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VOL. 3.
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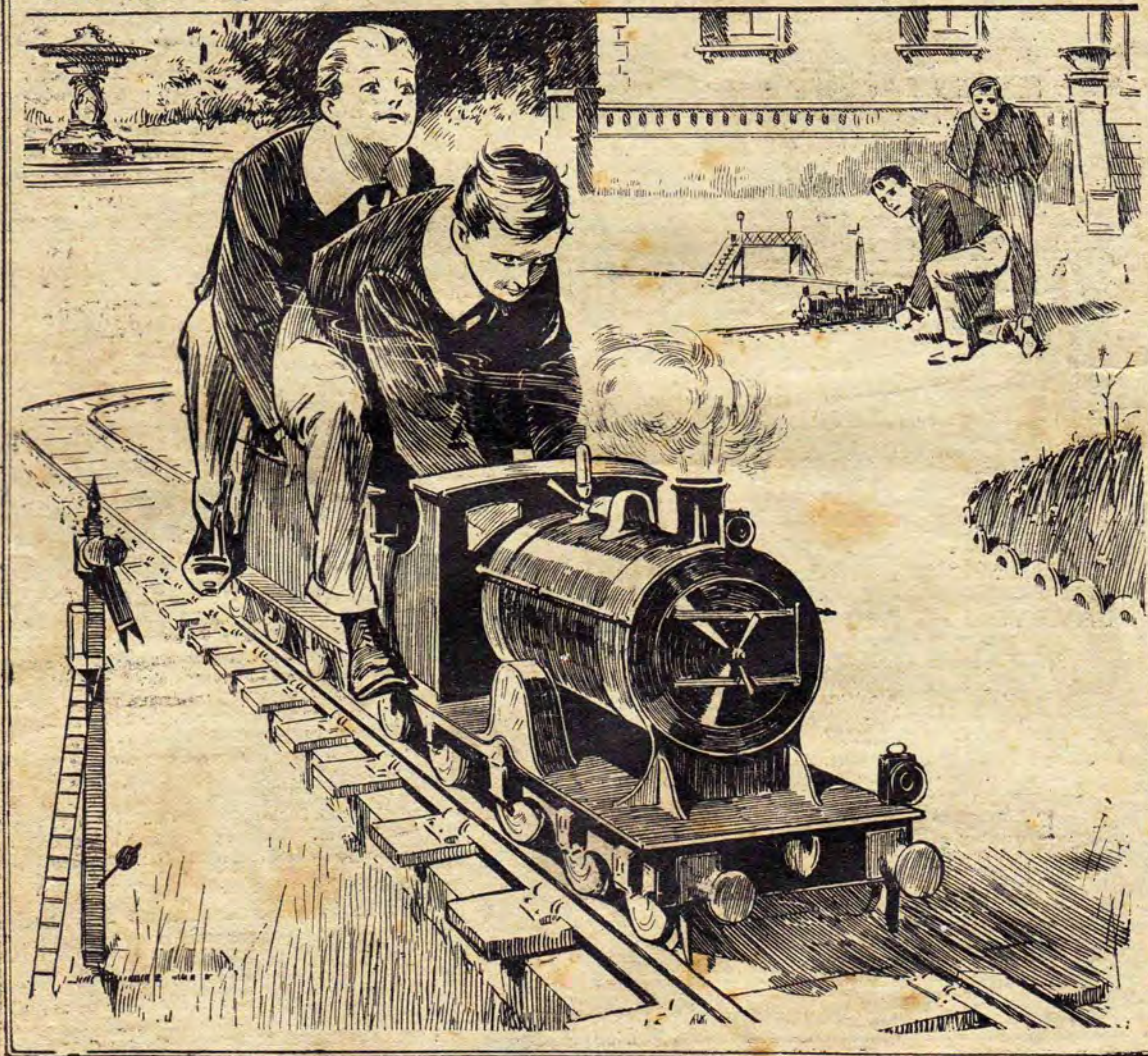
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THE ST. JIM'S INVENTOR.

By MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



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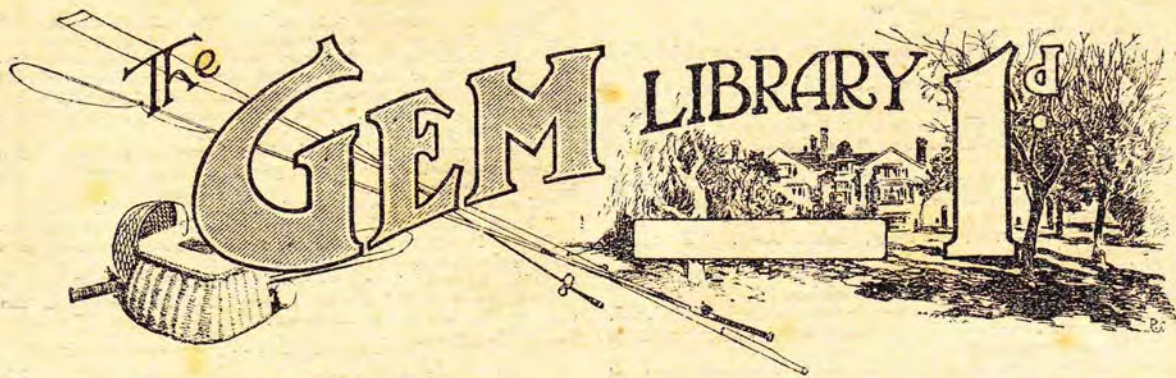
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"THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S!"



IN NEXT
THURSDAY'S

GEM LIBRARY.



Complete Stories for Everyone, and Every Story a Gem!

THE ST. JIM'S INVENTOR



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

CHAPTER 1.

Arthur Augustus Receives a Shock.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, came along the Shell passage in the School House, and tapped at the door of Bernard Glyn's study.

There was no answer from within, and after waiting a few seconds the swell of St. Jim's tapped again, and opened the door.

"Glyn, deah boy."

Still no reply.

"Bai Jove! I suppose the boundah's out."

Arthur Augustus put up his eyeglass and took a survey of the study. Bernard Glyn was certainly not there, but the state of the room looked as if he had only just left it. There were open books on the table—books that looked dreadfully scientific to D'Arcy, with diagrams and "figs." on every page. There was a sheet of paper bristling with algebraic calculations, with a pencil lying across it.

Bernard Glyn was the son of a famous Liverpool engineer who had settled down near St. Jim's. He had scientific tastes and unlimited pocket-money. Consequently his study was crammed with things of great interest to boys whose hobbies took a scientific turn. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not in the least addicted to anything of the sort, but like the rest of the School House juniors, he was interested by the strange things in Bernard Glyn's study.

"I suppose the young ass will soon be back," D'Arcy murmured to himself. "It is wathah wantin' in wespect to be away when I give him a look-in, though of course he did not know I was comin'. Still, it is wathah wantin' in wespect. I wondah what this funnay thing is for!"

It was a curious looking object. From two holes in a square black box two insulated wires ran, and on the end of each was a handle. D'Arcy looked it over, and round about, through his eyeglass, without being able to make anything of it. He was still engaged thus when an impatient voice came along the passage.

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 64 (New Series)

"Are you coming, Gussy?"
 "Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"
 "Well, why don't you come?"
 "The chap isn't here, Blake."
 Jack Blake grunted, and came along the passage and looked into the study.

"Oh rats!" he said. "Of course he's out just when I want him. My hat! What does all this mean I wonder." He looked down at the algebra. "A multiplied by B and divided by C and subtracted from D rearing on E and bucking against F—"

"Weally, Blake, you are weadin' that all w'ong. You—" "Go hon!" said Jack Blake. "What's this? 'Model Locomotives.' That's rather interesting. Let's—"

"I was just lookin' at this thing," said D'Arcy. "I wondah what it's for."

Jack Blake looked at it too, and grinned.
 "Do you know what it is, Blake, deah boy?"

"Yes, rather! You take those handles—one in each hand, you see—and if the thing's in working order you get—"

"What do I get, deah boy?"
 "You get a slight electric thrill, which is awfully good for the nerves and the digestion."

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!" said D'Arcy, greatly interested.
 "I believe the chap made this himself, you know. He's awfully clever! I couldn't do it, you know."

Blake sniffed.
 "I don't suppose you could, Gussy. You might as well try the machine while we're waiting for Glyn—it will please him. These young inventors like to have their things tested. See if it's in working order."

"Certainly, deah boy!"
 And Arthur Augustus grasped the two handles with a firm grasp.

The next moment there was a yell in the study that could have been heard at the other end of the School House.

"Ow! Wow!"
 Blake roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ow! Wow! Help! Wescue!"

Arthur Augustus would have liked to let go those handles. But he couldn't! He clung to them and danced, while the electric current ran through him like a million pins and needles.

"Ow! Help! Wescue!" shrieked the swell of St. Jim's.
 "Blake, you wottah—ow!—I shall no longah—ow!—wegard you as a—wow!—fwend! Help!"

"Let go!" gasped Blake. "Oh, my hat! Why don't you let go?"

"I—I—c-c-c-c-c-can't! Help!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Wescue!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Tom Merry, dashing along the passage from his study, and bursting into the room.

"What's the— Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ow! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha! It will do you good, Gussy!"
 "Wescue! Shut it off! Stop the beastly cuwwent! Wescue! Murdah!"

Blake, almost choking with laughter, ran to the rescue. Tom Merry held his sides and shouted. D'Arcy, dancing like a hen on hot bricks, was a comical sight.

"Ha, ha, ha! Catch hold again, Gussy!"
 "I—I wescue to do anythin' of the sort!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's, sinking into an armchair. "Ow! I am uttaly exhausted by that howwid expewience! Blake, I wegard you as a wottah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I wegard pwactical jokes of this sort as bein' in the worst form poss. You are a beast, and you are anothah beast, Tom Mewwy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I see no occasion for this wibald laughtah. I shall have to seriously considah whethah to wegard you as fwends," said D'Arcy, fanning himself with his cambric handkerchief. "I feel quite exhausted, and I have been thwown into a fluttah. I wegard Glyn as a beast to have such howwid things in his study."

"Thanks," said an easy voice, and Bernard Glyn came in, with a huge volume under his arm, which he had just brought from the school library. He grinned as he looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Your own fault, my son. That machine wasn't put there for every idiot in the Fourth Form to handle."

D'Arcy rose to his feet.
 "Am I to undahstand that you have addressed me as an idiot?" he said.

"My dear chap—"
 "Pway be explicit, Glyn. This is a sewious mattah that requires to be settled. If you chawactewise me as an idiot I shall have no option but to immediately wetire from your study."

"Well, that's what I'm waiting for you to do," said Glyn.
 "I'm busy. I went to fetch this book from the library, and I

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"THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S."

A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

By Martin Clifford.

didn't expect to find a lot of mischievous kids in my study when I came back."

The juniors looked at one another. Tom Merry was head of the Shell, and Jack Blake was top of the Fourth Form—at least, so far as the School House portion of the Form was concerned. To hear themselves described as mischievous kids was not exactly gratifying. The Liverpool lad sat down and opened the big volume. Jack Blake looked at him, and then at Tom Merry again.

"There are some kids," said Blake, in measured tones, "who have to be licked for their own good. I rather think that this chap Glyn is one of them."

"I was thinking the same," Tom Merry remarked.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as a good ideah to wag the wottah. It will be only fair, as a punishment for havin' that wotten electwic machine in the woom."

"Oh, chuck it!" said Bernard Glyn. "I'm busy."

Jack Blake jerked his chair away, and he reposed on the carpet. He jumped up in wrath.

"Why, you ass—"
 Blake wagged a warning finger at him.

"Now, that's only a hint," he said. "New kids at this school have to be respectful to their elders—"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Why, I'm older than you—"

"I'm not speaking of age, but of seniority in the school," said Blake loftily. "In that sense I am older than Tom Merry, and therefore chief of the juniors—"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.
 "Did you say rats to me, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, I did."

"If you're looking for a thick ear—"

"Go and look for it somewhere else, please," said Glyn, setting up his chair again. "I can't have kids rowing in my study."

"Bai Jove!"
 "Look here," said Blake wrathfully, "I came along here to speak to you on an important matter, otherwise I'd wipe up the study with you. I've got a jape on."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "What's the joke?"

"Nothing to do with the Shell," said Blake. "This is a Fourth Form wheeze. I've come to Glyn for help because he's a scientific beast and knows everything about electricity, and rot of that sort."

Glyn looked up quickly.
 Like most youthful experimenters, he was always glad to get fellows to take an interest in his experiments, and to call upon his scientific knowledge for aid was to pay him the highest possible compliment. Jack Blake did not mean it for a compliment, but the boy from Liverpool was pleased all the same.

"Hallo! What is it?" he asked. "I'll help you if I can, of course."

"That's wathah wippin' of you, Glyn, and I will not, undah the cires, wetire from your studay."

"Thank you for nothing," said Glyn. "What's the wheeze, Blake? What do you want?"

"I want some yards of insulated wire, an electric bell, and some professional knowledge of the subject," said Blake.

"Mind you, Tom Merry, you can stand there taking it all in if you like, but this is a Fourth Form wheeze."

Tom Merry laughed.
 "I expect you kids will make a muck of it," he said. "Better let me help."

"You can help if you like, but mind, I'm the boss of this show," said Blake. "That's got to be understood. I suppose you know that the Shell and the Fourth are being taken in one class this afternoon for German."

"Yes, rather! Half an hour of old Schneider and German irregular verbs," said Tom Merry dismally, "and one of the finest afternoons in spring—it's rotten! I was thinking of getting up a petition to the Head to cut the German lessons and let the school out half an hour early."

"Bai Jove! That would be a good ideah. I don't mind bein' chairman of a deputation on the subject, deah boys. Oh, I suppose you are wottin', you wottah! Weally, Tom Mewwy, I—"

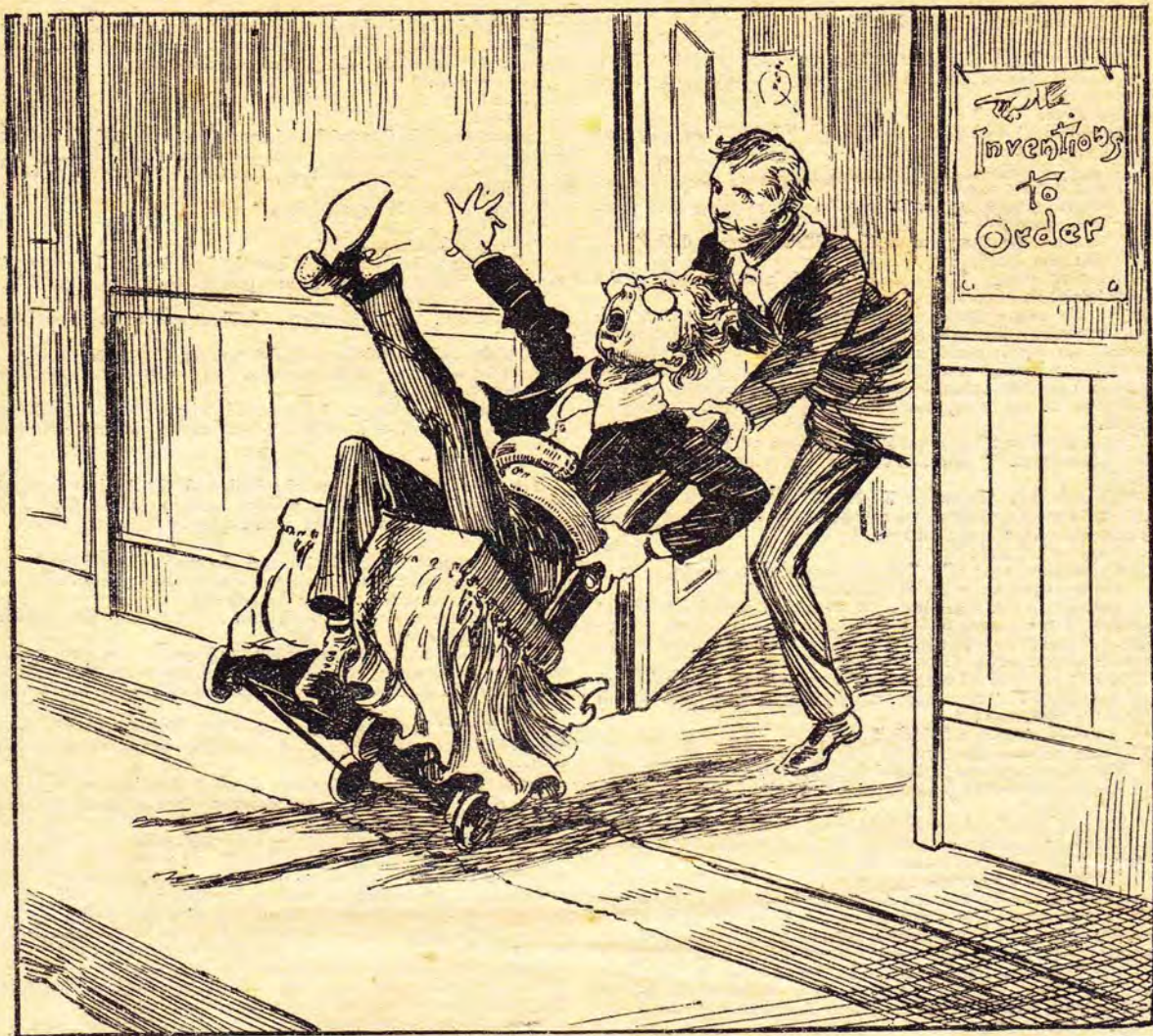
"You see, kids—"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake."

"Yes, that's all right, Gussy; I don't mind. You see, kids, we get quite enough German, and if the lessons were cut a little shorter on these nice afternoons, we shouldn't lose much, and what we lost in German we should gain in outdoor exercise. Then there's Herr Schneider—he says it's a fearful trouble for him to drive German into us; so it would really be doing a good deed, and treating our dear teacher with kindness, to cut the lessons short."

"Admitted," said Tom Merry, looking puzzled. "But I'm blessed if I can see how you're going to cut a German lesson short with a few yards of wire and an electric bell."

"That's because you haven't the brain," said Blake. "I



"There you are," said Glyn; "you can talk as much as you like out here in the passage, Skimmy!" And he went back to his study, and closed the door.

suppose you know that there's a bell rings for end of afternoon classes?"

"Yes, I think I've noticed it," said Tom Merry sarcastically. "And it's an electric bell in the Shell class-room?"

"Yes, what on earth about it? Since they put up the electric bells, I suppose I've had time to know the buzz by heart."

"You haven't had time to think of a jolly good wheeze on the subject, though," said Blake, with a superior smile. "Now the buzz goes at half-past four exactly to-day. Suppose it went at twenty past instead?"

"Then we should be out ten minutes early, unless Schneider happened to look at his watch."

"I know his watch is always wrong, so that doesn't matter. Besides, he dismisses the class as soon as the bell goes, and he wouldn't think of doubting it."

"But how are you going to make the bell ring early?" asked Tom Merry, mystified. "It's fastened up over the door in the class-room, and you can't even get at it."

"I don't want to get at it."

"Explain to him, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "We can't expect Tom Mewwy to understand these things."

"I suppose not," grunted Blake. "Well, this is the wheeze. There's the bookcase near the door, and if we stick a bell in that, the buzz will sound just as if it comes from the regular bell up there, won't it? We can run a wire from the bookcase to the forms, and in my desk I can have a little dry battery connected to it. Then I shall only have to touch the ends of the wires to ring the bell. See?"

"By Jove!"

Tom Merry gave an expressive whistle.

It was a simple plan, and there was no reason why it should

not answer. The lesson would seem a very short one to the German master, doubtless; but then, he could not have any suspicions when he heard the bell ring as usual. And he wasn't likely to notice that the buzz came from the top of the bookcase instead of from over the door. The difference in direction would amount to nil.

Jack Blake turned to Glyn.

"This is where you come in," he said. "Get out the props and come along."

The engineer's son grinned.

"Right you are! I'm on!"

With a little dry battery in his pocket, and a coil of double insulated wire under his jacket, and a tiny electric bell, the engineer's son followed Jack Blake to the Shell class-room, accompanied by Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 2.

Mr. Lathom Makes an Amazing Scientific Discovery.

THE amateur electriciens assumed an air of great carelessness and indifference, in order to throw off the track anybody who might happen to observe them going to the Shell class-room. That, of course, was quite sufficient to give the game away to anyone who did observe them.

Monty Lowther and Manners, Tom Merry's chums in the Shell, were in the passage, and they at once joined the party.

"What's on?" asked Lowther.

"On?" said Blake vaguely.

"Yes, on! What's the little game?"

"Little game?"

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A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By Martin Clifford.

NEXT
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"THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S."

"What are you going to do?"

"Do?"

"My hat!" said Manners. "He's a giddy parrot! Have you noticed this in Blake before, Gussy? Have you had a doctor to him?"

"Bai Jove, I—"

"Look here," said Blake wrathfully, "I don't see why you should suppose there was anything on. I—"

"You were looking so jolly mysterious—"

"I was looking careless."

"Well, it gave a chap the impression of mysteriousness, then. What's the jape?"

"You can come along and see if you like. Keep it dark."

"Right you are."

They went along. Reilly of the Fourth, and Skimpole of the Shell, joined them en route.

Skimpole was a genius himself, and a great inventor. He had invented airships which did not rise into the air; improved locomotives which could not move; a new rapid system of shorthand, which he could not write himself, and he had made other and equally valuable discoveries. He was interested at once when he saw a dry battery poking out of Bernard Glyn's pocket.

"Shut the door!" growled Blake, as soon as they were in the Shell class-room. "We don't want the whole giddy school here."

"Wathah not. Pewwaps if you all wotire fwom the spot exceptin' myself and Glyn, we could manage the mattah bettah. I could give Glyn diwections—"

"Oh, ring off, kid!"

"I wufuse to wing off. I could diweect Glyn—"

"What do you know about electricity?"

