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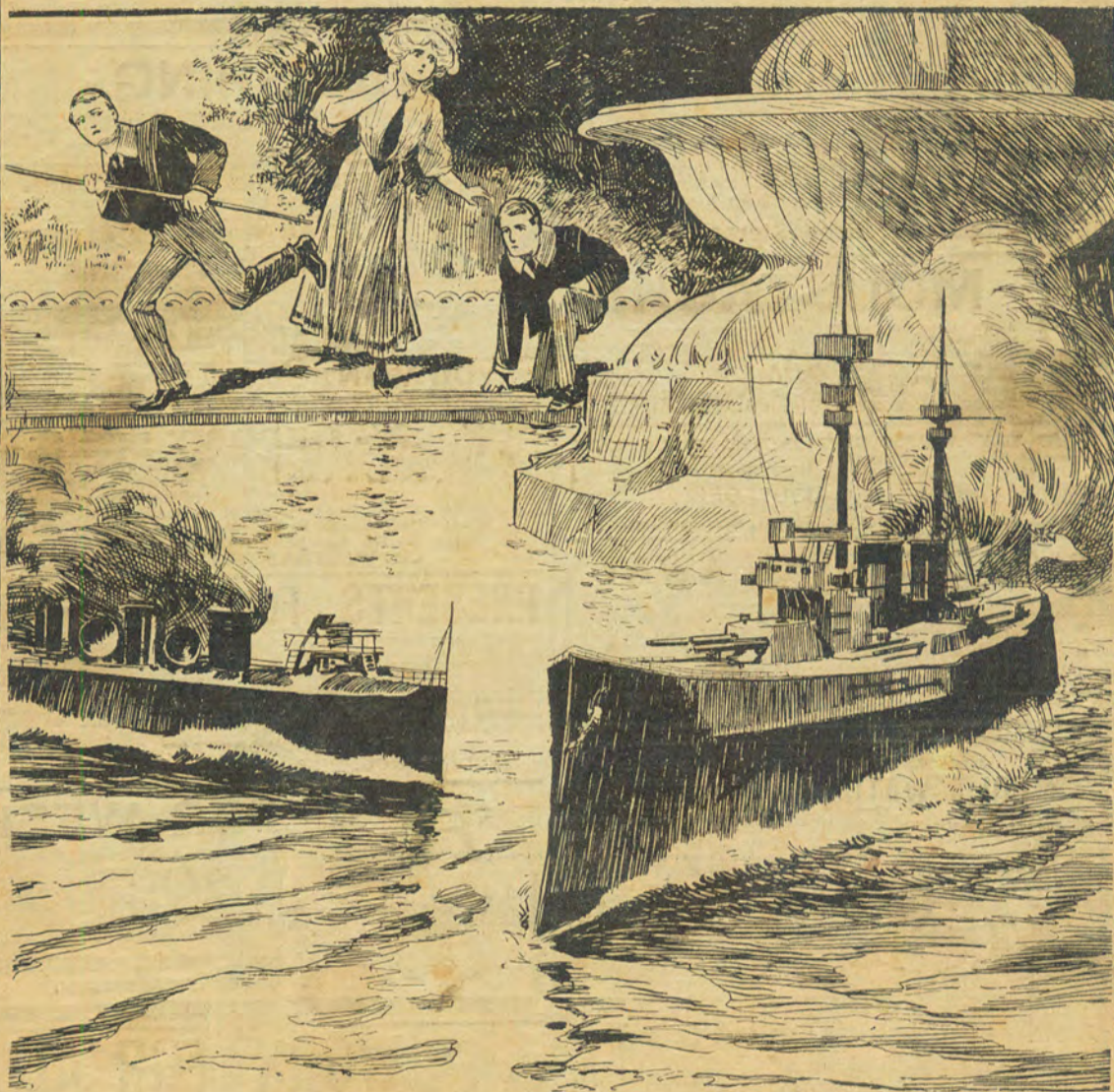


VOL. 3.
NO. 76.

SKIMPOLE'S DISCOVERY.

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MARTIN
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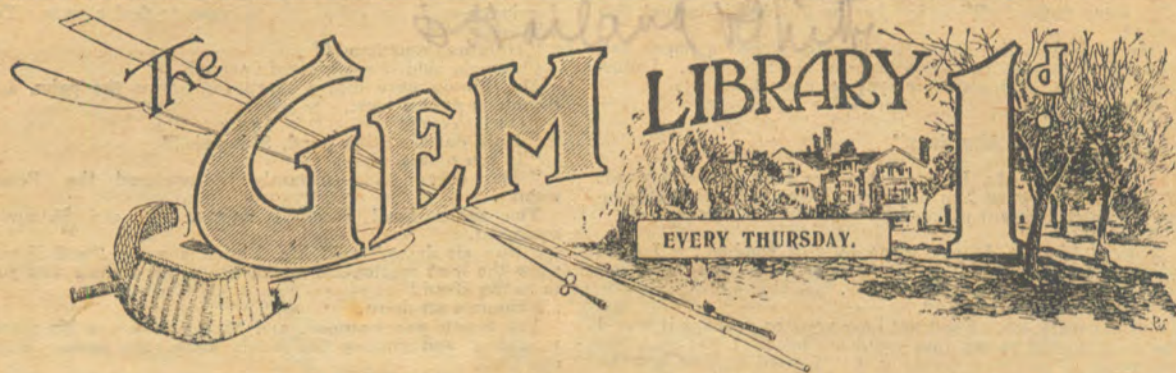
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SKIMPOLE'S DISCOVERY

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Skimpole's Great Discovery.

"SKIMPOLE!"

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell at St. Jim's, rapped out the name. But the owner of it did not reply, or even look up.

"Skimpole!"

Tom Merry looked round at Skimpole in some alarm. Mr. Linton was growing angry, and he had already taken a businesslike grip on the pointer. Tom Merry tried to catch Skimpole's eye, but in vain.

Skimpole was apparently immersed in thought. That was nothing unusual, for Herbert Skimpole was a genius. At all events, he said he was, and he had the information first-hand. Words of six or seven syllables, of which the other fellows did not even know the meaning, rattled off Skimpole's tongue at lightning speed when he was fairly going. He could tell you the history, past, present, and to come, of every word ending in "ism." With excited face, and eyes gleaming through his big spectacles, he would hold forth for hours together on the subject of Socialism, which was his favourite. But he would sometimes give

Socialism a rest in favour of Determinism, and it was even believed that he understood Ibsenism.

When Skimpole was on the trail, as Jack Blake had put it, of a new idea, or a new "ism," he was lost to the world—dead to his surroundings. At such a time, what did Roman history matter?

But the master of the Shell had no sympathy whatever with Socialism, Determinism, or any other "ism," and it was his duty to cram a certain quantity of Roman history into the heads of the Shell.

Hence the cloud that gathered on his brow, and his grip on the pointer, when Skimpole failed to answer to his name. "Skimpole!"

The name was rapped out for the third time. Mr. Linton's voice rose crescendo, but still the deep thinker did not hear, or did not heed.

Skimpole was sitting at the end of a form, and Gore was next to him. Gore could have nudged him into wakefulness, but Gore didn't. Gore preferred to sit tight, and wait for the fun.

"Skimpole!"

"The ass!" muttered Tom Merry. "He'll get a licking!"

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The utter duffer! What bee has he got in his bonnet this time?"

Harry Noble, the Australian junior, jerked a paper ball towards Skimpole, to startle him out of his reverie. Unfortunately, Mr. Linton's eagle eye was upon him.

"Noble!"

"Ye-e-a, sir!"

"You will take fifty lines."

"Oh!"

"Skimpole!" Mr. Linton made two long strides towards Skimpole, and gave him a rap on the knuckles that effectually startled him out of his deep reflections. "Skim—"

"Ow!"

"Boy! What do you mean by this conduct? I have spoken to you four or five times, and you have not answered!" thundered Mr. Linton.

Skimpole blinked at him.

"I am sorry, sir. I did not hear you—or perhaps it would be more correct to say that I did not heed. I was certainly conscious of someone speaking, but I tried to shut out the noise so that it would not interfere with the thread of my thoughts."

Mr. Linton gasped, and the Shell gasped, too. They were used to curious things from Skimpole, but this was strong even for the genius of the Shell.

"Skimpole! Dear me! Sometimes I am tempted to believe, Skimpole, that you are no more than an idiot."

"Not at all, sir. As Professor Krustykrumpett says very truly, a genius is never really understood by commonplace intellects. That is all that is the matter, sir. If your own brain were sufficiently developed to comprehend mine, you would change your opinion, sir."

"Boy!"

"Yes, sir. I have been thinking out a wonderful discovery, sir," said Skimpole, his eyes shining with enthusiasm. "I find, sir, that owing to my marvellous development of brain-power, sir, I possess the power—"

"Skimpole!"

Mr. Linton simply gasped out the word. He never knew what to make of Skimpole, and the junior's unparalleled nerve in talking like this in the Form-room absolutely took his breath away.

"Yes, sir. I possess the power of controlling the working of any intellect feebler than my own, by the simple concentration of will-power, sir. I could, for instance, suggest to you—"

"To—to me!"

"Yes, sir; to any intellect feebler than my own, I could suggest an action or a thought, which would govern that feeble intellect in spite of itself."

The Shell giggled.

"My only hat!" murmured Monty Lowther to Tom Merry. "Skimpole has the thickest head in class, and he's looking out for a thick ear to match, I suppose."

"Watch Linton," grinned Manners. "He's just beginning to boil."

"Skimpole! I hardly know what to say to you. You are an extraordinary boy! Stand out here, sir, and hold out your hand."

"M-m-m-my hand, sir!"

"Yes," said Mr. Linton. "I am going to punish you for—for your astounding impertinence! Hold out your hand, sir!"

Skimpole slowly left his place. A true philosopher, of course, ought to be able to despise pain, and Skimpole was a great philosopher. Yet he did not like the look of the pointer.

"If you please, sir—"

"Not a word! Hold out your hand!"

Skimpole blinked at Mr. Linton dubiously. He had an excellent opportunity now of seeing what he could do by the concentration of the will upon a feeble intellect. Mr. Linton did not look a very promising subject. But Skimpole was a full believer in himself, and he put it to the test.

The Shell watched him in astonishment.

Skimpole wrinkled his brows, with an effort of concentration that made his big, bumpy forehead seem to be making an attempt to reach the tip of his nose.

Mr. Linton gazed at him blankly.

"Skimpole, how dare you scowl at me like that?"

Skimpole jumped.

"I—I wasn't scowling, sir! I—I was concentrating my mighty will-power, sir."

"Hold out your hand!"

"One moment, sir. Allow me to explain. I am sorry I have paid no attention to the comparatively trivial matters in connection with school work. I was thinking out the great discovery I have made. You will see, sir, what a grand scope it gives me for—for doing good and useful service to humanity, sir. I shall be able to cure disease, for instance, simply by suggestion. By suggesting to you with a sufficiently concentrated will-force that you have no pain,

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for instance, I can cause you to cease to feel a pain. You will see—"

"Hold out your hand!"

Skimpole held it out gingerly enough.

Mr. Linton gave him a sharp rap across the palm, and Skimpole gave a howl.

"Ow! Yow!"

"Hold out the other hand, Skimpole!"

"If you please, sir—"

"The other hand—instantly!" thundered the Form-master.

The other hand received another cut, and Skimpole squirmed.

"Now sit down," said Mr. Linton angrily, "and if you show the least inattention again, Skimpole, I shall send you in to the Head."

Skimpole sat down.

The lesson was resumed, and Skimpole sat in his place, wriggling and chafing his hands under the desk. Gore chuckled.

"I say, Skimmy," he whispered, "there's a chance for you."

"Eh? I do not understand you, Gore."

"Why don't you suggest to yourself that you haven't any pain in your paws, you know, and you won't feel any there."

"I—er—hem—you do not understand science, Gore. You see—"

Gore chuckled. Mr. Linton looked across.

"Take fifty lines, Gore!"

And Gore did not chuckle again.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry Takes a Hand!

"BOW-WOW! Gr-gr-gr!"

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

It was after morning school, and the chums of the Shell were going up to their study, when the sudden irruption of doggy sounds proceeded from the room next to Tom Merry's. It was Gore's study, and the Terrible Three were naturally surprised, for Gore was not the possessor of a dog.

There was nothing of that sort about Gore. Gore wasn't fond of animals, and he never played cricket if he could help it. He had not the excuse of being a swot or a sap, for he never studied either, when he could get out of it. He was a slacker all along the line. Now, either Herries of the Fourth, or D'Arcy minor, of the Third, would have told you at once that there was something wrong about a chap who didn't like dogs. Whether that was true or not as a general proposition, certainly there was something wrong about Gore. He was the torment of Skimpole's life; the dreamy junior being his study-mate. He was the torment of everybody else who would stand it.

"Bow-wow! Yap!"

"There's a dog in there," said Manners.

Monty Lowther looked at him admiringly.

"My word, Manners! How do you do these things?" he asked. "Fancy him guessing, just from the sound, that there was a dog in there!"

"Don't be an ass—"

"It sounds to me like Wally's mongrel," said Tom Merry. "I believe I should know his yap anywhere. It's so—so musical."

"Yes, it's not Herries's bulldog, anyway; and there's not likely to be any dog in the School House except one of those two. What the dickens is Pongo doing in Gore's study?"

"Barking," said Lowther.

"Oh, don't be funny! Sounds to me as if he's being licked."

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows.

"Dogs want licking sometimes," he remarked. "But Gore has no business to be licking Pongo. Pongo can't have got into his study unless Gore took him there. It seems to me that this is a case for the S.P.C.A. Gore thinks everybody's gone out in the fine weather, and he won't be spotted. He's a cruel beast. I vote that we appoint ourselves local representatives for the S.P.C.A., and look into the matter."

"We want to get down to the cricket—"

"Blow the cricket."

"Oh, all right! If Pongo's really being hurt—"

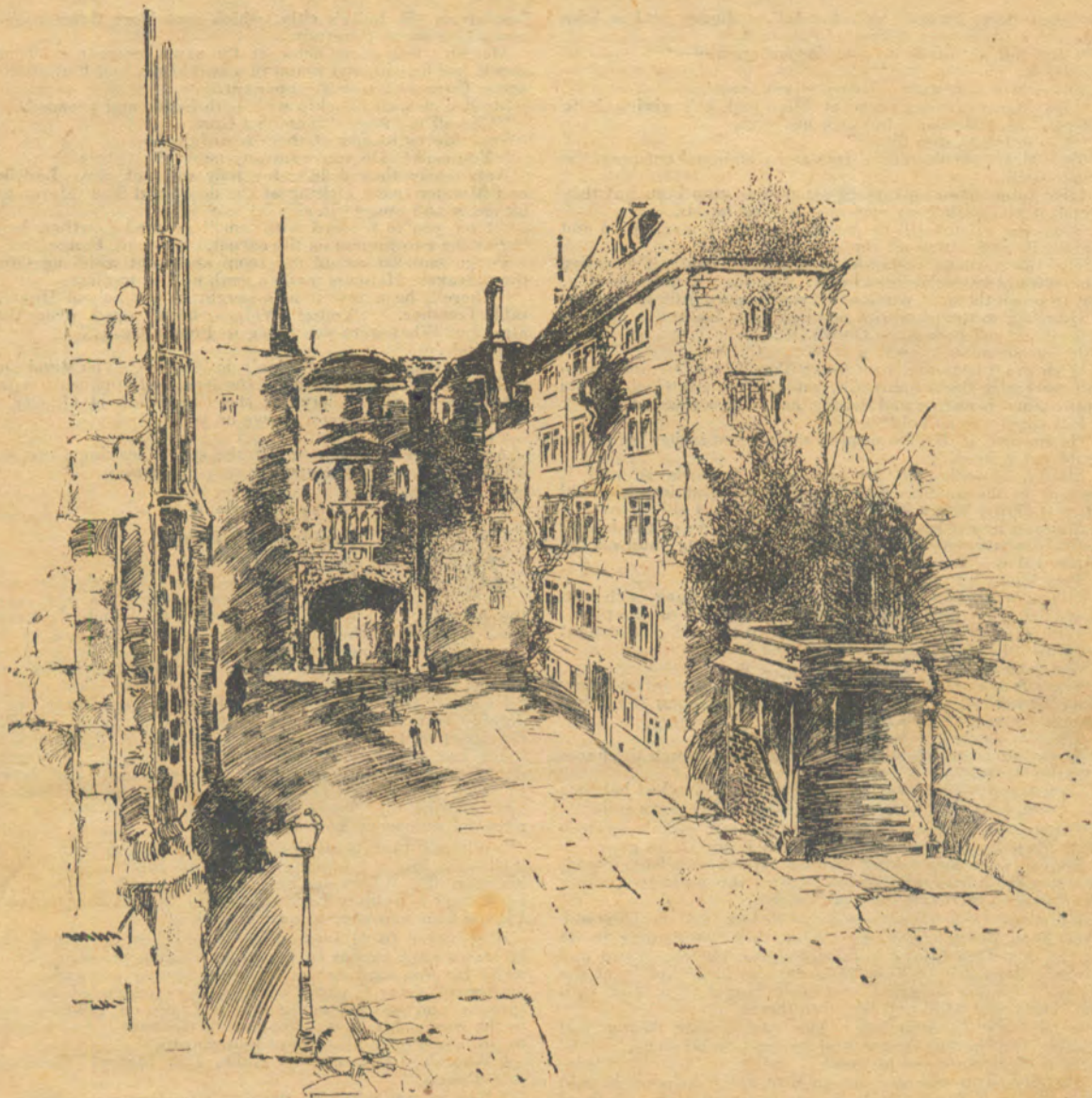
"Listen to that!"

The barking and growling broke forth again furiously as the chums of the Shell drew nearer to Gore's door. They could hear the voice of the owner of the study, too, in loud and angry tones.

"You fool, Mellish! Why didn't you keep the cord round his neck?"

"It slipped off."

"Dummy! You've got the cloth off, too."



Tom Merry's grip was on the window-sill at last, and there he hung, with outstretched arms, while his chums watched him with dizzy eyes and beating hearts.

"He had it off with his teeth."

"This row will startle the whole house, you fool!"

"It's all right; they're all gone down to the cricket. The beast can't bite while you keep a good grip on the back of his collar."

"Come and shove the cloth round his head again."

"Ye-es, but—I—I—"

"You cowardly cad!" roared Gore. "You're afraid of him!"

"I'm not afraid of him, but—"

"Then come and fasten his head up. How can I get at him unless he's got his jaws fastened up, you ass? He'll have one of my fingers off."

Tom Merry tried to open the door. It was fast.

He kicked at the lower panels.

"Who's there?" bawled Gore.

"It's I—Tom Merry."

"Go and eat winkles!"

"Open this door!"

"Rats!"

"What are you doing with Pongo?"

"Find out!"

Tom Merry drew back from the door, his eyes gleaming. He knew it was impossible to break down that solid oak, or to smash the lock with anything short of a crowbar. Things

were solidly built at St. Jim's. But the hero of the Shell was not the kind of fellow to give in, especially when he believed that an animal was being tormented and that he could help it.

Yap—yap—yap! Gr-r-r!

"Keep quiet, you beast!"

Bo-wow-wow!

Smack, smack, smack!

The Terrible Three distinctly heard the sounds of the heavy blows through the thick door, and the terrified squealing of the dog that followed.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

"You can't get in," said Monty Lowther.

"I will, though!"

Tom Merry ran into his own study and crossed to the window. His window was next to Gore, but the two window-sills were a considerable distance apart. Midway between the two a thick old drain-pipe ran downwards.

Lowther caught Tom Merry by the arm as he threw the window up.

"What are you going to do?" he exclaimed.

"I'm going in at the window!"

"Ass! You'll break your neck."

"That's all right—"

"Is it? Hold him, Manners!"

"Look here, let go!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I've been down that drain-pipe before. I can do it."

"Yes, but not across to the other window——"

"Hark!"

Bow-w-w-w-wow! Br-r-r-r—yap, yap!

"He knows we can't get at him, and he's giving it to Pongo," said Manners, between his teeth.

"I'm going to stop him!"

Tom Merry shook himself free and clambered out upon the window-sill.

His chums made no further attempt to stop him, but they watched him with dizzy eyes and beating hearts.

From the window-sill he reached out to the drain-pipe and caught it, and swung off the sill.

The thick, rough pipe afforded a good hold. The active junior could have clambered down it to the ground with ease, but to reach the next window-sill was a more difficult matter.

He clung to the pipe with one hand and his knees, and the other hand reached out to Gore's sill.

It was some inches short.

With great care and iron nerve Tom Merry strained himself to reach the window-sill, and his outstretched fingers approached it nearer and nearer, and at last touched it.

But there was no hold.

He touched it, but he wanted some more inches before he could get a hold.

Slowly, steadily, he forced himself towards it, and it seemed to the anxious watchers that he must lose his hold upon the pipe before he secured one upon the sill.

Manners closed his eyes as he thought of it—of the falling body—the rush through the air—the spattering thud on the stones below! Lowther was white as death.

Tom Merry's face was hard set.

His grip was on the sill at last, and he hung with outstretched arms, and then he let go the leg-grip on the pipe.

With a swift jerk he swung across to the sill, and caught with his other hand.

There he hung!

The effort had cost him too much for him to immediately drag himself upon the window-sill, and he hung for a full minute to recover his breath.

Then he slowly climbed upon the sill.

The window was closed, but he could see through the panes into the study.

Gore was seated at the table, with Pongo clutched between his knees, his grip like iron on the back of the dog's collar.

Pongo was snapping, but he could not bite so long as Gore kept his grip hard, and Gore was not likely to let go.

Mellish was approaching the dog with a cloth bag, intending to slip it over his head to drown the noise by pulling the string tight round the dog's neck.

Upon the table there was a colour-box, and nothing else that Tom Merry could see. What they were going to do to the dog Tom Merry could not guess, but that Gore had already ill-used it he knew, and even as he looked in at the window the dog wriggled, and Gore caught up a stick with his disengaged hand and began to thrash it.

Pongo whined piteously. The blows were heavy and savage, and the dog shrank and cowered under them.

Tom Merry snapped his teeth.

He pushed up the sash an inch to get a grip on it, and then threw it up, suddenly—so suddenly that the crash of it made the two young rascals in the study jump with startled affright.

Tom Merry sprang into the study.

Gore started to his feet, and Pongo scrambled away, and scuttled under the table instantly. There he began to bark furiously. Gore faced Tom Merry with a savage scowl on his face, while Mellish promptly placed the table between himself and the indignant hero of the Shell.

"What do you mean by bursting into my study like this?" roared Gore. "I—— Oh!"

