy remarked. "I daresay the Head has forgotten, but that doesn't make any difference."

"It's rough on Figgins, though," said Tom Merry. "I say, suppose we go over in a body to see him, and jaw it over, and we may be able to hit on some wheeze for getting him a holiday too."

"Good idea," exclaimed Blake heartily. "We'll——"
"Excuse me," said a voice in the doorway, and a spectacled countenance looked into the study, "I did not mean to listen, but you were speaking so loudly, and the door was open, and so——"



"Come on," said Albert.

"He, he! Afraid, are you!" said 'Erbert.

"Bai Jove! I will soon show you whethah I am afwaid!" said D'Arcy.

"Hullo, Skimpole! Don't be so long-winded, old chap."

"I heard you say that you had a holiday——"

"We're going up to town, to go to the Franco-British Exhibition to-morrow," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, so I thought. I should very much like to come with you. It would be a great treat to me to see the machinery exhibits."

"You'd better ask permission of the Head, then," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"That is a good idea," said Skimpole. Skimpole was the brainy junior of the School House, and he took a deep interest in everything that made other fellows' heads ache. He was a Socialist, an amateur detective, and a poet, and many other things; his ideas were unique, but never lasted a long time.

"Of course, he's bound to give you permission if you ask him prettily," said Blake, with a grin. "Tell him it's necessary for the proper expansion of your marvellous intellect."

"And you can write a poem on the subject for the 'Weekly,'" Manners remarked.

Skimpole shook his head.

"I am rather giving up poetry at present, Manners. Speaking of poetry, I should like you to return me my contribution to the 'Weekly' now in your hands, Merry. Upon second thoughts, I would rather it were not published."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Too late, Skimmy, my son. The copy's in the hands of the printer, and it's too late for any alteration."

"In that case, would you mind suppressing the whole of the present issue of the 'Weekly'?"

"Well, yes, I think so—a little."

"I do not see why. I no longer wish my contribution to be published, and the rest of the magazine is of a very low quality."

"I'm afraid it can't be done," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Now buzz off, Skimmy! We've got an important matter in hand."

"Oh, certainly. I will ask the Head for permission to accompany you to-morrow. I want particularly to see the machinery exhibits. I take a great interest in machinery. It may interest you to know that I am now making an invention——"

"Is that the latest?"

"Yes, certainly. I am inventing a flying machine which will strike the whole world with amazement when it is completed. I have not yet determined how it is to be raised from the earth, or in what manner it is to be propelled when raised, and there are several other trifles not yet completed, but——"

"Then go and complete them," said Blake. "If we get over to the New House now, kids, we shall be in time to catch Figgins at tea."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on, then," said Tom Merry.

And the juniors hurried out of the study and down the passage. Skimpole rubbed his enormous forehead in a thoughtful sort of way.

"They do not take much interest in my invention, so far," he murmured. "But I must not repine. All great geniuses are misunderstood and derided by the common herd, and I cannot expect to be more fortunate than the rest. But when my airship is completed they will open their eyes."

The juniors went down the passage, and Blake called in at the door of Study No. 6 for Digby and Herries. Then they left the School House and crossed the quadrangle in the red glow of the setting July sun, towards the New House—the rival house at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 2.

In the Neck!

FIGGINS sat in his study in the New House at St. Jim's, looking with a disparaging eye at the tea-table. It was rather late for tea, and Figgins was hungry. He had been at practice at the nets, and exercise always improved his appetite, naturally a good one. But the aspect of the tea-table was far from promising. There was half a loaf, and there was a fragment of butter floating in a basin of water. There were six sardines arranged upon a plate to make the best possible show.

"I thought you said tea was ready, Fatty," said Figgins, glancing from the tea-table to Fatty Wynn, and from Fatty Wynn back to the tea-table.

"So it is," said Fatty.

"Then where is it?"

"On the table."

"If you call that tea," said Figgins, "you're a chap who's more easily satisfied than I am. I'm hungry. Where's the rest of the loaf?"

"I had a snack before you came in."

"Where's the butter?"

"I suppose you don't expect me to eat dry bread?" said Fatty Wynn, in an injured tone. "If you expect that, Figgy—"

"Where's the sardines?"

"There they are—on the plate. Can't you see them?"

"Do they go six to a tin now?" asked Figgins sarcastically.

"Well, I had a few with the bread-and-butter."

"Where are the pork pies?"

"They're gone, too. I get so fearfully hungry in this July weather."

"Where are the beef patties?"

"I'm afraid there aren't any left, Figgins."

"Then you'd better trot out the cake. Cake isn't much to make a meal of, but it's better than nothing. We're too late for the tea in hall. Trot out the cake."

The Falstaff of the New House coloured uncomfortably.

"I'm afraid there isn't any cake either, Figgy."

"What!" howled Figgins. "Have you scoffed a two-pound cake, too?"

"Now, don't exaggerate, Figgins. It wasn't more than a pound and three-quarters at the most. Stick to the facts, old fellow."

"I suppose I shall have to nibble the biscuits, then," grunted Figgins. "Nice thing for a fellow to come in hungry from the cricket-field, and have to feed on biscuits. Well, get them out."

"You see, Figgins—"

"Why don't you get them out?"

"You see, there aren't any."

"Aren't any biscuits?"

"No. I get so fearfully hungry in this July weath—"

Figgins rose to his feet wrathfully.

"I'm going to change studies," he said. "I'm not going to dig with a human cormorant any longer. What do you say, Kerr?"

"Quite right," said Kerr, the Scottish partner in the Co. "This is a little bit too thick."

"I think you're very unreasonable," said Fatty Wynn. "You'd be sorry if I died of hunger and you found me dead in the study."

"It would be a great strain off the housekeeping, anyway," grunted Figgins. "What are we going to do for tea? That's what I want to know."

"There are some sardines."

"Three each for Kerr and me."

"Oh, don't be a pig, Figgy! Fair's fair. I'm as hungry as you are."

"What! After eating enough for a regiment of Dragoons!"

"It was only a snack, really; and I get so hungry."

Figgins burst into a laugh.

"Well, you can finish the lot, Fatty!" he exclaimed. "By Jove, you ought to be put under a glass case and sent to the new exhibition as the latest of freaks!"

"Oh, I say, Figgy!"

"And the public could feed you with pound cakes and joints of beef, as they feed the monkeys with biscuits at the Zoo!"

"Oh, really—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Kerr, who happened to be glancing out of the window at that moment. "Here come those School House bounders!"

Figgins looked out of the window. The chums of Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three were crossing the quadrangle together, evidently on the best of terms. Figgins forgot all about the tea immediately.

"They're coming here!" he exclaimed. "That means a raid, I suppose. They're never on good terms with one another except when they've got something up against us. Let's salute them as they go by."

Figgins picked up the plate of sardines. Fatty Wynn jumped up in alarm.

"Figgy! You're not going to waste good grub!"

"Oh, rats!" said Figgy.

The School House chums were passing nearly under the window. Figgins gave the plate a jerk, and the sardines scattered over them. The juniors jumped, and there was a wail of anguish from Arthur Augustus D'Arey. He had been bending forward to flick a speck of dust from his shining boots, and one of the sardines had lodged in the inside of his high white collar.

"Ow! Yow! G-r-r-roo!"

Blake looked up quickly, and saw the grinning face of Figgins at the window. Tom Merry rubbed his face where a greasy sardine had streaked it.

"You rotter!" he howled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Figgins. "That's our tea, and you're welcome to it. It's our treat. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" gasped D'Arey. "Somethin' has gone down the back of my beastly neck! It feels howwibly cold and clammy!"

"It's all right," said Figgins. "It's only a sardine!"

"A—a sardine! You howwid wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway help me, deah boys," wailed D'Arey. "I shall be gweasy all ovah. My shirt will smell of sardine. I feel howwidly clammy already. Pway extwaect that howwid fish from my beastly back."

"I can't get down the back of your neck, for one," said Tom Merry. "I'll get a cricket stump and grope for it, if you like."

"I wefuse to allow anythin' of the sort!"

"Shake yourself, and it will slide down," said Figgins.

"I wefuse to shake myself. I wegard you as a beast. I suppose I shall have to take my jacket and collar off, and search for the howwid thing. I shall give you a feahful thwashin' for this, Figgins."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. were roaring with laughter at the window. Fatty Wynn no longer regretted the loss of the sardines. The School House boys could not help grinning at the expression upon the aristocratic countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arey. It was not pleasant to get a sardine down the back of the neck, and Figgins had not intended it; but D'Arey's horrified wriggles were certainly funny.

The swell of the School House unfastened his collar and tie and tore off his jacket. His waistcoat followed, and then he begged Blake to search for the fish.

Blake shook his head.

"You'll have to take your shirt off, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake, it is pwactically impos. to take my shirt off in public. Suppose any ladies were to pass this way?"

"Well, your face would frighten them, anyway," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowtah—"

"Unless you're going to keep that fish about you as a keep-sake, you'd better take your shirt off," said Blake. "I can't wait here all night."

"Are you quite sure that we are unobserved, deah boys?" asked D'Arey anxiously. "It is impos. for me to allow that howwid sardine to remain where it is."

"My dear kid, there's nobody in sight. Taggles is looking out of his window, but you needn't mind Taggles."

"I do not mind Taggles. I was thinkin' that pewwaps Cousin Ethel might pass."

"Cousin Ethel is gone to the village," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, but she might return."

"Then hurry up before she does," said Blake.

"Vewy well. I suppose I had better do so; but I shall certainly give Figgins a feahful thwashin' for this shockin' out-waite."

The chums stood round in a ring while D'Arey dragged off

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THURSDAY:

"TOM'S TERRIBLE TIME."

A Double-Length Tale of the
Chums of St. Jim's.

his white shirt. The sardine whisked out with it, and fell to the ground; and at the same moment there was a yell of alarm from Monty Lowther.

"Look out!"

"Bai Jove! What——"

"Cousin Ethel!"

D'Arcy gave a gasp of horror. A slim, graceful, girlish form had entered the gates of St. Jim's, and was passing along the path to the School House. It was Cousin Ethel—D'Arcy's cousin—who was staying for a few days with Mrs. Holmes at the School.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, "wally woud me, you fellows, and keep me out of sight, for goodness' sake."

CHAPTER 3.

Arthur Augustus Stands Tread.

THE School House lads rallied round D'Arcy in a moment. They rallied round him so suddenly and energetically that he was jammed in the midst of them, and most of the breath was jammed out of him.

"Ow! Pway don't be so wuff," he gasped, "I am quite bweathless. I weally only wish you to conceal me from observation."

"She's looking this way," said Lowther.

"Bai Jove!"

"She's coming this way."

"Pway stand in the way, you fellows, while I get my jacket on. Stuff that beastly shirt undah your coat, Mannahs. This is simply howwid."

D'Arcy simply jumped into the jacket and waistcoat. Manners concealed the shirt, which there was no time for the unfortunate School House swell to don. Without a collar or tie D'Arcy did not look much like his usual natty self. Cousin Ethel came towards the juniors with a bright smile on her face.

"I had a letter from your old governess this afternoon, Merry," she said, "I suppose you have heard from her too."

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"She is going to get permission from the Head to take you to the Franco-British Exhibition at Shepherd's Bush, and she is going to take me also."

"Hurrah!"

"My hat," said Blake. "This is all right. We're going, you know, the four of us, with little Lathom—Mr. Lathom, our Form-master, you know. It will be awfully jolly to have you with us."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"Then it will be jolly, for I am coming."

"Wippin', bai Jove."

"I did not see you, Arthur," said Ethel, looking at her cousin in amazement. "Whatever are you doing without a collar on?"

"I—you see—that is—you see——"

"It's a new idea of Gussy's," explained Monty Lowther. "He thinks high collars unhealthy, and he's going to give them up in future."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"As a matter of fact," said Manners, "he has adopted Skimpole's Socialistic ideas, and he has made up his mind never to wear a clean collar again——"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

Cousin Ethel laughed again. D'Arcy was crimson.

"Pway don't attach any importance to the statements of these wottahs, Cousin Ethel," he said, "I have had a most unfortunate expwience——"

"Dear me, I shall be late for tea," said Cousin Ethel. "Good-bye."

"Yes, but weally——"

"Good-bye, Cousin Ethel."

The juniors took off their caps, and the girl walked away. D'Arcy glowered at his companions.

"I wegard you as a set of wottahs," he exclaimed, "I look upon Figgins as the same."

"Oh, dear," said Figgins. "He regards me as a set of rotters——"

"I mean I wegard these beasts as a set of wottahs, and you as anothah wottah, Figgins. I have been placed in a widiculous position."

"Well, that's nothing new, Gussy."

"I wegard that wemark as impertinent, Tom Mewwy. I have been made to appeah widiculous, and I wegard you as a set of wottahs for not standin' by me. And I am goin' to thwash Figgins."

"It's pax, Gussy——"

"It is not pax, Blake. Figgins has assailed me in a howwid and disgustin' mannah by hurlin' sardines at me——"

"My dear ass——"

"I wefuse to be alluded to as an ass."

"We've come over here on a friendly visit——"

"I cannot help that, Tom Mewwy. Figgins has placed me in a widiculous position, and as I am bound to show a pwopah wegard for my dig, I have no alternative but to thwash him."

"Look here——"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I have no alternative but to give Figgins a feahful thwashin'."

And Arthur Augustus ran into the New House. Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Come on, kids," he exclaimed, "let's follow him. I be. Hieve Gussy will be the death of me some day."

The School House boys entered the house. Gussy had already disappeared upstairs. They followed, and as they drew near Figgins' study they heard sounds of anguish proceeding from it.

"Pway don't be such a wuff beast, Figgins."

"Ha, ha!" chuckled Tom Merry. "That doesn't sound as if it's Figgins that's getting the fearful thrashing, does it?"

The School House boys looked into the study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in the clutches of Figgins & Co., and they were gently and thoughtfully rubbing his face on the hearth-rug. The swell of St. Jim's was struggling furiously, but he was helpless in the grasp of the three sturdy New House juniors.

"Pway welease me," gasped D'Arcy, "wescue, deah boys! I am suffewin' dweadfully! I shall nevah get my face clean again! Wescue!"

"Can't be did," said Blake.

Figgins & Co. had looked up warily as the chums came in, but the latter did not offer to interfere.

"Wescue——"

"Impossible, kid. We've come here to have a friendly talk with Figgins & Co., and if you choose to cut up rough after he's made you a present of his last sardine——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"We're willing to overlook the whole matter if D'Arcy apologises," said Figgins, with a wink at Blake.

D'Arcy gave a howl of indignation.

"You wottah! The apology is due to me."

"No good standing on a trifle like that," said Blake, "you had better apologise to Figgins and have done with it."

"Weally——"

"We're willing to accept an apology," said Kerr, "otherwise we are bound to rub Gussy's nose off on the hearth-rug. We're doing this out of a proper regard for our dig."

"Exactly," said Figgins.

"Undah the cires, I apologise," gasped D'Arcy. "Pway welease me. I still considah, howevah, that the apology was weally due to me."

"Oh, you can considah what you like," said Figgins, generously, "there's no law against that. So long as you've apologised it's all right."

D'Arcy picked himself up and rubbed his face ruefully. The Co. had pretended to be rougher than they really were, and the School House swell was not hurt. But he was certainly very dirty.

"Now, to come to business," said Blake. "We came over here for a friendly chat——"

"You ought to have explained that before I chucked the sardines," grinned Figgins.

"You didn't give us time, ass."

"Well, come to think of it, I suppose I didn't! What have you come over in such a friendly way about. Want us to help you in something?"

"I suppose you know that grub is low here, and you're going to stand a feed," said Fatty Wynn, "I take that as really decent of you——"

"Nothing of the sort."

"Well, if it isn't a feed, what is it? I don't see why you should come here and waste our time for nothing," said Wynn, with a very dissatisfied look.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Come to think of it, it's not a bad idea," he said, "if you chaps haven't had tea, come along to the tuckshop, and D'Arcy will stand a big feed to show that there's no ill-feeling."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"He's had a fever from his governor, and he's simply dying to blow it. He owes you some reparation, too, for his ungraciousness over that present you made him of sardines."

"Undah the cires——"

"Good," exclaimed Figgins, heartily. "Gussy is an ass, but I don't mind that. I accept his invitation with all my heart."

"Weally, Figgins——"

"So do I," said Kerr, with equal heartiness, "D'Arcy's manners want improving, I admit, but I wouldn't refuse to feed with him because of that."

"Weally, Kerr——"

"Rather not," exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "Come along, chaps. This is really very decent of Gussy. He has his good points."

"Weally——"

"That's all right, old chap," said Figgins, linking his arm affectionately in D'Arcy's, "no need for words—we understand perfectly. Come on."

"I am quite willin' to stand tweek, but——"

"Of course you are. Come on."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was marched off to the tuck-shop. The juniors, on the best of terms, were soon feasting on the best that Dame Taggles could supply. They drank D'Arcy's health as founder of the feast, in ginger pop and currant wine, and the swell of the School House was soon blandly smiling again. He was never angry for long; his phases of indignation were frequent but brief.

"Pway ordah what you like, deah boys," he beamed. "You are wathah a set of wottahs, but you are vewy welcome."

"Good," said Figgins. "And now, what did you chaps come over to the New House to jaw about?"

"We're going to the Franco-British Exhibition to-morrow," said Tom Merry.

"Rats!"

"Fact! Little Lathora is taking these four kids——"

"These four what?" demanded Study No. 6, with one voice.

"These four young gentlemen of the Fourth Form," said Tom Merry, gracefully correcting himself, "and we three are going with Miss Fawcett and Cousin Ethel."

"Oho! I thought I heard Cousin Ethel say something about going somewhere, at the window," said Figgins. "Well, you are in luck."

"Yes, rather," said Kerr. "I wish we were going too."

"Rather," said Fatty Wynn.

There was no trace of envy in the tones of the New House juniors. They wished they had been going, but they were glad all the same that the School House fellows were going to have a treat, although it was denied to them.

"That's what we came over to talk about," said Tom Merry. "Can't it be fixed somehow? Lathora is taking four, so I suppose you can't very well ask him, and of course Miss Fawcett couldn't ask for you. But your housemaster——"

Figgins shook his head glumly.

"No go," he replied. "Old Ratty doesn't like us much. No good asking him anything. Besides, we haven't distinguished ourselves lately, as a matter of fact, by anything in the line of hard work."

"Well, then, if you can't get the whole day, it's a half-holiday to-morrow," said Tom Merry. "Suppose you came up for the half day."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Good wheeze," exclaimed Blake. "It's only an hour in the train, and about half an hour to get to Shepherd's Bush. The Head would excuse you for being late for calling over for once. Lathora would speak a word for you."

"It's a good wheeze," said Figgins, thoughtfully. "There's no rule against kids going anywhere they like, I suppose, though they are supposed to keep in the usual bounds. There was a fellow expelled for going on a racecourse on a half-holiday, but that was because it was a blackguardly place. Going to an exhibition is different."

"Yaas, wathah."

"If it means a row we can stand it," said Kerr.

"Certainly. We'd bolt in the morning at any risk, only there's that promise we gave to the Head that time," said Figgins. "Can't break that. But we can spend the afternoon as we like if we choose to risk it."

"Then you'll come?"

"Yes, rather," said Figgins. "I don't see why we shouldn't, and it will be jolly, anyway. We'll meet you at Shepherd's Bush."

"Good! I don't know the place, but I suppose we can meet at the bandstand. We shall be sure to find that easily enough."

"It's settled."