"Nothin' at all, deah boy. A pwactical knowledge is not required for a managh. I can leave details to my subordinates," said D'Arcy loftily. "Gweat men always leave details to their subordinates. I could diweect Glyn—"

"You'll get directed with my boot yourself if you don't shut up," said Blake. "Now how are we going to shove that bell on top of the bookcase?"

"We shall wequire a laddah."

"There isn't a ladder here."

"We could bowwow Taggles' long laddah—"

"Ass! How are we going to get it here?"

"Cawwy it."

"Duffer! Ass! Carry a ladder twelve feet long into the School House, past the doors of the masters' studies!" shrieked Blake. "Oh, brain him, somebody!"

"I wufuse to be wained. I—"

Jack Blake did not listen. He cocked his eye up at the bookcase. It stood against the wall near the door, and it was a very high one. The steps near it only enabled one to reach the upper shelves, and not the top. On the top was a bust of Socrates, who had stared down on generations of St. Jim's juniors from that coign of vantage. The duster of the housemaid seldom reached the spot, and Socrates was decidedly dusty.

"Look here," said Tom Merry, "I'll stand on the steps, and you can climb on my shoulders, Blake, only don't shove me over."

"Yaas, wathah! Pewwaps, though, I had bettah—"

"Shut up! Hold the steps, Monty. You connect up the wire with the bell, Glyn, and hand it up to me."

"That's soon done," said Glyn.

The juniors pulled the steps into position, and Tom Merry mounted upon them, and held to the bookcase.

Blake followed him up the steps.

The juniors were safe from interruption for a good half-hour, so there was plenty of time for the work. But it was not easy to do.

Blake grasped Tom Merry, and climbed upon his shoulders. The hero of the Shell grunted.

"Now then, stupid; don't dig your silly knees into my ribs. I shall be over in a minute. My hat! Are you climbing up, or trying to bust my backbone?"

"Oh, shut up, do!"

"That's all very well. They're my bones you're dislocating," said Tom Merry indignantly. "Thank goodness you're up at last! Safe?"

"As safe as I can expect with an utter dummy underneath me."

"Hold on to the bookcase."

"You leave me alone, and look out yourself."

"Rats!"

"Yah!"

Meanwhile, Bernard Glyn was busy with the bell. The wire was a double one, enclosed in the insulator. He opened his pocket-knife, and scraped the wire bright at the end, separated the ends, and attached them, and handed the bell up to Blake.

In reaching down for it, Jack nearly overturned the junior under him, and Tom Merry gasped and clutched the bookcase.

"Look out!" gasped Blake.

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He clutched at the bookcase himself for safety, and, of course, knocked against the bust of Socrates. The bust reeled, and rolled sideways, and Blake gave a yell of warning.

"Look out!"

Crash!

Smash!

Socrates met the floor with an impact that scattered his features far and wide. The bust was broken with a vengeance.

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Socrates' bust!"

"Phew!"

"You've done it now, Blake!"

"You ass, it was you!"

"Well, I like that—"

"Oh, rats! Let's get this beastly bell fixed. I suppose it will be all right if I just lay it on top of the bookcase, Glyn?"

"Yes, that's all right."

"Buck up!" said Manners. "That row must have been heard."

"Faith, and there's somebody coming!" gasped Reilly.

Footsteps sounded in the passage. The crash of the smashing bust had been heard.

"Quick!" said Glyn. "Shove this wire on top of the bookcase out of sight, and we'll get into cover. If we're caught here—"

"Right-oh!"

The wire was thrown on the bell, and the juniors jumped down from the steps. To jam them back into their place, and cut across the room to the wall-cupboard was the work of seconds.

Blake dragged Skimpole in, and the rest followed, and the door was nearly closed. As it stood ajar, the juniors could see across the room to the door on the passage.

The class-room door opened, and Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form, looked in.

Mr. Lathom was a short-sighted little gentleman, very benevolent and very scientific. He peered into the room, and caught sight of the broken bust, and came over and peered up at the bookcase.

The juniors were quiet as mice. The Form-master looked round the room, and saw no one, and not a sound fell upon his ears.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom aloud. "This is most remarkable. The bust has fallen from its place without human agency. Most remarkable! For many years it has stood in that one spot without losing its balance. Now suddenly, without warning, it topples over. It is most remarkable. Doubtless some secret atmospheric agency, of which science is not yet cognisant, has undermined its stability, leading to this sudden fall. The marvels of science are more wonderful than the fables of the heroic ages. The ordinary brain would jump to the conclusion that some mischievous junior had been here, and caused this mishap. But to the mind of a scientific man—"

Mr. Lathom's voice died away, and he wrinkled his brows in deep thought, and walked slowly out of the class-room.

Jack Blake chuckled softly.

"The marvels of science are wonderful," he murmured.

"An ordinary brain—ha, ha, ha!"

"—would think that some mischievous junior had been there," said Monty Lowther, almost weeping. "My hat! Great are the marvels of science. Doubtless some secret atmospheric agency—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, this cupboard is awfully stuffy!" said D'Arcy.

"Pway let us get out!"

They got out.

Reilly went to the class-room door to act as scout in case of the return of Mr. Lathom, while the others resumed the interrupted work.

Blake brought the wire down at the back of the bookcase close to the dark wood, where it would only be visible on a close examination. Then it was run along the floor close to the wall to the back of the forms, and finally brought up round the leg of a desk.

Blake surveyed it with satisfaction.

"It's ripping!" he said. "Nobody would see that without searching for it. After Schneider's gone, we can come and take it away again. What have you got at the end for me to press, Glyn?"

"Look here."

Glyn placed the dry battery in Blake's desk, and connected up the wires with it.

The bell immediately began to ring.

"Here, hold on!"

"It's all right."

Glyn snipped through one of the wires, and the ringing ceased.

"Now, look here. To make the bell ring, you've only got to touch these two wire ends together where I've snipped it, and that establishes the circuit. See?"

"Yes, that's all right."

And the juniors, greatly satisfied with the preparations

"Ha, ha! Yes."

Skimpole struggled anew in the embrace of the chair.

"Really, Gore, I should be killed. Please do not be so reckless. I—"

"What did you go to the Shell class-room for, Skimmy?"

"I went with Tom Merry and Blake."

"I didn't say whom with, but what for? What were they up to there?"

"I don't know about telling you—"

"Why not?" demanded Gore savagely.

"Well, you know, you are a cad and a sneak, and—ow—leave my nose alone—ow! I do not blame you for being a cad and a sneak. As a Determinist, I am quite sure that it is due to your hereditary environment—I—I mean—ow—my nose!"

"What did they do in the Shell class-room?"

"Really, Gore—"

"Shove him along to the stairs."

"Stop! I will, on second thoughts, tell you. They have run a wire from a bell on the bookcase to Blake's desk. He is going to make the bell ring ten minutes before the German lesson is up."

Gore started.

"My hat! What a jolly good wheeze."

"Yes, it is very good, as it will give me an extra ten minutes to devote to my great work on Socialism."

"Come on, Mellish."

"Please release me, Gore. I have told you, and—"

"Oh, you can stay there!"

Gore went into his study, which was shared by Skimpole. He opened Skimpole's desk, and dragged out a coil of double insulated wire. Skimpole sometimes went in for electrical experiments, and Gore knew where to find the wire. Mellish watched his chum in surprise.

"What on earth are you going to do?" he asked.

"Come to the Shell room, and see."

"Right you are."

They hurried off to the Shell room. Now that he had the clue, Gore easily found the wire. He connected the two loose ends under Blake's desk, and the bell on the bookcase rang.

"That works all right," said Mellish. "Better chuck it, though, or you'll have somebody here to see why it's ringing."

Gore nodded. At a point near the wall he cut one of the wires, and the connection being broken, the ringing ceased. At the new breakage he connected up his new wire, and ran it along to his own desk. A second piece of wire he connected to one of the loose ends in Blake's desk, bringing it also along to his own desk. Mellish watched him with interest. It was now in Gore's power, while sitting at his desk, to make the bell ring whenever he liked.

"My hat! I didn't think of that," chuckled Mellish.

"It's all right," grinned Gore. "You see, Blake won't be in this room till the German lesson, so nobody will know the wire has been tampered with. We can have a lark with the Form-master in the afternoon, and if there's a search they'll find the battery in Blake's desk, and he'll get the rowing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I rather think it will be funny," said Gore. And they left the class-room feeling very satisfied with themselves.

CHAPTER 4.

Mr. Linton is Amazed—and so is Biaks!

"BAI JOVE! What's that?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy put up his eyeglass in amazement, and stared at Skimpole. Glyn's wonderful armchair was in the middle of the passage, and Skimpole was still wriggling in its embrace.

The amateur Socialist blinked at D'Arcy through his spectacles.

"Please release me!" he gasped. "I have been caught like this by that—that unpleasant Liverpool person."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is no laughing matter. I am uncomfortable, and I am sure that I look absurd."

"Bai Jove, that's nothin' new!"

"Please find the spring, and release me. Glyn is a beast. Gore is another beast."

"Well, I'll twy, old chap."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy obligingly tried to find the spring. But it was in vain. He felt over the padded arms of the chair, but there was no spring to be discovered.

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps it can't be opened while you're sittin' in it," said the swell of the School House. "That will be wathah wuff on you, Skimmy."

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, coming along the passage, with his books under his arm. "What's the matter with Skimmy?"

"He's all right," chuckled Monty Lowther.

"I am not all right. I wish you would release me."

"Can't be done, deah boy."

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S."

"We can wheel you along into the class-room like that if you like, Skimmy," said Lowther; "it will save you the trouble of walking."

"Really, I—"

Bernard Glyn opened the door of his study. He started a little as he saw Skimpole still sitting in the armchair, surrounded by the grinning juniors.

"By Jove, I had forgotten you!" he exclaimed. "Shove him in here, and I'll let him go."

The armchair was wheeled into the study with a rush that took Skimpole's breath away. It bumped against the table, and Skimpole gasped.

Glyn touched a spring hidden somewhere in the recesses of the chair, and the arms sprang back to their original position. Skimpole, with a gasp of relief, rose from the chair.

"All right?" grinned the Liverpool lad.

"If I were not forbidden by the principles of Socialism to use violence, Glyn, I should certainly punch your nose," said Skimpole. And he blinked indignantly at the cheerful young inventor, and marched out of the study.

"Will you sit down, D'Arcy?" asked Glyn politely.

The swell of St. Jim's backed away.

"Thank you, deah boy; not just now."

"Try that comfortable armchair, Tom Merry."

"Not much," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I'm off!"

It was time to get to the class-room. The Terrible Three went in together, and Gore followed them in with the rest of the Shell. Tom Merry looked round for Blake's wire. So far as he could see, it had not been disturbed. Gore grinned as he sat down at his desk. Blake had intended the joke of the bell to be played off upon Herr Schneider at last lesson. Gore's intentions were very different. He meant that Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, should have the benefit of it. The blame, if blame there was, could fall upon Blake.

Mr. Linton did not look very amiable when he came in. He was a just master, but sometimes sharp-tempered, and never very cheerful-looking. He glanced over the class, and his glance showed the Shell that they had better be on their best behaviour that afternoon. Monty Lowther, who had worked up one or two intentional blunders to raise a laugh in the Roman history lesson, decided to leave them over for a more suitable occasion. Buck Finn, the American junior, slid a chunk of chewing gum back into his pocket, instead of distending his cheek with it, as was his habit. Gore grinned with anticipation. Mr. Linton was just in the mood to be exasperated easily by any recurring annoyance. Things could not have shaped better to suit the plans of the cad of the Shell.

The first lesson had not been in progress ten minutes, when there was an interruption. The Shell were taking a more or less enjoyable plunge into deponent verbs, when the sound of an electric bell buzzed through the room.

"B-z-z-z-z-z-z!"

It was only a slight buzz. Gore had just touched the two loose ends of wire in his desk.

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Mr. Linton started and looked round. A shade of annoyance crossed his face.

The electric bell always buzzed at half-past four, when afternoon lessons, except upon special occasions, ended at St. Jim's. The Form-master concluded that it had been touched by accident; there was no reason why it should ring yet. He simply glanced at it, and the lesson went on.

His glance sought out Gore. Gore was one of the dullest fellows in the Form—not from want of ability, but from sheer laziness and slackness. Mr. Linton was a master with a strong sense of duty, which came rather hard on the dullards. He was about to give Gore his special attention for five minutes, and Gore knew it. It was time for the bell to ring again.

Buz-z-z-z-z-z!

The Form-master swung round, looking very annoyed.

"Dear me, there is the bell again!"

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged looks of consternation.

They knew very well that it was the unsuspected bell on top of the bookcase that was ringing, and not the one over the door. But what was making it ring? The desk Blake was to occupy when he came in for the German lesson was empty. What on earth was causing Glyn's bell to ring of its own accord?

Buz-z-z-z-z-z!

Mr. Linton strode to the door, and passed out. He evidently wanted to know who was ringing the bell. A murmur of voices broke out immediately the master's back was turned.

"What on earth is the matter with it?" said Tom Merry, in an undertone. "There's nobody at Blake's desk, so the wires can't get connected."

"Blessed if I can understand it!" said Lowther.

"I say, Glyn, was there anything uncommon about that bell—any of your beastly inventions stuck on it?"

"No, of course not; it was just an ordinary bell," said Glyn, who was looking mystified. "I can't understand what's making it ring."

"There's something wrong somewhere."

"Looks like it."

The re-entrance of Mr. Linton stopped the talk. The Form-master was looking very puzzled and angry. The class-room bell was worked from a switchboard in the lower hall, and anybody who chose to play a trick was at liberty, of course, to ring it, though the boy who should venture upon such a trick was likely to fare very badly if discovered. Mr. Linton could only conclude that someone had pressed the button in a spirit of mischief in passing, and he would have given a great deal to know whom that someone was.

"Silence!" he said crossly. "We will resume. Gore——"

Buz-z-z-z-z-z-z!

The Form-master fairly jumped.

"Merry, go and see if anyone is ringing the bell."

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry was only out of the class-room a few moments. He came back to report that he had seen none.

"Someone is playing an absurd trick," said Mr. Linton, his eyes glinting. "If I discover the person—ahem! I cannot imagine who it is, but he will be severely punished! You may take your seat, Merry."

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry sat down.

Buz-z-z-z-z-z-z!

Mr. Linton stared and glared. The impudence of the practical joker seemed to him almost inconceivable. He picked up his cane from his desk, and went out of the room, and with quiet steps down the passage.

"Aha!" he murmured.

Binks, the page of the School House, was coming along. He must have passed close by the button, and there was a grin on Binks' face. He did not see the Form-master, and as he came along he gesticulated, and muttered aloud:

"Har, har! They little know!"

"I think I know," murmured Mr. Linton.

Binks was given to reading lurid, cheap American fiction, and he felt under the many buttons of his uniform the bounding heart of a new Deadwood Dick or Arizona Bill. He preferred dreaming of bloodthirsty adventures to cleaning knives, and that often led to trouble with the House-dame. Binks hadn't touched the bell, and wasn't thinking of anything of the sort; but Mr. Linton couldn't possibly guess that Binks' mighty spirit was roaming over the mountains of the Far West.

As the page came closer, Mr. Linton reached out and grasped him by the shoulder. Binks came out of dreamland with a jump.

"Oh! I—I'm coming! I mean——"

"I hardly thought you would have the impertinence to play such a trick," said Mr. Linton. "As you have done so, however——"

"Ow!" gasped Binks, as the cane lashed round his plump form. "Ow! 'E's mad! Wot 'ave I done? Ow! Oh!"

"There!" said Mr. Linton. "Let that be a lesson to you, you foolish boy!"

"I—I—ow—ow——"

"Go!"

"But I—I——"

"Go!" thundered the Form-master.

And Binks went, very much hurt and astounded.

Mr. Linton, feeling somewhat relieved, returned to the class-room.

During his absence Bernard Glyn had dodged over to the unoccupied desk, and looked into it to see what was the matter with the wires. He found them connected up, as Gore had left them, and so knew at once, of course, that the trick was being played by a new wire from the desk. He disconnected them with a jerk, and returned to his own place as Mr. Linton came in.

"It's all right," he whispered to Tom Merry. "Somebody had connected them, and was working the wheeze with a new wire."

"Silence!" said Mr. Linton. "We will resume. Now, Gore!"

Gore's jaw fell. The wire being disconnected at Blake's desk, he could no longer ring the bell, and further interruptions of the same kind were impossible. The interruptions and the annoyance had sharpened Mr. Linton's temper, and Gore received the full benefit of it. During the next ten minutes Gore wished about fifty times that he had let the electric wires alone.

CHAPTER 5.

Quite a Success.

FOUR sounded from the clock-tower of St. Jim's, and Mr. Linton handed over his class to Herr Schneider, the German master. The Fourth Form came in, and Blake, in ignorance of the late happenings, sat down at the desk where he had concealed the battery. It was a beautiful spring afternoon, and the sunshine and soft breeze seemed to call the juniors out of doors. To grind over German in the dull class-room was a heavy task, and to escape ten minutes early was a very attractive prospect.

Blake looked at the battery in his desk, to make sure that it was all right. He was puzzled to find the end of Gore's wire there, but his own was soon put right, so he did not trouble his head about it.

Herr Schneider, on the subject of German irregular verbs, was what the juniors called a terror. The subject was a very interesting one to him, but he had not the gift of making it interesting to others. When the lesson had lasted a quarter of an hour, Blake thought it was time for the bell to go. It was only a quarter of an hour to Herr Schneider, but it seemed like whole hours to his pupils.

B-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!

Herr Schneider looked up in surprise.

"Mein Gott! Tat lesson is a ferry short vun mit itself, before!" he murmured. "I tinks tat te peil ring early, ain't it?"

B-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!

"Ach, it is te peil ring enoff!" The German master looked at his big watch. "Ach, mein vatch it is a quarter of an hour slow! Poys, te class is dismissed."

Gladly enough, the boys rose from their desks.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "It's worked like a charm!"

"Bai Jove, it's weally wippin'!"

Herr Schneider still seemed a little puzzled. He looked at his watch again, and held it up to his ear, and then crossed to the class-room window which gave a view of the big clock in the tower.

Jack Blake groaned.

"My hat! It's all up now."

But it was not quite up. Herr Schneider could see the face of the clock in the tower, but he could not make out the time. He was too short-sighted for the distance.

"Ach, I see it not!"

Blake breathed again.

"Gore," said Herr Schneider, calling to the nearest boy, "come and dell me vat is te time py tat glock."

Gore stepped to the window.

He was as anxious as the rest to escape from the class-room, and a lie came very cheaply to Gore.

"Half-past four, sir—just turned," he said cheerfully.

A look of disgust crossed Tom Merry's face.

"Cad!" he muttered.

"Ach, then it is tat I am quarter of an hour slow!" said Herr Schneider. "Tank you, Gore! Poys, you may go."

And Herr Schneider put on his watch a quarter of an hour. As a matter of fact, the watch had been quite correct.

The juniors trooped out of the room. Tom Merry's face was dark. In the passage he turned upon Gore, who was chuckling.

"Did him beautifully," said Gore.

"Yes, you cad!" said Tom Merry. "You told him a deliberate lie!"

Gore sneered.

"Of course, you wouldn't have!"

"You know I wouldn't," said Tom savagely. "It was a

good jape, and you've spoiled it by telling a beastly lie. I've a jolly good mind to go and tell Schneider now that you lied to him."

"Sneak!"

Tom Merry clenched his fists.

"You're not worth licking," he said, between his teeth, and he turned away. Gore, who had looked uneasy for the moment, breathed again.

"Lie or not, you're all jolly glad to take advantage of it," he said. "If I had told him the real time you'd have been in the class-room now."

"Oh, don't talk to me!"

"Yaas, watah! I wegard you as a wank wottah, Gore."

"Rotter isn't the word," said Blake. "He's a slimy toad. Pah! I can't breathe when I'm near Gore! Come along!"

Gore scowled savagely as he was left alone. But the chums were glad enough to get out into the sunny quadrangle. As luck would have it, they met Mr. Linton just outside the door.

The Form-master stared at them. He looked up at the clock tower and then at the juniors again.

"What are you doing out of class-room at this time?" he demanded.

"Been let out, sir," said Tom Merry meekly.

"But it is not yet time."

There was no reply to that.

"Is Herr Schneider ill?"

"I didn't notice it, sir," said Figgins of the New House.

"H'm! I shall see to this."

Mr. Linton went into the house. He looked in at the class-room, but the German was gone. He went along to Herr Schneider's study, and found the stout German master reposing in an armchair lighting his favourite German pipe, with a German newspaper in the eye-shattering type of the Fatherland on his knees. Herr Schneider looked up with a genial smile.

"You have dismissed the class early, Herr Schneider."

"I tinks not, Herr Linton. My vatch I find him to be a quarter of an hour slow, ain't it, pefore."

"What time do you think it is now?" asked Mr. Linton.

"Nearly twenty minutes to five, after."

"It is exactly twenty-three minutes past four," said the master of the Shell, looking at his own watch.

The German master jumped.

"Ach! But te class-room bell rang! I tinks it ferry early, but te clock in te tower—"

"The clock in the tower agrees with my watch."

"Mein himmel! Den tat poy lied to me—that Gore, when he look out of te window!"

"You say the class-room bell rang. I cannot understand it. Binks would hardly venture to repeat his trick. There is something in this I do not understand. I recall now that the new boy in my Form is much given to electrical experiments. Come with me, Herr Schneider, and I think we shall discover something in the Shell class-room."

"Ach! I tinks tat if it is a trick, I punishes tat poy."

They went into the Shell-room. Mr. Linton had been thinking the matter over, and it had occurred to him that he might have been too hasty with Binks. He had had occasion already to notice Bernard Glyn's electrical proclivities. With the new suspicion to go upon, the masters searched the desks, and the battery was soon discovered. Blake had intended to return later and remove it, but he had not had an opportunity yet.

Mr. Linton frowned as he saw it.

"Ach!" said Herr Schneider. "Vat does tat mean?"

