

Great Invasion Story!

THE GEM LIBRARY

58
1^d

NEW SERIES

NO. 58. VOL. 2.

SKIMPOLE'S SCHOLARSHIP.

A Grand Long, Complete School
Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



"Pway don't come any neawah. You will wuin my clothes!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in alarm, as the muddy footballers closed round him.

A REAL LEVER SIMULATION GOLD WATCH FREE

To All Clever
Readers of
'The Gem.'

The four lines of letters in this square stand for two boys' and two girls' names. We will send you **Absolutely Free**, one of our famous simulation 18-ct. **Gold Watches** (ladies' or gents') if you send us the correct names; but you must comply with our one condition, and promise to show the watch to your friends, as we wish to advertise our goods. It costs you nothing to try, so send your answer at once, with your name and address. A postcard will do.—**THE LONDON GENERAL SUPPLY ASSOCIATION** (Dept. A), 72, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.

C	J	K	A
E	T	R	B
T	K	E	A
S	O	R	E



MOUSTACHE

A nice manly moustache **SPEEDILY GROWS** at any age by using "**MOUSTA**," the only **Guaranteed** Moustache-Fencer. Quite harmless. **Boys become men.** Acts like magic. Remember, **Success or money returned.** Box sent (in plain wrapper) for **6d.** Postal Order. Don't delay; send now to **J. A. Dixon & Co., 42, Junction Road, London, N.** (Foreign orders, 9d.)

A REAL GEM

GOLD WATCH FREE.

E	R	S	O
R	Y	A	M
M	D	A	

In this puzzle you see three lines of letters. These have to be so arranged that each line spells a Girl's Christian name. A **MAGNIFICENT** Watch, Lady's or Gent's (guaranteed 5 years), will be sent free of charge to readers of this paper who solve this puzzle and conform to our conditions. **IT COSTS YOU NOTHING TO TRY.** Send your answer, together with stamp, that we may send you result. All failing to do this will be disqualified. **SEND NOW.**

"BARGAIN" WATCH CO. (32 Dept.), 89, Cornhill Rd., London, N.



TEN DAYS' FREE TRIAL

Packed Free. Carriage Paid. Direct from factory. Best British-made **MEAD 'COVENTRY FLYERS'**

WARRANTED FIFTEEN YEARS. Defiance Puncture-Proof or Dunlop Tyres, Coasters, Variable-speed Gears, &c.

From £2. 15s. CASH OR EASY

PAYMENTS. Tyres and accessories half usual prices.

500 Shop-soiled and Second-hand Cycles from 15/- to clear. Write at once for **Free Art Catalogue** & **Special offer** on sample machine. Greatly reduced prices. Save dealers' profits. Agents wanted.

MEAD CYCLE CO., Dept. 103B
11-13, Paradise Street, LIVERPOOL.



ANNUUM SILVER KEYLESS WATCHES FREE

We give you absolutely **FREE** an annum **SILVER KEY-LESS WATCH**—a perfect timekeeper—a genuine watch—not a cheap toy—for selling or using 60 of our beautiful Pictorial Postcards at One Penny each within 28 days. As soon as you have sold or used the 60 cards, and sent us the 5/-, you get the watch. If you do not want a watch, we have many other presents as per list we will send, but do not fail to send a postcard with your full name and address at once. Send no money. We will trust you.

THE CARD CO. (Desk 31), Willesden Junction, London, N.W.

VENTRILOQUISM. Anyone can learn this Wonderful, Laughable art. Failure impossible with this book containing over 60 pages of easy instructions and amusing dialogues. Post free **6d.** Humorous delight-d. "Mesmerism," 1/2.—**G. WILKES & CO., STOCKTON, EUGY**

IF YOU WANT Good Cheap Photographic Material and Catalogue, **FREE**—Works: **JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL.**

Rudge-Whitworth Britain's Best Bicycle

The Sense of Security

is ever enjoyed by riders of Rudge-Whitworths, for the certificate of Ten Years Guarantee, which is sealed to every machine, is backed by the largest and most responsible makers in the Kingdom, specially appointed to the King and Prince of Wales.

The new 68 page Art Catalogue describes in detail the new features of the 1909 Models of Rudge-Whitworths, including the

Patent Combined Celluloid Handlebar Covering and Grips
Patent Rustless Finish | **All steel Flush-joint**
Pa cut Brakes | **Frames**
Variable Gears | **Featherweight Roadsters**
The 10 Years Guarantee

Prices from **£3 15s.** cash to **£14 12s.** or from **7/-** per month. The Catalogue is sent Post Free from **Rudge-Whitworth, Ltd. (Dept. 331) Coventry.**
LONDON:—230 Tottenham Court Road, W.
23 Holborn Viaduct, E.C. 160 Regent St. W.



FREE! FREE!!

As an advertisement we give you a genuine 30-hour Silveroid Lever Watch (Ladies' or Gent's), with chain, a Gold Ring, Air Gun, or your choice of other valuable Gifts, for Selling or using Five Fashionable Articles of Jewellery, Brooches, Rings, Pins, Chains, &c., at 1/6 each.

We are also **GIVING AWAY** Hall-marked Sterling Silver Watches (with chains), Phonographs (not Toys), real Diamond Rings, &c.

Send your name and address (a Postcard will do), and we will forward you the Jewellery.

SELL the articles and forward us the money within 28 days, when we will send you a watch and chain, or any other present you choose.

ABSOLUTELY FREE.

There is nothing else to do, and no other condition. Only send your name and address; we trust you with the Jewellery.

THE SAYSWATER JEWELLERY CO.

(Dept. 13), 187, Westbourne Grove, London, W.



BLUSHING.

FREE, to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment, and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to pay postage to Mr. D. TEMPLE (Specialist), 8, Blenheim Street, Bond Street, London, W.

REAL LEVER WATCH FREE.

FOR POSTAL ORDER 1/2 we will forward a Handsome 18-ct. Simulation Gold Chain (Ladies' or Gent's), together with our generous offer of a **REAL LEVER WATCH**, absolutely Free by return. These Watches are perfect Timekeepers, guaranteed 10 YEARS. We are simply distributing these to introduce our goods.

IMPERIAL SUPPLY Co. (Desk 31), 42, Junction Road, London, N.

Be sure and mention this paper when communicating with advertisers.

MONEY MADE QUICKLY.

FLOWER AND VEGETABLE SEEDS.
LARGEST PENNY PACKETS IN THE WORLD.

Send No Money We Trust You.



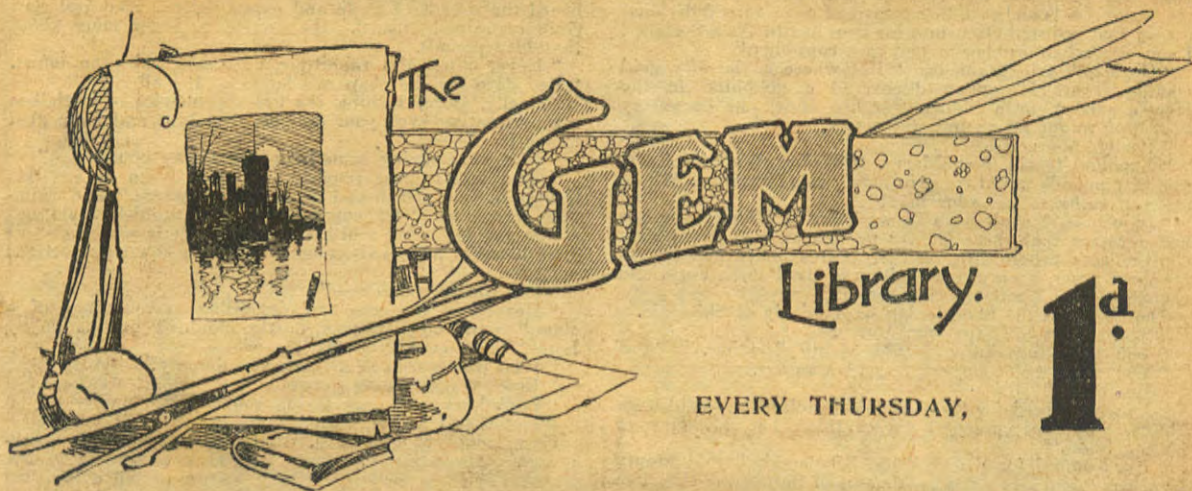
We have reduced our 2d. and 3d. Packets of Flower and Vegetable Seeds **All to One Penny** Packet in order to still more popularise them. All you need to do is to send us a postcard with your full name and address, and we will send you per return post 72 Packets Assorted Seeds. Use or sell the Packets of seeds at 1d. per packet within 28 days (**We Trust You**), and we will reward you according to terms on our new 1909 list. All **Prizes Free.** Real Phonographs, Watches, Rifles, Musical Instruments, Cameras, Footballs, Hall-marked Umbrellas, etc., etc. Be sure and state whether Flower or Vegetable Seeds required. Send postcard **AT ONCE** to **GEROME & CO., Ltd., Dept. 48, 87, Fleet Street, London, E.C.**



NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE RIVAL EDITORS."

A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Complete Stories for Everyone, and Every Story a Gem!



SKIMPOLE'S SCHOLARSHIP

A Splendid Long, Complete School Tale
of Tom Merry & Co.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. Great Expectations.

"FIFTY pounds!" murmured Herbert Skimpole musingly.

Skimpole stood at the door of the School House at St. Jim's, blinking dreamily through his big spectacles at the pigeons in the quad. There was a thoughtful shade upon the brow of Skimpole, as if weighty matters were moving in his mind.

"Fifty pounds!" he repeated, unconsciously murmuring the words aloud. "It is a large sum—comparatively speaking. What shall I do with it? Oh!"

Skimpole's meditations were suddenly interrupted by a hearty smack on the shoulder. He turned his head and blinked somewhat indignantly at the Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—who were just coming out of the School House. Tom Merry had a football under his arm, and he had administered the playful smack with his disengaged hand.

"Anything wrong with the brain-box?" he asked cheerily. Skimpole blinked at him.

"Certainly not, Merry. I cannot help regarding the question as almost rude. Really——"

"Then what are you mumbling about fifty pounds for?"

"I am expecting that sum——"

"Fifty pounds!"

"Yes; precisely fifty pounds."

"When?"

"In about a month's time."

The chums of the Shell looked at Skimpole, and looked at one another. Skimpole did not look as if he was wandering in his mind; yet he certainly must be. Skimpole's people were poor—so poor, in fact, that it must have cost them dear to send their son to a school like St. Jim's. And fifty pounds was a sum that the richest fellow at St. Jim's had never possessed. Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, and the son of a noble lord, seldom could show more than a tenner.

"You're expecting fifty pounds in a month's time!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Certainly, Merry."

"Going to rob a bank?" asked Monty Lowther pleasantly.

"Certainly not. Although as a sincere Socialist," said

ANOTHER DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 58 New Series.

Skimpole, "I regard a redistribution of wealth as necessary, yet also as a Socialist I disapprove of a private individual taking that redistribution into his own hands. As a Socialist, I consider a bank-robber as bad as a capitalist."

"Go hon!" said Manners. "But where is the fifty quid coming from? If you've discovered a goldmine in the Head's garden, or a hidden treasure under the dormitory floor, you might let us into the secret."

"Really, Manners—"

"Expound," said Tom Merry. "We're all short of tin, and fifty pounds would come in handy this afternoon. Where are you going to get your fifty?"

"Of course, I shall have to work for it. Surely you are not unaware that there is fifty pounds in cash given with the Codicote Scholarship, as well as free board and tuition for three years, open to competitors in the Fourth Form and the Shell, and I am entering for it?"

The chums of the Shell looked expressively at Skimpole.

"You utter ass!" said Tom Merry.

"You shrieking duffer!" said Monty Lowther.

"You unspeakable dummy!" said Manners.

"Really—"

"I have entered for the Codicote Scholarship," said Tom Merry, "and, of course, I rather think I've a chance of pulling it off."

"I've entered for the Codicote Scholarship," said Monty Lowther, "and I've got a feeble sort of impression that I've got a sporting chance."

"I've entered for the Codicote Scholarship," said Manners, as if repeating a lesson. "And I've been thinking that I should possibly come somewhere near the post."

Skimpole shook his head.

"I assure you that you are all mistaken. You haven't an earthly."

"Why not?"

"Because I have entered—"

"Modesty, thy name is Skimpole—Bertie Skimpole," said Tom Merry.

"Of course, as a sincere Socialist, I am not troubled by such folly as false modesty," said Skimpole. "I know my powers. With my splendid brain power I cannot fail to carry off so simple a thing as a scholarship. You see, I am writing a book on Socialism, and have already completed four hundred and eighty-one chapters. A fellow who can do that can win a junior scholarship, I should think."

"I don't think," remarked Monty Lowther. "But go ahead! With your wonderful brain-power—"

"That is exactly how I look at it, Lowther. You do not often see a brain like mine."

"I haven't seen yours yet, and I've only got your word for it that there's one there," said Lowther. "You can't expect me to take a statement like that on trust."

"Really, Lowther—"

"Come on, you chaps, or there won't be any daylight left."

The Terrible Three, grinning, marched out of the School House, leaving Skimpole to spend his fifty pounds—in imagination. Their evident incredulity had no effect whatever on the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's. With his wonderful mental powers, he had no doubt of winning the scholarship, and he was not troubled with the doubts the other fellows had as to the existence of those wonderful mental powers.

"Fifty pounds!" he said thoughtfully, addressing the quadrangle. "It is a large sum. With fifty pounds in hand I could carry on my Socialist propaganda work much more effectively at St. Jim's. I will, I think, devote the whole sum to that purpose. Perhaps I might spare a few pounds for the needy—"

"My word!" said a voice beside him. "I should think you might. You don't mean to say that you've come into a fortune, Skimmy."

"Really, Gore, you are interrupting my meditations—"

"Yes, but—"

"As for the rabbit-pie, I gave it to a beggar. As a sincere Socialist, I could not allow a man to go away hungry while there was a rabbit-pie in the house. You can see that—"

"What's that?" roared Gore. "You—you've given away my rabbit-pie."

"Certainly. As I explained—"

Gore looked for a moment as if he would hurl himself upon the generous Skimpole. He was Skimpole's study-mate in the Shell, and the amateur Socialist frequently raided his supplies to relieve the needs of the hungry tramps who passed along the high road. Gore wasn't at all generous, but even a generous fellow might have grumbled a little when his special feeds were distributed without the formality of asking his permission first.

There were frequent rows between Gore and Skimpole on

that subject, and Tom Merry, in the next study, sometimes heard the sounds of strife and expostulation. But just now Gore restrained himself. He wanted to know more about that fifty pounds.

"Never mind the rabbit-pie," he said, with an effort. "I—I dare say the chap was hungry. It's all right."

"Really, Gore, I think the great principles of Socialism are permeating even your dull brain at last, and I am glad to see it. I—"

"You were saying something about fifty pounds—"

"Yes; but I must remark how glad I am to see this change in your selfish and rather brutal nature," said Skimpole, beaming. "Of course, as a Determinist, I do not blame you for being selfish and brutal. It is wholly due to your heredity and environment, mixed in equal proportions—I mean—"

"But the fifty quid—"

"Reared in the vile and degrading surroundings of a slum," went on Skimpole, fairly mounted on his hobby horse, "how could you expect—"

"Who was reared in a slum, you dummy?"

"Er—I was speaking generally—"

"Look here, you were saying you had fifty quid—"

"Not that I had it, Gore. I am expecting it shortly."

Gore looked at him hard. Skimpole had his little weaknesses. He would distribute anybody's provisions to the hungry. But he had never been known to tell a lie. He often explained that it was impossible for a sincere Socialist to do so. Neither was he given to boasting. He made no secret of the fact that his people were poor; in fact, he seemed rather proud of it. It proved that they were not bloated capitalists, at any rate.

If he said he was expecting fifty pounds, he was expecting it, and Gore felt that he could believe it. As for the Codicote Scholarship, Gore had never so much as heard of it. Gore was not in the least studious, and he did just enough work to enable him to escape lickings. As a matter of fact, he was old enough and big enough to be in the Fifth, and only slacking had kept him in the lower Form. As for the Codicote, he would as soon have entered for the Marathon race as for a scholarship.

"You're expecting fifty pounds?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Quite certain of it?"

"Absolutely."

"It's a jolly big sum of money."

"Yes; and yet small when one thinks how far it will go in Socialist propaganda," said Skimpole. "I shall have to devote every penny—"

"You might spare a few quids for a Form feed," said Gore.

"I am afraid I could not consent to waste money on frivolity, while there are millions of our fellow-creatures groaning in the slavery of the present social system," said Skimpole, shaking his head.

"Ye-es; but— I say, Skimmy, are you hungry?"

"Yes, I am somewhat peckish, but I have no money—"

"Oh, that's all right; it's my treat. Come along to the tuckshop."

"Really, Gore, this is very kind of you. I will come with pleasure. I am, in fact, very hungry, as I have had no tea, and I had very little dinner. Maynard took most of the beef off my plate when I was not looking, and ate it himself. He said that as a sincere Socialist I could not object to sharing out. I explained to him that the utterly ridiculous idea of sharing out was not Socialism, but was invented by the enemies of Socialism to throw discredit upon it. But by that time he had eaten the beef."

"Yes, rough, wasn't it," grinned Gore. "Never mind; come and have some grub at Dame Taggles'. She's got some of those nobby little pies."

"I shall be very glad, Gore. I am more pleased than I can say to note this wonderful improvement in your character."

They entered the school shop, kept within the precincts of St. Jim's by Dame Taggles, the porter's wife. Several Fourth-Formers were strolling out, and they glanced at Gore and Skimpole. To see the two on such amicable terms was a novelty.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy screwing his monocle into his eye and regarding them with amazement. "This is a case of the lion and the lamb, you know."

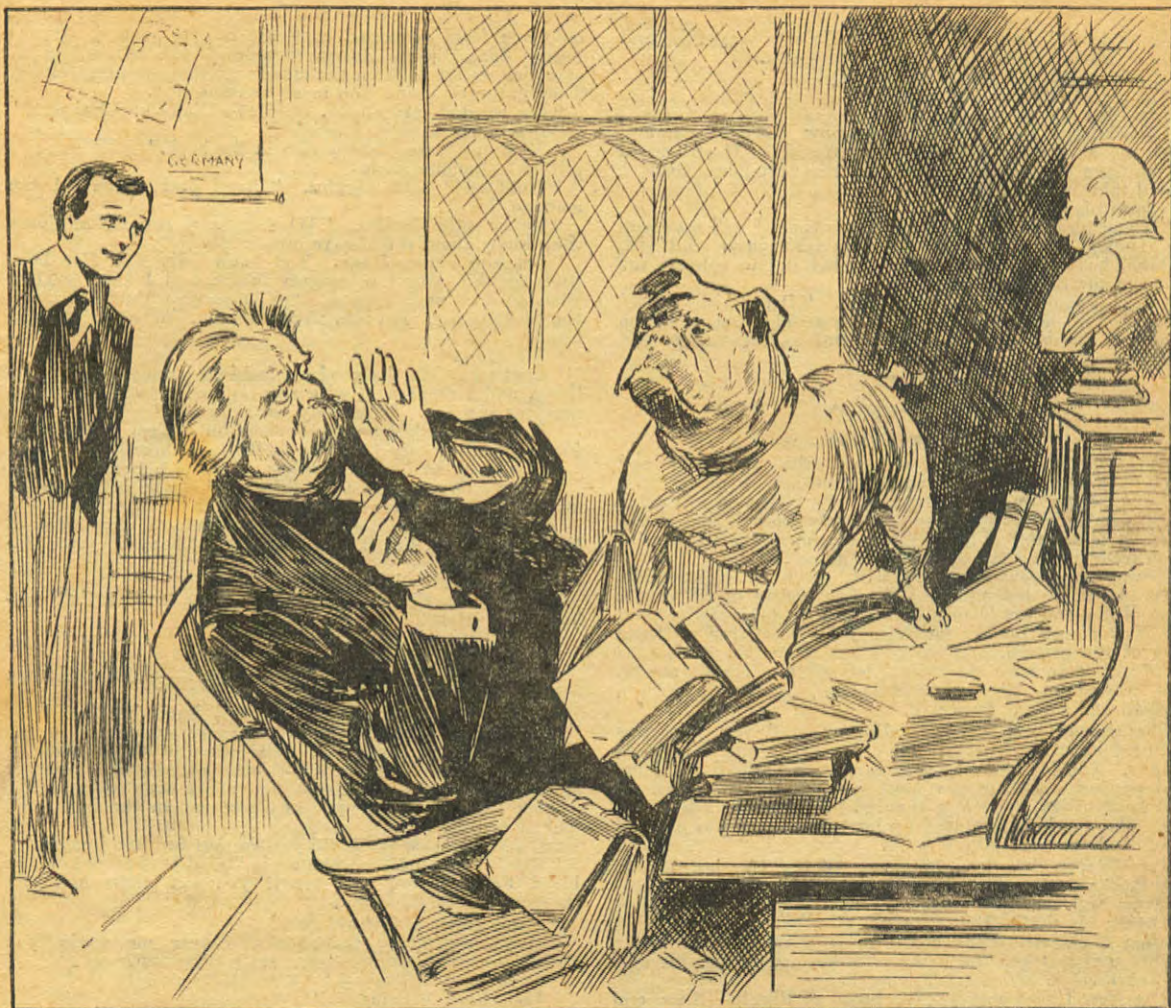
"Skimpole's converting Gore to Socialism," grinned Blake, "through the medium of a feed, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed Digby excitedly. "Look there, it's Gore standing treat!"

Jack Blake rubbed his eyes.

"My hat, so he is! Wonders will never cease. Gore must have come into a fortune, or gone off his rocker, or something."



Herr Schneider started up with a shriek. "Ach! Take tat peast away, ain't it!" he yelled.

"May as well make hay while the sun shines," suggested Herries. "Let's go and join them. I don't like Gore, but I don't believe in bearing malice at a time like this."

And the chums of the Fourth strolled after Gore and Skimpole. The cad of the Shell was, indeed, standing treat; and Skimpole, seated on one of the high chairs, was eating away with the appetite of a famished junior. Gore looked unpleasantly enough at the chums of Study No. 6.

"Want anything?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "We want a civil reception, deah boy, and polite mannahs, though we are very likely to be disappointed."

"If there are feeds being stood—" said Blake.

"There ain't!" said Gore emphatically. "I'm standing this to Skimpole, because—because he's converted me to Socialism."

"What?"

Skimpole stopped a laden fork half-way to his mouth, and looked round at the chums of the Fourth.

"I am very glad I have made a convert of Gore," he said.

"You know that he has always been a selfish, rotten sort of beast! Socialism, I hope, will make a great difference to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see what you are laughing at, Blake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Fourth were still laughing as they walked away. That Gore had some deep scheme in his mind, as the reason for his unexampled generosity, they were certain, but they could not guess what it was.

Skimpole had no suspicions; he never had. He ate, drank, and was merry. Gore showed no stinginess over that feed. Fifty pounds was a large sum to share in, and it was worth it.

"Dear me," said Skimpole at last; "I really think I have had enough, Gore. Yes; perhaps one more tart, as you are so generous. I am very much obliged to you, Gore. I think we shall get on better in the future."

"I'm sure we shall," said Gore amiably. "You haven't told me where that fifty quid is coming from. I suppose there's no doubt about it?"

"Not in the slightest. The money is as good as in my hands already. I was just planning what to do with it when you spoke to me at the door."

"I suppose you'll be standing some feeds in the study?"

"I should like to do so, Gore; but the claims of the down-trodden millions must be considered before study feeds. I—"

"But, of course, you'd be willing to lend a fiver or so to a chap who was in need of tin—a fellow-Socialist?" suggested Gore insinuatingly.

"Oh, yes; certainly! It would be my duty to do so."

"Then you can put my name down for it."

"Let me see," said Skimpole thoughtfully. "That will leave me forty-five pounds for my Socialist propaganda work. If you are really in need of the money, Gore—"

"And I am, Skimmy, old chap. Frightfully short!"