Tom Merry did not speak.

He ran straight at Gore and hit out from the shoulder.

The cad of the Shell caught the blow full on his nose, and went over backwards as if a cannon-ball had struck him.

He dropped on the carpet, and lay there blinking.

Tom Merry stood over him, his chest heaving.

"Get up, you cad!"

Gore scrambled to his feet.

"Come on, Mellish!" he yelled.

And he hurled himself upon Tom Merry.

Mellish hesitated a moment, but he thought that when Tom Merry had finished with Gore his turn would come, and that screwed up his courage to the sticking-point. He rushed forward to back up Gore.

But, though they were two to one, they did not know how to handle the champion athlete of the Shell.

Tom Merry faced them with flashing eyes—he would have faced half-a-dozen of them.

He knocked up Gore's lashing fists and drove him a right—the Gem Library.—76.

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hand on the bully's chin, which sent Gore down with a bump that shook the study.

Mellish's fists came home at the same moment on Tom's cheek, but he whipped round in a twinkling, and laid Mellish across Gore with a swift upper-cut.

Mellish clasped his chin with both hands and groaned.

"Gerroff my neck!" mumbled Gore.

Tom Merry looked at them scornfully.

"You cads! Do you want any more?"

Apparently they didn't, for they did not rise. Lowther and Manners were kicking at the door, and Tom Merry unlocked it and opened it.

"I see you've finished with 'em!" grinned Lowther, looking at the two juniors on the carpet. "Pongo, Pongo!"

Pongo scuttled out of the room and went whisking down the passage. Manners made a grab at him too late.

"There'll be a row if he's caught in the School House," said Lowther. "Young Wally's been roped over that already. What were you doing to Pongo, Gore?"

"Find out!"

"Well, whatever it was, don't do it again. You stand—or, rather, lie—in the presence of the local self-appointed representatives of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. We shall keep an eye on you."

"Go to Jericho!"

And the Terrible Three left the study, leaving Gore and Mellish blinking at one another very unamiably.

CHAPTER 3.

Looking for Pongo.

"ANYBODY seen Pongo?"

It was D'Arcy minor—more familiarly known as Wally—of the Third Form at St. Jim's, who asked the question. He asked it in a voice that could be heard from one end of the Shell passage to the other end of the Fourth Form passage. Wally very often missed his favourite, for Pongo was a perfect demon at slipping his collar, and he was hard to keep in a kennel. And then, besides, when he was on the chain he would blink so pleadingly, as if dumbly asking to be allowed a run, that Wally often hadn't the heart to keep him fastened up. And Wally wanted to know, too, why a dog shouldn't have a run when he wanted one. Pongo wouldn't bite unless he was hurt, and as for gnawing people's curtains or books when he got indoors, and digging up flower-beds in the garden—well, a dog required relaxation now and then.

"Where's that beast Pongo?" continued D'Arcy minor. "I'll give him a tanning when I catch him! I'll have half his skin off! Where has he got to? He's off his chain, the beast, and I tightened his collar two notches this morning. I'll tan him into rags when I catch him!"

A stranger to D'Arcy minor would have supposed that he was a hard master to Pongo by hearing his lurid threats when he was hunting for the troublesome mongrel. As a matter of fact, Wally's wrath always expended itself in threats, and he had never laid a finger on Pongo except in the way of kindness. But during the hunt it was a solace to promise Pongo all sorts of punishment.

"Where's that beast—Hallo, Tom Merry! Have you seen Pongo?"

"Yes, he was whisking down this passage a minute ago," said Tom Merry. "He must have gone past the Fourth Form studies."

"Thanks!"

And the hero of the Third went down the passage whistling for Pongo. Wally's whistle was the loudest and shrillest ever heard except from a locomotive, and it usually excited protests when it was indulged indoors. From the open door of Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage, a protesting

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voice proceeded—the voice of D'Arcy major, Wally's elder brother.

"Weally, Wally, I wish you would stop that feahful wow!"

Wally looked into Study No. 6 with a grin. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was putting on his necktie at the glass, and that was a labour of love with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. For Arthur Augustus was the swell of the School House, and he had the reputation of being the best-dressed fellow in the Lower School, and he lived up to it. There were dandies in the Sixth Form who envied Arthur Augustus D'Arcy the set of his necktie, the crease of his splendid trousers, and the peculiar grace with which he sported a monocle.

Wally looked at his elder brother, and gave an expressive whistle. Splendid as Arthur Augustus's attire always was, he was a little more gorgeous than usual. He was evidently dressing with the greatest care.

"Hallo, Gus! What's on?"

"I wegard that as a slangy expression, Wally," said D'Arcy major, turning his head for a moment to look at his younger brother, and jamming his eyeglass into his eye. "I weally wish, Wally, that you would not use slangy expressions. It is more particular than evah just now that you should not do so."

"Why, what's the giddy wheeze?"

"Weally, that is worse than the othah. You ought to be on your vewy best behaviour to-day. It is vewy painful to me to welect that Cousin Ethel might hear you usin' slangy expressions."

"Oh, is Ethel coming?" said Wally, apparently not so much impressed by the circumstance as his elder brother was. "Good! Have you seen Pongo?"

"I am not in the habit of lookin' wound for your wotten mongwel, Wally."

"Well, have you seen him?"

"Certainly not."

"I shouldn't wonder if he dodged into this study," said Wally, looking puzzled. "Tom Merry said he came this way, and I have just come upstairs, so he didn't get out that way. He must have dodged into some room, and this is the only door that's open."

"I have not seen him. What do you think of this necktie, Wally?"

"I don't think of it," said Wally, looking at the gorgeous tie. "It would give me a pain somewhere—like a nightmare in the daytime."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Look here, that dog must have dodged in here," Wally looked under the table, and behind the bookcase, and into the cupboard. "He ought to be here—"

"I should have seen him—"

"Oh, a tiger might come into the study without your seeing him, when you're tying your necktie!"

"You impertinent young wascal—"

"Hallo, what's this inky microbe doing here?" exclaimed Jack Blake, coming into the study with Herries and Digby. "Really, Gussy, I think you might wash your minor sometimes!"

"He needs it," said Digby. "I was thinking of getting a bar of carbolio soap, and keeping it in the study for D'Arcy's brother."

"Good!" said Herries. "If you'd like to begin now, Gussy, I'll borrow a scrubbing-brush of Mrs. Mimms."

Wally glared at the chums of the Fourth.

"Oh, you funny merchants!" he said. "You ought to be on the front page of a comic paper! That's the place for you. Have you seen Pongo?"

"G-r-r-r-r!"

"Hallo, that's him!" said Wally quickly and ungrammatically. "Where is the beast? Why, blessed if Gussy hasn't been shutting him up in a hat-box!"

"What!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Look there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

D'Arcy looked, speechlessly.

D'Arcy's hat-box was a standing joke in the Fourth Form. It was of huge dimensions, and would hold three silk toppers and a couple of straw hats and caps. There was comfortable room for Pongo to curl up in it, when the hats were not there. But Pongo had made room while the hats were there.

"Oh!" gasped D'Arcy, as he gazed upon his crushed toppers. "Oh, the wotten beast! He's in my hat-box!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Scat, you beast! Bai Jove, I nevah felt so inclined to swike an animal in my life! Hewwies's bulldog is bad enough; he has no respect for a fellow's twousahs. But this—bai Jove, this is the Jimit!"

Pongo eyed D'Arcy cautiously from the hat-box. He whisked out as the swell of St. Jim's rushed at him,

brandishing an umbrella. He whisked out of the hat-box and out of the study, and Wally, choking with laughter, whisked after him. Blake roared with laughter, till D'Arcy, brandishing the umbrella after Pongo, caught him a fearful crack on the side of the head, and then he roared with something else.

"Ow, wow! Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Bai Jove, I'm sowwy, deah boy!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Did I hit you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Digby. "Did he hit you, Blake?"

"Bai Jove!"

"You shrieking ass!" yelled Blake. "You've raised a bump as big as a roc's egg—"

"I'm sowwy—"

"My head's singing like—like—like a kettle!"

"I'm vewy sowwy indeed—feahfully sowwy—but I must wefuse to be addressed as a shwiekin' ass, Blake. I wegard the expwession as distinctly oppwobwious."

"I—I—I—I'll jump on his neck!" gasped Blake. "I won't have that dangerous lunatic in this study. I objected to him when he first came to this school. I knew I couldn't stand him. I'll—I'll jump on him!"

"I twust, Blake, that you will calm down and behave a little more decently before Cousin Ethel awwives."

Blake gave a jump.

"Cousin Ethel!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is she coming?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"In that case, I'll let you live," said Blake magnanimously. "But my head's humming like a top. It feels like— Hallo, Skimpole! Not to-day, thank you!"

CHAPTER 4.

Skimpole the Healer!

SKIMPOLE blinked into the study through his big spectacles. There was a serious and earnest expression upon his face—the look of an enthusiastic discoverer who is only anxious to turn his discovery to the use of humanity in general.

"Excuse me, Blake, but I could not help hearing what you said as I passed. You appear to be in pain."

"Yes; that dummy, D'Arcy—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"That utter dummy, D'Arcy, has swiped me on the napper with his silly broolly. I am thinking of suffocating him in a quiet corner one of these days, or— Aha, a thought strikes me!" exclaimed Blake, in the best manner of the Junior Dramatic Society. "Take him out and talk Socialism to him, Skimmy. From a safe distance I will look on and gloat over his expiring agonies!"

"Really, Blake, I consider that remark preposterous. I am quite willing to improve D'Arcy's mind by discoursing upon Socialistic subjects—"

"Not much, deah boy!"

"But at present I am rather dropping Socialism," said Skimpole. "A nearer and more important matter is occupying my attention. True, the cause of the suffering millions, bowed down by the oppression of the ruthless governing classes, must always claim my attention. But there is another matter—"

"There's the cause of the suffering juniors who have to listen to you," said Digby.

"I am taking up the subject of healing by suggestion," said Skimpole, unheeding. "It is a most important matter, and much neglected by the medical profession. I have noticed that the average medical man is something of the nature of a fossil. He is impervious to new ideas. The last time I saw a doctor I endeavoured to explain to him that his whole system was founded upon ignorance and misconception, and that he was in point of fact simply a survival of the painted medicine-man of savage times, and he grew quite irritable, and interrupted me in a manner which I could only regard as rude."

"How curious!"

"Yes; but a fellow with new ideas has to expect that sort of thing. However, I have not allowed the obsolete prejudices of antiquated medicine-merchants to stop me in my career of discovery. Having found that owing to my wonderfully developed brain power, I possess the faculty of healing by suggestion, why should I not use this discovery for the benefit of humanity?"

"Go and get on with it, then!" suggested Blake. "Don't lose a moment. Buzz off!"

"Ahem! Did you—I ask you frankly, did you often meet with a brain like mine?"

Jack Blake looked at Skimpole, running a curious eye solemnly over him.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S AIR-CRUISE." An Extra-long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

"No, I don't think I did," he replied.

"Good! Now, owing to the extraordinary development of my brain power, I am able to heal by suggestion. Pain is chiefly imaginary. The will governs the flesh; the mind rules the body. You think you have a pain; as a matter of fact, you know you haven't one."

"It feels jolly well like one," said Blake, rubbing his head ruefully.

"Ah, that expresses it exactly—it feels like it! But it is not a pain; it is an effect of the imagination. You have only to imagine with sufficient force that you have no pain, and the pain will disappear."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy.

"I assure you that it is the fact. Concentrate your will upon the subject—force yourself to think that there is no pain—and the pain will go."

"Skimpy, my son, you'd better go back to Socialism, or even to Determinism!" said Blake, with a shake of the head. "I thought there was never any piffle so piffly as Determinism, but this goes one better."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It is the fact, Blake. If you do not believe it, it is because the low development of your mental powers is in the way. However, if you cannot make the effort by yourself I can assist you."

"Look here, ass—"

"Yes, that is exactly what I am going to do. I shall place the tips of the fingers of my right hand upon your forehead, and bend my gaze upon you in the most concentrated way possible. Then I shall will that the pain will disappear, and it will disappear."

"Rats!"

"Let me try the experiment, and you shall judge for yourself."

"Yaas, wathah! Let him twy, deah boys; this is wathah intwestin'," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, we know Skimpy is a feahful ass, but there may be somethin' in this, you know. There's somethin' in everythin'."

"Oh, go it, ass!"

"Good! Stand here. Now, I place the tips of my fingers upon your forehead thus. Now, you will will that that pain disappear, and I will will that your will will effect its will."

"Better make your will," suggested Digby, with a grin.

"Pray don't interrupt. This is a question of will power. The will to will will necessarily—"

"Bai Jove, say that again, Skimpy! The will that you will that Blake wills will will—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, please! This is a serious matter. Are you willing, Blake?"

"Of course I am, or I shouldn't let you do it."

"Ah! I mean are you willing, present participle of the verb to will," said Skimpole. "You will will with all the strength of your will, and I will will with all the strength of my will to will."

And Skimpole placed his fingers on Blake's forehead, and bent his gaze upon him in the most concentrated way.

There was a short silence in the study.

Even Arthur Augustus remained with his necktie half-tied to look on.

"Now, Blake, how do you feel?"

"Just the same."

"Is the pain gone?"

"No!"

"Ahem! We must continue!"

Arthur Augustus began to brush his silk hat, to get Pongo's hair off it. The study was very silent. Digby and Herries looked on with great interest. They were beginning to see a gleam in Blake's eye that boded that his feelings were getting excited in some way, whether in the way Skimpole wanted or not.

Another minute elapsed.

"Is the pain gone, Blake?"

"No!"

"Dear me, that is very curious!"

"Yes, isn't it?" said Blake.

"Of course, you must do your best to help on the experiment," said Skimpole. "Whatever feeling you feel within you, you must give free play to."

"Good! I feel a strong feeling at the present moment—"

"Ah!"

"Which prompts me—"

"Go on!"

"To raise my right hand thus—"

"Good!"

"And clench my fingers, thus, as if I were going to punch somebody—"

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"Good!"

"And to—to—"

"To what?"

"To land out like that!" said Blake, letting out his right upon Skimpole's chest, and dropping the experimenter upon the floor as if he had been shot.

"Ow!" gasped Skimpole, as he sat down, "Ow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries and Dig.

Blake grinned at the healer.

"Is that all right, Skimpy?"

"Ow, ow!"

"I feel a further feeling rising within me," went on Blake dreamily. "It prompts me to take up the inkpot, thus, and to invert it over the head of an idiotic, howling ass, thus—"

"R-r-r-r-r!"

Skimpole squirmed away like an eel.

"Then I feel a further prompting to raise my right foot, thus, and—"

But Skimpole was out of the study, and Blake lowered his right foot to the ground. The amateur healer by suggestion sprinted along the passage towards his own study, with the ink streaming down his face.

A roar of laughter followed him from Study No. 6.

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "I think Skimpy's latest wheeze is gorgeous. I wonder if he will be able to suggest that ink off his chivvy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole scuttled along to his own study, and went in rather hurriedly. Gore and Mellish were there. Mellish was nursing his chin and groaning, and Gore was dabbing his nose with a handkerchief, which had stains of red upon it.

Skimpole gazed at them in astonishment.

"Dear me! Have you two been fighting?"

Gore grunted.

"Oh, shut up, dummy, and don't worry now!"

"Really, Gore, that is almost rude. However, it is the first principle of a true Socialist to return good for evil. You appear to be suffering from a pain in your nose."

"I'll make you suffer from a pain in your nose, if you don't get out!" roared Gore, whose temper, never very good, hadn't been improved by his encounter with Tom Merry.

"Really, Gore, I desire to help you," said Skimpole mildly. "Neither is it reasonable to ask me to get out of my own study. I have discovered, as you learned in class this morning, that I possess the gift of healing by suggestion."

"Oh, ring off!"

"I can, if you wish, cure that pain in your nose. I place the tips of my fingers upon your forehead, thus— Ow!"

Skimpole broke off with a yell as Gore hit out, catching him fairly upon the nose.

Skimpole sat down.

"Now you'd better cure that by suggestion!" grinned Gore, as he stamped out of the study, followed by Mellish.

Skimpole sat dizzily for a few moments, and then he staggered to his feet. His eyes were watering, and his nose seemed to be swelling. He put his spectacles straight.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "That is very brutal of Gore. I—I feel a very serious pain in my own. Yes, it is bleeding. Dear me! I wish I could imbue Gore with the principles of Socialism. It would make the study a much more comfortable place to live in. This hurts me considerably. How fortunate that I have discovered that I possess the power of banishing pain by the exercise of the will."

And Skimpole concentrated his will upon the subject to banish the pain from his nose.

He concentrated it with all his might, saying to himself that there was no pain there, that there should be no pain there, and "willing" with all his powers that the pain should cease instantly.

But there appeared to be something a little wrong with his theory.

For the pain continued as bad as ever.

But Skimpole went on "willing," and in the nature of things the pain was bound to subside in time. It gradually died away, and then a grin of satisfaction overspread the face of the scientific healer.

"Splendid!" he muttered. "The pain is gone, almost gone; practically gone, in fact! Having succeeded in my own case, there is very little doubt that I can succeed in the case of others. It is splendid!"

And Skimpole beamed with enthusiasm as he thought of the amount of good he would be able to effect with his newly-discovered powers.

CHAPTER 5.

What's the Matter with Towser?

"W HERE'S Herries?"

Jack Blake asked the question, as he dropped into his seat at the dinner-table. Blake was a little late himself, and all the rest of the Fourth—or, rather, the portion that boarded in the School House—were there, with the exception of Herries. Herries was conspicuous by his absence.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head.

"Hewwies seems to be absent, deah boy. He went wound to feed his beastly bulldog a short time ago, and pewwaps he is still feedin' him?"

"It's time he was feeding himself, if he wants any dinner," said Digby. "Lathom will notice soon that he isn't here."

There was a cough from the top of the table, where Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, sat. The little short-sighted master blinked through his spectacles at the vacant seat.

"Is—or—someone not yet in his place?"

"Ya-a-as, sir!"

"Who is it?"

"Hewwies, sir!"

"Do you know where he is?"

"I think he's gone to feed his bulldog, sir. Pway excuse Hewwies, sir! He is wemarkably fond of that howwid animal."

"Ahem! Go and find him, D'Arcy, and tell him to come in to dinner immediately!"

"Certainly, sir."

Arthur Augustus left the table, and grace being said, the other juniors fell to without waiting for him. D'Arcy hurried round to the kennels, and there, sure enough, he found his missing chum.

Herries was standing regarding Towser with a deeply serious and worried look. Towser was looking as grim as usual, and wagging his stump of a tail.

Arthur Augustus tapped Herries on the shoulder, and Towser's master started, and looked round.

"Dinnah's weady, Hewwies! The chaps are beginnin', and I've been sent to look for you. Why don't you come in?"

"I'm looking after Towser."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"He's not well."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Towser. He could see no symptoms of ill-health about the big, powerful bulldog.

"What's the mattah with him, deah boy?"

"I'm afraid it's a kind of distemper," said Herries, looking very much distressed. "Look at his body, there are pink spots all over it."

"Bai Jove!"

"Blessed if I quite know what to make of it. There are pink spots all over him, and a few blue ones. I've looked out all my books on the subject, and I can't find any dog disease that's got blue and pink spots for a symptom."

"Poor old Towsah! He looks all wight, though. He doesn't seem to be suffewin' fwom any pain."

"No; and that's what makes it serious."

"Has he lost his appetite?"

"Well, he's just eaten a whole rabbit. That looks as if he was all right in that direction."

"Well, deah boy, if he isn't in pain, and hasn't lost his appetite, he's all wight. Pewwaps the spots only show that he's moultn', or somethin'?"

Herries sniffed.

"Lot you know about dogs! Do you think he's a giddy parrot? Buzz off, and don't talk rot, old man!"

"Aren't you comin' in to dinnah?"

"Blow dinner!"

"But Mr. Lathom sent me to look for you."

"Blow Mr. Lathom!"

"My deah Hewwies, if you don't come he will give you a lickin'."

"Blow the lickin'!"

Herries was evidently in an unreasonable mood. He was disturbed and anxious about Towser, so it was excusable. He watched his favourite with a worried look. Towser was not popular with the juniors of St. Jim's, or with anybody else except Herries. But to Herries he was perfection, or as near to it as a dog could get. Herries only sniffed scornfully at the general prejudice against Towser.

"But you must weally come in to dinnah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus persuasively. "It's a weally wippin' dinnah—mutton and roasted potatoes and jolly good gweens, and lots of nice brown gway."

"I can't leave Towser."

"But you're not goin' without any gwub?"

"Blow the grub!"

"I can't go back without you, you know."

"Then stay here."

"But I can't, deah boy. Cousin Ethel will be here soon aftah dinnah, and I've taken all the twouble to dwess before dinnah, so as to cut off immediately it's ovah. I shall miss my dinnah if I stay here."

"Then, don't stay."

"But you must come back with me."

"Rats!"

"But what shall I tell Mr. Lathom?"

"Tell him to go and eat coke!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, get off!"

And Herries stooped down and began to make a careful examination of his dog; and Arthur Augustus gave it up, and returned to the School House.

The juniors were half through their dinner when Arthur Augustus arrived. D'Arcy was hungry, and he would gladly have dropped into his place and started; but he had to explain to Mr. Lathom.

"Dear me, D'Arcy, where have you been?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, who was the most absent-minded of little old gentlemen, and never remembered anything.

"I've been to look for Hewwies, sir, as you told me."

"Ah, yes, of course! Where is he?"

"He wishes you to excuse him, sir," said D'Arcy, thinking it best not to deliver Herries' message exactly as Herries had given it to him. "His dog is ill, sir; and Hewwies wants to look aftah it, sir, if you don't mind, and he doesn't want any dinnah."

"Ahem! I am afraid I cannot allow a junior to miss his dinner," said Mr. Lathom. "It would not be good for him. Go back and tell Herries to come at once, D'Arcy; or the table will be cleared."

"Yaas, sir!"

Arthur Augustus gave a longing glance at his plate. He had to leave St. Jim's at exactly two, if he was to meet Cousin Ethel; and it was ten minutes to two now. D'Arcy was by no means a great eater; but he had the natural healthy appetite of a youth, and the prospect of missing his dinner was not cheering.

However, he obeyed without a word, and returned to where he had left Herries.

That youth was engaged in washing Towser in a foot-bath, with a big sponge, and in a fluid which was highly scented, and doubtless contained some disinfectant.

He looked up impatiently as D'Arcy came up.

"Hallo! What do you want?"

"Mr. Lathom has sent me for you—"

"Oh, rats!"