"It is a dry battery," said Mr. Linton. "You see the wire goes up behind the bookcase. It undoubtedly connects with a bell there. That accounts for the fall of the bust to-day, I presume. There is the address of a Liverpool maker on this battery; but without that it would be pretty clear that it belonged to Glyn. Glyn has tricked you into dismissing the class a quarter of an hour before the correct time, Herr Schneider."

"Ach! I tinks I speaks to him apout it, ain't it."

"I leave you to deal with him," said the master of the Shell. Herr Schneider went back to his study, and selected a nice thick cane, and then proceeded to look for Bernard Glyn.

A crowd of boys were in the quad, but the German master was too shortsighted to see if Glyn was among them. He went to Bernard Glyn's study to look for him there first. The studious lad spent a great deal of his leisure time indoors. But as it happened, the study was unoccupied. Glyn had not yet come in.

The armchair standing close by the table looked very comfortable and inviting, and the German master looked at it. He still had his newspaper under his arm, and he decided at once to sit there and wait for Glyn. When the Liverpool lad came in he would find Nemesis, a stout and angry Nemesis, waiting for him in his study. With a sigh of contentment the plump German sank into the armchair, and the next moment he gave a gasp of horror and affright as the arms closed upon him and held fast to his fat ribs.

He was a prisoner!

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"THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S."

CHAPTER 6.

Herr Schneider in the Chair.

HERR SCHNEIDER remained quite still for some moments, too astonished to attempt to move. It seemed to him at first that he must be dreaming.

The armchair had looked so comfortable and inviting, and he had sunk into it with such a luxurious sense of repose.

"Mein Gott!" murmured the German master.

He moved his head from side to side helplessly, and tried at last to rise; but that was beyond his powers. The padded arms of the chair gripped his ribs with a steady pressure. His feet kicked into the air spasmodically.

"Himmel! I vas vun brisoner!" murmured Herr Schneider.

"Vat is it tat is te matter mit te chair, after? I tink tat te ting is bevitched, ain't it? I tink tat I not able to move pefore. Ach! vat is it tat I shall do?"

That was a question! After school in the beautiful spring weather the house was empty. Herr Schneider had noticed how deserted the studies and passages were as he came along to Glyn's quarters.

There was no help to be had. Unless Glyn returned to the study, the German master was likely to remain a prisoner in the armchair for a long time.

Herr Schneider had intended to remain there waiting for Glyn; but not under these circumstances. He could not comfortably read his paper with the padded arms gripping his ribs, and besides, the position was ridiculous as well as uncomfortable. But how to escape?

"Help!" shouted Herr Schneider. "Help, ain't it!"

But only the echo of his voice answered. The stout German had a deep, rumbling voice, but very little wind, and with the strong grip compressing his ribs, his wind was shorter than ever. His voice did not sound half way down the passage.

He realised that calling for help was no use; he had to help himself. He tried to rise, and lift the chair with him. It was a light weight, considering its size, and the German succeeded in getting upon his feet, with the armchair clinging on behind him.

But the effort was too great. He went down with a clatter upon the castors of the chair, and sat for some minutes gasping for breath.

"Mein Gott! But I vill punish tat poy! Ach! I haf neffer, neffer been in a bosition tat was more uncomfortable pefore!"

His next resource was to work the chair along on the castors towards the door, with his heels on the carpet, somewhat in the manner of an early velocipede. The chair ran easily on the little wheels—too easily, in fact, for it dashed against the door with a run, and crashed there with a shock that made the stout German gasp again.

"Ach, Himmel!"

He screwed the chair round and opened the door. It required some skilful navigation to steer the chair out into the passage, but the German master was desperate. He succeeded in getting through the door, and then went velocipeding down the linoleum of the passage.

The bumping of the curious vehicle first on one wall and then on the other, and the shrieking of the castors on the linoleum, soon attracted attention, as well as the gasping and grunting of the stout German.

Two or three fellows came running up, and they simply gaped at the sight of the stout German steering the armchair down the passage.

"My only hat!" gasped Clifton Dane. "It's Schneider, and he's off his rocker!"

"I guess he's balmy," said Buck Finn. "Fancy a fellow of his age playing a kid's game like this. I used to do it when I was nine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Herr Schneider commenced operations upon the sausages with a smile of contentment, while Glyn, at the next table, prepared to give him a surprise.

"Ach! Help!"

"He wants us to help him," said Gore, coming up. Gore recognised the armchair, and knew that Herr Schneider was in the same plight that Skimpole had been in, but Gore scented a joke. "He wants us to help him along."

"Must be mad," said Dane.

"Well, let's help him, anyway."

And Gore gave the armchair a shove that sent it along the passage at a spanking rate, with the German master waving his arms and legs frantically.

"Ach! Tat you stop! Stop, ain't it!"

"You asked me to help you, sir."

"Ach! Stop!"

"Certainly. But you asked—"

"I mean help me to get out of tat chair!" roared Herr Schneider. "Mein Gott! I am vun brisoner!"

"My hat!"

"Tat you release me, ain't it."

"Blessed if I know how to, sir," said Gore, examining the chair, with no intention of releasing Herr Schneider, even if he could. "There's a spring somewhere, I suppose. This is one of young Glyn's inventions, I suppose. Of course, I thought at first that you were having a game, sir, pushing yourself about in an armchair."

"Ach! I tink tat you speaks vun untroot, Gore. You vas an untrootful poy. I tink I canes Glyn for tis. Vere is that poy?"

"What boy, sir?"

"Tat Glyn. He know how to unfasten tat peastly chair, ain't it."

"Very likely, sir. I say, Mellish, old chap, go and find Glyn. I saw him in the gym." And Gore winked at Mellish, as a hint not to find the St. Jim's inventor. And Mellish winked back and ran off—not to find him.

Herr Schneider gasped.

"Tat tat, poy, be quick," he murmured. "I am short of

vind, and I am exhaust. I tink tat I bunish tat Glyn, ain't it before."

"He'll be here soon, sir," said Gore comfortingly. "Shall we wheel you downstairs, sir?"

"Ach, no! Te poy is mad, ain't it! Do you want to preak all my pones mit yourself?"

"Oh, no, sir! I don't suppose it would break many."

"Ach! Leave tat chair alone, ain't it. Stand pack, Gore. Dane, I tink tat you tries to find out how to open tat peastly chair, ain't it, before."

"I will try, sir, certainly," said Clifton Dane.

And he tried; but in vain. And then Buck Finn tried, and failed. The spring was not easily to be found. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came along the passage, and stopped in amazement at sight of the German master. He jammed his monocle into his eye, and took a survey of Herr Schneider.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ach! Tat you helps me, D'Arcy."

"Weally, Herr Schneider—"

"Dere is vun spring somevere," shouted Herr Schneider.

"Tat you finds him. Tat you looks for him after."

"Yaas, wathah, sir! This is a most wemarkable sight!"

"Look for te spring, ain't it!"

"Certainly, sir! This is a surpwisin' spectacle—"

"Look for te spring!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am extwemely sowwy to see that a mastah in this coll has been tweated with diswespect, sir."

"Vill you look for te spring!"

"Bai Jove, with pleasuah, sir!" D'Arcy looked for it. He squeezed his hand in between the arm of the chair and the German's plump ribs, and gave the master an unintentional pinch that made him shriek—"Bai Jove—"

"Ach! Ow!"

"Is anything the mattah, sir?"

"Ach! You pinch me!"

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"THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S."

"It was quite accidental, sir; there isn't much room between you and the chair, sir."

"Ach! You pinch me again! Ow! Stop! Idiot!"

D'Arcy drew back indignantly.

"Did you address me as an idiot, sir?"

"Ja, ja! Ass! Dummkopf!"

"I refuse to be chawactewised as an ass! I was twyin' to be obligin'—"

"You pinch me!"

"That was an accident, and I have remarked that I am sowwy."

"Ach! I feels to pain all to same, fool of a poy."

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"Tat you go and find Glyn," roared Herr Schneider.

"Certainly, sir. Undah the cires.—"

"Go at vunce!"

And D'Arcy went. Herr Schneider wasn't in a mood to be reasoned with. Fortunately, the swell of St. Jim's found Bernard Glyn outside the School House. He was chatting with Tom Merry & Co.

"Hullo, what's the matter?" exclaimed Tom Merry, as D'Arcy ran up, with less of repose than usual in his manner.

"Anything wrong?"

"Glyn is wanted."

"Who wants me?" said the Liverpool lad, looking round.

"Any silly ass been trying the electric machine in my study again."

"If you are alludin' to my expewience of that beastly machine—"

"My dear kid, I don't see why you should always imagine you're being referred to when a chap speaks of a silly ass," said Glyn, in a tone of remonstrance. "There are others, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the Terrible Three.

"Weally, you fellahs, I don't see anythin' to cackle at in that remark, which I have no alternative but to chawactewise as extremely personal. Undah the cires, howevah, I shall not twash Glyn—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wogard him as a beast, and if he were not a new boy I should give him a feahful thwashin'."

The Liverpool boy seized D'Arcy round the neck and hugged him in a transport of gratitude.

"Oh, thanks, thanks!" he exclaimed. "Are you really going to let me off a fearful thrashing?"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"But I am grateful."

"Ow! You are wumplin' my waistcoat! Leggo!"

"But—"

"You are ewumplin' my collah!"

"What does a collar matter at a moment like this?"

"You are disawwangan' my tie!"

"Never mind your tie."

"Ow! There goes my toppah!"

D'Arcy's topper went over the back of his head. He wrenched himself free from Glyn, and pounced on the topper. There was a big streak of mud on it as he picked it up. He glared at the lad from Liverpool. The Terrible Three were yelling with laughter, but Glyn was quite serious.

"You uttah ass!" roared D'Arcy. "You have wumpled my waistcoat, and ewumpled my collah, and upset my tie, and wuined my hat!"

"What a chapter of disasters!" gasped Tom Merry. "You had better slay him, Gussy. Anything short of that would be farceal."

"Something lingering, with boiling oil in it, is what I should suggest," said Monty Lowther.

"You—you uttah wottahs! Glyn, on weflection, I shall give you that thwashin'."

"Mustn't a chap show his gratitude without risking a thrashing?" said Glyn indignantly.

"I believe you were wottin'."

"Didn't you say Glyn was wanted, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove, yes—I forgot! Herr Schneidah wants him," said D'Arcy, jerking Tom Merry's handkerchief out of his pocket, and wiping the mud off the topper. "Herr Schneidah's been sitting in that beastly armchair, and he can't get out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah, it was vewy funnay, but Schneidah is in a feahful tempah!"

Glyn and the Terrible Three rushed off at once to see the German master. They found him in the upper corridor, still in the embrace of the armchair, and as red as a turkey-cock. The crowd round him had grown, and the passage was almost crammed with juniors, chuckling and grinning.

"Ach! Dere is tat Glyn! Glyn!"

"Yes, sir," said Glyn, hurrying to the spot. "It's all right, sir; I don't mind, though you might have taken the trouble to ask my permission."

"Ach! Vat is to poy talking about?"

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"You are quite welcome to the chair to have a game with sir," said Glyn, with a "cheek" that took Tom Merry's breath away; "it's all right. But—"

"Ach! Release me at vunce!"

"Are you finished, sir?"

"Feenished! Ach! I does te poy tink I got into dis chair of purpose?"

"Well, sir, you see—"

"I come to your study to bunish you," roared the German master. "I sit in te chair to wait. I get fasten. Ach! I bunishes you severely."

"Why, what have I done, sir?"

"You put bell in class-room to ring and make me dismiss classes."

"Phew!" said Tom Merry. "So it's out, kids."

Bernard Glyn looked serious.

"That—that was only a joke, sir," he said.

"I bunishes you for tat shoke."

"If you would overlook it this once, sir—"

"I not overlooks him. Release me dis moment."

Glyn fumbled about the chair. But the spring did not work. Perhaps there was something wrong with it.

"Vy you not release me?" roared Herr Schneider.

"The spring isn't working, sir," said Glyn blandly; a statement that was perfectly true, for it would not work unless it was pressed, and he was not pressing it.

"Ach! Cannot you vork it?"

"Shall I try, sir?"

"Ach! Ja, ja, stupid poy."

"If you would let me off this time, sir, for that affair in te class-room—"

"Release me at vunce."

"The spring isn't working yet, sir."

Herr Schneider gasped. The colossal nerve of the Liverpool lad astounded him. He was able to guess by this time that until he agreed to overlook the electric-bell escapade, the spring of the armchair wouldn't be working. It was a case of making terms; though from Glyn's bland smiles nobody would have guessed that he was dictating terms to a master.

"Glyn! You—you—you—I tink I overlook tat affair of te pell. After all, it was only vat you call bractical shoke."

"Yes, sir; that's all."

"I lets you off, I tink," said Herr Schneider, with an effort.

"Thank you, sir. That is very kind of you."

"Now find tat spring and release me."

Glyn succeeded in finding the spring in a remarkably short time. The German master rose puffing and gasping from the armchair. He gave Glyn a most expressive look, and went puffing downstairs. The juniors in the passage shrieked. Tom Merry clapped Bernard Glyn on the shoulder.

"Well, of all the cheek!" he said, "I think you take the bun."

CHAPTER 7.

Herr Schneider Does Not Play the Game.

BERNARD GLYN was a very quiet fellow, and he had not hitherto come into much prominence in the School House at St. Jim's, but the affair of the armchair brought him very much into notice. The School House juniors laughed over it till their sides ached, and Herr Schneider did not forget it. Herr Schneider had an interview with Mr. Linton that was not quite pleasant. The master of the Shell was surprised to learn that Glyn had not been punished for the escapade in the class-room, and he sniffed when he heard the story of the armchair. Herr Schneider resented that sniff very much, but his resentment was directed towards the Liverpool lad.

The next day was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and Bernard Glyn had arranged to take a party of the juniors to his father's place near St. Jim's. There was no German lesson in the morning, so Herr Schneider had to nurse his resentment till later. After morning classes were dismissed, Bernard Glyn was chatting in the passage to the Terrible Three, about the afternoon excursion, when the portly figure of the German master came along.

Herr Schneider was dressed for going out, with a silk hat on his head and an ulster on his arm. He stopped at the sight of the boys, and beckoned to Glyn.

"Yes, sir," said Glyn, going towards him.

The German blinked at him through his spectacles.

"Ach! Glyn, you had a ferry short German lesson yesterday?"

"Yes, sir; it was short, wasn't it?"

"I tink you know the cause of tat, mein poy?"

"I—I thought that was all settled, sir," said Glyn, in dismay.

"Ja, ja! Tat was settled. I looked over tat matter, Glyn."

"You were very kind, sir."

"But although I overlook to trick, I cannot allow mein pupils to fall behind in deir lessons," said Herr Schneider sententiously. "I tink tat perhaps you have lost something of your Sherman by leaving off too early, ain't it?"

"I—I think not, sir."

"Ach! Ve vill see. Giff me te—te—te pluperfect subjunctive of werden—quick!"

Glyn hesitated a second—and was lost!

"Ach! You knows him not! Den you vill go into the class-room and write out te whole conjugation of te verb werden from beginning to end," said Herr Schneider. "I gannot have mein pupils falling behind."

"Ich wäre geworden," said Glyn.

"Tat is too late! You vill write him out."

"But, sir—"

"Tat is enoff," said Herr Schneider, with a majestic wave of the hand. "Write him out ten times, mein poy, and remember him."

And Herr Schneider walked on, leaving the Liverpool boy with feelings too deep for words.

"Rotter!" said Monty Lowther. "Fancy raking up a matter again after it was settled. That's what comes of letting blessed aliens into the school. They don't play the game."

Glyn's brow was dark for a moment.

"He is a rotter," he said. "The German stuff is only an excuse. I know the conjugation of werden well enough, and he knows I do. It's a backhanded way of getting even with me for the armchair business."

"Never mind; we'll wake him up for it some time," said Tom Merry. "Buzz off and get the stuff written out."

Glyn looked concerned.

"I shall be keeping you fellows."

"That's all right; you're standing us a jolly excursion this afternoon, so we can afford to wait."

"Well, I'll buck up as fast as I can."

And Glyn ran off. The Terrible Three strolled out, and met the chums of Study No. 6, attired for the excursion. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking a picture as usual. From the tips of his little pointed boots to the crown of his silk hat he was elegance itself.

"Are you weady, deah boys?" he asked.

"We are," said Tom Merry. "Glyn's got an impot., though, so we shall have to wait a bit for him."

"Bai Jove, that's wathah hard cheese."

"Yes. We can fill in the time by making a cockshy of Gussy's hat."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Three shies a penny, and—"

"If you thwow anythin' at my toppah, Monty Lowthah, I shall have no alternative but to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Hallo, here's Skimmy!" said Jack Blake, as the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's came wandering by, with a huge volume under his arm, and a far-away look on his face. "Hallo, Skimmy. Are you ready?"

"Ready?" said Skimpole, stopping and blinking at Blake. "I do not quite comprehend. Do you mean ready for the revolution, which is to overturn the power of the capitalist classes, and bring forth the downtrodden masses to the inheritance of their just rights? Yes, I am ready. I have studied Socialist politics very carefully, and I am perfectly prepared to take the post of Prime Minister in the first Socialist Government. I—"

"My hat! What I mean is—"

"I shall first introduce a law to nationalise all bicycles," said Skimpole. "I had a desire to ride a bicycle this afternoon, and Gore has rudely and brutally refused to lend me his. Of course, under Socialism, I should be at liberty to ride anybody's bicycle."

"Mine, I suppose?" said Blake.

"Yes, yours, certainly, if I liked."

"Then I imagine there will be a jolly lot of thick ears given away under Socialism," said Blake. "If I found you on my bike—"

"Proper place for him," said Lowther. "You expect to see a crank on a bike."

"Really, Lowther, you fail to comprehend. I—"

"Are you ready, Skimmy—not for the revolution, that isn't coming off this afternoon—but for the run to Glyn's place—which is."

"Dear me, I had quite forgotten," said the absent-minded reformer. "It is perhaps fortunate that Gore did not lend me his bicycle, or I should have been far away by this time. Yes, I am ready, Blake. It was very kind of Glyn to ask me, as he knows I am greatly interested in models. Of course, I may be able to show him how to construct things far better than he could do without my assistance."

"Yes," said Tom Merry—"I don't think."

"You were waiting for me, I suppose."

"We're waiting for Glyn."

"Ah! I will fill up the time by reading you some extracts from this wonderful book of the famous Russian professor,

Lottoff Boshki, on the subject of 'Determinism.' Now, man being what he is—"

"I think I'll go and see how Glyn's getting on with his conjugations," said Tom Merry; and Monty Lowther said he would go with him; and Manners remarked that he thought he'd stroll along with both of them.

"Man being what he is, the product of the united influences of heredity and environment, it follows—"

"Hallo, there's Figgy going down to the cricket! Let's go and chip him!" said Blake; and he walked off with Herries and Digby. Arthur Augustus was restrained by his great politeness from following them.

"It follows," said Skimpole, "that to blame a man for his acts is to blame him for what he cannot help, as he did not choose his heredity or select his environment—or to put it in oth r words, he did not select his heredity or choose his environment. Is that quite clear, D'Arcy?"

"Ya-a-a-as, wathah!"

"Therefore, it is unjust to blame anybody for anything. Punishment is a delusion. How can you change the effect of heredity by punishing a man? How can you alter the result of environment by sentencing him? How can you?"

"Is that a widdle, Skimmay?"

"It is not a riddle. It is the Sphinx-problem that confronts the nations," said Skimpole, who had been reading Carlyle lately, and who always picked up the phraseology of the last book he had been reading. "It is the—"

"Bai Jove, that was a good hit."

"Ah, you think I present the matter in a telling way?"

"I was weferrin' to that hit Figgy's has just made ovah there."

"Oh, cricket! Can you possibly think of cricket when it is possible to study such a matter as Determinism, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And this," said Skimpole, "is the intellect of the governing classes—the brain power of a bloated aristocrat!"

"I object to the word bloated. Look at me—why, you as I am perfectly slim. I regard you as a nautah ass, Skimmay!"

"I was speaking figuratively."

"Then pway speak figuratively to somebody else. You are a feahful bore, Skimmay. I don't know wethah it's the result of your hewedity or your beasty environment, but there's no doubt about the wesult itself."

And Arthur Augustus walked over to watch the cricket, leaving Skimpole to expound Determinism to the desert air. The chums watched the New House juniors playing cricket, and cheerfully chipped Figgy's & Co. until Glyn was ready to come out. Then they left the gates of St. Jim's in a cheery party.

CHAPTER 8.

Glyn Gets His Own Back.

"ICES!"

It was a warm afternoon, and that notice in the window of a pastrycook's in the village caught Tom Merry's eye as the juniors walked down the ancient High Street of Rylcombe.

"Who says ices?" he said.

"Ices!" replied seven voices, with singular unanimity. And Skimpole blinked, and a moment later added "Ices!"

"Good. Then come in."

"Yaas, wathah. I wathah fancy an ice this afternoon, deah boy."

"Just the thing," said Lowther. "You can order a dozen for me to begin with, and then I'll let you know about the rest."

"Bai Jove! look there!"

In an apartment opening off the shop were tables arranged for teas, and on the hooks on the wall, close by one of the tables, hung a well-known ulster.

"Schneider!"

It was Herr Schneider's ulster, and his silk hat hung over it; but the German himself was not to be seen. Tom Merry chuckled.

"This place sells ripping sausages," he remarked. "I know Schneider often comes in here for a feed. He's just going to begin."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Bernard Glyn's eyes glistened.

"My hat! Hold on a tick, and I'll give him one for the impot he gave me this afternoon. I scent a wheeze."

"What's the ideah, deah boy?"

"You'll see in a tick."

Glyn crossed quickly to the table laid for the German. The inventor of St. Jim's generally had a collection of all sorts of fittings in his pockets, and on occasion he would turn out the most unlikely things. Electricity was his hobby, and he was never found without some of the fittings about him. Serious as he was over his hobby, he had a weakness for practical jokes of a harmless kind, and one of his favourite wheezes was making bells ring in unexpected places. The chums watched him with interest.