"It is very generous of you to stand a feed to me when you are frightfully short of money," said Skimpole. "Under the circumstances, I shall be very glad to oblige you. You shall certainly have five pounds out of my fifty."

Gore chuckled. He knew Skimpole would keep his word, if he claimed the fulfilment of the promise before the fifty was "blued." Where the money was to come from was a puzzle; but, after all, the chap might have rich relations—a rich uncle, or something. He remembered meeting a fellow belonging to Greyfriars who had a hundred pounds sent him by an uncle in India he had been named after.

Skimpole slid down off the seat. He was very full, and quite satisfied. Gore tapped him on the arm.

"I say, when will you have the fifty?"

"At the end of the month, Gore."

"And it's quite—quite certain?"

"Absolutely. But pray excuse me now. I have to go and finish my article for Tom Merry's 'Weekly.' If you could let me have the study to myself for the next hour, Gore, I should take it as a favour."

"Certainly," said Gore.

"If you like to come in in an hour's time, I will read you the article," said Skimpole. "It is a real rouser, and will, I think, have considerable effect in helping to convert the whole of the Shell to Socialism."

"Oh, I'll come; rather!" said Gore. "Depend upon me."

And Skimpole went off to finish his article; but when the hour had elapsed, Gore made it a point to forget to go and hear it read.

CHAPTER 2 The Conspirators.

THERE was a pattering of rain in the quadrangle, and the football-field resembled nothing so much as a mud-pie on an extensive scale; but the juniors of St. Jim's did not care for that. The football season was near its close, and a little rain was not going to prevent them from playing one of their last games.

It was an informal game, with seven or eight aside, between juniors belonging to the two houses of St. Jim's. Tom Merry and his friends had turned up for practice, and the New House juniors had also been practising on their part of the ground, and so they had joined in strife. As there wasn't an hour of daylight left after afternoon school, they wasted no time in preliminaries, but set to with a football and a right good will.

The ground was wet and slippery, and the raindrops pattered about their ears. They were wet, and they were muddy. The football was as greasy as a football could be, and popped about in the most unexpected directions. A run up the field frequently chanced itself into a slide and a fall. But the juniors played up heartily. There was nothing "soft" about Tom Merry & Co.

Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, Blake, Herries, Digby, and Reilly formed the School House side. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had declined. It was not only the trouble of changing his clothes that deterred him, but the certainty of getting frightfully dirty on the field. And he stood under shelter and watched the game with his eyeglass to his eye, and cheered on his comrades cheerfully.

The New House side was composed of Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—otherwise known as Figgins & Co.—with Pratt, French, Evans, and Trevlyn. But their House colours it was impossible to see. Mud bespattered them, and mud concealed colours and features and almost everything else.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "What a feaful-lookin' set of weeks! I am wathah glad I kept out of this. Go it, Blake, deah boy! On the ball!"

Jack Blake was making a run up the field with the ball at his feet. To dribble a ball that was greasy, on a field that was greasier, required some doing, and Jack Blake's motions were acrobatic.

"Bwavo!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as Blake nearly slid over, and saved himself with a hop that would have done credit to any frog. "Bwavo, deah boy! On the beastly ball, you know!"

Blake rushed the ball forward.

Figgins was speeding to get in his way, and he succeeded. The long legs of Figgins fairly flew over the ground.

Blake tried to elude him, but it was no use. The ball flew somewhere, and Figgins biffed into Blake.

Blake threw his arms involuntarily round Figgins as he lost his footing, and for a few seconds they waltzed together, and then they went over.

There was a yell from several other players. They were all speeding up, and they did not stop themselves in time.

In a few seconds three or four fellows were piling on Blake and Figgins. Figgins struggled desperately, and Blake gasped under the weight.

There was no referee on the field, and so Arthur Augustus took it upon himself to whistle. But the play was already stopped, nearly all the players having added themselves to the heap on the ground.

"Ow!" gasped Kerr. "Get off my chest!"

"Groo! Who's that got his boot in my eye? I'll give him a thick ear!"

"Roll away, Fatty Wynn. Do you hear?"

"Ow! Oh!"

They rolled off, and sorted themselves out somehow, and

only one form remained prostrate on the ground. It was that of Jack Blake. He was completely winded, and he lay extended on his back on the muddy ground, gasping faintly. They gathered round him in an anxious ring.

"My word!" said Digby. "Here's Blake knocked out!"

"It was Fatty Wynn's weight."

"Sit him up, and thump him in the back."

"Ow! Lemme alone!"

"Hold on!" said Figgins. "Stand back, there! I can manage this."

"Rats!" said Herries. "What on earth can a New House chap know about it? Leave him to me."

"Let him alone, I say. You know jolly well I've been studying the subject of surgery lately, and I know exactly what to do," said Figgins. "You needn't thump him on the back, Digby. Let him alone, Herries. What he wants is bleeding!"

"Bleeding?"

"That's it. It's the good old-fashioned remedy for everything, and I don't hold with new-fangled notions," said the amateur surgeon. "Anybody got a lancet?"

"Yes. I usually have my pockets full of 'em when I play footer!" said Monty Lowther, in the tone sarcastic.

"Don't you be funny, Lowther. This is a serious matter. I tell you, I've studied the subject. If Blake isn't relieved at once, he may have—have—I think it's congestion of the—the—the—I think it's the pericardium, or something. I forget the word, but it's jolly serious. Chuck us your penknife, D'Arcy."

"Here you are, deah boy!"

"Look here, Figgins, you're not going to stick that penknife into Blake!"

"Ass! I'm going to bleed him!"

"Duffer! You're not!"

"He'll get congestion of the peri—peri— What do you call 'em?"

Figgins opened the penknife, and knelt beside Blake. Blake had pretty well recovered by this time, and there was a steely glitter in his eyes. His foot shot out as Figgins knelt down, and the football boot caught the amateur surgeon on the chest, and sent him rolling over backwards.

Jack Blake jumped up. Figgins sat in the mud, and looked surprised.

"Ow! What on earth did you do that for, you image?"

"Catch me being bled like a pig," said Blake. "You can bleed Fatty Wynn, and see if you can make him any thinner."

"I was going to first-aid you."

"Don't you bring that penknife near me again, you dangerous lunatic, unless you want a prize thick ear!"

"Look here, Blake—"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Oh, play up!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "It's nearly dark. Where's the ball?"

They played up once more. Figgins looked disappointed. It was not often that he took up a hobby, but when he did he was serious about it. It was growing dark now, and the rain was wet, and when someone suggested a retirement, it was adopted unanimously.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye, and surveyed the players as they came off the field.

They were certainly a muddy lot, and perhaps it was excusable for the swell of St. Jim's to draw back from any possible contact with them.

"Bai Jove!" remarked D'Arcy. "You do look a feaful-lookin' set. Have you made it a special point to gwub up all the mud you could?"

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha! I wegard you as a most comical-lookin' lot of boundahs," said D'Arcy. "Pewwaps you wish you had taken my advice and postponed this? Pway keep your distance, Blake. I do not wish to be contaminated with that howwid mud. Figgins, if you persist in comin' close to me I shall stwike you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep away, you wottahs! Pway let me wetire from the spot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard with alarm.

The muddy footballers were all round him, and from their expression the swell of St. Jim's knew what was coming. There was no escape for the elegant junior, save by breaking through the muddy circle, and he shuddered at the idea of touching any of them.

"Pway allow me to pass, deah boys! I weally did not mean to offend you with my wemarks, and, upon second thoughts, you don't weally look so feafully dirty, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't come any neawah. You will wuin my

clothes. Lowthah, get away! Tom Mewwy, if you touch me I shall no longah wegard you as a fwiend. Mannahs, you howwid wottah, sheer off! Figgins, you beast! Kerr, you howwah! Pwatt, I shall stwike you! Fwench—Weilly—Ow!"

They closed round him. They grasped him, and wherever they grasped him they left finger-marks that any detective at Scotland Yard could have traced them by.

The swell of the School House struggled, but his struggles only made matters worse.

"Pass!" shouted Blake.

And D'Arcy was passed from one to another; and then Fatty Wynn, the Welsh junior, gave the signal for a scrum. D'Arcy, struggling vainly, was put into the scrum, and they scrummled for him as if he had been a Rugger ball. He squirmed out of the scrum like an eel, and ran.

But the state of Arthur Augustus was worse than that of any of the footballers who had moved his elegant derision.

His clothes were reeking with mud and wet, and his collar was torn out, and his shirt was a damp rag, and his silk hat was a concertina. His face was smothered with mud, and his hair seemed like a towlsed mop.

He paused for a moment, gasping, to hurl back some remarks at the howling footballers.

"You feashful wottahs! I wefuse to wegard any of you as fwiends. I—"

Tom Merry and Blake made a movement towards him, and he darted off; and then the junior footballers proceeded to wash and change, frequently interrupting those proceedings with shrieks of laughter.

CHAPTER 3.

Arthur Augustus Apologises.

LOOKING very fresh and rosy, and with all the mud gone, the Terrible Three came in, and paused in the upper corridor to look in at Study No. 6. A junior was there, giving the finishing touches to his hair, and he looked round with suppressed emotions as the chums of the Shell appeared at the door. Then he looked grimly into the mirror again, and went on brushing his hair.

"Feeling all right, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, with solicitude.

Arthur Augustus did not reply.

"I see you've had a wash," remarked Lowther. "You needed it."

Still silence.

"Got the article ready for the 'Weekly,' Gussy?" asked Manners. "We've got to fix up the number for to-morrow, you know!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked round again at last.

"I wefuse to speak to you," he said. "You have tweeked me with a gwoos diswespact."

"Oh, come, Gussy!"

"You have pwactically wuined my clothes. You made me howwidly dirty. I wefuse to wegard you as fwiends."

"I'm surprised at you, Gussy. After the way we treated you, too!"

"You failed to treat me with pwopah respect. I'm not weally a partiulah fellow, but I insist upon bein' treated with pwopah respect!"

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

"Well, I can only say I'm surprised," he said, "after the language you used when we came off the footer field."

Arthur Augustus started.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Yes, rather," said Monty Lowther, shaking his head solemnly. "After the language D'Arcy used—"

"Yes, the language," said Manners. "Oh, the language! D'Arcy! Lucky your young brother wasn't there to hear you."

"I—I—I wefuse to admit that I used any language," almost shrieked the swell of the School House. "You are a set of wottahs, and you know you're wottin'!"

"Of course, we don't want to be hard on you," said Tom Merry loftily. "Everybody forgets himself at times."

"It's due to heredity, I suppose," said Lowther.

"And environment," added Manners.

D'Arcy glared at them. They were absolutely solemn, and for a dizzy moment the swell of the School House wondered what he had really said to the footballers.

"I—I—I wepeat what I said, Tom Mewwy."

Tom Merry looked shocked.

"Oh, really, Gussy!"

"I insist upon wepeatin'—"

"Not even to oblige you, Gussy. Miss Priscilla Fawcett brought me up too carefully. Perhaps if you had had the care of a good governess, you would never—"

"But I never," said the helpless Arthur Augustus. "I

weally nevah—nevah did! You must have misappwehended me, deah boys."

"Now, Gussy, don't prevaricate!"

"I wefuse to admit that I am pwewawicatin'. I wegard you as a set of wottahs. I nevah—"

"Of course, we sha'n't tell anybody. We've made Blake promise to keep it a secret, too," said Tom Merry.

"Keep what a secwet? I wepeat—"

"It's all right. You can rely on us to—to the death!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

The Terrible Three shook their heads solemnly, and marched off. Arthur Augustus sat with the silver-backed hairbrush in his hand, looking dazed. He felt certain that the Terrible Three were "rotting"; but then they had looked so serious about it. Was it possible that he had forgotten himself, and—Surely not! He started as three faces looked into the study. They belonged to Figgins & Co., of the New House.

"Bai Jove! What do you New House wottahs want?" demanded D'Arcy.

"Only to assure you that it's all right," said Figgins affably.

"What's all wight?"

"About what you said when we came off the footer field. Of course, it wasn't nice, but we can overlook things said in a moment of excitement."

"You uttah wottahs!"

"Now, don't begin again, Gussy," said Kerr, with a wave of his hand. "I was brought up rather strictly. I can stand it once, but I can't stand it again. If you begin I shall stop my ears with my fingers."

"You—you—you—"

"In my opinion, D'Arcy owes us an apology," said Fatty Wynn. "We could let him off the apology if he stood a decent feed, or something of that sort."

"You uttah beast!"

"Look here, D'Arcy!" said Figgins severely. "It's all right. We've overlooked it. But if you get into a state of excitement like that again, you'd better let me bleed you. That's the proper thing for excited nerves."

"I wefuse to speak to you. I—"

Kerr put his fingers in his ears. Figgins and Fatty Wynn followed his example, and the three of them marched out with horrified faces. D'Arcy breathed hard.

ANOTHER NEW READER!



Judge: "Ahem. I congratulate the witness on the clear and concise manner in which he has given his evidence. It is certain that the book referred to has done much towards stamping out the pernicious penny horrible." (Cheers from the gallery).

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE RIVAL EDITORS."

A Double-Length School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co.

A few minutes later, Blake, Herries, and Digby came in. They were looking very grave, and they did not speak to D'Arcy. They began to collect up various manuscripts for the current number of Tom Merry's "Weekly," without even glancing at the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus had been prepared to cut them dead, and he was somewhat surprised by this chilling silence. After a few minutes he could stand it no longer, and he broke the silence himself.

"I say, Blake!"

Blake did not appear to hear.

"Have you seen my instalment of Sir Fatted and his Fayre Ladye, Dig?" he asked. "I had it written out all ready for the 'Weekly.'"

"Here you are," said Dig.

"I spoke to you, Blake," said D'Arcy, with rising colour.

"Did you?" said Blake. "Cheek!"

"I wufuse to have a wemark of mine chawactewised as cheek! I was intendin' nevah to speak to any of you again."

"Then you'd better keep to it," said Blake severely.

"After the language you were using on the footer-field—"

"What language?" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Don't ask me to repeat it. I couldn't. Besides, I must think of Digby and Herries."

"I nevah said anythin'—"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"My wemarks were quite harmless."

"Now you're contradicting yourself," said Blake

judicially. "You'd better let the matter alone, Gussy. You can live it down."

"I wufuse to live it down," shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"I am certain you are wottin'. You must have misapprehended my wemarks."

"I think we had better withdraw," said Blake, with

dignity. "He looks as if he was going to begin again."

"Right-ho!" said Herries. "Come on!"

"You uttah beasts!"

The three chums hurriedly withdrew. D'Arcy followed

them excitedly to the door.

"You feahful wottahs! I am just comin' to the editowial

office. I had wesolved not to come, but upon second

thoughts I—"

"Better not," said Blake, looking round. "You might

lose your temper again, and—"

"I insist upon comin'." I wegard you as—"

But the three juniors rushed away and lost the rest of

the remark. D'Arcy went back into the study and finished

brushing his hair. He was in a state of great excitement,

but that was an important matter, and could not be left

unfinished.

Then he went along to Tom Merry's study. By this time

he was half-convinced that he had, indeed, in a moment of

excitement, allowed some expression to fall from his lips

which had shocked the delicate susceptibilities of the

juniors of the School House. But as he drew near Tom

Merry's study a sound fell upon his ears.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They were laughing.

D'Arcy, with a crimson face, threw open the door. He

expected to see the juniors in convulsions of merriment;

but then he wondered if his ears had deceived him. There

were nine juniors in Tom Merry's study, and they were as

grave as judges. The Roman Senate, when the Gauls broke

into the Senate House, could not have looked more stately

and solemn than did Tom Merry & Co. as Arthur Augustus

D'Arcy opened the study door.

The swell of St. Jim's put up his glass, and looked at the

juniors.

"You are wemarkably quiet," he said sarcastically.

They exchanged glances.

"I don't want to wound anybody," said Figgins, looking

round. "This is your study, Tom Merry, and I suppose a

fellow has a right to keep any kind of company he pleases.

But if D'Arcy is coming in here, I think I had better

retire!"

"I was thinking so, too," said Kerr, getting up. "I'm

sorry to have to retire from the editorial staff of the

"Weekly" on the day before going to press—"

"But, as leaders of the New House juniors, we're bound

to keep up a certain amount of—of respectability," said

Figgins.

"That's it," said Fatty Wynn. "Of course, we haven't

anything against D'Arcy—it's more for the sake of appear-

ances than anything else."

D'Arcy was dumb. He looked from one to another of the

juniors with his mouth wide open, like an expiring fish.

Tom Merry shook his head mournfully.

"I quite understand your feelings," he said; "but, as

School House fellows, we feel bound to stand by D'Arcy

and try to lead him back to the right path."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"That's it," said Blake, with a grave nod. "We can't desert D'Arcy at a critical moment in his career. He stands at the parting of the ways, and a helping hand and a kindly word of advice may save him from plunging into the gulf of—"

"You feahful wottah!"

"We feel bound to bear with him," said Digby. "We only hope that he will moderate his expressions, and not shock us—"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Perhaps the matter could be settled by an apology,"

suggested Lowther. "If D'Arcy withdraws all he said—"

"I wufuse to—"

"And expresses his regret, we may be able to act with him on the staff of the 'Weekly.' We can give him the

chance."

"What do you say, D'Arcy?"

"I—I—I do not wemembah usin' any expressions that call

for an apology," said Arthur Augustus dazedly. "I was

wathah thinkin' that the apology was due to me. Howevah,

I am willin' to go so fah as to say that if I said anythin'

offensive to anybody, I am sowwy for it."

Tom Merry looked round.

"Gentlemen, is that satisfactory?"

"Yes," said Blake, after some reflection; "if D'Arcy does

not break out again."

"Very well. Gentlemen, the matter is closed."

"Wait a moment, Tom Mewwy—"

"It's all right, Gussy! We admit you to our society again,

on an equal footing. The matter is closed."

"I should like to know what it was I said that—"

"The question is out of order. The incident, being closed,

cannot be reopened without the unanimous consent of the

whole staff."

"But weally—"

"Order! Order!"

Arthur Augustus had to give it up. And the editorial staff

of "Tom Merry's Weekly" set to work with preternaturally

grave faces, and not a single ghost of a chuckle broke the

stern solemnity of the study.

CHAPTER 4.

The Staff are Busy.

SCRATCH, scratch, scratch!

The editorial staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" were

busily at work in Tom Merry's study. There were

six of them round the table, writing away at express speed.

Figgins was seated on the locker, and Kerr on a stool under

the window, with their paper on their knees. Lowther was

sitting on the fender, with his manuscript on the coalbox, and

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing up, rubbing his chin

thoughtfully. The swell of the School House seemed to be

in the throes of deep thought.

He came out of his reverie at last and looked round. All

the others were busy, and no one looked up to meet his

glance. D'Arcy coughed, and coughed again, and yet no one

took any notice. Then he spoke.

"I say, deah boys—"

Tom Merry looked up. He did not speak, but he pointed

with the handle of his pen to a notice hung over the mantel-

piece. It was a large sheet of cardboard, with the word

"Silence!" smeared on it in black ink with a gum-brush.

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus; "I observe that notice,

Tom Mewwy, but—"

"Shut up!" growled Lowther.

"I beg your pardon, Lowthah!" said D'Arcy, in his most

stately way.

"Granted!" said Lowther. "But shut up!"

"I did not mean—"

"Silence!"

"Yaas; but I say—"

"Cheese it!"

"I wufuse to cheese it!" said Arthur Augustus. "It is

a wathah important point, and concerns the whole editowial

staff of the 'Weekly.' I want to put it to you all."

"Oh, give us a rest!" said Manners. "How am I to

write a really good article on touching up photographs if

you keep on jawing like—a gramophone?"

"I weally don't suppose you will write a weally good

article undah any cires, Mannahs. I was thinkin'—"

"Attention!" said Tom Merry. "Everyone take notice of

the extraordinary circumstance mentioned by D'Arcy! It

ought to go into the 'Weekly' under the heading of 'Natural

Phenomena'! Is that all, D'Arcy?"

"I was thinkin'—"

"Yes; we've got that down!"

"I uttaly wufuse to have my wemarks tweated in this

wibald way, Tom Mewwy! Unless I am tweated with

wpopah respect I shall wesign from the editowial staff, and



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy opened the study door. "You are wemarkably quiet!" he said sarcastically.

that would place you in a doocid awkward posish, with your only weally good contwibutah gone!"

"Don't be hard on a poor chief editor, Gussy!"

"I don't want to be hard, Tom Mewwy, but a pwopah considewation for my personal dig, may leave me no alternative but to wesign. Howevah, to wesume, I was thinkin' that this week I shall want double my usual space——"

"Rats!" said several voices.

"As, besides my article on the fashions, I shall want a couple of columns for an article on music," said D'Arcy, unboeding. "My discovey that I have a wemarkable tenor voice has turned my attention to that subject. I am thinkin' of puttin' in an article on singin' ewevy week."

"Right-ho! You can put it in the place of your fashions article."

"Nothin' of the sort! If one of you fellows likes to wesign his space to me for a few weeks——"

"No fear!"

"Then the only alternative is to publish a double number."

"More rats!"

"I do not see how the difficulty is to be othahwise met," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, I leave it to Tom Mewwy, as chief editah, only pwemisin' that I shall certainly expect all the stuff I wite to go in. By the way, I don't seem to be gettin' on vewy well with the article, and I always find my bwain works quickah if music is goin' on. I suppose you fellows won't object to my turnin' on Tom Mewwy's gwamophone?"

There was a yell of protest.

"Weally, deah boys, if you are such unmusical asses, you ought to be glad of an opportunity of studyin' the thing!" said D'Arcy severely.

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther. "There's ten fellows in the

study, and hardly room to breathe now. There's no room for a row."

"If you wegard music as a wow, Lowthah——"

"Keep away from that gramophone!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! You wemembah what Shakespeare says, 'The man that hath no music in his soul is fit for tweasons, stwatagems, and spoils. Let no such man be twusted!' I agwee with Shakespeare in that wemark. I have been w'iting an 'Ode to Music' for this numbah of the 'Weekly'."

"Keep off that gramophone!"

"Wats!"

And Arthur Augustus wound up the machine, and selected a record, and laid it on the turntable. Lowther rose from the fender. D'Arcy put in a needle, keeping a wary eye on Lowther, and started the gramophone. The stirring strains of the "Soldiers' Chorus" from "Faust" filled the room with sound.

Now, nobody objected to the "Soldiers' Chorus" in itself, but in a crowded room with, at least, nine juniors hard at brainwork, it was really a little too much. Monty Lowther made a spring at D'Arcy.

"Shut it off!"

"Wats!"

"Well, I will, then!"

"I wepeat, Lowthah, that my bwain works bettah when I have just listened to some music!"

"Rats! I don't believe it ever works at all!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Now, look here, Gussy——"

"Look here, Lowthah——"

The door opened, and Skimpole looked in. He blinked mildly at the busy editorial staff of the "Weekly."

"Would you chaps mind making a little less row?" he asked. "I am working up for the exam. for the Codicote, you know."

"Oh, wats, deah boy! You haven't any chance for that!" Really, D'Arcy, I think it is practically a certainty for me!"

"But I have entahed, deah boy!"

"What difference does that make?"

"Well, I wathah weckon I am gettin' that scholarship!"

"Dear me! I have often feared that you were suffering from incipient softening of the brain, D'Arcy, but I have never had any direct proof of it till now! I—"

"You uttah ass!"

Lowther shut off the gramophone. Blessed silence descended upon the study. Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye and stared at Lowther.

"I wegard you as an unmusical ass!" he said. "How-ehah, I am willin' to leave the mattah to the majowity. What do you fellows say?"

"Silence!" roared the fellows.

"Vewy well. But I must wemark that I wegard you as a set of unmusical asses! I suppose there will be no objection to my singin' a tenor solo to wefwesh myself in the midst of the labahs?"

"Yes, rather!" shrieked Blake. "Dry up!"