"He cannot allow a juniah to miss his dinnah—"

"More rats!"

"Weally, Hewwies, this is wathah wotten! Between you and Mr. Lathom, I shall be dwiven to goin' out without any dinnah. Pway come at once!"

"Sha'n't!"

"I don't think there's anythin' weally w'ong with that beastly dog—"

"You don't know anything about dogs. Keep still, Towser. Still, old boy. It's for your own good, old doggy. Still, now."

Towser did not seem to understand that it was for his own good; for he wriggled in the water like an eel, and was evidently watching for a chance to skip out and bolt.

He splashed the water right and left, and Herries' waistcoat and shirt-sleeves were pretty well drenched; and D'Arcy had to jump away quickly to save his trousers.

Herries blinked at him with one eye, the other being closed by a splash of disinfected water.

"Hold him, Gussy. As you're here, you may as well make yourself useful. Hold him by the ears."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"He won't bite you unless he gets annoyed at something. Well, hold him by the hind legs, then."

"I shall be splashed with watah."

"Well, I'm splashed!"

"I uttally wefuse to be splashed with watah. I wegard you as an ass, and Towsah as a wotten, twoublesome beast. I think—"

"Stop him!" roared Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, you ass!"

With a terrific splashing, Towser had got loose, and he whisked out of the foot-bath in a twinkling. Whisking drops of water on all sides of him, he bolted, with Herries in frantic pursuit.

Towser and Herries disappeared round a corner of the buildings, and D'Arcy lost sight of them.

"Bai Jove!"

He walked away towards the School House.

A terrific growling and snapping met him in the quad.

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Towser and Pongo had met there, and they were rolling over and over in deadly combat.

Herries dashed up breathlessly; but at the same moment Pongo tore himself loose and dashed off, and Towser whisked away in pursuit. After Towser went Herries, and the three of them went pelting out of the gates of St. Jim's and down the road.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "It must be awfully excitin' to keep a bulldog! I wondah if I shall get any doinnah?"

Two boomed out from the school clock.

"Bai Jove! No!"

Stopping for dinner meant missing Cousin Ethel at the station. Arthur Augustus hesitated one moment. The juniors were pouring out into the quadrangle. But it was only for a moment that Arthur Augustus delayed. Then he walked quickly down to the gates and went out.

CHAPTER 6.

The Followers!

TING, ting, ting!
Buzz-uzz-uzz!
Toot-oot!

Arthur Augustus jumped, as the noise blared out just behind him, and turned round.

Three cyclists were dashing down the road from St. Jim's towards the village, and he recognised Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, as they bore down upon him.

The three Shell fellows dashed up within a few paces of him, and then jammed the brakes on.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Nearly ran you down, Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I wegard that as a beastly twick! You have thwown me into quite a fluttah!"

"Awfully sorry! We'll go very slow now," said Tom Merry. "Manners, give me your arm. And you give me a wing, Lowther. We're going slow."

Tom Merry, who was in the middle, held on to Manners and Lowther, leaving his handle-bars unheld. The three cyclists supported one another in a row, and moved along at a snail's pace.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass, and looked at them.

"There is no need to play the giddy ox, Tom Mewwy! Why don't you wide on?"

"We're going slow. We don't want to throw you into a flutter again—we'd rather throw you into a ditch."

"Weally, you uttah asses!"

"This is all right. Slow and solemn pace suits three respectable, serious-minded, conscientious young persons like ourselves," explained Tom Merry. "We're going to keep this up. It's good for a chap to go slow at times, and reflect. Are you reflecting, Lowther?"

"Yes, rather! Are you reflecting, Manners?"

"Yes."

And the Terrible Three, with solemn visages, moved on like snails, the wheels of the cycles turning round extremely slowly. Tom Merry was free-wheeling, and Lowther and Manners pedalling very gently.

"You uttah asses! Look here——"

"It's all right, Gussy. Don't mind us!"

"I am going to Wylcombe——"

"We're not stopping you, are we?"

"I wefuse to be followed down the woad by thwee silly asses!" said Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "Why don't you wide on?"

"We're taking it easy!"

"Vewy well, I shall huwvy myself!"

And D'Arcy broke into a long stride, which carried him over the ground at a good rate.

But the three cyclists immediately quickened their pace, and exactly kept pace with the swell of St. Jim's, about a couple of yards behind him.

D'Arcy slackened down again, and turned round wrathfully.

"Look here, you uttah asses——"

"Yes, we're looking!"

"What are you followin' me about for, you howwid wottahs?"

"The fact is, Gussy, we're anxious about you," said Tom Merry solemnly. "We noticed that you missed dinner in Hall. It's not good for a kid of your tender years to go for a long walk immediately after dinner—especially if he's missed the dinner. We are keeping you in sight, in case you faint from exhaustion on the road; and then we shall be at hand to render first aid. As full-blown, first-class Boy Scouts, we can render first aid in a first-class manner; and we shall be very pleased to pick up your fainting form, and revive you by dipping your napper into the nearest ditch!"

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"Awfully pleased!" said Lowther. "I'm quite looking forward to it!"

"You uttah asses——"

"Do you feel faint now, Gussy? There's a beautiful full ditch close at hand."

D'Arcy did not deign any reply. He strode on wrathfully; and the three cyclists kept exact pace.

When D'Arcy quickened, they quickened; when he slackened, they slackened. And the wrathful Fourth-Former could not shake them off. He was strongly inclined to go for them violently, and knock their bicycles over. It was not the thought that it would be one against three that restrained him. But he was certain to get pretty dusty and rumpled in the process; and that would never do, when he was going to meet Cousin Ethel at the station.

He strode on, with the chuckling chums of the Shell keeping pace behind.

"What's the little game, Tom?" muttered Lowther. "I thought we were coming out for a spin."

"So did I," said Lowther. "I'm doing as you say; but I'm blessed if I know what you're getting at. What's the jape? Are we going to waste time japing Gussy all the way from St. Jim's to the village?"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Yes, rather!"

"What for, ass?"

"You see, Gussy has his best togs to the fore. He was dressing himself before dinner—dressing to kill. Then he missed his dinner. Wherefore?"

"Aha!" said Lowther, beginning to understand.

"Now he's going down to the station. Wherefore again?"

"Aha! I smell a mouse!"

"There's been talk for a week or two of Cousin Ethel coming down to the school again. What?"

"Oh, that's all very well!" said Manners, with a grunt. "I haven't forgotten the other day you marched us down to the station to meet Cousin Ethel, and it turned out to be a fat young porpoise named Bunter, who was coming to visit Gussy!"

"Yes, rather," said Lowther, "and a jolly good snigger the Fourth Form had at our expense, too."

"It's all right this time, though," said Tom Merry hurriedly; "Gussy wouldn't miss his dinner for nothing. Besides, why is he so rattly about being followed? This lane is free to all the subjects of King Edward the Seventh, I suppose. Gussy hasn't bought it. He thinks we know the little game."

"Hallo, he's getting over the stile!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was mounting the stile, to take the shorter cut through the wood. Cyclists were not supposed to ride on the footpath through the wood, and, indeed, there was little room for them, as the branches encroached a great deal on the path. There was a smile on Gussy's face as he dropped on the inner side of the stile, and marched on through the wood.

But when he looked back a few moments later the smile vanished.

The Terrible Three were lifting their machines over the stile, and they mounted on the footpath and rode after D'Arcy. Tom Merry raised his straw hat as D'Arcy glared back at him.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wegard them as feahful wottahs! I weally hope they will meet a keepah who will wun them in."

But they did not meet a keeper.

D'Arcy emerged into the lane again near the village, and then paced on up the old High Street of Rylcombe, the cyclists keeping pace.

Arthur Augustus arrived at the railway-station, and went in. A few minutes later three machines clanked into the station-entrance, and were locked and leant against the wall. Three cheery-looking youths in Norfolk jackets lounged in.

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry. "What did I tell you?"

"What-ho!"

"The tram's in in three minutes," said Lowther, looking up at the station clock. "Let's go on the platform, in case Gussy faints from want of food."

"Ha, ha! Come on!"

They followed the swell of St. Jim's upon the platform. The elegant figure, the quintessence of elegance from the tips of the shining boots to the crown of the polished silk hat was discerned, standing by an automatic machine, studying his watch.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "Two minutes before the twain comes in! I am feelin' feahfully hungwy, and I must have somethin' before I walk back. I watah think I'll get a little snack out of this machine."

He was standing near an automatic sweet-machine. He felt in his pockets for coins, and turned out a handful—several half-sovereigns, half-crowns, florins, and shillings,

and sixpences, but no coppers. A look of vexation crossed his face.

"Bai Jove, I haven't any coppahs! Tom Mewwy!"

"Hallo!" said the hero of the Shell cheerfully.

"I wogard it as wank impertinence on your part to be here, Tom Mewwy—"

"Have you bought the station, Gussy?"

"That is a widulous question. As you are here, how-evah, I shall be obliged if you will lend me a penny."

"My hat! Are you quite stony? I'll make it five bob if you like."

"I do not wequire five bob—I want a penny for the automatic machine."

"Gussy! I can't allow this! Cheap cigarettes are bad for the constitution, and—"

"You uttah ass! I don't want cigarettes, as you know perfectly well. I am goin' to have some buttahscotch, as I am feahfully hungry."

Tom Merry laughed and tossed over the penny.

"There you are, my son."

D'Arcy jammed the penny into the slot, and drew out the little drawer containing the buttahscotch. He had the buttahscotch out of its wrapping in a twinkling. The sound of the train could be heard in the distance.

"Bai Jove, this is wathah hard," murmured Arthur Augustus, as he tried his teeth on the buttahscotch. "I pwesume it will get softer."

He gnawed the buttahscotch. Finally he made a desperate effort to bite it through, so as to reduce it to a negotiable size. His teeth jammed right into it, and almost met. But when he tried to take them out of it again, that proved to be not so easy.

With a clatter the train rushed into the station.

Tom Merry & Co. kept back a little.

"We'll let Gussy meet Cousin Ethel," Tom Merry remarked; "that's only fair. Then we'll come on the scene like the good fairies in the pantomime."

"More like the demons in the panto. to Gussy, I expect," chuckled Lowther.

The train stopped.

A charming face appeared at one of the carriage windows, and Arthur Augustus ran to open the carriage door. At the same time he was trying to open his jaws. But it was impossible; his teeth were firmly embedded in the buttahscotch, and would not come apart.

His face went crimson with the effort.

He opened the carriage door, and gave Cousin Ethel his hand to alight. The girl looked very charming in a neat blue serge cycling costume.

"So kind of you to come and meet me, Arthur."

"M-m-m-m-m!" said D'Arcy.

"My bicycle is in the guard's van. Will you take it?"

"M-m-m-m-m!"

Cousin Ethel gazed at him in astonishment.

CHAPTER 7.

D'Arcy Receives First Aid.

COUSIN ETHEL looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at Cousin Ethel. The swell of St. Jim's was crimson. It was not particularly dignified to be caught eating buttahscotch on a railway-platform; but it was worse still to be found with his teeth stuck together, so that he could not open his mouth, or give any explanation at all. Ethel Cleveland was naturally surprised.

"Arthur, how red you are! Have you been running?"

"M-m-m-m-m!"

"Don't you feel well?"

"M-m-m-m-m!"

"Dear Arthur," exclaimed the girl, in real concern, "there is something the matter. What is it?"

"M-m-m-m-m!"

Arthur Augustus's efforts to speak were tremendous. But they were all in vain. His teeth might have been glued together.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came up, with ingratiating smiles, and three straw hats went off at once.

"How do you do? So glad to see you."

"I am afraid Arthur is ill," said Ethel, looking distressed. "Can you help him?"

"Certainly! We are qualified to administer first aid to the injured," said Monty Lowther immediately. "Tom, look after Cousin Ethel's bike, will you, while we see to Gussy."

Tom Merry scuttled down the platform to take the hand-some machine from the guard. Monty Lowther and Manners proceeded to administer first aid to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Lowther caught him by the shoulders and shook him, and Manners thumped him on the back with hearty energy.

Arthur Augustus struggled violently.

"M-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m!"

"Do you feel better, old dear?" asked Lowther sympathetically.

"M-m-m-m-m!"

"Give him a little more, Manners."

"Right-ho!"

"M-m-m-m-m-m-m!"

D'Arcy's silk hat rolled off, and was blown along the platform. The train clattered out of the station, the passengers looking out with broad grins to see the first aid administered to the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's.

Cousin Ethel looked on anxiously.

"Don't you feel better, Arthur?"

"M-m-m-m-m!"

"Good gracious! He seems to be choking. He must have swallowed something. Oh dear! Arthur! Cannot you speak?"

"M-m-m-m-m-m-m!"

"Better lay him on his back," said Manners. "Get some water and bathe his face. If he doesn't recover I'll bleed him. I've got a pocket-knife, and if I jab it into his neck he's sure to bleed."

D'Arcy struggled furiously.

But the chums of the Shell laid him on his back on the dusty platform, and Manners took out his pocket-knife and opened it.

With a final effort D'Arcy freed his teeth.

"M-m-m-m! Ow! Beasts! Wottahs! Lemme alone!"

"Water here!" roared Monty Lowther. "Porter! Water! Buck up! Water, porter!"

"Yessir."

"Don't you bwing any watah, portah. Lowthah, you are a wotten beast! Mannahs, if you do not immediately release me I shall stwike you."

"I was rendering first aid—"

"I wefuse to have first aid wendered me. Lemme alone!"

"Well, of all the ungrateful bounders, I think you take the bun."

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet.

Tom Merry brought the bicycle running along the platform. There was a sweet smile on his face. D'Arcy evidently could not have known that Cousin Ethel was bringing her machine.

"I must apologise to you, Ethel, for this widulous scene," said Arthur Augustus. "The fact is—"

"I thought you were ill, Arthur."

"Not at all, deah boy—I mean dear gal. The fact is, I was eatin' some buttahscotch, and my teeth were stuck togethah. It was widulous, but I am all wight."

"Oh!"

"Of course, I am not in the habit of eatin' buttahscotch in public," Arthur Augustus hastened to explain; "but I happened—"

"Here's the water, sir," exclaimed the Rylcombe porter, hurrying up with a can full of it. "Here you are, sir. Which young gent wants the water, sir?"

"It's all wight, portah—"

"This is the chap," said Lowther. "Chuck it over him, and—"

"Stop!" shrieked D'Arcy. "If you bwing that watah here, portah, I will weport you to the company."

"Now, Gussy, don't be a cad. The man's trying to help you, and—"

"Pway stop your wotten jokes, Lowthah. I wogard you as a beast. Portah, take that watah away, and bwing a clothes-brush instead, and give me a bwush down."

"Yessir," said the porter cheerfully. He knew D'Arcy of old, as a munificent donor of tips.

He quickly returned with the clothes-brush.

"I'll brush you down, Gussy," said Lowther. "You want a gentle hand, and—"

"I don't want anythin' of the sort, Lowthah. Portah, pway bwush me down. Lowthah, if you come near me, I shall stwike you."

"That's the D'Arcy brand of gratitude, I suppose," said Monty Lowther. "I'm afraid you'll shock Cousin Ethel, Gussy."

Gussy deigned no reply. He was brushed down, and the dust flew in all directions. Meanwhile, Tom Merry was chatting with Cousin Ethel.

"I see you've got your machine," he observed.

"Yes, it's the one Arthur bought for me in Coventry," said Cousin Ethel, laughing. "You remember?"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry, laughing too. "We have our machines with us. You'll let us see you to the school, of course."

"Certainly. But Arthur—"

"Thank you, portah. Pway accept this shillin'. Ethel, my deah gal, I was not aware that you were bwingin' your machine—"

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"I am sure I mentioned it in my letter, Arthur."

"Of course, if you say so, you did, but I wead the leittah thwice times and nevah noticed it," said D'Arcy, who was far too polite to contradict a lady. "I pwesume it is my mistake."

"Of course," said Tom Merry. "I—I had a sort of—of feeling that Cousin Ethel would bring her bike, and—and so we looked in at the station. How lucky, wasn't it, Gussy?"

"Yaa-a-as, wathah!" said D'Arcy, not very enthusiastically.

"We shall be able to see Cousin Ethel to St. Jim's all right," Lowther remarked. "It's very fortunate, as it happens."

"You are so good——"

"Not at all——"

"Not a bit," said Manners. "We'd do anything we could, Cousin Ethel."

"You would, really?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then," said Ethel sweetly, "perhaps you would be so kind as—but no, it would be a great deal of trouble."

"No, it wouldn't!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It would be a pleasure."

"The greatest pleasure in the world," said Lowther.

"Go on," said Manners. "Of course, it would—— What is it?"

"Well, I was going to suggest——"

"Yes, yes!"

"That you should wheel my machine to St. Jim's——"

"Eh?"

"So that I can walk with my cousin."

The Terrible Three exchanged sickly smiles.

"Ye-e-es," said Tom Merry. "With—with pleasure. I—I wonder we never thought of it."

And they walked out of the station.

CHAPTER 8.

The Meet.

"FIGGINS!"

It was Fatty Wynn, of the New House at St. Jim's, who spoke. He was standing in the gateway of the school, with his hands in his pockets, looking down the road. Figgins and Kerr were a little further back, and Figgins was explaining to Kerr an especially telling stroke he had lately developed for baffling the School House bowlers.

"You see," said Figgins, "I take up my position like this——"

"Figgins——"

"And I hold the bat like that——"

"I say, Figgins——"

"And when the ball breaks——"

"I say, Figgins, old man——"

"Can't you shut up for a minute?" demanded Figgins, turning wrathfully upon his plump chum. "I'm explaining to Kerr——"

"Yes, but——"

"Don't jaw for a minute. I get the ball so—and send it——"

"But I tell you, Figgins——"

"Will you ring off a tick?"

"Well," said Fatty Wynn resignedly, "I thought you'd like to know that Cousin Ethel was coming, but if you don't——"

Figgins jumped.

"What's that?"

"Cousin Ethel——"

Figgins made one bound into the road. Even cricket vanished from his thoughts at the name of Cousin Ethel.

Some little time before the Terrible Three had come in, one of them wheeling a lady's machine, but Figgins & Co. hadn't noticed them particularly. Now Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his fair cousin were coming down the road on foot. Arthur Augustus was beaming, and though he was feeling very hungry, he was in a contented frame of mind.

Figgins dragged off his cap at once.

"Miss Cleveland! So jolly glad to see you!" he exclaimed.

Cousin Ethel smiled sweetly as she shook hands with Figgins.

"Has Tom Mewwy got in with the machine?" said Arthur Augustus, with a grin.

"Oh! Was that Cousin Ethel's machine?" exclaimed Figgins, in delight. "Yes, I saw him wheel it in. Are you riding this afternoon, Cousin Ethel? If you haven't made your arrangements yet, it would be jolly to make up a party for the road, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, very nice indeed," said Cousin Ethel sweetly. "Wouldn't it, Arthur?"

"Yaa-a-as, wathah!" said D'Arcy slowly.

He had intended to take Cousin Ethel for a delightful THE GEN LIBRARY.—76.

spin that afternoon all by himself, but the girl was apparently unconscious of it.

"It will be ripping," said Figgins enthusiastically. "I shall be able to look after Gussy, and help him over the rough parts——"

"I should uttably wefuse to be helped ovah the wuff parts," said Arthur Augustus stiffly, and he walked on with Cousin Ethel, leaving Figgins simply beaming.

"By Jove! This is a stroke of luck!" exclaimed Figgins, looking at the Co. "What do you think, Kerr?"

"I think you've forgotten that we were going to play cricket."

"Cricket!" said Figgins vacantly, as if he had never heard of the great summer game before. "Did you say cricket?"

"Yes," said Kerr, with emphasis. "I said cricket! Cricket! Cricket!"

"Were we going to play cricket?"

"You ass!" growled Kerr. "Yes, we were going to play cricket."

"Well, we can play cricket any time, I suppose."

"Yes, I suppose so. I'd like to come for a spin first-rate; the other fellows may cut up rusty."

"The other fellows can go and eat coke."

"What about tea?" asked Fatty Wynn. "It was arranged that we should have a bit of a feed after the cricket-match."

"You can have it after the spin instead."

"Well, that's all right; I'm satisfied."

"I'm going to look after my bike," said Figgins. "It will want a bit of a clean up. Come on, you chaps!"

Figgins & Co. walked away to the cycle-shed. Pratt, of the New House, came hurrying over to speak to Figgins.

"I say, Figgins, am I going in first this afternoon?"

"Eh?" said Figgins.

"Am I going in first?"

"Going in where?"

Pratt stared at him. He wondered for the moment whether Figgins had taken leave of his senses.

"Where?" he said. "Are you off your rocker? I mean in the match—the cricket. Am I going in first? I want to know."

"Oh! The cricket's off."

"Off!" exclaimed Pratt.

"Well, not exactly off," said Figgins hastily. "I mean, I'm standing out this afternoon."

"You're—you're standing out?"

"That's it. The eleven can be made up without me. You see, it isn't as if it were a regular House-match. It's only with young Noble's scratch eleven. I think I ought to give the other chaps a chance."

"But look here——"

"Sorry, Pratt. I know you're awfully pretty, but I haven't time to stand looking at you. Go and look at yourself in the glass, if you like."

And Figgins hurried on after his chums.

He left Pratt staring after him blankly.

"Well, my hat!" muttered Pratt, in perplexity. "This won't do! What's come over Figgins? He must be off his rocker. He knows jolly well that Noble's team will knock spots off us if he doesn't bat for us, and Wynn doesn't bowl. My hat!"

And Pratt walked away in perplexed dismay.

Figgins & Co. entered the cycle-shed, and Figgins had just taken his machine off the stand when French, of the Shell, a New House fellow, came in hurriedly. He rushed straight up to Figgins.

"Hallo, Figgins! What's this I hear?" he exclaimed.

"Blessed if I know," said Figgins, rubbing at his machine with an oil-rag. "I suppose I'm not responsible for all the things you hear, am I?"

"Pratt says you're not playing this afternoon."

"Well, that's Pratt's business."

"Oh, then it's not a fact!"

"Yes, it's a fact."

"Why couldn't you say so, then?" exclaimed French wrathfully. "Look here, you've got to play. Who's going to captain the side if you don't?"

"Well, I was thinking of you, Frenchy."

"Oh!" said French, mollified. "I see."

"You ought to have a chance to show what you can do," said Figgins solemnly. "I don't believe in a one-man side. You make up the eleven and take 'em into the field, and show the chaps that you can do it."

"Right you are," said French, greatly gratified. "I will."

And he went out, very pleased with Figgins and himself. Figgins chuckled.