He drew a small electric bell from his pocket, and bent by the table. The room was quite empty; there was only one waitress in the place, and Blake, with instant judgment, had commenced giving her orders that kept her near the shop-window, and out of sight of what was going on in the inner apartment.

Glyn hooked the bell under the end of the table, jabbing a fastener into a crack of the wood, so that it hung there securely. There was a coil of double insulated wire connected with the bell. To uncoil it and run it along the base of the wall was quick work to him. There was oilcloth on the floor, somewhat rucked up at the edges, and the wire was almost out of sight when it was laid close.

The other end of the wire was brought up to a table at a short distance, and it was a moment's work to connect it up to a pocket dry battery. Glyn laid the little battery on the chair beside him, and placed his cap over it. One wire he left disconnected—when it was connected the bell under the German's table would ring.

The chums of St. Jim's watched him in silent admiration.

On the table, for the purpose of summoning the waitress, was a bell, which when pressed by the diner would give a buzz somewhat similar to that of an electric bell. Glyn's wheeze dawned on the juniors of St. Jim's at once, and they prepared to enjoy the result.

The waitress, without a suspicion, brought ices to the table round which the juniors clustered. A few minutes later the German re-appeared. He had been chatting with the proprietor of the place, giving him a description of how sausages were cooked in the Fatherland. He glanced towards the boys, and they all raised their caps respectfully. The German master sat down at the table, and tucked a serviette round his chest up to his ears. Then he looked impatient, and pressed the bell.

Buzz!

The waitress came along a minute later, with an appetising dish of sausages. Herr Schneider beamed.

"Ach! tat is goot," he said.

He helped himself from the dish, and commenced operations upon the sausages. He touched the bell again, and the waitress reappeared.

"Tat you prings me te lager," said Herr Schneider.

The lager beer was brought. Once more the German rang, this time for bread, and the waitress looked a little impatient as she brought it.

Then Herr Schneider seemed contented. He ate the sausages and the bread with great gusto, and took draughts of the lager beer to wash them down. A smile of beatific happiness overspread his fat face. He was far from his dear Fatherland, but this was like home.

Buzz!

The waitress, who was in the shop, uttered a slightly impatient exclamation, and came round to the German's table.

"Yes, sir?"

Herr Schneider looked up.

"Ach! Vat is it?"

"You rang, sir."

"I did not, mees. I want nothing."

"Very good, sir."

And the waitress, supposing that the bell had been touched by mistake, retired to the shop again.

Buzz!

Again the girl came to Herr Schneider's table.

"Yes, sir?"

"Ach! Vat you want?"

"You rang, sir."

"I did not ring. Go off mit you."

"Indeed you did ring," said the waitress, tossing her head.

"These young gentlemen must have heard the bell."

"I certainly heard a bell ring, miss," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Herr Schneider frowned at the juniors. The waitress returned again, and the German, looking considerably ruffled, resumed eating the sausages. Tom Merry & Co. chuckled softly, and moved off to a further distance, leaving Glyn alone at the table. They did not want Herr Schneider to suspect them.

"Pway bwing us some tea, deah boy—I mean gal," said Arthur Augustus, raising his silk hat to the waitress as if she had been a princess.

"Certainly, sir."

Buzzzzz!

The girl was bringing the tea when the bell rang again. She did not take any notice of it till she had taken the juniors their tea, and then she went up to the German master's table.

"What is it this time, sir?"

"Ach! Vat?"

"You rang, sir."

"I did not ring!" roared Herr Schneider. "Now tat you

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THURSDAY:

"THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S."

A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

By Martin Clifford.

are here you may bring me some more lager beer, but I did not ring."

The waitress retired behind the shop, and the juniors heard a whispered consultation with the proprietor. The girl's evident impression was that Herr Schneider was intoxicated.

Mr. Cook, the proprietor, came into the shop, looking indignant. He wasn't going to have his waitress, who also happened to be his daughter, bothered by a gentleman who had been drinking so very early in the day.

Buzzzz!

Mr. Cook came up to the German master's table.

"Did you ring, sir?"

"No, I did not ring, ain't it."

"I heard the bell, sir."

"You heard some odder bell. I heard a bell meinself. But I did not ring."

"Very good, sir."

Mr. Cook retired, looking wrathful. He was certain that Herr Schneider had rung the bell, and he was naturally angry.

"Fancy a man of his age playing silly tricks like this," he murmured to his daughter. "He looks very excited, too. He must have been drinking. If he should make a disturbance here it would ruin the place. If he rings again I shall put it to him straight."

Buzzzzz!

Mr. Cook rushed up to the table.

"You rang, sir."

The German master rose in his wrath.

"I did not ring!" he roared. "If you say tat I ring when I ring not, I throw you out of te place, ain't it?"

"I sha'n't be the one to be thrown out," said the proprietor determinedly. "You're not going to kick up a row here, if I know it. Out you go!"

"Vat!"

"Get out of my establishment!" exclaimed Mr. Cook, growing very red in the face. "I've had enough of you and your babyish tricks. Go home and lie down."

"Go home," murmured the German master, "und lie down! Himmel!"

"I wonder you're not ashamed to carry on so, before young persons, too!"

"Before young persons! Ach!"

"Go home at once," said Mr. Cook persuasively. "Better go home quietly."

"Ach! I have not feenish mein sausage."

"Will you go quietly?"

"I will not go at all. I poonches your head, ain't it, if you sheek me any more. I haf neffer been so boddered in mein life. Go away!"

"Are you going to leave my shop?"

"Vill you go away? Odervise I strikes you."

The German master looked so dangerous that Mr. Cook needed a little.

"Well, I give you a chance," he exclaimed. "But if that blessed bell rings again, out you go, on your neck—so I warn you!"

And he stamped away. Herr Schneider sat down again, puffing with rage, and started on his savoury sausage again.

Buzzzz.

Mr. Cook fairly snorted with wrath. It was the bell again! He rushed to Herr Schneider's table, and grasped him by the shoulder and yanked him off the chair. The German had just placed a forkful of sausage in his capacious mouth, and was fully enjoying the flavour. The sudden jerk off the chair sent half of it cramming down his throat, and he began to cough and splutter wildly.

"Gro-groo-gerrooooooh!"

"Out you go!" roared Mr. Cook. "Call a policeman, Emily. Out you go!"

"Ach! I not goes—"

"Off with you!"

"Ach! Feast! Engleesh prute!"

They waltzed down the shop to the door, and Herr Schneider went flying out upon the pavement. Mr. Cook stood in the doorway ready to dispute his return. Emily fetched the German's coat and hat and umbrella, and they were pelted at the astounded German master. Herr Schneider sat on the pavement, with the serviette round his neck, the most astounded man in the United Kingdom at that moment.

"Now off with you, or I'll give you in charge for bein' drunk and disorderly," said Mr. Cook, waving his hand at Herr Schneider.

The Herr staggered to his feet.

He was too amazed and dazed to think or act or do anything but blindly stare at the enraged Mr. Cook for some moments. Then he murmured unintelligible words in German, and gathered up hat, ulster, and umbrella! and went slowly down the street with the greasy serviette still hanging round his neck.

CHAPTER 9.

An Interrupted Smoke.

TOM MERRY & CO. hugged themselves with mirth in the tea-shop. While Mr. Cook was ejecting the German master, Bernard Glyn collected up his electric bell and the wire and slipped them out of sight, along with the dry battery, in his pocket.

Tom Merry slapped him on the back.

"Ripping, old chap!"

"It's amazing what you can do with a bit of wire, a battery, and a bell," said Jack Blake. "I should never have thought of a wheeze like that."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Glyn grinned.

"It will teach the alien bounder to play the game," he remarked. "He deserved it every bit for raking up a thing that was settled, and going for me again and cutting short our afternoon."

"Yaas, wathah! It was wathah wuff on him, but—"

"That's all right," said Digby. "He asked for it. But we've given the people here a lot of trouble over that jape, and I think it's about the proper caper for Gussy to stand the waitress a good tip."

"Weally, Dig—"

"I hope you're not growing mean in your old age, Gussy," said Blake with severity. "I think Dig's suggestion a jolly good one."

"Certainly," said Herries. "I was just going to suggest it myself."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"If Gussy refuses to do the right thing—"

"I wufuse to wufuse—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle at a chap in that wiculous way, deah boys. Of course, I shall stand the waitress a weally decent tip. Do you think half-a-sovereign will be enough, Blake?"

"Ass! Half-a-crown will be heaps."

"I wufuse to be called an ass—"

"You can give me the other seven and six," said Skimpole. "I will use it for the purpose of spreading the propaganda of Socialism—"

"Wats!" said D'Arcy. "There's the half-crown. Now I wathah think we had better be off, or Glyn's governah will give us up."

"Come on, then."

Quite satisfied with their reprisal upon the German master, the juniors settled their account at the shop and left. It was a short walk from Rylcombe to the residence of Glyn senior, through a pleasant lane.

"Hullo, what's that?" exclaimed Manners suddenly.

"What's which, my son?"

"Look!"

There was a low hedge along the lane, and on the other side of it could be seen a St. Jim's cap, evidently worn by someone sitting on the grassy bank in the field.

There was nothing strange in a St. Jim's fellow being there; any fellow might be spending the half holiday in the fields with a book. But a thin haze of smoke was rising close by the cap.

The owner of the cap was smoking.

Tom Merry's brows contracted a little, and he stepped upon a knoll beside the lane and looked over the hedge. Another cap caught his sight, and another spiral of smoke.

"Gore!" he muttered. "And Mellish!"

The cads of the Lower School were there—in a secure corner, as they imagined—and smoking cigarettes.

There was nothing of the "goody-goody" type about Tom Merry; he had his faults, and was often enough in trouble for them. But there were some rules he never broke, and would have disdained to break. The rule against smoking at St. Jim's was very strict, and every sensible fellow, knowing that it was made for his good, obeyed it. There might be something enticing in the secret cigarette, but it had to be paid for in shortness of wind on the playing fields; and besides, to a boy like Tom Merry, with a keen sense of humour, the absurdity of a boy aping the habits of a man was always apparent.

"These are jolly good smokes," said Mellish, puffing away with a very good pretence of enjoyment.

"Ripping!" said Gore. "Glad you like them."

"Oh, rather! What's the brand?"

"I— Why, what's— Ow!"

A hand had reached over the hedge, and gripped Gore by the back of his collar.

He started up with a yell.

He could not see whom his assailant was, but he was in a grip of iron, which dragged him backwards into the prickly hedge. The cigarette went down his sleeve, and he shrieked as he felt the burning tip against his elbow.

"Ow! Leggo! Help! I'm burning!"

"My hat!" gasped Mellish, springing up. "It's Tom Merry!"

"Tom Merry! Leggo! I'm burning!"

"Rot!" said Tom Merry. "What are you talking about?"

"How can you be burning?"

"Ow! The fag—fallen in my sleeve! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry, as he released the cad of the Shell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Beast! Oh!"

Gore rolled off the hedge, and tore away his jacket as if it had become red-hot. He turned a face flaming with rage upon Tom Merry.

"You—you beast! You rotter!"

"Serve you jolly well right," said Tom Merry, disdainfully.

"You shouldn't play these dirty, low-down tricks."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus, peering over the hedge eyeglass in eye. "I wegard Goah as a low wottah."

"Mind your own business!" howled Gore. "What's it got to do with you rotters, I'd like to know?"

"I'm head of the Shell, and it's expected of me to stop these piggy tricks," said Tom Merry, serenely.

"Well, you won't stop me."

"Your mistake; I shall."

"Yaas, wathah! I quite approve of Tom Mewwy's attitude in this mattah. If you knew what a wiculous ass you look with a fag in your mouth, Goah, I am sure you would not go in for smokin'."

"Oh, you shut up!"

"I wufuse to shut up. I insist upon pointin' out that a kid of your age looks a most wiculous object with a cigawette in his mouth. If it were at all smart and nobbay to smoke, you may be sure that I should do it. But I am quite aware that it is uttably wiculous at our age, as well as unhealthy. Therefore—"

"My hat! Doesn't he go on like a gramophone?" said Monty Lowther, admiringly.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Go it, Gussy—it serves Goah right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you put it in that light, I shall not make any furthah remarks to Goah on the subject."

Gore had taken a case from his pocket, and selected another cigarette. Tom Merry eyed him steadily.

"You are not going to smoke that," he said.

Gore gave him a look of defiance.

"I am."

"After what I have said?"

"You can say what you like—so long as I do what I like. You're not my giddy father-confessor, Tom Merry!"

"I wegard it as Tom Mewwy's duty, as head boy in the Shell, to give Goah a feahful thwashin'."

"And I jolly well shall," said Tom Merry. "You know the prefects leave this business to me as head of the Form, Gore?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Hand over those smokes!"

"Want them yourself?" sneered Gore; and Mellish cackled. But he left off cackling as Tom Merry jumped over the hedge.

"Hand them over!"

Gore, with a muttered word that was not good to hear, hurled the cigarette-case at Tom Merry's feet.

"Take them, then!"

"Good," said Tom Merry, quietly.

He knocked the cigarettes out of the case, and stamped them under his feet. Then he kicked the case back towards Gore.

Without a word he jumped the hedge into the lane again.

"I wegard that as a perfectly cowwect attitude, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Then I feel quite satisfied," he said. "Come on."

They went on. Gore looked down at his trampled cigarettes with a very evil look on his face. He picked up the empty case, and shoved it into his pocket.

"The rotters!" said Mellish.

"I'll make them squirm for it yet," said Gore, savagely.

"Tom Merry is getting altogether too high-handed. The beast; there goes a tanner's worth of smokes! I wonder where those rotters are going, by the way?"

"Oh, they're going to Glyn's place—it's down the lane from here."

Gore's eyes glinted.

"Good! Let's follow them—our smoke's done, anyway."

"May as well," said Mellish.

And the two baffled smokers, with very evil expressions upon their faces, plunged through the hedge into the lane, and followed in the direction taken by Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 10.

Arthur Augustus Puts His Foot in It.

"HULLO, what's that?"

"What's that, deah boy?"

Tom Merry stopped, his glance fixed suspiciously upon a tree beside the lane, at a short distance from the spot

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A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

By Martin Clifford.

where the smoke had been interrupted. Arthur Augustus put up his eyeglass and gazed in the same direction.

"I thought I saw somebody dodge behind that tree," said Tom Merry. "It might be one of the village kids up to some lark—"

"Or Gore," said Jack Blake. "Hallo—look out!" He caught Tom Merry by the shoulder and dragged him aside.

It was only just in time.

A heavy clod of earth came whirling from behind a tree, and it just missed Tom Merry as Blake dragged him aside. There was a yell of anguish from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as the clod, missing its object, crashed upon his silk hat.

The hat went flying, and fell muddled and dented to the ground, and D'Arcy gazed at it for a moment speechless.

The spiteful face of Gore peered for a moment from behind the tree. He scowled savagely as he saw that his aim had failed. But he had no time for another shot.

D'Arcy grabbed up the silk hat. The dent was deep, and the mud was dirty. Arthur Augustus was going on a visit, and he knew that Glyn's sister was at the house. And now—! It was not often that the swell of the School House lost his temper, but this would have made an angel wild. With the outraged hat in his left hand, and his gold-headed cane firmly gripped in his right, Arthur Augustus dashed towards the cad of the Shell.

Gore changed colour as he saw him coming.

Although he was in a Form above D'Arcy's, and much bigger and stronger, he knew what a tough customer Arthur Augustus was when his temper was roused; and, besides, the cane looked very dangerous.

Gore hesitated for a moment; and then ran.

He did not venture to pass near the juniors, and so he had to run on towards Glyn House; and thither he pelted at top speed, with the vengeful swell of St. Jim's hot on his track.

"Stop, you wottah!" roared D'Arcy. "I am goin' to give you a fearful thwashin'. I insist upon your stoppin' immediately so that I can thwash you!"

Jack Blake chuckled.

"Curious that Gore doesn't accept that tempting offer," he remarked. "I don't envy him if Gussy gets near him with that cane!"

"Serve the brute right what he gets," said Glyn. "He meant that clod for Tom Merry's chivvy. It was a dirty, cowardly trick!"

"By Jove! Gussy's gaining!"

They watched the race with interest, as the running figures dashed further and further off up the lane. Glyn smiled.

"They'll be in my place in a few minutes," he remarked.

"This lane doesn't lead anywhere else. They'll be at the lodge gates soon, unless Gore clears the hedge and takes to the fields."

"Gussy's too near him for that."

"By Jove! There they go!"

The St. Jim's juniors hurried on.

The lodge gates of Glyn House were in sight now at the end of the by-lane. They were wide open. Gore had caught sight of them, and it dawned upon him that he had no escape. D'Arcy was too close behind for him to think of dodging or doubling. He had no chance but to run on, and on he ran, through the lodge gates and up the drive. After him went the enraged swell of St. Jim's, far too excited to realise that he was chasing his enemy into private grounds.

The juniors followed them in, grinning. A patch of bright colour caught their eyes from a distance, and Glyn uttered an exclamation.

"There's my sister Edith!"

The juniors could see only a dress and a sunshade. D'Arcy saw nothing—noting but his flying enemy. Gore pounded on up the drive, and D'Arcy pounded on after him. Gore broke off across a green lawn towards a wide lake that glistened in the sun, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dashed after him.

There was a shout from the direction of the house.

"Hi, there!"

D'Arcy did not even hear.

He was gaining upon Gore, and that was all he cared about.

The cad of the Shell was gasping painfully for breath. He had been irritated at the interruption of his smoke; but as a matter of fact, he was paying dearly now for his smoking. D'Arcy was as fresh as paint, but Gore's wind had given in, and he had "bellows to mend" with a vengeance, as he pounded painfully on. He gasped and gasped with a sound like escaping steam as he trampled over lawn and flower-beds. A short,

stout gentleman in a smoking-cap was waving his arms excitedly at the juniors, and Miss Edith had lowered her parasol and was staring in amazement at the chase. Gore was labouring on directly towards her. He stopped as he saw the girl in his path, almost reeling from shortness of wind.

D'Arcy was upon him the next moment.

"Now, you wascal,—bai Jove!"

The swell of St. Jim's caught sight of the astonished girl.

In a moment all vengeful thoughts passed from his mind. Violence in the presence of a member of the gentle sex was not to be thought of for a moment; it was the worst of bad form, and to D'Arcy bad form was worse than anything else in the world. He stopped—and blushed—and bowed over his battered hat.

"Bai Jove! I beg your pardon!"

Miss Glyn looked at him with a slight smile.

She was a tall and very beautiful girl of about twenty-five, and Arthur Augustus, who as we know was of a susceptible nature, was very much impressed at once. But if Miss Glyn had been ninety years old and a miracle of plainness, Arthur Augustus would still have been all contrition at the present moment.

"I am awfully sowwy," he said. "I twust I did not alarm you?"

Miss Glyn laughed.

"Not at all. But—"

"I was w'ong to lose my tempah," said D'Arcy. "But I had no ideah of wunnin' into a lady, you know. That howwid boundah has wuinin' my hat, and I was about to give him a fearful thwashin'. I weally twust you were not alarmed. I know I look wathah tewwible when I am woused."

Before Miss Glyn could speak again, the little gentleman in the smoking-cap appeared upon the scene. He was gesticulating with fury.

"You—you—you—," he spluttered. "My lawns—you—you—my flower-beds—trampled—you—you—young—bless—my soul! I—"

"Papa—"

"The flower-beds, my dear! Trampled—trampled—the—"

"I am awfully sowwy, sir," said D'Arcy. "This wascal—bai Jove, he's gone—that wascal who has just bunked, sir—there he is ovah there, wunnin' like anythin'—he wuinin' my hat—"

"You—you—you—" Words failed the old gentleman.

"I was about to thwash him. I am extremely sowwy to have intwuded into private grounds," said D'Arcy. "I can only apologise most sincerely."

"You—you—that won't mend my flower-beds you've trampled on, you young rascal," shouted the old gentleman.

"My dear papa—"

"Trampled on, my dear, trampled on."

"I am feahfully sowwy. Howevah, I must wefuse to be chawactewised as a young wascal. I have already apologised, which I should wegard as quite sufficient from one gentleman to another," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

The old gentleman looked at him speechlessly. Miss Glyn was smiling, but her father failed to see anything comical in trampled flower-beds, however handsome an apology he received afterwards.

Fortunately, at that moment the hurrying juniors from St. Jim's arrived upon the scene. Glyn was laughing.

"I say, dad—"

"Is that you, Bernard? And your friends!" The old gentleman's face cleared. "I am glad to see you. You are late. This young rascal—"

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"That's Gussy, sir—friend of mine—Gussy D'Arcy."

Mr. Glyn started.

"A—a—a friend of yours, Bernard?"

"Yes, dad. Don't mind him making a break over the flower-beds—he's always doing things like that."

"Weally, Glyn—"

"I—I am sorry," stammered the old gentleman. "Of course I did not know—"

"Your apology is accepted, my deah sir," said Arthur Augustus graciously. "I was weally to blame, but I was exasperated by that howwid wottah wuinin' my hat. I twust that the damage is not great."

Mr. Glyn made no reply to that. His politeness was put to a great test, but it stood the strain. Bernard Glyn, who was still grinning, introduced his companions, and the millionaire gave them a cordial welcome.



"My hat!" gasped Mellish, springing up. "It's Tom Merry!"

CHAPTER 11.

The Young Inventor's Workshop.

"**B**AI Jove! You are vewy well fixed here, deah boy." That was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's opinion, shared by his chums, as he looked round Bernard Glyn's quarters.

Glyn was the son and heir of a millionaire, and naturally he had many possessions that the St. Jim's fellows admired immensely and with a good-natured envy. He had three rooms to himself at Glyn House, and one of them, a very large apartment, was fitted up as a workshop, with every appliance that a young mechanic's heart could desire.

Glyn showed his possessions cheerfully, without a trace of "bumptiousness" in his manner, though the fittings of that room alone must have run into hundreds of pounds.