"If you put it that way, Blake, I shall wefuse to dwy up! It will wefwesh me considerably to sing the 'Pwize Song' from the 'Meistersinger'."

"You'll get scragged if you do!"

"I shall uttably wefuse to get sawgaged!"

And Arthur Augustus started:

"Morgenlicht leuchtend im rosigen Schein,
Von Blut und Duft,
Geschwellt die Luft—"

"Oh! Ow! O-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!"

Arthur Augustus suddenly stopped, as a Latin Grammar caught him under the chin.

Arthur Augustus did not like a Latin Grammar much at any time, but taken externally, under the chin, it was most unpleasant of all.

He sat down.

"Now, you jolly well shut up!" said Manners, who had hurled the volume. "Blessed if it's not as bad as the gramophone!"

"Mannahs, I wegard you as a beast!"

"That's all right, so long as you do it quietly!"

"I considah you a wank outsidah!"

"Good!"

"I uttably wefuse to co-opewate with you on the editowial staff of the papah!"

"Hurray!"

Arthur Augustus rubbed his chin, bestowed a glance of withering scorn upon Manners, and strode from the study.

And the editorial staff, with a gasp of general relief, settled down to their interrupted editorial labours again.

CHAPTER 5.

A Blow for Gore—And Another for Skimpole.

TOM MERRY rose from the table with a sigh of relief. "Well, that's done," he said. "If you fellows are finished, we may as well get down to the gym, and stretch ourselves a bit."

"Nearly done," said Figgins, without looking up from the instalment of the "Black Chief of the Red Braves."

"I will bury my scalping-knife in your chest—"

"Eh?"

"And hurl your remains to the wolves of the forest—"

"What?"

"Oh, it's all right! That's only a speech of the Black Chief of the Red Braves," said Figgins reassuringly. "To be continued in our next. I think that's a rather good curtain. I'm done."

Blake looked up, scratching his head.

"Anybody know a rhyme for mediæval?" he asked.

"Blessed if I do," said Tom Merry. "Put to be continued, and leave the rhyme over for the next number. I'm going down to the gym. When you've finished, put the sheets together. They've got to go down to the printer's to-night, or we sha'n't have the number on Saturday. You fellows are so late with your copy, that there won't be any time to look over the proofs, so take extra care now."

The door opened.

"Hallo, Skimmy!" said Tom Merry, looking round. "Have you got your article ready? I'm going down to the printer's with this soon."

"I have not yet finished the article, Merry. Somehow the inspiration refused to flow. Even the greatest brains fail to come quite up to the mark at times. I have been working

on the exam. instead, but I find the matter somewhat harder than I had anticipated. I had given it no attention before to-day. I find that a part of the subject consists in questions on Roman history and geography, and I am somewhat hazy on those subjects."

"Fancy that duffer entering for the Codicote!" murmured Kerr. "Why, I expect to have a pretty stiff tussle for it myself!"

"Are you entering, Kerr?" asked Skimpole, catching the words.

"Of course—weeks ago. I'm rather expecting to pull it off."

"So are we all," laughed Tom Merry. "So are a dozen other fellows in the House."

"Really, I should like to make a suggestion to you," said Skimpole, with an air of deep pondering. "I find that it will take up a great deal of my time to work up for the exam. I shall have to leave aside all my Socialist propaganda for a time, and give up my amateur detective studies. Of course, if I devote my remarkable brain powers to the subject, you fellows won't have any chance."

"Not an earthly, of course."

"So I suggest that you should all resign from the competition—"

"What?"

"And leave me a clear field."

"Well, of all the nerve!"

"I fail to see it in that light. If you work, and I work, I am bound to get the scholarship. If you resign, I shall get it easily—the result will be the same, and I shall be saved the trouble of working."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not see anything humorous in that suggestion, Merry. I may say that others beside myself regard me as a certain winner—Gore, for instance."

"His faith is great!" murmured Kerr.

"Really, Kerr—"

Gore looked into the study. He gave Skimpole an exceedingly amiable nod.

"Hallo, old chap! Coming down to the gym?"

"Yes—er—certainly, Gore, I was just—"

"Come on, then! Don't stay here with these swots," said Gore.

"We're not swotting," said Herries indignantly. "We're working up this week's number of the paper."

"Lot of rot, I call it," said Gore.

"There's the door," said Tom Merry. "Or perhaps you'd prefer the window."

Gore passed his arm through Skimpole's.

"Come on, old chap."

The whole editorial staff stared at them. The extraordinary amiability of the bully of the Shell was too amazing for words.

"Certainly, Gore," said Skimpole. "But just wait a moment. I was speaking to Tom Merry. Merry, will you please oblige me in this matter by resigning from the competition?"

"Ask me another."

"Will you other fellows resign?"

"I don't think," said the other fellows, in chorus.

"I consider this as rather selfish of you. I am certain to get the scholarship if I work for it, and I am really very much in need of the fifty pounds."

"The what?" said Gore, starting. "What's that?"

"I was speaking of the fifty pounds given with the Codicote Scholarship, for which I have entered, Gore."

"Is that—that—the fifty pounds you were telling me about?"

"Yes, certainly."

"You—you won't get the fifty pounds unless you win the

SANDOW'S BOOK FREE!

Just published, a new book showing how Sandow won Health and Fame, beautifully illustrated, and explaining how every man and woman can obtain robust health and perfect development by exercise.

SPECIAL OFFER.

To every reader who writes at once a copy of this book will be sent free.

Address: No. 17, SANDOW HALL, BURLEIGH STREET, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

A Double-Length School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE RIVAL EDITORS."

Codicote Scholarship?" asked Gore, scarcely able to articulate.

"Certainly not. But there is no danger—I am certain to win it. If these fellows persist in competing with me, I shall exert my wonderful brain powers, and then, of course, the thing will be a certainty."

"You—you—you!" stuttered Gore.

Skimpole gazed at him in amazement.

"Is anything the matter, Gore? You appear to be annoyed."

"You—you confounded idiot!" roared Gore. "You—you welsher!"

"Eh?"

"You've diddled me out of a feed!" yelled Gore. "You told me you were going to have fifty pounds, and promised me a fiver out of it."

"Well, that is quite correct."

"Yes, if you win some measly scholarship or other—and you've got about as much chance against Merry or Blake as a kid in the Third has."

"Really, Gore—"

"You—you welsher!"

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

And the staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" simply yelled. The discovery of Gore's true motives in chumming up with Skimpole struck them as comical.

The cad of the Shell glared at them fiercely.

"I am surprised and shocked, Gore, at discovering these mercenary motives," said Skimpole loftily. "I imagined that I had converted you to Socialism, and I had hoped that you would enable me to say—Ow!"

Skimpole had not meant to say "Ow," but the ejaculation was uttered involuntarily as Gore's fist smote him on the nose.

The amateur Socialist staggered back, and sat down violently upon the knees of Fatty Wynn, and Gore stamped out of the study and slammed the door with a slam that made the table jump.

"Here, get off, you bony duffer!" said Fatty Wynn, and he gave Skimpole a gentle shove that sent him sliding to the floor.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole dazedly. "I feel as if I had—had received a shock."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The amateur Socialist was dragged up by Blake and Tom Merry, and stood upon his feet. He pressed his handkerchief to his nose, and it was immediately dyed with crimson.

"Dear me! I think my nose is bleeding!"

"It looks like it," grinned Blake. "That handkerchief is a study in scarlet already. Mop it up! Will you lend Skimmy your hearthrug, Tom Merry?"

"Certainly. He's quite welcome."

"Dear me! I think the handkerchief will be sufficient. This is very rough and rude of Gore. As a sincere Socialist, I am opposed to every kind of violence, or I should certainly follow him and strike him forcibly. I am ashamed to say that at the present moment it would afford me considerable gratification to strike him forcibly."

"You're all right," said Figgins. "A little bleeding is what a chap wants when he's in too good condition. You don't want it all from the nose, though. I'll just let a little blood from your wrist."

"Eh?"

"Keep still! Lend me your penknife, Kerr."

"Here you are, Figgys."

"Dear me! What are you going to do with that knife, Figgins?"

"Bleed you a little, my son. Hold still."

"But I—I don't want to be bled. I am bleeding considerably at the nose."

"My dear chap, I've made a special study of this subject. In fact, I've taken surgery up as a hobby," said Figgins. "This is all right—I know what I'm about. Hold out your wrist."

"I—I—I—"

Tom Merry exchanged glances with Blake. Blake caught hold of Figgins's arm, and Tom gently but firmly extracted the penknife from his grip. Figgins resisted.

"Don't be an ass, Merry. This is a serious matter."

"I know it is," said Tom Merry. "I strongly object to pigsticking in my study. If you want to bleed anybody, try Fatty Wynn, in your own study."

"Well, I never thought of that, but it's not a bad idea. It would do Fatty good."

"Would it?" said Fatty Wynn, looking dangerous. "If anybody starts bleeding me, there will be a jolly big row, I warn him!"

"If it's for your own good, Fatty—"

"Oh, rats!" said Fatty ungratefully.

"Dear me," said Skimpole. "I think I shall have to go and hold my nose under a key, or slip a cold tap down my back—I mean—"

"Good idea!" said Tom Merry.

And Skimpole left the study, still with his handkerchief to his nose, and ruby drops spotting the linoleum as he went up the passage.

CHAPTER 6.

A Mysterious Disappearance.

GEORGE GORE had an extremely unamiable expression upon his face as he strolled into the gym. There was some satisfaction in the damage he had done to Herbert Skimpole's nose. But thinking of the time and trouble and money he had wasted in cultivating the friendship of the amateur Socialist, all for nothing, made Gore perfectly wild.

Mellish and Sharp noticed his looks, and sympathetically inquired the cause. They were Gore's chums, but fellows like Gore have very little understanding of the true meaning of chumming. As a matter of fact, neither Sharp nor Mellish was displeased by Gore's glum looks, and they derived considerable enjoyment from his recital of his wrongs.

"After I'd stood him a jolly good feed," said Gore impressively. "Then to find out that he wasn't going to have any tin at all! Why, what are you laughing at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Mellish.

"He, he, he!" cackled Sharp.

"Why, you grinning dummies—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!"

Gore scowled at his hilarious friends. He was looking in a dangerous temper, and the two Fourth-Form juniors quieted at last.

"Excuse me," grinned Mellish. "It struck me as—as rather funny. Ha, ha!"

"Something else'll strike you jolly soon," growled Gore.

"Oh, don't be ratty! Fancy you being taken in like that, though."

"Clean done!" chuckled Sharp.

"I shouldn't wonder if he planned it all from the beginning, and Tom Merry was at the bottom of it," went on Mellish, who knew very well that such was not the case. But Mellish had an imagination far too free and soaring to be trammelled by any regard for facts. Gore was in a humour to believe anything, however.

"I shouldn't wonder," he assented. "They were laughing like a lot of hyenas in Merry's study when I found it out."

"You could get your own back," Mellish observed carelessly.

Gore stared at him.

"How?"

"When I passed Tom Merry's study a while back the packet was lying on the table there, ready to go to the printer's."

"Oh, was it? How do you know?"

"Well, I looked in."

"Why didn't you chuck the thing into the fire?" said Gore savagely. "I would."

"Well, it's still there," said Mellish.

Gore wrinkled his brows. He was smarting, and in a mood to hit back hard for his fancied injuries. If the copy for the "Weekly" were destroyed, Tom Merry & Co. would have something else to laugh about.

"Where's Tom Merry now?" he asked.

"In the gym," said Mellish. "He came in a few minutes ago, I think. Yes, there he is over yonder, talking to Finn."

Gore looked across. Tom Merry was chatting to Buck Finn, the sparely-built, keen-eyed American youth. Finn had been laid up lately with influenza, and he was still looking a little pale, but very nearly his old self.

"I think I'll go and have a stroll round," said Gore abruptly.

Mellish and Sharp grinned at one another as Gore left. They knew his intention, and they pictured to themselves the faces of the editorial staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" when the copy was found to be missing.

A few minutes later Gore looked into Tom Merry's study. The room was empty, the gas turned low, and in the middle of the table lay a packet neatly wrapped in brown paper and tied with twine.

Gore's eyes gleamed as he stepped into the study.

He picked up the packet. Yes, there was the name of Mr. Tipper, the Rylcombe printer, on the outside, in Tom Merry's big hand. Gore thrust the packet under his jacket, and turned to the door again.

There was a footstep in the corridor.

The cad of the Shell started, and drew back. Was it someone passing, or— The next moment he knew. Jack Blake came into the study.

The Fourth-Former gave a start on seeing Gore there.

"Hallo, Gore!"

Gore muttered something, and went towards the door. Blake turned up the gas, and looked at him again. Gore left the study, and Blake looked exceedingly puzzled.

"Wonder what that rotter was doing here," he muttered. "Some little game, I suppose. Where's that packet for the printer?"

Jack Blake had a pass from Kildare to go down to Rylcombe and take the copy for the "Weekly," and he had just come to the study for it. He had been told that it was on the table, but the table was bare. He glanced round the study, but there was no sign of a packet, and he remembered Gore.

Gore's guilty look, and his presence in the study, were explained in a flash. He had taken the copy of the "Weekly."

In a twinkling Jack Blake was out in the corridor.

This place was deserted. Blake heard a sound towards the stairs, and ran in that direction. He rounded a corner, and almost ran into Skimpole. The genius of St. Jim's was studying a huge volume as he walked up the passage.

"Have you seen Gore?" gasped Blake.

Skimpole blinked at him.

"Did you speak?" he asked. "I am just getting into the interesting part of Professor Jawfull Jabbar's great work on Socialism. I shall, to a certain extent, take this as my model—"

"Has anyone passed you?"

"As my model for my own book. I have only finished some four hundred and eighty-three chapters, so far, so there is plenty of room left for— Ow, ow!"

Blake shook him violently.

Skimpole broke off, gasping, and the huge volume containing the valuable meditations of Professor Jabbar dropped with a crash to the floor, and Skimpole's spectacles slid down his nose.

"Dear me! Blake, really—"

"Has anybody passed you?"

"Yes, someone ran by me; but really—"

"Was it Gore?"

"Yes, I think so. Yes, I am sure; I remember he dropped something from under his jacket, and stopped to pick it up, and—"

But Blake was gone. He was descending the stairs three at a time, leaving Skimpole in a state bordering on stupefaction.

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole, replacing his spectacles, and picking up the huge volume of Jabbarian wisdom. "Dear me! I cannot help regarding that as almost rude of Blake."

Blake flew down the stairs. It was unfortunate that Kildare of the Sixth was coming up at the same moment. Blake bumped into a broad chest, and an iron grip on his collar brought him to a stop. Kildare grasped the banister with his other hand, and glared at the junior wriggling in his grip.

"You—you young—"

"Let—let—lemme go, Kildare!"

"Yes, I'm likely to!" said the captain of St. Jim's. "You nearly sent me downstairs on my neck."

"I'm in a hurry—"

"Come into my study, and I'll give you a lesson about going downstairs in a hurry."

"Oh, really, Kildare," gasped Blake, "I'm after Gore. He's collared the copy of our 'Weekly,' and he's up to something with it."

Kildare hesitated a moment, and then his grasp relaxed. "Cut!" he said briefly.

Blake did not need telling twice. He cut, and went down the rest of the stairs like lightning. Then he glared round in search of Gore. The cad of the Shell was not to be seen.

Blake grasped Reilly by the shoulder. The Irish junior was reading the notices on the board, when he was suddenly whirled round by Blake's excited grasp.

"Faith, and what—"

"Have you seen Gore?"

"Gore, is it? Faith, and he went into the quad. a minute ago."

Jack dashed into the quad. It was very dark there, and there was no sign of Gore to be seen. Up and down he rushed excitedly; but if the cad of the Shell was there, he kept well out of sight. Tom Merry and Buck Finn were coming out of the gym., and Blake dashed towards them.

"Have you seen Gore?"

"Gore?" said Tom Merry. "Not lately."

"I guess not," said Buck Finn.

"Did you leave the copy of the 'Weekly' where you told me, Merry?"

"Yes, of course I did."

"Then it's gone."

"Gone!"

"Yes; and Gore's taken it."

Tom Merry, as excited now as Blake, seized him by the arm.

"Sure?"

"He was in your study; he sneaked out like a kicked dog," said Blake rapidly. "Then I saw the packet wasn't there. I was after him like a shot, but he's dodging me."

"We'll jolly soon hunt him out."

"I guess I'll lend you a hand."

Tom Merry's whistle rang through the gloom of the quadrangle. It was a signal well known to his chums, and they were not long in gathering. A minute more, and the news was known, and Tom Merry & Co. were hunting far and wide for the vanished Gore.

CHAPTER 7.

Towser Distinguishes Himself.

GORE was not, as a rule, much sought after. But just now he was being sought after to a really remarkable extent. A dozen juniors hunted for him high and low, asking every fellow they met for information. Information was hard to gain. Some had seen him, and some hadn't. Nobody appeared to know where he was now.

The hunters separated, and took different directions. Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners did the Shell passage, searching every study. Buck Finn and Blake drew the box-rooms—blank. Digby and Herries hunted through the Fourth Form studies. They routed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy out of the common-room, and made him join in the hunt.

D'Arcy, who was still suffering considerably from damage to his dig, declined at first; but when he learned that the copy of the "Weekly" was in danger, he bucked up at once. To have his fashion column and his interesting information on music lost, was not to be thought of. He joined in the quest with great ardour. Figgins & Co., on a chance that Gore might have taken refuge in the New House, hurried off thither, and searched for him. But it soon became clear that Gore was not there.

Where was Gore?

Nobody appeared to know. In the midst of the exciting search, while the fate of the "Weekly" hung in the balance, Digby remembered that he had a German imposition to take in to Herr Schneider, and that it was overdue. He rushed off to Study No. 6 to get it. Herries, who was considerably dusty from a search in a lumber-room, was suddenly struck by an idea.

"Towser!"

"Eh?" growled Blake. "Thinking of that rotten bulldog now, when we may have all our work to do over again! Scat!"

"I'm thinking of Towser—"

"Oh, go and feed him, then!"

"I'm not thinking of feeding him. It's time, though," said Herries, looking at his watch. "But what I was thinking of is that Towser might track down Gore."

"Rats!"

"Look here," said Herries warmly, "you know jolly well what a marvel Towser is at tracking down people. You remember how he tracked down the burglars who robbed the chapel."

"More rats!"

"Well, I'm jolly well going to try Towser, that's all."

"You'll get into a row if you bring him into the house," said Lowther.

"Well, it's worth risking a row to get the copy of the 'Weekly' back."

"Yes, but—"

"Besides, Blake says that Towser can't track down the rotter, and I know jolly well he can. I'll just show you."

And Herries, not to be argued with, rushed off for his favourite.

Tom Merry laughed.

"There'll be ructions if Herries starts tracking people indoors with that ghastly bulldog," he said. "But hang it all, where can Gore be?"

The search had lasted more than half an hour. There was ample time for Gore to have destroyed the "Weekly" if he had so wished. But Tom Merry thought he would hesitate to do so.

"You see, if we hadn't spotted him—"

"If I hadn't spotted him, you mean," said Blake.

"Well, yes, if Blake hadn't spotted him, he would very likely have made an end of the copy, but now he knows we're on his track, he won't dare," said Tom Merry, with conviction.

"He could deny knowing anything about it," said Lowther.

"Yes, and I know he wouldn't mind lying; but we should find some traces of it sooner or later," said Tom. "Two or



Arthur Augustus ceased in the middle of his tenor solo, as a Latin grammar caught him under the chin.

three quires of foolscap aren't got rid of so easily. And when we found the fragments—well, the proof wouldn't be conclusive enough for a court of law, but it would do for us, and Gore would have one of the highest old times of his life. And he knows it."

"Bai Jove, I wathah think you are wight, Tom Mewwy. What do you think the wottah will do, then?"

"Most likely hide it somewhere, and pretend to know nothing about it."

"Bai Jove! We'll wag him till we make him tell us where it is."

"Yes, rather! And that's why he's keeping out of the way."

"Where can the wottah be?"

"That's a blessed mystery. Hallo, here's Herries with his blughound. 'Ware prefects, old fellow!"

"Blow the prefects!" said Herries, dragging on Towser's chain. "Have you got anything belonging to Gore—his cap, or boots, or anything?"

Gr-r-r-r!

Towser apparently didn't like being kept waiting for his supper. He was looking far from amiable. His growl made Arthur Augustus draw back hastily.

"That wotten dog is not safe, Hewwies."

"He's safe enough, unless one of the prefects sees him."

"I mean he is not safe for us at close quartahs."

"It's all right if you don't look at him. Towser doesn't like being looked at, that's all."

"I'm just going up to Schneider," said Digby, coming along with an imposition in his hand. "I forgot about my lines."

"Have you got anything belonging to Gore? Hallo! Quiet, Towser! What is he sniffing at?"

"My imposition, I believe," said Digby, snatching it hastily out of the bulldog's reach. "It was left on the table at tea-time, and some herring got on it. It's on the last sheet, so I hope Schneider won't notice it."

"Keep him quiet, Herries."

"I am keeping him quiet," growled Herries. "I suppose you don't want a bulldog to be as quiet as an Egyptian mummy, do you? He obeys me in everything. Quiet, Towser. Now watch him shut up."

Gr-r-r-r!

"Quiet, old boy! Quiet, doggy!"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Well, we're waiting for him to shut up," said Blake patiently.

"Oh, rats!" said Herries crossly. "Towser isn't a measly mongrel afraid of every word. If he wants to growl, he growls. Don't you, Towser, old boy?"

Gr-r-r-r! said Towser old boy.

"There you are!" said Herries triumphantly.

"Wonderful!" said Tom Merry, with due solemnity. "I see that you can lead Towser with a thread—anywhere he wants to go. What on earth is he trying to get after Digby for?"

"Quiet, Towser! Stop!"

"Ha, ha, ha! He's after the herring on the paper."

Towser strained at the chain. He made so much noise when Herries tried to restrain him that the junior, in fear of being pounced upon by an angry prefect, let him have

his way. Towser strained and pulled on, and arrived along with Digby at the door of Herr Schneider's study. Dig had just tapped, and a deep voice had bidden him "Come in!" Towser made a snatch at the imposition as Dig went in, but the junior held it in the air.

Herries gave a sudden exclamation as the door flew open. For there, seated demurely at Herr Schneider's table, was George Gore.

"Gore!" gasped Herries.

Gore looked round with a sweet smile.

"I can't come now, Herries," he said. "Herr Schneider has kindly consented to help me with my German verbs."

"Dat is so," said Herr Schneider, beaming through his spectacles. "I likes to encourage to study among te poyss, and I tink tat Gore especially is ferry mooch in need of taking his vork more seriously."

"My imposition, sir," said Digby.

"You may place it on te table, Digby," said the Herr. From where he sat he could not see Towser, but he suddenly became aware of the bulldog's presence.

As Digby laid the impot on the table, Towser made a sudden spring for it.

It was useless for the startled Herries to attempt to stop him. The sudden spring had dragged the chain from his hand.

Towser scrambled on the table.

Herr Schneider started up with a shriek.

"Ach! Take tat peast away, ain't it!"

Herries rushed forward. Digby sprang to his aid. But they were too late. Herr Schneider smote the bulldog with his book, to frighten him away, and it was about the worst thing he could have done. Towser forgot all about the fascinating scent of herring that had led him on. He went in for vengeance. Right at the stout German he scrambled over the table. Books and papers, an inkpot and a globe, went crashing to the floor. Herr Schneider took one look at the bulldog's jaws, and fled.

He dodged round the table, and Towser dashed after him with clinking chain.

"Towser!" shrieked Herries.

But Towser was too excited to heed his master's voice.

"Ach!" gasped Herr Schneider. "Help! Mercy! I am murthered! Help!"

Digby flung himself desperately between the bulldog and his prey. If Herr Schneider should be bitten, the consequences would be endless for the juniors. Towser, baffled, was greatly inclined to bite Digby instead, but he recognised one who had often fed him, and bulldogs have good memories. Digby clutched his collar and held him off, and Herr Schneider promptly gained the other side of the table again.