"Keep it dark, though," said Blake warningly. "If your housemaster got a sniff of what you meant to do he'd detain you for the afternoon. That's Ratty's style."

"I know that," said Figgins ruefully. "It's a dead secret until after dinner to-morrow. Then we'll leave the school as if going for a stroll, and walk down to the railway station in Rylecombe, and then——"

"And then we shall be off," said Kerr.

"Good!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I'm jolly glad you are coming. We'll look out for you after lunch to-morrow round the bandstand. It's ripping."

And so it was settled.

CHAPTER 4.

D'Arcy's Preparations

"MY dear, darling Tommy!"

"Miss Priscilla!"

"My sweetest angel boy!"

"Yes, but——"

"My dear little darling!"

Miss Priscilla hugged Tom Merry in the full view of a dozen delighted juniors. Tom Merry turned red, but he did not resist. Miss Fawcett hugged him, and then held him out at arm's length to look at him, and then hugged him again.

"You are looking quite well, Tommy."

"I'm feeling pretty fit," said Tom.

"Have you taken all the purple pills I sent you?"

"The—the—purple pills!"

"And the Terra-cotta Tabloids for Pining People?"

"The—the tabloids——"

"And Dr. Bones's specials?"

"The—the specials——"

"Have you any of the pills left, Tommy?"

"No, I haven't any left, dear," said Tom Merry, truthfully enough; for all Miss Fawcett's patent remedies for imaginary ailments had been consigned to the nearest dustbin immediately upon receipt.

"Then that is why you are looking so well," said Miss Fawcett. "Do you remember that the last time I saw you you were looking very pale."

"N-n-no, I don't remember."

"Yes, you were, and I was alarmed for you. I thought perhaps you had overstrained your darling strength in kicking those dreadful goals at cricket."

"Ha, ha! I mean, I'm all right."

"Have you always kept out of those fearful scrummages on the cricket-field, as you undertook to do, Tommy darling?"

"I haven't been in a scrimmage on the cricket-field all the time I've been at St. Jim's, dear."

"That's my own careful darling. I have great hopes that you will grow to be quite strong some day."

The champion athlete of the Shell Form at St. Jim's grinned. Miss Priscilla would probably never lose the belief that he was a tender little infant requiring constant care and supervision.

"I'm pretty strong now, dear," said Tom Merry.

"Ah, appearances are deceptive. Do you feel equal to coming to London to-day to see the exhibition."

"Well, rather!"

"I am so glad. Has the Head spoken to you about it?"

"Yes, he told us last night that we might go," said Tom Merry.

"That is very kind of him. I must go at once and thank him. Will you prepare for the journey. You will come to the station in the cab which is waiting with your two friends."

"Mr. Lathora is coming, too."

"Who is Mr. Lathora?"

"The master of the Fourth Form here."

"Ah, yes, I remember meeting him now. A little kind gentleman in glasses, I believe. I suppose the Head is sending him to see that you come to no harm. That is very kind and thoughtful of Dr. Holmes."

"No," said Tom Merry, grinning. "The Head doesn't regard me as quite so important a person as I really am, you know. Little Lathora is taking a party of Fourth Formers—Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy and Dig."

"That will be very pleasant. The cab will not hold so many."

"Mr. Lathora will go with the Fourth Form kids in the trap. I'll get ready now. I've only just had breakfast. Have you breakfasted?"

"Oh, yes, very early at Laurel Villa. I must go and see the Head now, and my dear Ethel. Ethel told you she was coming?"

"Oh, yes!"

"It will be very nice. Between us we shall be able to look after you, and see that you come to no harm."

"Oh, I say," said Tom Merry, rather dismayed at the idea of being looked after by an old lady and a young girl, "draw it mild, you know. We are going to look after you."

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy, who came along just then. "We shall take pwopah care of you, you may be sure, Miss Pwiscilla. You and Cousin Ethel will be undah our pwotection."

Miss Fawcett looked rather doubtfully at the swell of the School House, and walked away for her interview with the Head.

D'Arcy was dressed in an extremely elegant fashion, and evidently meant to astonish the natives of Shepherd's Bush and the other visitors to the exhibition. The crease in his trousers and the shininess of his boots were only equalled by the height and whiteness of his collar and the gorgeoussness of his waistcoat. Tom Merry looked at him and grinned, and D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eyes and returned his look.

"Do you think I look wathah nice, Tom Mewwy?"

"Oh, yes, ripping!" said Tom Merry.

"You see, it's necessary for some of us to keep up the cwedit of the coll," said D'Arcy. "You chaps are satisfied with goin' about like a lot of wagamuffins, but I weally think there ought to be one well-dressed chap to give a tone to the party."

"Of course," assented Tom Merry. "There's some risk in your going, of course."

"How is that, deah boy?"

"There are a lot of performing monkeys there, and you might get mixed up with them, and we mightn't be able to sort you out again."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

Tom Merry walked off laughing. There were several other



"Ow!" gasped D'Arcy, "Somethin' has gone down the back of my beastly neck! It feels howiwldly cold and clammy!" "Oh, it's only a sardine," yelled Figgins.

fellows laughing, too, in the passage; but Miss Priscilla's greeting was the subject of their merriment.

"Hallo, Tommy darling," said Gore, as Tom Merry passed him. "What price ancient governesses?"

"He, he, he!" giggled Mellish.

Tom Merry turned round.

"What's that, Gore?"

"Tommy darling—ow!"

Tom Merry's fist came straight out, and Gore reeled against Mellish. The two of them rolled over, and sat up looking dazed.

Tom Merry looked at them for a moment or two, waiting for Gore to get up, but he did not do so, and the hero of the Shell walked on. The fellows in the passage were still laughing, but the laugh was against Gore now. At the door of the dining-hall Tom Merry met Skimpole coming out.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Are you coming?"

The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's nodded.

"Yes, I am coming. The Head has given me permission."

"Good! Though I'm blessed if I know why."

"Well, the fact is, Merry, that the way the Head put it was not exactly complimentary," said Skimpole. "He said that he was glad to see me taking an interest in so sensible a matter as mechanics, as it showed that I was ceasing to trouble my head about things too old for my years—or something to that effect. He meant Socialism and Determinism, of course. He doesn't understand that the brain power of a Fellow in the Shell may sometimes exceed that of the head of a school."

"Ho, ha!"

"Still, he has given me permission, and that is the great thing. I thought it would be more judicious, under the circumstances, to mention nothing in connection with the airship I am inventing."

"Well, that was judicious," assented Tom Merry. "No need to go around telling people that you're off your rocker."

"Really, Merry—"

"You'd better get ready. We've got to catch an early train from Rylocombe to get to the exhibition in the morning."

"Certainly. I will hurry."

The Terrible Three had few preparations to make. They came along the passage towards Study No. 6 a little later, and Blake met them near his room.

"Just coming to look for you," he said. "The trap's come round. Little Lathom is ready, and we're ready. Gussy has gone into the study again for something. I say, Gussy, do you want to be left behind?"

"Certainly not, deah boy," came back the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy through the half-open door of Study No. 6.

"Then buck up!"

"I am quite weady. Will you come and lend me a hand with this twunk?"

"What?"

"Will you come and lend me a hand with this twunk?"

"Eh?"

"Weally, Blake, I am sorry to see that you are growin' deaf. Will you come and lend me a hand with this twunk?"

"I'll come and lend you a hand," grunted Blake, striding

into the study, followed by Tom Merry, laughing. "Now then, you ass—"

"Pway do not be wude, Blake. Lend me a hand like a good fellow," said D'Arcy, "I can cawwy the hatbox myself, but I should like a hand with the trunk."

Blake surveyed D'Arcy's preparations wrathfully. The swell of the School House had packed and strapped a small leather trunk and had a hatbox in his hand.

"You—you are going to take those with you!" gasped Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, dear boy. I am being modewate in the mattah as we are only goin' for one day."

"What have you got in that hatbox?"

"One toppah, deah boy."

"Only one! Why don't you take two or three?" asked Tom Merry humorously.

"I should greatly pfer to do so, Tom Mewwy, in case of accidents; but I believe in cawwyin' vewy little luggage when-evah poss," said D'Arcy. "You see, it would be a bothah havin' a lot of things to look after."

"That's all right," said Blake; "you won't have those things to look after. I'll look after them for you."

"Thank you very much, Blake. That is a weally good idea, as I shall be lookin' atfah Cousin Ethel most of the time. I have only one change of linen and a few clean collars in the trunk, as well as another waistcoat—in case of accidents—and my dwessin'—case and a few—"

"Is that all?"

"That's all, deah boy. You can't cawwy much on a day's journey, you know. It would be different if we were goin' for three or four days."

"What do you want this topper for?"

"To wear, dear boy. A chap must look wespectable sometimes even at an exhibition."

"Are you going to wear it along with the panama you have on your head?"

"I wegard that as a widiculous question. This panama will roll up vewy small, and one of you fellows can cawwy it for me—"

"And until then we can carry the silk topper?"

"Pwecisely."

"I won't knock your head off, Gussy—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Because it's too hot; but if you don't immediately come out, and leave all this rubbish here, I shall jam your napper against the wall."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Very well," said Blake, "I said I'd look after these things for you, and so I will. Here goes for a start."

He picked up the hat-box, and dropped it, and took a kick at it as it dropped, as if it were a ball on the rugger-field.

The hatbox crashed against the opposite wall of the study.

D'Arcy gave a wail of horror.

"Blake! My toppah! My toppah! Blake!"

"Now we'll jump on the trunk," said Blake. "Come on Tom Merry, your feet are bigger than mine. By Jove, I wish Figgins were here!"

D'Arcy dragged the trunk away just in time.

"Blake, are you off your wookah?"

"You're not going to bring any luggage along," said Blake.

"You're coming just as you are. You can do without a topper for one day."

"Imposs."

"Well, I don't want to be hard," said Blake. "You can change that panama for a topper if you prefer it, and if you can do it in one minute."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Buck up! Waste another minute, and I'll lock you in the study, and we'll go without you!" exclaimed Blake.

"I should uttably wefuse to be locked in the beastly study—"

"Buck up!" roared Blake.

"If you weally insist, I suppose I must wear the toppah, but weally—"

"Half a minute gone."

D'Arcy opened the hat box, brushed the topper, and put it on his head.

Blake picked up the panama the School House swell laid upon the table.

"This just about suits my style of beauty," he remarked. "I'll wear it to-day instead of my cap, if you don't mind. I can't afford to buy a real panama, but there's no reason why I shouldn't wear yours that I can see."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, come on! We shall be late for the train!"

D'Arcy, looking rather worried, quitted the study with Blake and Tom Merry. To start on a journey without even a clean collar in case of accidents was a weight on his mind. But Blake was inexorable.

The trap was waiting, and Mr. Lathom was sitting in it beside the groom.

Herries and Digby were already in their seats. Blake and D'Arcy climbed in, and at the same time Cousin Ethel came out with Miss Priscilla, and Tom Merry handed them into the station cab.

Figgins & Co. were standing outside the New House looking on, and they waved their caps as the vehicles drove off. Then they went in unrepining to morning lessons.

CHAPTER 5.

To London.

"BAI Jove, the twain's in!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "And it's just starting!"

The two vehicles were rattling up to the station. A train whistle had rent the air, and the alarm from D'Arcy followed.

"It's all right!" exclaimed Blake, as the cab and trap halted. "I'll buzz on ahead, and keep it back."

"Hang on to it!" called out Tom Merry, as he assisted Cousin Ethel from the cab. "Hold it back!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake bolted into the station. He ran right into the fat station-master, and bowled him over like a ninepin. Unheeding, he dashed on.

After him went the juniors on the run. If the train started without them it would mean an hour's wait for the next, and that would be an hour gone from the time spent at the exhibition.

Miss Priscilla and Cousin Ethel did not run, and Tom Merry walked quietly with them; but Arthur Augustus was rushing on after Blake, and the other juniors streamed after him, determined that the train should wait for the party if they had to rag the guard and keep the engine back by main force.

D'Arcy reached the top of the flight of steps leading to the platform, and then turned and calmly waved his hand to the excited juniors.

"It's all right!" he announced. "The twain isn't moving."

"You—you—" gasped Monty Lowther—"You said it was starting before we got out of the cab."

"Yaas, I thought it was. I suppose it was weally coming into the station when I thought it was goin' out."

"You—you—"

"It was wathah funny, wasn't it?"

Blake and Digby seized the swell of the School House by the throat, and backed him against an automatic machine.

"You funny merchant," said Blake. "I'll teach you to give a false alarm, and—"

"Pway, release me! You are wumplin' my collah!"

"I'll rumple your neck—"

"Dear me! What is the matter?"

Blake and Digby released D'Arcy as suddenly as if he had all at once become red-hot, as Miss Priscilla and Cousin Ethel came on the platform.

"It's—it's all wight!" gasped D'Arcy.

"The train's here," said Tom Merry. "I had an idea that it wasn't starting. Here's a carriage that will suit us. It's a through train fortunately, and we don't have to change at Wayland. Bundle in, you kids!"

"Who are you calling kids?"

"Oh, don't argue! What's the matter with you, Gussie?"

"Blake has soiled my collah!"

"Serve you right. In you go!"

Tom Merry had handed in Miss Fawcett and Cousin Ethel. The juniors followed fast. D'Arcy glanced round the carriage.

"I say, this cawwiage only seats eight!" he exclaimed. "I am afraid it will be impos to cwam ten into it."

"Make it nine, then," said Monty Lowther. "You can trgvcl in another carriage."

"I should certainly wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Then ring off!"

"I wefuse to wing off. I considah—"

"I am sure we can find room for the whole party, Arthur," said Cousin Ethel, pouring oil on the troubled waters as usual.

"Yaas, wathah, Ethel, if you pwfer it," said D'Arcy at once.

"Don't tread on my feet, please, Skimpole. You are spoilin' my boots!"

"I am sorry," said Skimpole. "I did not see your boots, D'Arcy. I think I will put my book on the rack for the present."

The short-sighted Skimpole reached up to the rack with a huge volume in his hand, and laid it on the edge, so that it toppled off the moment he let go of it. It crashed down upon Arthur Augustus, and knocked his hat over his eyes.

The School House swell gave a yell.

"Oh, my hat! You clumsy ass!"

"I am sorry!"

"Bai Jove, if it were not for the pwesence of the ladies, I should give you a feashful thwashin'!" said D'Arcy. "You have made a dent in the side of my hat, and it looks wotten. I say, Blake—"

"All in?" said Blake cheerfully. "Right-ho! Shut the door!"

The guard slammed the door as he was speaking, and the train began to move. The carriage was crowded, but every face was jolly except that of the swell of St. Jim's.

"I say, Blake——"

"Do you, Gussy? I've heard you make that remark before, I believe," said Blake. "It's a glorious day, isn't it, kids?"

"Ripping," said Tom Merry. "The best we've had this July."

"I say, Blake, upon second thoughts——"

"It's not too hot and not too cold," said Lowther. "It will be all right in the grounds at the exhibition, I can tell you. They call it the White City, and there's a mountain railway and a giddy lagoon."

"I say, Blake, upon second thoughts, I will wear my panama hat to-day."

"Then upon third thoughts, you won't," said Blake coolly.

"I've left my cap at St. Jim's now, my son."

"Skimpole has made a dent in my silk hat."

"Pooh, that doesn't matter!"

"Doesn't it? If you think I am goin' around in a Fwanco-British Exhibition in a damaged silk toppah, Blake, you are labourin' under a gweat mistake."

"Then you had better join the hatless brigade," said Blake. "I'm not parting with the panama hat to-day. It suits me rippingly."

"You can have the toppah."

"But you said it was damaged."

"So it is, but not more than your toppahs usually are, anyway. And besides, it doesn't so much mattah about your hat, and——"

"My dear kid, only a silly ass would take a silk hat out on a holiday," said Blake. "You can keep your toppah."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Don't say any more, old fellow. I like this panama. And besides, I look good-looking in it, and you—well, you know what you look like."

"I wergard that remark as wude."

"Jolly cool, these hats," said Blake. "Keep the sun off your face, too. I say, the train is tearing, isn't it? We shall soon be in London at this rate. My only hat, or rather, D'Arcy's only hat!"

"What's the matter now?"

"Where's Lathom?"

"Phew!"

"He's not here."

Tom Merry laughed.

"The last I saw of him he was arguing with the station-master who bowled over, Blake," he remarked. "I didn't see him get into the train."

"I didn't either."

"It is extremely prob. that he is left behind," said D'Arcy. "He will come on by a lath twain, I suppose."

"Dear me!" said Miss Priscilla Fawcett, looking distressed. "I am sorry he is left behind. I was having a most interesting chat with him before we left the school about my darling Tommy at the time he was cutting his teeth."

Tom Merry turned red. It was much to the credit of the juniors that not one of them grinned.

Cousin Ethel was grave as a judge.

"I intended to continue that pleasant chat in the train," said Miss Fawcett.

"I don't think he's left behind," said Skimpole, blinking. "I saw him get into the next carriage. He had a newspaper in his hand."

Tom Merry could not help smiling. Mr. Lathom evidently preferred his newspaper to the promised information upon the subject of the cutting of Tom Merry's early teeth. And Tom did not blame him.

The train rushed on.

Manners brought out a pocket set of chess, and commenced to teach Cousin Ethel the game. The other juniors looked on enviously. Then they started working out chess problems, and Skimpole, of course, as the brainiest member of the party, had a brilliant contribution to make to the discussion.

"I know a ripping problem," he said, rubbing his bumpy forehead thoughtfully. "I don't know if I quite remember it. Let me see. I don't play chess very well, but I think it runs something like this. Pawn to king's fourth, check with the knight, take away the number you first thought of, and serve with sugar and cream to taste—no, that's not quite right."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "I don't think it can be, Skimmyn. You'd better stick to airships, and let chess problems alone."

The chess-board whiled away the journey wonderfully. At last came the final stop of the train, and a porter's voice bawled into the carriage:

"Chrnness!"

"Dear me," murmured Miss Priscilla, "I wonder what that means? Can it be a warning that there is danger of some kind?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"No. It means Charing Cross," he said. "And it's a warning that we have to get out."

"Oh, I see! How perspicacious of you, my dearest boy!"

They left the carriage.

Mr. Lathom stepped out of the adjoining one, and blushed a little under the eye of Miss Priscilla.

CHAPTER 6.

On the Motor-Bus.

"DEAR me, I was so afraid you were left behind," exclaimed Miss Fawcett, as she sighted the Fourth-form master on the crowded platform.

Mr. Lathom coloured.

"No—not at all," he murmured. "But—but so many in one carriage—ahem——"

"Ah, yes, that was very thoughtful of you."

"Yes—er—exactly."

"Now we've got to get to the exhibition," remarked Tom Merry.

"I think we had better go in a taxi," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy suggested.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Don't you think the taxi would be a little crowded with ten in it, Gussy?" he asked.

"Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that."

"We should want a procession of taxis," grinned Blake, "three or four. Better have a bus while we're about it."

"If my airship were perfected, all the difficulties of travelling would be avoided," murmured Skimpole. "At present, however——"

"At present we had better be content with railway trains," grinned Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah."

"We can—er—get a motor-bus here for the exhibition," said Mr. Lathom. "I think you boys would like that better."

"Yes, rather, sir."

"Then follow me."

They sallied out of the station. The crowds and the noise somewhat alarmed and scared Miss Priscilla, and she clung to Mr. Lathom with one arm and to Tom Merry with the other. Under these circumstances, she had to stow away her umbrella under one arm, somewhat to the danger of passers-by, some of whom gave the old lady stony glares as the umbrella jabbed them in the crowd.