Skimpole looked about him with keen admiration, blinking into first one corner and then another, and leaving nothing unturned. Skimpole never had any money, but he was not at all envious; only he could not help reflecting what he might have done, with his great intellectual powers, had he been equipped for experiments as Bernard Glyn was. By this time his airship might have been soaring above the clouds, or raining shells upon some hostile city—at least, so Skimpole thought. As a matter of fact, the airship was very much in the air at present. Skimpole belonged to the numerous class of inventors who conceive a hazy idea upon a subject, and without thinking out the details, regard themselves as having made great discoveries. Even given opportunities, he lacked the mental concentration necessary for bringing his theories to the test of practice. But Skimpole would have been the last to see that obvious fact.

"Some fellows have all the luck," he said. "However, I

should be willing, as I suggested before, to go into partnership with you over my airship, Glyn—a million pounds each out of the profits, and the rest to be devoted to the propagation of Socialism. Of course, under Socialism I should have as much right to use this workshop as you have—your possession of it is only a matter of form."

Glyn laughed.

"But what's the idea of the airship?" he asked. "How are you going to raise it from the ground?"

"I have not thought out that detail yet," said Skimpole. "But I shall, of course, raise it by—by some simple method of elevation."

"How are you going to get it along?"

"I have not definitely decided; but I shall effect that by some simple method of propulsion."

"Is it to be heavier than the air or lighter?"

"I am leaving that point open for the present."

"What will it be made of?"

"That is a detail to be settled later."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Then what on earth does the invention consist of?"

"Really, Merry—"

"I suppose you're leaving the whole thing to be settled definitely later?" grinned Jack Blake.

"Certainly not, Blake. The main idea is settled, and that is the chief thing—the main idea of the navigable airship."

"And what is the main idea?"

"The—the main idea?"

"Yaas, wathah—what is it, deah boy?"

"I don't know that I could go into details," said Skimpole.

"You would probably not comprehend. I have not thought out the details yet, either."

"But the main idea?" persisted Glyn.

"Well, of course the main idea is—is a conglomeration of combined details," said Skimpole. "Without going into details I could hardly make you understand, and I have not yet thought out the details."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not see anything comical in that remark, Merry."

"Never mind; I do."

"What I am afraid of is that my idea may be used by others," said Skimpole, looking anxious. "The Wrights and others are getting very near to success now, and if they keep on long enough they may hit on the great idea. I suppose a really workable airship would be worth millions of pounds, but—"

"But you're not particular about a million or two," said Blake.

"I do not mean that. I should be willing to leave the profits to Glyn, for the sake of using the airship for the propagation of Socialism. Imagine Socialist literature raining down from the skies."

"Bai Jove!"

"I foresee the time, very near at hand now, when airships will take the place of motor-buses," said Skimpole. "You step on the airship, pay your twopenny, and are carried anywhere you like. The saving on the roads alone, in the cost of the upkeep, will be enormous. A further development of the idea will be aerial taxi-cabs. You see, there's a great deal in it, and as my invention is a certain success, I am really surprised that Glyn doesn't snap at the chance."

"It's because I'm not business-like," said Bernard Glyn solemnly. "I don't know a good thing when I see it. But you can experiment here, if you like, and as much as you like, so long as you don't break anything."

"Thank you very much, Glyn. I shall take advantage of your kind offer. What is this bar across the window for?"

The juniors looked at it. From Glyn's workshop a pair of French windows opened upon a quiet lawn behind the house. The windows opened outwards, upon stone steps down to the lawn. Across the doorway, inside, was a bar which seemed to lie loosely in its sockets.

Glyn looked round, and laughed.

"That's a burglar-stopper," he said.

"Bai Jove," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the bar. "I would fail to see how that would stop a burglar. The doors open outwards, so the bar wouldn't prevent a burglar opening them."

"It would prevent his coming in."

"Blessed if I can see how," exclaimed Tom Merry. "Why the bar is lying loose in the sockets, and anybody could lift it out."

"Try it."

But Tom Merry drew back his outstretched hand.

"Hallo, what little game is there on?" he asked, looking at Glyn, who was laughing.

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Indeed, that bar cannot possibly stop a burglar," said Skimpole, blinking at it very intently through his spectacles. "You see, it lies quite loosely in the metal sockets, which are not even made to fasten. I could lift it out of its place easily enough, with a movement of the hand."

"Good," said Glyn. "Lift it out, and I'll accept your offer of going into partnership over the giddy airship."

"Dear me, then I will certainly do it."

And the genius of St. Jim's grasped the bar firmly.

The next moment he gave a shriek.

"Ow! Wow! Gow-wow!"

He tried to let go the bar, but he couldn't. Neither could he lift it from its place. He could do nothing but jump up and down spasmodically, and utter wild yells. The perspiration streamed down his brow, and his spectacles slid down his nose. He danced and yelled, and the juniors burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow—wow—wow!"

"Bai Jove! I never thought of that, you know."

The burglar-stopper was a safer one than bolts or bars could have made. The light bar across the French windows was a conductor, and it was connected with a powerful battery at some distance. The current was powerful enough to overcome a strong man, and keep him a prisoner hanging to the bar until the police should come.

Glyn grinned and shut off the current.

Skimpole staggered away gasping.

"Think it's safe enough now?" grinned Glyn. "I fixed that up myself, though I haven't caught anything bigger than a tom-cat on it so far. I could turn a current on if I liked powerful enough to kill an elephant if he touched the bar."

The juniors backed away rather hastily.

"Bai Jove! I regard you as a wathah dangewous animal, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't turn on the current while I am here."

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NEXT

THURSDAY:

"THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S."

"Not much! You would be just the chap to sit on the bar if I did."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Dear me," gasped Skimpole, "I am very much shaken, but I think upon the whole that electricity is good for the nervous system, and I already feel better. I think, however, that I will sit down for a few minutes."

"Mind your eye," grinned Monty Lowther. "You know what sort of chairs you find in Glyn's quarters."

But the warning came too late.

Skimpole had sunk into a particularly comfortable-looking easy chair near the French windows of the workshop. It was a wide, deep chair, and looked big enough for the proportions of a Falstaff to repose at ease in the yielding depths of it.

But Skimpole did not repose at ease.

He gave a wild gasp, and the next moment all that could be seen of him was his boots and his hands.

The seat of the chair was a little too yielding—it had sunk away out of sight, and Skimpole had been engulfed. As a matter of fact, it was not a chair at all, but a deep chest in the shape of one, and the lid formed a collapsible seat—and Skimpole was in the chest now, blinking up in amazement at the toes of his boots.

"Dear me!"

The juniors stared at the boots protruding from the bottom-less chair.

"Bai Jove! Where's Skimmy?"

"Please help me out," came a muffled voice. "I am feeling most uncomfortable. I—I am folded up in the middle like—like a pocket-knife. Please help me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I feel most uncomfortable."

"You look it!" grinned Tom Merry, gazing down upon the unfortunate Skimmy, whose knees were almost under his chin, and who could not have struggled out of his uncomfortable position to save his life. "My hat! I don't see how we're to get you out, either, without amputating some of you."

"Really, Merry—"

"Do you prefer to lose your legs or your head, if amputation is necessary?"

"I—I—I—"

"It's all right," grinned Bernard Glyn, and he touched a spring at the back of the chair. The front of it immediately fell away, and Skimpole was shot forward, sliding out on the floor, and the chair closed up into its original position. "You're all right, Skimmy. That's another of my trespasser-catchers. There have been several curious people caught in that chair, who came nosing about my workshop while I've been at school."

"While you've been at school!" exclaimed Digby. "Then how on earth long did they stay there?"

"Until they were found," said Glyn coolly. "You see there's an electric button connected with the seat here, and when the chair-bottom falls through it rings a bell in the servants' hall—when it's in order. I disconnected it just now, or else we should have somebody coming along to see what the matter was. We had a capture in this chair last week—a village kid who was doing some work here, and thought he'd like to look round my quarters. He got in—and he happened to sit in that chair—and he was the most scared kid you ever heard of by the time he was helped out."

"Bai Jove! I should think so."

"I rather think I'll think twice when you ask me to take a seat," said Herries, staring rather grimly at that very peculiar armchair.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Glyn, laughing. "No tricks on a guest, you know. Skimmy took the bar of his own accord, and he sat in the chair without giving me time to warn him."

"Any more pleasant little surprises like that knocking about?" asked Manners, looking curiously at the workshop.

"Yes, heaps," said Glyn. "But I've got something to show you in the garden that'll interest you more."

"Bai Jove! What's that?"

"My model railway."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "Why wasn't I born the son of a giddy millionaire! How does the railway work—will it carry you?"

"Yes, rather—two or three of us, if we like. But I'll show you."

Glyn stretched out his hand to the bar across the door.

"Bai Jove! Look out, deah boy!"

Glyn laughed, and lifted out the bar. It did not hurt him. He had shut off the current without any of the juniors noticing where or how.

"This way!" he said.

He pushed the French windows open, and they followed him down the wide, mossy stone steps into the trim garden. And what they saw there brought an exclamation of great admiration from everyone.

CHAPTER 12.

On the Model Railway.

It was a sight that would have pleased any lad with a turn for mechanics, and it delighted Tom Merry & Co. Expensive as Glyn's possessions were, they had hardly looked for anything on the scale of this.

It was a "model" railway, but of a size that far exceeded anything the juniors from St. Jim's had anticipated.

The track was laid in a circular form on the lawn, and it was of substantial make and size, the lines well laid on solid sleepers. There were signals along the line, and a miniature station complete. But the juniors' admiration increased as they saw the locomotive.

Glyn's face glowed with pleasure as his companions gathered round the engine, which was evidently the pride of his heart.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, jamming his monocle into his eye and surveying the locomotive. "I wogard that as wippin'!"

"It is ripping, rather," said Blake, in great admiration. "You couldn't make one like that under an hour, could you, Gussy?"

"I think not, Blake—oh, you are wottin', you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And will it weally wun along the line?" said D'Arcy, as if that was really too much to expect of even such a ripping locomotive.

"Or does it walk?" murmured Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Yes, rather," said Glyn, laughing. "It isn't just to look at, you know. It will carry any two of us sitting on the tender."

"Bai Jove!"

"Wait till I get the steam up, and then—"

"Bai Jove! It goes by steam!"

"Of course it does, ass! How the dickens should a steam-engine go?" demanded Glyn. "Did you think I pushed it along from behind?"

"Weally, deah boy, I didn't think about it at all. Upon weffection, I suppose a steam-engine would go by steam."

"He's worked that out in his head," said Monty Lowther admiringly, "and without the aid of a net."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Let's have a ride," said Herries. "Nothing like seeing it work."

"Right you are!"

Jack Blake looked doubtfully at Herries.

"What about Herries' feet!" he said. "Will the engine stand the weight?"

"You let my feet alone," said Herries wrathfully. "What about your own swelled head? Blessed if a real railway-engine could stand that sometimes!"

"Look here—"

"Rats!"

"Pway don't argue, deah boys! Where do you light the fire in that wippin' engine, Glyn? If you will lend me an old pair of gloves I shall be vewy pleased to light the fire for you."

"There isn't any fire, ass—it's heated by paraffin."

"Is it weally? Bai Jove!"

Glyn soon had the locomotive in working trim. The steam rose and puffed away in a very realistic manner. The juniors looked on in delight.

They did not suspect that two pairs of eyes were watching them from the top of the garden wall.

Gore and Mellish were looking over into the garden behind Glyn House, much interested and puzzled by what they saw.

"It's a giddy railway-engine," said Gore. "My hat! They're going to ride on it, too. That chap must have pocketfuls of money."

"Looks like it! I suppose there's no chance of us getting a ride on it, if we asked?" said Mellish.

Gore chuckled.

"I expect we should get the order of the boot if we were seen here."

"I suppose so. Hang them!"

"I'd like to chuck the beastly engine off the line when they're going round," said Gore savagely. "It would be a screaming joke."

"So it would—but you couldn't manage it."

"I'm going to see, anyway."

"What are you going to do?" asked Mellish, as the cad of the Shell swung his leg over the wall. There were trees between the wall and the group of juniors, who were besides far too keenly interested in the model locomotive to have eyes for anything else.

"I'm going in—come on!"

"I'm not coming."

"Yes, you are," said Gore, seizing Mellish by the shoulder and dragging him across the wall. "I'm not going alone. Don't be a coward!"

"I—I'd rather not risk it. Let go!"

"Bosh! You're coming!"

Mellish had no choice but to drop down on the flowered border inside the wall. He went ankle deep into the soft soil, and sat down violently. Gore dropped lightly down beside him. Mellish rose to his feet with a scowl.

"There'll be trouble about this," he grunted. "We're trespassers here."

"Stuff! They won't treat St. Jim's boys as trespassers," said Gore. "If we meet any servants about we can pretend we belong to the visitors, and our caps will bear us out."

"Tom Merry's boot will bear you out if he catches you."

"Oh, shut up; he won't catch me! I'm going to put a spoke in their wheel if I can!" growled Gore. "Come on, and keep under cover; they can't see us if we keep in the trees! And hold your jaw!"

They crept nearer to the group of juniors, but took care not to show themselves. The model engine was giving forth puff after puff with a business-like sound, and Glyn had taken his seat astride of the tender.

"Come on, one of you!" he said.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Upon weffection, I am afwaid my clothes might get wumped. You go, Tom Mewwy!"

"Right you are, kid!"

"Jump on, then!"

Tom Merry straddled the tender behind the youthful engine-driver.

Puff! puff! The whistle shrieked, and the locomotive glided along the line.

"Bai Jove! She's off!"

The group of juniors watched with the keenest interest.

Gathering speed as she went the engine rolled on, carrying the two juniors behind on the tender.

"Bravo!" shouted Blake.

"Hip-pip!"

Right on went engine and tender with their burden, making the circuit of the rails, and then round again at an accelerated speed.

CHAPTER 13.

A Narrow Escape.

GORE and Mellish watched from the trees, at a point near the model railway furthest removed from the engine-house. Tom Merry's chums were standing near the engine-house, looking on with keen interest, and ignorant of the fact that the two cads of St. Jim's were in the garden at all. Their glances followed the engine as it rolled, and as the track was a very long one, when they were watching one point their backs were almost turned to the opposite point. Gore noted it, and an evil gleam came into his eyes as he watched.

He looked quickly about him under the trees. Mellish followed his glance uneasily. He knew that some evil thought was in the mind of the Shell bully.

"What are you looking for?" he muttered.

"Something to stick on the line."

Mellish almost jumped.

"You duffer! They'd see you!"

"No, they won't! When the engine's over that side of the railway, they're looking at it, and can't see in this direction."

"No, but—"

"It wouldn't take a second to pop out of the trees and stick a log or something on the line."

"But—but—but—"

"But—but—but," sneered Gore, "what are you but—but—butting about, you worm?"

Mellish had turned quite pale.

"You fool!" he muttered "that's past a joke. Suppose it throws the engine off the line—"

"That's what I want."

"It—it might injure them."

"I don't care if it does," said Gore. "That's what I'm going to do. Who would know—we could cut off in a jiffy."

"I—I don't want to injure them. I won't have a hand in it. You're a mad fool. You can do it by yourself."

"Can I?" said Gore, with glinting eyes. He had wrenched a jagged piece of wood off a rustic chair that was standing under the trees. "This will do rippingly. You can nip out and stick this on the line, Mellish."

"I—I won't!"

"You will. You're smaller than I am, and lighter, and you can run faster. It won't take you a second, when their backs are turned. Then if the engine goes round a third time they'll be done in."

"I won't have a hand in it."

"You will, or—" Gore clenched his fist, and towered threateningly over the smaller boy. "Are you looking for a hiding, you worm?"

"If you touch me I'll call out to Tom Merry," said Mellish, desperately.

Gore gritted his teeth, but he held his hand. He controlled his savage temper with an effort.

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A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By Martin Clifford.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S."

"All right, you worm—I can do it. Keep your head shut."

"You'd better not—I tell you——"

"Oh, shut up."

Mellish relapsed into uneasy silence. He was ready enough to play any spiteful trick upon Tom Merry & Co., but he felt that such a dangerous trick as Gore was contemplating might end seriously—and a serious result meant trouble. Gore was too reckless by nature to think or care for that; but Mellish thought and cared a great deal. But it was useless to attempt to dissuade the bully of the Shell.

Gore was watching his opportunity.

The engine had passed the place where they crouched in cover, a second time, and was speeding on towards the engine-house.

It reached the furthest part of the circular railway, and the group of juniors, following it with their eyes, had their backs turned towards the spot where Gore was waiting and watching. That was his chance.

He whipped out of the trees, and laid the jagged fragment of wood on the line, and whipped back again into cover, almost in the twinkling of an eye.

It happened so quickly that Mellish, in spite of his nervous uneasiness, could not help admiring the way his companion had effected his purpose. The jagged fragment lay on the line, and Gore was crouching in cover again.

"Come on," muttered Mellish, "Let's get clear while there's time."

"Shut up!" Gore did not stir. "I'm going to see the smash. Then there'll be plenty of time to cut. Wait till they're round a third time."

Puff! puff!

The engine, at a greater speed than ever, was dashing gaily on with the two juniors sitting astride of the tender. Lengthy as the model track was, it required less than a minute for the locomotive to reach the obstacle on the line and dash into it.

But at that moment there came a shrill cry from the direction of the house.

"Stop!"

The juniors standing by the engine-house looked up in surprise. The girl was running towards the model railway, with a deadly-white face.

"Stop! Bernard, put the brake on!"

He caught his sister's terrified glance, and heard her cry, without knowing in the least what was the matter.

"Put the brake on!" she cried.

Glyn's hand sought the brake. He knew that something must have happened to so excite his usually quiet and calm sister, though he could not realise what it was. But Tom Merry's eye had swept along the track.

"Brake, quick!" he gasped. "There's something on the line."

The brake jammed on.

The engine slowed down, and as it slowed, Glyn caught sight of the jagged lump of wood on the line, and changed colour.

"Great Scott! How did that get there!"

The engine stopped—only three feet from the obstacle. Gore gritted his teeth, and Mellish was trembling.

"She must have seen you, Gore," he muttered. "For goodness sake, let's cut."

"Come on, then," muttered Gore, who was pale himself now. Tom Merry and Glyn jumped off the tender.

The juniors of St. Jim's were running towards the spot now, and their looks were amazed as they saw the obstacle on the line.

"Who on earth put that there?" exclaimed Blake.

Glyn looked astounded.

"We've been round twice, and the line was clear," he exclaimed. "How on earth—did you see it put there, sis?"

Edith Glyn pressed her hand to her heart.

"Yes, yes," she said breathlessly. "I was coming this way to see you working the railway, when I heard the whistle—and I saw a boy run out of the trees and put the piece of wood on the line. I—I thought you might be killed."

"Bai Jove! It must have given you a fearful fright, Miss Glyn," said Arthur Augustus, sympathetically. "I think the wotten wascal ought to have a fearful thwashin'."

Glyn's brows contracted darkly.

"I don't know about being killed," he said. "We shouldn't have fallen far! But we should have been hurt, I'm jolly certain of that—and the engine might have been busted up! Who on earth—some village kid—"

Miss Glyn shook her head.

"It was a school-boy—he had a cap like yours."

Tom Merry started.

"Gore! Which way did he go?"

"He ran into the trees again."

In a moment the St. Jim's juniors were dashing into the trees in search of the perpetrator of what might have been a dangerous outrage—all except Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Even in that moment of excitement, D'Arcy's natural courtesy towards the fair sex did not desert him. Miss Glyn was very much shaken, and the swell of St. Jim's offered her his arm back to the house with all the grace of a Grandison. Miss Glyn smiled and accepted it. Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. were looking vengeancefully for the delinquent.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S."

CHAPTER 14.

Caught!

TOM MERRY & Co. looked, but they looked in vain. They hunted through the trees and shrubberies, and up and down the garden, but they did not find Gore. But the cad of St. Jim's was not far off.

Mellish had made a blind dash towards the wall, over which they had climbed to enter, but Gore dragged him savagely back.

"Not that way, dummy."

"But—but—they—"

"Shut up! They'll see us if we climb on the wall now."

"Oh, dear! So they will!" Mellish stopped, trembling.

"You—you brute, I warned you not to do that! You might have injured them for life! You—you fool! You've got us into a nice mess."

"Shut up, you snivelling worm," muttered Gore, fiercely. "We've got to get out of this somehow."

"We can't! They'll see us—and they'll be after us in a minute anyhow. They've bound to find us."

"Shut up—while I think. Here, dodge into these rhododendrons."

"I tell you—"

Gore's fierce grasp dragged Mellish into the shrubbery, and he was silenced. But there was rebellion in his looks.

"I'm not going to be run down by them—I'll go out and own up," he muttered. "After all, it was you put the log on the rail, and the girl must have seen you."

"Hold your tongue."

The shouts of the St. Jim's juniors could be heard now as they searched among the trees. Gore bit his lip desperately, still keeping his grasp upon Mellish. He knew that Edith Glyn must have seen him, and that he could not fail to be recognised and identified by her if he were captured. The thought of a report to the Head of St. Jim's made him quake.

But it was impossible to gain the wall, and hiding in the shrubberies could not save him for many minutes.

What was to be done?

As the voices of the juniors came nearer, Gore dragged his companion further towards the house, where the French windows of Bernard Glyn's room stood invitingly open. The shrubberies extended close up to the stone steps, and it struck Gore that he had found a possible refuge.

He muttered in Mellish's ear,

"Quick! Cut in here."

"I—I won't! In the house! You're mad!"

"It's the only chance."

"We may get cornered there—"

"We shall get cornered here if we stay."

"It's—it's all your fault," whimpered Mellish.

"Oh, shut up, and come on."

His grasp was like iron on Mellish's arm. They ran together for the steps, and sprang into the room. The juniors, still in the shrubberies, did not see them, and when they came out into the open, Gore and Mellish were safe indoors.

Tom Merry & Co. gathered on the lawn and looked about them. It did not occur to them that the intruder might have had the nerve to take refuge inside the house. Glyn was of opinion that the rascal, whoever he was, had dodged away to one of the gates, or hidden himself in a tree.