"Ach!" he gasped. "Mein gootness! Haf you got tat tog safely, Tigby?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Digby.

"You vas ein prave lad. Hold him tight."

"Yes, sir," said Digby heroically. As he was in no danger, he could be as heroic as he liked, and he did not let the opportunity slip. "I won't let him bite you, sir. He shall—shall tear me in pieces first!"

"Prave poy! Hold him!"

"He's all right, sir!" gasped Herries. "Only a little frisky!"

"You vicked poy! But for that prave-lad I might have been torn in pieces, after," said Herr Schneider. "You shall be reported to the House-master, ain't it, and tat fearful peast shall be shot!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped the dismayed Herries.

"I haf said it! Go, and take tat peast mit you pefore."

"Oh, sir—"

"Not a vort!" said the German master, with a majestic wave of the hand. "Go!"

Herries dejectedly took the chain of the bulldog. Tom Merry & Co., all attracted by the disturbance, were in the passage outside. They were looking at Gore very expressively, but Gore appeared not to see it.

"As for you, Tigby, my prave lad," said Herr Schneider, "I am ferry grateful to you, and if you asks a favour, I grants him."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Digby.

"You vas a prave poy. You may go. You also may go, Gore. I cannot after tat shock go on mit te Sherman verbs, but I helps you anoder time."

Gore gave a disquieted glance at the juniors in the passage. But there was nothing to be done, and he left the study. And Jack Blake and Tom Merry linked their arms in his as he came out, and marched him away quite affectionately.

CHAPTER 8.

A Case of Doubt.

TOM MERRY & Co. led Gore away without a word. The cad of the Shell made one or two efforts to shake himself free, in vain. Then he went quietly, lest worse should befall him.

Herries had a dejected countenance. Reporting to the House-master meant a caning; but that did not worry Herries. But the German-master had declared that Towser should be shot. Towser had caused trouble so often before at St. Jim's that there was a very strong feeling against him in many quarters. His violent death would probably cause rejoicings among those who had been selected by Towser for the purpose of trying his teeth. But to Herries Towser was all in all. Even his cornet paled into insignificance beside Towser.

It was a much debated question in Study No. 6 in the School House, as to which was the more utterly intolerable in the study—Herries' bulldog, or Herries' cornet. Blake had openly declared that he would stand a feed to anybody who would smash the cornet. Arthur Augustus had hinted that he had a spare fiver for anybody who should be responsible for the demise of Towser. But now that the fiat had gone forth, they were all sorry for Herries.

If Herr Schneider made a point of it in his complaint to the House-master—and he was certain to do so—there would be only the alternative of the death of Towser, or of sending him away from the school. And Herries had a dismal foreboding of how Towser would be received if he sent him home.

"It's too bad," said Tom Merry. "I'm sorry, Herries. Of course, it's rot about having him shot. Railton will let you send him away instead."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't want to send him away," said Herries miserably.

"It's hard cheese," said Blake. "I can't say I like Towser as a companion, but it's hard cheese all the same."

"Yaas, wathah! Undah the ciros, I withdaw seveal wemarks I have made concernin' Towsah."

"It's all the fault of this squirming rotter," said Figgins.

"If Gore hadn't taken the copy of the 'Weekly—'"

"Bai Jove! Figgins is wight. It's all Goah's fault!"

"Better get the critter back to his kennel, before there's more trouble, Herries, old man," suggested Monty Loyther.

Herries nodded gloomily, and led Towser away. The juniors gathered round Gore, who was looking a little scared, but impudent at the same time. They debated various modes of torture, but it was agreed that it should not commence till Herries came back. As the chiefly injured party, he was entitled to have a hand in it. Herries was not long gone. He came back with a vengeful glitter in his eyes.

"Better get him into the box-room," he said. "I think five hundred whacks with a cricket bat will about meet the case."

"Bai Jove! Dwaw it mild, old chap!"

"Look here," said Gore, "lemme alone! I don't know what you're talking about. It wasn't my fault Herries' mongrel went for old Schneider."

"If you call my bulldog a mongrel, Gore—"

"Well, I don't care what kind of beast it is. You can't say it was my fault it burst into Schneider's study—"

"Yes, it was. He was tracking you."

"He was whatting?"

"Tracking you. You know jolly well you were only fooling Schneider—you were only pretending to want his help with those rotten verbs to keep out of our way." Gore grinned faintly. "We've been hunting for you everywhere, and at last I thought of tracking you down with Towser."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you image?" demanded Herries, turning to Digby. "Do you mean to say that Towser didn't track Gore down, when he went direct to Schneider's study?"

"Ha, ha! He was following the scent of the herring on my impot!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, don't talk utter bosh!" said Herries irritably. "It's amazing to me how everybody runs down Towser—a nice, quiet, affectionate, intelligent dog. Here's he got into a mess for doing exactly what we brought him into the House to do; and you can't even give him the credit of running down Gore."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"And so it was all Gore's fault Towser has got into a row," said Herries. "He's going to be jolly well ragged for it, too!"

"Yaas, wathah! I quite agree with Hewwies there."

"Look here," said Gore, "what's the row? I don't care

whether Towser tracked me or not! What confounded business had you to be tracking me? What have I done?"

"You know jolly well what you've done!" exclaimed Blake hotly. "What were you doing in Tom Merry's study when I went there?"

"I went to borrow his German Grammar."

"Why, you—you—"

"As he wasn't there I looked in to see whether it was lying about in sight, and as I couldn't see it I was coming out when you came in," said Gore coolly. "I'm blessed if I see what business it is of yours!"

"Now look here, Gore—"

"If Tom Merry doesn't like me going into his study, it's for him to say so, and not for a Fourth Form kid!" said Gore. "Mind your own business!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Blake. "You took the copy of the 'Weekly' off Tom Merry's table, and you know it!"

Gore looked surprised.

"I took what?"

"The packet containing the copy prepared for the printer," said Tom Merry sternly.

"Blessed if I know anything about any packet! Is that what you have been chasing me around for?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I can't give you any information. If this is a little joke of yours, Blake—"

"Mine!" howled Blake.

"Yes, yours! If this is a little joke of yours, you'd better own up, and produce the thing."

"Pro—pro—produce it!" almost stuttered Blake.

"Yes. The joke has gone quite far enough."

Blake looked as if he would jump on the voracious youth. Figgins held him back. The juniors were looking very curiously at Jack.

"Bai Jove," remarked D'Arcy, "if this is weally a little joke, Blake—"

"It isn't!" shrieked Blake.

Gore shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course, I don't know anything about it," he remarked. "Blake was the last fellow to be seen with the packet—"

"I wasn't—I didn't—I—"

"It's my belief that Blake has played some joke with it," went on Gore coolly. "He'll own up to-morrow or the next day—"

"Let me get at him!" roared Blake.

"Hold on!"

"Weally, I cannot cwedit that there is anythin' in Goah's assertion, as I know him to be an untwuthful person, and I can wely on the word of my friend Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "I suggest that we wag him."

"Look here—"

Tom Merry looked steadily at Gore.

"Do you give us your word that you don't know anything of the packet, Gore?"

Gore hesitated a moment. It was hard to look into Tom Merry's clear eyes and tell a direct untruth.

"I don't see why I should be catechised," he exclaimed. "I've told you why I went to your study. If Blake didn't take the packet somebody else might have. You oughtn't to leave it lying about if it was valuable."

Tom Merry hesitated.

"There's something in that," he said, at length. "It's suspicious against Gore, but the packet might have been taken by someone else."

"I wecommend waggin' him, anyway."

"I'm jolly sure he took it!" said Blake.

"So am I," said Herries. "I've got to part with my bulldog—"

Tom Merry smiled faintly.

"There's no connection between your bulldog and whether Gore took the packet, old chap."

"I know I've got to part with Towser, anyway, and Gore ought to be made to smart for it," said Herries obstinately.

"I'm for leaving the ragging over till we find out for certain," said Tom Merry. "It would be unpleasant to rag Gore, and then discover that some other cad—I mean, some other chap, had taken the packet."

Herries grunted. He was certain that Gore was guilty, but as his only reason was that he had to part with Towser, his position could not be regarded as logical. The rest rather unwillingly agreed with Tom Merry.

"I wegard Tom Mewwy's statement of the mattah as cowwect," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Goah is a feahful wottah, but it would be a doocid awkward posish to discovah that we had wagged the w'ong wottah. I wecommend that he is allowed to go, and to come up for judgment if called upon."

"Start him with a kick," said Kerr.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "Suppose we fine him—make him stand a feed all round, and—"

"Oh, scat! Get off, Gore!"

"It's a jolly good idea!" said the fat Fourth-Former. "I'm jolly peckish. I get very hungry in this March weather."

Blake, who was only half-convinced of the propriety of letting Gore go unpunished, started him with a kick, and the cad of the Shell did not retaliate. He was only too glad to escape so cheaply.

He scuttled off, chuckling, to retail the joke to Mellish and Sharp; and when the Terrible Three went to their study a little later, they heard the sound of chuckling proceed from Gore's room. But there was one junior in the School House who was in no mood for chuckling. It was Herries. He went into Study No. 6, and plumped himself into the easy-chair, and refused to speak. His chums were sympathetic, but unable to console him. Herries was mourning his loss, and was not to be consoled. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's kind offer to cheer him up by singing a tenor solo from "Tannhauser" was received so brusquely that the swell of St. Jim's gave up the attempt at consolation on the spot.

CHAPTER 9.

A Respite for Towser.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered the exclamation suddenly. Blake and Digby looked at him, but Herries remained morose and preoccupied. He had plenty to think about in the sad plight of Towser.

"I have thought of an ideah," explained Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah touched—"

"Why say 'rather'?" grunted Blake.

"Weally, Blake, you misappwehend my meanin'! I am wathah touched by the extwemely dispiwvited expwession upon Hewwies' bwow, and though he has been somewhat wude to me, still—"

"With all his faults, you love him still," said Blake, with a nod.

"Yaas, pwecisely—"

"Well, he's still now," said Blake—"quite still."

"Pway leave those wotten witticisms to Lowthah, Blake. As you know, I have always objected to Towser—"

"You let Towser alone!" growled Herries.

"You misappwehend me, Hewwies—"

"Well, shut up, then!"

"I decline to shut up. You misappwehend me entirely. I have been stwuck by an ideah on the vewy subject of that wotten bulldog—"

"You'll be struck by something else jolly soon!" said Herries darkly.

"I should uttahly wufuse to be stwuck by somethin' else, Hewwies. And I must say that you are not vewy gwateful for my ideah, which is conceived in the spiwit of genewosity and self-sawfice. When I think of the constant dangah my twousahs are in through that beast Towser, I am tempted to hold my tongue, and let the bwute be sent away."

Herries started.

"Do you mean to say that you have got a wheeze for getting him let off?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "That is pwecisely what I mean to say."

"Well, go ahead!"

"Undah the circe—"

"Oh, cut the cackle, and come to the 'osses!" said Blake.

"I don't like that savage cannibal beast nosing round, but on Herries' account I'll allow you to get him off if you can. I hope Herries will be properly grateful."

"Oh, rats!" grunted Herries. "Are you ever coming to the point, D'Arcy?"

"How can I come to the point, when Blake keeps on intewwuptin' me? What I was thinkin' of is this: What our wespwected German-mastah said to Dig."

"What did he say to me?" asked Digby, staring.

"You saved him fwom bein' bitten, at a feahful wisk to yourself—"

"Well, I saved him from being bitten," grinned Digby. "I don't know about the risk to myself. Towser wouldn't bite me."

"I wasn't thinkin' of that. He might have torn your waistcoat, and, as a mattah of fact, he did tear a wrent in your twousahs."

"Are you ever coming to the point, D'Arcy?" asked Blake politely. "If you're understudyin' a gramophone, I'll go for a little walk."

"Pway be patient, deah boy. Herr Schneider said that if Digby asked him a favah he would gwant it."

"So he did," said Digby. "I remember now!"
 "Well, deah boys, that's the wipping ideah! Dig can go to Herr Schneider and ask him for a favah—ask him to overlook this mattah, and let Hewwies and his beastly dog off."

Herries jumped up, and gave D'Arcy a thump on the back that sent him staggering across the study.

"Splendid!" he shouted.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "You—you uttah ass! You've nearly broken my back, and probably wumpled my jacket feahfully!"

"Good wheeze!" repeated Herries heartily. "Buzz off, Dig!"

To his surprise Dig showed a decided lack of enthusiasm. Herries shook him by the shoulder.

"Buzz off, Dig, before Schneider has time to go to Railton. What the dickens are you hanging about for?"

Digby rose slowly to his feet.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "I'm sorry for you, Herries, but I don't enjoy the society of bulldogs as much as Gussy does—"

"I was speakin' in a spiwit of self-sacrifice—"

"I'll do my best!" grunted Dig. "I'll make it all right if I can, Herries—in a spiwit of self-sacrifice."

And Digby left the study.

Herries followed him down the passage, to wait anxiously outside Herr Schneider's door for the verdict, and Blake looked at D'Arcy fixedly.

"Well, you are a giddy ass!" he said. "I'm glad for old Herries' sake, but you've perpetuated that bulldog now."

"I am afwaid so," said D'Arcy. "But poor old Hewwies was so feahfully downhearted about it, you know. He actually wept wudely when I offahed to sing him a tenor solo from 'Tannhauser,' which showed how awfully cut up he was. I felt that I must do somethin'. That bwute Towsah has no pwopah respect for a fellow's twousahs, I know. But a decent fellow ought to be always pwepared to sacrifice even his best twousahs on the altah of fwiendship."

Herries and Digby entered the study a few minutes later. Herries was beaming, and there was no doubt as to how the appeal had gone.

"All wight?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes, ripping!" said Herries. "Schneider's not such a bad sort."

"Good sort," said Digby. "He wriggled at first, but I put it to him strong, and he couldn't get out of what he had said. Towser's let off!"

"And look here, D'Arcy!" said Herries, in a burst of gratitude. "I'm awfully obliged to you, you know. You can take Towser for a run round the quad if you like."

"Thank you vewy much, Hewwies. Pewwaps I will avail myself of your kind offah anothah time. Just at pwesent"

"Excuse me!" said Skimpole, putting his head into the study. "I hear that you want me."

And the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's came in.

CHAPTER 10.

Skimpole's Skill.

SKIMPOLE blinked at the chums of Study No. 6, and the four Fourth-Formers stared at Skimpole.

"This is the first I've heard of it," said Blake, casually. "And how you could possibly imagine that anybody wanted you, is a mystery to me."

GET "THE MARVEL,"

NOW ON SALE.

20

HALF-CROWNS

FOR

READERS!

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Really, Blake, I think I am right," said Skimpole, adjusting his spectacles, and taking out a large notebook.

"You have had a loss—"

"It's all right now," said Herries, who naturally could think only of one subject just then. "Towser's all right."

"I was not speaking of your bulldog, Herries. I hope he is lost—I mean, if he is lost I shall certainly not take up the case. I hear that the copy of the 'Weekly' has been purloined from Tom Merry's study."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I am willing to help you in my capacity of amateur detective," explained Skimpole. "I do not mind giving my brain a rest from the mighty problems of the social state for a short time, while I solve mysteries which would, perhaps, baffle Scotland Yard. If I find the missing will—I mean the missing packet, and restore it, perhaps you will withdraw your frivolous competition for the Codicote Scholarship."

"Bai Jove!"

"You see, I am going to get that scholarship, but if there are competitors I shall have to work hard for it, and I should prefer to save the time," Skimpole explained. "As the exam. is held shortly, I should have to spend all my time over it, and I have many other irons in the fire. But about this lost document. It was last seen by whom?"

"By the person who saw it last," said Blake.

"Ahem! Blake, I understand, went to Merry's study for it, and found it gone."

"I didn't find it at all."

"Yes, that is what I mean. Gore was in the study—"

"Yes, both of them."

"Both?" said Skimpole, staring. "I do not understand."

"There was Gore of the Shell," explained Blake. "That was one. The other was from your nose. It was still spotting Tom Merry's carpet."

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as wathah funnay."

Skimpole took a couple of minute's to see Blake's little joke, and then he frowned portentously.

"This is no subject for jesting, Blake," he said. "I am surprised that you can jest so."

"Jest so," assented Blake.

"Really, Blake, there you are doing it again! If these documents are really lost, I should be glad to find them. Pray be serious. Gore declares that you must have taken them for a joke on Tom Merry."

"I suppose Gore is looking for a thick ear."

"If you are guilty—"

"Eh?"

"If you are guilty, Blake, the documents are doubtless concealed in this study. I will make a search."

"Will you?" said Blake grimly.

"Certainly."

"Weally, Skimpole, I wegard you as an uttah ass," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I should wecommend Blake to kick you out of the study."

"Ha!" said Skimpole. "You fear the search, then?"

"Bai Jove! I?"

"Yes, you! D'Arcy is the guilty party. The thief is discovered."

"Bai Jove!"

Skimpole pointed his finger dramatically at the startled swell of St. Jim's.

"There stands the purloiner of the will, I mean the documents!"

"You uttah ass!"

"Search him!" commanded Skimpole.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"This is no laughing matter, Blake. The packet is doubtless concealed about the person of the culprit."

"Ha, ha, ha! Where?"

Skimpole looked thoughtful. As a matter of fact, the elegant figure of the swell of St. Jim's, with its closely-fitting attire, would have shown at once if the bulky packet of copy had been stowed away about it.

"H'm, yes!" said Skimpole. "He has probably concealed it somewhere else; in that hat-box, in all probability."

The amateur detective strode towards the leather hat-box in which Arthur Augustus kept his Sunday topper.

With a bound D'Arcy was in the way.

"Stop! By Jove! My Sunday toppah's in that box." "Ah! Then I have discovered the hiding-place of the loot."

"You feahful ass!"

"The plunder is stored in that hatbox!" said Skimpole.

"You blithewin' chump!"

"There stands the culprit! There—"

"Bai Jove, I'll show you!" said D'Arcy, and he tore open the hatbox. Then he almost staggered with amazement.

For, in the place of the silk hat that should have reposed



"Hallo, Skimmy, got a headache?" asked Gore. "No; this towel is to assist the working of the brain and to keep the head cool!" explained Skimpole.

there, was a packet wrapped in brown paper, squeezed and jammed carelessly into the box.

"My hat!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Not your hat," yelled Blake. "There's the manuscript."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's the copy!" exclaimed Digby, rubbing his eyes.

"Fancy it being D'Arcy all the time!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"What have you done with your hat, Gussy?"

"I haven't done anythin' with it," shrieked the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's. "Some uttah wottah has taken my hat away and stuffed this thing into the box!"

"Oh, draw it mild, you know."

"I wefuse to dwaw it mild. I nevah saw that before; I mean I nevah saw it here. Somebody has done this for a twick."

"Come!" said Skimpole, in a tone of remonstrance. "Now that your guilt is detected, D'Arcy, you had better make a clean breast of it."

"Bai Jove, I'll—"

"I have found the culprit and the missing documents," said Skimpole looking round. "As an amateur, I accept no fee for my services, but—"

"You feahful dummy! I tell you I don't know how that manuscript got into my hatbox," shouted D'Arcy.

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It was Blake, of course! He must have put it there."

"Eh, what's that?"

"I weward a pwactical joke of this sort as in the worst of taste, Blake."

"Well, of all the chumps—"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a chump. I—"

"Hallo, here's the hat!" said Herries, kicking a silk hat under the table. "It couldn't have been Gussy did it, or he'd have then taken care of the topper."

"My hat! Bai Jove, it's neahly wuined!"

"I have discovered the culprit, and—"

"Look here, wasn't it you, D'Arcy?"

"No, certainly not. I should not be likely to play such a silly twick with my own toppah. If it wasn't you—"

"It wasn't!"

"Then it must have been Goah!"

"Of course! It was Gore!" exclaimed Digby. "Tom Merry guessed that he wouldn't dare to destroy it, in case we found it out, and that he would hide it somewhere."

"Really," said Skimpole, "I— What are you doing, Blake?"

"Slinging you out, old chap!"

"But I— Really— Oh! Ow!"

Skimpole's remarks were finished in the passage.

"And now," said Blake, "I'll get down to the printer's with this stuff. There's still time if I hurry. You chaps can pay Gore a visit."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Jack Blake, armed with his pass, left St. Jim's for the village, while the others called for Tom Merry, and then went to look for Gore. Herries thoughtfully took a fives bat along with him.

Fellows passing along the Shell corridor a little later heard voices raised in heated argument in Gore's study, and then a sound as of beating carpets. And the next day it was observed that Gore showed a strong liking for a perpendicular position, and did not sit down at all if he could possibly help it.

CHAPTER 11.

A Slight A tercation.

"FEEL bad?" asked Mellish sympathetically. It was the afternoon of the day following. Gore had twice or thrice been called to order by Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, for not keeping still on his seat. He was leaving the class-room now in the worst of tempers, and as the Fourth Form were also coming out, Mellish met him in the wide-flagged passage. Gore replied to the sympathetic query only with a scowl.

Tom Merry & Co. were talking in the passage in a cheerful group. The copy of the "Weekly" was safe at the printer's office, Blake having taken it there in time the previous evening. The juniors were chatting now about the approaching examination for the Codicote Scholarship. They were nearly all entered for it, and each was firmly of the opinion that he had the best chance of pulling it off. But their rivalry was quite friendly.

The scholarship, founded some two centuries before by a dead-and-gone lord of Codicote Hall, near St. Jim's, was worth the winning. It was for three years' free board and tuition at St. Jim's, and a sum of fifty pounds in cash. It was open only to members of the Fourth Form and the Shell, and there were a good many entrants.

Tom Merry, Blake, and Kerr were popularly supposed to have the best chances, but there were eight or nine others who had put their names down. Skimpole had done so among the rest, though it was only now, when the examination was drawing nigh, that he had begun to turn his attention to it, from the more engrossing subjects of Socialism and Determinism. Tom Merry was speaking of Skimpole now, and the other entrants for the Codicote were listening with mingled expressions.

"As a matter of fact," Tom Merry remarked, "if I had known Skimmy was entering I shouldn't have put my name down."

"Why?" demanded Figgins.

Tom hesitated for a moment.

"Well," he said frankly, "Skimmy wants it more than I do. You know, his people are pretty hard up, and the scholarship, if he won it, would mean a lot to him—and then. And it was really founded for the purpose of helping poor scholars, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! I am twuly sowwy, now I come to think of it, that I am goin' to win the Codicote," said D'Arcy, shaking his head. "Howevah, I shall ask my governah's permish to make Skimmy a pvesent of the fifty pounds."

"You needn't worry," said Figgins. "I'm going to get the Codicote."

"Weally, Figgins, this conceit——"

"Why, what about your own?"

"There is a gweat diffewence between a pwopah weliance on one's own powahs, and silly conceit," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I uttaly fail to see anythin' to gwin at in that remark, Wynn."

But Fatty Wynn grinned all the same, and so did the others.

"Gussy's right on one point," said Blake. "Figgy won't get it. I haven't decided yet what I shall do with the quidlets."

"Better get 'em first," suggested Lowther.

"I'm going to have a new twenty-five guinea camera out of the fifty," said Manners. "That's really why I entered for the scholarship."

"Well, I'm sorry about Skimmy," said Tom Merry. "Outside our select circle, I think he would have first chance. But I think it must be admitted that there are three or four fellows here who will lick him hands down."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We could resign, as far as that goes," Blake remarked.

Tom Merry shook his head decidedly.

"Impossible—at least, without a jolly good reason. The Head would inquire into it, and then we should have to own up—and look like a lot of good little boys out of a story-book."

Blake shuddered.

"My hat! That wouldn't do! I'm sorry for Skimmy, but I'm not going to be shown up as a good little Georgie for his sake."

"Wathah not! I could weally stand anythin' but that. And some of the fellows might think we were too lazy to work for the exam., and were twyin' to get some cheap cweedit, you know."

"Some of them would be jolly certain to say so," said Kerr. "Gore, for instance. He's confabbing over there

with Mellish now, and looking as if he was planning some dirty trick."