Blake looked after Cousin Ethel. Tom Merry would gladly have done so, but duty kept him to the side of his old governess. Miss Priscilla was in a state of alarm, as much for him as for herself.

"Keep close to me, my darling," she murmured. "Don't let go of my arm, whatever you do. What would happen if you should get lost?"

"Oh, I darsay I should turn up again," said Tom Merry, cheerily.

"My dear child! You must be very, very careful not to get out of my sight."

"Oh, that's all right."

They emerged into the busy streets. Arthur Augustus waved his hand excitedly to the driver of the nearest motor-bus, and was indignant to see that the huge vehicle proceeded on its way unheeding.

"Bai Jove, that impertinent fellow wants weportin'," exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's. "I know he saw me wavin' my hand, for he grinned at me."

"They're not allowed to stop just here, I think," said Mr. Lathom.

"Oh, I nevah thought of that."

"You must come to the corner."

"Vewy good, sir."

They walked down to the corner. D'Arcy was leading the way up the steps of a motor-bus halted there, when Blake caught him by the tail of his jacket and jerked him back. D'Arcy caught hold of the rail for support, and turned his head indignantly.

"Blake, what are you jerkin' me like that for?"

"Come off."

"I wufuse to come off."

"Don't you see——"

"I see that you are wumplin' my jacket, and I insist upon your weleasin' me immediately."

"But——"

"The dwivah is just pweeparin' to start. You have hardly time to get on. Buck up, dear boys. Blake, you ass, let go my jacket or I shall lose my tempah and stwike you."

"I tell you——"

"The bus is startin' now."

Blake jumped on the step, still holding the exasperated swell of St. Jim's.

"You utter ass!" he roared. "This bus doesn't go to the exhibition. It goes to Putney."

"Does it weally, Blake?"

"Yes, ass. Get off."

"I'm afraid I can't get off while the vehicle is movin'. I might dwop in the woad and soil my clothes."

"You'll get off or I'll chuck you off."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Buck up now, before the thing gets on speed."

"Oh, vewy well, if you insist."

D'Arcy jumped off, and staggered along after the bus for a few paces, till he was pulled up by Blake, who had jumped off a moment later, and was quite steady on his feet.

"This way, ass."

"I wefuse to be called—"

"Oh, come on."

Blake dragged the swell of St. Jim's upon the path, followed by a volley of cabby language from a cabman who had nearly driven into them. D'Arcy turned on the kerb to argue the matter out with the cabman, but Blake dragged him along.

"Pway don't be so wuff—"

"Here we are," exclaimed Blake, rejoining the party. "D'Arcy would have been at Putney by this time if I hadn't rescued him. Can anybody lend me a bit of string to lead him about with?"

"I should uttably wefuse to be led about with a bit of string—"

"Let us go on," said little Mr. Lathom, mildly. "Here is our bus, and fortunately it is almost empty. Pray allow me to assist you, madam."

"Thank you. I am so nervous of motor-buses."

"Ah, perhaps you would rather have gone by train?"

"Oh, no. My little darling prefers riding on top of a bus. He is so given to taking dreadful risks, you know."

"Upstairs," said Monty Lowther, pressing up the steps.

"Come on Blake."

"I'm going inside," said Blake.

"Inside? why—"

"That's all right: you can go up."

Cousin Ethel had gone inside with Miss Priscilla, and Blake went in with Cousin Ethel. Tom Merry went on top with the rest of the juniors, and had the good luck to escape hearing Miss Fawcett relate to Mr. Lathom some thrilling episodes of his teething period—episodes which furnished a great deal of amusement to other passengers in the omnibus.

"Jolly up here, isn't it?" exclaimed Herries. "How busy London looks—bit different from Rylcombe!"

"Vewy different indeed," said Arthur Augustus. "The smell of the motor-buses is vewy offensive, howevah, and they make a tewwific noise."

"They didn't know you were coming," Monty Lowther remarked. "You shouldn't take the authorities by surprise in this manner. Give 'em time, next time you come, and—"

"Oh, weally, Lowther—"

"If we pass a hat shop," said D'Arcy, a minute or two later, "I should like to alight for a few minutes and purchase a new toppah. I feel most uncomfortable wearin' a toppah with a dent in the side."

"Good, and we'll hold the bus back while you make the purchase," said Manners. "If the driver tries to go on we'll rag him bald-headed."

"I suppose the dwivah would not be so inconsiderate as to wish to leave me behind, Mannahs."

"Of course not," said Tom Merry. "Just try him. When we pass a hat-shop, lean over the front and speak to him on the subject."

"Yaas, wathah."

D'Arcy kept his eyes well about him. A window set out with hats of every shape and size loomed into view. D'Arcy darted to the front of the bus and leaned over.

"I say, dwivah!"

The swell of St. Jim's had a view of the top of a chauffeur's cap, which did not move. The driver was too busily engaged steering his way through the traffic to pay any attention to the call from above.

"I say, dwivah, deah boy."

"He's deaf, I suppose," said Manners.

"Bai Jove, this is most annoyin', you know—we shall be passin' the beastly hat shop, and I shall be depwived of my opportunity of changin' my hat."

"Rotten!"

"Give him a clout over the head with your cane," suggested Digby.

"That is a weally good ideah, Dig."

D'Arcy reached down over the top of the bus with his cane. Tom Merry jerked him back just in time.

"Welease me, Tom Merry—"

"Ass!"

"I decline to be chawactewised as an ass. If the dwivah does not stop we shall have passed the hat-shop, and—"

"If you disturb the driver we may be into another bus in a second," growled Tom Merry. "You might get arrested too, you howling duffer."

"Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that."

"It's like Blake's cheek to go inside the bus and leave us to look after his tame lunatic," remarked Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Hullo, there's the Park," said Digby. "We're getting towards Shepherd's Bush now."

It was some time, however, before the motor-bus halted at Shepherd's Bush. But halt it did at last, and the whole party alighted. Mr. Lathom blinked round him through his glasses.

"Dear me, what an extremely large crowd," he murmured.

Miss Priscilla clung tight to Tom Merry's arm.

"Keep close to me, my darling."

"I say, dear—"

"Don't leave me. I shall feel so nervous about you."

"But really, my dear, I'm all right," said Tom Merry, colouring. "I've been to London before, you know, and quite on my own. Don't worry."

"Yes, but keep near me."

Mr. Lathom took the tickets for admission, and they entered the building. Although it was still the morning, there was a goodly attendance at the exhibition, and the crowd was quite large enough to keep Miss Fawcett in a constant state of alarm lest her darling Tommy should be lost.

CHAPTER 7.

At the Exhibition.

"PROGRAMME!"

"Certainly, youngstah."

D'Arcy bought a programme. He stopped in the middle of a moving crowd to read it, and looked round him indignantly as he was pushed and shoved.

"Pway don't push against me," he said, addressing a young man with a spotted tie and a straw hat on the back of his head.

The young man favoured him with a stare.

"Get outter the way, then," he said.

"Wats! There is plenty of woom for you to pass me, without pushin' against me in that wuff and altogethah inexcusable way," said D'Arcy, warmly.

"My 'at!" said the young man with the spotted tie. "'Ere's a cough-drop, Albert."

Another young man, in a spotted tie, and with his straw hat at the same angle, gave D'Arcy a stare and chuckled.

"Mother know you're out?" he inquired, in a friendly tone.

"I have not acquainted Lady Eastwood with my intention of visitin' the exhibition," said D'Arcy. "But I weally fail to see that it is any business of yours, anyway."

"Ha, ha, ha."

"I weward you as a pair of wude boundahs—"

"Knock 'is 'at off, 'Ebert."

"I wefuse to have my hat knocked off. I weally—"

D'Arcy's refusal would not have counted for much; but just then Blake and Tom Merry came up, and marched the swell of St. Jim's off. A chuckle from the two young men in the ties followed them.

"What are you up to, Gussy?" demanded Blake severely.

"Rowing the moment you set your hoofs inside the place."

"Weally, Blake—"

"That's Gussy's way," said Tom Merry. "Trust him to get into trouble. He's spoiling for a fight, I suppose."

"I am not spoiling for a fight," said D'Arcy. "Those persons tweated me with diswespect, and I should pwobably have chastised them."

"Chastisings are off. Come along!"

"I was lookin' at the pwogwamme."

"I've got one here. We're going into the grounds first. There are lots of things there—flip-flap, mountain railway, toboggan, and so on."

"Good, deah boy! But I wish you had not dwaggd me away. Those persons may think that I am afraid of them."

"Let them think so then."

"It would be an infwaetion of my dig."

"Wouldn't it be an infwaetion of your dig to be kicked out of the show for quarrelling?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Well, yaas, wathah."

"Then shut up!"

The party walked on into the grounds. The White City burst upon their view, and really it was a splendid sight in the blazing sun of July.

"Bai Jove, what a wippin' lagoon!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "And what a wippin' little boat. It's wathah a wippin' idea to have boats in the shape of swans, you know. It wemnds me of somethin' I've seen at the opewa—Lohengwin comin' in his boat dwawn by a swan, you know."

"I am afraid the boats will not be quite safe for you, my darling boys," said Miss Priscilla. "I observe that they are not provided with lifebelts."

There was a chuckle.

"The water is not deep, I believe," observed Mr. Lathom.

"But the deah boys might catch a chill if they were upset."

"Weally, there is no wisk of that," said D'Arcy. "I shall look aftah them, my deah Miss Fawcett. You may twust Tom Mewwy to me."

Tom Merry looked daggers at the obliging swell of St. Jim's.



Five other juniors, as well as Figgins, were pleased to see that glimmer of silver on Cousin Ethel's finger.

"We must be very careful not to be separated," said Miss Fawcett. "Are we all here now?"

Mr. Lathom looked round with a rather worried expression. He was the most good-natured of men, but Miss Priscilla's anxiety was beginning to weigh on his mind. He had willingly consented to accompany the good old lady and her protégés to the exhibition, but he began to feel now that he had taken on a big task.

"Are we all here, Merry?" he asked meekly.

Tom Merry looked round.

"I can't see Skimpole," he said.

"Skimpole! Where are you, Skimpole?"

The brainy man of the party was not to be seen. Skimpole was gone, and no one had noticed him go. Miss Fawcett looked distressed.

"Is it possible that he has been crushed to death in the crowd, do you think, Mr. Lathom?" she asked anxiously.

"No, I don't," said Mr. Lathom, with a slight touch of tartness. "I suppose he has walked away to look at something, and is quite well and safe."

"Some accident may befall him."

"I think I can guess where he is," Monty Lowther chuckled. "You know we passed through the aerostatics department as we came in. Skimpole is inventing a flying-machine, and so he was bound to stop there."

"It is quite possible," said Mr. Lathom. "If you wish, Miss Fawcett, I will go and look for Skimpole. Don't wait for me; I can trust Miss Fawcett to look after you boys, and I am sure you will behave well and give her no trouble. I may be a considerable time before I see Skimpole, and I don't want to waste your time."

"Certainly, sir."

"It is so thoughtful of Mr. Lathom," said Miss Fawcett, as the Fourth Form master walked hastily away.

Tom Merry grinned. He had an idea that Mr. Lathom would not be in a hurry to find Skimpole and rejoin the party; but he did not say so.

"I think we might rest for a time on one of these seats," said Miss Fawcett, sinking upon a seat overlooking the shining lagoon. "It is very pleasant here."

"We are not tired," said Tom Merry.

"You must not overtax your strength, my darling."

"My strength is all right. Would you like to rest a little, dear, while we have a look round?" suggested Tom Merry. Miss Fawcett looked anxious and thoughtful.

"Are you sure you will not get lost?"

"Oh, yes; we can't get lost inside the exhibition, you know! Some of the attendants would find us if we got mislaid, and—"

"Don't joke on such a serious subject, Tommy darling. I remember once my fearful anxiety when you were lost as an infant."

"I don't remember."

"You were too young to remember. You were lost for about twenty minutes, and Hannah and I were terribly alarmed. Finally you were found in the garden."

"Yes," grinned Tom. "But I am older now."

"You are the same reckless darling—dear me, where is Ethel?"

"There she is, looking at the lagoon with Blake."

"I hope she will not go far away. Open my sunshade for me, darling. It is very comfortable here, and I can sit under

my sunshade and lean my head back and watch you, and see that you do not go too far away."

The sun was blazing and the sunshade was a relief. The railway journey had fatigued the old lady somewhat; but the boys, of course, were as active as monkeys and as merry as crickets.

"Where are the others?" asked Miss Fawcett, looking round.

"I do not see Digby or Herries."

"They've gone on a boat, I think."

"I hope they will meet with no accident."

"I think I had better go and look after them," said Tom Merry. "They're reckless young bounders, and we chaps in the Shell are supposed to look after the Fourth Formers, aren't we, Monty?"

"Yes, rather," said Lowther.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Come on then. You are quite comfy, dear?"

"Oh yes, quite, my darling! And I shall be glad to rest here for an hour or two while you play like good children," said Miss Fawcett.

"Ha, ha! I mean, all serene! Au revoir!"

And the juniors ran off before Miss Fawcett should change her mind. The good old lady nodded away under the sunshade.

"Come on," said Tom Merry. "We ought to see something and have something to talk about when Figgins & Co get here. What do you say to a run on a boat first?"

"Good!" said Manners. "Herries and Dig have gone on one of the swan boats. There goes Blake with Cousin Ethel on another."

"Hi! Stop a minute, Blake!"

Blake looked back.

"Can't," he said calmly. "Can't you see the boat's full up. There's a big one coming along."

The swan boat glided off. A larger craft, to hold a larger number of passengers was ready to start, and Tom Merry and his companions embarked.

"Bai Jove!" remarked D'Arcy. "Do you know I weally believe that Blake has awganged on purpose to cawwy off Cousin Ethel undah our beastly eyes, you know."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I know that, Gussy."

"Bai Jove, you know, it's like his feahful cheek!"

"Hallo, there's Dig!"

A boat passed the large craft, and a youth reached out with a stick and gave D'Arcy's hat a knock that brought it over his eyes. Arthur Augustus turned round in a flare of indignation, but grinned as he saw that his assaulter was Digby.

"Hallo!" said Digby cheerfully.

"Hallo, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "Pway, don't be so beastly wuffy, you know. That's the second knock my beastly hat has had."

"Give it another," said Herries. "There's luck in odd numbers, and—"

"Pway, don't do anythin' of the sort," said D'Arcy, holding his hat warily out of the reach of the playful Dig's cane. "I suppose you don't want me to go awound lookin' a fwright, do you?"

"I don't see how that can be helped in any case," remarked Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Hallo, window-pane!"

D'Arcy looked round. Another boat had overtaken them and was passing, and in it were seated Albert and 'Erbert, the two young gentlemen in the coloured ties, with whom D'Arcy had disputed at the entrance to the exhibition.

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass, thus irreverently alluded to as a window-pane, into his eye, and stared haughtily at the young men in the passing boat.

"Pway, keep your wude remarks to yourselves!" he exclaimed haughtily. "I wegard you as a pair of vulgah persons!"

"Knock 'is 'at off, Albert."

"Right you are, 'Erbert!"

Albert reached out a stick with a German silver knob on it, and D'Arcy's hat went flying into the boat.

"You wude beast!" roared D'Arcy. "Boatman, pway stop the boat for a few minutes while I give that wettah a feahful thwashin'!"

"He, he, he!" was the boatman's reply.

"Pway, stop!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom Merry. "The boat won't stop. Lucky your hat hasn't gone overboard."

"Vewy well, pewayw I shall meet those boundahs on shore," said D'Arcy glowering at the craft which was receding with the two grinning young gentlemen in the bright neckties. "Then I shall certainly pwoceed to give them both a feahful thwashin'. Pway, will you hand me my hat, sir?"

This request was addressed to a stout gentleman in loud checks, who was seated on the bench in front of D'Arcy, and at whose feet the hat had fallen beyond the reach of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Why don't you take care of your 'at?" demanded the stout gentleman.

"Weally, my deah sir, it has just been knocked off my head in a wuff mannah by a beastly boundah."

"Well then, why don't you take care of your 'at?"

"If you wouldn't mind handin' it to me—"

"Oh, 'ere it is!" said the stout gentleman, and he jammed his umbrella into the hat and hooked it over to D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's gave an anguished gasp.

"You wottah! You are wuinin' my hat!"

"Then why don't you take care of your 'at?" said the stout gentleman, whose ideas seemed to be somewhat limited. "There, the thing's gone now!"

D'Arcy had grabbed at the hat, and inadvertently knocked it off the end of the umbrella into the water. He reached after it desperately, and caught it just as it was floating away.

"My hat! It's wuined!"

"Never mind," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "You've got lots more."

"Yaas, but what am I to wear to-day?"

"That will dry in the sun," said Lowther. "Hold it up on the end of your cane and it will soon be dry."

"Yaas, a nice, widiculous ass I should look holdin' a silk hat up on the end of a cane to dwy in the beastly sun."

D'Arcy jerked the silk hat to get all the water out of it, and there was an angry exclamation from the stout gentleman in front as a shower went over him. He turned round and glared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Did you do that a-purpose?" he demanded.

"Pway what are you alluding to, my dear sir?"

"You've splashed me with water, you young idiot."

"I am sowwy, but I uttably wufuse to be alluded to as a young idiot. If it were not for your age, sir, I would give you a feahful thwashin' for usin' that extwemely oppwobwious expwession."

The stout gentleman turned purple.

"You've splashed me with water!"

"I am sowwy. I was shakin' the watah out of my hat, and as you sent it ovaahboard, it is weally your own fault."

"Why don't you look after your 'at?" demanded the stout gentleman. "What I say is, why can't you look after your 'at?"

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"Don't talk to me. Why cap't you look after your 'at?"

"Weally—"

The stout gentleman muttered to himself for the rest of the voyage round the lagoon. The thums of St. Jim's heard a word here and there of his mutterings, and caught something about looking after a hat. D'Arcy was relieved when the boat came to the landing-place again, and the party alighted.

"Jolly good trip!" said Lowther. "Have you enjoyed it, Gussy?"

"Well, I can't say that I exactly have," said D'Arcy. "I am wathah wowed about my hat."

"Oh, never mind your hat. Let's get on!"

"But I must mind my hat, Lowthah. I shall have to cawwy it in my hand till I get the beastly thing dwy—"

"Better leave it on this seat to get dry, and walk round without it for a bit," said Manners. "We may come upon a place where you can buy hats, and then you can rig yourself out in a brand new one."

"Bai Jove, that's wathah a good idea, Mannahs!"

Miss Fawcett had nodded off to sleep under the sunshade. The boys would not have disturbed her for worlds. The damaged hat was laid upon a seat beside her, and the juniors walked on in search of fresh experiences—and a hat-shop.

CHAPTER 8.

Arthur Augustus Receives a Shock,

"HALT!" said Monty Lowther.

"Certainly, deah boy; but what is there to halt for?"

"Look at this battewy."

D'Arcy screwed his eyeglass into his eye and looked round.

"I can't see any battewy," he said. "I didn't know there was a militawy department in the exhibition, eithah."

"I mean this electric battewy."

"Oh, I see!"

"If you'd like a shock, Gussy, I'll treat you to one," said Lowther generously. "Of course, I don't suppose you could stand it."

"Weally, I considah—"

"I'd better have it instead," said Manners gravely. "I can show D'Arcy how to stand it, and then he will be able—"

"Weally, Mannahs, I wegard that suggestion as somewhat impertinent. I weally think I had bettah sample the beastly thing first, you know."