"I wish I had my bulldog here," said Herries, with a rather challenging glance at his chums, "Towser'd track him down in next to no time."

"Yes—I don't think," Blake remarked.

"You know how Towser tracked people down, Blake. Why—"

"Yass, wathah; he can twack down a kippah, at all events, as we know from experience," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Look here, you ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass."

"If you say that Towser can't—"

"Oh, blow Towser!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Whatever Towser can and cannot do, Towser is in his kennel at St. Jim's now, so we can leave him out."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The beast appears to have got away, whoever he was, and that's the great point," said Blake. "There's precious little doubt in my mind that it was Gore."

"You hear that?" whispered Mellish, as the two cads of St. Jim's crouched behind the curtains in the room, and listened to the talk on the lawn.

"Hold your row! they'll hear you," whispered Gore savagely.

"We shall find out; and if it was, we'll warn him," said Tom Merry. "Luckily, there's no damage done."

"That's all right," said Glyn; "don't bother further. Would any of you care to have a run on the railway now? We're going to have tea on the lawn here in time for the walk back to school with dad and Edith. If you'd care to run on the railway—"

"Yes, rather!"

"Ripping, my son!"

"Good! Then we'll get going."

A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By Martin Clifford.



This picture appears on the cover, and illustrates an amusing incident in the school tale entitled, "Wharton & Co. versus Merry & Co." contained in "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on sale. Price One Halfpenny.

The engine was at a standstill; but Bernard Glyn soon had it going again, and it puffed away in fine style. The juniors of St. Jim's were all keen to ride on the tender, and they went round and round the circular railway in great spirits. Then Glyn coupled on a waggon behind, and tried the engine with three juniors. D'Arcy sat in the waggon, and was carried round in great comfort, sitting with his silk hat in his hand, in an attitude of great elegance.

It was great fun, and the juniors enjoyed themselves immensely; but the time did not pass so quickly to the two young rascals watching from the open windows of the workshop.

While the juniors were on the lawn, it was impossible for Gore and Mellish to escape by the way they had entered, and for a time they were nonplussed. Mellish was beginning to complain again, but Gore's savage scowl cut him short. Gore was not in a mood to be trifled with.

"We've got to get out somehow," he muttered desperately.

"We can't. They'd see us in a jiffy if we cut."

"The brutes can't remain there for ever."

"Didn't you hear Glyn say they were going to have tea on the lawn after they'd done riding on the tender?"

"He may have meant in front of the house."

"He said the lawn here."

"Oh, hang him!—and hang you! What's to be done?"

"Go out and own up."

"Hold your tongue! If the girl hadn't seen me, I'd say I came in for a lark; but now—oh, shut up! I wonder if we could get out through the house?" said Gore, looking towards the inside door of the workshop.

Mellish shrank back.

"We should be bound to run into some of the servants, or somebody belonging to the house."

"Yes, I suppose so. Well, we've got to remain here."

"They may be in any minute now. They've all had a run on the model railway."

"Then we'd better get out of sight."

Gore looked savagely round the room, Mellish following his glance in silence. A fresh sound on the lawn attracted their attention, and they looked out of window again. Servants were setting tea-tables on the turf between the model railway and the window. It was evident that Glyn had selected this spot for the al-fresco tea-party. There was no chance of escape now.

"Fairly caught!" muttered Gore. "I never was in such a fix. It's all your fault, you young cad!"

"My fault!" said Mellish, staring. "How do you make that out? I was against coming into the grounds, from the start."

"Oh, shut up!"

Mellish uttered an exclamation.

"Look out! They're coming!"

"Get down here—quick!"

Gore dragged Mellish behind the huge armchair in which Skimpole had had such a startling experience. The juniors of St. Jim's came crowding in at the open French windows, without a suspicion of the two palpitating young rascals who were crouching within a few feet of them.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, "we've had a jolly aftahnoon here, Glyn. I wegard you as havin' done us down extremely well. I do not deny that I am gettin' peckish, and weady for tea."

"I'm jolly hungry, as a matter of fact," Jack Blake remarked. "Yaas, wathah! I have enjoyed my wide immensely, and have only soiled my hands a little on the tuck."

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"What did you soil your face on, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! I twust my face is not dirty, Tom Mewwy."

"Oh, perhaps it's your complexion."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You've got a spot there," said Tom Merry, tapping D'Arcy on the cheek with his forefinger, which was stained with dirty train-oil, "and another there." And he tapped him gently on the nose.

"Weally—why, you wottah, you have just put them there! I wegard that as a vewy wotten joke, Tom Mewwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah. I—"

"Come up to my room and get a wash," said Glyn, laughing.

"Tea will be ready in ten minutes."

"Wighto, deah boy. I should not like Miss Glyn to see me with a dirty face. I should wegard it as a doocid awkward posish."

The juniors followed Glyn from the room, and the door closed behind them. Mellish and Gore emerged from their hiding-place. They were dusty and breathless, gasping from having been crouched up in a small space.

"My hat!" gasped Gore, "it's hot! I—ow!"

He had sunk into that comfortable-looking chair to rest for a minute. In a flash his feet were in the air, and he was looking up blankly past the toes of his boots at Mellish, who looked at him in alarm. He was astounded to see his companion disappear so suddenly through the bottom of the chair. The next moment he grinned.

"Give me a hand out, you ape!" said Gore, in a muffled voice.

Mellish took his hand. But Gore was doubled up in the shape of a V, and he could not be dragged out. His knees were almost touching his chin, and without the front of the chair being let out, he could not escape.

"My hat!" said Mellish, with a whistle, "you're in for it now." He looked out of the window. "Hallo! the coast's clear! The servants have gone!"

Gore groaned.

"Help me out!"

"I can't. Can't you wriggle out?"

"Dummy!—of course I can't! You must help me!"

Mellish gave another look through the windows. The lawn was quite clear; the servants had laid the tables and retired. The coast was clear—but for how long? A minute, perhaps—or less!

"I'm going, Gore."

"Stop!" yelled Gore. "Don't you dare to leave me here! I shall be caught and—"

"No good both of us being caught. I hate a selfish chap," said Mellish virtuously. "I warned you not to come here, you know. I don't want to say 'I told you so'; but that's how it stands. I must hook it before they come back, now there's a chance."

And Mellish, unheeding the enraged glance of his whilom chum, slipped out of the French windows, and cut across the lawn to the wall. In a moment he was clambering over it. He dropped into the lane and scudded off as fast as his legs could carry him.

Gore remained fastened up in the collapsible chair in a far from enviable frame of mind. He waited in tense anxiety for the return of the chums of St. Jim's. He tried to wriggle out of his captivity, but in vain. He was horribly cramped, and he felt pins and needles stealing over him.

The sound of the click of crockery from the lawn warned him that the coast was no longer clear. There was a tramp of feet at the door of the workshop, and the juniors, looking very bright and rosy from recent washing, came streaming in, to go out to tea. There was a shout of amazement at the sight of Gore.

"Bai Jove! it's Goah!"

"Caught!" yelled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He must have been hiding here all the time," grinned Glyn. "Lucky he took a fancy to resting in that chair!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, you know, I wegard this as wathah funnay! Goah, you are in a most widiculous posish, deah boy."

"Let me out of this!" growled Gore. "My legs are twisted up; I believe I've sustained a serious injury."

"Rats!" said Glyn. "I dare say you're a bit cramped, but you're not hurt. I made that contrivance myself; it's one of my inventions. Jolly good one, too. I'll teach you to put a log of wood on my permanent way, and risk busting my model engine!"

"I—I didn't!"

"Tea is ready!" said a gentle voice at the window, as Miss Edith looked in from the garden.

"Good!" said Glyn. "I say, Edie, is this the rotter you saw put the wood on the line?"

Miss Glyn smiled as she looked at Gore. She could only see the soles of his boots, with his savage face peering between them.

"Yes, that is the boy, Bernard."

"I thought so. What have you got to say for yourself, Gore?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"We're going to eat muffins and tarts and cake," said Glyn, laughing. "As for you, you can stay there till we go back to St. Jim's."

"Ow! Let me out! I'm cramped!"

"I should have been worse than cramped if you had knocked my engine off the line."

"Ow! Lemme go!"

"Shall we let him go, kids?" said Glyn, appearing to relent.

"Yaas, wathah! His suffewings don't mattah vewy much, as the wottah deserves some punishment, but you must not forget that his clothes will be uttably spoiled, wumped up like that," said Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, let him go," said Edith Glyn, with a glance of contempt at the hapless bully of the Shell. "He deserves to be severely punished, but this may be a lesson to him. Let him go."

Bernard Glyn touched the spring, and Gore was shot out upon the floor. He rolled over against Tom Merry, who promptly shoved him off, and then against D'Arcy, who pushed him away with his foot, as if he were not fit to be touched with the hand. Then he picked himself up—cramped, humiliated, savage, dusty—and after a look of hatred round at the grinning juniors, went sulkily through the window, and disappeared.

"Good widdance!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Miss Glyn, may I have the gweat pleasuah of takin' you in to tea?"

D'Arcy had the pleasure. The little old gentleman, in whom the juniors would hardly have recognised one of the most famous and successful of Liverpool engineers, so unassuming and jovial was he, joined them at tea. He had quite forgiven Arthur Augustus the damage to his flower-beds, and he laughed heartily over the story of the capture of Gore.

The tea was a very merry meal, and when at last it was time for the juniors to go, they parted with a pressing invitation from Mr. Glyn and Edith to repeat their visit soon; which they gladly promised to do, and needless to say that promise was kept at an early date. Tom Merry & Co. had seldom had a more enjoyable afternoon than the one spent at the home of the St. Jim's inventor.

THE END.

Next Thursday!

"The Hypnotist of St. Jim's."

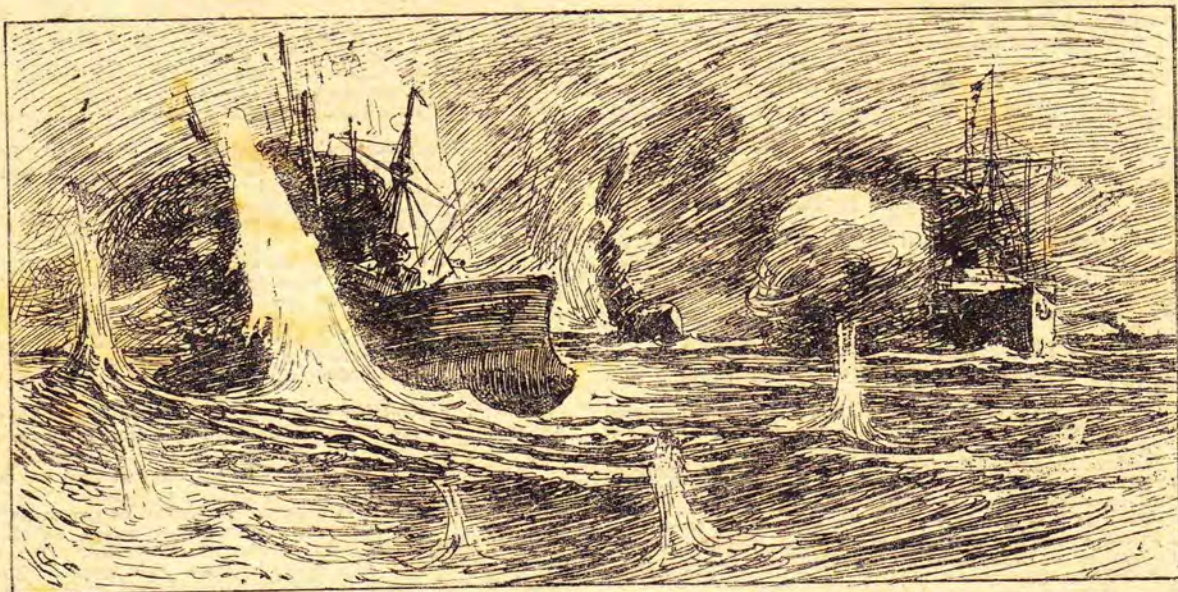
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BRITAIN AT BAY!



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THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

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, and from the flagstaff on the Mansion House 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.

The boys have many exciting adventures, and one day Sam finds himself, together with a Lieutenant Cavendish, who has lost his torpedo-boat in destroying two German battleships, called to an interview with Admiral Sir Francis Frobisher.

The two are complimented on their performances, and Cavendish is appointed to a fine new ship.

To Sam the admiral offers the task of running the steamer Blaine Castle, laden with provisions, from France, past the blockade, into London. Sam agrees to make the attempt, and he and Stephen journey to Dunkirk, where they embark on their perilous voyage. After several narrow escapes from capture by German warships, the Blaine Castle arrives safely in sight of the Tower Bridge.

(Now go on with the Story.)

A Furious Mob!

"Saved our hide," said Sam, with a sigh of relief. "A good bit of work on the whole—eh, Steve? We're under shelter of our own guns now, an' we can go right in through the docks an' take a good berth out of reach of any German fire. Signals ahead there!"

From the next docks signals were being made which the stolid captain of the Blaine Castle read as orders that he was to take his ship in there. The British colours were flying, a company of tattered but erect and warlike-looking Fusiliers were guarding the docks, and a great crowd could be seen beyond. As the Blaine Castle turned and steamed slowly in between the dockheads, a bugler struck up with tremendous effect "The Roast Beef of Old England."

A tremendous outburst of cheering followed, till the very streets and houses echoed with it, and the troops presented arms, while from every quarter came the same roar:

"Hurrah for the Greyfriars kids! Shout for the pluckiest youngsters Britain ever bred! Bring in the grub, an' save London!"

"They seem to have heard we've got the job," chuckled Stephen.

"Daily Mail" bulletin must have got it by wireless from the fleet," said Sam, who was standing by the wheel as the skipper took the great ship in. "Bit of a bother—we didn't want all this fuss."

"Hurrah!" roared the crowd. "Bring her in, laddies—bring in the grub!"

The roar began to change to a fierce yell at the word, and the multitude surged back and forth against the dock barriers. For the first time the brothers saw how desperate a plight the people were in.

What a difference those six days had made! The gaunt, hungry faces glared wolfishly as the desperate crowd surged round the barriers; lean, tight-skinned cheeks and sunken eyes showed how the grip of hunger had told on them.

"Food! Give us food!" broke out the wild yell. "They won't give it us! The War Office'll get it, an' they'll leave us to starve! Give us bread—bread for the kids an' the women!"

"Let's take it for ourselves, mates!" roared a huge

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navvy with a face lean as a jackal's. "We're all starvin'! Let's feed ourselves first! Down with the fences!"

There was a wild outbreak at this. The soldiers did their best to keep the crowd back, but the barriers were broken down, and the walls scaled in a dozen places.

Stephen looked aghast at the mad, ravening mob that poured on to the quays, looking more like wolves than men. The Fusiliers were powerless to keep them back, being hopelessly outnumbered, and they would not use their weapons.

"On to her! Break her up! Every man take what he wants!" roared the mob; and with one furious rush they swept down upon the Blaine Castle.

The Beleaguered City.

"Gosh! What a mob!" muttered the little skipper. "They'll pull the ship to rags!"

"Hard astern there—both engines!" ordered Sam quietly, jerking the handle of the telegraph over. "Bo'sun, jam that boathook into the first man who tries to board! Up with the fire-hose there—sharp! Back her out of the quay!"

The Blaine Castle backed out from the wharf into the middle of the dock just as the maddened crowd reached the edge. She was already just too far for them to reach when they arrived, and there was a furious howl of execration as they saw her draw back just out of their reach.

"They're backin' out with the grub! They're goin' to keep it for themselves! We knew they would! Stop 'em! Down 'em!"

The howl grew to a roar again, and those behind pressed on so fiercely that the foremost found themselves pushed over the edge into the water.

Yells of rage from the front arose at this, and a free fight began. But the rearmost pushed onward furiously, and the outermost began to plump into the dock one after another as they were forced off the quay, till a score were battling about in the chilly water; and Stephen, despite the gravity of the riot, began to laugh.

"Hold on there, you boobies!" shouted Sam, with all the force of his lungs. "Stop makin' asses of yourselves, do you hear? You'll all be fed if you'll only wait; but the man who thinks he's goin' to loot this steamer's goin' to get hurt! Hold up, an' wait your turn!"

"Order in the pit!" roared Stephen, with his hands to his mouth.

"Bread—we'll have bread! We'll take it for ourselves!" bellowed the big navvy. "Go an' shave the fluff off your lip, kid! Bring that ship 'ere, or we'll pull yer into rags! Come on, mates!"

"Get that pipe together," said Sam, as they rapidly screwed up the big fire-hose, and the donkey-engine began to whirl and rattle as it pumped up the water. "Give it here!" added Sam, grasping the nozzle and valve, and directing it over the heads of the tossing crowd to where the big navvy was fighting his way forward.

He turned on a three-inch stream that sailed out of the nozzle like a solid pillar of water, which struck the towering navvy full under the chin.

But for his being wedged in the crowd, it would have lifted him off his feet. His flow of oaths stopped with a splutter and a howl.

"Don't push at the back there, please! It's rude to push!" shouted Stephen, as Sam's hose began to play full on the rearmost ranks over the heads of the front ones.

The cold water drove them back, and made them stop forcing their unlucky comrades in front over the edge of the dock. There was a medley of yells as Sam turned the hose off, and then the noise was quelled for a moment.

"Poor beggars!" said Sam. "I don't like givin' 'em a bath in weather like this; but it's better than usin' anything deadlier, an' they don't loot this ship at any price while we're on her. If that lot got aboard they'd swamp us, spoil half the cargo, an', ten to one, set the lot on fire. Ahoy there! Are you goin' to listen to reason, or must I give you another dose?"

There was a pause of a few moments, as the crowd wavered, some wishing to fight, and others calling for order, when one of the boats lying at the stairs suddenly filled up with men, and pushed out across the dock towards the Blaine Castle, the big navvy in the bows.

"Board her! Knock the beggars on the head, an' loot her!" cried the hunger-sharpened voices, as the wolfish-looking crew pulled out swiftly across the intervening water.

"They mean business this time," said Stephen. "Every man of 'em's got a scull or a stretcher!"

"Go it! Seize her! Man the other boats!" roared the crowd, flaring into rage again.

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"Look out! The blessed boat's sinkin'!" cried somebody on the quay. And the rowers, finding themselves over their ankles in water, which was coming in fast, stopped pulling. "Some fool's kicked a hole through here! Here it is!" swore the big navvy. "Here gimme a cap, an' I'll stuff it in!"

There was a loud crack, and a bullet whizzed through the floor-boards of the boat.

The crew looked up, startled, to see Sam leaning over the steamer's bridge-rail, a smoking revolver in his fist.

"There's another hole for you!" said Sam. "Now let me see any of you try to plug it, an' I'll plug him! Take the boat back to the stairs, you swabs!"

The cadet's air was so resolute, and his pistol looked so ready, that even the desperate men in the boat paused. A voice went up from the crowd, changeable as crowds always are.

"That's the young cockerel that beat the Germans! Let him alone, you chumps, an' he'll deal straight by you! You'll get your heads broken if you tackle that lot!"

"Ay, let the young 'uns speak! They've brought the grub through the German fleet!" shouted the mob. "Stop shovin', there!"

"Come, boys, you might as well have listened at first!" cried Sam. "We don't want to fire at you, an' we don't want to play the hose on you. But I'm in charge of this ship, an' I'm goin' to see her safe. I've taken a lot of trouble over her, an' I didn't bring her here to be looted. You'll all get your rations if you wait ten minutes or so."

"Hurrah!" yelled the mob fiercely. "We'll trust yer, Sam Slick!"

"There's a good few thousand tons of food in this ship, an' those who are worse off'll be fed first—the women an' children."

"Ay, an' they're welcome to it!" shouted several voices. "But give us some first for ours. They're starvin'."

"I've got no right to give you a handful of the cargo," said Sam. "It will be put under proper guard, an' distributed by those that know who wants it most. But I reckon the ship's own provisions are fair game. The freight I can't touch, for I'm in honour bound to guard it; but the steward's stores I'll take on myself to dole out, an' I reckon there's enough to give each of you a meal right off!"

"Hurrah! Cheer for the Greyfriars kids!" roared the crowd in delight. "Let's have it, Sam Slick! There's many here dyin' for the want of it!"

"Form up properly, then, an' the Fusiliers will see you get served," said Sam. "Lively, now, skipper! Turn out the harness-casks an' the corned beef. All hands serve out rations!"

It was wonderful how quickly order was restored. The crowd, famished as it was, gave way with great good-humour, and the Fusiliers soon had them shaped up for taking their rations. A gangway was run ashore again, under guard, as the steamer came in again, and each man got his share swiftly, and was passed off by another route out of the docks.

"Hope the Blaine Castle won't have to put to sea again," said Stephen, "or she'll be pretty short of grub. It's fine to see those poor chaps gettin' it! Who does it belong to, by the way?"

"The dickens knows!" said Sam. "An' I'm blessed if I care! We'll call the ship's food-stores our fee for runnin' her through the blockade, an' those poor chaps shall have all there is. Look at 'em!"

It was almost horrible to see the way the starved crowd, nearly all of whom were of the very poorest, seized their rations. It showed eloquently the misery which the Kaiser's armed legions had brought upon Britain, and the class that suffered most by it.

Some stuffed their rations into their ragged pockets, and hurried away breathlessly, to bear it to those at home; others kept a little out to eat themselves; others, again, clutched at the food, and devoured it wolfishly on the spot, tearing it to pieces with their teeth, and swallowing great pieces whole.

All hands on the steamer were hard at work, and the harness-casks and the pork-barrels were melting like snow under the sun. Only the big crowd that had gained the inside of the docks were served; the walls and barriers were guarded now.

Sam and Stephen wished they had enough to feed all the

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district, but there was a limit to the food. Each man got a chunk of meat and two ship's biscuits, and the crowd was nearly worked off when two more companies of Fusiliers marched up and entered the dock enclosures, led by their company-officers.