He was still chuckling, and cleaning his bicycle, when the Terrible Three came into the shed. They began to dust their machines very carefully. Figgins looked across at them.



"Better lay him on his back," said Manners. "Get some water and bathe his face. If he doesn't recover I'll bleed him. I've got a pocket-knife!" D'Arcy struggled furiously, but the chums of the Shell held him firmly down to the dusty platform.

"Going out for a spin this afternoon?" he asked.
 "Yes," said Tom Merry, dusting away.
 "I thought you were playing in Noble's scratch eleven."
 "So did I."
 "You've given it up?"
 "Yes."
 "Why?"
 "Oh, we're attending the meet!"
 "The meet!" exclaimed Figgins, staring.
 "Yes," said Tom Merry calmly. "I hear there's a cycle-meet—and Cousin Ethel's going. We're going, too."
 "Oh!" said Figgins.
 And he oiled his machine without saying any more.

CHAPTER 9.

Skimpole Shows What He Can Do.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was hungry enough to eat shoe-leather, as he walked across the quadrangle with Cousin Ethel; but politeness came before everything with the swell of St. Jim's. He escorted Miss Cleveland to the Head's house, and did not leave her till the door had closed upon her. As the door closed, he stood in a graceful attitude, hat in hand.

The next moment he was descending the steps very

rapidly. The meet was to be in a short time, and before then he had to change his clothes and get something to eat. Dinner, of course, there was no chance of getting now, but the school shop was always open on half-holidays. It was in that direction that the swell of St. Jim's bent his steps, and he almost ran into Skimpole near the shop. Skimpole was walking with his eyes on the ground, and a very thoughtful frown upon his face.

"Sowwy!" said D'Arcy, dodging round him.
 "Stop a minute, D'Arcy! Hold on—it's important!"
 "Pway what is it?" said Arthur Augustus, still polite, though extremely hungry.
 "You are looking rather pale."
 "Weally, that is pwobably because I have missed my dinnah. I am goin' to get a snack, and I'm in a dooce of a huwwy, deah boy!"
 "Ah! You are hungry?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Have you no time to take your lunch leisurely?"
 "No. I've got to buzz off, you know!"
 "If you like, I can save you the waste of time necessitated by lunching, as you are in a hurry," said Skimpole. "With the wonderful powers of influencing by suggestion, of which I am possessed, I can work the trick in a very few

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moments. I place the tips of my fingers upon your forehead, thus—

"Weally, Skimpole—"

"I bend my gaze earnestly upon you, so."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"I concentrate my will-power upon you. You concentrate yours in the same direction. Hunger is largely a matter of habit. If you think you are hungry, you are hungry. Do you comprehend? By the sheer force of will-power, I can banish your hunger in a few seconds. It is worth while trying the experiment. It will save you time, and also the cost of the lunch. I can save you pounds. Now—"

"But—"

"Have you concentrated your mind upon the subject?"

"Yaas," said D'Arcy, resigning himself to his fate.

"Say to yourself, in a determined manner, 'I do not feel hungry.'"

"Yaas; I do not feel hungwy."

A minute elapsed.

"Do you feel the hunger now, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"As bad as ever?"

"Worse than evah, deah boy!"

And, indeed, a mysterious rumbling that proceeded from under Arthur Augustus's waistcoat seemed to indicate that there was a great emptiness there.

Skimpole shook his head with a puzzled look.

"Dear me, this is very curious! You are sure you feel hungry?"

"Quite sure, deah boy."

"Extraordinary! However, we will give the experiment a fair test. We will remain exactly in this position for ten minutes, concentrating our wills!"

"Bai Jove! I cannot—"

"You need not mind me," said Skimpole. "In the interests of science I am prepared to take any amount of trouble."

"You may be, Skimmay, but I'm not," said Arthur Augustus, jerking himself away. "I'm goin' to get some lunch."

"But I can save you the expense."

"Wats!"

"My dear D'Arcy," urged Skimpole, following the swell of St. Jim's into the tuckshop, "I can save you both time and money. With my wonderful powers—"

"Wing off, deah boy!"

"In the interests of science—"

"A wabbit-pie, please, Mrs. Taggles!"

"Immediately, Master D'Arcy!"

"I shall go on with the experiment," said Skimpole, resolutely. "I will do so while you are eating. I shall save the latter half of your lunch at all events. Healing by suggestion is one of the greatest discoveries of modern times. Hunger being largely a matter of habit, and, in point of fact, in many cases, really non-existent, can be cured by suggestion by a sufficiently powerful exercise of the will."

"Yaas, please, cold potatoes."

"I will, therefore, sit opposite to you, and direct my will-power upon you, and cause your hunger to vanish."

"And some salt."

"Yours is a specially obstinate case, due, doubtless, to the fact that you are of little faith, but I hope I shall succeed in convincing you."

"Bai Jove, this is a wippin' pie!"

"Would it incommode you very much, D'Arcy, if I placed the tips of my fingers on your forehead while you are eating?"

"If you place the tips of your beastly fingahs on my forehead, I will jab the fork into them, deah boy."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Some peppah, please, Mrs. Taggles!"

"However, I will concentrate my will," said Skimpole. "I will will that your will will will that you cease to be hungry."

"I nevah tasted a wabbit-pie quite so nice as that before. There's nothin' like missin' a meal to give you a good appetite. Yaas, I will have some of the puddin'."

"Do you still feel hungry, D'Arcy?"

"Not quite so much, deah boy."

"Ah," said the great discoverer, with much satisfaction, "it is working."

"What is, the wabbit-pie?"

"No, the concentration of my will."

"Wubbish, deah boy!"

"Infallible, D'Arcy, infallible. You see, a brain like mine possesses boundless power over the weaker intellect."

"Ovah a what?"

"A weaker intellect. Yours is weaker than mine, weaker, in fact, than the average intellect of a fellow of your age, and, therefore—"

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"Are you out this aftahnoon lookin' for a feahful thwash-in', Skimmay?"

"I am stating scientific facts."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ah, you are surprised that I can judge so—"

"No! I was thinking that this is a wippin' puddin'."

"Ahem! Do you feel as hungry now as you did, D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove, no! I will finish with an ice, Mrs. Taggles."

"Certainly, Master D'Arcy!"

Skimpole's gaze was bent fixedly upon D'Arcy while he was eating the ice.

Arthur Augustus was feeling very comfortable after his meal, which was an unusually large one for him, and very satisfying.

Skimpole's brow was wrinkled up, and his frown was most portentous, and a casual observer might have supposed that he was scowling ferociously at D'Arcy. As a matter of fact, he was simply concentrating his will, to heal Arthur Augustus's hunger by suggestion.

The ice was finished, and D'Arcy rose, and whisked away a crumb from his mouth with a corner of his serviette. He was feeling very comfortable.

"You look better, D'Arcy," said Skimpole.

"I feel bettah, deah boy."

"Do you still feel the craying for food?"

"Not at all."

The scientific junior simply beamed with satisfaction.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed. "Magnificent!"

"Yaas, it was a good lunch."

"I was not speaking of the lunch. That was a minor detail. I have cured this attack of habit-hunger by the force of suggestion."

"Weally, Skimmay—"

"It is another proof of the reality of the power I have discovered myself to be possessed of," Skimpole rubbed his bony hands. "It is splendid! I shall continue to experiment in this way."

"Bai Jove! I've no doubt you could cure anybody's hunger, deah boy."

"Ah, you acknowledge it!"

"If they ate a wabbit-pie and a puddin' while you were doin' it," said D'Arcy, and he walked out of the tuckshop with a grin on his face.

Skimpole followed, still beaming. He had hardly heard D'Arcy's words. He was full up with satisfaction at this second great success of his newly-discovered powers. In fact, he was already thinking of making a businesslike arrangement with the Head by which he might take the place of the doctor who attended St. Jim's, at half the fees of the latter gentleman, thus effecting a saving for the school, and getting a little financial benefit himself from his great discovery.

CHAPTER 10.

The Deserters.

HARRY NOBLE, otherwise known as Kangaroo, wore a worried look.

It was a fine afternoon, one of the finest. The sunny playing-fields, the green grass, and the gleaming wickets, seemed to call aloud for cricket. The young Cornstalk was a born cricketer, and he played the great game quite as well as even Tom Merry. He had looked forward to a game that afternoon, but something was amiss.

That Wednesday afternoon, like most of the half-holidays at St. Jim's just at this time, had been booked for a cricket-match. The junior eleven, captained by Tom Merry, and formed of juniors chosen from both Houses, had been engaged away, but the fixture had been broken off. But as Noble didn't want to lose his game, he had arranged for a scratch match to be played between the juniors of both houses—New House against School House.

It was understood that Figgins would captain the New House juniors. As it was not a regular House match, Noble had not been surprised, however, on learning, rather late, that Figgins had another engagement, and had left the captaincy to French. But when he learned that Kerr and Wynn were engaged along with Figgins, Noble frowned a little. He had a splendid side to take into the field, and he didn't want to meet a side of duffers.

But, after that, he began to discover that his own side would not be quite so strong as he had expected. Tom Merry was junior cricket captain, but as Noble was getting up this match, Tom had willingly left the captaincy on this occasion to the Australian. It was understood that he was to play, however. But about half an hour before the time fixed for the first ball to be bowled, the Terrible Three came along with excuses.

"Awfully sorry, old chap," said Tom Merry. "I'm glad, now, we arranged for you to captain the side. I'm suddenly called away."

"Oh, never mind!" said Noble. "The New House side is jolly weak, so it will be all right if I play Hancock or Robinson instead of you."

"I'm sorry, too," said Lowther. "You see—"

"Hallo! Aren't you playing?"

"You see, I'm called away with Tom Merry."

"Hum! What about you, Manners?"

"I'm called away, with Lowther!"

"Oh, get off the earth!" grunted Noble.

And they got off that part of it.

Noble frowned a little. He couldn't understand any fellow missing a game of cricket on a fine afternoon, if he could possibly help it, especially fellows like the Terrible Three, who were sportsmen to the core.

But the end of his troubles was not yet.

He met Arthur Augustus coming away from the tuck-shop, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"You're playing, of course?" he said.

"Eh! Playin' what, deah boy?"

"Cricket!" roared Noble. "Did you think I wanted you to play marbles?"

"Cwicket? I'm sowwy. I've a most particulah engagement this aftahnnoon."

"Look here!"

"I'm wathah in a huwwy, Kangawoo. I've got to change my clothes."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

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

"Where's Blake?"

"I weally do not know. I'm sure he'll play, though. He always plays cwicket. I hope you'll have a weally wippin' time, Kangawoo!"

And Arthur Augustus hurried on, leaving Kangaroo growling. He looked out for Blake, and found him going down to the cycle-shed. He dug him in the ribs, and Blake gasped and stopped.

"Ow! What do you want?"

"Are you playing this afternoon?"

"Well, I was going to play," said Jack. "But a most particular engagement has turned up. I'm going out for a spin."

"What about Dig?"

"He's coming with me."

"And Herries?"

"Herries? I haven't seen him—I think he's nursing his dog. You'll find him round in the pets' house."

Thither Kangaroo bent his steps. There, sure enough, he found Herries. Herries had recaptured Towser after a long chase, and chained him up again. To his great delight he found that the disinfected wash had removed most of the blue and pink spots, and he had left Towser for a sleep. He returned later to look at him, and make sure that he was all right, and, to his dismay, discovered a fresh outbreak of the spots. Towser was simply covered with them. He looked otherwise very well, and was contentedly gnawing a bone which some good Samaritan had bestowed upon him. Herries jerked the bone away, and threw it far; he had a strong objection to good Samaritans feeding his dog at irregular times.

He was engaged in making an examination of the spotted bulldog when Kangaroo came along. He did not look up.

"Are you playing this afternoon, Herries?" asked Noble.

"Look like it, don't I?" grunted Herries.

"I mean, are you playing cricket?"

"Blow cricket!"

"Anything the matter with the dog?"

"Look at him! He's come out in spots. I cured him once, and he's broken out worse than ever. Blessed if I know what to make of it."

"Leave him for a bit, and come—"

"Rats!"

"I want you in the eleven."

"Bosh! Think I'm going to play cricket while Towser's ill?" demanded Herries indignantly. "I'll tell you what I'm jolly well going to do. I'm not going to leave my dog here. I'm going to have him indoors, and look after him properly, and if the rules are against it, blow the rules!"

"What about the game?"

"Blow the game!"

It was evident that there was nothing to be done with Herries. Harry Noble sniffed, and left him to look after Towser. He met Reilly, the boy from Belfast, near the School House, and stopped to speak to him.

"I'm blessed if I quite know how to make up the side," he said. "Blake and his lot, and Tom Merry's lot, are out of it. Let me see, there's Dane, and Glyn, and you—"

"Faith, and I'll have to ask ye to excuse me," said Reilly.

"What! You, too?"

"I've an important engagement this afternoon."

Noble glared.

"Look here, what's the little game? Every silly ass in the school seems to have an important engagement this afternoon!" he exclaimed. "What's the—"

"I say, I can't stop," said Reilly hurriedly. "I've got to clean my bike."

And he hurried off. Noble stared after him.

"Everybody's going out cycling," he exclaimed, turning to Clifton Dane, his study-mate, as the latter came out of the School House. "I shall be playing a side of giddy duffers this afternoon. It's rotten! There's you and Glyn—"

"Excuse me, old chap," said Dane, colouring a little.

"I've got to go out this afternoon. I must hurry off."

And Clifton Dane dashed away after Reilly.

"My only hat! What's the matter with them all?" Kangaroo exclaimed, as he entered the School House in search of Bernard Glyn.

Kangaroo, Dane, and Glyn occupied the end study in the Shell passage, where they chummed up very amicably. Bernard Glyn, the lad from Liverpool, was of a scientific turn of mind, and he sometimes carried on experiments in the study to the discomfort of the others, who did not enjoy sitting unexpectedly on electric chairs, or being suffocated by eerie chemical smells. Kangaroo had no doubt that he would find Glyn in the end study, deep in some experiment, and that he would have to drag him out by main force to the cricket field, but to his surprise the end study was unoccupied.

"My word! Where's Glyn, I wonder?" he ejaculated.

He returned along the passage. He caught sight of Wally, of the Third, looking a deal neater than usual, in a trim Norfolk suit. Kangaroo called to him.

"Have you seen—"

"Can't stop!" said Wally, as he rushed past. "Late already! Important engagement!"

And he vanished.

"Great Scott! The whole house has gone rocky in the napper," muttered Kangaroo, with conviction. "Hallo, Glyn!" He caught sight of his chum coming downstairs, fastening the belt of his Norfolk jacket. "You ought to be in flannels. We're nearly ready to play."

"Play!" said Glyn.

"Yes, the cricket!"

"By Jove! I'm awfully sorry, Noble! Are you playing this afternoon?"

"Yes!" roared Noble. "What are you driving at? Where are you going?"

"I'm going out for a spin, old chap. I— Ow!"

The exasperated Cornstalk gripped his chum by the throat and backed him up against the wall. There he pinned him fast, and flourished his disengaged fist in his face.

Glyn stared at him dazedly.

"Now, then," roared Kangaroo, "just explain yourself,

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you ass, before I knock your silly napper right through the wall! Where are you going? What's this bosh about everybody going cycling instead of playing cricket this afternoon? Have you all gone off your silly rockers?"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Explain yourself, then."

"You see, Cousin Ethel—"

"Eh?"

"Cousin Ethel's come, and she's going for a spin, so I—"

"Oh!" Kangaroo released his rumped chum. "I see! It's a meet, is it?"

"Well, something of the sort. I understand that D'Arcy is taking his cousin for a spin, and everybody is inviting himself," grinned the Liverpool lad. "I'm going. Why don't you cut the cricket for once and come too?"

Kangaroo chuckled.

"I think I'd better. Make 'em wait while I get into my things."

"Right you are!"

And Kangaroo rushed upstairs.

CHAPTER 11.

Another Wonderful Cure!

"DEAR me, Herries! Is anything the matter with Towser?"

It was Skimpole who asked the question.

It certainly seemed as if something was the matter with Towser. He was wrapped up so carefully that only one eye showed among the various bandages that were scientifically wound round and round him, and Herries was carrying him in his arms.

"Yes," grunted Herries. "He doesn't look as if he was in the bloom of health, does he?"

"No, he certainly does not. What is the matter with him?"

"He's come out in spots."

"Oh! Some mild form of skin irritation due to inward trouble of some sort," said Skimpole. "How fortunate!"

Herries glared at him.

"Eh! What?"

"How fortunate!" Skimpole rubbed his hands. "It is very lucky indeed."

"You howling ass—"

"Ahem, Herries, that is—er—almost rude. It is very fortunate, because—"

Herries disengaged one hand and let it out with a heavy tap on Skimpole's nose. The tap was unexpected, and the amateur healer sat down suddenly.

"Ow!" he gasped. "What did you do that for, Herries?"

"You ass!" said Herries. "You rotter! Fancy saying it's fortunate that my dog's ill! Don't you get up, or I'll jolly well knock you down again!"

"Really, Herries, you misapprehended me. I did not mean that it was fortunate that Towser was ill. I meant it was fortunate that I have lately discovered myself to possess the power of healing practically any disease." Skimpole picked himself up. "I can, if you choose, cure Towser."

"Don't be an ass! I know more about dogs than you do, I suppose, and I can't make out what's the matter with him."

"That does not matter. I can cure him. Have you never heard of healing by suggestion? I find that, owing to the remarkable development of my brain, I am able to heal by suggestion. I concentrate my will, and imbue the patient with the will to will away the pain, and the pain vanishes."

"Ever done it?" asked Herries sceptically.

"Yes, certainly. I cured Blake of a pain in his head, caused by violent contact with an umbrella. I cured D'Arcy of a feeling of hunger, caused by having missed his dinner."

Herries looked dubious. Skimpole spoke very earnestly, and he knew that the amateur Socialist would have scorned to tell an untruth. It was barely possible that there was something in it, and Herries was anxious to leave no stone unturned to cure Towser of his mysterious complaint.

"Well, I suppose there would be no harm in trying," he said, cautiously.

"None at all. Even if Towser were not cured, he could not possibly be hurt; but there is no doubt that he will be cured. You see, my method is infallible. It is due to the gigantic development of my mental powers, and—"

"Well, how are you going to do it?"

"I place the tips of my fingers on Towser's head, thus—"

Ow!"

Skimpole drew his fingers away just in time as Towser made a snap at them. There was a general chuckle from the fellows who were gathering round to look on.

"Ahem! I hope he will not bite," said Skimpole mildly. "I am afraid that would—er—prevent me from concentrating my will."

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"Don't look at him, then. Towser doesn't like being looked at."

"H'm! I am afraid I cannot concentrate my gaze upon Towser without looking at him. I will—er—avoid touching him, however. Hold him so that I can concentrate my gaze upon him, in order to facilitate the passage of the will-influence."

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

Towser's single visible eye blinked at Skimpole, and Skimpole blinked at Towser. The crowd of juniors looked on with great interest. Kildare, of the Sixth, came by, in flannels, with a bat under his arm. He stopped to look on, in great surprise.

"What on earth are you doing with that dog, Herries?" he demanded.

"He's ill."

"But why—"

"Pray do not interrupt, Kildare," said Skimpole mildly. "I am healing him by suggestion—by concentrating the force of my will."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Kildare—"

The captain of St. Jim's walked away laughing. Towser made a sudden wriggle and escaped from Herries, and flopped on the ground.

He made a desperate effort to run, but the bandages prevented him. He sprawled and growled, and Herries grasped him again.

"Now, then, Towsy, old boy! Have you finished, Skimpole?"

"Yes, I think so, Herries. I think I have sufficiently concentrated my will to drive away the disease that has been troubling Towser. I should recommend a wash to remove the traces of the disease, and then Towser will be all right."

"Good! I'll try it, anyway."

And Herries marched off with Towser. Jack Blake, who was wheeling a cycle down to the gate, called out to him.

"Aren't you coming out, Herries?"

"No; I'm looking after Towser."

And Herries, followed by Skimpole, carried Towser up to Study No. 6. Towser was growling; he didn't appear to like the bandages or the carrying.

"Lend a hand with the washing, old chap," said Herries.

"If I let him go he will bolt. He doesn't understand, you know. Get a foot-bath out of the dorm, will you, and ask one of the maids for some hot water."

"Certainly, Herries!"

Skimpole would have done anything for anybody, for his Socialism, at all events, was genuine in that respect, and he was always obliging. He hurried away in search of the requirements for the washing of Towser, and returned presently with a foot-bath under one arm, and a can of hot water in the other hand.

"Good!" said Herries. "Pour it out, and, mind, not too hot. Towser doesn't like it hot."

"I had better get some cold water, then."

"Yes, perhaps you'd better."

Skimpole fetched the cold water in another can. Then it was discovered that there was no soap, and Skimpole was sent to fetch Herries' special dog soap. Then a towel had to be smuggled from somewhere to dry Towser upon when he was washed. By that time the hot water was cool enough to be used without any addition from the cold.

Herries began to strip Towser of his bandages to wash him.

Towser was stripped, and plumped into the bath. He growled ominously, and would certainly have bitten anybody but Herries. He snapped several times at Skimpole, and the amateur healer gave him as wide a berth as he could.

Towser got worse as Herries began to wash him. Perhaps he considered that one wash was enough for one dog in one day. He struggled and splashed, and Herries had a great deal of trouble to hold him.

"Oh, do lend a hand, Skimmy!" he exclaimed. "The spots are coming off."

Skimpole beamed.

"Ah, I thought they would!"

"But they did before, when I washed him before dinner," said Herries. "They came back worse than ever, though."

"They will not come back this time," said Skimpole; "you will see. Yes, I will hold him with pleasure."

He took a cautious grip on Towser. Towser objected violently. He made a terrific splashing, and Herries was jerked to and fro as he held him, and so was Skimpole.

"Look out!" gasped Herries.

He plunged forward upon the bath, and sent it reeling. The water came up in a great wave over Skimpole, and soaked him to the skin.

"Ooch!" gasped Skimpole.

Herries received the return wave as the bath righted. He gasped and spluttered, and Towser wrenched himself loose and bolted. But the door was closed, and Towser was



"Keep still, Towser," said Herries soothingly. "Still, old boy. It's for your own good, old doggy. Still now!" Towser did not seem to understand that the bath was for his own good; for he wriggled in the water like an eel, and was evidently watching for a chance to skip out and bolt.

reduced to bolting round and round the study, in the effort to escape his master's clutch.

"Stop him, Skimpole!"

"O-o-o-ch! I'm wet!"

"Never mind that now. Stop him!"

"I'm soaked!"

"Bosh! Stop Towser!"