"Oh, very well; but I could show you—"

"Nevah mind about showing me, Mannahs. I think I should like an electwic shock, you know. It is said to be wewy invigowatin'."

"So it is—ripping."
 "Then let it wip, deah boys."
 "Wait till I shove the coin in. Now, then, you pull out the handles."
 "Yaas. Anythin' else?"
 "No. Take a firm grip."
 "I've taken a firm grip. How far do I pull them out?"
 "As far as they'll come," said Lowther. "Bring them right out with a sharp jerk, you know, as far as they will come, and then you get a slight shock."
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.
 D'Arcy looked round at him.
 "What is the beastly joke, Tom Mewwy?"
 "Oh, nothing. Get on, you're keeping us waiting."
 "Vewy well. Pull them out as far as they will come, I think you said, Lowthah."
 "That's right."
 "Are you sure I shall get a shock?"
 "Well, I think you will; but you'll see when you try," grinned Lowther.
 "Vewy well, I will twy."
 D'Arcy brought the handles out with a sudden jerk. The next moment he was dancing up and down like a mad dervish.
 "Ow! wow! yow! ow!"
 "What's the matter?"
 "Ow! You—wow—ow!"
 With his hands still tightly gripping the handles, Arthur Augustus danced and hopped, his face twisted up into strange contortions, and his eyeglass flying at the end of its cord.
 "Don't you like it?" demanded Lowther.
 "Can't you feel the shock?" asked Tom Merry.
 "Ow! wow! Yes, I can feel it—ow! Turn it off!"
 "Eh?"
 "Stop it! I—I can't stand it!"
 "Don't you like it?"
 "Ow! G-r-r-row! No."
 "Why don't you let go, then?" chuckled Tom.
 "I—I c-c-can't!"
 "Oh, have a try!" said Manners. "You never know what you can do till you try. Keep it on till you can let go."
 "Ow, ow! Help!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ow! Help!"
 "Ha, ha, ha! Shove it in, Lowther."
 "Right-ho. Ha, ha!"
 Arthur Augustus was released. He seemed surprised to discover that he was not hurt, and he rubbed his hands in a thoughtful way.
 "Bai Jove, that was vewy wotten!" he observed. "Did I cwy out at all, deah boys?"
 "Well, I should say so," said Lowther, grinning. "You made row enough to wake a dead donkey."
 "I was wathah surprised. It was weally a beastly twick to play on an unsuspectin' person, you know. I wathah despise you."
 "Well, you wouldn't let Manners show you the way."
 "Still, I wegard it as a twick," said D'Arcy. "A weally wotten twick, and I am afwaid that unless you apologise I cannot continue to wegard you as a fwend."
 "Oh, go and buy a hat!" said Lowther.
 "Vewy well, I shall leave you," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I wegard you as bein' all thwee associated in this wascally outwage!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I no longah wegard you as fwends. Unless you expwess your wegwet, I shall not look aftah you any more."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Then I shall withdwaw my pwotection," said D'Arcy. "I am goin'!"
 And the hatless swell of St. Jim's adjusted his monocle and walked away. The Terrible Three chuckled in chorus.
 "I expect we shall find him again," said Tom Merry. "Let's go and have a look at the mountain railway."

"What price the flip-flap?"
 "There's a big crowd round that," said Manners. "There's a giddy spiral railway yonder, and it looks rather good."
 "Toss up for it," said Tom Merry.
 They tossed up for it, and the spiral railway won. The chums of the Shell made their way towards it. They paid their sixpences for admission to the enclosure, and in the crowd waiting for the car they found Herries and Digby.
 "Hallo!" exclaimed Digby. "Where's the only Gus?"
 "Gone off on his dignity," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Are you coming on this giddy railway?"
 "Yes, rather. We've been round once, and it's ripping. Quite a long journey for a tanner. The ups and downs shake you up like anything."
 "Here's the car," said Herries.
 The two Fourth Formers bundled in. The Terrible Three had to wait for the next car, but it came along in a minute or two. Then they jumped in and were off.
 "By Jove, this is ripping!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Good speed, too. Hallo, there's Dig!"
 Digby's car was passing on another round of the line, in sight of the Terrible Three. Tom Merry waved his hand, and Digby waved back. His straw hat blew off, and floated away past his desperate clutch, and alighted in the crowd outside the enclosure.
 "Hallo, my hat's gone!" exclaimed Dig, in dismay.
 "Find it presently," said Herries.
 "That's all very well—"
 "Well, you can't stop the car."
 That was true enough. The journey had to be made to the end, and then Digby hurried round to look for his hat.
 "Wot-ho, 'Erbert, 'ere's a 'at."
 "Tread hon it, Albert."
 "Wot?"
 "That you won't," exclaimed Dig, indignantly. "That's my hat!"
 "Allo, it's one of the gang!" said 'Erbert. "Tread on 'is blessed 'at!"
 "Right you are!"
 Digby made a dive for the hat. He was pushed over, but Herries ran up, and hurled himself at Albert and 'Erbert. The sudden attack made the two young gentlemen in the spotted ties reel away, and Digby jumped up and recovered his hat.
 "Go for 'em, Albert!"
 "Knock their blessed 'eads off, 'Erbert!"
 "Hallo, what's the trouble here?" exclaimed Tom Merry, coming up with Manners and Lowther. "Is it a row?"
 "Oh, nothing!" said 'Erbert hastily, as he saw the odds against him. "Nothing at all—only a lark."
 And the two took themselves off promptly.
 "They were going to tread on my hat," said Digby, dusting his headgear and putting it on. "I've seen those two chaps before. Gussy was rowing with them."
 "What price the flip-flap now?" asked Monty Lowther.
 "Good idea. Come on."
 The five juniors walked off towards the gigantic contrivance known as the flip-flap. Two giant arms were arranged to be raised skyward, bearing aloft a couple of platforms, upon which a crowd of people could stand. From the top could be had a splendid view of the exhibition grounds and of the neighbourhood of Shepherd's Bush.
 "My hat, it's a big thing!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the juniors came up. "It's all right; I'm paying this time."
 "Good," said Digby. "No objection that I know of. I'll stick to you like an oyster in the future."
 "This way in."
 The juniors were soon on one of the flip-flap platforms. There was a goodly crowd around them. The machinery creaked.
 "We're off!"
 "Stop!"
 It was a shriek from the crowd.
 "Stop!"
 Tom Merry looked dismayed.
 "My only Pyjama hat! It's Miss Fawcett!"
 Miss Fawcett it was. She was on the track of the juniors, and had discovered her darling Tommy in the very act of going into terrible danger—as she supposed. She came towards the machine with alarmed face and excited manner.
 "Stop! Oh, stop!"
 "Too late, ma'am," said the attendant. "You can go up with the next lot."
 "I do not wish to go up—my darling boy is in danger—"
 "No danger, ma'am."
 "The machine may break."
 "It can't break."
 "Stop! I insist upon the machine stopping at once while my darling boy gets out."
 But the machine was started, and like time and tide, it waited for no one. The platform swung higher, and carried Tom Merry & Co. out of the sound of the anxious voice of Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

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CHAPTER 9.

The Flip-Flap.

"G LORIOUS!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ripping!" said Manners.

Tom Merry was looking a little troubled. Although Miss Fawcett's alarm was absurd, he did not like her to suffer anxiety on his account. But it was too late to think of that now.

The platform was in mid-air, and the juniors looked round over a vast expanse. The whole of the White City was spread beneath them, and a great many buildings that surround the exhibition.

"Splendid view," said Digby. "It's nice and fresh up here, too. Look round and see if you can see Blake and Cousin Ethel."

The juniors scanned their surroundings.

They could see most of the exhibition grounds, and swarms of people; but searching for any particular person was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

"Can't see Blake," said Tom Merry. "I wonder where he—my hat!"

"What is it?"

"There he is!"

Tom Merry pointed to the other platform of the flip-flap, which had risen in the air at the same time, and remained stationary, vis-a-vis with the one the juniors were standing upon.

In the crowd upon it, Tom Merry had suddenly discerned two well-known figures: those of Blake and Cousin Ethel.

"Hallo, there!" called out Manners.

Jack Blake and Cousin Ethel turned their heads.

"Hallo!" called out Blake. "Fancy meeting you."

Cousin Ethel smiled and waved her hand.

"I say, Miss Fawcett is looking for you, Thomas," said Blake. Tom Merry coloured.

"Oh, rats!" was his polite reply.

"We're going down," said Lowther.

The flip-flap was descending. The two platforms swung apart, and Tom Merry & Co. lost sight of Blake and Ethel. Down they went, watched with anxious eyes by an old lady in the crowd below; and directly the passengers poured out, Tom Merry found himself clasped in a pair of loving arms.

"My darling boy! Safe at last!"

"My dear—"

"Safe, safe at last!"

"I haven't been in danger—"

"You have been on that dreadful, dreadful machine," murmured Miss Priscilla. "Oh, how I reproached myself for allowing you to pass out of my sight."

"But really—"

"My darling boy: restored in safety at last."

Tom Merry's cheeks were crimson. The people round were staring and giggling, a fact of which Miss Fawcett was sublimely unconscious, but which was painfully clear to Tom Merry. Two young men in spotted neckties, who were waiting their turn at the flip-flap, chuckled gleefully.

"The darling boy is quite safe, 'Erbert,'" said one of them.

"That's very satisfactory, Albert," said the other.

"Young shaver wants looking after."

"Ought to be led round on a string."

"Or tied to the old girl's bonnet-strings, 'Erbert.'"

"He, he, he."

Tom Merry disengaged himself from Miss Fawcett, and turned towards Albert and Herbert with a dangerous glint in his eyes. "Are you looking for a licking," he said; "if you are not, you had better apologise at once to this lady for what you have said."

Albert chuckled, and 'Erbert grinned.

"Do you hear me?"

"Do we 'ear 'im, 'Erbert?"

"We do, we does, Albert."

"Then knock 'is 'at off."

"Right—ho."

'Erbert reached out to do so, and to his surprise found a fist that seemed like a lump of iron coming into his face like a battering ram.

The young man reeled and sat down, looking rather dazed. Albert sprang forward, lifting his cane, and Monty Lowther and Manners grasped him, and sent him sprawling across Herbert. The crowd was laughing still, but Albert and 'Erbert were the objects of their laughter now.

"Had enough?" queried Tom Merry pleasantly.

"Tommy! Sweetest, dearest Tommy! How can you enter into a ferocious combat with these rough men. They will hurt you."

"Oh, they couldn't hurt a fly," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "They've been looking for trouble, and now they've found it they're satisfied."

"My dearest boy—"

"Oh, come along, dear!"

"You are sure you're not hurt?"

"I've barked my knuckles a little. It's all right."

Tom Merry & Co. walked off, leaving Albert and 'Erbert to pick themselves up and dust themselves rather ruefully; Miss Priscilla kept a tight hold of Tom Merry's arm. She did not mean to lose him again.

"My darling boy, you must not be so reckless—"

"That's all right, dear. I say, it seems to me that it's getting towards lunch time. I wonder if there's a place here where we can get a decent feed."

"Where are the others?"

"Oh, they're somewhere! We shan't lose them for good—no such luck."

"My dearest Tommy!"

"Here's the 'Grand Café,'" said Digby. "That looks a likely spot."

"But we must find Cousin Ethel first," said Herries. "Where can that boulder Blake be? Like his cheek to go wandering off with Cousin Ethel, and—oh!"

Herries' cap was pushed over his eyes from behind, and he turned round indignantly to see Blake and Cousin Ethel at his elbow. Blake grinned genially. Cousin Ethel was laughing.

"We're here," said Jack Blake.

"I see you are," grunted Herries, setting his cap straight. "Have you seen Lathom?"

"Not a hide nor a hair of him."

"Where's Gussy?"

"Goodness only knows."

"Well, let's get some lunch."

And the party—all there were of them—entered the Grand Café.

CHAPTER 10.

More Trouble for D'Arcy.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had parted from the Terrible Three in a state of great indignation, which, however, cooled down somewhat as he strolled on. The swell of St. Jim's was frequently indignant, but never angry for long. But he could be very obstinate—or, as he preferred to call it, determined.

"Bai Jové," he murmured, "I sha'n't speak to those chaps again unless they apologise. I wegard that electric twick as an outrage upon my dig. I wondah where that wottah Blake has got with Cousin Ethel. And where can Digby and Hewwies be?"

D'Arcy looked out for his friends, but he did not go near the flip-flap, and so he did not see them. He walked on, looking out for a hat-shop and not finding one, and presently found himself in a hall gazing at masses of machinery. A familiar voice broke upon his ears.

"Hallo, is that you, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Skimpole joined him. The brainy man of St. Jim's had a notebook in his hand, and a pencil stuck behind one large ear. He had evidently been making notes. He blinked at D'Arcy through his spectacles.

"Been having a good time?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah! And you, deah boy?"

"I have been enjoying myself immensely," said Skimpole.

"I am sorry to say that the aerostatic department does not come up to my expectations. I have not found any airships or flying machines in working order. Still, I have picked up a few hints that will be of great use to me, I think, in perfecting my invention."

"I am glad to hear it, deah boy."

"I will read out my notes to you, if you like—"

"Oh, pway don't twouble!"

"No trouble at all; I should like to do so."

"Well, I shouldn't, you see; if you want me to be quite fwank," said D'Arcy. "I don't take any intewest in all that wot, you know."

"No; I forgot that you naturally require something much simpler, to suit your intellect," agreed Skimpole.

"If you mean that wemark in a dispawagin' sense, Skimpole—"

"Not at all. As a Determinist, I cannot logically speak disparagingly of anybody. Man being a creature of heredity and environment, it is evident that he is the outcome of the combined influences of environment and heredity, and so—"

"Oh, pway wing off."

"I will endeavour to put the matter in simpler words, suitable to—"

"Oh, shut up. By the way, Mr. Lathom was lookin' for you."

"I haven't seen him."

"Then you had bettah go and look for him, and wead your beastly notes to him," said D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a feaful bore, Skimpole."

And the swell of St. Jim's walked off.

Skimpole resumed his staring at the machinery, and recommenced making voluminous notes in his book, and soon



"I get so hungry in this July weather," said Fatty Wynn. "Pass the ham, tongue and the cold beef."

forgot D'Arcy's existence. The swell of St. Jim's strolled on, looking out for the Fourth-formers from St. Jim's, and unconsciously drawing nearer to the grand entrance of the exhibition in Shepherd's Bush. There had been some slight change in the aspect of the succession of halls since the boys had entered. Men were busy decorating the place with flags and paper roses, and in the entrance great rolls of crimson carpet were being laid down.

D'Arcy, with his monocle screwed into his eye, gazed round him with great interest. He stopped an attendant in light-blue uniform, to ask him what was "on." The man glanced at D'Arcy's bare head curiously.

"Somebody's expected," he replied.

"I see. A distinguished visitah, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Thank you vewy much," said D'Arcy. "By the way, can you direct me to a hat-shop?"

The man scratched his head.

"I have had the misfortune to have my beastly hat wuined by the beastly thing fallin' in the beastly water," the swell of St. Jim's explained.

"Oh, I see!" said the man grinning.

"If you can diwect me to a place where I can buy a new hat, I should be vewy much obliged, my good fellah."

"Yes, sir."

The attendant, like most of his kind, had an itching palm, but it never occurred to Arthur Augustus to tip him. The man grinned again.

"Well, can you diwect me?" asked the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yes, certainly, sir. You go straight forward for about a hundred yards, then turn sharply to the left, and then to the

right, then keep on, bearing to the left all the time, till you come to the Egyptian tombs, and then you go right round them, and bear to the right for about a hundred yards again. Then you will find yourself right in front of the hatter's."

"Thank you vewy much, my good man."

The good man grinned and vanished. D'Arcy turned round to follow out the directions, but they were rather mixed in his mind.

"Let me see," he murmured. "You turn to the wight for a hundred yards, then keep straight on the left all the time, and bear forward—No; that cannot be wight. You turn to the left a hundred times, bearing to the wight all the time—No, that is decidedly incowweet. Pewwaps it would be simpler to inquire my way to the Egyptian tombs the man spoke of, and then look for the hatter's."

D'Arcy tapped another attendant on the arm.

"Pway, can you diwect me to the Egyptian tombs?" he asked.

The man stared at him without replying.

"Can you diwect me to the Egyptian tombs?" asked D'Arcy, raising his voice a little, thinking that the man was deaf.

"What are you talking about?"

"I say, can you diwect me to—Dear me, he's walkin' away. I weward that as wude in the extweme, I will ask this old gentleman."

D'Arcy walked up to an old gentleman who was carefully examining the model of a steamship in a case. He bowed politely as he made his enquiry.

"If you please, sir, can you diwect me to the Egyptian tombs?"

"Bless my soul!"
 "Can you diweet me?"
 "The boy must be mad," said the old gentleman, putting up his glasses and staring at D'Arcy. "Mad, of course! Going about bareheaded, and asking for the Egyptian tombs. Bless my soul, I wonder if he is dangerous?"

And he walked quickly away.
 "The man must be off his beastly wockah," murmured D'Arcy. "And it is vewy wude of him not to wreply to a civil question."
 He walked on a little, and finally asked a policeman for information. The policeman looked at him suspiciously at the mention of the Egyptian tombs, but D'Arcy's innocent face told him that the junior was the victim of a joke, and was not trying to perpetrate one on him.

"Pway can you diweet me to the Egyptian tombs?"
 "Yes, sir," said the constable. "You will have to go out of the exit nearest the Twopenny Tube, and take the train as far as the Bank."

"But—"
 "Then you get a cab to the docks. You could walk it, but you mightn't know the way, and so it would be better to take a cab."

"But—"
 "Then you will go on board a steamship for Cairo. When you get to Cairo, you had better inquire again," said the policeman, with a perfectly grave face.

D'Arcy turned red.
 "I suppose you are wottin'," he remarked. "I weally don't see why you can't give me a civil answer to a civil question, my deah fellow."

The policeman grinned.
 "Have you come up from the country, my lad?" he asked.

"I have just come from St. Jim's—our school, you know."
 "Well, there aren't any Egyptian tombs exhibited here," said the constable. "There's none nearer than Egypt, I believe. There are some mummies in the British museum—"

"And there are some dummies here, I think," said D'Arcy. "I was told there was a hattah's shop near the Egyptian tombs. I have lost my hat."

"You will have to go outside the exhibition to buy a new one, I'm afraid, sir."

"Bai Jove, what a feahful bore! Then that person must have been tellin' me stowies," murmured D'Arcy as he walked on.

There was no hat to be had, and he decided to go in search of the one he had left to dry in the sun. He entered the grounds again after a ramble through the buildings, and almost ran into the arms of two young men in spotted neckties.

They knew him again at once. There was a slight change in 'Erbert's appearance since D'Arcy had seen him last. His nose was swollen and red, and looked as if it had received a hard knock, as indeed it had.

"'Ere he is," said 'Erbert.

"Knock 'is 'at off!" said Albert.

"He ain't got one on."

"Then knock 'is 'ead off."

D'Arcy gave the young man a withering glare through his eyeglass.

"I uttably wefuse to have my head knocked off," he exclaimed. "I wegard you as a wotten pair of beastly boundahs. I have a gweat mind to administah a feahful thwashin' to you both."

"Come on, then," said 'Erbert, squaring up.

"Upon second thoughts I think it would be wathah disgraceful to have a vow in public," said D'Arcy disdainfully.