"Look! By Jove, there's Devine!" exclaimed Stephen. "Devine, ahoy!"

They both recognised the young adjutant of the Fusiliers, with whom they had seen so much service in the early part of the campaign in Essex; and he came forward at once.

"Well done, kiddies!" he said. "It's like old times to see you back again. We shall have some more luck now. Is the ship all right? We came down in a hurry, because we heard there was a row, an' the company overpowered."

"I've given away the ship's provisions, but the cargo of food's all square," said Sam. "I'll make it over to your C.O., or the agent, or whoever it is, an' then you can take charge. Yes, we had a nice little run through; pretty easy on the whole."

The major in charge of the two companies came on board, also an official who belonged to a newly-formed society for distributing food among the starving poor. And Sam gave up the ship and cargo to them, and both officers were full of praises, and anxious to hear how the blockade had been run.

"We don't want to waste time gettin' to Lord Ripley," said Sam. "It isn't exactly a Service job. If we report to your colonel it ought to be all right—eh? We'd like to get back to sea an' to work, unless there's anything for us to do up here first."

"Right! You'll find the colonel at our station at Tower Bridge. We've had some brisk work keepin' back landin'-parties from the German side lately. See you soon. I shall be busy here," said Devine.

The Last Voyage of the s.s. Blaine Castle.

The boys left the Blaine Castle, which was already full of the bustle and hurry of unloading. The work was being smartly done. A certain quantity of food was being given away at one of the dock gates, and loaded carts, under full guard, were leaving for different parts of London.

If Sam and Stephen expected a quiet passage to Tower Bridge, they were disappointed. No sooner were they outside the docks than a wild, cheering crowd pounced upon them, composed chiefly of those who had been fed on the quays, but there were many others.

"The young blockade-runners! Chair 'em up! Up with 'em, shoulder-high! The young 'uns that twisted the Kaiser's tail! Whoop!"

In spite of themselves the boys were hoisted up bodily, and borne on the shoulders of the crowd through street after street among deafening cheers. There did not seem a man, woman, or boy in London who had not heard of their exploits, and they were the heroes of the hour.

"I say," cried Sam, laughing, as soon as he could make himself heard, "if you absolutely won't put us down, you might take us where we want to go. If we're not at the Tower Bridge in twenty minutes there'll be trouble for us."

"Tower Bridge! Right away! Higherrup there!" yelled the crowd. "Make way for the best pair o' kids Old England ever bred! Whoop!"

How they reached the place Sam and Stephen scarcely knew. However, they got clear at last, as battered as if they had passed through a charge of infantry, at the gates of the Fusiliers' temporary quarters, where the boys were at once admitted to the colonel's quarters, made their report, and were very warmly thanked and complimented by their old friend.

It is not necessary to relate all that passed between them, nor the handsome things the colonel said, and the message to the boys over the telephone from Lord Ripley at headquarters. As soon as they could get away they were out again, and, escaping the mob by a back way, took a quiet walk down the besieged streets to the westward and back.

Battered, ruined, famished London was just six days worse than when they had left it. But still the flag was flying, and only the veriest riffraff among the starving populace clamoured to have it pulled down and a surrender made. The British nation set its teeth and growled and waited, tightening its belt.

"Von Krantz, the German Commander-in-Chief, can't make it out," said the Adjutant Devine, when the boys returned to the dock, and joined him before noon. "He holds all the principal parts of London, an' most of England besides. He don't see what there is for us to do but surrender. The Kaiser's terms have been dictated, but still there's no answer from us. It's reported Von Krantz is getting blessed uneasy about it."

"I hope he'll be more uneasy before long," said Stephen. "The fleets are hammerin' away, spread all about the

North Sea, an' once we can bring the German Navy to battle an' win back command of the sea, Von Krantz 'll have his work cut out."

"Talking of the fleet," said Devine, "we've had news that there's been a fairish fight somewhere up the North Sea, not far out. Details not to hand yet, but two big German ironclads, a battleship, an' one of the large cruisers have had to put into Sheerness, damaged."

"Ah!" said Stephen. "Blow it all, Sam, we've missed that! Are they knocked out?"

"Not those two. The Germans 'll be able to repair 'em there, an' put to sea in a day or two."

"At Sheerness! In the Medway's mouth!" said Sam. "By gum, if we could keep 'em there!"

"What, torpedo 'em by way of the Swale?" said Stephen.

"No, no! That could never be done twice. A much more forlorn hope than that," replied Sam. "Bottle 'em up, I mean. So they couldn't get to sea at all."

"Eh!" exclaimed Devine. "What d'you mean?"

"Same as Lieutenant Hobson did at Santiago in the Yankee-Spanish war!" said Stephen, his eyes sparkling. "They're lyin' in a harbour with a narrow entrance, like the neck of a bottle—at least, the passage for deep vessels is narrow. Sink a great ship in the channel an' block 'em in—that's what Sam means."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Devine. "Sounds good enough! But our fleet can't get to the Thames mouth now. Where's the vessel to do it with?"

Sam, without a word, pointed to the Blaine Castle, unloading at the dock-side, her towering hull rising higher and higher as she lightened.

"Great James!" cried Stephen. "I'm on if you are, Sam!"

"My aunt!" said the adjutant. "You youngsters seem ready to tackle anything on earth! You'll never get her down the river even."

"We'll talk of that when we're on the way," said Sam. "Let me get on the telephone to Lord Ripley, an' if he'll give me leave to try, we'll go! A tin-pot old steamer against the blockin' in of two German warships—it's a game worth playin', an' the cost's small. Devine, if you'll make 'em hustle the cargo out of that ship like lightning—"

"I'll do my utmost for you," said the adjutant; and Sam darted off.

He was gone barely half an hour, and came back breathless, with sparkling eyes.

"We've leave to try!" he cried; and Sam gave a cheer. "Is the ship nearly empty?"

"She will be by five o'clock. I've a treble gang on her, an' four steam-cranes goin'," said the overseer.

"Good! There's a warehouse full of cement in bags next us here. I want as many of 'em as ever your gangs can handle hove into the holds before midnight. They ought to get in a big tonnage by then, with all those cranes. Don't handle the cement-bags carefully. Let 'em bust, an' keep hoses spoutin' water into the holds all the time. Start at once on the fore-hold—the food's all out of that."

"Glory! What's goin' to happen?" said the overseer; but he saw to the work at once, and it proceeded with feverish activity.

"We've got a free hand," said Sam exultingly to his brother. "Lord Ripley's rousin' 'em all up over the wires. We're to have all the assistance we need. Result of bringin' the other thing off all right, no doubt. Luck for us—eh? I've got to see the crew now. Good job they're such toughs."

Sam drew the skipper and chief engineer apart first. "How many men, at the lowest, could take this ship as far as Sheerness?" he said. "I don't want to waste any, you understand, because it isn't likely any that go will live to tell of it. How many?"

"Only to Sheerness?" said the stolid skipper. "You want to anchor when you get there?"

"No. Only to take her there."

"Oh! One can do that. One on deck."

"An' four in the engine-room, besides myself," put in the chief. "She's bound to have her furnaces fired, if you want her to keep goin'. I could manage with four to Sheerness."

"Bring in your stokehold crew," said Sam; and they appeared, big, grimy men with arms like knotted ropes.

"Now," said Sam, turning to them, "you helped bring this ship from France at a risk of being sunk. This time she's not goin' on a risk, but on a certainty. She's goin' out to be sunk by the guns of the German Fleet, an' a load of nitro-glycerine inside her. Her next port is the bottom of the sea abreast Sheerness, an' there won't be a cat's chance for anybody aboard her to get out of it alive. It's for the good of the British Empire an' a big nail in the invaders' coffin, so the lives of a rusty steamer an' six Britishers 'll be a cheap price to pay. In case anybody

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should escape the guns, the sea, an' the Germans, I'm authorised to say there's £50 for every man who drops on a miracle an' lives to claim it. I add £50 to that myself. Now then, four volunteers for the stokehold wanted!"

"Are you a-goin', sir?" said the spokesman quietly.

"Yes, and my brother, too."

"Then we're all a-comin', sir!" chorused the firemen eagerly.

"Good men! But I can only take four of you," said Sam, and, picking his four, he dismissed the men and turned to the skipper and chief. They were both willing to go—the engineer eagerly and the captain stolidly as ever.

"I can probably give you an' your men a chance to come up out of the stokehold before she busts up, but that's all," said Sam to the engineer. "An' now we must get to work."

A lieutenant of Sappers, with a light cart and six or seven men, turned up directly afterwards, and, after a short consultation, they were at work in the bowels of the ship for a couple of hours, Sam with them, watching closely.

"She's all fixed up now," said the lieutenant to Sam before he left. "Here are the two switches, fixed to the bridge-rail. The wires lead down into the explosive, an' it can't fail. You've only got to switch on the current as I showed you, and it'll blow the everlasting bottom out of her."

"It'll blow us up as well on deck, I suppose?" asked Sam.

"Can't make any promises about that—had to make it strong, you see. Shouldn't wonder if it killed one or two of you. But it's arranged to spend its force downwards, an' so you may come off all right on deck."

"Thanks," said Sam, as the lieutenant departed with his Royal Engineers.

"Don't see that it makes much odds—as well be blown up as drowned, or shot by the Dutchies," said Stephen, who had overheard. "There's some news, Sam. More fightin' at sea, an' most of the German Fleet at the Nore is out."

"All the better," said Sam, "though I think we'd make Sheerness, with luck, anyway. You'd better turn in, Steve, an' get a good spell of sleep. We shall want our wits about us to-night. I've got a lot of things to do, an' then I'll turn in too."

The activity on board the Blaine Castle was enormous, but Sam, after the last of his tasks was completed, was glad to snatch some rest and leave the stevedores' work to be guided by the overseers. In spite of the noise, both boys slept soundly in their cabins, and it was close upon midnight when the skipper woke Sam. The gangs had then ceased their work, and comparative silence reigned. The hatches were being battened down on deck.

"Nigh on eight bells, sir," said the captain. "There'll be water for her out of dock in half an hour, and steam's up."

"We'll start at one o'clock—two bells, I mean," said Sam, springing out of his bunk. "I want to go over her again."

When one o'clock struck the Blaine Castle was gliding out between the dockheads into the dark river, and Sam, standing beside the wheel, helped the skipper take her down. She headed away at a rapid pace to the eastward once more, her nose turned towards the sea, but many a dark mile lay before her. The time passed quickly, however, and Gravesend was presently passed and left behind.

"I don't understand how on earth you expect to get her through, Sam!" said his brother. "The Germans 'll sink her as soon as ever they sight her. You bluffed through last time, but they know who she is now."

"Just so. They know who she is, an' so they won't sink her," said Sam; "they'll prefer to capture her for their own uses. We've called her names, but she's a fine ship an' a fast ship, an' they'll want her for transport. An' she can't show fight."

"But last time—"

"Last time they'd have sunk her if they'd known her, rather than chance a cargo of food gettin' through to relieve London. Now she's comin' back, they'll have no reason to sink her. There's the Lower Hope ahead, an' the torpedo-boat—a fresh one. Now, you'll see if I'm right. She won't torpedo us, an' lose a fine, useful transport. But if she tries to board us we must have up the stokehold crew an' fight. We want to get lower down yet."

The torpedo-boat shot out from the shadow of the Cliffe shore. Her searchlight flashed on the Blaine Castle, but, to the surprise of those on board, she did not call on her to stop. She merely followed her, like a sinister shadow, with guns trained and tubes ready, as the steamer ploughed on down Sea Reach.

"What's that for?" said Stephen, marvelling.

"She knows us. Maybe she wants us to go down as far as Southend on our own, an' get picked up there by their THE GEM LIBRARY—64.

ships, an' put to work. She couldn't spare a prize crew, anyway, an' the ship'd be no good up here."

"Reckon they think they've dropped on a fat thing!" chuckled Stephen. "Saves our fightin' a boardin' party. We're short-handed."

Straight down to the Nore went the Blaine Castle unhindered. Out to sea, just beyond the river's mouth, the boys could see the German squadron's searchlights and the ships returning. It was lucky the steamer was not bound to sea. To get past the warships a second time would be utterly impossible.

To the left was Southend. Under the lee lay Sheerness and the narrow mouth of the Medway. A rocket went up from the torpedo-boat some way astern, and as Sam saw it he put the helm hard over, and the Blaine Castle turned and steamed straight for Sheerness.

"Give her ginger!" he said down the engine-room tube.

"Steamer ahoy!" said a voice in bad English, as the torpedo-boat quickened her pace and came racing up.

"Head in for Southend—instanter, or we sink you!"

Dead silence on the Blaine Castle. She was leaping ahead at a splendid speed, and every moment Garrison Point, at the Medway's mouth, grew nearer. The searchlights of the squadron, steaming rapidly in from sea, found and dwelt on her.

The torpedo-boat fired viciously across her bows, and then into her hull, but no torpedo was sent on its deadly errand. The huge steamer looked strange and ghostly as the glare of the searchlights showed her empty decks and the three silent figures on her bridge.

The Medway's mouth and Sheerness opened straight before them. Inside lay two great German ironclads—a battleship and a cruiser—at anchor. They were the two which the Blaine Castle had come to seek. Their searchlights were instantly turned upon the stranger.

Sam jerked the telegraph-bell six times, and the stokehold crew came up speedily from below and mounted to the bridge-deck. There was a shout at the same moment from the torpedo-boat, and Sam laid his hand on the switches.

The two ironclads inside, suddenly suspicious of the strange merchantman, opened fire heavily, and so did several of the fleet behind. That same instant the Blaine Castle struck some heavy object with a heavy crash that made her shiver, and stopped her with a violent shock. It was the boom—the great iron barrier swung across the harbour's entrance to guard against torpedo-boat attacks.

"Sit tight!" cried Sam, and with one jerk he pulled the switch-handle on the bridge-rail.

The next moment the deck seemed to heave beneath them and flung them off their feet. There was a tremendous, muffled explosion that shook the very sea. The ship buckled and heaved like a steel spring, and she groaned like a giant in pain.

Then, as her damaged crew struggled to their feet and sought blindly to save themselves, she doubled in the middle with her bow and stern raised high, and the waves swept over her waist as she went down in the midst of a pitiless hail of shot and shell.

How the German Pinnace Rammed a Brick Wall.

"The rigging, mates! Take to the rigging!" shouted the skipper, trying to make his voice heard above the din. "Her masts won't cover!"

The crash and rattle of the firing redoubled as the waves met across the 'midships of the Blaine Castle, and she sank slowly to her doom. One of the men was instantly dashed into eternity by a shell that struck him, and the chief engineer's head was cut by a flying splinter, so that the blood ran down his forehead. It was all a matter of seconds, and as the wallowing hull was drawn under, the smaller vessels of the German squadron were seen racing up.

"The rigging's no use! You'll be shot if you're caught!" shouted Stephen. "Dive!"

In that moment of deadly stress there seemed nothing to hope for but death in one form or another, and each man went the way that seemed to him best. Some of them mounted the rigging, but as the boys plunged overboard, Sam saw that the chief engineer, at any rate, was following their example and taking to the water.

What became of him there was no saying. Neither Sam nor Stephen saw him when they came up; nor were they able to attend to anybody but themselves. They came to the surface immediately, and swam with all their might to free themselves from the neighbourhood of the sinking vessel.

Their plight was hopeless enough, with the enemies on every side by land and water, and the choice of a death by bullet or drowning, but they gave it no heed for the moment. They were only too thankful to find themselves alive at all,

after that hail of shot and the blowing up of the big steamer.

"Keep away to the left!" panted Sam. "Get into the slack water, or we'll be swept right among 'em!"

They were just outside the zone of the searchlights now, which rested on the sunken steamer and the shell-torn water around her. The fire ceased, and the swimmers saw a black destroyer race up alongside and halt abreast the up-rising masts of the wreck.

"Phew! I'll bet they're mad!" gurgled Stephen. "I s-s-say, Sam, the water's perishin'. I can't keep up in it long. Can't we land on the Grain shore?" he added, glancing at the nearer of the two distant banks between which the salt tide swirled.

"Yes, an' get nabbed by a sentry," said Sam grimly, striking out across the current. "We'll try it, but we sha'n't get so far. Look at those wasps buzzin' about all over the place. Hold up, old boy; I'll give you a shoulder!"

Up from the squadron and down from the river came half a dozen launches and piquet-boats, at racing speed, besides the destroyers. These small vessels scurried in every direction, evidently looking for anybody who might be afloat.

The boys had swum so far in out of the eddy that for some moments they were missed; but the searchlights began to move again, and slowly swept the water all about the vicinity of the wreck. A great circle of light passed over the boys, checked, moved back again, and lit them up in a blinding white glare, their heads showing against the frothy water.

A shout was heard from a swift steam-pinnace that was circling a hundred yards away, and it came bearing down at once towards the hapless swimmers.

"All up!" growled Stephen hoarsely. "Burn them an' their searchlights! It's all we could expect, I s'pose!" he groaned.

"Sham drowned!" muttered his brother quickly. "Don't swim—let 'em think you're unconscious, anyhow, or stunned. Maybe they won't bind us then."

Stephen needed little enough shamming just then, for the cold had chilled him to the bones, and the tide ran strongly enough to weary the stoutest swimmer. He relaxed all efforts, and let himself drift helplessly, while Sam beat the water feebly with his hands and appeared to be sinking, though, in fact, he could have kept up another half-hour. But the pinnace shot alongside, and Sam was grabbed just as he appeared to be going down.

"Got two of them!" growled a deep German voice, as Stephen was also pulled to the side with a boathook. "Englanders—they're off the steamer all right enough!"

"Haul them in!" said an impatient voice, as a German naval lieutenant bent forward and looked at the prisoners. "What are they dead already? Can't be!"

"They're near it, Herr Lieutenant," said one of the pinnace's crew, helping to haul the boys in. "Unconscious, I think, ja! Shall they be bound?"

"Bah! They are only boys—waste no time but go on at once. These shall be taken aboard, and if they revive information may be got from them. After that they will be shot. Cursed young scellums! Full speed there, engineer!"

The boys, limp and dripping, with blue-white faces and closed eyes, were hauled roughly into the pinnace, and dropped on the floor gratings in the stern-sheets, below the steersman's seat. The pinnace shot ahead again, and Sam very warily opened half an eye.

The little vessel, though light and smart, had a powerful engine, and carried five men, including the engineer and the officer. The steersman sat perched above in the stern-sheets, holding a long, brass-mounted tiller, and the pinnace was tearing up the river at high speed, near the edge of the deeper channel, evidently making for the warship to which she belonged.

"A devil of a night's work!" growled the lieutenant, half to himself. "That lump of a steamer has sunk herself right in the fairway, and half our squadron must have been blind to let her do it. Probably we can blow her up. But if not, the Grosser Karl and the Blitz will be unable to get out any more, for she blocks the deep-water passage completely!"

"I wish you joy of the blowing-up, old cock!" thought Sam, as he heard the words.

"If these came off the steamer, Herr Lieutenant," said the senior seaman respectfully, "will they be able to tell what she contained?"

"We shall make them tell," said the lieutenant grimly. "On that depends whether she can be removed or not."

"The prisoners appear to be civilians, Herr Lieutenant. Their uniforms do not appear to be of any recognised service."

"They will be shot all the more expeditiously for that," replied the lieutenant. "Enough talking! Keep closer in to the edge of the channel, steersman!"

Sam, keeping one wary eye open, had only a very limited range of vision. In-front of him was the engine, tended by the engineer, whose face glowed in the glare of the tiny furnace as he opened its door, stoked, and shut it again. One of the crew was right forward, while the other stood beside the lieutenant, close to the side.

Above the engine, all Sam could see was a strip of starry sky, till something bulky and black loomed in the distance, a good way ahead and somewhat to the right. It puzzled him for a moment, till suddenly he realised what it was.

The bulky object was the old martello tower on the Grain Flats opposite Sheerness. One of those antique brick forts, solid and squat, shaped like a bucket turned upside down, and built in Napoleon's time to defend our shores against the threatened French invasion; it is nowadays of no use at all, and was abandoned, as a fortress, long ago.

The Grain Martello Tower appears to stand nearly in the middle of the river, for it is built on the outer edge of the Grain Flats, which are covered by the tide at high water. It stands with its walls rising straight up out of the salt flood, and Sam, squinting cautiously ahead as he lay, realised that the pinnace was steering so as to pass fairly close to the deep-water side of it.

A sudden wild scheme into Sam's brain. There was no time to weigh the arguments for and against it. Anything was better than being taken aboard the German battleship to be shot by a firing-party, and the cadet acted on the thought as soon as it entered his head.

He nudged Stephen, who was lying beside him, and who had the sense not to stir at the touch.

"Hold on like blazes, an' then be ready to jump!" breathed Sam, in a quick whisper.

What the words meant Stephen did not know—or if he grasped what they meant, he had no notion why he was to follow them. But in a tight place he had implicit faith in his brother, and he prepared to do exactly as he was told.

The need came swiftly. The pinnace was dashing along at a pace that made the foam fairly hiss, and clove the water into two curling cushions at her bows. Suddenly, every muscle in his body obeying to the call, Sam bounded up from the gratings, and threw himself on the steersman.

In an instant he had the astonished German by the throat with one hand, forcing him away from the helm, and with the other he slammed the tiller hard over as far as it would go, making the pinnace swerve right away out of her course. There were two hoarse cries, a guttural oath, and a moment later the pinnace rammed the martello tower at full speed.

So high was the speed and so tremendous the shock, that the pinnace crumpled herself up against the brick wall like a lump of paper. The jerk was so sudden and powerful that the lieutenant and the man next him were shot clean overboard, and the engineer went sprawling over his engine with a force that nearly stunned him.

The Sentry on Grain Wall.

Stephen was hanging on with all his might to whatever he could clutch; but even then was nearly shaken from his hold, and Sam had clung to the tiller. It was as if a hansom cab had galloped at full speed against the side of a house. The steersman was dazed by the force of it and his sudden seizure.

"Jump!" cried Sam.