Skimpole ran into Towser's path, but Towser showed his teeth so terribly that he ran out again. Herries rushed at the bulldog, who skipped away actively. Round and round the study they went, knocking over everything that was in the way. Chair after chair went flying, then the table, and finally Herries' broad shoulder brushed the clock off the mantelpiece, and it fell into the grate with a fearful crash.

Then he plumped himself on Towser at last, and collared him. Towser quieted down, and did not take a lump out of Herries, as Skimpole fully expected. Herries held him fast, and rubbed him down with the towel, and then began to bandage him again.

"I—I think I will go and change my clothes," murmured Skimpole. "I am very wet."

"All right; shut the door."

Ten minutes later Skimpole looked into the study. Towser

was bandaged up, and Herries was arranging him comfortably in the armchair for a snooze.

"Is he all right?"

"Yes, seems so. Don't make a row, I think he's going to sleep."

"All the spots gone?"

"Every one."

"Ah! You will not doubt my marvellous powers again, I think," said Skimpole, rubbing his hands.

"We'll see whether they come back again."

"Oh, I am sure they will not come back!"

"Good! Go out quietly, and latch the door."

Skimpole went out quietly and latched the door. He met Gore in the passage, and Gore gave him a curious grin.

"I hear you've been curing Towser," he remarked.

"Yes. He came out in spots, but by the concentration of my will-power I—"

"Cured 'em?" asked Gore, laughing.

"Exactly."

"I suppose the spots are gone, then?" Gore asked sarcastically.

"Certainly. There are no spots on Towser now."

"What! Oh, I suppose he's been washed too?"

"Certainly; but it was my concentrated will-power that—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no reason for merriment, Gore," said Skimpole, blinking at the cad of the Shell through his big spectacles in a puzzled way. "There is nothing comical in Towser coming out in spots, surely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it is a matter for congratulation, not for merriment, that I should possess the marvellous power of curing him by a concentrated effort of will."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door of No. 6 opened suddenly, and Herries glared out.

"Can't you go and giggle somewhere else, Gore?" he demanded. "You're disturbing Towser. Go and make that row somewhere else."

And as Herries had a cricket-stump in his hand, Gore thought he had better go.

CHAPTER 12.

The Cyclists.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY wheeled his bicycle—a handsome machine that shone like a new pin—up to the Head's house, and at the same moment the door opened and Cousin Ethel came out.

"All weady, deah gal," said Arthur Augustus. "Tom Mewwy is wheelin' your machine down to the gates."

"Very good. What a beautiful afternoon for a spin!" said Cousin Ethel brightly.

"Yaas, wathah! Tom Mewwy is comin'."

"Yes, I am glad."

"And Mannahs and Lowthah."

"I am very pleased."

"Oh, vewy good!" said D'Arcy. "If you are pleased it will be all wight! It will be wathah a ewowd."

"I think a large party on a spin is so pleasant," said Cousin Ethel sweetly. "It will remind me of the ride to Coventry, too. How sweet it was of you to buy that machine, Arthur, and how dreadfully reckless and extravagant!"

"Well, I find the governah wathah a wowwy at times," said D'Arcy. "It is only fair that he should sholl out, you know, sometimes."

Cousin Ethel laughed as she walked down to the gates beside D'Arcy. Figgins & Co. were waiting there, Figgins with a handsome jigger, and Kerr and Wynn with a tandem. The Terrible Three were chatting to the New House trio, apparently on the best of terms. House rows were barred in the presence of a lady. Cousin Ethel nodded cheerily in reply to the general raising of straw hats.

"I think we're all here," said Arthur Augustus, a little sarcastically.

"Yes, I think so," assented Tom Merry. "Let's be off before any more bounders turn up. Here come Blake and Digby."

"Oh, we're in time, I see!" said Blake, doffing his straw as he came up. "So jolly glad to go on a spin with you, Miss Cleveland!"

"Yes, rather!" said Digby.

They moved out into the road. In the road Reilly and Clifton Dane were leaning on their machines and chatting. They joined the party with agreeable smiles, and apparently did not see the frigid look of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The party had barely started when a ringing of bells was heard behind them, and D'Arcy, looking round, saw Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn scorching after them. A minute later a more diminutive figure whisked out of the gates, and came dashing up the road. It was that of D'Arcy minor.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Quite a large family," said Harry Noble, as he overtook the cyclists, and rode into the middle of them, making some of them shift very hurriedly, with muttered words, to avoid collision.

"Yes, too many, in fact," growled Lowther. "I thought you were going to play cricket."

"So did I."

"Why don't you, then?"

"I couldn't resist the temptation to come for a spin with you instead. I want to hear some more of your jokes," said Noble blandly. "I'm getting quite an attachment to your jokes. They remind me of my early childhood."

Lowther murmured something, and Manners grinned.

"Don't shove that bike into mine!" growled Figgins, looking back.

"You're in the way, old man."

"Noble, I insist upon your keepin' clear of my back wheel."

"Why don't you keep your back wheel clear of me?"

"Weally, Noble—"

"I was thinking that if I rode beside Miss Cleveland, I

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should be able to help her machine up the hills," said Kangaroo.

Figgins glared at him.

"I'm quite able to do that, thank you, Kangaroo."

"Yaas, wathah; and I dare say I could manage it. I wegard you as an ass, Kangawoo."

"Go hon!"

Cousin Ethel smiled, and pedalled on quietly. Figgins and D'Arcy were escorting her, and the rest of the riders were strung out behind. The party came in sight of the stile, half-way to Rylcombe. The leading riders passed on, and rounded the bend of the lane. Dane and Reilly and Digby were the last to pass, and as they went by three youths came out of the wood and stared at them over the stile.

They were Monk, Lane, and Carboy, of Rylcombe Grammar School.

They sent a Grammarian yell at the disappearing cyclists, who sent a yell back; but there was no time for more. The riders disappeared.

"Pity we didn't have our pea-shooters," said Carboy reflectively.

"Yes, rather!" said Lane. "What are you screwing up your chivvy about, Monkey?"

Frank Monk grinned.

"I was thinking. You know what we've just walked down to Rylcombe for."

"Yes," said Lane wonderingly; "to get a packet of tacks to stick the new lineoleum down in the study. What about it?"

"I've got the tacks in my pocket."

"I know you have. What on earth—"

"Jolly big ones, and a pound of them," said Frank Monk.

"Oh, he's dotty!" said Carboy. "Come on!"

"I'm not dotty, my sons; it's a wheeze. Look here, there's a party of St. Jim's cyclists gone by—we didn't see all of them—a dozen or so, perhaps."

"Well, they're gone now."

"They're going towards the village, easy pace. If we cut through the wood by the footpath we can easily get ahead of them."

"What on earth do you want to get ahead of them for?"

Frank Monk drew a big packet from his pocket and jammed it under Carboy's nose.

Carboy gave a yelp.

"What's that?" demanded Monk.

"Tacks, I suppose!" howled Carboy. "Keep them to yourself, you ass. Have you gone off your rocker?"

"Not much!" Monk grinned. "What price punctures?"

"Punctures?"

"Yes. A pound of big tacks scattered in the road, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I say, isn't that playing it rather low down?" said Lane. "You see—"

"All's fair in war. Didn't Tom Merry come to our school disguised as a giddy new boy, and give us a high old time?" demanded Monk. "Besides, I've got an idea. I heard the other day that D'Arcy expected his cousin down at St. Jim's. I shouldn't wonder if they're going to the station to meet her. What price busting them up on the road, and going ourselves?"

"Good!"

"Then come on, and don't argue."

And the three Grammarians dashed on along the footpath at top speed.

They emerged into the lane far ahead of the cyclists, and in the road they scattered the tacks with a liberal hand. The road was smooth and hard; the tacks, white in colour, were lost to view in the dust.

The buzz of a bicycle bell from afar warned the Grammarians that the St. Jim's cyclists were coming. They scuttled back behind a hedge to watch the result of their stratagem.

The cyclists came in sight, whizzing along at a good rate now.

Frank Monk, peering through the hedge, uttered a sudden exclamation.

"My only hat!"

"What's the matter?"

"There's a lady in the party! It's Miss Cleveland! I—"

"Too late now!" said Lane. "It can't be helped! They're on the tacks!"

They were!

ANSWERS

CHAPTER 13.

The Spin!

"BAI Jove! There's somethin' w'ong with my tyah!" said Arthur Augustus d'Arcy.

The cyclists had swept on past the Grammarian ambush. They were going at a good speed, and they had collected up a large number of the tacks without noticing it. But as they rode on, the tyres noticed it.

D'Arcy was the first who remarked that his tyre was flattening. Cousin Ethel noticed that her own tyres were going down. Figgins's were quite flat, and he had not said a word. He did not know anything about the tacks; and he would have ridden with flat tyres, or without any tyres at all, rather than give up his place beside Cousin Ethel.

"Hallo! I'm getting as flat as a flounder!" said Tom Merry. "Curious!"

"I'm punctured!" growled Manners.

"So am I!" said Lowther.

"Faith, and I'm punctured, too!"

"And I!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in bewilderment. "What a crop of punctures in a minute! Why, look at this!" he added, as he jumped off his machine. "The tyres are stuck full of tacks!"

"Tacks!"

"Tacks!"

"My only Aunt Maria! Tacks!"

"It's a trick!"

"A rotten, caddish trick, too!"

The whole party dismounted. There was only one machine that was not punctured, and that was Harry Noble's. Noble had been riding on the strip of grass beside the lane, and so had escaped the tacks.

He was very sympathetic, but very pleased at his own escape. A glimmer of fun came into his eyes.

"You chaps are in a bad way," he remarked. "You won't mend those punctures very soon. Let's begin on Miss Cleveland's machine, and get that done, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors were, of course, quite willing to do that. Noble and Tom Merry and Jack Blake set to work on Cousin Ethel's tyres, and were busy for some time. Ethel's machine was nearly new, and the tyres in good condition; and so she had suffered the least injury. Some of the oldest tyres in the party, which had already been mended and recommended, looked desperate.

Reilly and Digby wheeled their machines back towards St. Jim's. The others began the work of repair. Soon a group of cycles were reposing upside down by the roadside, and warm juniors in their shirt-sleeves sweated over the work.

Cousin Ethel sat on a grassy bank to wait.

She was disappointed at this ending of an afternoon's spin. It was pretty clear that the spin was over for the greater part of the band of cyclists. It was really too bad. And the juniors murmured things about the liberal distributor of tacks, and wished they could get within comfortable hitting distance of him.

Three youths in Grammar School caps came along as they were busily engaged.

"Hallo!" said Frank Monk cheerily. "Is this a puncture competition?"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the Grammarians.

"Some uttah wotah has been scattewin' tacks in the woad," he said. "I wish I knew whom it was, and I would give him a fearful thwashin'!"

"Dear me!"

"Rotten cad, whoever he was!" said Manners savagely.

"Dirty cad, and no mistake!" said Lowther.

"Regular sweep!" said Blake.

"Yes, it was rotten," said Monk thoughtfully. "Pretty nearly as bad as getting oneself up as a new boy, and raring chaps in their own school."

Tom Merry grinned.

"I don't suppose the giddy joker would have done it if he had known there was a lady in the party," added Monk, raising his cap to Cousin Ethel.

"Of course not!" said Lane and Carboy promptly.

"I am sure not," said Cousin Ethel, with a smile. "But it was a very thoughtless thing to do, all the same; and rather more than a joke."

"Well, yes, I suppose it was," said Monk. "I'm sorry—I mean, the chap who did it would be sorry if he could see you. Can we lend you a hand, Blake?"

"No!" growled Blake. "I'll lend you a foot if you don't sheer off!"

"Can we help you, D'Arcy?"

"Oh, go and eat coke, deah boy!"

"Can we help you, Dane?"

"Rats!"

"We can't be of any assistance here," said Monk. "Perhaps Miss Cleveland would like us to escort her home while all these punctures are being mended."

"No, thank you," said Miss Cleveland, smiling.

"Well, I wish we could do something to help. You don't look as if you could handle that machine, Glyn. Let me lend you a hand."

"Look here," said Glyn, "these Grammar rotters punctured our machines. There's a ditch there full of water!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ethel, deah gal, would you have any objection to our thwowin' these cads into the ditch?"

"Please don't do anything of the sort," said Ethel.

"Yaas, but weally—"

"Good-bye!" said Monk hurriedly. "See you again another time. I hope you won't have any more punctures."

And the Grammarians walked away rather hurriedly. Kangaroo and Blake were putting the tyre back on Ethel's machine. One was already finished.

"We sha'n't be long now," said Blake.

"Oh, I don't mind waiting at all!"

"You can't wait till the lot are done," said Blake. "It's messing up your afternoon. Your machine is done now. Kangaroo will lend me his jigger, and I'll look after you while you have a spin."

"But really—"

"Upon the whole, Blake, Kangaroo had better lend me his jiggah, so that I can look aftah my cousin," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"Really—," said Cousin Ethel.

Noble shook his head.

"I think Miss Cleveland ought to have her spin," he said; "and some chap had better take my bike to ride with her. I hope you will decide upon that, Miss Cleveland."

"If you all think so—"

"Oh, certainly!" said all the juniors.

"Very well, then!"

"I should like to lend you my machine, Blake," said Kangaroo thoughtfully; "but, you see, D'Arcy, as Miss Cleveland's cousin, has a claim."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I should like to lend you my machine, D'Arcy; but, you see, Blake, as head of your study, has a claim."

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

"To prevent friction, I think, perhaps, it would be better for me to ride the machine myself, after all," said Kangaroo still in the same thoughtful strain. "If Miss Cleveland does not object to me as an escort—"

"Of course not!" said Cousin Ethel.

"Then that's settled!" said Kangaroo cheerfully.

And Blake and D'Arcy exchanged looks, and mentally promised Kangaroo something when they had him safe back at St. Jim's without Cousin Ethel looking on.

Figgins did not speak; but there was a look on his face as he glanced at Cousin Ethel that Kangaroo saw, and which went straight to the Australian junior's heart. His eyes met Figgins's; and Figgins dropped his glance, and coloured.

The Cornstalk chum was coolness itself, and he generally contrived to have things the way that pleased him. But he had a generous heart. He wanted very much to go on that spin, but—

"It was Figgins arranged for the spin in the first place," said Jack Blake, catching the Australian's look. "Play the game, Kangaroo."

"Oh, all right!" said Noble. "If Cousin Ethel doesn't object to Figgins instead of me, I'm willing to do the fair thing."

"Of course not!" said Cousin Ethel, in exactly the same tone as before.

"There's the jigger, Figgy!"

Figgins grasped it as if it had been a priceless gift.

"I'll remember this, Wallaby!" he murmured.

Noble grinned genially.

"That's all right! Take it, and welcome."

Tom Merry held Cousin Ethel's machine till she mounted. And she rode away, with a sweet smile all round, Figgins by her side.

The juniors looked after them till the next winding curve of the lane hid them from sight.

"Well, this is nice for us!" remarked Noble. "No good thinking of a spin this afternoon, kids. Better wheel the machines back to the school."

"I suppose so."

"It's rotten!" said Wally, growling. "Absolutely beastly!"

"Weally, Wally, I stwongly object to your usin' those expressions—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!"

"I insist upon beginnin'. I wefuse to allow you to use slangy expressions. I—"

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S AIR-CRUISE." An Extra-long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

"Rats!" said the disrespectful younger brother; and he turned his machine to wheel it homeward. "I wish I could get hold of those Grammar cads! I'd—I'd fill 'em up with solution!"

"Yaas, wathah! I quite agwee with you there, but——"

But Wally did not wait for the rest. Some of the juniors went on mending punctures. But the punctures were too numerous for a roadside job. Most of them gave it up, and wheeled their bicycles away towards St. Jim's.

Noble, with Figgins's machine, was the first to reach the gates. Skimpole was standing there, blinking out into the road.

"Have you seen young D'Arcy, Kangaroo? His dog Pongo——"

"Blow his dog Pongo!" said Kangaroo. "I say, I hear you are healing things by suggestion, and that sort of thing."

"Certainly! I have already——"

"Can you heal punctures in a tyre by suggestion?"

"Really, Noble——"

"If so, you can begin on mine. Sufficiently concentrated force of will ought to be enough, I suppose, to mend a common or garden puncture?" said Kangaroo, with a perfect seriousness of manner which quite deceived Skimpole. The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's was never known to see a joke.

"Really, Noble, you entirely misapprehend the whole matter," said Skimpole patiently. "My wonderful discovery is only of use to human beings. Pain being largely a matter of the imagination, can be cured by the force of will. A puncture——"

"I see. You can cure a puncture in a human body, but not in a bicycle-tyre?"

"Yes, to put it that way—— Hallo, young D'Arcy, here you are! Your dog Pongo——"

"My only Aunt Jane! If you've been trying any experiments on my dog Pongo——"

"Not at all. I only wish to tell you that he has shown the same disease as Herries's bulldog, doubtless owing to contact when they were fighting to-day. I just saw him coming along the Shell passage covered with blue and pink spots."

Wally turned quite pale.

"Where is he?" He rushed off towards the house without waiting for an answer to the question, and Skimpole hurried after him.

"D'Arcy minor, I will cure him if you like. I have already cured Herries's bulldog of the same complaint. My wonderful discovery——"

"Oh, ring off——"

"With my marvellous powers, I can soon restore him to a normal state of health; and, as a matter of fact, I——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" roared Wally. And he dashed away, calling to Pongo till the echoes of the old quadrangle rang again.

CHAPTER 14.

Towser is Not to be Sat Upon.

"PONGO! Pongo! Pongo!"

Wally called and whistled, but the voice of Pongo did not answer.

"Pongo! Pongo!"

"Have you seen Pongo?"

"Where's that dog got to?"

"Pongo! Pongo!"

Gore came out of the School House, with a grin on his face, and a smear of paint on his fingers. Gore had apparently been using his colour-box that afternoon, rather an unusual thing for Gore, who was not at all artistic.

"Looking for Pongo?" he asked.

"Yes. Have you seen him?"

"I saw him in the Shell passage a while ago," said Gore, with a peculiar grin. "I think he's outside now."

"There he is!" shouted Harry Noble suddenly.

Wally whisked round, and dashed away on the track of Pongo. Pongo appeared to be in an unruly mood, even more so than usual, for he whisked off in a twinkling, and he and his master vanished round the buildings at top speed.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he entered the School House. "Those wotten dogs seem to be giving a lot of trouble this aftahnoon. First, there was Hewwies's beastly bulldog, which was the cause of my missin' my dinnah, and then there's Pongo. Do you know, deah boys, I am wathah tired frowm wheelin' that bike home. I think I will sit down and have a west in the study."

"I think I'll brush some of the dust off," grunted Jack Blake. "Hallo, what's the matter here? Where's Herries?"

"I think I saw him on the cwicket-field."

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S AIR-CRUISE." An Extra-long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

"What's the study dark for?"

The chums of the Fourth were surprised. The blind was down in Study No. 6, and the interior was quite gloomy, though the sunshine was brilliant outside in the quad. Blake crossed towards the window to pull up the blind, and Arthur Augustus stepped towards the armchair. There was a sudden yell from Blake, and he was heard to stumble, and there was a splash.

"Ow! Gerroch!"

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, deah boy?"

"Some idiot has left a bath of water standing here in the dark!" howled Blake. "I've—ow—sat in it! Yow! I'm wet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Digby. "This is a little joke of Herries! That's why the blind's down."

Blake splashed out of the footpath.

"If this is a little joke of Herries, Herries will have to be instructed to grow less funny," he said, as he shook the water off. "My trucks are soaked through, the asinine duffer!"

"Bettah change 'em, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "I am goin' up to change in a few minutes, when I have had a west. I am quite exhausted, bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sank gracefully into the armchair.

He reposed there for about the .000001 seconds, and then he jumped up with a terrific yell.

"Oh!"

"What's up?"

"Oh! Ow! Help!"

Gr-r-r-r-r.

In the dimness a strange form swathed in bandages could be seen clinging to the seat of D'Arcy's cycling knickers.

The growl showed what and whom it was.

"Towser!" gasped Digby.

Towser it was.

Arthur Augustus had sat upon him in the dimness, and Towser had been remarkably prompt to make his presence felt.

"Help!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Murdah! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake dragged up the blind, and a flood of sunlight rushed into the study. It revealed Towser, bandaged up to the chin, clinging to D'Arcy, who was leaping to and fro like a kangaroo in wild attempts to shake him off.

Fortunately, Towser's teeth had met in the cloth, not in D'Arcy, and the swell of St. Jim's was more startled than hurt.

"Take him off!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Help! Murdah! Help! Fiah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "This is another of Herries's little jokes, I suppose."

"I will give Hewwies a feaful thwashin'! Take this howwid beast off! He will bite me in a minute. He is wuinin' my twousahs! Help!"

"Get off, you brute! Shush!"

"Shush!" roared Digby.

But Towser declined to shush.

He hung on like grim death, and refused to budge, and only growled as Blake applied a boot to his ribs, and Digby a cricket stump to his back.

Suddenly there was a rending of cloth, and D'Arcy's garments gave way.

Towser dropped off, with a mouthful of cloth as a trophy of victory, and D'Arcy gasped with relief.

"Dwive the beast out, deah boys!"

Towser did not want driving out. He whisked out of the study instantly, and careered down the corridor with the cloth in his jaws. His career was rather curious to watch, for the numerous bandages impeded all his movements, and he progressed sometimes like a crab, and sometimes like a kangaroo.

Arthur Augustus gasped for breath.

"Bai Jove, I am feelin' quite in a fluttah! I wegard Hewwies as a beast—a wank beast!"

"Hallo, here he comes!" said Digby.

"Collar him as he comes in!" said Blake, in a hurried whisper. "I approve of japes when they're up against the Shell fellows or the New House. But a jape on one's own study mates is past the limit. Herries has got to go through it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I say, what are you——" began Herries, as he came in, in cricketing flannels. "Oh, oh! Leggo!"

They were upon him in a twinkling.

Three pairs of hands grasped Herries, and, sturdy as he was, he had no chance.

He was whirled into the study, whirled round to the bath, and sat down in it with a terrific splash.

He sat there for some moments, too dazed to move, while his three chums grinned at him.

Then he jumped up, soaked with water and furious. "You utter idiots!" he roared. "Are you off your rockers? What are you up to?"

"He that japed his study mates, he also shall be likewise japed," said Blake solemnly. "Give him another."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hold on! Who's japed you, you shrieking idiots! I haven't!"

"You showed this bath here for me to fall over—"

"I left it here. How should I know you were dummy enough to fall over it?"

"You put Towser in the armchair for Gussy to sit on."