"Very likely he is."

The chums strolled out, leaving Mellish and Gore still confabbing, as Kerr termed it. Gore had been inclined at first to meet Mellish's sympathy with his knuckles, but the cad of the Fourth had a suggestion to make that aroused Gore's interest at once.

The Shell fellow was smarting and longing for vengeance, as Mellish knew very well; and Mellish had old scores to pay off against Tom Merry & Co., and was very willing to use Gore as a catspaw.

"The copy isn't in print yet, you know," Mellish was remarking. "I know that Tiper doesn't turn the copies off till Saturday morning."

"What about it?"

"There's a chance to put a finger in the pie, if you like to take it. It would be a ripping joke on Tom Merry if his paper came out on Saturday with some alterations in it."

"But how can I get at the paper, when it's in Tiper's house?" said Gore peevishly.

Mellish grinned.

"That's all you know. I've strolled round Tiper's house, and I know how easy it would be to get in from the garden. I——"

"I understand," said Gore savagely. "You've thought of a wheeze for mucking up the 'Weekly,' and have spied out the lay of the land, but you haven't pluck enough to carry it through yourself. You want me to do it."

"H'm! I'm showing you a way to get level with those cads!"

"I'm on," said Gore. "We'll go together."

Mellish shrank a little.

"I—I didn't mean——"

"I know you didn't," assented Gore sneeringly. "But I mean it. You'll come along with me and show me the way, and keep watch while I get at the paper. I'll get a pass from Knox; he'll give me one if I offer to bring him some cigarettes from the tobacconist's."

And as dusk was falling that evening, Mellish and Gore slipped quietly out of the school. Knox, the prefect, had provided the pass, on the condition that Gore was to bring him the smokes from the village. Mellish was far from willing to join in the expedition, but Gore was not to be gainsaid.

The cigarettes were purchased in Rylcombe, and then the two young rascals turned their steps in the direction of Mr. Tiper's house.

Mellish had evidently been on the scout for information, and had picked up a great deal. Gore's surmise was correct; the cad of the Fourth had schemed out the present "jape" from beginning to end, but had not had the nerve to do the work himself.

He explained all he had learned as they went along, and Gore listened attentively. Mr. Tiper carried on his business in his private house, on the outskirts of Rylcombe. He was a single man, and was accustomed to spend his evenings at the Golden Pig. On these occasions the house was quite empty, as the "charlady" who "did" for Mr. Tiper always went at dark. As Gore listened to the result of Mellish's investigations into the household arrangements of Mr. Tiper, the jape appeared to become easier and easier.

"It will be as simple as rolling off a form," he remarked. "I'll get in and alter the type, while you keep watch. Is this the place?"

"Yes, here you are. That gate creaks; better get over it."

"I see you know all about it," grinned Gore.

"Well, I've been up as far as the window," Mellish confessed. "This way."

They stole up the dark garden-path. An uncurtained window looked out on the garden, and there was no gleam of light from it. Mellish touched the window.

"This is the room."

"The catch is fastened," said Gore, in a whisper, after squeezing his face against the glass to see.

"It's shut, but it's broken; the window will open all right."

"Well, we'll try."

Mellish drew a chisel from his pocket, and the sash was prised up. In spite of the apparently fastened catch, it rose easily enough. Mr. Tiper was a careless man in some respects, but as there was nothing in his house worth a burglar's trouble, he had never had any fear of house-breakers.

The two juniors pushed up the sash, and then Gore clambered over the sill. Mellish waited outside.

"Buck up!" he whispered.

"Right you are! I shall have to have a light."

"It can't be seen from the lane; the trees are too thick."

"Good!"

ANSWERS

NEXT
THURSDAY

"THE RIVAL EDITORS."

A Double-Length School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co.

Gore struck a match, and lighted the gas. He did not turn it higher than was absolutely necessary for his purpose. He looked round the dim room, where Mr. Tiper and a youthful assistant turned out the weekly "Rylcombe News," and various local printings, as well as the more important publication, "Tom Merry's Weekly." His eyes alighted upon the formes containing the valuable lubrications of the editorial staff of the school paper—in type, and ready to be turned off on the press first thing in the morning.

Gore's eyes glittered as he saw them. His first impulse was to loosen the type in the formes, and scatter it into "pie," an action that would have postponed the publication of the "Weekly" till long after the date fixed. The printer would have had all his work to do over again, and the feelings with which he would have done it afforded Gore considerable satisfaction to contemplate. But after all, the brunt of the thing would have fallen upon Mr. Tiper, who was his own compositor, and Tom Merry & Co. would only have had to wait a few days for the paper. Gore decided that he must think of something better than that.

To mix up the type, putting lines from one page into the middle of another, was the next idea. That was certainly better, and Gore looked round for the tweezers to take out the type. His eyes fell upon other formes, ready set up by Mr. Tiper, and thinking that they might perhaps belong to the "Weekly," he looked at them. To read the type backwards in the formes was no easy task to Gore, who had very little acquaintance with the interior of a printing-office.

He managed to struggle through it, however, growing more and more puzzled as he proceeded.

"My hat!" he murmured. "I never knew that any of the silly asses wrote articles in Latin for the 'Weekly.' Showing off, I suppose."

It was certainly Latin, but as he spelled at it painfully, Gore realised that there was something familiar to him about it.

"My hat!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Tacitus!"

He was distinctly puzzled. What on earth the contributors to Tom Merry's "Weekly," could be printing a section of the "Annals" for, he could not understand.

Mellish looked in cautiously at the window.

"I say, Gore, how are you getting on?"

"Look here," said Gore, "I don't catch on to this. They've got some 'Tacitus' set up for the 'Weekly.' They must be off their chumps."

"Off yours, more likely," grinned Mellish.

"Well, look here!"

Mellish looked cautiously down the garden. All was quiet and still. He climbed into the room, and stood beside Gore. He looked puzzled, too, as he glanced at the forme, and found that Gore's statement was correct.

"Curious," he said. "I wonder—my only hat!"

He broke off in amazement.

"Well, what's the matter with you?" snapped Gore, staring at him.

"Fifty pounds!" murmured Mellish.

"Eh? What are you chattering about?"

"My hat! If I'd only known. It's too late to enter now for the Codicote."

"Of course, it is. You have to send in your name at the beginning of the term," said Gore mystified. "What are you talking about that now for?"

"Don't you see. This forme doesn't belong to the 'Weekly.'"

"Rats! I suppose Tiper isn't setting up Latin for anybody in Rylcombe," said Gore sarcastically.

"No, of course he isn't. He's setting it up for Dr. Holmes."

"What?"

"Can't you see?" said Mellish impatiently. "This is going to be the printed exam. paper for the Codicote." Gore jumped.

"My word! If only I'd entered!"

"Yes," said Mellish, with a sigh. "If we'd known; but it's no good talking about that now. There's some fellows at St. Jim's would give a little finger to see this paper."

"I should say so."

"I wonder—Suppose we made notes of it, and worked it off that way? We could give hints to some of the chaps, at a bob a time—"

"Ass! It would come out! You couldn't trust even a fellow who was entered for the exam. He might give us away."

"I suppose it would be risky."

"Of course it would."

"It's a pity, though," Mellish looked over the locked formes. "Here's the Latin prose, and here's the questions on Roman history. A chap who had a look at this could take the Codicote on his head."

Gore grinned gleefully as a curious idea came into his mind.

"It's all right. Look here, these formes are the same size, and the type is the same fount. Suppose we shift some of the 'Weekly' out, and shift some of this stuff into the place?"

Mellish stared, and then he chuckled.

"Good! Then the exam. questions and the Latin prose will come out in the 'Weekly,' if Tiper doesn't notice it."

"Why should he? He'll find these formes just as he left them—and I know he's going to knock off the copies of the 'Weekly' first thing in the morning, to send them up to the school. Ten to one he'll print 'em off without noticing anything—in fact, I believe his boy does most of this hand-press work."

"Good! It's worth trying, anyway. My hat, it will be funny to see their faces—and Railton's, and the Head's."

The work did not take long. Mellish, who was much lighter-fingered than his friend, did it, and did it well. Wedges of the exam. matter were put into the pages of the "Weekly," an equal quantity of Figgins's Red Indian serial being transferred to the Codicote formes. At a glance, the formes all looked exactly the same as they had looked before.

Chuckling, the two young rascals left the room, turning out the gas and carefully closing the window. They stole on tiptoe out of the garden, and in a few minutes were speeding back to the school.

CHAPTER 12.

Skimpole Does Not Listen to the Tempter.

SKIMPOLE sat in the study he shared with Gore. There was a wet towel gracefully twined round his mighty brow, from which drops dripped upon the table and upon a nicely-bound Horace belonging to Gore.

Skimpole was hard at work.

The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's had realised, at last, that he had been wasting time. In his confidence in his powers, and his keen regard for the great problem of regenerating modern society, he had been careless about preparing for the Codicote exam.

Although the scholarship was not to be awarded till the end of the term, the exam. was to be held shortly. The date had been known from the beginning of the term, and Skimpole certainly ought to have swotted in readiness. He had plenty of excuses for not having done so. He had not returned from his American travels until after the term had well started. Then he had been busy with Socialistic propaganda, and in writing the famous book that was to revolutionise the civilised world. It seemed a pity to put off the revolution for several weeks, while he won a scholarship, and Skimpole might have refused to do so on his own account. But Skimpole senior was imperative.

Skimpole senior wanted his son to win that scholarship. It was a strain on his resources to keep his son at St. Jim's, and the scholarship would have settled the difficulty nicely for him.

Skimpole was a dutiful son. As a sincere Socialist, as he would have put it, he was bound to show great respect to parents and to the influence of the home. Therefore, with more than one sigh, he had put off the revolution, and applied himself to the task of getting the Codicote.

But now that he was setting to work in real earnest at last, he found unexpected difficulties in the way.

The work was hard. Skimpole could have passed an examination in Socialism, Determinism, and several other "isms." He could have written copiously on Marx's theory of capital, or Henry George's views on progress and poverty. But in Roman history he was deficient, and Latin prose had never been his strong point. It was a question of hard work, and to hard work Skimpole applied himself. The difficulty now was to make up for lost time, and get ahead of his competitors in the race.

If Tom Merry and Kerr had been out of it, he would have felt more at ease.

Blake he thought he could probably equal, though the keen Yorkshire lad was a dangerous opponent. But Tom Merry was strong on the subjects dealt with in the Codicote exam., and Kerr, the canny Scotsman, was known to have classical attainments that put many fellows in the Sixth Form to the blush.

And so, in spite of Skimpole's almost sublime self-confidence, he was uneasy, and he was working away now like steam.

In spite of his peculiar ways, and manners, and customs, Skimpole was really brainy, and he had a gift for hard work when he liked. The wet towel round his head was an aid to thought. He worked away, careless of the drops that were spoiling the cover of Gore's Horace, and splashing on his paper as he worked. He looked the picture of intent industry when the door opened and Gore came in.

Gore stared at him.

"Hallo! What are you up to?"

There was no reply from Skimpole. He was too deep in his work.

"Got a headache?"

"Er—did you speak, Gore?"

"Yes, ass! What have you got that rag round your fat chump, for?"

"It's a towel."

"I know it is, dummy! What's it for?"

"To assist the working of the brain, and keep the head cool," explained Skimpole. "I am working for the Codicote exam."

"Hum," said Gore. "I hope I sha'n't disturb you getting tea. Mellish and Sharp are coming, and they'll be here in a minute or two."

"Really, Gore—"

"Why, you—you ass! Look at my Horace!"

"Dear me! It appears to be wet!"

"You—you duffer! You've spoiled it!"

"I'm sorry! But please don't get excited, Gore. I will buy you a new one out of the money paid with the Codicote Scholarship."

A sudden idea occurred to Gore. He had snatched up the volume, and was about to use it as a club on Skimpole's head, but he refrained. He laid it down, and closed the door carefully and mysteriously. Skimpole did not notice it. He was deep in his work again.

"Skimmy!"

Skimpole looked up, blinking.

"I wish you would not speak now, Gore—"

"Shut up. Do you want to win the Codicote?"

"Yes, of course. At my parents' request, I am making a special point to do so, much to the detriment of my Socialistic propaganda. I regard it as a sincere Socialist's duty to respect the wishes of his parents."

"You've got no chance against Kerr or Tom Merry."

"I think I have an excellent chance. It is simply a question of hard work. As for the others, I am still more certain of beating them."

"You'd like to get out of the work, then?"

"Certainly. I am wasting valuable time. These laborious hours would be much better devoted to spreading the glorious truths of Socialism—"

"Would you like a tip from me?"

"You cannot help me, Gore. You are extremely ignorant for a boy of your age, and on classical subjects especially. Thank you all the same."

Gore gritted his teeth.

"Look here, you dummy. Suppose I could tell you the exact questions for the exam., and the Latin prose chosen?"

"That, of course, would make the whole matter simple; but you cannot. Besides, it would not be honourable for me to take advantage of such information. It would be my duty, as a sincere Socialist, to report the whole matter to the Head."

"Look here, don't start humbug with me! You want the Codicote, and I want a slice of the fifty quid," said Gore eagerly. "I've seen something this evening—never mind how or where—and I can tell you. I can easily go back and undo the little joke, as far as that goes."

"Really, Gore, I do not follow."

"Never mind that. Look here. I can get you all the points of the exam., and it will be a walk-over for you. What do you say?"

"I hardly know what to say," said Skimpole, blinking at him. "I must overlook the despicable suggestion, as it is dictated by regard for me."

"Oh, come off! I want ten out of the fifty."

"Ah! Then you are suggesting that I should act in a dishonest way, from mercenary motives. I am afraid that I despise you, Gore. As a sincere Socialist, I am bound to bear with the failings of my fellow-creatures, but really—"

"You can take the offer, or leave it?"

"I shall certainly leave it."

Skimpole rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and his brow wrinkled up. Gore watched him anxiously.

He imagined that Skimpole was turning the temptation over in his mind, and thinking it out. Skimmy certainly was thinking very deeply.

"Well," said Gore impatiently, when the silence had lasted a couple of minutes, "are you thinking it out, Skimmy?"

"Yes, certainly, Gore."

"And what do you say?"

"I really hardly know what to say. I was thinking—"

"Better take the offer. I—"

"I was not thinking of that."

"Not thinking of that!" howled Gore. "What do you mean? What on earth were you thinking of, then?"

"I was thinking that something ought to be done to

bring you to a more honest and moral frame of mind," said Skimpole benevolently. "I cannot call to mind at the present moment precisely which of my books would do you most good. There is the great volume by Professor Jawfull Jabbar—"

"You—you—you—"

"Or the smaller but equally valuable volume by Scratchford, entitled—"

"You—you shrieking ass!"

"Or perhaps an article I have marked in the current number of the 'Trumpet'—"

Gore picked up an umbrella from the corner. But just then the door was opened, and Mellish and Sharp came in.

"Tea ready?" asked Mellish.

Gore gave Skimpole a vicious look.

"Not yet," he said. "We'll get it between us. Skimpole is working for an exam., and we must be careful not to disturb him."

"Dear me, that is extremely considerate of you, Gore," said Skimpole.

"Yes, isn't it?" grinned Gore. "The fact is, it's my intention to be considerate—very! Come on, kids, and don't fail to be considerate towards Skimpole."

"What-ho!" said Mellish.

And they set to work.

CHAPTER 13.

Unemployed.

"MIND you don't disturb Skimpole, Mellish," said Sharp, pushing a chair against the table, and causing Skimmy to scatter blots right and left.

"Certainly, Sharp. I am very careful."

And by way of showing his care, Mellish sent a swish of water from the kettle across the table.

Skimpole started up.

"Really, I wish you would be a little more careful," he exclaimed. "You have quite spoiled my paper, and I was going to show it to Mr. Railton."

"Indeed! Too bad."

Skimpole sat down again—more forcibly than he intended, for Gore had pulled his chair away. Skimmy sat on the carpet, and gasped.

"Dear me!"

"Dear us!" said Gore. "What are you doing down there, Skimmy?"

"Someone has removed my chair, I think."

"Well, yes, it does look like it."

"I feel quite dazed. It is a most dangerous trick to play. Please don't push the table like that, Mellish—Sharp! You may overturn it. Oh!"

Books and papers and inkpot shot off the table and rained on Skimpole. He jumped up.

"Dear me! My work is all spoiled! I—"

"Well, we wanted the table for tea," said Gore. "That's cleared it. Could you sit on the locker and study, Skimmy?"

"I am afraid I must have the use of a table."

"H'm! Go and ask Tom Merry for his, then. We want this."

"Really, Gore—"

"Yes, really," said Gore. "Upon the whole, you wouldn't be able to work much with us three talking and cooking."

"If Sharp and Mellish were to retire—"

"A jolly big if," grinned Mellish.

"Suppose you go and have tea with Mellish, Gore?"

"Suppose I don't?" suggested Gore, as if proposing another alternative. "Get the bacon out of the cupboard, Mellish. You can chip the potatoes on the table, Sharp."

"Really, Gore, I—I suppose I had better retire."

"Yes," grinned Gore. "I suppose you had."

And the unfortunate "swot" collected up his books and his inky foolscap, and disconsolately retired from the study. And the three worthies left there howled with laughter and went on with their feed.

Skimpole looked into Tom Merry's study. The Terrible Three were busy there. They were looking warm and somewhat fatigued. Buck Finn had been showing them some American football in the gym., and the first instructions in that fearful and wonderful game had left them rather sore.

Skimpole blinked at the chums of the Shell, and looked for a vacant place to dump down his property.

"Can I work in here?" he asked. "Gore and Mellish and Sharp are making a row in my study. I suppose you chaps are working for the Codicote?"

"No; this is prep."

"I've finished working for the Codicote," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's better to take these things gently—better than letting it alone for a long time, and then cramming at the finish."

"Yes, I think you are probably right, Merry. I should

like to do my work here, if you fellows would be sure not to move or talk."

The Terrible Three looked at one another. "That's awfully kind of you, Skimpole," said Monty Lowther, apparently almost overcome by the offer, "but we won't encroach on your kindness."

"I'll tell you what I will do," said Manners. Skimpole looked at him inquiringly. "I'll biff you with that cricket-bat if you don't travel, and let me get on with my prep."

"Really, Manners—"

"Oh, eat!"

Skimpole scatted. He went down the passage with his belongings under his arms, and looked into several studies in search of a quiet place to work. The occupants were mostly at prep., but whatever they happened to be doing, they did not appear to be yearning for the company of Skimpole. Various polite oburgations, and a few whirling books and inkpots, sent him faring forth again.

He quitted the Shell passage in despair, and looked in at No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage. Four cheerful youths had finished their prep. there, and were discussing the coming cricket season. Skimpole came in, and four pairs of eyes—to say nothing of an eyeglass—were fixed upon him immediately. Skimpole gave an affable nod.

"I'm glad you chaps are not using your table," he remarked.

"Weally, Skimmay, I fail to see how that circ. can be of any interest to you."

"I should like to do my work here."

"Would you?" said Digby, hitching the poker towards him with his foot.

"Certainly! If you fellows wouldn't mind leaving off talking, I should get on all right here."

"Bai Jove!"

Blake took out his watch.

"I've seen some cheeky kids in the Shell before," he remarked. "I think Skimmay takes the cake. I give him three seconds to get on the outside of the door. One!"

"Really, Blake—"

"Two!"

"But I should like to explain—"

"Three!"

"Under the peculiar circumstances of the case—"

Jack Blake jumped up and grasped the poker. Skimpole was on the outside of the door in a twinkling. He dashed along the passage, shedding books and papers at almost every step.

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole. "I am really beginning to feel like one of the unemployed—looking for a chance to work and not finding it. All the fellows seem to be very unreasonable. Perhaps I had better try the Form-room."

And he marched into the wide passage upon which the Form-rooms opened, and looked into the Shell-room. It was lighted up, and a circle of admiring juniors were there, surrounding Buck Finn. The American junior was executing a Navajo war-dance, for the delectation of his delighted Form-fellows.

"Ahem!" said Skimpole. "Would you fellows mind clearing out—"

"Get out!"

"Buzz off!"

"Bank!"

Skimpole got out. He looked into another Form-room, and found the Fifth Form debating society hard at work. Into the sacred precincts of the Sixth Form's quarters even a Socialist could not venture.

From the Third Form-room came loud voices. Skimpole found the door open, and looked in. The heroes of the Third had finished prep., which they did in the Form-room under the supervision of Mr. Selby. They were left alone now, and they were improving the shining hour by getting up an amateur boxing competition between D'Arcy minor and Dudley. The younger brother of Arthur Augustus had the gloves on, and so had Dudley; but both had received some hard knocks, to judge by the appearance of their features.

"If you little boys would run away—" began Skimpole. "Hallo, what's that thing crawling in there?" asked Wally, stopping after a round.

The Third-Formers looked round. Skimpole looked round too, not realising that he was himself the thing alluded to. "Shove it outside!" said Dudley.

A crowd of fags rushed at Skimpole, and he was outside in the twinkling of an eye. The remnant of his books and papers went no one knew whither. He picked himself up, and gazed at the solid oak door of the Form-room, which had been slammed and looked after him.

"Dear me! Where are my—my books and my papers? I have only a sheet of foolscap left and—and a pencil." Skimpole blinked doubtfully. "Ahem! Perhaps I had better give up the working at the exam. for this evening,

and—and sketch out the four hundred and eighty-eighth chapter of my book on Socialism."

And he did.

CHAPTER 14.

Skimpole's Chance.

"THE 'Weekly's' come!" Tom Merry remarked, as the chums of the Shell left the Form-room after morning school that Saturday. "Tiper promised me that it should be delivered by twelve, and French says he saw his man coming across the quad. I expect we shall find it in my study."

"Good!" said Lowther. "These kids expect it too, apparently."

The chums of Study No. 6 had joined them immediately, and Figgins & Co. were quick to follow. In a party the editorial staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" made for the study.

Blake asked Lowther in honeyed tones whom he was calling "kids," but Tom Merry pushed between them in time. They reached the study, and there, sure enough, was the parcel containing the twenty-five copies of the "Weekly."

"Good!" said Manners, taking out his penknife to cut the string. "Tiper's kept his word. He's busy on Saturdays, too. Looks all right."

He opened the parcel, and the neatly printed and pinned copies of the famous "Weekly" were exposed to view.

"I should say it does look all right," said Tom Merry, rather indignantly. "I edit this paper."

"Yaas, wathah, and I contwibute."

"I hope Tiper's made no blunders this time," said Figgins. "Every time Merry is too lazy to look over the proofs, something goes wrong."

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Well, if it isn't laziness, it's something else. You know jolly well you don't even have a proof sent in most cases."

"I suppose you don't want a Saturday paper to come out on Monday? Of course, you chaps always keep me waiting for your stuff."

"Yes, of course; it always is anybody's fault but the editor's," assented Figgins. "Only the trouble is, that Merry's laziness—or whatever it is—leads to blunders in the printing. You remember that a week or two ago the ass printed my serial as 'The Black Thief,' instead of 'The Black Chief.'"

"Well, that's only a difference of one lettah, Figgins."

Figgins snorted. He opened the top copy of the paper, to look immediately at his serial, and make sure that nothing of the kind had happened this time.

"Ah, here it is!" exclaimed Figgins, with satisfaction. "I'll read you out a bit."

"Don't trouble, old chap."

"No trouble at all. 'The Black Chief of the Red Braves, a stirring Red Indian serial, by G. Figgins. Chapter XXX. The Massacre.' Ahem! 'The Black Chief of the Red Braves drew his tomahawk from his belt, and the keen-edged weapon whirled through the air, and descended with a sickening thud—'"

"Bai Jove, that's wathah thwillin'!"

"Upon the head of the defenceless scout. The hapless Broncho Bill had only time for one cry. He cried—'My only hat!'"

"Rot!" said Blake decisively. "Scouts don't say that."

"I mean—"

"Besides, if the Black Thief—I mean the Black Chief—had given him such a one, he wouldn't have had time for three words. He would have said 'Oh!' or 'Oh, help!' at the most," said Blake, shaking his head.