"But I wegard you with feahful contempt."

"He, he, he! Afraid, are you?"

D'Arcy flushed crimson. The blood of the D'Arcies boiled in his veins at the insinuation of want of courage.

"Bai Jove, I will soon show you whethah I'm afraid," he exclaimed. And he ran at 'Erbert, hitting out from the shoulder.

For the second time that day, 'Erbert sat on the ground, feeling as if a mule had kicked his nose. D'Arcy danced round him.

"Now then, you wottah, get up, so that I can knock you down again—"

But just then Albert chipped in, and D'Arcy went over on the ground with that young man clinging round his neck. 'Erbert at once jumped up, and the two of them piled on D'Arcy, who gasped helplessly beneath their weight. Several people looked on from a distance, but perhaps regarding the matter simply as youthful horseplay, did not interfere. D'Arcy wriggled furiously.

"Pway allow me to wise, you wotten boundahs," he gasped.

"You are wumplin' my clothes dweadfully. I will give you a feahful thwashin'—"

"Rub his face in the dust, Albert."

"Right-ho, 'Erbert."

"Ow—wow—help!"

"Hullo, fair play there!" exclaimed a voice, and three youthful forms rushed forward, and Albert and 'Erbert were jerked off their victim in a twinkling.

"My only hat!"

"It's Gussy!"

"Gussy himself!"

D'Arcy sat up. Albert and 'Erbert had already made themselves scarce. D'Arcy rubbed the dust out of his eyes and looked at his rescuers.

"Bai Jove, it's Figgins & Co.!"

Figgins jerked the swell of St. Jim's to his feet. D'Arcy was gasping for breath, and he dusted himself down ruefully. His clothes seemed to be destined to get rough handling that day.

CHAPTER 11.

A Pleasant Lunch.

FIGGINS & CO. stared at the swell of St. Jim's with broad grins upon their faces. They had seen a serinimage going on with two against one, and had interfered, never dreaming that the "under dog" was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, their old acquaintance of the School House at St. Jim's. D'Arcy did not look much like himself now. His hat was gone, and he was rumpled and dusty from head to foot.

"You look as if you had had a ripping time, Gussy," Figgins remarked.

"I have had a wotten time."

"Where are the others?" asked Kerr.

"I weally do not know."

"Do you know whether they've had lunch?" asked Fatty Wynn, eagerly. "It was Figgys's idea to bolt off immediately after morning school, without waiting for dinner. I had only time to snatch up a pork pie before he rushed me off."

"I said we should be here in time for lunch," said Figgins.

"If this is what you call time for lunch—"

"We were going to meet Tom Merry and Blake and the rest at the bandstand," said Figgins. "There seems to be a lot of bandstands. We've looked round three or four—"

"And not seen anything of them," Kerr remarked.

"And I'm fearfully hungry," said Fatty Wynn. "You know, I get awfully hungry in this July weather."

"I am a twifle peckish myself," said D'Arcy. "There is a decent place here to feed, and I will show you the way if you like. You might give me a dust down."

"Certainly," said Figgins.

"Ow! Don't punch me like that, you ass!"

"You wanted a dust down."

"I didn't want my beastly bones bwocken."

"Oh, come along," said Fatty Wynn. "I don't think I ought to have to starve to death while you dust D'Arcy's clothes, Figgins. I get so hungry in this July weath—"

"Yaas, wathah! I think that will do, Figgins. If you are not joking, I must say you are a clumsy ass. Let's get along to the Gwand Café."

"Grand Café! That sounds promising," said Figgins.

"Show the way, Macduff."

"Follow me, deah boys."

Arthur Augustus had not much of an eye for topography, but he remembered the big building, and he led the way to it. The juniors, hungry enough after their journey, entered, and Figgins glanced round.

"My hat! There they are."

Tom Merry & Co. were seated at a large table. Tom Merry was at the head of it, with Miss Fawcett on his right hand and Cousin Ethel on the left. The juniors were enjoying a hearty lunch, and the viands were plentiful.

"My aunt!" said Fatty Wynn. "Tom Merry is doing himself down very well this time. I don't see Skimpole or Lathom though."

"Mr. Lathom has gone to look for Skimpole," said D'Arcy.

"Good! Let's join this happy family."

The New House Co. hurried up to the festive board. The juniors greeted them with a whoop of welcome, which made the lunchers at the other tables look round. Cousin Ethel gave Figgins a sweet smile.

"So you've come, after all," said Blake. "Jolly glad to see your old chivvy, Figgys."

"Yaas, wathah, I found them," said D'Arcy. "They were looking for you, Tom Mewwy, and I brought them along."

"Good for you, Gussy. I didn't expect you so early, Figgins, or—"

"That's all right," said Figgins. "We made up our minds to bolt immediately after morning school, and cut dinner, so we got here early, you see. You're late with your lunch, but that's lucky, as it happens. We shall be able to join you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There's room at the foot of the table," said Blake, who had no mind to give up his place beside Cousin Ethel, at which Figgins was casting a longing glance.

"Oh, can't you make room there?" said Figgins.

"I'm afraid there's not an inch."

"I can get a little nearer to Tom," said Cousin Ethel, with

an innocent smile. "Then I think there will be room for Figgins here."

Blake looked quickly at Cousin Ethel.

Her face was so utterly innocent that he could not suspect her of deliberately wishing to give his place to Figgins. And, besides, it was absurd on the face of it to suppose that she would actually prefer to have Figgins beside her. He made room with a good grace, thinking that Ethel was just a trifle thoughtless.

"There you are, Figgins."

"Thank you," said Figgins, dropping into the seat between Blake and Cousin Ethel. "I shall be quite comfy here."

"Haven't had your lunch, have you, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, as the swell of St. Jim's stood looking on, instead of sitting down at the table.

"No, Tom Mewwy, I have not."

"Then why don't you sit down?"

"I must refuse to feed with you or Mannahs or Lowthah until you have apologised."

"If you want to make a row in the presence of ladies," said Tom Merry severely, "you can go ahead. But I must say I am surprised at you, Gussy."

"I am astonished," said Mannahs.

"I am amazed," remarked Lowther.

"I am astounded," said Blake.

"Oh, really, Arthur," said Cousin Ethel, "I am sure you do not want to spoil a nice holiday by being in a bad temper!"

"There are times when a fellow's dig requires him to be in a bad tempah, Ethel," said Arthur Augustus, in a stately way.

"Dear me, is anybody in a bad temper?" said Miss Fawcett, looking up from her cold chicken. "Who is in a bad temper?"

"Oh, it is nothing, Miss Fawcett!" said D'Arcy, colouring.

"Is it D'Arcy who is in a bad temper?"

"Yes, he's simply ferocious," said Monty Lowther. "If it wasn't for your presence, Miss Fawcett, I should be afraid to let him come near me while that carving-knife is within reach."

"Oh, weally, Lowthah—"

"Dear me," said Miss Fawcett, "I am truly sorry to hear this, D'Arcy. Be a good little boy now, and I will buy you some sweets."

D'Arcy turned as red as fire, while the others suppressed their chuckles.

"Weally, Miss Pwiscillah—"

"Be a good little boy," said Miss Fawcett coaxingly. "Little boys will never be happy if they lose their little tempers. I will buy you some sugar-sticks if you promise to be a good-tempered little boy."

"Oh, weally—"

"Now, promise," said Miss Priscilla, in a coaxing voice. "Promise that you will be a good little boy and not lose your little temper again."

"Weally—"

"Now, you must promise."

"Promise, you ass!" whispered Blake. "She won't be happy till she gets it."

"Well, weally— Vewy well, I promise, Miss Pwiscillah."

"That's my dear little lad," said Miss Fawcett. "Now, come here and I will give you a kiss for being such a good little lad."

"I—I—I—"

"Oh, come, and let me kiss you for being such a darling!" said Miss Fawcett.

"Go and be kissed," muttered Blake.

"I refuse," said D'Arcy, in a furious whisper. "I uttably and distinctly refuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"You must—"

"I won't!"

"Surely the dear child is not sulking," said Miss Fawcett. "My dear Arthur, surely—"

"Certainly not, Miss Fawcett, but weally—"

"I will buy you some nice—"

"Oh, weally, I—I—I—"

"Come and kiss me like a dear little boy."

A hundred eyes were fastened upon Arthur Augustus. It was evident that the terrible Miss Priscilla would never leave off till he had complied, and so, with a burning face, he stepped to her side and submitted to be kissed. There was a ripple of laughter through the great building, of which Miss Priscilla took no note.

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus, as he took his seat at the foot of the table, as far from Miss Fawcett as he could get. "Bai Jove, I will punch somebody's head for this some time, you see if I don't!"

"Better punch your own," said Blake. "You shouldn't be an ass, you know."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, get on with the feeding; we're nearly done!"

"I refuse to hewwy. It is bestly bad form to hewwy ovah a meal. I uttably refuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Then we'll leave you here to settle the bill," said Blake.

"Pass the tongue," said Fatty Wynn, who had been distinguishing himself, travelling steadily through everything

that was within his reach, and now looking out, like Alexander, for fresh worlds to conquer. "Pass the tongue, will you, and the ham, and the cold beef."

"Bai Jove!"

"And the cold chicken, and the kidney pie, and the steak pudding—"

"Go it, Fatty!" said Blake admiringly. "It's your innings, you know, and now's the time to make the fur fly."

"I get so fearfully hungry this July weather," said Fatty Wynn. "By the way, who's standing this feed?"

"Rather late in the day to ask that question, I think," grinned Tom Merry. "But it's all right, Miss Fawcett is standing it."

"Good! Then I can let myself go."

"Do, by all means."

And Fatty Wynn did. The way he let himself go was an eye-opener to even his chums, who had some idea of what he could perform in the gastronomic line. And when the party rose from the table, Fatty Wynn had a satisfied smile upon his face, and it was observed that he moved with slowness and something like an effort. And he had surreptitiously unfastened the lowest button of his waistcoat.

CHAPTER 12.

On the Mountain Railway.

"WEALLY feel vewy wumped and dirty," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the party came out of the Grand Café into the glare of the brilliant July sunshine. "These wuffians have wumped my collah and made me vewy dusty and dirty. I weally think I must go and get a wash somewhere."

"Here's your topper," said Blake; "I've saved it for you! It's a bit fluffy to look at, and something like a concertina, but I dare say you can wear it. It will keep the sun off your top-knot."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a good idea about a wash," said Tom Merry. "One does get so grubby roughing it out of doors, and D'Arcy certainly looks as if he had been using himself to rub up the ground with."

"Very good," said Miss Fawcett; "I am feeling rather nervous about Mr. Lathom. We have not seen him for so long a time. Can anything have happened to him, do you think, my dearest Tommy?"

"I don't suppose so," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"He may have found Skimpole and got bored to death," murmured Monty Lowther.

"I think we ought to look for him," said Miss Fawcett. "Can I trust you dear boys out of my sight for a little while?"

"I will look aftah them, Miss Fawcett."

"And you will not lose your temper again, D'Arcy. It would worry me very much if I thought you might lose your temper and perhaps strike one of your schoolmates with your fist."

"We'll look after him," promised Figgins. "If he strikes anybody with his fist we'll jump on him—"

"Figgins!"

"I mean we will speak gentle words to him, and try to show him the error of his ways," said Figgins hurriedly.

"That is very nice of you, Figgins. Do you promise me that?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Then you may run away for a time, and I will find Mr. Lathom. I sincerely hope that nothing has happened to him. Come, Ethel."

Tom Merry grinned.

"I fancy Lathom won't be found in a hurry," he murmured. "But come on, and we'll wash Gussy, and see if we can make him look respectable."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"He's rather a disgrace going about as he is, and doesn't bring much credit on us, or on the school we come from," Monty Lowther remarked.

"If I have any more of your impertinence," said D'Arcy, glowering at the Terrible Three, "I shall have no alternative but to administah to you a feafuhl thwashin'. You have already placed me in a widiculous position."

"Now, then, Gussy, you have promised not to lose your temper—"

"It is vewy difficult to keep one's tempah in dealin' with such a set of exasewatin' boundahs," said D'Arcy. "I am stronglly tempted to stwike you."

"In that case, Figgins will have to speak gentle words—"

"I've promised to," said Figgins. "I shall endeavour to point out to Gussy the error of his ways, and the bad result that must follow from the indulgence of the temper, especially when it leads you to stwike people—"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"I'm looking. Then I shall take him by the hand, and while he leans his head upon my shoulder, I shall say to him gently—"

"You uttah beast——"

"No, I shall not say that. I shall say——"

"I wufuse to listen to any more of your wot," said D'Arcy.

"I wegard you as a set of wotten, cacklin' boundahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But for the considewation I owe to Miss Fawcett I should thwash you all. I weally despise you feahfully."

And the swell of St. Jim's turned upon his heel and walked off. Tom Merry called after him.

"Come back, Gussy! Come on, old chap; it was only a joke!"

But Arthur Augustus marched on without turning his head. Perhaps he thought it would be a just punishment to the party to withdraw the light of his countenance for a time. He disappeared in the crowd.

"Never mind," said Figgins cheerfully. "He's bound to come round, and he can't help being a funny merchant. You School House fellows are a funny lot anyway."

"Curious specimens, some of them," agreed Kerr.

"Well, considering what howling wasters you New House chaps are——"

"Eh?"

"I say considering what disreputable and noxious animals you New House rotters are——"

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Blake?"

"Certainly, if there's a New House animal that can give me one."

"Then I'll jolly soon——"

"Come on, then."

Tom Merry pushed between the two warlike juniors. He shoved Figgins back with one hand, and Jack Blake with the other.

"For goodness' sake don't start a House row now!" he exclaimed. "You can leave all that till you get back to St. Jim's, I should think."

"Something in that," said Blake cheerfully. "Still, I think Figgins ought to keep his head shut——"

"I think Blake ought to shut up that everlasting——"

"Dry up, both of you! I'm going to get a wash, and you can do as you like."

The juniors felt all the better for a wash and a brush up. They had lost sight of D'Arcy, but doubtless he was similarly engaged. They came away feeling refreshed and in a mood for adventure. Digby suggested the mountain railway, and the idea was adopted with enthusiasm. The juniors marched for the entrance in a body.

Tom Merry took the tickets, and the juniors marched in. There were a good many people waiting for the car, the railway doing a good business as the day wore on. Blake glanced up the line.

"Stand together," he said. "We're going to bag the front seats."

"You 'ear that, 'Erbert?" said a voice in the crowd.

"I 'ear it, Albert," was the reply.

"Hallo, here are those bounders again!" exclaimed Figgins, looking round. "They were sitting on Gussy when we found him. Are you looking for some more trouble?"

"They can have it if they are," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, it's all right!" said 'Erbert. "No offence. I suppose a bloke can make a remark."

"Well, no, not with a face like yours," said Blake, shaking his head. "Take your features away and bury them, and then——"

"You 'ear 'im, 'Erbert?"

"I 'ear 'im, Albert."

"Don't take any notice of the young rips, 'Erbert."

"I won't, Albert."

"Here's the car!" exclaimed Blake. "Come on!"

The juniors swarmed into the front seats. 'Erbert and Albert seated themselves further behind. The car filled up, and started on its journey.

It was an exciting journey.

The car rushed up and down steep slopes with a speed that almost took the breath away, and there were shrieks from feminine passengers. Up and down, down and up; and then they plunged through a mountain tunnel, and were in darkness. Then out into the daylight again.

"Hurrah!" gasped Tom Merry. "This is ripping."

"Hurrah!"

As they whisked along in the light, Tom Merry caught sight of Miss Fawcett and Cousin Ethel standing near the entrance, looking up. He waved his hat to them. Miss Fawcett sighted him, and gave a cry.

"My darling boy! In danger again!"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"It is quite safe, Miss Fawcett. I should like to go on the mountain railway, too."

"My dearest child, you might be killed, and then what should I say to your uncle——"

"There is weally no danger, Miss Fawcett," said a voice at their elbow, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made his appearance. "I shall be vewy pleased to accompany you and pwotect you."

Arthur Augustus was looking in fine feather now. He had evidently had a careful wash and brush, and his silk hat had been given all the attention possible, and looked fairly respectable again. The swell of St. Jim's presented something of his usual elegant appearance once more.

"I am afraid I could never consent," said Miss Fawcett, shaking her head. "Besides, I don't think I could go——"

"There is really no danger unless you put your head ova the side, and then of course you get killed."

"Bless my soul."

"But a chap who was ass enough to put his head ova the side would deserve to be killed, you know."

"I am afraid it would not be quite seemly for a lady of my age——"

"Oh, that's all wight. People of all ages go on the railways," said D'Arcy. "Look there, there is an old gentleman goin' on—— and he can't be under eighty——"

The gentleman in question turned and fixed a stony glare upon D'Arcy. It was the stout gentleman of the boat once more, and he recognised D'Arcy. It was rather hard, too, because he was certainly not over sixty; but an irascible temper had wrinkled his forehead and made him look older.

"Bai Jove, I know him, too," murmured D'Arcy.

"Really, is it a friend of yours, my dear boy——"

"Well, no, not exactly—it is a wathah impertinent old boundah."

The stout gentleman whisked his cane into the air, and D'Arcy's hat rolled in the dust. Then the perpetrator of that outrage went into the enclosure with a chuckle. D'Arcy, with a gasp of indignation, sprang after his hat.

"The feahful, impertinent boundah," he exclaimed. "Fancy knocking a fellow's hat off a fellow's head, you know."

"Perhaps he was annoyed at what you said," suggested Cousin Ethel, with a demure smile.

"Yaas, pewwaps, but that's no excuse for actin' like a wuffian," said D'Arcy. "If he were not an old gentleman I should weally administrah a feahful thwashin'. Nothin' else would meet the case. As it is, I feel bound to point out to him——"

"Oh, please let the matter drop," Miss Fawcett said nervously. "Ah, there is my dearest Tommy. He has returned alive."

Tom Merry waved his hand to Miss Fawcett and Ethel.

"Come on the railway," he called out. "It's quite safe, and it's ripping fun."

"My dearest child——"

"Oh, do come, dear: just to please me."

Miss Fawcett could not resist an appeal like that. She purchased three tickets at the little office, and entered the gate with Cousin Ethel and D'Arcy. A car was coming along again, and Tom Merry handed them into it.

"Sit beside me, my dear boy," said Miss Priscilla, "I feel that we are going into terrible danger."

"Absolutely none, ma'am," said the man in charge of the car.

But Miss Priscilla was not convinced.

"You had better hold Ethel's hand, Figgins, in case she is nervous," she said, turning towards the seat behind, where Cousin Ethel and Figgins sat.

"Certainly," said Figgins, promptly. "With pleasure."

Cousin Ethel blushed a little, but made no demur, and Figgins held her hand quite firmly as the car whizzed on its journey.

CHAPTER 13.

No Casualties.

"BLESS my soul!" ejaculated Miss Fawcett, as the car made its first bump. "I was certain that something would happen."

"It's all right, dear," said Tom Merry.

"That terrific shock——"

"That's part of the game."

"Dear me! Do you mean to say that it is intended to go like that, Tommy?"

"Yes, rather."

"I hope you are not simply trying to reassure me, and keeping up a bold face because you know there is fearful peril."

"I assure you——"

"I—oh! dear! Oh!"

The car rushed on and bumped again. Then it rushed up a steep gradient, and Miss Priscilla held on convulsively to Tom Merry. She had some idea in her mind that when the catastrophe came they would die together. She had now almost given up hope of emerging from the mountain railway alive.