"And he tore my twousahs—"

"I left him in the armchair to sleep!" yelled Herries.

"Do you mean to say that that howling ass has sat upon him?"

"I wefuse to be called a howlin' ass! I—"

"You pulled the blind down, so—"

"That was to make the study dark so that Towser could go to sleep," said Herries indignantly.

Blake burst into a laugh.

"Then you weren't japing us at all?"

"Of course I wasn't, you ass!"

"Then you've had a bath for nothing. Serve you right for being such an ass, though! Chaps who leave a bulldog in a study ought to be drowned!"

"I thought you were out for the afternoon, you duffers! When I heard you had come in I cut over from the cricket-field to see that you didn't disturb Towser—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You arrived too late!"

"You've soaked my trucks, you dummy!"

"You've soaked mine, you ditto!"

"Now, where's Towser?"

"Blessed if I know! He's gone."

"Gone!" roared Herries. "He's ill!"

"Well, he didn't look ill, the way he bolted!" grinned Blake. "Perhaps he's recovered. Anyway, he's gone, and a jolly good riddance!"

"Look here—"

"Haven't time. I'm going to change my things."

And Jack Blake went upstairs, whistling, and Herries, having glared after him, and glared at Dig and D'Arcy, hurried away in search of Towser, heedless of the big patch of wet upon his white trousers.

"Bai Jove!" remarked D'Arcy. "I'm beginnin' to get fed up with these dogs, you know!"

"Towser nearly got fed up with you!" grinned Dig. "I'm going down to the cricket. Better than mending punctures all the afternoon. Can do that on a rainy day!"

CHAPTER 15.

The Invitations.

TOM MERRY came off the cricket field with his bat under his arm, and the ruddy glow of exercise in his face. The St. Jim's juniors had not allowed the Grammarians' little joke to spoil their afternoon. The "spin" was off; but the weather was ripping for cricket, and they were filling up the time with complete satisfaction to themselves while Figgins and Cousin Ethel were away. Bernard Glyn was looking on at the game, and Tom Merry stopped to speak to him as he came off the field.

"Getting near tea-time, I think," Tom Merry remarked.

"Yes. How long are you playing?"

"Oh, this is only filling up time. We shall chuck it when Cousin Ethel comes in, and have tea."

"Good! Come over to my place for tea," said Glyn. "I was going to ask you, only as the spin was arranged, I left it. I've got something to show you that I think will interest you—and Cousin Ethel, too."

"No more electric chairs, or electrified walking-sticks, I hope," said Tom Merry, laughing.

The Liverpool lad chuckled.

"Oh, no; something better than that. You remember my model railway train?"

"Yes, rather; and a ripping one it is!"

"Well, it's something in that line, only better—a real ripper. Will you come over with the chaps?"

"With pleasure."

And Glyn's invitation was accepted with pleasure by most of the fellows. Most of them were interested in models, and all of them were interested in tea. And tea on the lawn at Glyn House, with Miss Edith Glyn presiding, was something to be enjoyed, as some of them knew by experience.

"My dear chap, I shall be extremely happy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when Glyn asked him. "I wemembah with great pleasure my last visit to Glyn House. Pway wely upon me."

"You coming, Herries?"

"Thanks awfully," said Herries. "I'm rather anxious about my dog, though."

"Bring him with you."

"Oh, weally, Glyn! I thought this was to be a pleasure party."

But Herries shook his head.

"Towser can't go on a run just now. He's ill. Skimpole has been working the healing-by-suggestion wheeze on him, and it seems to have done him good, though I'm blessed if I can understand how. The spots haven't come back."

"Oh, you've caught the wotten beast, then, Hewwies?"

"I've caught Towser," said Herries. "Lot of energy that dog has. Took me an hour. I've got him on the chain now."

"Let's have a look at him," said Glyn. "If he's well enough to be left, you'll come over to my show to tea."

"Jolly good!"

They walked round to the pets' house. Towser was there, on his chain, and Gore of the Shell was looking at him. Gore concealed something hastily under his jacket as the juniors came up, and strolled away. Herries looked after him suspiciously. He knew that Gore was cruel; but there seemed to be nothing wrong with Towser. Herries examined him with fatherly care, but there was no sign of returning spots.

"He seems all right," said Glyn.

"Yes, he does. There may be something in Skimmy's piffle after all. You never know."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'll come over to Glyn House with pleasure," said Herries. "Jolly glad to. Towser will be all right till I come back."

Skimpole met them as they walked away. The brainy man of the Shell immediately buttonholed Herries.

"Have you been to see Towser?"

"Yes. He's all right."

"No return of his disease?"

"Not a bit of it."

"Ah! What did I tell you, Herries? I trust that you will not doubt my wonderful powers again," said Skimpole, beaming through his big spectacles. "Wonderful as my discovery is, I am really surprised at such splendid results in so short a time. I cured Blake of a pain in the head, caused by the violent impact of an umbrella, and D'Arcy of an attack of habit-hunger—"

"I was eatin' a wabbit-pie at the time—"

"Now I have cured Towser, simply by suggestion," said Skimpole, unheeding. "I regard these results as little short of marvellous. I really wish D'Arcy minor could capture his dog. I should be very pleased to work a cure in Pongo's case."

"Marvellous, and no mistake," said Glyn, with a grin. "You must come over to my place with us, Skimmy, in case anything goes wrong with my model. Then you can set it right by suggestion."

"I am afraid that my powers, marvellous as they are, would not have any perceptible effect upon inanimate objects, Glyn. However, I shall be very pleased to come to tea at Glyn House. Thank you very much."

Glyn strolled down towards the gates with D'Arcy. It was time that the cyclists returned; it had been arranged that the spin should be over in good time for tea.

"Bai Jove! Here they come!"

Two cyclists came into view.

Figgins and Cousin Ethel were riding at a leisurely pace, their machines just level, and talking as they rode, and they did not seem to be aware that they were getting near the gates of the school at all.

D'Arcy put up his eyeglass and looked at them.

"I can't quite make it out," he said. "I weally nevah could quite make it out."

"Can't make what out?"

"How my cousin can be interested in the piffle that chap Figgins talks, you know. She's weally an awfully intelligent gal, you know," said Arthur Augustus confidentially. "If all gals were as intelligent as Ethel, I shouldn't object so much to gals havin' votes, you know. Yet she can listen to the stuff that chap talks! Figgins doesn't know anythin' about anythin' except football and ewicket, and Ethel doesn't play either football or ewicket. It's simply amazin'."

"Yes, isn't it?" said Glyn, laughing.

Figgins's voice became audible as the cyclists came nearer.

"I just charged, you know, and he went down, and then he blubbed, you know, and then I was jolly sorry."

"Hallo, Figgins!"

Figgins nearly fell off his machine.

"Ha-a-a-allo! Why, here we are at the school!"

"Dear me, so we are!" said Cousin Ethel.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S AIR-CRUISE." An Extra-long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

"Pway allow me to take your machine, Ethel," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner.

"Certainly, Arthur! How good you are!"

"I say, you're coming over to Glyn House to tea, aren't you, Miss Cleveland?" said Bernard Glyn. "My sister Edith wants you to come, you know, and it's going to be a bit of a spread—if you come. Will you?"

"Pway do, Ethel; but if you are too exhausted to walk over to Glyn House, pway be fwank, and we will have a spread here."

"I shall be very pleased to come," said Cousin Ethel.

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus wheeled Ethel's machine away, and Figgins placed his in the hands of Bernard Glyn. Glyn looked at it, and at him.

"Shove it somewhere for me, old chap," said Figgins. "It's Noble's, you know."

And without waiting for a reply, Figgins walked away with Cousin Ethel towards the Head's house. D'Arcy's eyeglass glimmered after them.

"Bai Jove! There's somethin' vewy cool about that chap Figgins. Don't you think so, Glyn, deah boy?"

"Yes, perhaps so."

"He was talkin' the most amazin' piffle, you know, but Ethel was listenin' as if it were a giddy owacle, you know."

"Curious!"

"Yaas, wathah! I nevah could quite undahstand Ethel, you know. Don't you think that gals are sometimes awfully puzzlin'?"

"They are, sometimes," said Glyn, "and chaps are awful asinine at times, too. Let's get rid of these jiggers."

They wheeled the machines off to the shed. Figgins took leave of Cousin Ethel on the steps of the Head's house.

"Thanks so much," said Cousin Ethel. "I have enjoyed the ride so much."

"So have I," said Figgins. "It was jolly good of you. I hope we shall get another ride soon."

"Yes, indeed."

"May I come to tea at Glyn House?" asked Figgins, colouring.

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"Surely that is for Bernard Glyn to decide."

"Oh, I can fix it up with Glyn. He wants me to come, you know. Awfully decent chap, Glyn. He's got a jolly nice sister."

"Has he?" said Cousin Ethel, with perhaps a shade less of sweetness in her manner.

"Yes, a ripping girl," said Figgins unconsciously. "I'm sure you'll like her. I think she must have been like you when she was as young as you are now."

"Indeed! Why?"

"Well, she's so nice," said Figgins. "Though I don't think she could have been exactly like you, though," he added meditatively.

"Why not?"

"Well, I don't know, only you seem different somehow from other girls. Kerr says all girls are the same, and Kerr's an awfully clever chap, you know. He can do lots of things that I can't do. I suppose he's right, but it seems to me—"

"Yes?"

"It seems to me that he isn't. I dare say I'm an ass, you know, but somehow I don't think there's another girl exactly like you in the world," said Figgins.

"Dear me! How long they are in answering the bell," said Ethel.

Figgins turned crimson.

"By Jove! I forgot to ring!"

And he rang.

When Cousin Ethel had gone in, Figgins walked away slowly to the New House, and his chums, Kerr and Wynn, met him. They stopped in his path, expecting him to stop too; but Figgins was so immersed in thought that he ran right into Fatty Wynn without seeing him.

"Here, gerroff!" gasped Fatty Wynn, as he staggered back. "Are you blind, you owl? You've knocked all the wind out of me!"

"Hallo! Is that you, Wynn?"

"Yes, it is," growled Fatty. "What's the matter with you? What do you mean by mooning about like that in the broad daylight?"

"Mooning!"

"Yes, mooning. Look here, Glyn wants us to go over to his show for grub—"

"Ah, yes! Yes?"

"Are you coming? I'm hungry."

"Yes. No. Yes."

"Had a good ride?" asked Kerr.

"Yes. Certainly. Nice ride," said Figgins absently.

"Where have you been?"

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"Eh?"

"What road did you take?"

"Road?"

"Yes. I suppose you've ridden somewhere?"

"Oh, yes," said Figgins. "We—we rode somewhere. I'm blessed if I noticed the road. We were talking most of the time, you see."

"Yes, I see—lots," said Kerr. "But it's time to wake up now, and come to tea!"

"Oh, I say!" said Figgins more briskly. "That chap Glyn is standing a tea at his place, and I'm going—"

"Why, I just told you—" began Fatty Wynn.

"Cousin Ethel's going, too," said Figgins. "Better get ready. Don't stand about there wasting time, you chaps. Come in."

And they went in.

CHAPTER 16.

Bernard Glyn's Little Party.

BERNARD GLYN grinned as he entered the gates at Glyn House with his friends. Glyn House was only a short walk from St. Jim's; and Mr. Glyn, a retired Liverpool engineer of great wealth, was hospitality itself to his son's friends. Glyn House was always open to anybody whom Bernard chose to bring there. This time he had brought over a dozen fellows, and it occurred to some of them that he was putting the good-nature of his kind parent to a severe strain. But Mr. Glyn met his youthful guests with a heartiness of manner that quite dispelled any doubts on that score. And Miss Glyn was sweetness itself to Cousin Ethel.

The millionaire had not been prepared for so many guests; but it did not take long to provide for them. He was never surprised at anything Bernard did. It was easy to see that Bernard was the apple of his eye, and that nothing was too good for him. And, as a matter of fact, even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, though the son of a noble lord, never indulged such expensive tastes as the millionaire's son. The equipment of Bernard Glyn's little workshop alone had cost hundreds of pounds, and his models were the best that money could buy.

Tea on the lawn at Glyn House was a function to be enjoyed. The juniors enjoyed it.

Figgins was looking after Cousin Ethel most of the time, and although he generally had a very healthy appetite, he was observed to eat very little. Edith Glyn glanced at him once or twice with a somewhat amused light in her eyes. There was something very manly and kind about Figgins's devotion to his girl friend. That innate respect for women which is a part of the nature of every healthy, manly boy, was very strongly developed in Figgins. Cousin Ethel was to him a being of a superior mould, something too sacred to be lightly touched, only to be looked after and protected. And it was that very quality about Figgins which made girls always like him and trust him—much to the amazement of some fellows who were ten times as good-looking as Figgins, but not quite so honest and chivalrous.

Fatty Wynn glanced towards his chum several times with real concern.

Fatty was chivalrous, too, and ready to do anything for Cousin Ethel; but at meal times his attention seldom wandered from his plate.

"I say, Figgy," he took an opportunity of whispering; "better make hay while the sun shines, you know. You won't get anything to eat when you get in."

"Eh?" said Figgins. "Did you speak?"

"Try these tarts," said Fatty Wynn.

"Tarts!"

"Yes; they're first-class. Mr. Glyn's cook is a treasure, and she must have been a boy herself, I think, or she wouldn't know so exactly what boys like. These tarts are a dream."

Figgins absently ate a tart.

"You must have some cake," said Cousin Ethel, smiling.

"Certainly," said Figgins; "but can't I help you to anything. You're not eating anything at all, Cousin Ethel."

"I say, Figgins, do have some of these biscuits. They've got sugar on, and they're simply stunning."

"Yaas, wathah! I can wecommend them, Figgins."

"Oh, all right! Thanks!"

"You can get a beautiful view of the park from my seat," remarked Arthur Augustus, who was, at the next table to Figgins—the tea being laid on a group of round tables under the trees. "Would you like to change places with me, Figgins?"

"No, thanks!"

"It's very nice here."

"Then I hope you're enjoying yourself."

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy whispered to Blake. "I wegard

Figgins as a cool beast, you know. Fancy appowpwiatin' a chap's cousin undah a chap's vewy nose, you know!"

"Cheek!" grinned Blake. "Pass the radishes."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard it—"

"Radishes—I said radishes."

"Yaas, here they are. As I was sayin'—"

"Bread-and-butter."

"As I was sayin', Figgins is a cool beast, and I wathah think I ought to give him a feahful thwashin' when we get back. What do you think, Blake?"

"I think I'd like some bread-and-butter with these radishes."

"Oh, weally, Blake—"

The tea was finished at last.

Then Bernard Glyn led the way towards the lake that gleamed in the summer sun through the trees.

"Now we're going to see the giddy sight," remarked Noble. "I haven't heard what it is yet."

"Some giddy model," said Lowther.

"My hat! Look!"

"Here you are!" said Bernard Glyn as they halted on the embankment of the lake. "The pater has got them all ready for us. What do you think of them?"

"Bai Jove! Amazin'!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Ripping!"

"Stunning!"

The exclamations of amazement and admiration were well called for.

On the edge of the sheet of ornamental water a model battleship lay afloat, and near it a torpedo-boat.

Both the craft were complete in every detail.

The juniors gazed at them with keen interest.

The battleship, although on the scale of a model, was complete—a replica of a real member of the great fleet by the aid of which Britannia rules the waves.

It was complete, to the very guns that looked out of the barbettes—long threatening black tubes that looked grim enough, even in the model.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is weally wippin'! It must be weally stunnin' to have a tame millionaire for one's governah."

The cost of the models the juniors could not guess, but they knew that it must have run into hundreds of pounds.

"Will they work?" asked Noble.

Bernard Glyn laughed.

"Well, rather!"

"How?"

"Steam, my son. They're just as complete inside as out, and they work exactly like the real article."

"Bai Jove! But I don't see how you get inside to put on the coal fwom the bunkahs," said Arthur Augustus, fixing his eyeglass upon the battleship. "Have you model firemen and stokahs inside?"

"No, ass!"

"I wufuse to be called an ass! I—"

"Sorry, I forgot," said Glyn, remembering that Arthur Augustus was his guest. "I mean, you're an ass when we get back to St. Jim's."

"Weally, Glyn—"

"The heat is produced by burning paraffin, you see, not by coal," explained Glyn. "You can't have everything in a model."

"Yaas, I see. Are you goin' to work them?"

"Yes, rather!"

"And how do you steer them, deah boy?"

"They can be directed by a pole from the bank. I can make them steam round the fountain in the middle, and dodge one another a treat," said Glyn. "You'll see. Here, Blake, you lend me a hand—you've got most sense."

"Weally, deah boy—"

But Glyn and Blake set to work without listening to Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 17.

Run Down.

"THEY'RE off!"

Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

"Splendid!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel, clapping her hands.

Bernard Glyn stood on the bank with a satisfied smile on his face.

It had not taken long to get the models working. Blake had attended to the torpedo-boat, and Glyn to the battleship.

The smoke was pouring out of the funnels now in black volumes, and the two vessels glided through the level, calm water.

The steering-gear was arranged to take them round the

little lake in a wide sweep, any variation being corrected by a touch from a pole on shore.

"Bai Jove! They go wippingly!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great admiration. "They weally work, you know."

Bernard Glyn snorted.

"Did you think they wouldn't work, ass?"

"I wufuse to be called—"

"Sorry—I meant dummy."

"I wegard that as bein' quite as oppwobwious a term as the othah, Glyn, and if I were not your guest, I should give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Arthur!"

"It's all wight, Ethel, deah gal. I am not goin' to give Glyn a feahful thwashin'," explained D'Arcy. "I should give him a feahful thwashin' if I were not his guest at the pvesent moment, but undah the circs. I shall welwain fwom givin' him a feahful thwashin'. There is nothin' to be alarmed about."

"Come after the battleship," said Blake, pulling Arthur Augustus by the arm; "we shall lose sight of it."

"Pway don't pull me in that wuff way, Blake."

"Come on, duffer!"

"I decline to be chawactewised as a duffah."

"Come on, chump!"

"I uttably wufuse—"

"Come on, dummy!"

"Blake, I have no wresource but to thwash you. I—"

"Arthur!"

"I am sowwy, Ethel, but I beg you to walk the othah way while I thwash Blake. Figgins, will you kindly take Miss Cleveland away while I thwash Blake?"

"Certainly," said Figgins.

"Arthur! I am shocked at you!"

"Weally, Ethel, it's as much for his own sake as anythin' else," said Arthur Augustus. "You see, I wegard myself as bein' weally in charge of these fellows, and I have to look aftah them, you know. I considah myself wesponsible for their actions."

"Well, that's pretty good; when you're not responsible for your own," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Here, come and look at the battleship!" exclaimed Herries, dragging D'Arcy along by his shoulder. "Leave the thrashing till afterwards. You'll be the one to get it, you know."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, don't jaw so much, old chap! Get moving!"

And Arthur Augustus bottled up his wrath. The juniors were following the models round the lake.

The battleship was leading, and the torpedo-boat was keeping pace, a little behind, on the port side.

Their action was perfect.

A slight touch or two from the pole Bernard Glyn carried in his hand corrected any deviation from the course, and the two vessels steamed on steadily round the lake.

"Ripping!" said Noble.

"Yaas, wathah! Isn't it wippin', Ethel?"

"Indeed it is."

"They are weally wonderful models," said D'Arcy, looking round. "I couldn't have made them, you know."

"Go hon!" said Bernard Glyn.

"I am speakin' quite sewiously. They would have been quite beyond my powahs. I can, howevah, guide them, and I will take the pole, if you like, Glyn."

"Better leave it to me, Gussy."

"Well, it's a delicate mattah, you know, and a fellow with tact and judgment is required for it," said D'Arcy doubtfully. "Howevah, here is anothah pole, and I will help you."

And the swell of St. Jim's picked up a light pole, and helped.

Bernard Glyn did not look overjoyed at the assistance rendered. But politeness to a guest prevented him from telling Arthur Augustus that his aid was superfluous and a bother.

"How beautifully they steam!" said Cousin Ethel, with great admiration.

"Yaas, wathah! They're like lookin' at weal battle-ships, you know, though the wong end of a telescope," said D'Arcy. "I dare say they could be put through some evolutions, you know. What do you think, Glyn? Shall I make the torpedo-boat go wound the battleship?"

"Oh, leave 'em alone!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I'll do it," said Glyn. "You see—"

"Oh, I'll help you. You see—"

"But—"

"Just a slight touch like that—there! I wish you wouldn't gwab my arm, Blake. You have made me give it quite a shove. Bai Jove, look at it!"

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Bernard Glyn uttered a sharp exclamation, and ran to the water's edge, pole in hand.

Cousin Ethel gave a cry.
"They are going to collide!"

It was only too true. The unlucky touch from Arthur Augustus had made the torpedo-boat turn upon the battleship, and it was running it down.

Before Glyn could interfere the crash came.
Crash!

Right into the side of the battleship the torpedo-boat crashed, and the larger vessel reeled in the shock.

"My hat!" exclaimed Glyn.

The torpedo-boat lurched. The crash had smashed the bows, and the water was rushing in. There was a wild hissing of escaping steam, and a sharp explosion.

"Phew!"

"Bai Jove!"

"She's sinking!"

In a few seconds the torpedo-boat disappeared under the water.

It was only six feet deep, and in the clear sunlight the torpedo-boat could be seen resting on the stone bottom, turned upon its side.

The battleship, driven out of its course by the shock, impinged upon the bank, and Harry Noble secured it.

Bernard Glyn looked at the wreck, and looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The latter looked at Blake with a very severe expression.

"Weally, Blake, you might be more careful. Look at the damage you have done."

Blake stared at him.

"I!" he exclaimed. "The damage I have done!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why, you ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. If you had not touched my arm at that moment—"

"If you hadn't touched the boat with that pole—"

"Oh, wats! Pway don't twy to cawwl out of the wespensibility that way, Blake. I am weally surprised at you."

"Well, of all the—the—the—"

"Pway say no more!" said Arthur Augustus loftily. "The best thing you can do is to expwess your wegwets to Glyn."

"Well, yes, I can do that. Glyn, I'm awfully sorry I brought this dangerous lunatic here, and messed up your torpedo-boat."

"Weally, Blake, that is not what I meant. I—"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Glyn, with a grin. "We'll fish it out, and I'll repair it all right next half-holiday."

"That is vewy decent of you, Glyn. I must apologise for Blake. He is always wathah clumsy, and he cannot help doin' these things. I weally do not see anythin' for you fellows to laugh at."

But the fellows did, for they laughed, and laughed again. Bernard Glyn took the accident quite good-humouredly, but he made a mental resolve not to allow Arthur Augustus within reach of one of his models again.

CHAPTER 18.