"Look here," roared Figgins, "I'm not talking about what the Black Chief said. I said that myself."

"Yes, and I tell you—"

"Look there!"

"What's the matter?"

"Look at my serial! Some utter idiot has mixed it up with Roman history, or something!" shouted Figgins. "Look at it, mixed up with hic, haec, and hoc. Some dummy has done this for a joke."

"My only hat! That's Tacitus."

"Bai Jove! Fancy Figgins cwwibbin' fwom Tacitus, you know."

"You ass—"

"I refuse to be called an ass. If you choose to plagiarise from Tacitus, of course it's your own business, but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Figgins must have copied down a Latin exercise by mistake, or written an imposition unconsciously in the place of his 'Black Chief' instalment."

"I didn't!" raved Figgins. "My instalment was all right when I left it with Tom Merry. Some idiot has done this for a joke."

And he looked aggressively at Monty Lowther.
 "Well, what are you glaring at me for?" demanded Lowther warmly. "Do you think I would touch your rotten 'Black Thief' with a barge-pole?"

"Some idiot has done it—"
 "If you mean to call me an idiot—"
 "Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Peace, my children. The contribution wasn't altered in the editorial office, Figgy. I know that. It's a printer's error."
 "But how on earth would the printer know anything about Tacitus?"

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.
 "My hat!" he suddenly exclaimed. "Look here! Codicote Examination, March 20th. Look! These are the questions, and that is the Latin prose."

"Bai Jovel!"
 "My word!"
 "My Aunt Selina!"

The juniors stared at the strange addition to Figgins's serial in amazement. There was no doubt about it. The type had been a little displaced in being changed into the wrong forms, and some of the questions were missing. But there was no mistaking it. Every fellow who looked at that page had the scholarship in the hollow of his hand, so to speak.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry at length. "That ass Tiper has mixed the formes somehow—he is printing the exam. papers—and he's shoved most of it into the middle of Figgy's serial."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Chance for somebody to rope in fifty quid," said Monty Lowther.

"Don't be funny, Lowther. This is serious."
 "So is Lowther's fun."
 "Cheese it, deah boys. We have to considah what to do. Aftah what we have learned, it would be wathah wotten to entah the exam."

Tom Merry nodded glumly.
 "We couldn't do it. We know the whole thing now, and as we know what the questions are to be, we couldn't help looking up our knowledge on the subject. The exam. papers will have to be set again, or we shall be barred."
 "After all, we have equal chances. We've all seen the thing—"

"What about the fellows who haven't—Skimmy and French and Pratt, and the rest?"

"I forgot that."
 Tom Merry shook his head.
 "The question is, are we to report the whole matter to Mr. Railton, and have fresh papers issued, or to resign?"

"I don't want to resign."
 "Nor I."
 "Nor I."
 "I don't want to, either. But we're close on the exam. now, and it will mean a lot of hard work for Railton to get out fresh papers. It's partly the exam. work that's knocked him up lately. I say, you chaps—" Tom Merry paused, and they all looked at him.

"Well?" said two or three voices.
 "You remember what I was saying about Skimpole yesterday? This puts us out, unless we give Railton his work to do all over again. Suppose we resign?"

The juniors looked at one another grimly.
 They all wanted the distinction of winning a valuable scholarship, yet they had to confess that not one was in such need of it as Skimpole was.

There was a long silence.
 It was Arthur Augustus who broke it.
 "I wegard Tom Mewwy's suggestion as an excellent one, deah boys, and I for one wesign with pleasure. Aftah all, it will save us work."

"Good!" said Lowther. "I resign for another."
 "Oh, I suppose you can count us all out!" said Figgins gloomily. "I wanted it, to show my people I could work. Still, considering, too, that it was really founded to help poor chaps, Skimmy ought to have it if he can get it."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Then it's agreed," said Tom Merry, looking round. "It's a bit of a wrench to all of us; but it's what we ought to do, you know. Is it a go?"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Yes!"

And so it was agreed. And with somewhat downcast faces the juniors consigned the pages of the magazine that bore the tell-tale questions to the fire. For that week at least, Tom Merry's "Weekly" was fated to appear without Figgins's serial. And before he allowed a copy to go out of his hands, Tom Merry scanned every other page to make sure that nothing was wrong on them.

The fact that ten juniors had withdrawn from the com-

petition for the Codicote Scholarship was certain to excite remark. The fellows who were considered to be "in the running," had all drawn out, and of the competitors who were left, there was no doubt that Skimpole was the fellow with the best chance.

But Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, naturally wanted to know something about it, and on Monday he sent for Tom Merry. Tom guessed what he was wanted for. He made his way quietly to the House-master's study; but he coloured a little as Mr. Railton's eyes were fixed upon his face.

"You have withdrawn from the Codicote exam., Merry?" Mr. Railton remarked.

"Yes, sir."
 "May I ask your reason?"

"I—we—several of us decided to draw out, sir."
 "Yes, I am aware of that—but the reason? I approve to a certain extent of self-sacrifice, Merry, but I could not approve of your giving up the scholarship for the sake of the youth who at present seems to have the best chance of winning it. Was that your motive?"

"I—I—"
 "That would be carrying self-denial too far," said Mr. Railton. "I may mention that I must have the facts in this case, Merry."

Tom Merry hesitated and coloured.
 But he was not the fellow to prevaricate, and there was nothing to do but to make a clean breast of it.

Mr. Railton listened quietly while he told the story. The House-master drummed on the table with his fingers for some minutes.

"The date of the exam. would have to be put off," he said musingly. "It would, of course, mean a great deal of trouble. But—"

"We'd rather have it as it is, sir," said Tom Merry eagerly. "Skimmy—I mean Skimpole may not be able to stay at St. Jim's after this term unless he gets the scholarship—"

"Very well, Merry. I will let you have your way in this."

"Oh, thank you, sir! We should all be sorry to lose Skimmy, and he's really working very hard for the exam., sir."

"But about this curious mistake at Mr. Tiper's office," said Mr. Railton, shaking his head. "I do not understand that. I had a note from the printer on Saturday evening excusing himself for delay in sending me the papers, as something had gone wrong with the formes. He said that he could only account for it by supposing that someone had entered his house and played a practical joke with the formes."

Tom Merry started.
 "Under the circumstances, I shall not inquire into the matter," said Mr. Railton, with a slight inflection upon the personal pronoun that was unmistakable. Tom Merry took his leave, with a thoughtful expression on his face.

Ten minutes later, George Gore, who was in the gym., was surprised to see ten serious youths march up to him and surround him. He made a movement to escape, but a heavy hand was laid on his collar.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry grimly. "On Friday evening—"

"Leggo!"
 "On Friday evening, after you had been batted for losing the copy of the 'Weekly'—"

"Lemme go!"
 "You obtained a pass and went out. On Friday evening some practical joker entered Tiper's printing office and mucked up the 'Weekly' and the exam. papers."

Gore changed colour.
 "If you think—"

"I don't think—I know! Frog's march, kids!"
 "It—it was only a joke," stammered Gore. "I—"

"Well, this is only a joke, too," said Tom Merry. "Over with him!"
 And Gore was frog-marched round the quad. till he was dusty, dishevelled, and in a state of simmering fury. When his punishment was over, he was left lying on his back in the gym., surrounded by an interested and admiring crowd of fags.

It was some time before Gore forgot that experience, and for consolation he had the knowledge that he had made the Codicote Scholarship a "dead cert" for Skimpole, though, as he bitterly reflected, there was no longer any chance for him to finger any of the fifty pounds that accompanied Skimpole's scholarship.

THE END.

(Another long, complete school tale of Tom Merry and Co. next Thursday, entitled: "The Rival Editors," by Martin Clifford. Please order your copy of THE GEM LIBRARY in advance. Price 1d.)

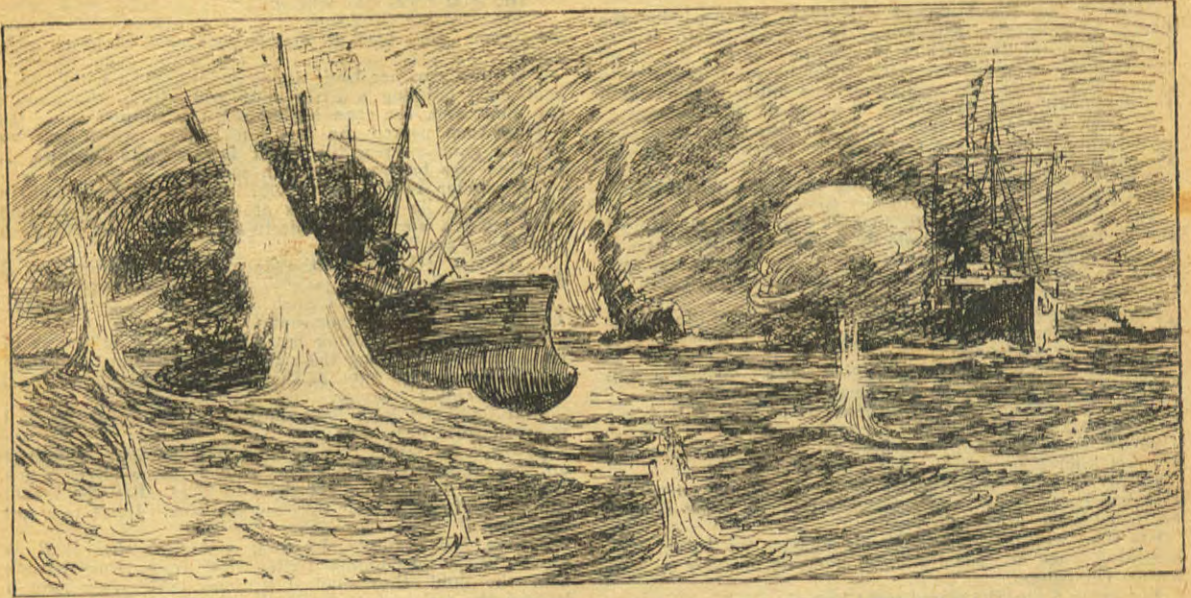
NEXT
THURSDAY.

"THE RIVAL EDITORS."

A Double-Length School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co.

Let Your Friend Read the Opening of this Grand War Story.

BRITAIN AT BAY!



Another Powerful WAR Story.

SPECIAL NOTE.—Although this story forms a sequel to "*Britain Invaded*," it is really a new story in which all the characters are reintroduced to the reader.

CHAPTERS 1 and 2.

Sam and Stephen Villiers, two cadets of Greyfriars School, by a combination of luck and pluck render valuable service to the British Army during the great German invasion. They are appointed special scouts to the Army, which is forced back on London by Von Krantz, the German commander.

At the time when this account opens, London had been bombarded and carried. Von Krantz had entered the City with his troops, the Lord Mayor was a prisoner at the Mansion House, and from the flagstaff on that famous building the German flag floated, where none but British colours had been seen since London was built. London Bridge was blown up, and across the great river the remainder of the British troops and the half-starved millions of London waited in grim silence for the next move.

Sam and Stephen are chafing at their enforced inactivity, when Ned of Northey, a young Essex marshman, and an old friend of theirs sails up the Thames in his smack, the *Maid of Essex*, with a despatch he has captured from a German. This contains useful information of the landing of another German Army corps, and Sam, having shown it to Lord Ripley, is given permission to go down river, and see what he can do. The boys and Ned sail down to the river mouth, and board a derelict steamer, which is loaded with petrol.

"The tide'll be an early one," remarked Sam thoughtfully. "And if the Germans reckon to arrive just before high-water it'll be runnin' down by the time they reach the Nore."

"Ay, sir!" said Ned. "Then do you mean that they'll have to land on the piers?"

(Now go on with the Story.)

CHAPTER 3.

"For the Old Country's Sake!"

"No, I don't mean that," Sam caught the young marshman by the arm. "I needn't ask you if you're game for a risky piece of work, with a ten-to-one chance in it?"

"Nay, sir. I'm ready for any orders you give."

"Then launch your gunning-punt off the smack's deck, get a couple of big iron marine-spikes from the steamer,

an' put the three of us aboard the first of the dynamite-hulks in Hole Haven."

"Right," said Ned cheerfully. "Bear a hand to launch her, gents!"

"Glory!" exclaimed Stephen. "We're gettin' to work now! Will she hold three?"

"She's got to," said Sam, as they slid the light punt into the water. "We can't go in the dinghy—she's too high on the water, an' too visible. In you get!"

The gunning-punt (nothing like an up-river punt, but a long, low, flat canoe, pointed at both ends, and decked all round, hardly showing above the water, was very deep-laden when the three of them were in it, but there was not much swell in Sea Reach at the time, and Ned skilfully edged her across towards Canvey Island without mishap. She cut along through the water as noiselessly and easily as a shark. The marshman rowed her along by the edge of the Chapman Sands, making for the little haven the smack had passed by an hour before.

"Now, you chaps," said Sam, "we're in for it. We've got to overpower the guard on that dynamite-ship, an' if they show fight—as no doubt they will—they must be downed. As Ned says, there won't be more than two—three at the most. There isn't accommodation on the hulk for more."

"My aunt! But ain't it queer, those hulks being still there?" said Stephen.

"No. The explosives on 'em are not the sort that are any good in war. They're trade explosives. It's the safest places for 'em—where they're always kept. Nothing to be gained by shifting them—except to us. We've got to clear the guard an' set 'em adrift when the tide turns."

Stephen gave a low whistle.

"Tain't far off high-water now," said Ned, quickening his stroke. "Does the guard keep a watch on deck all night?" said Sam, peering ahead.

"They didn't when I lay there wi' the smack," returned Ned—"talkin' below in the cabin most o' the time, I reckon. There's no one to look after 'em. The light was burnin' most all night. They're allowed lamps."

"But look here, Sam," exclaimed Stephen, "what the—"
 "Shut up!" murmured his brother warningly. "No more talkin'. We're getting too close."

The narrow entrance to Hole Haven showed before them as they turned the corner of Canvey Island. Here, in times of peace, the Dutch eel-boats that carry eels to Billingsgate Fish Market, are wont to lie. Now they were gone, but in the usual place a little higher up, the first of the dynamite-hulks lay moored.

These hulks, the hulks of old ships, are used for the storage of dangerous explosives. It is forbidden by law to bring cargoes of dynamite or blasting-powder any higher up the Thames, so vessels carrying them have to unload into these hulks, which are moored in this lonely creek, where if a great explosion did happen, it would do little damage.

On each hulk a caretaker lived, but these men had now been turned away by the Germans, to whom, however, the dynamite stores were of little use.

What object Sam had in boarding the hulks neither of his comrades knew, nor was there any time to ask.

They held themselves ready to back him up to the utmost, and as the punt glided noiselessly towards the dark mass of the first hulk, Sam strained his eyes to see if there was anybody on the deck, for he knew how much depended on boarding her before any suspicion was aroused.

He could see nobody, however, and the punt, low upon the dark water, was almost invisible from a distance of a few yards in the gloom.

She slid silently alongside, and Ned quietly made the rope painter fast to a clamp, and secured the punt.

"Nip aboard quickly!" whispered Sam; "and if it's a fight, remember we're strikin' for our country."

He set the example by reaching up to the bulwarks, and hoisting himself on deck with a quick spring.

Hardly had his feet touched the deck, when a muttered oath was heard below, and a German corporal came dashing up through the cabin hatchway.

His rifle, with bayonet fixed, lay against the hatch, and, snatching it up, he rushed at Sam, shouting hoarsely to some unseen companion.

Springing aside, the young scout brought the iron marline-spike down across the German's skull with a crash that stretched him lifeless on the deck, and he fell without a groan.

A second man, in the uniform of a German Sapper, appeared in the hatchway at the same moment, his face livid with surprise and rage, a heavy Service revolver in his fist.

Before he could use it or reach the deck, a crushing blow from the butt of Stephen's carbine sent him toppling back down the hatchway stairs, and he fell with a heavy thud at the bottom.

The brothers paused a moment, their weapons grasped firmly, ready for any others that might come up. Sam waited but a second, however, before he sprang down the hatchway, marline-spike in hand, taking his chance of any hidden enemies below.

There were no others on board, as he quickly found. "Take your marline-spikes, an' unshackle the cables," he cried, reappearing for a moment in the hatchway, "as sharp as ever you can do it; there's no time to lose!"

Ned and Stephen ran up into the bows of the hulk, where the two heavy iron cables that moored her were stopped to the bitts.

To cast them off would have been far too long a task, so they attacked the shackles, unscrewed the pins as rapidly as they could with their marline-spikes, and let the great cables slip overboard of their own weight. This done, they darted aft to serve the stern cables in the same way.

While they were about it Sam came on deck with a couple of large cans of colza lamp-oil—the only oil allowed on the powder-hulks.

One he emptied over the decks and down the hatchway, and with the other he drenched both sides of the hulk amidships, down to the water's edge.

By the time he had done it the stern cables had been slipped, and the hulk was adrift on the tide.

"Are those two men dead?" said Sam quickly.

"Dead as door-nails!" returned Ned, who had looked at both the fallen Germans.

"Pull away to the next hulk like blazes!" cried Sam, jumping into the punt. "Put me aboard her, an' you go on to the next two above, an' treat them the same way. There won't be time for any more. Pick me up on your way back!"

He clambered aboard the next hulk as they ran alongside, without stopping the punt, which rowed swiftly on up the creek.

Sam found the vessel he was on deserted, as Ned had said, and he worked like a demon to set her adrift. In

ten minutes he had unshackled and cast off all four cables, and, breaking open the cabin hatch, he went below and soused the decks and sides with oil, as no had done to the other.

He waited impatiently for the others, as the hulk drifted gently along the narrow creek.

In ten minutes the punt returned, and took Sam aboard. "They're both adrift above," said Stephen; "that's four."

"Did you dose 'em with oil?"

"Yes, two big cans each."

"Good! Pull back to the steamer now, as hard as you can!"

"We can run her back under canvas. The wind's fair," said Ned, hoisting a little mast and sail in the bows of the punt, and, the crew sitting aft, she slipped along fast.

They soon passed the first hulk again, which was now driving gently down the creek towards the Thames, for the tide was beginning to run seaward.

"I wonder if it'll come off?" muttered Sam, knitting his brows as he looked back at the old hulks. "It's long odds, but it's worth our while to try. There's no other way that I can see."

"Are you reckonin' on the German ships runnin' into the dynamite hulks in the dark?" said Stephen eagerly.

"No, no; they're not such fools. We've got to lay a better trap for them than that."

They could get nothing more out of Sam, who was lost in thought, calculating the chances of his plan, and watching the quickening tide, as they ran down Sea Reach again to the stranded steamer.

Sam took one long look down through the darkness to seaward from her decks.

"Now," he said, "there's just half an hour before us, an' you must work like slaves. The fate of Britain may depend on whether we get done in time. Rig the tackles, and sweat those petrol-tanks out on deck. Don't talk now, but work!"

Setting the example, he took a derrick-wheel and ran aloft. With the double pulley and ropes thus hanging over the hold, they hooked up one tank after another, heaved them up on deck, hauling in the tackle-ropes, and swayed them out on deck, next the bulwarks that were heeling down to the water.

Not a word did they speak, save the orders to "Haul!" or "Slack!" and no rest did they take. Sam alone gave an occasional glance down towards the Nore.

They toiled like niggers, and though the regular tanks were too large for them to move, they brought out a dozen of the portable ones and a number of metal drums, all full of petrol.

"Easy all!" said Sam at last. "That'll do."

He brought aft a couple of long-handled axes and a large centre-bit, and took one more long look seaward.

"Thank Heaven, they're not in sight yet!" he muttered. "Can it be that we're goin' to succeed?"

"Here come the hulks," cried Stephen, "drifting down!"

The four great black hulks from Hole Haven were nearly abreast the steamer, out in the deep water.

They had drifted out of the creek with the tide, which was now carrying them down Sea Reach towards the Nore.

A strange, silent procession they looked, driving slowly seawards, without masts or rudders. They might have been the ghosts of some old navy, haunting the waters.

"Just in time!" said Sam thankfully. "Let 'em come nearly abreast us, an' then start in an' breach these tanks. Get the plugs out, an' let the stuff pour overboard as fast as it can."

Stephen gave a whoop of excitement, as the scheme came home to him at last.

"By gum, Sam, you're a genius! Can you fire the whole river with the dynamite hulks on it? Will the stuff spread enough?"

"All over the Reach. One gallon'll cover fifty square yards, an' there's hundreds here," returned Sam. "You've heard of setting the Thames on fire? Now you'll see it done. Start!"

He brought his axe down on one of the drums with a squelch that burst the head in, and the raw petrol rushed out over the deck.

Ned gave a cheer, and with Stephen's help they soon had the screw-plugs out of the biggest tanks, and started to broach the others with axes.

The colourless fluid gushed forth in quarts and gallons, and the decks of the stranded vessel being on the start, it poured out through the scuppers and valve-plates in spouting cataracts.

Naturally, floating on water, it ran far and wide over the tideway in all directions.

The four dynamite hulks came drifting down just in

time to meet the flood of petrol, and drove along with the tainted water, covered in it, lapping round their sides. As they slowly passed the steamer the stuff continued to pour out and follow them, and for twenty minutes the waterfalls of petrol still flowed, till the last tank was emptied. Sam watched it, his face strangely white and tense.

"Get aboard the smack, an' run the sails up," he said. "If the luck holds, we've got 'em now!"

A thrill ran through Stephen as he realised what was to come. They boarded the smack, and sailed out across the river in the darkness.

The supply having stopped, the petrol-covered tide, with the hulks upon its bosom, was running down towards the Nore. The deadly, inflammable stuff now coated the water right across the channel, and nearly a mile in length.

This tract, therefore, was slowly moving seaward, and the Maid of Essex tacked backwards and forwards just above it on the unpetroled water, but edging down all the time, so as to keep just off the edge of it. By the oily shimmer on the surface, Sam knew just how close to go.

"Got any wax matches, Ned?" he said. "Give me a box. You might go up to the cross-trees and keep a look-out seaward. The fate of the German army corps hangs on an inch an' a half of vesta now, unless the luck turns against us. I hardly dared hope for this."

"Good heavens!" muttered Stephen. "D'you mean we can really stop 'em—we three?"

Sam made no reply; he was straining his eyes through the darkness.

"No sign of them," he said, under his breath. "Can there be any mistake? If they don't arrive soon the petrol'll spread too far an' evaporate; it'll be all up."

"Lot o' small vessels away beyond the Nore, sir," hailed Ned from aloft, "headin' this way. They ain't so small, either. I can make 'em out now. They're tugs—big ocean tugs—with strings o' lighters an' barges towin' behind 'em."

"It's the Germans at last!" cried Sam. "Come down from aloft, Ned."

"Now for it!" thought Stephen; and a thrill of intense excitement shot through him.

They had followed the dynamite hulks and the petroled tide down past Canvey and abreast Southend. The tainted water had driven straight along in one vast, oily patch, spanning the whole deep-water fairway. The hulks, which had separated considerably, were now nearly opposite the lightship of the Nore, whose white, revolving eye winked steadily. She was now in the hands of German operators.

Out of the darkness beyond the lightship, sweeping along rapidly from the open sea, came a multitude of dark objects, that presently resolved themselves into large, powerful tugs, each with a train of great, open barges behind her.

Every one of these was packed as thick as it could hold with German troops. In the same way the first invaders had descended on the East Coast two weeks before—a vastly quicker and less perilous method than landing from troopships in deep water, for the shallow-draught barges could put their men on the very beach itself.

Through his night-glasses Sam could see the spiked helmets of the Kaiser's men bristling like a small forest on every lighter. In others were the horses of the cavalry, and others, again, bore the heavy guns. If any warships had come with the flotilla they were left outside, and the only escort was a couple of snaky, black torpedo-boats. Not a light was shown by the whole fleet as it crept into the mouth of the Thames.