"It is terrible! My darling Tommy, if you should escape alive, remember that——"

"But there is no danger."

"I am convinced that there is fearful danger."

"None at all, weally, Miss Pwiscillah. I assuah you that there is not the slightest pewil, so long as you keep your limbs inside the cah," said the voice of D'Arcy from behind.

"It is quite true, dear Miss Fawcett," said Cousin Ethel, softly. "There is no danger."

"I—I wish I could think so."

Bump! bump!

Miss Fawcett gave a shriek.

"Help! Stop! My darling child."

"It's all right, dear."

"It is not all right. I insist upon this terrible thing stopping before we are all killed. Driver!"

"My dear—"

"Driver, stop this car at once."

"He can't," said Tom. "The other cars would bash into us."

"Goodness gracious!"

"At least, I suppose they would. Anyway, that chap won't stop. It's all right; I've been round on this before, and it's ripping."

"I—I—my fears are all for you, my sweetest boy. You are so reckless, and I am convinced that there is something wrong with the machinery."

"Nothing at all," said Tom Merry.

"Then what is the cause of these sudden jerks?"

"That's arranged; it's part of the fun."

"Dear me! How can people like to be shaken up like that! It is amazing to me. There is somebody shrieking!"

"It's only a girl," said Blake.

"Is it Ethel?"

"Certainly not. You won't catch Ethel shrieking," said Figgins, warmly.

"I am not frightened," said Cousin Ethel.

"Some one is shrieking—"

"Lots of 'em shriek," said Lowther. "If they didn't shriek, they wouldn't think they'd had their money's worth, you know."

"That is very curious, Lowther. I—oh, dear, it is come at last!"

The car dashed down a steep declivity at a terrific speed—at all events, it seemed terrific to the good old lady from Huckleberry Heath.

She clung to the side and to Tom Merry convulsively.

"My darling boy—"

"It's all right."

"We are going to our death—"

"We're all serene."

"Horror—help! help! we are lost!"

The car had suddenly plunged into darkness.

Tom Merry held tight to his old governess, and tried not to laugh. He knew that Miss Fawcett's terrors were more for him than for herself.

"This is the best part of the ride," he exclaimed. "We're going through a mountain tunnel, you know."

"Dear me; I thought—"

"Don't be alarmed; it's ripping."

"Weally wippin', bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The journey was more than half over, and no catastrophe had occurred. Miss Fawcett allowed herself to be somewhat reassured at last. The sight of other cars passing and repassing through the mountain scenery was reassuring too. The passengers were evidently all enjoying themselves.

"Perhaps it is not so terribly dangerous, after all," murmured Miss Fawcett.

Tom Merry laughed.

"No danger at all, dear. Do you feel better now?"

"Yes, and I—I think I quite like it."

"Good! It is really ripping."

The car ran on the last lap, and the journey was over at last. The juniors of St. Jim's poured out of the car, and Figgins, who had been holding Cousin Ethel's hand all the time, assisted her to alight. Tom Merry handed out his governess. Miss Fawcett was looking quite excited and pleased. A stout gentleman brushed rather roughly against Arthur Augustus, and the swell of St. Jim's turned round to remonstrate.

"I am afraid that I shall be compelled to give you a thwashin' in spite of your years," he exclaimed. "You knocked my toppah off, and now you have bwashed against me in a violent mannah. It seems to me that you are lookin' for trouble."

"Look after your 'at, then," said the stout gentleman.

"You ridiculous old person—"

Tom Merry seized D'Arcy and dragged him away. The swell of St. Jim's struggled in the muscular grip of the hero of the Shell.

"Pwaweelease me, Tom Mewwy—"

"Rats! You've had enough rows for one day."

"That ridiculous old person has tweated me with gwoss disrespect—"

"Never mind; let him rip."

"I refuse to let him wip. I insist—"

But Arthur Augustus was bundled out of the gate, and he lost sight of the stout gentleman in the crowd. He screwed his monocle into his eye and glared at Tom Merry.

"Tom Mewwy, you have treated me wuffly—"

"Rats!"

"Vewwy well—I wefuse to wecognise you as an acquaintance frowm this moment. I cannot thwash you in the pwesence of your esteemed and respectable governess, but I wefuse to wecognise you as a friend."

"Oh, Gussy, Gussy, unsay those cruel words."

But Arthur Augustus marched off with his nose in the air,

and disappeared in the throng. Fatty Wynn gave Tom Merry a nudge.

"I say, Merry—"

"Hallo! Hungry again!"

"You ought to set up as a thought reader," said the New House junior. "You've hit it. Have you noticed that these mountain railways give you a jolly good appetite?"

"I can't say I have, particularly."

"Well, they do me. That trip has made me feel quite peckish. Hasn't it you, Kerr?"

"Not at all," said Kerr.

"Well, that's curious. How do you feel, Lowther?"

"I'm not hungry," said Monty Lowther.

"I am afraid there must be something wrong with you both; then," said Fatty Wynn, with a grave shake of the head. "I am awfully peckish. When were you thinking of having tea, Tom Merry?"

"Not just yet, anyway. There's a grand reception to be held, and then the sports in the Stadium," said Tom Merry. "All that before tea."

"Well, in that case I think I had better have a snack. It's no good my going about hungry at the risk of fainting from want of sustenance in the midst of your fun, is it?" said Fatty Wynn.

"Not much," said Tom Merry. "There's a Lyons over there; go in and win!"

"I think I will. I'll meet you in the Stadium if I miss you here."

"Right-ho. Leave some of the grub if you can—there's a lot more people coming in in the evening, and they may want some."

"Oh, really—"

"Buzz off, old son. We're going to the reception."

"I'd rather go to a feed than to a reception any day," said Fatty Wynn, and he made a straight line for the refreshment place, and disappeared in the nearest doorway.

Tom Merry looked through his programme.

"There's a grand reception this afternoon, and it's nearly due," he remarked. "The Hereditary Prince of Klein-Silberg is coming to see the exhibition, and to open the Klein-Silberg department. Shall we see that?"

"Certainly," said Figgins. "It's part of the show, and it's no good missing anything when you've paid for admission. Hallo, there's a trumpet."

"I suppose that means that the Hereditary Prince has arrived?"

"Then let's go and look at him."

And the whole party moved towards the grand entrance, where a large crowd was setting.

CHAPTER 14.

D'Arcy's Mistake—In the Stadium.

"BAI Jove, somethin' seems to be on," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Something certainly was on.

A roll of rich crimson carpet extended from the entrance into the grand hall, and up the stairs, and men, some in uniform and others in liveries, stood about in attitudes of great attention and suppressed excitement.

Two or three stout and well-dressed gentlemen with bald heads were waiting, in a state of fussy excitement that D'Arcy could not account for.

The swell of St. Jim's strolled along the crimson carpet with his usual graceful unconsciousness of demeanour, and although he heard a murmur, he did not associate it with himself.

But he glanced round and saw that all eyes were fixed upon him, and he coloured a little at thus finding himself the centre of attention.

What he had learned from an attendant during the morning flashed into his mind. A distinguished visitor was looked for at the exhibition. D'Arcy had not learnt his name, but knew that he was distinguished.

Was it possible that he, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, had caused all this excitement?

He was a visitor, and he was distinguished, that he knew, and so it was really quite possible. And certainly every eye was fixed upon him now—his movements seemed to be watched with almost painful interest by everybody near at hand.

"Bai Jove," murmured D'Arcy, "they must have got wind that I was comin', and made these preparations for me. I am sowwy I did not think of it earliar, I don't want to seem ungwateful."

A gorgeous flunkey came towards D'Arcy, so adorned with gold lace and variegated colours that he looked like an enormous tropical beetle.

Unconsciously D'Arcy stood a little more erect, and assumed a stateliness of demeanour suitable to the occasion.

He adjusted his eyeglass, and looked at the footman as he advanced.

"Get hoff."

They were the surprising words the footman uttered. D'Arcy had expected a respectful salutation, and would not have been surprised if the gorgeous individual had dropped on one knee.

He could only stare in amazement at the strange words uttered by the gaudy being.

"Get hoff."

"Bai Jove, pewwaps he is a Wussian," murmured Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I believe a lot of Wussian words end in 'hoff.' Are you a Wussian, my good fellow?"

"Get hoff!"

"Pway speak in English."

The footman turned purple.

"Get hoff this carpet," he gurgled. "You're a-standing in the way of the reception."

"Eh?"

"The 'Hereditary Prince of Klein-Silberberg is expected every minute, and you're in the way of the reception."

"Oh!"

"Get hoff!"

"Weally, I am surprised at these pweparations bein' made for the weception of an alien," said D'Arcy with dignity. "I was thinkin'—"

"Get hout."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"Get hoff! Get hout!"

"Certainly not. Havin' paid for admission to this exhibish, I am entitled to stand where I like, I pweasume," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you as a wather impertinent wottah, and I can't say I appwove of the colour scheme of your attire, eithah."

"Get hoff!"

"Pway don't bothah me. Twavel along, deah boy, and don't wowwy."

The footman glared at him, and stretched out a large hand to seize him by the collar, with the evident intention of forcibly removing him.

D'Arcy coloured with indignation.

"Pway keep your paws away," he said. "I shall othahwise be compelled to knock you down, my good fellow."

"Gussy! Gussy! Come here."

It was a familiar voice from the side of the hall, where the spectators were crammed back behind the row of gorgeous footmen and attendants. D'Arcy looked round, and saw his friends from St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove, is that you, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes, come here."

"I am all wight here—"

Cousin Ethel made him a sign to come. D'Arcy could not refuse a lady, and he came over and joined them, while the footman was still undecided how to deal with him. The swell of St. Jim's departed only in time, for a policeman was approaching the spot, and D'Arcy had run a very considerable risk of being hauled to the door and ejected from the exhibition.

Blake passed an arm through that of the School House swell.

"You keep here," he murmured. "You champion ass."

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a champion ass—"

"Mind, if you get arrested to-day, we're not going to bail you out," said Digby.

"I am not wunnin' any wisk of gettin' arwested, that I know of."

"Hallo, here's the Hereditary Prince of Sausageberg, or whatever it is," exclaimed Lowther. "Shut up now, Gussy."

"I wefuse to shut up."

"Then go on jawing. That's the prince, kids."

The expectant crowd in the hall had been gratified at last. A little brown-faced man in a tight uniform glimmering with gold lace had entered, and the footmen and attendants were bowing to the ground. The two or three bald-headed old gentlemen were bowing to the crimson carpet. Their faces were brimming over with the satisfaction natural to bald-headed old gentlemen who were greeting no less a person than the Hereditary Prince of Klein-Silberberg.

Nobody could hear what was said, but there was a murmur of applause at a given signal, and then the Hereditary Prince was conducted in state into the exhibition.

Most of the crowd followed, watching the prince as intently as if he were some remarkable conjurer who might start his remarkable tricks at any moment.

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"Bai Jove, I don't think much of this weception," he remarked, "and it must be wathah wuff on a pwince to be followed about and watched by all these silly wottahs."

"All in his day's work, I suppose," said Blake philosophically. "I say, the sports will be beginning in the giddy Stadium now."

"Let's get there, then."

They moved away. Miss Priscilla was looking a little fatigued. She leaned rather heavily on Tom Merry's arm.

"I think I should like a little rest soon, Tommy darling," she murmured.

"You will be sitting down in the Stadium," said Tom Merry. "That will be a ripping rest, and you can go to sleep instead of watching the sports if you want to. And I'll get you a ride to the Stadium."

"Surely there are no cabs in the exhibition—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"No, but there are rickshaws," he replied. "Lots of people are going about the exhibition in rickshaws. I'll get one."

"Get two," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah."

Tom Merry secured two rickshaws, and Miss Priscilla and Cousin Ethel were seated in them. Miss Fawcett was at first rather nervous of attracting attention, but she soon saw that many other old people were proceeding about the grounds in the same way.

The coolies ran the little hand-carriages swiftly along to the Stadium, the juniors keeping pace, and Miss Fawcett reached the next show without further fatigue.

Tom Merry ran his hands through his pockets for cash to take the tickets, and his face lengthened a little. Miss Priscilla smiled, and opened her little bag.

"Take this, Tommy darling," she murmured.

"Thank you, dear," said Tom Merry, as a couple of sovereigns were slipped into his hand. "The money does go here, and no mistake."

They entered the Stadium, and secured good seats.

"The sports here ought to be intewestin'," said D'Arcy, looking through his programme. "Let me see, a foot-wace between the Muggleton Fliers and the Golder's Gween Hawwiah. Good."

Miss Fawcett's head dropped on Tom Merry's shoulder. The good old lady was tired, and she nodded off to sleep, and Tom Merry kept very still, so that he should not disturb her. Figgins glanced at Cousin Ethel, and wondered whether she was tired. But the girl seemed as fresh as a daisy.

The Stadium was pretty well filled for the sports.

The Hereditary Prince of Klein-Silberberg had graciously consented to witness one of the events, and there was a stir as he was ushered in, with two or three bald-headed old gentlemen bowing round him as if moved by clockwork.

The race between the Muggleton Fliers and the Golder's Green Harriers proved an exciting one. The honours fell to Golder's Green, and there was a round of cheering, and the Hereditary Prince opened his eyes and said "Bravo."

Other sports followed, through all of which Miss Fawcett remained asleep, and Tom Merry quite still, and at the end, when the crowd began to stream back into the exhibition ground, Miss Fawcett woke.

She gave a little start.

"Dear me, Tommy! I do actually believe that I nodded off," she exclaimed.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Yes, I think you must have," he assented. "The sports are over now, dear. Shall we go and have some tea?"

"Certainly, my darling boy."

And the St. Jim's party followed the crowd out of the Stadium.

CHAPTER 15.

In the Singalese Village.

FATTY WYNN rejoined the party as they came out of the Stadium. There was a smile of contentment on the fat face of the Falstaff of St. Jim's. He had evidently "done himself down," as Lowther expressed it, well.

"Had a good time?" he inquired rather languidly.

"Fine," said Figgins. "And you?"

"Oh, ripping. I hope you are in funds, some of you."

"Why?"

"Well, I'm stony. They've got awfully nice things to eat over there, and I only had five bob, and it all went in next to no time. Still, I've had a good feed. I'm stony now. Lucky you're not."

"We're looking for tea," said Tom Merry. "I suppose you don't want any more?"

"That's where you make a mistake," said Fatty Wynn promptly. "I've just been filling up time, that's all. I'm quite ready for tea. There's a nice French place where you can get tay congplay—"

"Where you can get what?" asked Manners.

"Tay congplay—"

"Oh, the complet," laughed Tom Merry. "Well, I think that will suit us, and we'll have some dinner later, to last us through the journey home. Let's go and have the complet, kids."

"Lead on, Macduff," said Figgins.

"Right-ho, follow me," said Fatty Wynn. "You can always depend upon me for guidance when it's a question of looking for a feed."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The party was soon enjoying "the complet," a light meal, but sufficient for them, at the time, and even for Fatty Wynn, as he



"Have You taken all the purple pills I sent you?" asked Miss Priscilla. "And the Terra-cotta Tabloids for Pining People? Have you any of the pills left, Tommy?"

"No!" said Tom Merry, truthfully enough.

had already been eating most of the afternoon. After tea, Miss Fawcett was too fatigued for further adventures, but by this time she had come to feel that Tom Merry might be safely trusted out of her sight. Cousin Ethel refused to leave the old lady, and so it was agreed that the juniors should call for them again when it was time to see the fireworks. Meanwhile, the boys were to visit some of the shows.

"And look out for Mr. Lathom," said Miss Fawcett. "I suppose nothing can really have happened to him, but I am quite uneasy about his long absence."

"Oh, he'll turn up all right in time for the train home," said Manners.

"And Skimpole, too—he must not be lost."

"Oh, Skimpy is all right."

"And you will be back at dark, darling."

"Certainly," said Tom Merry, and Figgins, with a glance at Cousin Ethel, said "rather," so emphatically that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglasses upon him.

"We'll visit the Singalese village," said Tom Merry. "I hear that it's awfully interesting, and there are snake-charmers and conjurers there, too."

"Wippin'. I hope some of you fellows have got some change: I am wunnin' out of cash. Evewybody expects somethin', and it wuns away with the beastly tin, you know."

"It does," said Tom Merry. "Make it a rule to give only a penny a time, and then the money will go further."

"Yaas, wathah, that's a good ideah."

Tom Merry paid for the admission of the party to the Singalese village. Brown faces surrounded them now, and strange sights and sounds of the East.

"Hullo, here's a snake-charmer," said Tom Merry, stopping at a door. "Come in here."

"You have to pay again for admission," said Kerr.

"Never mind, come on."

They entered. A man with a brown skin and glittering black eyes sat cross-legged at the end of the low-roofed place. He grinned amiably at the boys, and took up a little wooden instrument, and began to blow into it, emitting a somewhat discordant noise. He removed the lids from two little baskets, and two hideous heads appeared.

Arthur Augustus, who was leaning on the rail, started back a pace.

"Bai Jove! How extwemely howwid," he exclaimed.

"What are they?" asked Fatty Wynn. "Haddocks?"

"Ha, ha! They're snakes."

"Beastly fat necks," said Figgins. "Spiteful looking beggars too. I say, Brownie, what do you call them?"

"Cobra," said the Indian. "Injun cobra."

"By Jove! And will they bite?"

The snake-charmer moved his brown hand towards one of the snakes, and the cobra made a spiteful dart at it. He drew it back.

"All the same, I imagine their fangs are extracted," murmured Kerr.

The Indian blew harder into his curiously-shaped pipe. The noise grew louder, and the cobras raised their heads, and turned them round in obedience to the sound. The boys watched them curiously.

"It's a feahful wow," D'Arcy remarked. "But I'm wathah cuwious to see them dance on their tails."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I fancy you won't see that, Gussy."

"I expect to. I've been told that Indian snake-charmers can make cobwebs dance on their beastly tails, you know. They're gettin' up highah now."

The cobras raised their heads higher in obedience to the barbaric music. But they did not leave the baskets, and did not dance on their tails. The Indian closed the baskets again, and laid down the pipe. D'Arcy looked disappointed.

"I say, aren't they goin' to dance on their tails?" he exclaimed.

The brown man grinned, evidently not understanding. He rattled a bag that was suspended round his neck, and commenced his conjuring tricks. With two balls and three little jars, he played an old trick, much to the juniors' interest.

With a gesture he inquired which jar one of the balls was under. D'Arcy was quite certain that it was under the middle one, and the Indian grinned and removed it. Nothing was there.

"Bai Jove! that is weally wonderful!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Handkerchief," said the Oriental.

"He wants a handkerchief," said Tom Merry. "Give him yours, Gussy."

"Bettah give him yours, Tom Mewwy, in case he injahs it," said Arthur Augustus. "You nevah can tell how these conjurin' twicks are goin' to turn out."

Tom Merry laughed, and passed the brown man his handkerchief. The conjurer tied a knot in the corner, and handed it back to the juniors for examination.

"Pull tight," he said.

"What is he going to do, Tom Mewwy?"

"Untie the knot?"

"Bai Jove, I could do that."

"But he's going to do it by magic."

"Wats!"

"Well, you'll see."

Each of the juniors gave the knot on the handkerchief a tug, till it was so tight that the unfastening would not have been easy for any of them. Then it was passed back to the Indian.

He laid it down for a few moments, while he produced a number of stones from his throat, much to the amazement of D'Arcy, and then took it up again, with one hand, and after a pass or two presented it to Tom Merry. The knot was unfastened!