Caught in the Act.

COUSIN ETHEL was seen off at the station by the whole party, and then Tom Merry & Co. walked back to St. Jim's. The sun was setting, and a glow of golden light lay across the old quadrangle. The cricketers were going in, and lights were beginning to gleam in the studies. A piercing whistle rang through the quad, as the juniors entered at the gates, followed by a shout.

"Stop him!"

"Bai Jove! Stop whom?"

"Look out! Pongo!"

Wally's mongrel was dashing towards the gates at full speed, with Wally on his track. The hero of the Third was looking very red and breathless. Tom Merry made a spring at the dog, and Pongo bolted away from him and ran between D'Arcy's legs.

The swell of St. Jim's stumbled over him, and sprawled on the ground. Harry Noble made a clutch at Pongo, and caught his collar.

Pongo barked and squealed, but the Cornstalk held him fast till Wally came panting up.

"Got him!" said Kangaroo cheerfully.

"Thanks!" gasped Wally. "Come here, Pongo! You little beast! I'll—I mean I've a good mind to skin you! You rotten young bounder—you—you beast! A nice dance you've led me. You ought to be larruped."

Wally held the dog by a tight grip on his collar, but as a matter of fact he was patting his shaggy head while he uttered the threatening words. Pongo, once caught, was quiet enough. Skimpole came panting up, his spectacles nearly falling off his nose in his excitement.

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"Have you caught him, D'Arcy minor? Good! Now I will cure him—"

"Rats!"

"By the concentration of my powerful will—"

"More rats!"

"My dear D'Arcy, surely you want to have the dog cured?"

"I don't know that there's anything the matter with him yet," said Wally, examining his shaggy favourite.

"Oh, yes; I clearly saw the blue and pink spots on him."

"It's right enough," said Herries, looking at the dog.

"There's the same spots on him that I found on Towser."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry, in amazement. "I never saw anything like that on a dog before."

"Neither did I," said Noble. "I know something about dogs, too. I rather think it's a jape."

"A jape?" exclaimed Herries.

"Yes; they're not natural spots."

"They are the symptoms of disease, due to some internal disorder," explained Skimpole. "By concentrating my powerful will upon the animal I can banish the disease."

"More rats!"

"I have already done so in the case of Towser. Herries will bear me out."

"Well, that's right enough," said Herries. "Towser came out in spots like this twice. I washed off the first lot with disinfectant, and he broke out again; then Skimmy tried the healing by suggestion dodge, and—"

"And the spots disappeared?"

"Yes."

"Did you wash him?" asked Noble, with a grin.

"Yes, I washed him."

"That's why the spots disappeared, I reckon. Look here, if you examine these spots closely, you'll see that they scratch off with your nail."

"Well, but—"

"It's paint."

"Paint!"

"Yes, simply paint. That's why they came off in the washing," chuckled Kangaroo. "Skimmy could cure that by concentrating his will-power just as much as he could get the paint off a fence by boiling his head."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are quite mistaken, Noble," said Skimpole patiently. "I have cured D'Arcy of habit hunger, and Blake of a pain in the head, caused by the violent impact of an umbrella, simply by the concentration of will. If I will that my will will—"

"Wats! I was eatin' a wabbit-pie, and that was what cured my hungah."

"Really, D'Arcy, such a frivolous détail as that—"

"Wats! More wats!"

"I cured Herries' bulldog, and I can cure Pongo. Hold him securely, D'Arcy minor, while I place the tips of my fingers on his head."

"Oh, ring off!"

"Then by concentrating my will I can—"

"Buzz off!"

"I can restore him to his normal state of health. I—"

"I think I can do that by washing him," said Wally, with a grin. "I wish I could find out the practical joker who painted this giddy disease on him. I'd paint him! Come on, Pongo, old dog; come and have a wash!"

"Really, D'Arcy minor—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

And Wally carried his dog away, and sure enough the signs of disease yielded to soap and water.

Skimpole remained blinking at the grinning juniors, and quite as convinced as ever of the reality of his wonderful powers as a healer by the method of suggestion.

"I am sorry to see this spirit of scepticism in D'Arcy minor," he said. "His dog may succumb to some terrible disease, owing to his refusal to allow me to work a cure, as I did with Herries' bulldog."

"Bosh!" said Herries. "I never thought of it before, but now I come to think of it, of course it was paint. It's a jape."

"Nonsense! You see—"

"Yaas, wathah! It's a wotten twick of some boundah."

"And I think I know who it is," exclaimed Tom Merry abruptly. "Do you remember how we found Gore with Pongo in his study, you chaps, and he wouldn't unlock the door? I remember now there was a colour-box on the table."

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Herries excitedly. "And I remember now seeing Gore near Towser's kennel just before I went out to tea, and there was something smeared on his fingers. He was going to do it again, only I stopped him by going there."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Better go and have a look at Towser now," suggested

Noble. "Gore knows we've been to the station with Cousin Ethel, and he may be up to his tricks again."

"By George, so he may!" exclaimed Herries excitedly. "Come on!"

And he dashed off at top speed.

Tom Merry & Co. hurried after him.

There was a light gleaming from the open door of the little building at the back of the Houses where the boys kept their pets.

Noble caught Herries by the arm.

"Hold on—"

"Towser—"

"Yes, but let's see what he's doing before you jump on him."

"Oh, all right!"

And the juniors hurried quietly to the door and looked in. The interior of the place was very dusky at this hour, save where an acetylene cycle-lantern gleamed, casting a circle of bright light. In the circle of light was Herries's bulldog, Towser, and two juniors were with him. One was Mellish, and the other was Gore of the Shell.

Mellish was holding Towser by the collar, and Towser was gnawing a bone, apparently satisfied with the situation so long as there was any meat on the bone. Gore had a colour-box on the ground near him, and a brush in his hand. There was an ill-natured grin upon his face.

"Keep him still, Mellish!"

"He's still enough. You never know how to take this beast though; so buck up," muttered Mellish. "He's got such a beastly uncertain temper."

"Let him have the bone, and he's all right."

"Yes, but—"

"Shut up! I shall be finished soon," said Gore, dabbing Towser with the paint. "This looks as well as ever. Herries will find that he's broken out in spots again when he comes in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't make a row and get all the fellows round here. Herries would make a row if he knew. He's fond of this rotten beast. Blessed if I can see anything about him to be fond of. Of course, Herries is a silly chump, or he'd guess what the spots really were. We couldn't work a trick like this on Tom Merry, or that Australian chap."

"Oh!" murmured Herries at the door.

Noble grinned, and held him back. Skimpole was blinking in at the dog-painters, and his face was a study.

"Buck up, Gore! He's stirring! I don't want to be bitten!"

"I don't care if you're bitten. But he won't bite. You can give him a licking when I've finished if you like. It does dogs good to lick them. Hold still, you brute! I expect Herries will have him shot if he keeps on breaking out like this. Ha, ha!"

"Herries might come back—"

"Oh, he's gone to the station with D'Arcy's cousin! That's all right! He won't be back yet. I sha'n't be another minute."

"That you won't!" roared Herries.

And, breaking away from Noble's hold, he burst in upon the cads of the School House.

Gore jumped to his feet, inadvertently treading on his colour-box as he did so, and there was a grinding crash under his boot.

Herries went straight at him like a bull, and hit out from the shoulder. Gore put up his hands; but he could not stop Towser's indignant master. He warned the first blow; but Herries's left came out like a flash, and it caught Gore full upon the nose. He dropped upon Towser.

There was a terrific growl from Towser, and a wild yell from Gore.

"Ow! Help!"

"Bai Jove! Towser's got him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a case of poetical justice! Gore had been painting Towser, and now Towser was bestowing his attention upon Gore.

His teeth were fastened in Gore's trousers, and apparently in Gore, too, to judge by the fearful yells of the bully of the Shell.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Call him off, Herries!"

Herries granted.

"Call him off, Hewies, deah boy!"

"Blessed if I see why I should call him off!" growled Herries. "Gore knew that he could bite, I suppose, when he started playing his tricks."

"Yaas, but—"

"Help! Ow! Help!"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Call him off! Ow! Help!"

"Towser!" called Herries. "Here, don't let that hound

Mellish get away! He was going to lick Towser. Hold him!"

Digby caught Mellish by the ear and held him. Herries called Towser off; but Towser seemed to be deaf to the voice of his master.

"You see, he won't come off," said Herries. "He knows Gore's a cad, and ought to have a bite or two. Let him alone."

Tom Merry dragged at Towser's collar.

The bulldog slowly and unwillingly released his victim, growling ominously.

Gore sank against the wall, white as a sheet.

"Oh!" he gasped. "I—I shall have hydrophobia. Ow!"

"Serve you right! Bring those cads here, and I'll let them have some painting!" said Herries, picking up Gore's brush and sticking it into the moist colour. "Come on, you rotters! What's good enough for Towser is good enough for you!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Good idea!"

"Hold on! I—ow—ooch!"

Gore ceased to expostulate as the brush was dipped into his expostulating mouth. He choked and spluttered, and spluttered and choked, as Herries daubed his face with colours of various kinds.

Herries laid it on with a liberal hand; and Gore's face was a curious sight when he had finished.

"Now yank that other cad here!"

"Here you are!"

"I—I—I say, it was only a joke, you know!" stammered Mellish feebly. "I—I—I wasn't really going to lick Towser, you know! I—I—"

"No lies!" said Herries. "Keep your mouth shut!"

"But I—I—ooooch!"

A dab of paint in the mouth warned Mellish that it would be wiser to keep it shut, as Herries directed.

In a few minutes he was in the same condition as Gore. They looked at one another in sickly dismay, while the juniors round them roared with laughter.

"Now get out of this place!" said Herries. "If I catch you near it again, I'll knock you into the middle of next week. Outside!"

And Gore and Mellish proceeded outside, with half a dozen boots behind to help them go.

They vanished into the dusk; and the juniors, laughing heartily, strolled away towards the School House, only Herries remaining behind to see his favourite comfortably settled for the night.

In the centre of the School House they found Gore and Mellish the centre of a laughing crowd. It was some time before the painted juniors could escape to a bath-room and begin getting the paint off.

Herries came in, and Skimpole took him by the button.

"Is Towser all right, Herries?" he asked.

Herries nodded cheerfully.

"Right as rain, Skimmy!"

"No sign of disease about him?"

"Not a sign!"

"Ahem! That indicates that the disease is working inwardly," explained Skimpole. "I consider Towser to be in a dangerous state."

"Rats! He hasn't any disease. Gore painted those spots on him."

"H'm! Gore certainly seems to have attempted a joke on the subject; but I am convinced that the spots I cured were genuine ones. If you like, I will go to Towser now, and cure him of his internal complaint."

"Bosh!"

"The complaint is, of course, all the more dangerous as it has taken an inward turn," said Skimpole. "If taken before it is too late, I can concentrate my will upon it, and heal it by suggestion—"

"Oh, ring off, old son!"

"There's Gore requires some healing, Skimmy," Tom Merry suggested. "Gore's hurt, you know. You'd better go and heal Gore by suggestion."

"A very good idea, Merry!" said Skimpole. "I shall certainly do so. I cannot allow my wonderful abilities as a healer to lie fallow. I must place my astounding discovery at the service of suffering humanity."

And Skimpole hurried away in search of Gore.

What happened when he found him Tom Merry did not know; but later that evening he observed that Skimpole had a red and decidedly swollen nose. And when Monty Lowther suggested to Skimpole that he should heal it by suggestion, Skimpole only blinked at him disconsolately.

THE END.

(Another splendid long tale of the Boys of St. Jim's next Thursday, entitled, "The Terrible Three's Air-Cruise," by Martin Clifford. Order in advance. Price One Penny.)

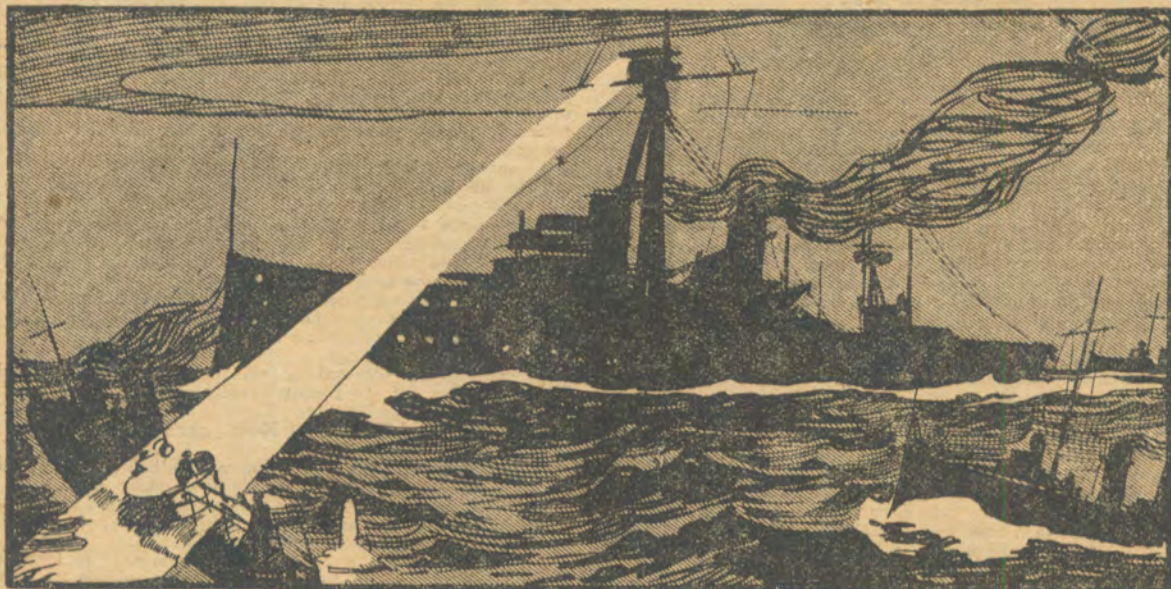
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Please tell your Friends about this Story.

BRITAIN AT BAY.



A Powerful and Stirring War Story.

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 instalment opens, Sam and Stephen have just come up the Thames with important news for Lord Ripley. Hearing that the whole of North London is in German hands, they go thither and investigate. By chance they come across a party of London clerks posted on a roof commanding the roof of the Mansion House, where the German flag is flying. A confederate in the Mansion House is to lower the German standard, and the little band have sworn to prevent it being hoisted again while they live. Sam and Stephen join the party, and all watch the Mansion House roof impatiently. Suddenly there is a shout. "By Jove!" cries one of the clerks, "He's done it!"

(Now go on with the Story.)

The Storming of the Bank House.

On the leads of the distant Mansion House a trapdoor suddenly opened, and a young man in a grey coat came up through it in a great hurry. Immediately he was through he slammed the trapdoor to again, threw his weight on it, and bolted it on the outside.

He waved his hands to those on the roof of the house, and they replied with a cheer as he ran swiftly to the flagstaff and seized the halliards. In another moment the German standard came fluttering down, just as the trapdoor was burst open and four of the Prussian Guards came rushing up on the leads.

The youth in the grey coat cut the flag away from the halliards with his knife, and as the Prussians ran at him Stephen's rifle cracked on the opposite roof, and one of them fell sprawling. The other two came on, and several more bounced up through the trap.

Drawing a revolver, the Londoner fired thrice at his assailants, dropping one and wounding another. He made

a dash for the parapet, and jumped upon it, grasping the flag in one hand and facing the Prussians as they rushed at him.

Crack, crack, crack! sang the revolver. One of the guards halted and staggered, another checked for a moment, and then came on, but the rest were untouched. Then, flinging the empty pistol at them, he grasped the German flag in both hands, and rending it in half, cast the pieces into the street. Three shots rang out, and with a last cry of defiance he threw himself off the parapet and vanished before a hand could be laid on him.

Stephen shut his eyes and gave a shiver, as a muffled, crushing thud from the unseen street told of the plucky Londoner's fate. His baffled enemies seemed utterly taken aback, and one of them jumped on the parapet and looked over.

"Jerry's done his work," said Marten between his teeth, "rest his soul."

The rifle spoke as he said the words, and the Prussian on the parapet threw up his arms and plunged helplessly down, following the Londoner to destruction. There was a pause, and the rest of the men on the Mansion House seemed panic-stricken for the moment. They looked around them with bewildered stares in every direction.

Not a sound or a movement came from the roof where the boys lay. All were well in cover, and the tiny puffs of smoke from the white powder of the rifles was blown away by the wind. A great roar of voices came from the street below, but it taught the men nothing when they looked down.

Even Sam was rather thrown off his balance by the action of the man in the grey coat, so swift and sudden had been the tragedy, and so ghastly its ending. It was different from anything he had seen in the war, and showed the desperation to which his comrades were driven. After that first cheer they kept a grim silence.

The Prussians recovered from their surprise in a moment or two, and three of them lowered the wounded men down through the trapdoor. They were allowed to do so unmolested. An officer appeared directly afterwards, and seemed both angry and excited, nor was it much wonder. The boys were too far off to hear what he said, but he was evidently giving pretty strenuous orders, and they saw him point at the flagstaff. Very shortly, another man arrived, bringing with him a fresh German flag. One who appeared

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to be a sergeant, took it from him and strode to the flag-staff with it.

He had scarcely picked up the flag-halliards to bend the colours on, when a rifle spoke from the left-hand chimney-stack, where Gerald lay, and the sergeant dropped the flag and staggered away, clapping his left shoulder with his right hand, and swearing loud enough to be heard by the sharpshooters.

Another man ran forward to the staff, and was missed altogether by Stanley, from the other chimney-stack, so that he had the flag all bent to the halliard before he was stopped, and he was just about to hoist it. It was Stephen's shot that found him, and he dropped at the staff's foot.

"The flag's down—keep it down!" said Marten fiercely. "You attend to anybody that tries to hoist it, Villiers—you're the surest shot. Gerald, you'll help him."

The rage and consternation on the Mansion House roof was now immense, and as Basil showed himself they saw now where the shots came from. They did not give it up, however, for to be baffled by a handful of civilian sharpshooters was too terrible a disgrace for the Prussian Guard, and more were arriving, while their flag was still down.

"The rest of you fire at those coming up the trapdoor!" ordered Marten. "We mustn't let any more get out on the roof, or there'll be more than our rifles can keep away. Shoot as they come up!"

It was the Prussian officer now who, disgusted at the lack of success of his men, darted to the flagstaff to send the colours up. He was fated to fail; for hardly had his fingers touched the rope when two shots spat out. The officer dropped on his hands and knees, sinking lower and lower, till he collapsed and lay still.

"This is almost a bit too cold-blooded," said Sam—"isn't it?"

"Shoot away!" said Marten sternly. "These are the beasts who shoot women and kids in London streets. Keep those colours down, for soon it'll be our turn."

"I'll spare no German who comes in front of my foresight, after what I've seen to-day!" muttered Stephen, re-charging his rifle.

Two others of the Prussians fell, as they were pointing out the sharpshooters' roof to each other, and then came a panic, and every man bolted for the trapdoor. The loss of their officer did it; nor was it much wonder, for the leads were already strewn with dead. The Prussians dived down and disappeared. Meantime, the noise in the street had increased, and shots were heard below.

"They're clearin' the streets," said Sam.

Marten nodded.

"Yes; they'll soon start on the house now. But even then I reckon they'll have another try at the flag. It's gall to them to have it down all this time; and they'll get it blazing hot from their commander-in-chief for allowing it. One thing, we shall bag nearly all who get first into the house."

"There they are!" said Stephen, as loud blows were heard down below at the main doors. "They'll get a bit of exercise before they come through. Ah! Would you?"

His finger pressed the trigger, and a head, that had appeared cautiously through the distant trapdoor, vanished again in a way that left no doubt of its owner's fate.

"Pretty shot!" said Marten critically. "You're as useful with a rifle as the papers said you were. Bit of luck for us, getting you here. How they're pounding away down-stairs!"

"Hark at the row in the streets!" said Sam. "The fall of the flag's stirred the people up. There'll be ructions."

"I hope they'll keep out of it," said Marten. "However, it's every man for himself these days, if he chooses to kick."

"That's just what it oughtn't to be," muttered Sam. "It should be every man for his neighbour, as well, an' then there'd be some sense in it. If ever I was to get out of this hole alive, that's the first lesson I'd learn by heart. The folks only want a leader, an' plenty of weapons."

"Don't worry about gettin' away from here," said Stephen, with a shrug. "Sounds to me as if the door was goin' already. Hallo! Look at that!"

He took a quick shot, but for the first time it had no effect. A curious thing had happened while they were talking. Two Germans had suddenly sprung up nimbly through the trapdoor, and instantly throwing themselves flat down on the leads, rolled over two or three yards, and gained the shelter of a chimney-stack on their own side.

"That was neatly done," said Stephen. "Didn't know they grew acrobats in the German Army. Look out for

Putt! came a bullet just over his head. The new-comers had brought rifles with them. Stephen drew back a little farther into cover, and watched with his eye along the sights, and his finger on the trigger. A few moments later

he saw the top of the German's head just appearing, as he prepared for a second shot. Stephen's rifle spoke again, and the man rolled limply into view from behind his shelter, and lay prostrate.

The second man made an attempt to stalk his way to the flagstaff by dodging from one cover to another; but Marten caught him half way by a neat snapshot, and both the men were accounted for.

After that, no more attempts were made to reach the roof. The enemy had found it too hot for them—from the roof where they lay the Londoners could keep half a regiment from getting successfully through that narrow opening. The flag remained down, lying idle at the foot of the staff, or swayed to and fro by the breeze, like a dish-cloth on a line.

In silence the little party of defenders watched the roof, the grim spectacle of the corpse-strewn leads opposite them a witness to their vigilance. Down below there had been a great noise of hammering and banging, echoing through the whole house, but now it ceased.

"They're up to something," muttered Stephen.

A loud, bursting crash, that made the whole building shake, followed on his words. A cheer rose from below, and then there was a rush of heavy feet.

"They've blown the barricade down with a bomb," said Marten calmly. "We shall have a little hand-to-hand work now—an' the end isn't far off. Young Villiers, will you and Basil keep guard over the flag with your rifles? We want the best shots for that, an' the flag mustn't go up till the last of us are wiped out. You understand? You," he added to Sam, "I want to help me hold the trapdoor against 'em, with the remaining three of us. Bullet and butt ought to account for a few before they get on deck. How many d'you think there'll be?"

"They'll send a score, I dare say," replied Sam, as Marten made his arrangements for the defence.

It was not done in the way Sam would have done it, but he did not interfere. He told himself it was Marten's campaign, and he had better do it according to his own lights. Marten had evidently made up his mind to make a fight to the death of it.