In those lighters, as the boys knew well, lay their country's doom. Should that powerful army corps be landed and added to the vast force that had already overwhelmed Britain north of the Thames, the nation might still fight, but with no hope of victory against such huge odds.

Every nerve in Stephen's body tingled as he gripped the smack's rail and watched the flotilla steam steadily into the great trail of petrol-covered water. The dynamite hulks were now not far in front, and one of the torpedo-boats suddenly flashed her searchlight on to their black hulls and lit them up plainly. Sam, with steady fingers, drew a single wax match from his box.

"For the Old Country's sake!" he said, between his teeth.

And, striking the match, he flicked it as far forward of the smack as possible, while the head was still blazing. The result was amazing.

As that tiny spark of light struck the surface a tongue of smoky flame shot up, as if from the water itself. For one fraction of a second it poised, and then, with a hiss that grew into a long, dreadful roar, the flames raced sideways

and forwards across the great river's mouth with the speed of a galloping horse.

The inner edge of the flames shot to within a few feet of the smack, and she put down her helm and raced away back. They could not follow, for she was above their limit.

Eastwards, the sheet of flame spread swiftly, till the whole river seemed on fire, lighting up the gloom of night with a wild, smoky glare. In a few moments it was all round the dynamite hulks, which instantly began to blaze and crackle furiously as the oil upon them caught and their dry old sides were devoured by the flames.

Right round and through and among the tugs and lighters shot the flames, and within ten seconds of the striking of the match the German flotilla was steaming through a sea of fire.

The boys on the smack's deck, with the glare reflected on their faces, stood appalled by the spectacle. Wild outcries and curses came from the vessels, which, bewildered by the disaster, lost their proper stations, and went crashing into each other in wild confusion, while the dynamite hulks, blazing furiously, and swirling along in the strong tide, drove right in amongst them.

"Gosh!" cried Ned hoarsely. "There's an end o' the Kaiser's army corps! Not beaten, but wiped off the seas!"

With an awful, devastating crash the first dynamite hulk exploded as the flames reached her vitals, and the vessels nearest her were blotted out of existence. Hardly had the echoes ceased rumbling when a still louder roar split the heavens. Hulk No. 2 had gone, taking with her every living thing within a hundred yards.

"Up—hard up your tiller!" cried Sam, springing to the helm. "The wind's dropped, an' the tide's carryin' us into the flames!"

So engrossed had the three comrades been in watching the huge flare that they had failed to notice their own peril. The wind had fallen light, and the smack was being rapidly drawn into the flaming tract of sea. Ned dashed aft, and hauled in the mainsheet with all his might, as Sam tried to keep the smack up to windward and stem the tide. Hotter and hotter grew the glare as she drove slowly towards the flames.

"Out sweeps!" cried Ned, seizing one of the long oars. "Pull for your lives! Once among the petrol an' we're done for!"

The flare of the blazing petroleum was now not ten feet away, nor could the boys' efforts at the oars bear the heavy smack against the ebb-tide. Hope seemed gone, when the dark water behind them was ruffled by a sudden gust, and the mainsail filled.

"A breeze!" cried Sam, springing to the tiller again. "Flatten in your jib!"

A sigh of relief escaped all three as the little vessel began to heel over and skim away up river again out of reach of the flames, pointing as close against the wind as she could, and the ripple of the water against her bows was music to their ears. The whole affair had not lasted forty seconds.

"Keep her well away now, sir, an' over towards the Blyth sands!" cried Ned. "We can cast anchor then, if we have to."

"Well out of that!" panted Sam. "We couldn't have complained, I s'pose, if we'd fallen into our own trap. But still—"

The rest of his words were drowned by a deafening crash far down among the flames, and the smack's crew fairly staggered under the force of the explosion, distant as it was. The third dynamite-hulk had blown up, and with her went a couple of tugs and their string of lighters. The boys looked back at the disaster with awe.

"My heavens, it's an awful smasher for them!" gasped Stephen. "Will they all be burnt?"

"No, no; go to the bottom, that's all!" said Sam grimly. "It ain't pleasant, this night's work, but those beggars in the spiked helmets are here to take England from us, and they must abide by what comes!"

"See!" cried Ned. "It ain't a minute since the petrol was fired, an' half o' them are gone! What's that comin' this way?"

Through the inferno of smoke and flare and wreckage something was charging with bewildering speed, with sharp, cracking reports breaking from it, and in another moment the thing was clear of the fire and dashing up Sea Reach.

"Torpedo-boat!" exclaimed Sam. "Got the panic! Her crew have lost their heads! Look at 'em shooting all round the clock!"

"Gosh! Will she go for us?" said Stephen.

No grimmer witness to the defeat could have been seen than that torpedo-boat, for she was an example of the panic a great catastrophe can create in men's brains. She behaved like a mad ship. Her crew, not knowing how the disaster had occurred, or where the enemy was that had

caused it, had clapped on all steam and rushed ahead, blazing their quickfireds at everything they saw. It was their guns and not the flames that had exploded the third dynamite-ship, and now, blinded by the glare, they came rushing on into the darkness beyond.

Those on the smack watched her in bewilderment and suspense, for there was no saying what she might do. Her superior speed had enabled her to do what the tugs and lighters could not—to race clean through the fire before her crew was overpowered.

On came the torpedo-boat, nearly straight towards the smack, her thin iron sides still flickering with the wash of burning petrol she had brought from the fatal tract. The small machine-guns on her deck were spitting vigorously, and as her crew caught sight of the Maid of Essex she turned violently away, and a gun was turned for a few seconds on the smack.

A sudden shower of lead came hurtling over the boys' heads, ripping holes through the mainsail, and one shot cut the peak halyards away, and down came the mainsail with a run, leaving the smack rocking on the waters like a crippled gull. Her crew expected to be annihilated, but the crazy torpedo-boat held on her wild career, and, suddenly sighting the stranded steamer on the Blyth flats, rushed straight at it, her guns going furiously. A few seconds later a great column of white water leaped up against the steamer's side, and hardly had it fallen back before the stranded ship burst into flames, and began to burn furiously. Sweeping past her, the torpedo-boat rushed on, and then stopped dead with a shock that shook the short funnels clean out of her; and there she remained, helpless and stranded.

"Great James!" cried Sam. "The fools have torpedoed the petrol-ship!"

"Took her for an enemy, bein' all ends up, an' in a panic!" said Sam excitedly. "An' she's run herself hard on to the Blyth sands now. By gum, it was just like a mad dog chargin' an' bitin' everything he saw! Don't wonder, either. I thought we were done for!"

"Help splice these halyards!" cried Ned. "Let go the anchor, or we'll be drivin' back again!"

Stephen deftly cast the turns of the anchor off the smack's bits, and the anchor splashed overboard and brought her up sharp, for she was now in shallower water, and her hook could reach the bottom. They set to work rapidly with a couple of spikes and a serving-mallet, and very soon Ned's deft fingers had spliced together the halyards that had been cut through, and the mainsail was ready for hoisting once more. No time was lost over this, for to have command over the boat was urgent. Once done, they let her ride at anchor, and watched the finish of the conflagration.

The burning tract had driven far down to the open sea by now, and was flickering out as the last of the petrol consumed itself. In its track was a waste of wreckage and ruin. The blackened hull of the Nore Lightship still swung at its cables, and here and there over the tide were dotted the shattered fragments of lighters that had been blown to pieces, and the boats from the tugs. The second torpedo-boat was nowhere in sight. A more desolate picture of ruin was never seen.

Away below over the Shoeburyness flats, now fast uncovering, two or three lighters, with their crews, had drifted. Strangest of all, the fourth dynamite-hulk had stranded on the Knock, and burned down to the water's edge, but her perilous freight had failed to explode, and the flames were dying out in her harmlessly. But the others had done their work.

Silence reigned for a time on board the Maid of Essex, as her crew watched the blackness of the night shut down once more when the flames died on the waters. It was Stephen who spoke first.

"Sam," he said soberly, "that plan of yours has saved Britain. The Kaiser's army corps no longer exists."

"It was in better hands than mine," said his brother quietly. "We did our best, and the rest was done for us. Yes, save for a few companies who may find their way ashore over the Maplins and who won't make much difference to Von Krantz's strength, the second invasion is wiped out. Britain has her chance of winning still, if she fights as we know she will."

"Gosh!" said Ned, looking with awe at the wreckage of the lighters. "You ought to be head o' the Fleet, Master Sam, sir. An army o' men an' ships smashed up by three! Who'd ha' dreamed of such a plan before?"

"You're wrong, Ned," said Sam, with a grim smile. "I'm only movin' with the times. Three hundred years ago Sir Francis Drake sent his fireships driftin' down with the tide off Calais, an' in half an hour half the Spanish Armada was stranded, an' the rest flyin' for their lives. Petrol an' dynamite weren't invented in those days, but

the little man with the red beard mopped up twenty times his weight in Spaniards, just the same."

"Well, the sea is the grave of the Kaiser's army to-night," said Stephen, "just as it was of King Philip's fleet. And we owe it to you, Sam. Say what you like, you've gone one better than Franky Drake."

Nor was he far wrong. What Britain has done Britain can do again while she breeds the same sons as she did of old.

CHAPTER 4.

Run Down.

The breeze freshened, and the smack began to roll in the short sea off the edge of the sands. Ned stood up and looked keenly over the dark waste of waters.

"We ought to be slippin' out o' this, sirs," he said. "After this smash-up their destroyers'll be sweepin' round an' pokin' about everywhere. A yardarm job for us if we're caught!"

"Right-ho! Up hook!" said Stephen. And in a minute the anchor was broken out and the sails run up. "But there were only one of those two torpedo-boats—one ashore an' the other's sunk. Hallo! What are those?"

"Just what Ned feared," muttered Sam, as two long black hulls, hardly visible in the gloom, came swiftly in along the edge of the Shoebury sands opposite. "Destroyers! The Germans have got a squadron at Sheerness. Here goes another!"

A couple of searchlights, like long white pencils, suddenly sprouted out from the foreparts of the destroyers, and began to play back and forth over the waters.

"Lookin' for men to rescue," said Sam grimly. "They won't find any. There's the third one now, searchin' for the enemy. Can't you get us out of it, Ned? But it's no good; they're bound to spot us."

One of the searchlights threw its vivid circle within twenty feet of the Maid of Essex, and the crew held their breath. If the light fell on her she would be shown up and captured instantly. She was so far out of the regular ship-channel, however, that the light swept past just short of her, leaving her in the gloom.

"There's just one chance," said Ned. "We'll try the Jenkin Swatchway, an' get past 'em. Easy away your sheets!"

The smack stood straight in for the Kentish shore. She had sailed some way up above the scene of the German defeat, and Ned ran her into the narrow channel between the Nore sand and the main shore of Kent. The long shelf of sand, now uncovered by the tide, cut her off from the destroyers, and while they were racing up the main channel of Sea Reach, she was slipping away down the narrow swatchway, seawards.

There were a couple of minutes' breathless suspense before she was under cover of the sands, for at any moment the searchlight might have hit upon her, while even inside her sails could have been seen from the top of the sandbank. But the destroyers were now above her, and kept their lights playing ahead. The danger was past.

"Phew!" said Sam. "That's as close a game of hide-and-seek as I've ever played. Another ten feet, an' that light would have meant a hangin' job for us!"

"They couldn't have proved we did the business," said Stephen.

"Prove! A lot they'd trouble to prove! Any Britisher they catch afloat to-night'll be hanged or shot. They'll call 'em spies. They'll be too mad to let any go for fear the right ones should escape, after the wreckin' of their blessed army corps. Don't wonder!"

"I reckon they won't find anybody afloat either," said Ned, "except us; an' we're not out o' the wood yet. We've got to cross the open mouth o' the Medway, inside which their ships lie, in a few minutes. This swatchway don't last for ever, as you know."

The boys needed no warning on that point. They had, in their own little cutter yacht, sailed the lower Thames and east coast, winter and summer, for six years, and they knew every creek and sounding. It was not long before the sheltering Nore came to an end on their left, and the Medway's mouth opened on their right. From the fort on Garrison Point, now in the hands of the Germans, a powerful searchlight was sweeping its ray in long circles over the approaches to Sheerness. For a moment Ned was uncertain what to do.

"Run straight across and chance it!" said Sam. "As close to the Point as you dare, an' we may run under the searchlight with luck. Once past the opening we shall be all right, with the high land of Sheppey for a background."

"It's Hobson's choice!" muttered Ned; and ten minutes later the advantages of facing the matter boldly were seen,

for the smack ran swiftly across the Medway's mouth, untouched by the searchlight, and way down along the dark, forsaken shallows that fringe the Isle of Sheppey, heading east for the North Sea.

"Now we're out of it!" said Stephen exultingly. "We can leave 'em to clear up the mess. By gum, what are those?"

He pointed to the northward, away from the land. Four huge, massive forms, half a mile out in the deeper water, were heading silently in for the Thames and Medway like great black spectres.

"Battleships!" said Sam. "German ironclads of the line. We're well out of their path here."

"Wonder if they've come in from a turn-up with our ships in the Channel? I'll swear I heard distant firing when we sailed down," said Stephen, watching the great vessels slowly steaming ahead.

"They're goin' into Sheerness," said Ned. "The Germans ha' captured the Isle o' Sheppey, an' they're holdin' it for a base. Their guns command both sides o' the Medway. It's the only place they hold south o' the Thames."

"Where do they lie, Ned?" asked Sam suddenly.

"Tween Sheerness an' Queenborough. Just where our Nore Squadron used to," answered the smacksman.

"Do they, by Jove!" muttered Sam. And he relapsed into pensive silence, and did not open his mouth again for some time.

"It's rum, their usin' our harbour as a base!" remarked Ned. "S'pose they're glad o' the stores an' coal, though. Wonder they ain't landed any troops on the Kent side. Maybe that army corps was to go there an' take South London in the rear."

"Rats!" replied Stephen. "They couldn't take South London on their own; an' they'd be cut off from all help from their own side an' Von Krantz. The only way for the Germans to take London is to starve it out an' cross in a mass. They daren't split themselves up. No; Sheerness is only a naval base; they can't get any further down this way."

"I ain't no soldier," said Ned, sucking at a cold pipe, for he dared not strike a match; "salt water's good enough for me."

"Where's this hooker bound now, Sam?" asked Stephen. "What's the next move?"

"I think we ought to get word to Lord Ripley that the army corps is done for," said Sam. "It might make all the difference in his plans; an' how's he to learn of it else? Are there any of our men along the coast beyond Sheppey, Ned?"

"I ain't been there this cruise. Don't think there's any troops—they're all drawin' landwards. But there'd be some scouts, no doubt. There ain't no Germans that side, anyhow."

"Then we'll land, if we can get as far, and find somebody to ride up with the report."

"Ripley'll be pretty well pleased when he gets it," chuckled Stephen. "His remainin' hairs'll turn dark again with joy."

"Yes," replied his brother. "When I said there might be a way to stop the invasion, he told me pretty snappish to go an' find it. We've done it! It wasn't meaning to brag," said Sam simply, "for I never dreamed at the time that it was really possible. There's Warden Point! We're nearly past Sheppey Island. Are there any German ships guardin' the entrance of the Swale that runs behind Sheppey, Ned?"

"Ain't heard o' none. There's nothin' for 'em to guard except shallow water," said Ned.

"Why, the creek runs right behind Sheppey an' cuts into the Medway at Queenboro'—just by Sheerness," said Sam.

"Ay; but it's only a muddy ditch, or not much better," said Ned scornfully, "with a big iron railway bridge across it! Nothin' can go through 'cept barges—certainly no ships. An' the Channel's as difficult an' twisty as an eel. You know that, Master Aubrey; you've been messin' about there shootin' an' fishin' oftener than me."

"I have," said Sam quietly, "and no ships ever go through, as you say. But at high tide I'd undertake to take any craft through if she had a low mast an' only drew—say, four or five feet of water."

"What—a barge?"

"No; a torpedo-boat."

"Phew!" whistled Stephen. "An' it's the back way into Sheerness—where the German battleships lie, too!"

"My eye!" muttered Ned. "You have said no less than the truth, sir, I do believe, though no torpedo-boat's ever been through. Nobody knows the creek's channel but the bargees an' chaps like you an' me. King's Ferry Bridge is supposed to stop the navigation. Though it's made to open, it never does."

"Well, it's no good talkin' about it," sighed Stephen.

"This old smack ain't a torpedo-boat, an' there ain't one, probably, for a hundred miles—except the Kaiser's."

Sam said no more, and soon Sheppey was passed and the Kentish mainland, with the few lights of the now almost deserted town of Whitstable twinkling across the water, came into view.

They bore onward at this point, and looked anxiously back at the wide entrance of the Swale where it opened behind Sheppey. There were no craft to be seen, however, save a couple of trading schooners—probably deserted—lying at anchor above Shellness. The smack held on till Whitstable was left astern.

"This'll do," said Sam. "There's a place where we can land, if I remember, nearly abreast of us. Won't do to go ashore at one of the towns. Haul up the dinghy. You an' I will nip ashore, Steve, while Ned heaves to an' waits for us."

Sam went below and hurriedly wrote a brief report of the destruction of the German flotilla scribbled on a sheet of wrapping paper. Folding it up in a second sheet, sealing it with pitch, he put a cord round it, and joined Stephen in the dinghy, which was bobbing alongside.

"Tack up an' down, Ned, an' look out for us in about an hour," said Sam. "We may be some time."

The dinghy was pulled away steadily over the smooth swells, heading in for the land. They had a long row, for at low tide the sea is so shallow off that part of Kent that there is no getting closer than a mile or more with a smack. At last, however, the dark sea-wall loomed up, and leaving Stephen in charge of the dinghy, Sam went ashore with his despatches.

It was more than half an hour before he returned.

"It's all right," he said, with much relief, stepping into the dinghy. "Found a chap who told me where I'd find a Yeomanry scout. Caught the scout waterin' his horse at a farm, an' he's off to London as fast as he can lick with my message. We don't want to take the smack up the river again if we can help it."

"No; there's more to be done down here," said Stephen. "Pull away, an' let's get back aboard."

"How dark it is!" said Sam, after they had rowed a full mile. "Hold on, we're far out enough! Where the dickens is the smack?"

Look as they might, they could see no signs of her. It was now the hour before the dawn, blacker than ever, for the sky was overcast with clouds. Nothing but a waste of sea and the dark outline of the distant shore was to be seen.

They hailed two or three times, but there was no answer from the gloom.

"There she is!" exclaimed Stephen. "No it isn't, though; it's a tug or—Great Scott! A torpedo-boat!"

"Look out! She's down on us!" cried Sam, seizing the oars as a black, sharp bow came gliding swiftly through the darkness right on top of the boat. "Pull hard!"

It was too late. With a splitting crack, the steel bow struck the dinghy, hurling the boys clean out of her and cutting her in two.

Down they went, the black water hissing round them. And as Sam came to the surface, wondering wildly where his brother was, he heard the thresh of the torpedo-boat's screw and saw her swerving round some way behind. At the same moment something in the water—one of the boat's oars—was driven heavily against Sam's head upon the crest of a wave before he could ward it off.

A thousand stars danced before his eyes, the water roared in his ears, and his senses left him.

CHAPTER 5.

Mr. "Bobby" Cavendish of the King's Navy.

When Sam came to himself—which he would never have expected to do had he been able to think when the oar struck him—he was conscious of the taste of ample salt water in his mouth and throat, and a throbbing iron deck beneath his back. It took him some seconds to guess where he was.

"Great James!" he thought. "The torpedo-boat's picked us up! Wasn't that Steve's voice I heard?" He coughed and choked painfully as the brine stung his lungs. "Better if we'd been left in the water!" he muttered bitterly, trying to raise himself. "We'll be shot now, if not hanged!"

"Hallo!" said a cheerful voice in pure English just above him. "Take a pull of this. You look as if you want it."

Sam sat up and stared blankly at a spruce, very youthful-looking naval officer, apparently not much older than himself, with a good-looking face which gave the idea that nothing could put him out of temper. He was handing Sam a tiny silver flask.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Sam. "Are you English?"

"Ra-ther!" said the young officer.

"Then I'm in a British craft?"

"Somewhat! Did you think the Germans had got you? Torpedo-boat No. 667, Sub-lieutenant Cavendish—that's me!"

"You've got my brother, haven't you?" said Sam quickly.

"Yes; I've just sent him below to get out of his togs an' borrow a slop-suit from my torpedo-gunner. Told me he was your twin. He's all right. Take a whack of cognac—it'll pull you round."

Sam did so. He did not care for spirits at any time, but he needed the gill of old brandy badly, and, being the finest of medicines in case of need, it pulled him together and set his blood circulating.

"I'm beastly sorry I ran you chaps down," said the sub-lieutenant, "but it was as dark as the inside of an elephant, an' my look-out didn't see your little boat. How d'you feel?"

"Heaps better," said Sam gratefully. "I've got to thank you for savin' my life. I got a whack on the head in the water, and was about done for."

"I know. I saw you bobbin' about when we came round," said Cavendish cheerfully. "My signalman stuck the boat-hook through your pants—hope you don't mind. We got your brother first, though. Here he is," he added, as Stephen, in a suit of blanket-like clothes much too large for him, came up the hatchway. He expressed his gratitude to Cavendish, who waved it aside.

"Least I could do for you was to pick you up," he said. "Where were you bound?"

"I say, where's Ned an' the smack?" exclaimed Stephen, suddenly remembering them. "We were pulling off to our vessel," he said, to Cavendish. "Can you take us to him?"

"Phew! Sorry, I can't," replied the young lieutenant seriously. "You see, I'm under orders, an' must get back to my squadron as quick as I can—there's the dawn breakin' already. We're a couple of miles from where I picked you up, too," he added, for the torpedo-boat was now leaping along as swiftly as a dolphin, heading along the coast past Herne Bay and towards the Foreland. Sam took a look round him, and saw the force of what the lieutenant said.

"Of course," he replied, "we couldn't expect that! We'll have to stay with you for a spell, then, and you must pitch us out when we become a nuisance. Eh, Steve?"

"Rather! Old Ned'll be able to look after himself for a spell," said his brother. "We'll get back to him some day, an' this suits me. I've never been on a live torpedo-boat in war-time, an' if the captain don't mind having us—"

"By all means," said Cavendish, laughing. "Can't very well heave you to the fish, can I? But what on earth were you up to? Why, you're sodgers, aren't you?" he added, glancing at Sam's khaki jacket and cord breeches.

"About that!" said Sam, grinning. "Cadets, when we're at home. We've had so many queer jobs that I'm hanged if I know what we are just now. Sort of harumfroidites, perhaps. We came down from London in the smack, yesterday."

"What have you been doing?" said Cavendish, eyeing them in a puzzled way.

"Well," said Sam, "among other things we've blown up the German flotilla that was bringin' an extra army corps into the Thames."

"I say, draw it with a little less head on!" remarked the sub-lieutenant cheerfully. "Anything in reason, you know, we're used to it at sea. But—"

"All right," said Sam. "Would you like to run up an' have a look at the wreck? The petrol's burnt out, of course—"

The young officer stared at him.

"That infernal glare an' blaze I saw when I was coming up? D'you mean that?"

"That was the army corps, burnin' up."

"I say, tell us what you're drivin' at! We never heard of any army corps. I believe I'm the first of our Fleet to get round here since the early smash-up—they sent me ahead from down Channel to scout through the enemy's lines. I never saw any flotilla—"

"No, you were just half an hour too late. We only got the news accidentally," said Sam. "We gave it to Ripley an' came down to scout, so we got the start of you."

"I say, tell me about it, will you?" said the young officer eagerly.

Sam gave him as briefly as possible the story of the dynamite-hulks and the petrol.

"Groat Oesari!" gasped Cavendish. "Then you really mean it? I saw the glare! I say, who are you?"

"Just a couple of cadets. Stephen an' Aubrey Villiers are our names," said Sam simply.

"Not the chaps that held Greyfriars against the Germans!"

"Yes."

"My aunt! Shake hands, will you!" exclaimed the young officer. "We got the news of that when we reached home

from Crete! I say, you two are livin' wonders! You ought to be in our Service!"