Over went both the boys, almost before the shock had spent its force, and they dived out side by side as the shattered pinnace began to fill rapidly. Sam struck out with all his strength, only to hear a hoarse shout of rage ahead of him in the water, and before he could turn the lieutenant, who had been flung out, seized upon him savagely.

"This way! Hans! Fritz!" he cried. "The British pig has done us, but he sha'n't escape! Here—"

His speech was cut short with a gurgles, as Sam suddenly dived and took his assailant down with him. When they came up, Sam's hands had a firm grip of the German's throat, and the man's eyes were staring out of his head.

The lieutenant's grasp relaxed, and he began to beat the water frantically with his hands. As soon as he felt himself released, Sam flung the German from him, just as Stephen came swimming to the rescue, and both of them struck out together with a steady side-stroke, leaving the choking lieutenant to his own devices.

None of the other sailors had responded to their officer's cry. One was stunned and had sunk, while the others were much too full of the need of saving themselves to trouble about orders or prisoners. One clung to the foundering remains of the pinnace, while another tried vainly to get a hold on the slippery walls of the martello tower.

"Round to the back—the old causeway!" said Sam, in Stephen's ear. "You can swim that far, can't you?"

"Yes," gasped Stephen.

He was a good deal worn out, and had hardly recovered

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from his former swim; but the new hope buoyed him up, and it was no distance to a place which, at any rate, would afford a temporary refuge from the water.

The Germans did not know where they were, and the shore appeared far distant, for the wide flats were deeply covered by the tide.

But Sam knew that a high stone causeway ran from the Grain Island shore out across the flats, and connected the martello tower with the land. The causeway was now covered, like the rest, but it was a good deal higher. And when the boys had swam to the far side of the tower, and struck out from it in a straight line towards the land, they soon found themselves able to reach bottom with their feet, and knew by the feel of the stony foothold that they were on the causeway. A little farther, and they were able to stand, with the water barely up to their chests.

"Hang on to me, old boy," said Sam, "and wade straight in alongside me. You can do that, can't you?"

"Y-y-yes," said Stephen, his teeth chattering and his face blue with cold, "if it isn't t-t-t too far. I'm a bit d-d-done up."

"Keep hold of me an' walk straight. Don't move aside, or you'll be off the causeway again and in deep water. Go ahead!"

They waded as strongly as they could, Sam acting as pilot, keeping in a line between the tower and the shore. They could not see the causeway, and there was nothing to mark it. Salt, softly swirling water was all round them; but somehow Sam managed to keep on the stones, and presently the uncovered sands could be seen ahead, with the causeway stretching across them.

"The tide's not as high as I thought," said Sam; "the flats aren't covered right up to the bank. All the better; we may have a chance of dodgin' the sentries."

"I s'pose the Germans hold all the Grain shore?" said Stephen, shivering.

"Every inch of it, an' all round the island."

"An' we're on the island now—or, rather, on the sands. It's a poor look-out!"

They were not much above their knees in water now, and soon the causeway led them on to the sands and mud-flats that stretched out from the shore. They were on the west side of the Medway's mouth, with the lights of Sheerness twinkling dimly on the far side of the estuary, and the warship's searchlights still wandering over the water.

The boys paused a minute as they at last drew themselves out of the lapping tide, and Stephen sank down on the sand. The masts of the sunken Blaine Castle could just be seen in the glow of the lights below the martello tower, and several torpedo craft and launches were gathered round the spot.

"We ought to be jolly thankful we're out of it all," said Sam; "it's more than I ever expected. Come on, Steve; let's try an' get over the sea-wall. We might find our way across the marshes, in spite of 'em."

Plodding shorewards over the sand and mud, they made for the dark line of the embankment that shields the low-lying land from the tide. All this was formerly War Office property; but now, together with Sheerness, it had fallen into German hands, as Sam well knew.

They reached the foot of the sea-wall, and Sam stood for a moment glancing east and west along the bank.

A dark figure, rifle on shoulder, was clearly silhouetted against the sky some distance away, and was moving towards the boys with steady tread. Sam caught his brother by the arm, and pressed him down.

"Crouch flat!" he whispered. "German sentry! Don't move or make a sound!"

How the Brothers Reached Sheppey.

There was no time to go forward or back, neither down over the sands or onward over the sea-wall. The sentry was pacing steadily along the top of it from seaward, and the boys laid themselves flat among the black seaweed-covered stones at the embankment's foot.

If the alarm were raised, they knew well that there would be no further hope. Any number of German troops were within easy reach, and a shot from the sentry would certainly bring them up. Moreover, there was no possibility of immediate escape from the island.

Would he see them? Stephen thought he could not fail to, for he was bound to pass within ten feet of them. The younger boy was wondering what his brother would elect to do if they were discovered. They might overpower the sentry before he could let off his rifle. But there was the risk of that shot which would mean certain disaster.

Stephen, indeed, hardly realised that they were better hidden than they seemed to be. It was very dark down there among the stones, as they crouched like partridges against the ground. They were able to see the sentry plainly, for he was above them, showing clear against the starry sky.

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NEXT
THURSDAY;

"THE HYPNOTIST OF ST. JIM'S."

A School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By Martin Clifford.

The man tramped along with a heavy, measured stride, his rifle, with bayonet fixed, sloped over his shoulder. He was humming a German folk-song, and glanced to the left over the flats and to the right over the marshes as he walked; but down at the foot of the sea-wall he never looked at all, for it was the last place he expected to see an enemy. Nor is it certain that he could have seen anything had he looked.

Sam and Stephen held their breath as he passed above them. They could almost have reached his boots from where they lay. But the German air never ceased, and a few seconds later the sentry, with his back towards them, was disappearing round the curve of the wall. They waited till he was out of sight.

"Glory," muttered Stephen, "that was a near thing! My fingers were itchin' to get hold of the beggar!"

"It's a good job you kept them quiet, then," said Sam, in a low voice. "Come on, we can't stay here! Push ahead!"

"Why not go up the river, instead of towards the Thames?"

"Because there's a body of troops at Port Victoria. We can only go one way," said Sam. "Hold on, while I take a squint over the wall!"

He lay among the tangled dead grass on the embankment's top for some time, but shook his head when he returned.

"No go. There's a camp not three hundred yards away, and an outpost nearer still. We must stick to the seaward side of the wall for a time, an' try to cross it further down."

"How are we to get off the island?"

"Yantlet Creek, which cuts off the other side, could be crossed fairly easily, except, I'm afraid, it'll be too well guarded. Keep going. Do a bit of a run, or you'll get chilled through."

The cold and exposure, in their drenched clothes and in the keen, night wind, was enough to numb both of them into helplessness, and had they not both been as tough as whipcord, it would have done so, after all they had gone through. A swift, silent run along the sands, close to the wall, set their blood moving again, but as they rounded the bend and came in full view of the open Thames mouth and the sea, they had to go cautiously again.

Sam checked himself as he saw another black figure in the distance, approaching along the wall, and muttered an exclamation.

"It won't do," he said, under his breath, "there's another sentry, an' the whole wall right away round to Yantlet is sure to be patrolled by them. It's no good striking inland over the island, either. An' we can't expect to dodge 'em all night."

"There's nothing on this side of us but the open Thames!" grunted Stephen. "It's four miles across to Shoebury, so we can't very well swim it; besides, I'm not up to any more swimming. I s'pose that's one of the German craft, anchored in the swatchway opposite, there?"

Sam stopped, and looked keenly out across the sands and water.

"No, by gum! It looks to me like a barge. There are still a few barges plyin' on the rivers, in spite of the Germans. She's anchored in the Jenkin Swatchway, not far off the sands."

"Couldn't we get aboard her?"

"We'll try. Come on! It's up to us either to dodge that sentry on the wall, or to get away by water, an' the last is the likeliest. Keep as low as you can, and run!"

The sands and mud were a good deal higher here than they were in the river; consequently the tide had not yet covered them, and there was a long expanse of sandy flats reaching down to the water. The boys hoped to be out of sight of the sentry in the gloom by the time he arrived, but there was no certainty about it, and when at last they reached the water's edge, they found themselves disappointed. The vessel they had seen was there, but the water seemed to be covering her decks.

"Sold!" groaned Sam. "It's a barge, all right, but she's sunk, and abandoned. She's aground in the shallows, an' soon the water'll be right over her. No use tryin' to get aboard."

"Looks as if we were done," said Stephen grimly. "What's that along the sands there?"

"Scoot for it, quick!" exclaimed Sam, as his eye fell on something dark, rocking at the water's edge a hundred yards further along. "Looks like a boat, as I live!"

"You won't live long if it ain't," returned Stephen, as they sped along side by side. "Is that the sentry shoutin'?"

A distant hail came from the seawall, in hoarse German. The boys did not stop to look round, but the sharp crack of a rifle and the hum of a bullet told them they had been seen.

"A boat it is, by glory!" cried Sam, as they dashed up

to a tarry, rotten-looking old dinghy. "The barge's boat, for a hundred! Oars in her, too! Shove her off quick!"

A second bullet came thwacking into the sand, not alarmingly close, as the boys rushed the boat through the shoal water till she floated, and hurriedly jumped in. Sam shipped the oars in the twinkling of an eye, and they pulled for the open water with all their might.

"Hard round to the right!" said Sam, tugging away. "Here's the beggar comin' down after us. Get the barge in a line with us."

They saw the sentry, who had fired the two vain shots, running down towards the water as fast as his clumsy ammunition boots would carry him. The boys pulled so as to place themselves on the further side of the half-sunken barge, which gave them some slight shelter, and then pulled straight away seawards from her.

"Who goes there!" shouted the sentry, again in his own tongue, and another shot plunked into the water a short distance away. Over the sands, several other forms could be seen running down to join the sentry, showing how quickly the shots had spread the alarm.

"Poor shootin'!" said Stephen, as another bullet flicked the water a yard or two wide.

"They can barely see us. Pull away, and another hundred yards'll put us out of sight," said Sam, making the water fly with his strokes.

"Think they'll get a boat an' chase us?"

"Won't find us if they do, now," said Sam exultingly. "Most likely they reckon we're only cockle-gatherers, scared off by the shooting, an' didn't dare wait to be challenged. Dares say they won't bother about us. They're out of sight now, an' I'll bet they can't see us either. Keep on pulling; let's allow plenty of margin."

"What a gorgeous bit of luck, findin' this boat!"

"Rather! Natural, enough, too, for there ain't much doubt she's the barge's boat, broken adrift an' driven on the sands. Wonder why the barge was sunk? Lucky for us, anyhow. We're out of the tightest place we've been in yet, an' there's a chance of gettin' right clear away. I only hope some of the other poor chaps have been as lucky."

"You're right! Where are we to make for?"

Sam paused a moment and rested on his oars.

"We can't land anywhere on this side, west of the Medway's mouth. They'll be too much on the look-out for any boat to get ashore, an' the tide'll be up to the wall in half an hour!"

"Up the Thames, then!"

"We can't get far enough up to be clear of 'em before daybreak. Then there's the other side—the Essex shore. But it's four miles across, an' the water's patrolled by torpedo-boats. Besides, there's a German camp there. Seems to me our only chance is Sheppey Island."

"But the Germans are there, too. They're everywhere, in fact. An' Sheerness is on Sheppey."

"They hold Sheerness, but not the whole island. We'll have a better chance of gettin' ashore there; it's a wilder shore than this, an' there's no sea-wall for sentries to tramp. And I know the island like a book."

"Let's be at it, then," returned Stephen. "The more I row the drier I shall get. We've got to reach somewhere before dawn, that's a dead cert. How about crossin' the mouth of the Medway, though?"

"We'll keep well out, an' go nowhere near the entrance. The German squadron's drawn off to seaward, barrin' a few destroyers."

"The ships must have gone into Sheerness," said Stephen. "I don't see 'em."

"How can they, you chump, when the channel's blocked up by the Blaine Castle? They can't get in, any more than the two inside can get out. No big ships can use the fairway now—only torpedo craft."

"By gosh, of course not! I say, will they be able to blow her up, as the lieutenant of the pinnace said?"

"They're welcome to try," said Sam, with a grin. "Her hold was run full of dry cement an' water before we left the dock, an' it's nice tough stuff to blow up, to say nothing of the ship herself. It'd be a ten days' job, with divers an' all proper appliances, besides wasting about a ton of explosives, before the channel's anything like clear. Look-out, there's a torpedo-gunboat crossing by the Nore!"

Twice the boys had to rest on their oars and let the boat drift, trusting to luck not to be discovered. But nothing came dangerously near them, and they were out of range of the searchlights from Sheerness. Once past the Medway's entrance, they turned and headed inwards on a long slant, towards the dark cliffs of Minster, on the Isle of Sheppey.

"Old Sheppey's a lucky spot for us," said Stephen, "if our last trip there was anything to go by. We were in the creek at the back of her then, though; I sha'n't forget that trip through the Swale. What d'you mean to do on the island, though?"

"Lay up for the day, and work our way across at night,

to the other shore. We ought to be able to find a punt in the creeks somewhere, an' ferry ourselves over to Whitstable. Once there we're all right. We can get to London overland, or back to Ramsgate an' the fleet. Only we'd better not start countin' our chickens too early. It's goin' to be a ticklish job."

The dark shores grew nearer, and the boys pulled farther down on Sam's advice, to get beyond the high, earthy Minster cliffs. Presently the beat of a rapid engine was heard, and a man-of-war's launch came shooting along by the shore of the island. The brothers could only just make her out, and crouching low in the boat, they hoped their craft would be overlooked in the gloom. The launch passed on and disappeared.

"Lookin' for us?" queried Stephen.

"No. How should anybody guess we're down this way? Besides, I suppose the whole earth ain't looking for us. We'd better run ashore here. The place I want to make is a quarter of a mile further along, but it won't do to leave the boat right opposite it, or somebody might poke around to see who's landed. We'll have to abandon the boat, of course. Wish we could stick to her an' go right on, but it's useless to try that by daylight. The east's lightenin' already."

It was, as Sam said, ticklish work landing. The tide was well up, and they had to row within a short distance of the cliffs before they could step out; consequently, there was no saying whether a scout or a sentry might have seen them already.

Nothing occurred to trouble them, however. They jumped out of the boat, pushed her off again to drift wherever she pleased, and then hurried to the cliffs. Keeping as close to them as possible, they trotted along to the eastward, very weary now, and spent with the night's labours. But no sign of an enemy, nor anything else, gave them further concern, and soon Sam turned inland through a rift in the cliffs that led to a little bushy valley, as narrow as a sword-cut in the hills. A short distance up this they came upon an old overturned boat, almost hidden among the brambles and fern.

"I can't go much further," said Stephen faintly. "I'm done!"

"Right!" said Sam. "We'll call a halt! I'm pretty well at the end of my strength, too, an' this boat ought to give us shelter for a few hours. There's no hurry now."

With Stephen's help he propped one side of the boat up with a couple of logs, and a few armfuls of dead bracken made a cosy nest under her. They both crawled inside, glad to find any sort of a roof over them, and lay down with deep sighs of relief. They were faint with hunger, too, but each had his own portion of Service emergency rations in a small watertight tin box, and a few of the tablets of condensed food satisfied them.

Stephen was fast asleep almost before he had swallowed his portion. Sam sat up for a few minutes, glancing out at the stars that could be seen in the narrow strip of sky above the little ravine.

The clothes of both the fugitives had dried on them during the long row down from the Medway, and Sam took out his revolver, and tried to clean it as well as he could in the darkness, hoping the brass cartridges had taken no harm from the wet. But before the task was finished he fell asleep with the open pistol in his fist, and the deep, dreamless slumber that follows great exertion, held him for its own.

The Sheppey Mine Station.

When Sam awoke it was broad daylight, and though he had no idea of the time, he knew by the strong light it must be nearly noon.

Stephen sat up at once as he heard his brother stir; and Sam, bidding him take it easy for awhile, went out by himself to reconnoitre.

Scouting, as those who have followed this history know, was second nature to Sam, and he was more cautious than usual that morning. He kept well under cover till he was on the higher ground of the cliffs, and took a careful survey of the country.

It showed him two things which he had not suspected. One was that the German squadron had withdrawn northward down the Swin, and were well out of the way. He could see their smoke well off the distant Essex coast, and wondered if they had gone that way to meet a British attack.

The second discovery was that, besides their forces at Sheerness, at the inner end of the island, the Germans had another station at the far outer end, to the eastward. By what Sam could see, it was not a big force; indeed, nothing more than a signalling-station, with a few companies of infantry and a troop or two of dragoons to guard it. It

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NEXT
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was too far away to make sure of any details. Sam went back at once and told his brother what he had seen.

"We're about midway between the two lots," he said; "they lie to east and west of us, and as our course is south across the island, I really think we might as well push on by daylight. They've got a few scouts about, but we can dodge 'em. Waitin's a poor game, an' I don't think much of this as a place to spend the day in when they come poking round. Besides, we're short of provisions."

"Right you are!" said Stephen. "I've had a thumpin' good sleep, and I'm ready for anything! I wish we could chance on a solitary German eatin' a good hot dinner—then there'd be real war! These tablet rations are all very well, but what a fellow wants is bulk in his inside."

"Let's start at once, then," said Sam. "You can get a drink out of the brook that runs down the gully."

It was a cold breakfast, but they would not use any more of the emergency rations yet. They might be needed in sorer straits. South, across the marshes and the Swale creek, were the hills of the mainland, where the boys knew they would be given of the best by the hospitable Kentish farmers, scarce though food was. But to get there was the difficulty.

Bush by bush and gully by gully the brothers made their way southward, never exposing themselves when there was cover to be had. They did not hurry over the journey, though both were anxious to get back to the colours. They knew that any blunder would cut short their chances of being any further use ashore or afloat.

Except when they had to dodge a couple of Uhlan patrols on the higher ground—which they easily managed by hiding in the thickets—they had much less trouble than they expected with the enemy. There were not many Germans about once they began to leave the higher ground next the sea behind them and made their way down over the lowlands towards the marshes.

"It's those marshes that'll do us," said Stephen. "They're as flat as your hand; an' anybody with field-glasses could see us on any part of 'em, miles away."

"I know a way through with enough cover for us," returned Sam. "There are some shallow caves and welkbeds nearly all the way over. Gettin' across the Swale will be the rub. But even if we have to lie up for another night, we'll be a good stage on our way. If we'd only got horses—or even one good horse—"

"Like the old black Uhlan charger," put in Stephen. "We'd ride for it full tilt, and get to the creek before anybody came within a mile of us. Only—Great Scott!"

The sound of cantering hoofs no great distance away made Sam suddenly pull his brother back behind the shelter of some briar-bushes. They were crossing a long, narrow, grassy ride between two tall hedges; and at the far end, riding from east to west, suddenly appeared a horseman in German uniform on a swift chestnut charger. He carried a cavalry sabre at his side, and was not a Uhlan.

"Hallo!" murmured Sam, as the boys crouched behind the briars out of sight. "He's no scout. I believe we could stop him, for he hasn't seen us."

"Stop him!" exclaimed Stephen.

"There are two reasons why we should do it, if it's anyway possible. For one thing, he owns a horse that would take us both out of this. For the next, he's a despatch-rider, an' may carry orders worth a day's march to our side! Keep low, old boy, for it's got to be tried!"

Stephen said nothing, though he wondered if it would not have been better to let the man pass, and take their former chance of getting back to their fleet. There was nobody near for the man to give the alarm to, certainly, but if he saw them and got away, they would soon be hunted down. But Sam evidently thought the risk ought to be taken. He drew his revolver, and

with a watchful eye through the briars he noted the man's approach.

The German was riding somewhat loosely for a cavalryman, and was plainly quite at ease as to the absence of danger. There were no British troops on Sheppey, and there had been none since Sheerness was surprised and taken. The horseman cantered along rapidly, with a slack rein.

"Halt there!"

The words rang out sharply from Sam's lips as he sprang from behind the briars, revolver in hand, right across the despatch-rider's path.

So sudden was Sam's appearance, and so loudly did he shout, that a surprising thing happened. The German's horse shied violently, and reared right up in the air, with such a jerk that the unsuspecting rider was thrown clean out of his saddle before he could tighten his grip, and, turning over in the air, he fell heavily on his head.

Sam sprang forward to seize the bridle of the horse; and Stephen did likewise. But in a moment the animal whipped round, with a snort, and dashed between them.

"Stop him!" cried Stephen.

Sam missed his grasp by a hair's-breadth; and the horse, cannoning violently into Sam as he passed, knocked him head over heels, and dashed away at full gallop, disappearing down the ride in the twinkling of an eye.

"Great guns, we've gone an' done it now!" cried Stephen. "Catch hold of that chap, quick!"

Sam staggered to his feet, cast one look at the horse vanishing round the bend, and then darted to the side of the fallen rider. A single glance, however, showed him there was no need for Stephen's warning cry.

"No fear of his giving us away, poor chap," said Sam, stooping over him.

"What, is he dead?" exclaimed Stephen, hurrying to his brother's side.

"Can't say. He may be only stunned. But he pitched with his head right on this old cart-wheel lying in the grass, and it wouldn't surprise me if he never moved again."

"Poor beggar! Still, it's life against life, an' his kind haven't any right to be here at all—let 'em take what they get. Only it wasn't a fight. Queer that a troop-horse should shy like that."

"Young horse. Chosen for his speed," said Sam, running his fingers over the fallen man's belt. "Here's the fellow's despatch-wallet. We've got to have that. He's our capture by right, an' it may mean an advantage to our colours."

The wallet at the man's belt was locked. Sam cut it open with a German sword, and drew out a sealed and bound despatch. He ripped off the seal and tape, and read the missive, which had the appearance of having been hurriedly written. As he coned the cramped German writing, his

brows knitted together, and he gave a long, surprised whistle.

"My aunt!" he exclaimed, more excited than Stephen had seen him for many a day. "We've got to see what this means. Here, bear a hand and get this unlucky German into cover—we mustn't leave him here to be discovered. Look sharp!"

Between them they bore the fallen German a little way along the ride, through a gap in the hedge, and laid the body down among some thick bushes.

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