"What if your pal, who's goin' to fire the house, fails to do it?" he said. "The Germans 'll be pretty thick below."

"He won't fail," said Marten; "for he knows he'll be shot, anyhow. The time the Germans 'll waste pulling down the upper staircase barricades will give the fire time to get a good hold. Can't you hear 'em now?"

The noise inside the house was prodigious. Men were tearing down the furniture and wedged in cases on the stairs, in a wild effort to get at the daring little party that had defied them so long, and take their revenge.

"I think your man's done his work," said Sam. "I believe I smell fire."

"Hope they don't spot the danger too soon themselves," said Stanley anxiously.

"Not they. They're too busy," returned Marten, gripping his rifle. "They've broken the barricade, an' they're rushin' up right underneath us now. Hark at that!" he added, as a great shout was heard below. "The fellows below have spotted the trouble, anyhow. By the time these top beauties know it, it'll be too late, an' no power will put out that paraffin and straw. The house is dry as tinder. Look out now!"

Crash! came a thundering blow on the under side of the trapdoor. Somebody was battering at it with a pole. Hoarse cries in German were heard just below, and the scuffling of many feet. The defenders threw their weight on the trapdoor to gain as much time as possible, but soon the whole frame was battered to pieces, and forced up clear.

The first of the enemy—a big Saxon—came springing up the step-ladder with a shout, only to fall back with a revolver-bullet from Sam through his brain. Two others made a desperate attempt to haul themselves through, but a rifle-butt felled the one, and the other was carried down with him.

Stanley, beside himself with excitement, leaned right over, pistol in hand, to fire downwards. Instantly a shot from below caught him under the chin and passed through his brain. He toppled down headlong through the trap.

"Keep back! Don't show yourselves, but give it 'em the moment they appear!" ordered Marten quickly.

With watchful eyes, and breath drawn between their teeth, the remaining three held themselves ready at the sides of the trap. Behind them they could hear the reports of the rifles, and knew Stephen and Basil were having fresh trouble in guarding the flagstaff. But they could not spare a glance that way.

The enemy below had paused, and drawn away. Sam heard the harsh shout of "Feuer!" and knew they had discovered that the house was alight behind them, and the staircase already in flames. There was no need to ask—the acrid smell of smoke was already drifting up, and the crackle of the flames grew loud.

"Cut off! They'll never master it now!" said Marten, with a grim, exulting face. "We shall have them back at us in earnest in a minute."

The noise and cries ceased after a little, and a frenzied rush of savage men came up the stairs again and made for the roof. They had found that they were trapped, and that no escape below was possible. A step-ladder was jammed against the trapdoor door opening, and up it came the Germans, desperate with rage and fear, and thirsting for the lives of those who had brought them to such a pass.

In numbers the enemy surpassed the defenders by five to one. But the position favoured the latter, and with clubbed rifles and spitting revolvers the three Britons strove madly to hold the narrow passage.

The rest was a wild medley of shots and blows and groans, in which Sam scarcely knew what was passing. He emptied his revolver in less than half a minute, and then used the heavy butt as a club.

Twice a couple of the Germans won their way to the top, and actually gaining the roof, only to fall, with their blood staining the leads.

Only at such moments, when even life is not to be hoped for, can man fight like that.

They raged together in cold, silent fury, each man according to his own taste, and over all the stinging smoke and the sound of the crackling fire became plainer and plainer.

So good was the position of the defenders above the trap's opening that Sam, after the first burst of the fight, did not see why the Germans should not be kept out altogether, with a little more science in the fighting.

He had a quick eye for an advantage, and shouted more than once to Marten, who was battering away at every man that showed himself, on the same side as his other mate.

"Guard both sides, man!" cried Sam. "If they get on top we're done!"

The Death-Trap.

But Marten gave no sign of having heard. It almost seemed to Sam that he wished the Germans to have their chance; perhaps for the remnant of them to gain the roof, and let the defenders die fighting, rather than by the fire.

That was not Sam's way. He believed always in striving to the last moment, and never gave up hope.

The Germans must have lost two-thirds of their number by now, he thought.

Why shouldn't they be kept down altogether? He took advantage of a few seconds' lull to cram fresh cartridges into his revolver.

But there was no time to prove it. Marten would not heed, and a moment later a burly Saxon forced his way through, and loosed off a quick snap-shot that brought Marten's comrade down.

The next moment he measured his length on the leads, stretched out by a crushing blow from Marten's gun-stock; but two more had taken advantage of the moment's delay to gain the roof, and though one met his fate at Sam's hands before he could raise a hand, the second took up all the boy's attention.

In a twinkling the roof was stormed by six desperate German privates.

"Here, Steve—quick!" cried Sam, his revolver spitting rapidly.

His handiness with the weapon saved him, for the Saxons had fixed their bayonets, trusting to the long reach of them; but the pistol in Sam's hands was swifter.

Marten, fighting blindly and furiously, brained one of the Saxons, and the bayonet of another passed through his body at the same moment, and he went down without a cry.

Stephen and Basil had sprung to the rescue, and the latter killed Marten's slayer with a shot fired right against the man's coat; but he, too, met his end at the hands of the third Saxon.

Stephen, leaping back nimbly as a goat, made no attempt to come to close quarters, but avoided the bayonet-stroke, and shot down his man.

He was pursued by another, who came at him swearing furiously; but the boy had no intention of meeting the bayonet, for he had none himself.

One snap of the rifle-bolt brought a fresh cartridge into place, and, taking a quick run back, he pressed the trigger, and brought the tall Saxon tottling to the leads as easily as if he were shooting at the butts.

He turned, and saw Sam thrusting fresh cartridges into his smoking pistol with feverish haste.

But there was not a German living of all the six, for the firearms had told, and the experience of the boys, taught by a dozen fights, had saved them, so far.

"Take the opposite side—quick as you can!" ordered Sam, standing, watchful and breathless, beside the trap.

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Stephen obeyed, but not a sound came from below, save the groan of a wounded man. Nothing stirred.

"I believe we've accounted for the lot!" said Stephen, drawing a long breath. "They'd have been out on top before now, else."

Sam peered cautiously over, and saw that it was true. The floor below the trap looked like a shambles, and fully a dozen men lay dead or dying there.

The knowledge that the devouring fire was behind them had driven them to try an almost impossible feat in reaching the roof.

"Phew! Have we wiped out all those?" gasped Stephen.

"All those? Why, none of them ought ever to have reached the roof at all. We might have held this place against an army, with a little care. Marten and his pals fought like demons, poor chaps; but they fought like children, too. If they'd only gone about the thing properly we'd have done it without losing a man, an' they'd be alive now."

"I'm not sure that that's any advantage," said Stephen gloomily. "Maybe they were right, an' you were wrong. We look like bein' burnt alive the way things are, and I own I'm a coward about that; nor shall I fancy chuckin' myself off the roof, like that other chap did."

"Don't be such a despondin' beggar, Steve!" said his brother. "We're not dead yet, and I haven't any intention of peggin' out if it can be helped. There's always hope. Phew! That fire's spreadin' fast!"

"All right. I should say we've got half an hour or less before we begin to frizzle," said Stephen, with a shrug of his shoulders. "But if you've any plan, I'm game, whatever it is. Nothing can be worse than burning. There go those beggars again!"

He turned suddenly, and, bringing the rifle to his shoulder, fired, and brought down a man who had taken advantage of the cessation of hostilities to make for the historic flag-staff.

He shared the fate of the rest, and some others who were following him dodged back as a second shot saluted them.

They had learned caution over there, and had no mind for a second musketry duel against such opponents.

It could not be long now before the sharpshooters were past giving trouble.

"Drop that now, Steve!" said Sam impatiently. "First of all, see if any of those poor beggars are alive—German or British."

"No," said Stephen, after a brief examination, and a look down the trapdoor, "doesn't seem so."

"I hope not. It'd be awkward leavin' the poor chaps to frizzle. Their own side must do what they can for 'em, though I don't see how. It's impossible for us to do anything with 'em. Come and give a heave at this door."

There was a second trap at the far end of the roof, now securely bolted down from outside. It led to the back staircase, which Sam had already partly explored, and which, Marten had said, there was scarcely any chance of the Germans finding, to say nothing of its having been barricaded lower down.

The roof was not joined to any other, for the house was a corner one, and also stood by itself, a twenty-foot space cutting it off from the next in the row, which was not nearly so high. The boys raised the trap, and Stephen paused.

"What's that?" he said, as voices were heard lower down in the house, apparenting shouting for help in German.

"By Jove, there are some more Germans inside yet!" said Sam. "They must be fixed on the second floor, I should think, and unable to pass the barricades now to get up higher, or else the fire's spread right up the staircase. They're in a bad fix."

"So are we," grunted Stephen. "I'm beginning to think poor Marten was a bit too ingenious altogether; but we agreed to chip in, so we mustn't grumble, and if you've got any notion of gettin' out you'd better hurry."

"It's only a cat's chance," said Sam, descending through the trap, "but worth tryin'." I was down here before the shooting began. There is a window and a rain-pipe. The odds are we break our necks; but the case is pretty desperate, anyhow."

"I'd like to hear anybody deny that. But how d'you expect to do any good even if we get into the street? We shall only fall into the embrace of the Prussian Guard. They'll be ready to take us to their bosoms as we come down."

"It doesn't lead into the street. There's a back yard. I don't say it's any good, but let's hurry, anyhow."

"Pho! It's pretty thick here!" said Stephen, coughing, as the smoke curled up the staircase.

They made their way down the narrow, pitch-dark stairs right to the third storey, where a small room was reached, the window of which stood open.

"There!" said Sam. "This room is blocked off from the others. Look outside, an' be careful how you do it. There's

the rain-pipe; it runs right down into the yard. The smoke hides everything, but there doesn't seem to be anybody in the yard. The gates are shut, an' they're all busy round at the front an' sides."

"It's the ugliest climb I ever saw!" said Stephen. "But this is too hot a shop to stay in, so here goes."

He lowered himself out of the window, took the thick pipe in as good a grasp as he could, and slid down.

Stephen was out of sight almost at once, through the smoke that suddenly spirted out from the window below.

Sam did not wait to prospect. He gave Stephen fifteen seconds or so, and then followed.

He was heavier, and could not go down so fast, but he did not as much as cast a look down.

He was just passing the second storey, from which the smoke poured, when he caught sight of a frantic German soldier rushing to the window as he descended past it.

Sam tried to slide faster, but his foot caught for a moment in the flange of the rain-pipe, and the German, leaning out with an oath and a furious face, raised his rifle and aimed a deadly blow at the climber, whirling the butt above his head.

"It was you who set this trap!" he yelled. "Die, Englisher!"

A Wonderful Escape.

Sam saw the heavy rifle raised to strike him down as he clung like a fly to the side of the house. The German's face glared through the smoke, and the boy's foot was stuck fast, so that to slide out of reach in time was impossible.

Out came his revolver, as he gripped the rain-pipe with his left hand and tried a hurried snapshot upwards. He was not a second too soon.

The German fell across the window with a choking cry, and the rifle fell from his grasp. It struck Sam on the shoulder as it fell, and clattered down upon the flagstones below.

The blow, though not heavy, very nearly shook Sam from his hold, and he had to let his pistol go and grab desperately at the pipe.

He clung there for a second or two, feeling giddy and dazed, till he heard Stephen's voice calling anxiously to him from below.

Pulling himself together, he wrenched his foot from the flange, where it had jammed, with an effort, and climbed down hand over hand, sliding the last ten yards and dropping quite six feet. Nor could he have held out another yard for life itself, for the strain of that cramped climb was terrible.

He almost fell into Stephen's arms, and heard his brother's excited voice at his ear:

"This way—quick! We'll have to try an' hide here. They're coming round."

Sam scarcely realised where he was or what he was doing, so much had the descent taken it out of him. It was Stephen who, having snatched up the fallen revolver, hustled his brother across the paved yard, round a couple of hand-barrows, and behind a pile of empty packing-cases that stood near the wall.

Stephen had already hauled three of these out to make a shelter, and the boys fairly dived behind them just as the yard door on the back street flew open and five or six of the Prussian Guard rushed in.

Just then two more yelling, smoke-blackened German soldiers appeared above—one at the window where the dead man hung across the sill, and another at the next one.

The Prussian Guardsmen, who were evidently not looking for prisoners, shouted to them to hold on and that help was coming. A couple of tall ladders, bound together, were hauled over the yard wall a minute or two later, and raised against the side of the house. They just reached below the second storey window, bending and cracking dangerously, and the imprisoned Germans managed to scramble down them, one after the other, as the ladders were shifted just in time.

"Blitzen!" gasped one of the rescued ones. "You were none too soon. My clothes are scorched like tinder."

"Are there any more of you?" cried the sergeant of the Prussians.

"Not on that floor; but of those who went up to the roof we do not know what became of them. I do not think there is any hope for them. They cannot get down."

"But that man in the window, is he dead? What has killed him?"

"Donnerwetter, I don't know! The smoke, I suppose," said the first of the rescued men. "But dead he is, sure enough."

"What are you about, men?" exclaimed a Prussian officer harshly, suddenly appearing in the yard. "Up the

ladder with you and see if there is no way to get the rest out!"

The Prussians had to obey, and two of them went up the ladder, although the rescued men told the officer it was impossible.

But those who went up soon found their task too much for them. They only got into the room to hurry out again, well scorched and blackened by a fresh blast of fire. When they reached the ground again red flames were roaring through the windows and the glass was melting.

"No man could get through the room alive, Herr Lieutenant," panted the sergeant, dripping with perspiration. "The place is a furnace."

"And all the front and side windows are worse," said one of the others. "The house is doomed."

"There were but three of us caught in the second storey, Herr Lieutenant," added the second of the rescued men.

"We could get neither upstairs nor down."

"They have the fire-escapes against the front now," said the officer gloomily, as if to himself; "but it seems there is no hope. Here, man!" he added to the last speaker.

"Did you see anything of those Englishmen?"

"No, sir, we did not get up so far. There was a great noise of fighting up above, but it ceased some time ago."

"The sharpshooting rascals will be grilled along with the rest, if any of them survive," said the officer savagely, "that's one comfort. Somebody said those two cubs, the Greyfriars scouts, were up there. I only hope so, for they gave us trouble enough in Essex. March out, there! Join your corps in front!"

Stephen nudged his brother, who had recovered from his exhaustion, and was listening. The younger boy peeped cautiously over the cases and saw the men disappear.

"I'm not sorry they got out," he said, under his breath, "judging by my own feelings when I was up there. What about making a bolt for it, Sam?"

"Hold on! The street is packed," said Sam, for even the cart-alley at the back resounded with tramping feet and loud voices. "We shall be pounced on if we're seen. You got me in here jolly smartly, Steve. I was cooked. It don't seem possible that nobody saw us come down, though."

"It's a cert no Germans did, or we'd have been turfed out of this by now. There were several heads stickin' out of the windows across the way, an' they know where we are; but they're all English, an' you bet they'll keep it dark. The Prussians were all round at the front an' sides; an' besides, the smoke and murk hid everything. I reckoned our best tip was to dodge in among this rubbish as soon as you got down, but it's ticklish work stayin' here. Gosh, look at that!"

A great flaming beam from one of the burnt-out bow-windows came hurtling down into the yard with a crash, sending a shower of sparks flying over the pile of packing-cases.

"I shouldn't like the old house to polish us off after all, now we're out of it," remarked Stephen. "That'd be rather tame. We shall be mashed into omelettes here when it starts fallin' about."

"Better try an' bolt for it, then," said Sam, for another lump of timber and some smoking bricks came rattling down on the packing-cases. But, just as the boys were about to jump out, the colonel of the Prussian Guard, swearing prodigiously, suddenly came round to the yard with a staff-officer and six men, and the brothers had to duck back hurriedly behind their shelter.

"When I find the men who are responsible for letting those cursed civilians with their rifles get into the house, I will court-martial and shoot them!" cried the colonel. "We have lost a score of men through this business, and the whole block will be burnt out unless the hydrants can be used! Donner und blitzen!" he exclaimed, leaping back as a blazing window-sash nearly alighted on his head—"here, clear the men back, we've had enough losses to-day! Any who remain in the house now, there is no hope for—the fools must pay the price of their bungling."

"Yes, sir. The Commander-in-Chief won't be exactly pleased," said the staff-officer innocently; on which the colonel swore at him, and Stephen grinned behind the packing-cases.

"I beg your pardon, sir. All the same, if those Villiers brats are really in the house, as somebody said, we're rid of them pretty cheaply even at this price, don't you think? They've had the fiend's own luck in upsetting the plans of better men," said the staff-officer.

"You need not trouble yourself," said the colonel, in a rasping voice. "I have information that the men in the Mansion House saw them on the roof above us, and as the leads must be nearly melted by now you may be sure they are grilling like sausages."

"A very good thing for everybody, sir. All the same, they are amazingly slippery, and have got out of places

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE TERRIBLE THREE'S AIR-CRUISE." An Extra-long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

nearly as tight as this. For all we know they might be hiding in this yard even now."

The boys held their breath.

"Don't be a fool, Hartzfeldt," said the colonel roughly. "How could they get out of the house, and where could they hide? Phew!" he concluded, as more masonry fell. "Let us get out of this. Set a patrol on this side of the house at once, to make quite sure. I must get back to my battalion."

The Prussians cleared out without more delay, and the boys breathed more freely.

"I wish a brick had knocked that old ruffian on the head!" murmured Stephen. "He's done us!"

"Has he? I should say he was our best friend, just then," returned Sam. "That other Johnny would have had the place searched. That's the best of these cocksure chaps, especially when they're colonels. It's been a bit too excitin' so far, but I rather enjoyed that little confab. I can't believe we're goin' to be nabbed now after such a shave as the two last."

"We're jolly sure to get brained by brickbats if we stay here, an' if there's a patrol outside, an' the main street's full of Germans, how'd you expect us to get away?"

Sam turned it over in his mind, and could see no way. There was certainly no chance at all of their not being stopped and recognised if they left the yard. Stephen was opening his mouth to add a further discouraging remark, when suddenly he was knocked flat by something large and bulky, which descended between them like an avalanche.

"Great Scott!" gasped Stephen, feeling the side of his head. "The beastly house'll be the death of us after all! Let's bolt!"

"This didn't come from the house!" exclaimed Sam under his breath, catching hold of the missile that had felled his brother, and turning it over in amazement. It was a large, soft parcel of dark drab cloth, tied round with a stout cord. Sam pulled the cord off, and the astonished boys unrolled a couple of military greatcoats such as the German officers of the line wear, and two peaked caps belonging to the same rank. A note in an envelope fell out of the package, and Sam tore it open. It was scrawled in pencil.

"Put these on and walk straight out. The patrol may pass you through. Then take the left turning and get into Cannon Street. The coast is clear there. Good luck to you!"

"Heaven bless 'Well-Wisher,' whoever he is!" said Sam fervently. "Who says our luck ain't holding!"

"Somebody must have chucked it down from the windows across the street!" said Stephen. "I told you they spotted us comin' down. They must have seen us hide."

He glanced up at the opposite houses as he wrapped the cloak round him. There was not a sign of anyone at the windows. Whoever flung the parcel down, had drawn back out of sight.

"I wish I could make him a duke!" said Stephen, rapidly fastening the chain at the cloak's collar. "Where on earth can he have got these duds?"

"Goodness knows! After some big scrap or other, when the wearers were past wearing clothes. Never mind that now; but let's get on an' try the bluff. I wonder if it'll pass. How do I look?" said Sam, putting the cap on.

"Pretty fair. Our serge trow-trows don't look very military, but let's hope they won't show much under the cloaks. We're neither of us short. Now for it!"

"Walk straight out, meet the patrol—don't make 'em turn back to look at us—and mind and salute German style," said Sam. "I'm going to pitch into you like blazes for not having the ladders brought out of the yard. I'm captain an' you're subaltern. Clear off to

the right as sharp as ever we can, and take that turning."

"And if they stop us?"

"We can account for six men each," said Sam grimly, "before we're taken."

But they went, leaving the friendly pile of packing-cases and halting a moment at the gate, when they heard the footsteps of the sentries advancing. The yard was like the ashpit of a furnace, so much burning rubbish had fallen, and to delay was fatal. With beating hearts the boys strode out smartly, almost walking into the patrol, and Sam abused Stephen loudly for neglect of duty, in the best German style, and with plenty of epithets. It was fortunate at that hour that they spoke such perfect German, else it had been safer to keep silent.

Up went the hands of the patrol mechanically, in salute, and the boys saluted back as they swept swiftly past. It was a critical moment. But the German soldier owes absolute obedience to a commissioned officer of any rank, and the encounter did not last a couple of seconds. It is no part of a sentry's duty to look back after he has saluted.

Right on and round the corner, swung the boys, and Stephen could have shouted with relief, but he did not. The crackle of the fire, and the noise of the main street died down behind them, and they saw at once that the unknown hand which wrote that note had given them sound advice. The way was clear before them, and hardly anybody was about in the side streets.

"Great Caesar's ghost! I never expected that to come off," said Stephen, drawing a long breath. "Where could they have thought we came from?"

"Private soldiers in the Kaiser's army ain't allowed to think. The officers do it for them," said Sam sardonically. "Look here, these things have served our turn, an' we must get rid of 'em. They were all right for a rapid bit of bluff, but the first German officer would spot something wrong. We shall be safer simply as ourselves."

Stephen agreed rather doubtfully, but he supposed his brother was right, and, a few moments later, they had flung the cloaks and caps into a doorway, and went straight ahead as they were. Cannon Street was reached, and though a couple of squads of Germans were passing down it, nobody noticed the boys, who made a detour towards the Monument, reached it without mishap, and Sam led the way eastwards.

"Where to now?" said his brother.

"Out of this as quick as we can, an' across the river again if possible. Every second we stay over here may be the last for us—we've made things too hot. We can't do any more good here, an' I want to get back an' report. I've a plan at the back of my head that'll make things hum over here, if it can be carried out."

"It'll be a tough job getting across. However, it isn't a little difficulty that'll stop us now," said Stephen. "Shall we have to wait till dark, or had we better— Great Scott! It's getting dusk already, is it?"

It was. The boys little realised how much time they had spent on that strenuous day, and the afternoon was drawing in. There is no need to relate the way in which they reached the docks again, and struck away farther eastwards, keeping near the water.

"We'll give a wide berth to our old landing-place," said Sam, "and get right down to Spiggott's Wharf, you remember the old place! There ain't likely to be anybody near it. We'll have to wait till it's dark before we try to cross, though. There are German pickets here and there, that command the river with their rifles, an' we'd be a dead easy mark goin' over. They fire on anybody that tries to go afloat."

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