"Well, we're guests of it just now, as you've kidnapped us on the high seas," said Sam, grinning. "But, I say, where's the Fleet an' what's happening at sea? We've had precious little news, ashore."

"Why, the main Fleet's comin' down by Scotland, you know. It's beaten the first cruiser squadron of the Germans off Pentland."

"We've got that much."

"Oh, you have? We had the news by wireless, yesterday. Then there's the second division of the Channel Fleet, that's moved up through Dover Straits into the North Sea, an' where that is now there's no sayin', though Frankie knows, no doubt. Frankie's my boss, you know—he's fessickin' about the Channel with four big cruisers an' eight torpedo-boat—Vice-Admiral Sir Francis Frobisher's his name an' grade. It's our squadron's job to keep the Channel an' do all the runnin' fights. We're a fast lot, I tell you—the slowest is good for twenty-two knots. We've been chasin' the Mary Anns."

"What!" said Stephen.

"The drank German warships an' armed steamers that have been bombardin' the south coast towns. They shelled Brighton an' Hastings an' several other places, an' yesterday, when our little lot turned up, they hooked it," said Cavendish, chuckling. "The old man sent two of his ships in chase, chivied 'em forty miles, an' wiped up the whole lot—eight of 'em. Not one got away."

"Good biz!" exclaimed Stephen excitedly. "Where's your squadron now?"

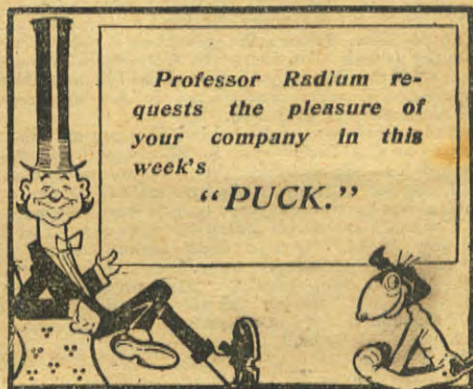
"It was swoopin' up Channel past the Isle of Wight before dark, after sinkin' the Mary Anns. Frankie sent me ahead to try an' get into the Thames, as mine's the fastest craft an' draws the least water, so I licked ahead. Dodged a German destroyer off the Foreland—it was a bit foggy—an' sneaked in over the flats here, up nearly to the Medway. I never dreamed I should get so far, or anything like it, an' I couldn't understand how it was nobody spotted me. But now I reckon that flare-up of yours kept 'em so busy they were wrapped up in it. There were four German battleships came in with all lights out, soon after."

"We saw 'em!" said Stephen. "Did you have a try to torpedo one?"

"No; I was under orders not to engage in any fights," said Cavendish regretfully, "but to scout back to the Fleet with news at all speed. They're waitin' for me—an' I think Frankie guessed those ships were about. He never knew they were hangin' out at Sheerness though, but they are."

"PUCK."

THE ONLY PENNY HUMOROUS
JOURNAL PRINTED IN
COLOURS.



Packed with Healthy Fun and
Splendid Stories.

One Penny. Every Friday.

NEXT
THURSDAY

"THE RIVAL EDITORS."

A Double-Length School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co.

"Yes," cried Stephen eagerly, "they're there now! Sam, it ain't an hour since we were sayin' how a torpedo-boat could sneak through the Swale, an' here we are on one! I say—"

"Too late, worse luck!" said Sam, with a slight sigh. "Dead darkness an' a flowin' tide are necessary, an' there's the beastly sun rising. Besides, our rescuer's under orders." He looked regretfully back at the now far-distant entrance of the Swale.

"What d'you mean?" said Cavendish.

Sam hesitated before he spoke.

"Well, you know, I was wonderin' how a torpedo attack'd come off when those German battleships are lyin' at anchor at Sheerness."

"No go," said Cavendish, shaking his head. "The mouth of the Medway's very narrow, an' when the beggars are inside, they'd be certain to have a boom swung across the entrance, so that nothing could get in to have a try at 'em. Any torpedo-boat or destroyer would smash herself up against the boom. Even without it there wouldn't be much chance, for the guns in the fort, an' all the ship's batteries as well, could sweep the entrance."

"I know that," said Sam, "but there's a back door. If this boat went into the Swale creek behind us there, she could go right through at the back of Sheppey an' she'd come out in the Medway, just above Sheerness."

"My dear chap, there's no way through!" said Cavendish. "No ship in the Service has ever done it, or could! It's only a ditch when you get high up, an' I've heard there's an iron railway-bridge!"

"The barges go through," said Sam, "but I suppose they wouldn't let torpedo-boats go mud-larkin' up there in times of peace, an' if a man didn't know every inch of the way, he could never do it, even in daylight, for there are no beacons or buoys to mark the shoals. You've got to know where they are."

"What do you know about it?" said the sub-lieutenant, in surprise.

"I don't know much about Navy work, but I do know the Thames-mouth, an' every creek in it. I've taken a small yacht through the Swale scores of times, of the same draught as this torpedo-boat. An', as I say, she'd slip into the Medway before it was known she was there, just at the back of the battleships' anchorage—while they were watchin' the entrance, too."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the young officer, smacking the rail with his fist. "Could you take this hooker through—in the dark?"

"Blind, paralytic, or asleep," said Sam.

"Then hang me in a rope if I don't ask the old man to let you pilot me!" ejaculated Cavendish. "Of course, we should probably get wiped out in the job! You don't mind that?"

"It's no good minding it, is it?" returned Sam, with a dry smile. "We aren't quite new to takin' risks, either of us. But, d'you think there's any chance of your chief lettin' us go?"

"That's the rub. It's a bit out of the way, lettin' a landsman pilot you, but, in our Service, we're supposed to be ready for anything, an', p'raps Frankie might let me try. He's a rum old bird! By gum, you two chaps are bricks!"

"Same to you. Where d'you reckon to find your squadron?" said Stephen.

"Somewhere between the North Foreland an' Dumgeness. With a craft like this, one can skip over fifty miles of sea like nothing."

"She does walk along!" said Stephen admiringly, as the spray threshed his face. "That's Margate just abeam, ain't it? Looks pretty different to what it used before the war. There must have been a few shells pitched in, by the look of it."

The torpedo-boat was racing along eastwards with the North Kentish coast a mile to windward of her, and the boys marvelled at the way in which she cut through the water. They stood watching the land slip by, and the keen, crisp air of the North Sea stung their faces. Both the brothers were delighted as they felt the swift, deadly little craft throbbing under their boot-soles. Suddenly Cavendish, glancing over his shoulder, gave a short, sharp whistle, and dropped his mouth to the speaking-tube that led into the engine-room just below.

"Give her all she'll stand, Mr. Hicks. Pile it on till the last revolution!"

"Right, sir!" came the answer of the tube.

"Off with the gun-covers!" was the next order, and the two machine-guns were swiftly and deftly stripped, their black muzzles pointing seaward.

"What's up?" said Stephen.

The sub-lieutenant jerked his head towards the north by way of reply, and, with a thrill, the brothers saw a long,

black shape leaping through the seas with tremendous speed and power, racing down in pursuit of No. 667.

"German destroyer," said the sub-lieutenant coolly. "She's got the legs of us!"

"D'you mean she's faster?" said Stephen, staring at her. "What's she goin' to do?"

"Send us to blazes," answered Cavendish, with great cheerfulness. "She's five knots faster than we."

He glanced at her, and bade his steersman alter the course a couple of points.

"I see," muttered Sam, to himself. "This is a torpedo-boat, an' that's a torpedo-boat destroyer! I knew it before, but there's nothing like an example of this sort to show a chap just what it means." He raised his voice. "Then we're done for, I s'pose?"

"Ra—ther," said Cavendish.

"There's another comin' up behind!" exclaimed Stephen, catching sight of a second destroyer, some distance beyond the first, ploughing furiously in pursuit.

"One's quite enough," said the sub-lieutenant imperturbably. "Well, I'm steamin' back for Frankie, even though he won't see me again. 'Fraid I've done you fellows a bad turn by picking you up."

"Don't mind us," said Sam.

He was surprised at the young officer's coolness, and recognised the sort of stuff they use in the Navy. Hardly more than a boy, at an age when many youths are still at school, the sub-lieutenant seemed no more disturbed by the peril of sudden destruction than if he were at a review.

"Can't we get a whack at 'em before they sink us?" exclaimed Stephen.

"Bless you, yes," said Cavendish, "as soon as there's a decent range. But he's got heavier guns an' more of 'em, an' it don't take much more than a pistol-shot to sink a little eggshell like this of ours. We've got one uncommon good gun, though. There he goes."

The nearer destroyer, which was a long way ahead of the other, suddenly opened a rapid, drumming fire. The small shells dashed up fountains of water, first well astern of No. 667, and then to windward of her.

"Rotten bad shootin'!" remarked Cavendish calmly. "Their torpedo men aren't much good at gunnery. Samson, let her have it! We ought to reach 'em now!"

Crack, crack, crack! went the torpedo-boat's machine-gun. The first shot struck just in front of the German destroyer, and the other two raked clean along her deck and dismounted a torpedo-tube, as Sam saw through his glasses. Cool as he always was on land, every nerve in him thrilled at that rush through the seas and the drumming of the guns, for here one shot driven fairly home meant destruction to ship, crew, and all.

At that moment, in answer to the British gun, a couple of German shells screeched past the boy's ears, one glancing from the rail without exploding, and the other smacked clean through the funnel and left a ragged hole.

It seemed to Sam the very death-knell of the little craft, for now the German boat had the range she was bound to get home lower next time, in the hull itself. As he turned, he saw Cavendish leave the canvas doggers of the tiny bridge, and step across to the gun.

"Let me have her!" he said quietly; and the next moment the gunner had stepped aside, and the young officer levelled the long, black barrel.

Crack! Boom!

The German destroyer seemed suddenly to heave up her head like a horse rising at a fence. The middle part of her decks were burst asunder by an explosion that sent a shower of debris shooting up into the air, and, before the eyes of the astonished boys, she reeled, lurched, and went down in a cloud of grey-white steam. The sea closed over her pitilessly, and torpedo-boat No. 667 flew onwards like a swallow skimming the waves.

"Got him in the boilers!" said Cavendish complacently, leaving the gun and stepping back beside the petty officer at the wheel. "Bit of luck, that! Those German torpedo-boat destroyers are fitted with fire-tube ones, an' if you get 'em a fair smack, up they go!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Stephen. "Is she wiped out—by that one shot?"

"Ra—ther! There's nothing to keep the lead out. Why, a rifle-bullet'd go clean through both sides of this hooker," said Cavendish imperturbably. "Sides aren't much thicker than postcards, an' those destroyers aren't much stronger."

"Gone, crew an' all!" muttered Sam. "It was a great shot of yours, that. I thought—"

"Yes, it isn't usual for a chap to handle his own guns," said Cavendish. "An' my torpedo-gunner's a good man, too; but I've made a pet of that gun, an' I can shoot with her. Not that I expected to get him in the boilers like that—it was rare luck. Mr. Hicks, can you whack her up a trifle?"

"She's doing her top-weight, sir," came the voice of the

tube. "Shouldn't be surprised to see our boilers go, without any shell to help 'em."

"Well, she's doin' a fair twenty-six!" murmured Cavendish, glancing over his boat appreciatively. "Wish I had one of those new turbines."

"The other destroyer's comin' up fast," said Stephen, squinting back through the spray. "What about her?"

"She? Oh, she'll get us!" said the sub-lieutenant unconcernedly. "We're not likely to do that trick twice in ten years. I'll bet it surprised that one to see her go down."

"Then they'll square up by seein' us go down?" queried Sam.

"Ra—ther! You'll see it, too—only it'll be rather quick work."

"Can't you torpedo her?" said Stephen, looking anxiously at the death-dealing craft that was now fast shortening the distance between them. The young officer burst into a roar of laughter.

"You soldier Johnnies are rum chaps!" he chuckled. "Did you really think two little crafts like these, both goin' at twenty-six knots, can torpedo each other? Haw, haw, haw!"

Stephen could not see what there was to laugh at. He had faced death often enough, but out here on the grey, white-crested seas, in an iron shell, with no possible chance of a single soul aboard getting out of it alive if she were once hit, it seemed to him grimmer than usual.

The torpedo-gunner crouched at the gun. Cavendish, his face stung crimson by the lashing spray, and his eyebrows flaked with salt, peered steadily ahead as the palpitating fire-pot hurled herself onward through the seas.

To their starboard, far out of reach, the great white headland of the North Foreland—the gatepost between the North Sea and Dover Straits—showed its green cap of turf above the glistening chalk. They were fast approaching the turning-point, where the Long Nose Reef marks the entry into the Straits. The striped buoy, like a great black-and-white pillbox, marking the end of the rocks, came into view.

Suddenly, with a rattle and a whir, the German destroyer opened with both her guns. The scream of hustling shells filled the air, and the next instant there was a stunning crash aboard torpedo-boat No. 667. Sam, half-blinded by the explosion, staggering helplessly along the decks, felt her reel violently under his feet.

"She's gone!" was the thought that flashed through Sam's brain as the shock sent him staggering. He fell sprawling upon the steel deck, shaken off his feet by the tremendous jar of the explosion, and as he went down, a shell screamed close over him and whirled away into space.

A wash of sea sweeping over the rounded deck dashed over him as he was flung against the low rail, and he thought she had foundered under him. He opened his eyes, gasping, to find the torpedo-boat was still hurtling along as fast as ever. The small

Maxim on the starboard side had nothing left of it but the stump of its carriage, and a dark red stain tinged the wave that just then swept the deck near it.

"Better hang on tight!" said Cavendish, over his shoulder, without looking round. "No, she isn't scuppered. She whacked the starboard gun to blazes—didn't get her in body. Let go with the pom-pom, Birch!"

The torpedo-boat's larger gun began to rattle away sharply, and Sam, wringing the water from his eyes, and looking back, saw the shells burst like fireworks about the long decks and funnels of the destroyer. The German opened again with both guns, but the small size of the British boat, half buried in the water, and the pace she was travelling, seemed too much for the destroyer at that range, and the shells

whirled over and all round the quarry without hitting her.

"Rather bad shootin'," remarked Cavendish critically. "They've got my signaller, though, as well as the Maxim. Head her three points inside the buoy, Hallett."

"I s'pose it's only a question of seconds, now!" gasped Stephen, clinging to the rail, for the wind raised by the vessel's speed seemed to blow his words back down his throat.

"Yes," said Cavendish, as the firing ceased; "she's runnin' close in to make sure of us. She'll shoot better at close quarters."

The destroyer came flying onward in pursuit of her prey, gaining rapidly. Her crew could plainly be made out now, and there seemed no hope for 667. Her shots were knocking the German craft about badly, but the superior size and power of the destroyer kept her going, and no lucky shot reached the boilers this time. It was plain enough that when the German opened fire at short range, the little torpedo-boat would be blown out of the water. And yet the whole affair was but a matter of minutes from the time when the enemy was first sighted. No. 667 swerved to starboard.

"My aunt, he's goin' to cut inside the buoy!" muttered Sam.

NOW YOU'VE FINISHED GIVE ME AWAY.

With a rush the vessel made a daring short cut, and shaved close to the sunken reef of the Long Nose. At the same moment the German "let go" at her with both guns. The smoke-stack was shattered by a shell, and destruction seemed upon the torpedo-boat, when, turning sharp to the right, she ran round the headland of Foreness, and opened up the Straits, with Broadstairs and Ramsgate ahead of her.

So sharp was the turn, and so close had she gone to the rocks, that for the moment she was shut off from the view of the destroyer, which was still round the corner. In a few moments, the boys knew, she was bound to follow, but as they looked ahead on rounding the Foreness, a great shout burst from them.

"Are those our ships, or the enemy's?" cried Sam. Right in front, to the north of the Goodwin Sands, four magnificent steel-clad cruisers were steaming slowly up in line abreast, stately as floating fortresses, and the moment he had spoken, Sam saw the white ensign fluttering at the poop-staff of the nearest.

"Ours!" exclaimed the young officer. "Our squadron! Good old Frankie! I never thought he'd come so far!"

Cavendish gave a delighted chuckle.

"They must have spotted us!" cried Stephen.

"Ra—ther! Come along, you awab behind there! Here's a gay old surprise packet for you!"

He had hardly uttered the words when the German destroyer came rushing round the point. She had, like 667, been prevented by the headland from seeing the cruisers until she doubled Foreness. Now she came full pelt in pursuit, intent upon her prey, and while she was still swerving round the Long Nose buoy, her guns opened fire.

Almost immediately a jet of thin smoke spouted from the port casement of the nearest British cruiser. Zoo-oo-oo-oo—bang!

(Another long instalment of this Grand War Story next Thursday. Please order your copy of "The Gem Library" in advance. Price 1d.)

"IN THE RANKS." A Splendid Story of Army Life. In the "MAGNET" LIBRARY. Now on Sale. Price One Halfpenny.



"RIVAL EDITORS."

Gore, Mellish, and Skimpole start a rival paper to "Tom Merry's Weekly"!

Blake & Co. raid The Terrible Three's study.

The Terrible Three raid Study 6 and Figgins & Co. of the New House!

Figgins & Co. get the blame

Curtain!

Herbert Skimpole, Editor, gets the push!

Exit!

The above is just a brief outline of next week's story.

Order in advance, will you?

The EDITOR.



The "SHAVEZI" SAFETY RAZOR.

1s.
Post
Free
1/1.

The "SHAVEZI" Combination Razor can be used as safety or ordinary razor by the most inexperienced, for smooth, velvety shaving. Best nickel silver fittings and best Sheffield steel blade, extra hollow ground. Full instructions sent with each razor, in neat box. Price 1/-; post free, 1/1. Extra blades, 6d. each. Guaranteed as good as others at higher prices. Entire satisfaction given or money returned in full. **Illustrated Catalogue** of thousands of other Bargains sent gratis and post free. **PAIN BROTHERS** (Dept. A99), The "Presents House," Hastings (Eng.).

ROYAL AJAX.

THE PEOPLE'S CYCLE.

From **£5 12s. 6d.**
Cash, or **7/6** per Month.

All Accessories included Free. Carr. Paid. **SECOND - HAND CYCLES** FROM **50s.** UPWARDS.



Write to-day for our Magnificent
ART CATALOGUE, post free

Best & Cheapest Firm.

BRITISH CYCLE MFG. CO. (1901), LTD.
(Dept. J.C.), 1 & 3, Berry Street, Liverpool.

12 1d.
Cards
sent
Free.

PRIZES FREE

We Trust You.

12 1d.
Cards
Free
at once.

We give you 12 Penny Pictorial Cards at once, absolutely Free, even if you do not use or sell a single card. Besides, we give Free Ladies' or Gents' size Watches, Rifles, Phonographs, Musical Instruments, Footballs, Silverware, Cutlery, &c., &c. Send your full name and address, and we will send you 72 Beautiful Pictorial Penny Cards (comics will make you shriek with laughter), actresses' views, &c. Sell or use the cards within 28 days, and we will reward you as per terms on our grand list. Send postcard at once to



ACTE & CO. (Dept. 1).
85, Fleet Street, London, E.C.



A CYCLE for 1/- DEPOSIT & 1/- WEEKLY.

As an advertisement we will send to first 1,000 applicants our **£3 8s. 6d. "ROYAL EMBLEM" CYCLE** for **1s. DEPOSIT**, and on last payment of 81 weeks at 1s., making **£4 10s. A HANDSOME PRESENT 18 MONTHS FREE**. Cash with order, **£3 15s. 6d. only**. Write for Illustrated Catalogue of Latest Models.

ROYAL EMBLEM CYCLE DEPOT
(C30), GREAT YARMOUTH.

HAVE YOU A

MOUSTACHE?

If you want a moustache, to look manly, to add to your appearance, write me, enclosing stamp for full particulars of a simple home treatment which never fails. Age no object. — **A. LAWRENCE**, 25, Hart St., London, W.C.



1/3 WEEKLY.

We send this High-Grade Free-Wheel CYCLE, Mud Guards and Tools, fully guaranteed, to any address on receipt of 2/- DEPOSIT, and upon payment of the last of 22 Monthly Payments of 5/-, making total **£5 12s. 6d.** Cash price **£5 5s. 0d.** Sent on approval. CYCLES from **£2 19s. 6d.** Write for Catalogue. — **ERSKINE CYCLE CO., WALTHAMSTOW, LONDON.**

VENTRILOQUISM. Anyone can learn this Wonderful, Laughable art, 60 pages of instructions and amusing dialogues. Post free, 6d. Thought-Reading included Free. — **WONDER CO., Station Road, Ilkeston.**

A REAL LEVER SIMULATION

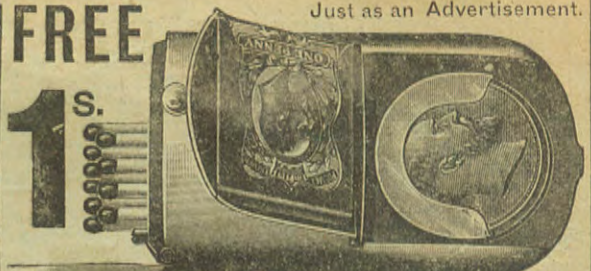
Gold Watch



FREE. In the centre of the diagram you see a figure 5. Arrange the figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 in the remaining squares so that the columns add 15 up and down, across, and from corner to corner. If correct, and you comply with the simple condition we shall send you, A HANDSOME WATCH (guaranteed 10 years) will be sent you ENTIRELY FREE OF COST. Send your answer NOW, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for our reply. — **Imperial Supply Co. (Dept. 2), 42, Junction Road, London, N.**

FREE
1s.

Just as an Advertisement.



We offer this useful Pocket Companion at less than half price to introduce to you our new Cata. This is a clever invention, well finished and well plated; contains Stamp Box, Money Purse fitted with Secret Spring, Matchbox, etc., etc., with Swivel Ring for attaching to Watch Chain. Useful to all. **Bargain List Free. WRITE TO-DAY.** — **MASTERS, 97, ROPE STORES, RYE.**

£100 GIVEN AWAY



This is a chance for clever persons to win cash and other prizes with a little effort. Count the spots in the above figure of a hand, and so those who count them correctly and conform to our simple conditions we shall give **£100**. Other prizes for nearest best counts, **£20, £10, and £5**, besides Watches, Rings, Phonographs, Cameras, etc., etc., by selection. **Every correct count wins.** It is not so easy, but try carefully. The Cash and other prizes are absolutely given away on the most straightforward genuine conditions. It is free to try. Write your count on a postcard. We tell you at once whether you win. If you send a stamp we tell you even if you lose, so you can try again. Try at once. This offer may not be repeated. — **JUDGE (Dept. V), 9, Rugby Chambers, W.C.**

THE UNIVERSAL PRINTING OUTFIT.
For Marking Books, Papers, Lichen, etc. Any two lines of wording can be printed. Contains good supply of type, and everything ready for use. Postage free. — **WONDER CO., Station Road, Ilkeston.**

Remarkable FRETWORK BARGAIN.

Send us three penny stamps and we will, as an advertisement, send you A SHILLING parcel of our novel Art Fretwork Designs, including a Sixpenny Book of 13 dainty small designs, and TWO THREEPENNY sheets of larger designs. Address: The Secretary,

NATIONAL FRETWORKERS' ASSOCIATION,
63, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

In
"THE MARVEL."

HARRY FAIRFAX AND BOB DAWSON.

Boy Detectives.

Now on Sale,
1d.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND"

3^{D.}
LIBRARY.

No. 76: PETE, MONEY-LENDER.

*A NEW and Original, Long, Complete Novel
of Jack, Sam, and Pete.*

By **S. CLARKE HOOK.**

No. 77: WITH PICK AND LAMP,

*A Splendid, Long, Complete Story of
Colliery Life.*

By **DAVID GOODWIN.**

No. 78: PLUCK WILL TELL.

*A Thrilling Story of a Young Scotch
Boy's Adventures in London.*

By **ALLAN BLAIR.**

Price

3^{D.}

Each. Now on Sale!