"My hat!" said Figgins.

"Bai Jove!"

The brown man grinned.

"Magic," he said.

"Wats, old chap! I don't believe it was magic, but it was jolly clevah," said D'Arcy. "I think I'll make it a bob for this clevah beggah, deah boys."

And Arthur Augustus dropped a shilling before the Indian, and a little shower of coppers accompanied it.

"Salaam, sahiba," said the conjurer.

"Salaam," replied D'Arcy, without knowing what it meant, and the conjurer grinned.

They left the show and went on their way, at every step finding some object of interest—and a new road for their money. A man was chipping out little elephants in ebony, and D'Arcy had to purchase some, and then they watched a potter making jars on an ancient Oriental potter's wheel.

"Bai Jove, this is quite wotantio," said D'Arcy. "Kiplin' says somethin' somewhere about east is east and west is west, but nevah the twain shall meet, you know, but we are meetin' the east here, and no mistake. This wernids me of somethin' I have read somewhere. I forget what it was, but I think it was poetwy, somethin' about a potter, and it was awfully good."

"Here's a giddy monkey," exclaimed Manners, halting.

"What does he do? Well, of all the funny little beggars!"

An old wizened native was squatted on the ground, blinking in the sunset. He had a curious little monkey attached to a string. He grinned up at the boys.

"Salaam," he said.

He was speaking to the monkey, and the animal evidently understood. He salaamed in the most respectful way to the juniors.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, putting up his eye-glass, and surveying the monkey with great interest. "The little boundah looks quite human, you know."

"Looks like somebody we know, doesn't he?" grinned Digby.

"He only wants an eye-glass to make him complete."

"Weally, Dig—"

"He wants some tin," said Tom Merry. "That's what he's holding out his hand for. You see, he takes it to his master."

"Bai Jove, what a clevah little beggah."

Figgins stooped and placed a penny in the monkey's claw. The little animal salaamed and carried the coin to his master, after putting it in his mouth.

Half a dozen coins were carried to the old Indian in a similar manner, and he would willingly have continued that performance indefinitely, but the juniors passed on.

"Hallo, what's this?" said D'Arcy. "The village doctor and his wife. They ought to be worth seein'. Famous Ceylon dwarfs. Shall we go in, Tom Mewwy?"

"Certainly."

"Pay for us, then, deah boy. I have only some coppalis left." Tom Merry felt in his pockets. His hands came out again empty.

"I'm stony," he replied.

"Very good show, sir," said the attendant. "He speaks five languages."

"I've got some tin left," said Herries. "Here you are."

He placed a handful of coins in Tom Merry's hand: all he had. The hero of the Shell paid for admission, and the juniors filed in.

The Ceylon dwarfs were certainly curious to see. A little brown man and a little brown woman with agreeable grins on their brown faces. They held out their hands to shake hands, and the juniors went through it in turn, not liking to decline. As D'Arcy said, a fellow was bound to be polite to a stranger in the land.

"Glad to see you, daddy," said Figgins. "I hear you speak five languages. Go ahead."

The little man grinned amiably.

"Pway speak in Fwench," said D'Arcy. "I should be vewy pleased to hear you speak in Fwench."

"He speaks in five languages, but I don't suppose yours is one of them," grinned Digby. "I'd better tell him. Speak in French, daddy, will you?"

The little man grinned, and began to speak volubly in that tongue. French was in the ordinary curriculum at St. Jim's, and all the juniors could speak it more or less, but they could not follow a foreign tongue at the rate the little Singalese spoke it.

"Blessed if I can see what's the good of his talking in French," murmured Figgins. "You can't understand a word, Gussy."

"I know I can't, deah boy. But it's Fwanco-Bwitish Ex-hibish, you know, and so it's only the pwopah thing to hear some Fwench while we're here."

"Well, of all the asses—"

"Weally, Figgins—"

Tom Merry placed a shilling in the hand of the little doctor, and the juniors left the little house. They looked round the Singalese village a little further, and then left the enclosure. Outside they ran into Skimpole.

CHAPTER 16.

A Demand for Cash.

SKIMPOLE was walking along with his hat on the back of his head, and a thoughtful wrinkle upon his huge forehead. He had his notebook in his hand, and a pencil behind his ear. He was evidently in a brown study, for he did not see the juniors until Figgins slapped him on the shoulder. Then he started.

"Dear me! Is that you, Figgins?"

"Looks like me, doesn't it?" grinned Figgins.

"Yes, indeed. I thought you were at St. Jim's."

"Half-holiday to-day, Skimmy."

"You will be late for calling over."

"That doesn't matter, if we go in under Mr. Lathom's wing," grinned the New House junior. "I heard you were lost."

"Oh, no, I have been examining the machinery in the 'Daily Mail' building," said Skimpole. "It is awfully interesting. I have not been able to pick up any hints for my airship there, but it is really interesting all the same. They are printing an exhibition edition of the paper, you know, and I've got a copy for a souvenir."

"Good idea."

"Yes, I thought it was rather a good idea. I was somewhat disappointed with the aerostatic department, but that will be greatly improved when I get a model of my new airship completed, and send it here to be exhibited. By the way, I heard that there is an ant-hill exhibited here—cut down the middle, you know, so that you can see the interior, with the ants at work. Have you seen it?"

"No."

"H'm! I suppose I shall find it sooner or later. Good-bye."

And Skimpole hurried off in search of the ant-hill. Figgins grinned at his companions. Tom Merry laughed.

"He's welcome to his giddy ant-hill," said Figgins. "What do you say to a visit to Senegal. It's an exhibit from French West Africa."

"Is that where that thundering row comes from?" asked Kerr.

"Yea; that's the tom-tom, or something."

"Let's have a look at them."

"Cash!" said Tom Merry. "You'd better pool all you've got, and we'll make it go as far as we can. Hand over."

"Right you are."

Every pocket was emptied into Tom Merry's cap. A supply of cash sufficient for immediate needs was raised in this way, and they entered the Senegal enclosure.

It was a strange sight to the juniors.

Half-naked blacks were beating the war-drum, creating a terrific din. Others were lounging about, and little black

children, with enormous heads wandered about asking for coppers with huge grins upon their comical faces. In a building roofed with a West African thatch, and open at the sides, several Senegalese blacks were dancing in a savage, barbaric way. The din was terrible.

"Let's get on," said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove; here's a jewellery department," said D'Arcy. "They're makin' little silvah wings. How cuwious."

"Rats," said Figgins. "What on earth should they be making silver wings for?"

"They are makin' them, deah boy."

"Rats!"

"The ass means silver rings," grinned Lowther. "They're making silver rings, and jolly pretty little things they are, too."

The rings, in a curious filagree style, were certainly pretty. Tom Merry asked the price, and the brown man in charge grinned and replied in his limited English.

"Eighteenpence; two shilling."

Tom Merry looked thoughtful. He was wondering if Cousin Ethel would care to have one of the rings as a souvenir of the exhibition. The others passed on to the next stall, and Tom Merry selected a ring hastily, before they looked round, and laid down two shillings. He slipped it into his pocket and walked on. Figgins nudged him.

"I say; you've got all the cash, Merry—can you let me have a couple of bob?"

"Certainly," said Tom Merry. "Here you are."

"Thanks."

They moved on. A few minutes later Jack Blake, with a slight blush in his face, requested the loan of a couple of shillings. Tom Merry handed it over without question. The money was a common supply, and was at everybody's service so long as it lasted—though it was not likely to last long at this rate. But there was always Miss Priscilla's bag to fall back upon in case of necessity.

"I say, Merry, is there much tin left?" asked Digby.

"Yes; a pretty good bit," said Tom Merry.

"Let me have a couple of bob, then, will you?"

"Here you are."

"Bai Jove, that wow of the war-drum is weally tewwif," said Arthur Augustus, looking distressed. "I weally think we shall have to get out, Tom Merry. Before we go, howevah, I should like you to let me have a couple of shillings."

Tom Merry laughed.

"There you are, Gussy."

"Thank you vevy much, deah boy."

D'Arcy disappeared. Several of the juniors had been straggling from the party, and some of them looked conscious. Monty Lowther nudged his leader.

"Can you let me have a couple of bob, Tom?"

"There's only eighteenpence left, Monty."

"That will do, if you don't want it."

"You're welcome, old chap. Sorry there's no more."

"Oh, that's all right!"

Lowther pocketed the eighteenpence, and strolled away with an air of exaggerated carelessness. Manners tapped Tom Merry on the arm.

"Hallo!" said Tom. "Are you in want of a couple of bob?"

Manners looked astonished.

"Well, I was going to ask you if you had any to spare," he said. "How on earth did you guess, Tom?"

"Well, nearly everybody has been raiding the supply to that tune, that's all," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I'm sorry there's none left, Manners, old chap. I gave Lowther the last eighteenpence."

Manners looked disappointed.

"Well, I suppose it can't be helped," he remarked. "It's rotten. I wanted a couple of bob particularly."

"What for?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh! it doesn't matter," said Manners evasively. He strolled on, and Herries, who had been wearing a very thoughtful expression, came over to Tom Merry.

"I say, Merry, if there's a couple of bob to spare—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What on earth are you cackling at?" demanded the amazed Herries. "Nothing funny in my wanting a couple of bob, is there?"

"Oh! nothing; only the cash is all gone."

"Not a couple of bob left?"

"Not a penny."

"H'm! well, never mind."

"Did you want it for anything particular?"

"Oh, no; it doesn't matter!"

"May as well get out of this place," said D'Arcy, rejoining Tom Merry. "That feahful wow is makin' my head ache, and we've seen about all there is."

"Right!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'm getting rather hungry, too. We shall only have time to get some dinner before the fireworks."

"Come on then," said Tom Merry.

And the juniors quitted the Senegalese enclosure, and a few minutes later they rejoined Miss Fawcett and Cousin Ethel.

CHAPTER 17.

Everyone is Pleased.

"MY darling boy," said Miss Fawcett. "I am so glad to see you again. And how has my darling enjoyed himself?"

Oh, rippingly!" said Tom Merry. "And I'm getting ready for dinner, too. I'm sorry to say that all the tin's gone again, and we're all stony—"

Miss Fawcett groped in her bag.

"That does not matter at all, Tommy darling; you would naturally spend all your money at a place like this," she said affectionately. "Your old nurse thought of that for you. Take these, my child—for yourself and for your friends, of course."

"Thank you, dear," said Tom Merry, as he slipped a couple of sovereigns into his pocket. "I don't know what we should do without you."

And Miss Fawcett smiled a pleased smile. Tom Merry's affection for his old nurse was genuine, and would have been just the same if she had been as poor as a church mouse, and Miss Priscilla knew it. Cousin Ethel gave Tom Merry a bright smile as he stepped beside her.

"I say, Ethel," he said, in a low voice, "I—I thought you might like this as a souvenir of the exhibition, and it's an awfully pretty little thing, too. Will you take it?"

Cousin Ethel uttered a pleased exclamation at the sight of the ring.

"Certainly, Tom—and thank you very much."

And Tom Merry was happy. Miss Priscilla was beckoning to him, and he joined her. Figgins stepped towards Cousin Ethel, with a blush on his sunburnt face.

"I—I say, Cousin Ethel, would you—er—would you accept this as a souvenir of the exhibition," he murmured, colouring crimson. "I—I know it's not good enough for you, of course; but—but I should like you to take it."

"What a dear, pretty little ring," said Cousin Ethel. "Thank you very much, Figgins. I think this is very kind of you."

She slipped it on her finger. It was exactly the right size, and Figgins thought it looked beautiful on the plump, white finger.

"Come, my dears," said Miss Fawcett. "It is time for dinner, and Wynn knows the way."

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "I spotted the place first of all—the only place in the show, I believe, where you can get a table d'hôte. Follow me."

Jack Blake dropped to Cousin Ethel's side as they moved out in the dusk. The lights were beginning to gleam on all sides now, and the mountain railway looked strangely attractive, with its glimmer of electric lights in the summer night. The White City was agleam, and looked like fairyland.

"I say, Ethel—"

"Yes, Jack?"

"Would you—would you accept this—as—a souvenir of—the exhibition, you know—"

"What a charming little ring," said Ethel, with a sweet smile.

A few minutes later Digby had something confidential to say. They were about to enter the place Fatty Wynn had discovered, when Dig found an opportunity to speak unobserved by the rest.

"Miss Ethel—would you—would you accept this—as—as a souvenir," he stammered, blushing. "I—I'd like you to have it."

"What a beautiful little ring," said Cousin Ethel. "Thank you so much, Digby."

They went in, and Tom Merry selected a table. They were about to take their seats when Figgins uttered an exclamation.

"There's Lathom! He's looking for a seat, too."

The short-sighted master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's was blinking to and fro, Tom Merry ran across to him.

"Will you join us at dinner, sir?"

"Dear me; I did not see you, Merry. Yes; I will certainly join you with pleasure. I have been looking for you. We must keep together now, as we have to depart immediately after the fireworks."

"Certainly, sir. This way."

Mr. Lathom raised his hat to Miss Fawcett, looking very conscious, and took a seat beside that amiable lady.

"I was so afraid you were lost, Mr. Lathom," said she. "Have you succeeded in finding Skimpole?"

"No," said Mr. Lathom. "I have looked everywhere, but I have not seen Skimpole since this morning. I trust he will be found before the time for departure. Dear me, is that Figgins? How did you come here, Figgins?"

"Train, sir, from Rylocombe," said Figgins demurely.

"Er—I mean, how comes it that you are here?"

ANSWERS

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"TOM'S TERRIBLE TIME."

A Double-Length Tale of the
Chums of St. Jim's.

"Half-holiday at St. Jim's, sir; so we thought we might come, as our Form-master was here," said Figgins glibly. Mr. Lathom coughed.

"But it is now past calling-over at the school, Figgins. Have you permission to remain out after calling-over, from a master or prefect?"

"Well, no, sir; but we thought you would give us permission, and allow us to travel back to St. Jim's with you," said Figgins, in his meekest tone.

"I am sure Mr. Lathom will do so," said Miss Priscilla. "Figgins has been most attentive to both Miss Cleveland and myself during the afternoon, Mr. Lathom. He held Ethel's hand all the time we were on one of the dreadful railways to keep her from growing frightened—"

Cousin Ethel coloured, and Mr. Lathom's face relaxed a little.

"Well, I suppose I must overlook this, Figgins," he said. "You will come back to the school with me, and I will explain to your housemaster."

"Oh, thank you, sir," said Figgins & Co. together.

"You are very, very kind," said Miss Fawcett.

"Oh, not at all," said little Mr. Lathom, beaming through his glasses. "I am glad to say this has been a most enjoyable day, and I can understand Figgins wishing to join his friends here; and I know Kerr and Wynn always go where Figgins goes. Not at all! I shall see them through the matter."

Meanwhile, Lowther was speaking in a low tone to Cousin Ethel. Lowther was usually self-possessed upon all occasions, but now there was a slight hesitation to be discerned in his manner, and there was something like a blush in his cheeks.

"It's nothing much," he said. "Only I thought you might accept it as—a souvenir of the exhibition, you know."

"What a dear little ring!" said Cousin Ethel.

"I am so glad you like it," said the gratified Monty.

The dinner was a great success. Fatty Wynn, of course, kept his end up in noble style. All the juniors were hungry, and they did the viands justice. By the time the dinner was finished it was time to go to the Stadium to see the fireworks. Thither they went accordingly, for the final show. They had not, as Tom Merry remarked, seen half that there was to be seen, or done half that there was to be done, but they had filled up a day pretty well, all the same. As they found their seats in the Stadium, D'Arcy contrived to seat himself beside his cousin. He had something to say, and the girl gave him an opportunity, but D'Arcy did not seem to find it easy to utter what was in his thoughts.

"I say, Ethel," he said at length, "I—I wish you would accept this wing—"

"This what?"

"This little silvah wing. It's made by a Senegalese chap, you know; and I thought you might like it as a souvenir of the exhibish. Will you take it?"

"What a sweet little ring!" said Cousin Ethel.

"Bai Jove, you know, I am awfully glad that you like it," said Arthur Augustus, very much gratified. "Hallo, there are the fireworks!"

The fireworks were starting. The juniors of St. Jim's watched the pyrotechnic display with great interest. When it was over, and they followed the crowd out of the vast Stadium once more, Mr. Lathom looked at his watch and announced that it was time to leave.

"But where is Skimpole?" asked Miss Fawcett.

Mr. Lathom looked worried.

"I really have not the faintest idea."

"He was looking for a model ant-hill when I saw him last," remarked Tom Merry. "If you go on towards the station, Figgins and I will look for him, and join you there."

"Very good, Merry."

The party moved on. Tom Merry and Figgins hunted high and low for Skimpole. There was no sign of him to be seen; but they found an attendant who directed them to the spot where a model ant-hill was exhibited. And there they found Skimpole, gazing at it through the glass, and making copious notes in his notebook.

Figgins thumped him on the shoulder, and Skimpole jumped and turned round.

"Dear me! How you startled me!"

"We've been looking for you everywhere," said Tom Merry. "It's more than time to go. Come along."

"Wait a little while, Merry. I am making some very interesting notes. I have only been here a couple of hours or so, and—"

Tom Merry grasped him by one arm, and Figgins by the other, and they marched him off. Skimpole vainly expostulated.

"No good talking," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "You've got to come. This way to the station."

"But really, Merry—"

"Come along!"

And Skimpole, having no choice in the matter, came along. Mr. Lathom looked relieved when Tom Merry and Figgins rejoined him at the station, bringing the missing junior with them.

"The party is complete now, fortunately," said Mr. Lathom, blinking round through his spectacles. "I think we may proceed."

And they proceeded.

After a long journey, and twice changing trains, the party arrived at the gates of St. Jim's, pretty well tired out, but cheerful and satisfied. Taggles the porter granted expressively as he admitted them. He did not think that a visit to an exhibition was sufficient reason for having his rest disturbed.

Figgins & Co., of course, had been missed at calling-over. But a few words from Mr. Lathom made that matter all right. Figgins shook hands with Cousin Ethel when they parted, and noticed the glimmer of silver flaggee on her finger. And his eyes danced at the thought that Cousin Ethel was wearing his ring.

The same thought, curiously enough, was in five other minds. Five other juniors, as well as Figgins, were pleased to see that glimmer of silver on Cousin Ethel's finger. As they did not exchange notes on the subject, they all remained pleased.

"Good-night, my darling boy," said Miss Priscilla, kissing Tom Merry in the hall of the School House. "I hope you have enjoyed your holiday."

"Rippingly!" exclaimed Tom.

"And the same with all of us," said Blake.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chimed in:

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors went to bed in a happy and contented frame of mind, well pleased with their day at the Franco-British Exhibition.

THE END.

(A splendid double-length tale of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled "Tom's Terrible Time." Please order your "GEM" in advance. Price 1d.)

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"TOM'S TERRIBLE TIME."

A Double-Length Tale of the
Chums of St. Jim's.

SPLENDID NEW TALE OF CIRCUS LIFE.**READ THIS FIRST.**

Joe throws up office work, and while tramping along a country lane meets Jim, who is running away from Muerte, a bullying circus proprietor. Joe and Jim chum up and join Muerte's rival, Ruabino. From motives of revenge, Muerte bribes Luigi, Ruabino's former lion-tamer, to let loose his one-time charges. Asked to do an errand at the bank for Rubby, Joe rides Buster, a vicious circus-horse, into the town. While Joe is in the bank, Buster manages to do much damage, and Rubby later receives calls from some irate tradesmen, whom he proceeds to pacify.

(Now go on with the story.)

Joe again Proves his Worth to Rubby.

"Send me forty-four rolls on Monday morning," said Rubby to the baker, "and fifteen loaves of new bread on Monday afternoon, and forty-one and a half rolls on Tuesday, and send your bill with it. And— Oh, dear, oh dear! The bank-manager! My dear fellow! Sorry! What's in a bell? A bell would sound as sweet if called a gong. Er—send me a pound of your best—I mean, send me your bill for your bell; and— Good-afternoon; I am busy."

"Our porter has been bitten; and—"

"Send it in, send it in, my dear fellow! It will do for my lions; and tell the porter I will pay him two shillings a pound for it; and—"

"This is no joking matter, sir!"

"Who would be a showman? Sir, I ask you the question. Would you be a showman? Would you buy hats for pretty tigresses? Would you lead lions out of conservatories? Would you—"

"Sir, you are intoxicated!"

"Then it is with the exuberance of my own verbosity," growled Rubby, cutting himself a slice of bread, "for I vow that I have had nothing stronger than coffee to drink all day. But that does not matter. A showman is supposed to be able to get over any difficulty; but here is one that puzzles me. I can't offer to pay in ten thousand pounds next week, because I am absolutely certain I shall not have it. He doesn't sell butter or eggs. How would you quiet the man, Joe?"

"Shove him into Buster's stall; and if that horse can't quiet him, I am mistaken."

"Dear boy," exclaimed Rubby, waving his knife at the indignant manager, "go away; you annoy me! I presume your porter is insured against the ordinary risks of his calling. If not, it is a dereliction of duty on your part. Now, dear boy, you are a younger man than I am,"—that manager was at least twenty years older—"and I have the right to give you good advice. Stick to your bank. Never go into the circus line. There are too many vicissitudes in it. You have to buy hats for tigresses, and lead lions from conservatories. If you should hear of a comfortable job in your bank—say, a director, where there is plenty of pay and no work—let me know, and I will sell this show and take it. Thank you very much. I shall be quite pleased to hear further from you. Good-afternoon, gentlemen! Pass me the salt, Joe. Well, well; we have satisfied them."

"But what about your present baker and butcher?" said Joe.

"Dear boy," exclaimed Rubby, "I admit that it is rough on them; but what was I to do? They have had a week of

my custom, and if you look at it in the right light, it is only fair that the other tradesmen should have the other week."

"Would they have had it if Buster had not kicked up ructions?"

"No! They have to thank Buster for that. You see, it is the law of nature—pass me the pickles—when a master flogs a boy, that boy has a lot to be thankful for. He does not know it at the time. Jube did not know when he was having beef kicked into his eye that he had a lot to be thankful for; but he knows it now, because he has got my custom—except for sausages and beef. The same remarks apply to the baker man. He has got my custom for rolls. And similar remarks also apply to the bank-manager. He has received excellent advice from me, and I shall charge him nothing for it— Pass me the mustard, and cut me a little more bread, while you are helping yourself."

"Still, it is rough on your present butcher and baker."

"Well, you can call it rough-hewed justice shaping their ends. I can't help it. It isn't my fault. It is their misfortune."

"Do you think you will hear any more from the bank-manager, Rubby?"

"Possibly! What does it matter? He can claim for a broken bell. Very well! That means half a crown. If his porter was bitten, they ought to compensate the man, and make me pay for the compensation. I should say a sovereign would do that."

"It's a lot of money!"

"Not in the way of business, dear boy. It doesn't do to look at a few pounds in a show like this. Shove them down to the profit and loss account, and there you are. You never know your luck in this line."

"Don't you ever worry?"

"What's the good? Things go wrong, and I get savage. That doesn't improve them a bit. Still, it is my nature. Well, they go all right—like they are doing now. I get happy. That's not wise; but it is my nature, again. You never know your luck in this life. Take the ups and downs calmly, is my advice, and it is good advice. I know that, because I never do it, myself, and that is a sure proof that it is good advice. What can't be cured, must be endured; and it is so often that you find what you fondly imagine to be a calamity turns out to be a blessing in disguise. When in a difficulty, do your best to get out of it. If your best isn't right, no matter. You have acted as you thought was best, and could do no more. It is futile saying I wish I had done so and so. Care killed a cat, and as we have only one life, why, we can't afford to care. Now, seeing that we have had nothing stronger than water to drink, suppose you brew a cup of coffee, and then we will go for our walk."

Rubby had arrived at that time of life when a man becomes rather lazy after a mid-day meal, and he lolled in his chair, enjoying his cigar, and favouring Joe with some remarkably sage advice.

"All right, Rubby," exclaimed Joe, when he judged by that worthy's droning voice that he was getting very sleepy, "I follow in your footsteps, and—"

"You silly worm!" gasped Rubby, "I'm about the last man in whose footsteps you should try to follow. Look at me, in middle age—a broken-down, miserable wreck—"

"Ha, ha, ha! There's still plenty of flesh on your bones, Rubby; and you don't look so jolly miserable. You will get over the butcher and baker in no time. Now, are you coming for a walk?"

"Assuredly! No man can live without proper exercise, and—"

"Well, come and take it, and don't talk about it."

"I was just wondering whether it would not be better to take it in a trap."

"You can't take exercise in a trap; besides, you can't get across country. Then, again, it would cost you about three shillings an hour."

"We might go in the traction engine, and—"

"Here, you come along. You will be asleep in two minutes. Don't be so horribly lazy. What you want, is half an hour on the high trapeze, or else an hour on Buster's back. I'll warrant he will give you enough exercise to last you some time."

"I'll warrant that horse will never give me any exercise in his dear little life. Still, we will come. I want to go for a walk by the river, and there is a little inn some miles along, where we shall be able to get an excellent tea; then we will get back in time for the entertainment. Your turn does not come till the end, so it won't matter if we are late."

Joe found Rubby very good company. The only thing was that he would insist on walking at about two miles an hour; and once or twice he took a rest in the grass.

It was a beautiful afternoon, and they had proceeded for some miles along the stream without meeting a soul. Then they saw Luigi, accompanied by another man, coming towards them.

"A fine pair of beauties, I should say!" exclaimed Rubby. "I do not know what Luigi's friend is like, but he looks a pretty big scoundrel; and the very fact that he is in Luigi's company convinces me that he is one."

"Have you got that money in your pocket, Rubby?" inquired Joe.

"Certainly, dear boy! You don't suppose I would be so stupid as to leave it in the caravan, surely?"

"Well, I am not at all sure that it would not have been safer under all circumstances."

"Why?"

"This is a very lonely spot."

"Pooh! We have got the company of Luigi and his precious friend. Hello, Luigi! Still taming Muerte's lions."

"No, I ain't," growled Luigi, glaring at his late master.

"Ah! Probably he did not like your foreign pronunciation. You should strive to get over that foreign accent. 'No I ain't' is pure Italian."

"There's a thundering lot of Italian about Ruabino, ain't there?"

"Decidedly! But not so much about Rubby. You see my dear creature, the public like Italian names, and I strive to give them what they like. What have you taken to now? Burglary—or merely murder?"

"See you here, you fat-headed brute, you'll go too far with me."

"Not of my own accord. I would not go a foot with you!"

"It's that brute of a showman as I was telling you of, Giles," exclaimed Luigi.

"So your friend is Giles," observed Rubby, eyeing him keenly, and not admiring his slanting forehead and evil-looking eyes. "Well, Luigi, you tried to do me a bad turn by suddenly leaving, and you have only yourself to thank if you learn what it is to be hungry. You forgot that Joe can make my lions perform quite as well as you ever could."

"I hope they will tear him to pieces, one of these days."

"I have no doubt that you hope that."

"I'm willing to come back, if—"

"I am not willing to take you. Joe has taken your place, and if he fills it entirely to my satisfaction, there is an end of the matter, so far as you are concerned. You can stay with Muerte."

"He's a thief, and—"

"Then I should say that he would be a most appropriate master for you."

"He's treated me in the most shameful manner. Turned me off at a moment's notice."

"Well, what could you expect? He only took you on to do me a bad turn, and if you had had a grain of sense in your stupid head, you would have known that he would sack you the moment it suited his purpose. I told you so at the time, and you would not listen to me in your silly temper. As a matter of fact, I had not the slightest intention of working Joe into your place, and had not the slightest idea that he had ever been into the lions' cage. After you had left I forbade him doing so, and the silly young worm disobeyed me, as he always does—so do all the rest of the people I employ. I don't know what is the matter with the unruly brutes. They are worse than lions, and Vera is worse than a dozen tigers. Now, how far is the

inn from here. The farther we go the farther it seems to get, and I'm dead tired. We have been walking at an awful pace."

"You can keep on walking, you maggot, and when you come to that 'ere inn you will notice it," snarled Luigi.

"See here," growled Giles. "If the gent has walked fur he will be wanting a drink, and it's only fair to tell him the way to the inn. It's about three miles along the river bank, and you can't possibly miss it."

"Come on, Joe!" exclaimed Rubby. "We sha'n't get back in time for the performance—not if we are to have a comfortable time for our tea. I had no idea it was so far. There's twopenny for your information, my man, although you haven't given me at all good news concerning the distance. Hurry up, Joe! I daren't be later than nine, for you go on at half-past."

"Look here, Rubby," exclaimed Joe, following him along the bank. "It strikes me that you have given Giles a good deal too much satisfaction."

"How?"

"Why, you told him that we are going to have tea at the inn, and that we are then coming back to the show. Now, what is to prevent those two waiting for us?"

"What should they do that for, dear boy?"

"You have got over twenty pounds in your pocket, and a gold watch and chain. Then there's your scarfpin; and I suppose your life is of some value."

"Well, I will admit that those two are quite capable of robbing us, but don't you see, Joe, they would be afraid to do so. No, we are perfectly safe. I wish that inn was closer. I can't think what they want to build an inn at such a ridiculous spot."

"Perhaps it is for the boatmen."

"Then they ought to build one for the walking men, or else run a tramway to it."

Rubby grumbled at the heat, at the distance, and at being tired, but when, at last, they reached the inn he cheered up wonderfully.

He ordered new laid eggs, watercress, and jam for tea, so that they fared very well. Rubby took a very considerable time over the meal, and when it was finished he went into the grounds, and smoked a cigar in the summer-house.

"Look here, Rubby," exclaimed Joe, at last. "Hadn't we better be shifting. We sha'n't be home much before nine."

"We shall if we walk briskly."

"Very likely; but, if I know anything of you, we are not going to walk briskly. You came along at about two miles an hour, at your best, and then you had several rests."

"It won't be so warm in the cool of the evening. We sha'n't need any rests. All the same, we will start when I have finished this cigar. I always like to start a long walk with a fresh cigar."

Rubby was too comfortable to hurry himself much, but he made a start at last, and he appeared to have forgotten all about Luigi and his evil-looking companion, but Joe kept a good look out.

Joe was walking a little ahead when he heard a movement and the next moment two masked men sprang out.

He had not the slightest doubt that they were Luigi and Giles, although he could not see their faces.

They made a rush at the unfortunate Rubby, and one of them dealt him a blow over the head with a thick stick that he carried.

Rubby sprang back, and this saved him somewhat, but his assailant dealt him a second blow that fell full on his head, and, staggering backwards, Rubby plunged into the water, which, at that part, was very deep.

Joe saw him sink beneath the surface, and he heard one of the ruffians utter a fierce oath, for they had evidently not intended this.

"Send the boy after him," growled one of the miscreants. "He won't tell no tales then."

They both made a rush at Joe, who stood his ground until they were nearly upon him, then dodging them, he plunged into the deep water, and, to his joy, gripped Rubby's body.

"Here, we ain't going to hurt you, lad," growled one of the men. "Stick to him, and we will help you to get him out."

"I believe you have murdered him!" cried Joe. "Now, I suppose, you want to rob your victim. Well, you are not going to do it, you couple of scoundrels—at least, not if I can help it."

Joe had no difficulty in keeping Rubby afloat, as he was quite conscious, and therefore did not struggle; but he had an idea it would be death to land on that side of the river.

He soon made up his mind as to what to do for the best, and, being an excellent swimmer, he struck out for the

opposite bank, supporting the unfortunate Rubby with one hand; and all the time Joe feared that his kind-hearted employer was dead.

The two men on the bank, directly they became aware of his intention, commenced to hurl stones at him, and one of them struck Joe on the head, but he still retained his senses, and heedless of the missiles, swam towards the opposite bank, while the two men threatened him with instant death if he did not return.

Of these threats Joe did not take the slightest heed. His brain was dizzy from the blow he had received, and he felt his strength leaving him, but he was determined never to release his hold of Rubby while any strength was left to him.

He had gained about half the distance when a revolver shot rang out, and he heard the hiss of the bullet in the water close to his face.

"I'll put the next bullet through your heart if you don't come back," cried one of the men.

"You cowardly scoundrel," panted Joe. "You would have put the first one through my brain, had your aim been straight. I'll make you sorry for this work, Luigi, if I escape. Do your worst, you utter scoundrel, and just you remember that I shall do my worst, if ever we meet again."

"I am not Luigi."

"Yes you are, you murderous ruffian, and that other blackguard is Giles."

Another shot was fired, and this time Joe felt the bullet graze his throat, though it was only very slight, so slight, in fact, that it caused him no more pain than a scratch with a pin would have done.

There was a clump of bushes on the opposite bank, and towards these he made, allowing for the tide to drift him downwards.

Four more shots were fired, but none of the others struck Joe, and now he clung to the bushes, though how he was going to get Rubby up the steep bank he did not know.

The water was too deep for Joe to touch the bottom, but he determined to hold on in the hope that Rubby would regain consciousness, and this is exactly what occurred, though quite five minutes elapsed before he showed signs of returning life.

"Where are we?" moaned Rubby.

"In the water."

"I—thought it—felt damp. I remember. I was struck on the head. Did you come in to rescue me?"

"Yes. Never mind about that—"

"Well, it seems to be the one thing that I have got to mind."

"How are we going to get out, Rubby. You are too jolly heavy for me to lift."

"I can crawl out all right. Let me catch hold of the bushes."

"Be careful. They have been firing with a revolver, and will have had plenty of time to reload it. They are on the other bank."

"Then you have swum across the river with me?"

"It was the only thing to do. They were hurling stones, and then they commenced firing."

"All right! They are not likely to hit us at this distance, and it is one of the risks we are compelled to take. Here goes."

Rubby got up all right, and Joe quickly followed.

"Get behind this tree," said Rubby. "I suppose the men were Luigi and Giles?"

"I haven't the slightest doubt about that."

"Well, we will have a talk to them, just to let them know that they haven't done themselves much good. It won't be wise to let them know that they have annoyed us. We will treat the matter coolly, though, I must say, I feel as though I would like to have the lashing of them. I know the surest way to drive Luigi into a state of fury, and, in all probability, I shall be able to get him to incriminate himself, though I have not the slightest doubt he is one of the men."

Then Rubby called to the two miscreants, who were still on the opposite side of the river.

"I rather fancy you have made a mess of things this time, Luigi. You will find penal servitude harder than training lions, although it may not be so dangerous."

"I dunno who you are talking to. I ain't Luigi."

"Ha, ha, ha! That is an excellent joke. If you were not Luigi it stands to reason that you would be very glad to let me believe you were. I don't know whether Giles put you up to this, or whether it was your own brilliant idea, but you have got to remember that you will be punished for it. It is rather hard on the taxpayers that they should have to keep a lazy brute like you, but I can't help that. When you are safely behind the iron bars I will pay you a visit with Joe, and we will try to bring you to a better frame of mind. You always were a great clumsy

brute, but I must say you have muddled this affair in a remarkably stupid manner. The amusing part of the business is that I had twenty pounds in gold in my pocket, so, if you had managed it with any degree of skill, you would have had a good haul. As it is, you will both get two or three years, and the cat. It's highway robbery with violence, and I'll take care that you get a flogging. In fact, when I catch you I shall order Jupiter to flog the pair of you before I give you in custody."

"You silly brute. I tell you—"

"I never did believe anything you ever told me, Luigi," interposed Rubby; "so am not at all likely to believe what you say now that you are in such a frightful difficulty. If I were a scamp like Giles, I would give you a good flogging for the manner in which you have bungled the matter. I don't know whether you or Giles have got my gold watch and chain, but that doesn't matter at all. I expect the one who took it will swear to the other that he didn't, so that he may keep all the spoil. You ought to have learnt to swim, Luigi, before attempting a job like this. Joe has completely outwitted you. I suppose you will outwit Giles by telling him that you haven't got the watch and chain. However, it isn't worth much more than twenty pounds, so he won't mind losing his share of that."

"Hark at them!" whispered Rubby. "They are getting to words now. I thought I would be able to make them cross. It is a case of thieves falling out. We shall see some fun directly. Listen! I think we shall be able to catch their words."

"You ain't going to rogue me, and so I tell you," roared a voice, that they never doubted was Giles. "Jest you fork out, or I'll put my fist in your eye."

"Don't hit him, Giles. Better put up with your loss than that. You might hurt him. I am the one to be angry, because of my gold watch and chain, which I valued. I don't suppose he would be able to raise more than ten pounds on it, and it is not worth fighting over a small sum like that. Ha, ha, ha! There they go. They are both hard hitters, as far as I can see."

They were, and the way those two hammered each other nearly convulsed Rubby. They slogged away for about five minutes, then they fell to the ground, but they did not stop fighting. Hammering at each other's faces, and kicking furiously, they fought more like two wild beasts than human beings.

"I declare this is worth the blow I got on my head," cried Rubby. "Ha, ha, ha! Aren't they enjoying themselves. Who do you think is getting the better of it, Joe?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I should say they were both getting the worst of it. They are about tired now."

The two ruffians sat up, glaring at each other, but they were both so badly knocked about that neither of them seemed to be at all inclined to renew the combat.

"Don't fight any more, my poor, misguided blackguards," shouted Rubby. "Ha, ha, ha! Excuse my laughing at you, but you have been fighting for nothing. I find I have not been robbed of my watch, nor anything else, but I thought you might be able to punish each other a little. I hope you have enjoyed the combat. I assure you that I have. I don't think I ever enjoyed seeing a fight so much. Has he knocked your Italian nose out of joint, Luigi? Ha, ha, ha! You see what an easy way I have punished the pair of you. Now I will go to the village and put the police on your track. It won't be very difficult to find you, now that you have knocked each other about in that fashion. It must be a very sad thing to be born without the slightest intellect. But, then, you always were an idiot, Luigi. Ha, ha, ha! To think the couple of blubber-headed boobies have been punching each other's heads just for our amusement, Joe. It's really too funny. Shall I make them fight again?"

"Ha, ha! I think they have hurt each other enough already."

"You think as you are mighty clever, don't you?" sneered Luigi, for now his mask was torn from his face, although that face was so knocked about that it would have been hard to recognise it.

"Very likely," answered Rubby, cheerfully; "but I think you are the biggest idiot that ever walked the face of this earth. The question is, whether we shall swim across to them and give them another thrashing, Joe."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea."

"Perhaps they have been hurt enough," said Rubby, who knew that it would be a most ridiculous idea, because they could never have succeeded in fighting the two ruffians; besides, Rubby could not swim a stroke.

"Well, you will see as you ain't so clever as you think," growled Luigi.

"You will want some steak for your eyes. Buy some out of the money you get for my watch."

"I'll make you smart for this, you fat brute."

"Nothing could make you smart, Luigi. You are the



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